Mining, Metalworking, and the Epic Underworld: The Corruption of Epic

Heroism and the Emergence of Commercial Ethos as Represented in the Epic Line

from Homer to Milton

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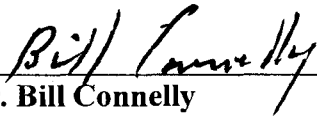
Mining, Metalworking, and the Epic Underworld: The Corruption of Epic Heroism and the Emergence of Commercial Ethos as Represented in the Epic Line from Homer to Milton

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Dedication

I consider this dissertation as an exercise in recovery and an effort to revisit those aspects of reading and literary study that compelled me first to major in English as an undergraduate. However, no dissertation is written autonomously. The input of others helps to provide shape and direction for any project, and in this space I would like to offer my sincere thanks to those who made this particular effort possible.

First, to my two readers: Drs. Connelly and Strawman, thank you for your patience, support, supervision, and encouragement in what I'm afraid was a very demanding and time-consuming experience. Dr. Strawman, I particularly appreciate your meticulous attention to the quality of my work, and your willingness to read page after page and offer suggestions, even as your own department duties grew more pressing. I also appreciate the conversations we've had about this topic, especially those that took place on trails in the Smoky Mountains and in the South Cumberland State Recreation Area. I look forward to many more such conversations and to our continuing friendship and exchange of ideas.

Dr. Connelly, I particularly appreciate your encouragement to continue in my pursuit of a doctorate after my abortive first effort, and your continuing interest in a project that continued into your own retirement. Your allowing me to sit in your Medieval Literature seminars as an unattached adjunct faculty member helped to rekindle my interest in the topics I'd set aside. Thank you especially for allowing me to discuss the matter of lynx urine (and other peculiarities of medieval lapidaries) with your graduate students, and for your effective and thoughtful stewardship of a department in transition.

Also, I thank other members of the MTSU English department and community who provided support and mentoring along the way: Drs. Kevin Donovan, Michael Neth, and Julia Fesmire provided models for effective research and scholarship in their graduate seminar classes. Dr. Alan Boehm provided valuable input as a reader of early drafts of the first few chapters, and served at points as a sounding board when my ideas were still in development. His input helped greatly to shape the current project. Drs. Keith Taylor and Pete McCluskey helped in similar ways, and to all I offer my appreciation tor your helpful and timely guidance. I also express thanks for the help and instruction offered by select faculty members at the University of Arizona, who planted the seeds that took almost two decades to take root in this project.

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Finally, to my wife, Kim. Thank you for taking a chance on a struggling graduate student and for sharing the journey with me. It's been a great ride, and you've been around for just about all of it. You've helped make the job worthwhile, and I'm excited about what the future will bring with it now behind us. Thanks also for the family we've created together.

Dissertation Abstract

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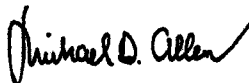
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I contend that economic realities and practices give shape to the epic form and define its motifs as much as the traditions and conventions of the genre that epic poets inherit and reinvent. Epic poetry is traditionally read as a repository for values associated with heroism in Western Civilization. My focus instead seeks to establish that the epic text also reflects and comments upon a culture's identity in economic and social spheres. Moreover, when biographical and historical details about the epic writer's life are available, these likewise help to reveal the pool of imaginative resources that the epic poet draws upon.

In this way, epic literature documents the economic and social lives of a developing tribal culture as much as it does the chivalric ethos or proto-mercantile dimensions, or the colonial ambitions or early industrial efforts of a more developed national entity. This pattern of economic and social development is evident in the "epic line" that connects the battle and underworld images in the pre-Christian works of Homer and Virgil, the anonymously composed tribalism depicted in *Beowulf* and chivalric grandeurs of the *Song of Roland*, the proto-commercial travel narratives of Dante's *Inferno* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the colonial subtext of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and the incipient industrial motifs used to depict Hell in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

I read all of these texts with an eye on the economic and social systems which shape and are represented in them, and I locate the common symbol that connects the epic genre to the economic and social life of a culture in the symbols and imagery of metals and metalworking. Metals are the materials of empire, as they are essential and fundamental to a culture's immediate survival, as well as to its long-term economic health. They help to define and transform its social hierarchy, and most frequently represent the currency that defines its class system. Moreover, they figure prominently in the common epic motifs of battle (weapons), journey, underworld descent, and the articulation of social strata.

Likewise, mining is the activity that makes metals available to human commerce and industry, and it requires both a large-scale manipulation of the landscape and a descent into underworld regions. The significance of underworld imagery in epic is in part determined by the essential importance of mining and metalworking to cultures of varying degrees of development. Within the epic narrative, the underworld regions represent a problematic, morally ambiguous space where metals figure prominently and comment most vividly on the commercial and social ambivalences of the epic poet's world.

Whether represented by the prophetic visions worked by Olympian smiths, in the arms and armor donned by epic heroes, the currencies that both dictate the interactions within emergent mercantile societies and determine their moral standards, or in the weapons of warfare used by celestial rebels, metals constitute the essential imagistic substance of epic. They are drawn from subterranean recesses which shed light on the economic realities of the epic poet's world, and in the line connecting Homer and Milton the conjoined motifs of metals and the underworld depict important stages in a larger pattern of economic and social development in western civilization that proceeds in close conjunction with the perpetuation and reinvention of the epic genre.

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**Introduction: Mining, Metalworking, and the Epic Underworld: The
Formation of State Identity to the Seventeenth Century**

Or:

The Epic Line from Homer to Milton and Its Economic and Military Foundations

Working individually or in collective effort, epic poets are constantly

negotiating the economic realities and practices of their worlds, the traditions and

conventions of the genre that they inherit and reinvent, and the influence of other

narrative, imagistic, and thematic superstructures that likewise shape the epic form and

define its motifs. Still, certain features of epic literature are universal. I contend that

the epic text seeks out the material substance of its cultural identity and makes manifest

its immediate economic and social spheres. Biographical and historical details about

the epic writer's life (when available) likewise help to reveal the imaginative resources

the epic poet drew upon. Whether of Germanic or Gaelic, Greek or Roman, English or

Continental origins, epic literature reflects a developing state identity in commercial,

economic, social, and literary spheres. Epic serves as the document of empire, culture,

and nascent statehood, depicting the infrastructural dimensions of a people in common

themes and motifs, including battle (weapons), journey, underworld descent, and an

articulation of social strata.

The surface concerns of epic include the obvious: heroism, duty, warfare, and

challenges to fate and /or the favor of the gods. Within the epic's structural dimensions,

the imperatives of warfare are enhanced by describing the implements of battle in detail

and by portraying them with a mythic stature that connects the hero's actions to the

heroics of past warriors and battles. The epic's preoccupation with warfare and battle is

oriented also to its subsurface concerns of communal well-being. Therefore, within the parameters of the epic form one can note a secondary but no less significant focus on a politics of colonial economic practices and a vision of imposing its leadership and control over the lives and sometimes livelihoods of the foreign enemy so often configured in the epic tradition.

In this way, epic literature documents both the economic and social lives of a developing tribal culture as well as the link between the chivalric ethos and proto-mercantile and colonial ambitions, between the chivalric ethos and early industrial efforts in support of a more developed national entity. This pattern of economic and social development is evident in the "epic line" that connects the battle and underworld images in the pre-Christian works of Homer and Virgil, the anonymously composed tribalism depicted in *Beowulf* and chivalric grandeurs of the *Song of Roland*, the commercial travel narratives of Dante's *Inferno* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the colonial subtext of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and the incipient industrial motifs depicted in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. All of these texts merit reading with an eye to the economic and social systems that shape and are represented in them. The common symbol that connects the epic genre to the economic and social life of a culture is found in its imagery of metals and metalworking. Metals are the materials of empire; they are as essential to a culture's immediate survival as to its long-term economic health. They help to define and transform its social hierarchy and most frequently represent the currency that defines its class system.

The Critical Tradition

Traditional readings of epic highlight its structural, textual, formalistic, and generic dimensions. A prolific scholar whose mid-20th century studies of the epic provide useful illustrations of traditional historicist readings of the genre, C.M. Bowra argues in *From Virgil to Milton* (1944) that epic, "by common consent," is defined as "a narrative of some length" which "deals with events which have a certain granduer and importance." Bowra identifies the characteristics that distinguish "literary" epic from "authentic" epic. For him, these "two classes of epic are really distinct because their technique is different and because each owes its character to special methods of composition" (2), which in turn establish "a difference in the character of the poetry" (3). His consideration of textual elements that define the epic form is based on this essential distinction, and is based fundamentally on the differences between Homeric and Virgilian epic. Bowra's 1952 study, *Heroic Poetry*, offers a fuller consideration of epic's role in articulating visions of heroism across cultures and historical epochs. This later study reads as an exericse in comparative literature, and Bowra himself describes his effort as "both literary and social," in that heroic poetry serves as "the reflection of the societies which practice it and illustrates their character and ways of thinking" (47). Bowra stops short of arguing that epic also illustrates a culture's material, social, economic, and political realities, but in his two studies his focus on the genre of epic opens up the prospect for later generations of scholars to read epic as a reflection of a culture's materialist bearings and social practices. He inadvertently reveals as much when claiming that "heroic poetry seems to be on the whole a poor substitute for history," and that "we have no right to approach heroic poetry as if it were a record of

fact" (535). Qualifying these views, he nonetheless enables later scholars to position epic texts which, when read through a lens informed by Marx that combines both traditional and new historicist approaches, justifies a reading of epic literature in economic and social terms.

Crediting Bowra's discussions, scholar E.M. Tillyard considers in *The English Epic and Its Background* (1954) the appropriation and reinvention of the epic form according to classical aesthetics that are reinvented in subsequent epochs. His is a formalist inquiry enabled yet also inhibited by historicist considerations. Writing that "epic must select, arrange, and organise" (8), Tillyard articulates a "structural ideal" (9) of epic which is infused with "an heroic impression" (10). In this way, a given epic is connected with its precursors and reshaped in subsequent reinventions, returning its essential formalistic and thematic characteristics. "Epic," writes Tillyard, "must have faith in the system of beliefs or way of life it bears witness to" (13), and his inquiry rests upon such formalist assumptions.

Writing in 1962, scholar Thomas Greene likewise offers a formalist analysis of the genre, considering the epic form according to recurring motifs that linked classical to renaissance versions. His oft quoted study *The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity* focuses primarily on the epics of the renaissance and seeks to understand how the motif of "the celestial descent," which "constitutes typically a crucial nexus of the narrative," also "represents the intersection of time and the timeless" (7), thus illustrating a culture's interaction between humans and gods. In this way Green considers the appropriation of this classical motif by renaissance writers, highlighting not only the genre's "continuity" but also its continuing "transformation"

(7). Collectively, the scholarship cited above demonstrates the formalist and textual emphases of traditional readings, which do much to highlight the imagistic and thematic connections across a field of epic works.

A reading of epic literature focusing on its economic, social, and political dimensions is enabled and justified by a select field of critical approaches. Historicist approaches, traditional and new, supply the needed critical apparatus to read the epic document in light of contemporary evidence. Likewise, the field of Marxist studies enables the scholar to probe the economic underpinnings of epic literature. In contrast this study seeks to understand the epic genre in its full economic, political, ideological, and social complexity. A theoretical superstructure to frame this study is found initially within the traditional historicist model shown in the landmark study *Technics and Civilization*, where historian Lewis Mumford articulates an acute awareness of the "derivative arts of mining" which distinguishes Europe of the first millennium A.D. from the "stone cultures that came before: smelting, refining, smithing, casting; all increased the speed of production, improved the forms of tools and weapons, and greatly added to their strength and effectiveness" (61). In considering the development of mining and metalworking through history, Mumford notes that "[m]ining was not regarded as a humane art" but one that "combined the terrors of the dungeon with the physical exacerbation of the galley" (67). Collectively, "[m]ining and refining and smithing invoke, by the nature of the material dealt with, the ruthlessness of modern warfare" (69). Mumford articulates most precisely the connections between mining, metalworking, warfare, and environmental devastation, elements conjoined according to epic motifs. Moreover, he likewise asserts the problematic status of the miner and

metalworker: "the mine, the furnace, and the forge have remained a little off track

of civilization" (73). Overall, Mumford's consideration of the material history of

mining, metalworking, and warfare provides a historical under girding for this

consideration of their conjoined function in epic literature and their associations with

the pagan and Christian underworlds.

The traditional historicist perspective of Mumford as expressed in *Technics and*

Civilization articulates a reading of the epic text as a measure of the technical

sophistication of a given society, positioning it as a window onto the past which helps to

reveal the social and intellectual currents that helped shape the epic itself, as well as the

underworld visions imagined by its poets and other artists. The historicist perspective is

reconfigured via Steven Greenblatt's critical vantage in the preface to *Renaissance Self-*

Fashioning. Greenblatt highlights and validates the relevance of contemporary texts—

econonomic tracts and records, anthropological and historical evidence, and

sociological patterns—to reveal the interaction between the historical context of the

epic and the modern reader's understanding and interpretation of it. His work provides

a useful and updated new historicist counterpoint to Mumford's historicist interpretation

of the mining arts. The reconstructed history offered in the texts contemporary with a

given epic constitute the traditional perspective of the historian, providing a fuller

window on the world of the various epic poets considered in this study. Seeking to

"practice a more cultural or anthropological criticism," Greenblat emphasizes a need for

a strain of literary criticism based in anthropological methods that "must be conscious

of its own status as interpretation and intent upon understanding a culture as a part of

the system of signs that constitutes a given culture," while seeking in turn to realize a

"poetics of culture" (4-5). Writing that "Language, like other sign systems, is a collective construction," Greenblatt explains that the "interpretative task" of literary critics is to "grasp more sensitively the consequences of this fact by investigating both the social presence *to* the world of the literary text and the social presence *of* the world in the literary text" (5—my italics).

However, another obvious critical vantage also factors into the method used to read the epic texts. The lens of Marxist criticism enables a reading which focuses on the ideological content about a work, examining its assumptions and providing a window into the economic and social worlds it reveals. The work of Marxist critic Raymond Williams is usefully applied to this project. In *Marxism and Literature* Williams considers the "four basic concepts" of culture, language, literature, and ideology (5), seeking "to see different forms of Marxist thinking as interactive with other forms of thinking" (5) and to realize "a theory of the specificities of material cultural and literary production within historical materialism" (5). Within the epic genre, these concepts all merit articulation within the cultural and materialist parameters enabled by Williams's discussion.

Within the last fifteen years, scholars of epic have increasingly considered the application of select motifs within a larger field of materialist contexts—combining Marxist perspectives with those of old and New Historicist coloring in order to focus increasingly on the material and social dimensions of the epic genre. Writing in 1993, scholar David Quint's *Epic and Empire*, in conjunction with Michael Murrin's 1994 study *History and Warfare in Renaissance Epic*, mark the reconfiguring of the scholarly focus in readings of epic literature, as both show a newly realized social and materialist

emphasis. Basing his argument on the view that Virgil's *Aeneid* "ascribes to

political power the capacity to fashion human history into narrative," Quint reads the

epic as one that " attached political meaning to the narrative form itself" (9). Likewise,

Murrin considers the "long flirtation with history" evident in the works of notable

Renaissance poets, and aligns himself, despite his admitted "Old Historicist" leanings,

with the emerging school of critics by "juxtapose[ing] documents of differing

provenance or genres or disciplines," and "us[ing] historical and legal documents to

reconstruct a practice or battle" (15). Both writers locate the changing trajectory of the

epic genre in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, ascribing the change first

(according to Quint) to the aristocracy's changing vision of its own autonomy, and also

(according to Murrin) to the development of "the New Warfare" which irrevocably

transformed the materials available to post-Miltonic writers of epic. In both cases, these

works demonstrate an imaginative reconfiguring of reading epic that is shown in more

recent scholarly efforts and indirectly validate the end point of the current study.

Two more recent critical studies, the first by Robert Cook and the second, a

compilation of essays edited by Margaret Beissinger, Jane Tylus, and Susanne Wofford,

likewise seek to read epic literature in materialist terms made available through a

Marxist-oriented new historicist approach. Cook's study, *Milton, Spenser, and the Epic

Tradition*, written in 1996, considers a field of epic works in spatial terms and the

imperial implications of this spatial character. Considering "how Homer forged

culturally inflected spatio-temporal distinctions into a generic system," Cook writes that

"the present work proceeds to examine how later poets made use of this system in new

cultural contexts" (1). Cook's work is significant in its spatial emphasis, but could do

more to locate this emphasis within a consistent material dimension with the epics

and the cultures they reflect. Likewise, in introducing their collection of essays,

Beissinger, Tylus and Wofford posit that their volume's "thematic kernel" is that "the

dynamics of epic, both oral and literary, are created and sustained through the

challenging of boundaries–boundaries of genre, gender, locality, and language" so that

readings of the epic form, like those featured in their study, typically turn on "questions

of genre, gender, and trope" (11-12). In each case, the project of reading works of epic

in social and materialist terms is validated by the recent scholarly impetus to highlight

the imagistic substance of epic literature and its social and political implications.

The closest study to this current project is presented in the 2004 inquiry by

Virgilian scholar Andreola Rossi, whose *Contexts of War* studies the neglected concern

of Virgilian battle imagery, seeking to grasp "how the *Aenied* constantly redefines the

epic imagery of war by assimilating narrative systems that are distinctive of other

literary generes," primarily historiography and secondarily tragedy. In this light, Rossi

asks if it is possible to "characterize Virgilian battle narrative otherwise than by its

connection to the Homeric code" (7). Rossi's focus on Virgilian battle is on its

thematic, more so than its materialist dimensions, and in this light her scholarly path

proceeds according to a different trajectory. As I hope to illustrate, metals and

metalworking (and their military and commercial application) represent a consistent

trope that enables scholars of epic to connect the dots between works in materialist

terms, so that the material culture each epic reflects can be understood more readily.

Mining and Metalworking

In the western tradition, mining yields the essential substance of a culture's

material essence, and the corequisite activity that makes metals available to human

commerce and industry. Mineral extraction mandates both a large-scale manipulation

of the landscape and a descent into underworld regions. The significance of underworld

imagery in epic is in part determined by the essential importance of mining and

metalworking to cultures at varying degrees of development. Within the epic narrative,

the underworld regions represent a problematic, morally ambiguous space where metals

figure prominently and comment most vividly on the commercial and social

ambivalences of the epic poet's world.

The symbols of metals, armor, metalworking, and the underworld are embedded

in the Christian tradition, and their imagistic significance is directly enhanced when

depicted as essential components in the epic narrative. In the Old Testament, the

Gahenna district outside of Jerusalem, a disreputable area serving as a sort of garbage

dump, provided writers an early vision of the underworld. Likewise, images and motifs

of armor (Ephesians 6:10-20), metalworking (Genesis 4:18-22), and the sword (Luke

22:38) are readily present in both the Old and New Testaments. These allusions, in

conjunction with comparable motifs depicted in a field of epic narratives within the

western tradition, stress the inexpediency of arms and armor—and the significance of

the underworld location from whence they emerge—to the epic's overall social and

national ambitions.

Whether represented by the prophetic visions of the Olympian smiths, who

worked the arms and armor donned by epic heroes, by the currencies that dictate both

the interactions within emerging mercantile societies and determine their moral

standards, or by the weapons of warfare used by celestial rebels, metals constitute the

essential imagistic substance of epic. Drawn from subterranean recesses which shed

light on the economic realities of the epic poet's world, the conjoined motifs of metals

and the underworld consitutue the line connecting Homer and Milton and depict

important stages in a larger pattern of economic and social development in western

civilization that proceeds in close conjunction with the perpetuation and reinvention of

the epic genre.

Synopsis

Chapter 1: Milton's Underworld Factory

Chapter 1 of this study looks at Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the "finished product,"

or last great demonstration of the epic form written before the industrial revolution in

conscious imitation of the classics and the culmination of the epic vision as shaped by

the industrial, political, and social transformations of the emergent English nation.

Paradise Lost is, I contend, a record of these transformations, which were brought about

largely as a result of social upheavals caused by economic and (and to a lesser degree,

environmental) transformations, and his underworld imagery is shaped in particular by

the commercial and pre-industrial dimensions of seventeenth-century England.

Miltonists have increasingly read *Paradise Lost* in historicist terms in recent decades,

and efforts to read Milton's epic as a reflection of individual political or social conflicts

or changing economic patterns or policies have contributed to an already rich critical

heritage of textual and historical interpretations as established by scholars of previous

generations. The range of interpretive contexts that have informed readings of *Paradise Lost* asserts its polyglossic capacity to represent several discourses simultaneously.

In its images of the underworld and of battle, *Paradise Lost* captures stages of the evolution of discourses relating to mining, metalworking, and other forms of resource exploitation to accommodate economic and military needs. In representing these discourses within his epic conflict between God and Satan, Milton reveals his own ambivalence not only for the industrial and commercial developments which were progressing in his own time but also comments on their environmental and social consequences. In so doing, he belies trust in the social hierarchies and wealth-generating enterprises that stood as hallmarks of his mercantile society.

In casting Satan as a rebel against the "natural" hierarchies of Heaven, Milton portrays him in turns as a military commander, explorer, merchant, miner, and metalworker. In so doing, the poet hints at a rudimentary knowledge of the debates concerning the cultures of mining and metalworking. Milton reveals his intuitive knowledge of the necessary economic relationships between mining, metals, and militarism—and the economic transformations that resulted from these continually transforming relationships—in his mercantilist world. In so doing, Satan and his charges follow the lead of real-world tradesmen, craftsmen, miners, and members of production workshops who sought to improve their economic and social stature as they enhanced their nation's military and industrial prowess.

Chapters 2 and 3: Arms and the Shield

Chapters 2 and 3 step back to the earliest beginnings of classical epic, to Homer

and Virgil, and attempt to connect the form to the time. These chapters seek to

demonstrate how the representation of metals and metalworking technologies in ancient

epics establishes a basis for the medieval and renaissance conception of the Christian

underworld. Essentially, the imagistic significance of the warrior's arms and the

communal visions depicted on the shields taken by Achilles and Aeneas into battle

establish the relevance of metals and metalworking to larger cultural objectives.

In comparing these underworld figures and the domains they inhabit, one sees

an essential historical movement in the imagery of metalworking and weaponry. The

elder poet seeks to promote the homogeneous, received world view of a Mycenean

tribal culture, while the more recent poet uses similar patterns of imagery to promote a

multi-cultural and fabricated ethos to support the nation-state ideal of empire. In their

depictions of this world, the crafts and labors of the blacksmith are given a featured

role. Ultmately, in the Homeric imagination, metals and their related technologies

therefore represent the knowledge of capital that complements, symbolizes, and defines

the individual warrior's bravery and merit and facilitates the pursuit of the ultimate goal

in this epic world: the attainment of glory in battle.

This vision is given a more refined treatment in Virgil's' *Aeneid,* which offers a

more precise vision of the significance of metals and metalworking to the proliferation

of trade, of commerce, and of the values of the Roman world. In both cases, metals and

metalworking technologies represent the currency that drives the heroes' ambitions. The

mythic blacksmiths Haphaestus and Vulcan are portrayed as agents of transition who

possess unique connections to the underworld. Haphaestus and Vulcan facilitate the efforts of the epic heroes who wear their arms and maneuver their shields. As such, their contributions to the perpetuation of the warrior ethic envisioned by the epic bards are significant, possessing an economic, strategic, and spiritual significance. Haphaestus' labors are highlighted by the *Iliad's* emphasis on individual warriors fighting in the heat of battle, and the story's plot turns upon Achilles' armor, worn by Patroclus, being stolen by Hector. Haphaestus, like Virgil's Vulcan, is a visionary figure whose work—necessarily undertaken in the underworld recesses beneath Olympus—is essential to the establishment and perpetuation of the "natural" world of war that culminates in Rome's imperial stature.

However, in contrast to the Homeric heroic vision, the Virgilian conception of heroism, as embodied in Aeneas, allows for and enables human emotions and frailties such as doubt, weakness, and uncertainty, for Virgil's hero demonstrates a range of emotions unsuitable to his Homeric precursors; likewise, the *Aeneid's* narrative trajectory is directed toward a specific end—the founding of the Roman empire as espied midway through the story in a prophetic underworld vision. Superficially, of course, Aeneas is a combination of Homeric forms, demonstrating the traveler's wits of Odysseus and the battle skills (the *aristeia*) of Achilles or Hector. Overcoming envy for his vanquished cohorts killed in the siege of Troy, Aeneas instead effects the fulfillment of divine prophecy. In this context, his brand of heroism is directly counterposed to the Homeric warrior's heroism represented by Turnus, whom Virgil depicts as ill-suited to the task of founding a new civilization.

Chapters 4 and 5: The Hero and The Cross

Chapter 4 considers the works of the church fathers, beginning with the post-imperial perspective expressed by Augustine in *De Civitas Dei*, or *City of God*, and continuing with the post-Virgilian sensibilities of the English Church fathers, particularly Saints Bede and Gregory, as well as *The Life of St. Guthlac*. In this "translation" of Virgilian motifs of metals, the underworld, and imperial conceptions, I am interested in seeing how these are borrowed and adapted by the post-imperial world and later appropriated by the Anglo-Saxon world. In this process, the arms-bearing warrior is invested with a Christian spirituality that is, paradoxically, informed by the Virgilian epic motifs of armor, weapons, and the underworld. Ultimately, my purpose in this chapter is to show how the Virgilian conceits of underworld and metalworking imagery find imagistic and thematic conduits in the late classical and early Christian church fathers. The end point of this process of appropriation is the cultural milieu of the *Beowulf* poet (s), whose epic is distantly informed by residual Virgilian resonances.

The Virgilian appropriation of Homeric conceits—especially the metallurgical, military, and underworld imagery of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—initiates a discourse that conjoins the politics of empire and the poetics of epic form and resonates in the Christianized works of the early English church fathers, as well as in the Germanicized world of *Beowulf*. As shaped by Virgil's *Aeneid*, this Anglo-Saxon epic combines metallurgical and pre-industrial imagery, depictions of battle and warfare, underworld motifs, and nascent nationalist themes. In its epic imagery, *Beowulf* also comments on the evolution of the state from an entity defined by ethnic loyalties into an institution

defined by economic, social, and political institutions, and echoes the legacy of
Norse and Germanic epic traditions.

Augustine's reliance on Boethian and Virgilian thought is evident in both *De
Civitas Dei*, his reading of Rome's decline through the lens of Christian spirituality, and
in the *Confessions*, his spiritual autobiography. Ultimately, the syncretism of Virgilian
and Boethian themes is notable through these two most significant works of Augustine,
and their echoes in the works of the Anglo-Saxon poets are also resonant. The epic
influences from the Nordic and Germanic worlds represent an additional precursor to
the corpus of Anglo-Saxon literature.

In addition to his symbolic importance in classical epic and his imagistic
resonance in the Hellish environs depicted in the writings of the early Christian church
fathers, the blacksmith figure—and the materials he creates—also resonate significantly
in the Finnish, Nordic and Germanic folklore traditions; any examination of
metalworking in *Beowulf* must consider its connection to related motifs in other folk
traditions. For example, both the poetic *Edda* from Old Norse myth and the *Kalevala*
from Finnish tradition engage the smith figure in a more self-conscious fashion.
Additionally, the connections between the Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon worlds are more
established and evident, and the smith character of the *Volundarkvitha* section of the
poetic *Edda* reappears in both the literature and folklore of the Anglo-Saxon world.

The distinctive features of a primitive English nation state—its gradually
proliferating Christian faith, its emergence as a distinctive commercial identity, and the
elevation of prominent kings whose rule unified regions marked previously by
internecine conflict—were clearly notable in the eighth and ninth centuries. The course

of England's developing national hegemony was interrupted by early tensions

between the English and Irish churches, the internal rivalries between kings of both

pagan and Christian faith, and a series of invasions by the Vikings, the Danish, and later

the Normans. This collective range of influences shaped the imaginative resources

available to the composers of the *Beowulf* epic.

Chapter 5 focuses squarely on the Old English epic *Beowulf*, which examines

the thematic resonance of the disparate influences discussed in the previous chapter. As

in Virgilian epics, the motifs of metals and metalworking serve as a point of entry into

the imagistic conceits of the early Christian Church as well as the slowly developing

national consciousness of the Anglo-Saxons. I look at the ways in which epic imagery

in *Beowulf* borrows from both classical conceits as much as from contemporary

metalworking practices and exchange systems, as revealed by the east Anglian burial

grounds at Sutton Hoo. Further, I consider the ways in which metalworking shaped

both the symbolism of *Beowulf* and the hesitantly Christianizing national consciousness

of Anglo-Saxon society.

Ultimately, it is the Christian church fathers that enable the reinvention of the

imperial thematics of Virgil's *Aeneid* into materials appropriate to Christian spirituality.

The Christian notion of world-hatred both complements and complicates the ethos of

warrior commerce articulated by Homer and transformed by Virgil's imperial vision.

Both Virgil and the *Beowulf* poet are preoccupied with concern for the "fit" kingship of

a struggling empire. Both heroes' triumphs are ultimately for the future generations of

their people. Ultimately, one way to read Beowulf's demise is to regard him after the

fashion of the "medievalized" character of Aeneas: as a Christ-like figure who is

sacrificed to reiterate the power of God's kingdom. Just as Christ himself is done

in by the failings of his disciples, so is Beowulf brought down by the failings of his

people, more so than by his own lapses. In this way, salvation is assured in both

celestial and imperial terms—a realization conjoining Virgil's imperial mandate and

Augustine's civil theology. In short, the influence of these church fathers enabled the

appropriation of the Virgilian hero motif –for all of his proto-Christian dimensions–into

a form suitable to both the fledgling Christian church of seventh-century western

Europe and also to the far-ranging Germanic hegemonies still prevalent across its

northern reaches.

Fortuitously, the excavations at Sutton Hoo have yielded much evidence to

situate objects of worked metal as important icons within the larger political and

economic currencies of the Anglo-Saxon world. In so doing, these excavations have

also enlivened the debates over how accurately *Beowulf* itself reflects and comments

upon the political and social world of its audience. While the artifacts recovered at

Sutton Hoo further complicate the issue of whether the poem is an outdated heroic tale

from ages past or one in step with the climate of its age, they do ultimately underscore

the importance of metalworking—in symbolic as well as practical realms—to the

eighth-century Anglo-Saxon political economy. Their presence resonates in an epic that

is either contemporary or was composed up to three centuries later.

And despite its ultimately non-Virgilian character, *Beowulf* remains the most

vivid statement of the Anglo-Saxon conception of empire. In its depictions of

metalworking, armor, underworld imagery, and transformative process, it demonstrates

the imagistic and thematic features that define the epic genre. The *Beowulf* poet could

only vaguely envision an empire as a political entity conjoining the mythic

Germanic past and the predestined Christian future, but he nevertheless sought to define

his hero more according to this belief system, and less after the fashion of any residual

Virgilian models that he might have known. And like Virgil and the architect of the

Sutton Hoo burial tableau, the *Beowulf* poet also understood the interconnection

between the symbols of political authority and the labors of artisanship that made them.

Chapters 6 & 7:   The Sword and the Coin

Writers of medieval epic ultimately highlight the power associated with the

growing influence of the bourgeois class, who are those most likely to profit via the

proliferation of increasingly sophisticated metalworking technologies and systems of

monetary exchange. Grasping the period between the Norman Conquest and the

earliest dawn of colonialist and pre-capitalist enterprise is, as a whole, a process of

understanding how the medieval period expresses its world view in literature that is

heavily influenced by classical thought, imagery, and literary form. Further, like the

Anglo-Saxon period, literature of the medieval period that spanned from the early

eleventh-century world of the *Roland* poet to the early fourteenth-century world of

Dante features a blending of classical literary motifs with native literary and social

traditions, such that medieval literature as a whole and specifically medieval European

epic literature is influenced by epic motifs of the ancients as much as by contemporary

economic realities. The epics of the medieval period, as well as other dominant literary

genres, were also influenced heavily by a growing commercial culture which helped to

reshape ideas fundamental to the epic form into motifs that accommodated increasingly

complex economic and political systems.

The *Song of Roland*, the principal focus of chapter 6, shows in its rich and

purposeful deployment of grandiose chivalric images the incursion of a nascent

commercial ethos which seems to corrupt the chivalric ideals of duty and faith. This

pro-crusading Frankish epic simultaneously valorizes the ideals of Christian knighthood

and acknowledges in unflattering terms the slowly developing capitalist impulses which

sprung out of the commercial climate of northern Italy and encroached upon the

chivalric class' vision of itself. It is best described as an articulation of the medieval

crusading ideology but also reveals the encroachment of commercial ideals upon a

chivalric hegemony. This double purpose captures the poet's conflicted views between

his superficial expression of crusading ideology and his subtler focus on the humanist

dimensions of the characters, their conflicts, and the encroachment of bourgeois values

into their chivalric world. The period of the late-eleventh to mid-twelfth centuries, the

range of dates assigned to the *Song of Roland,* is of significance in any effort to

consider the poem's epic themes in the context of the economic realities of its world.

As long as the knight served his lord and shared his wealth, he occupied a

position of relative security. In the *Song of Roland*, therefore, the poet's anti-bourgeois

anxieties are most visibly on display when he focuses particularly on the "works" of the

artisan class—in his descriptions of the images of metals, weapons, and armor—which

themselves delineate the older chivalric order. The *Roland* poet's greatest oversight is

in his condemnation of the interactions of the early commercial climate of eleventh-

century France and its attempt to find lasting value in this means of economic

interaction. The arms and armor of the *Song of Roland* are the commercial signifiers of

the chivalric class; in Roland's gratuitous destruction of pagan armor (and the warriors

therein encased), we see his rejection of the markers of worldly glory and the ascendancy of Roland's Christ-like stature. Within this pro-chivalric hegemony, the sword serves as the fittist symbol of institutional power.[1]

In Chapter 7, I consider the roughly two hundred years between the composition of the *Song of Roland* and *The The Divine Comedy*, in which the institution of chivalry was growing less relevant in practical terms even as it assumed a greater iconic and mythological importance to the papacy and to the lower-level noble classes. The institution of knighthood assumed a problematic role in the investiture conflicts between pope and emperor, and was easily appropriated into the service of papal authority in the epoch of crusading. Later, as commerce replaced knighthood as the essential controlling force in the lives of people in the later middle ages, chivalric institutions were increasingly recognized as threats to civil order and so became more marginalized from mainstream social interactions.

While the *Roland* poet valorized the sword as the fittest symbol of chivalric virtue, Dante invests the coin with the highest capacity for imperial (re)unification of his divided Italy. Dante saw the complexities of both chivalry and commerce and identified the latter as the root cause. The *Roland* poet unconsciously hints at the

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[1] The use of the sword as a symbol in the political maneuvering between church and crown is one of the hallmarks of the crusading rhetoric. And it is not accidentally chosen, at least not in the milieu of the early eleventh century captured in *Roland*. But the growing use of the sword as a rhetorical trope within the investiture conflicts continued for another two full centuries. Moreover, the sword (and armor) had significant influence as a symbol of spiritual power, authority, and divine mandate, encompassed much of the pro-crusading ideology, and took tangible forms in the creation of the holy orders which facilitated the crusades themselves.

However, the sword was slowly but inevitably replaced by the symbol of coinage, which would come to dictate commercial interactions and inspire the Christianized, neo-Virgilian sensibilities of an exiled Florentine epic poet. Exacerbated by the so-called "silver famines" of the later middle ages and prompted by the expanding range of influence of the merchant culture and mercantile climate of northern Italy, the expansion of gold-based coinage was to continue unabated for several decades. The gold-based florin and its related versions—the ducats, gulden, pennies (or pfennings), and shillings—would dominate both local and national transactions until well into the fifteenth century.

problematic status of chivalry in the very epic which ultimately seeks to affirm

and valorize the institution. Moreover, chivalry is tellingly excluded entirely from

Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, an epic work in which knighthood is demoted and

commerce assumes the role as most prominent and, therefore, most problematic of

social institutions. The *Inferno's* heavy emphasis on commerce is highlighted by the

symbol of the coin, which represented that unifying function served by a healthy

standard of currency in realizing the Italian imperial vision. Much is revealed about

Dante's attitudes toward trade and commerce in the way he represents money, whose

spiritual and linguistic values extend beyond its function as currency.[2] His *Inferno*

marks the continuing evolution in defining transgression less as the failure of warriors'

virtues as the moral failings of the commercial class that undergirds the monied culture

and receives his criticism throughout this underworld sojourn.

Chapter 8 and 9: The Clerk and the Office

If Dante is recognized as the writer of the great spiritual epic, then Chaucer's

Canterbury Tales is the great epic, as well as the great comedy, of late medieval human

experience. In thematic alignment with Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Chacuer's *Canterbury*

Tales has also been described in terms of a "mercantile epic" as patterned, if to a lesser

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[2] Dante saw currency like language; both provided a necessary unifying force to bring together the disparate and often opposed city-states on the Italian peninsula, if not the whole of Western Europe. Moreover, both money and language facilitate the state's development and ensure its prosperity and so have a moral function beyond their obvious service as agents of human exchange and interaction. However, both are prone to be misused and corrupted in the wrong hands—money can bribe, buy power, and interfere with justice while language can seduce, flatter, and deceive. Dante is sensitive to the debasement of both, as he sees them as unifying cultural entities within his own imperial vision. While the redeemed souls in his Paradise have evolved beyond the currency of language, those condemned to his Inferno are obsessed and consumed with the currency of money. Scholar Joan Ferrante argues that "from the beginning of the poem Dante uses financial imagery to describe his own journey and experience as well as the spiritual debts and treasures of the souls he sees" (329). In his underworld, "financial language in Hell is applied to sin and evil" (329) such that "Hell is a great sack which holds the treasure of evil (7.17-18...)" (330). Ultimately, this minor detail from the *Inferno's* thirty-first Canto provides a sense of closure in a transition from chivalric to commercial ethos.

degree, after Boccacio's *Decameron.* Even as "Chaucer's storytellers span the

social ranks and only some are mercantile," as Howard argues, it is clear that

"commerce is (the) semantic field" of the "General Prologue" (Howard 407),

underscoring its connections with the Dantean underworld.[3]

Unlike Dante, however, Chaucer considers the intersections between spirit and

commerce in more pragmatic terms. The commercial orientation among select tellers of

the *Tales* underscores the tension in Chaucer's own mind between his merchant

background and courtly inclinations, his Boethian Christian spirituality, and the

juxtaposed but often contradictory imperatives to prepare for the hereafter while making

a living in this world. Most powerfully influenced by those Florentines from earlier

generations and the Humanist traditions, old and new, that resonated in their works,

Chaucer recreated their concerns according to a new epic form: the salvation epic.

My discussion of *The Canterbury Tales* focuses in particular on the functions

served by two specific tales whose close associations within the larger narrative

framework of the *Tales* have gone hitherto unnoticed. The imagery of "The Knight's

Tale" and "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale," when melded into the overall sequence of

The Canterbury Tales, demonstrate a further structuring principle at work, an imagistic

logic that, after the fashion of epic, is heavily reliant on the imagery and thematic

possibilities of arms, metals, and metallurgy. Further, in light of these features, the

placement of "The Parson's Tale" is deliberate, a design signaled by positioning "The

Knight's Tale" at such distance from "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale." Chaucer ordered

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[3] The matter of coinage provides a tangible link between Dante's world and Chaucer's. The Florin, the international currency which originated in Dante's Florence and came to dominate the financial climate of Western Europe, was known well in the courts of Edward III.

the tales consciously, so as to prepare his pilgrims for "The Parson's Tale" and

their arrival into the New Jerusalem, the symbol of their salvation. In this way,

Canterbury itself becomes a sort of divine destination patterned after the City of God.

This interest—albeit less in metal objects themselves and more in their

alchemical degeneration—is shown at a thematically significant spot later in Chaucer's

salvation narrative. In "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale," alchemical motifs and images

help to reinvent the idealistic structures first presented by the Knight and then

perpetually imitated, debated, parodied, and reinvented by the other pilgrims to forms

suitable for the world. At a late stage in their narrative progress toward salvation, the

Yeoman's alchemical motifs serve to reinvent the narrative progress, suitably

reorienting it toward its final endpoint. To the Canterbury pilgrims, many of whom are

caught in worldly webs of commercial transactions, family entanglements, and spiritual

uncertainties, the message delivered by the Yeoman and the form that it is delivered in

are particularly relevant. And the governing structures of this salvation epic, established

long before in the patterns of "The Knight's Tale," are gradually made worldly in the

stories of life, love, money, and spirit told by the intervening pilgrims.

If *The Canterbury Tales* represent a salvation epic in the age of early

mercantilism, *The Faerie Queene* has come to be read in recent decades, according to

scholars of both old and new historicist critical methods, as an imperial epic in an age of

colonialism.[4] Spenser and Chaucer occupied similar, equally tenuous social positions

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[4] The beginnings of colonialism represent an intermediate step between the salvation epic of Chaucer, a spiritually based epic with heavily commercial undertones, and the creation epic of Milton, a spiritually based epic with surprisingly heavy industrial overtones. The colonialist impulses expressed in *The Faerie Queene* portray the economic necessity and advantageous character of resource exploitation, which was proceeding in the colonial outposts of Ireland where Spenser served the crown. These describe the earliest hint of an approaching industrialism, which would eventually be given fuller treatment in *Paradise Lost*.

as capable servants from humbler origins who labored in the service of the crown. While Chaucer's age saw first a pattern of unprecedented economic growth and later a stultifying climate which restricted that growth, the Irish world inhabited by Spenser via Elizabethan colonial enterprise represented a necessary arena for the new epic of salvation, one defined in more overtly capitalistic terms. Despite a common focus on concerns that can be traced ultimately to contemporary politics and the economy of their respective ages, Spenser, far more so than Chaucer, revisits the epic themes of empire established by Virgil. He likewise demonstrates a habit of Virgilian self-identification and career negotiation, positioning himself as the poetic voice of an imperial entity. As an upwardly mobile servant of the crown who was looking to take advantage of Tudor colonial policies to supplement his own social station, Spenser was himself not without models whose examples in social advancement he could follow.

Across the seven books of *The Faerie Queene*, one sees both the valorization of the colonizing ideology and the realization of the failure of the Tudor colonialist policy, and this changing attitude is reflected most vividly in the poem's epic imagery. These sentiments are likewise expressed in the *View of the Present State of Ireland* which, as will be shown, provides a necessary structural complement to Spenser's epic as well as a more objective statement of his colonialist ideology.[5] To understand both the emergence of this ideology and his growing disaffection with it, one must consider both the historical patterns established in sixteenth-century England, as well as specific

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[5] Following the volatile early months during his tenure in Ireland, Spenser would serve the crown in a variety of increasingly important capacities which collectively involved military command, land acquisition, surveyorship, and later, colonial settlement. These allowed him eventually to develop an intimate emotional, topographical, and imagistic—but above all, problematic--acquaintance with the Irish landscape and its people.

elements in Spenser's life which uniquely positioned him as a commentator on the drastic efforts by the English to colonize its neighbor to the west. Spenser first invested himself fully in this enterprise, but across the seven-book structure of *The Faerie Queene* he grapples with the doubts and tribulations so self-consciously inherent in the ideology of economic and political missionizing in Elizabethan England. In this way, the poet depicted the new road to remodeling the pagan in Christian, Protestant, and capitalist terms and reconfigured colonial ideology as a sort of secular crusading.

In its depiction of epic imagery, particularly in its descriptions of warfare, arms, and battle, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* sheds light on the economics and politics of sixteenth-century English colonialism and, more importantly over the gradual process of its creation, reveals the poet's changing attitude toward this increasingly tenuous project. Across the seven books of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser's growing disillusionment with the English colonial policy is reflected particularly in the different chivalric motifs he uses in Books I-III as opposed to those portrayed in Books IV-VI. "The Mutability Cantos," which conclude the epic, represent the best expression of Spenser's disenchantment with the failed English colonial policy, then breathing its last gasps in the late years of the sixteenth century. In this way, scholars have recently come to regard Spenser's only known political tract, *A View of the Present State of Ireland,* as a document that supplements much of the thematic and imagistic detail of his epic.

Connecting the Epic Line: Recurring Economic and Imagistic Features

In this way, epic literature documents the economic and social lives of developing tribal cultures as much as it does the chivalric ethos, the proto-mercantile dimensions, the colonial ambitions, and the early industrial efforts of more developed

national entities. This pattern of economic and social development is evident in the "epic line" that connects the battle and underworld images in the pre-Christian works of Homer and Virgil, the anonymously composed tribalism depicted in *Beowulf* and chivalric grandeurs of the *Song of Roland,* the proto-commercial travel narratives of Dante's *Inferno* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* the colonial subtext of Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* and the incipient industrial motifs used to depict Hell in Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

Whether represented by the prophetic visions worked by Olympian smiths, in the arms and armor donned by epic heroes, the currencies that both dictate the interactions within emergent mercantile societies and determine their moral standards, or in the weapons of warfare used by celestial rebels, metals constitute the essential imagistic substance of epic. They are drawn from subterranean recesses which shed light on the economic realities of the epic poet's world, and in the line connecting Homer and Milton the conjoined motifs of metals and the underworld depict important stages in a larger pattern of economic and social development in western civilization that proceed in close conjunction with the perpetuation and reinvention of the epic genre.

Chapter 1: Metals, Money, and Militarism: Milton's Ambivalence toward

Early Industrial and Commercial Progress in Paradise Lost

Paradise Lost as Locus of Mercantile Discourse

It has been a tendency in recent years among Miltonists to read *Paradise Lost* in

historicist terms, examining the text in connection with the various political and social

discourses of the poet's day. Such efforts to read Milton's epic as a reflection of

individual political or social conflicts, or changing economic patterns or policies,

contribute to an already rich critical heritage of textual and historical interpretations that

have been established by scholars of previous generations. These earlier studies

typically locate Milton's imagistic sources for his epic exclusively in the various works

of his classical precursors Ovid, Virgil, and Homer, in the scriptural traditions the poet

was also intimately familiar with, or in Christian theological debates or iconographic

traditions. These approaches have been supplemented by efforts to connect the poem to

specific philosophical debates or biographical contexts that have been pieced together

with available evidence. The range of interpretive contexts that have informed readings

of *Paradise Lost* reflects its polyglossic capacity to represent several discourses

simultaneously. Indeed, the relatively recent habit of reading the poet in light of

discursive contexts as supplied by narratives of contemporary exploration, documents

of government policy, geographical texts, and theological commentaries[6] represents the

latest stage in a long-established dialogue between the poem and its critics.

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[6] See, for instance, J. Martin Evans, *Milton's Imperial Epic: Paradise Lost and the Discourse of Colonialism* (Cornell UP, 1996); Robert Thomas Fallon, *Divided Empire: Milton's Political Imagery* (Penn State UP, 1995); and Roger Martin, "The Colonization of Paradise: Milton's Pandemonium and Montezuma's Tenochtitlan," *Comparative Literature Studies* 35.4(1998): 321-55.

Given its ability to represent several debates simultaneously, Milton's epic, particularly in its images of the underworld and of battle, captures stages of the evolution of discourses relating to mining, metalworking, and other forms of resource exploitation to accommodate economic and military needs. These discourses begin in the poem's engagement with the underworld depictions and culminate in its exploration of the class and economic conflicts present in the developing mercantilist economy of seventeenth-century Western Europe, and particularly in the more domestic spheres of Milton's contemporary English society. In representing these discourses within his epic treatment of the conflict between God and Satan, Milton reveals his own ambivalence not only toward the industrial and commercial developments which were progressing in his own time but also toward their environmental and social consequences. In so doing, he expresses reservations about the social hierarchies and wealth-generating enterprises which stood as hallmarks of his mercantile society.

As the fallen angels' fated firearms inevitably fail, they are routed and banished to the underworld, where they resettle its environs and begin their rebellion under subtler, less direct auspices. Establishing their base in the subterranean haunt of Pandemonium, they begin the process of transforming its landscape and exploiting its resources to suit their needs and ambitions. In so doing, they reveal their skills as miners, metalworkers, builders, and artisans. In contrast to the established and eternal architecture of God's celestial city, the fallen angels' efforts to construct Pandemonium are shown to be impractical, gaudy, and misdirected, but nonetheless purposeful and efficient. In casting Satan as a rebel against the "natural" hierarchies of Heaven, Milton portrays him in turns as a military commander, explorer, merchant, miner, and

metalworker. In so doing, the poet hints at a rudimentary knowledge of the debates circulating around the cultures of mining and metalworking. More importantly, he reveals his intuitive knowledge of the necessary economic relationships between mining, metals, and militarism—and the economic transformations that resulted from these continually transforming relationships—in his mercantilist world.

The social conflicts in this mercantilist world were played out in the large scale modifications of landscape, in the evolution of social-class strata, and in the developing consciousness of labor within what were, by the poet's time, already well established vocational cultures. In these conflicts, the privileged orders of the social hierarchy—typically, regalian interest and land-owning nobility—were responding to and often in uneasy cohesion with a newer mercantilist class that was rapidly assimilating into noble networks of power and privilege. These social factions were, likewise, in intermittent periods of conflict and uneasy alignment with an upstart and often itinerant working class. This group, of a much larger proportion, consisted of miners, laborers, and artisans who were, by the fifteenth century, clearly cognizant of their emerging economic power, political autonomy, and social mobility (Clough 38-39; *Cambridge Economic History*, Vol II, 746-56). Clearly, Milton had many available political and social struggles to give voice to his dramatization of the struggle between God and Satan, to Satan's rebellion against celestial authority, and to Satan's tempting of Adam and Eve to rebel. In its adaptation of scriptural conflicts, *Paradise Lost* clearly draws upon the rhetorical self-justifications of the emerging class and economic struggles as played out in the real world spheres of the seventeenth-century Western European economy.

Because of their vital contributions to the ship-building and munitions industries that fueled the mercantilist agenda, the segment of the working population that was most influential and ultimately most socially transformative within this vortex of conflicts were the miners and metalworkers. In conjunction with immediate social and economic changes, their labors managed to facilitate an imaginative transformation that was particularly influential to the images portrayed in the militaristic conflicts and underworld landscapes of *Paradise Lost*. However, the efforts of this population often proceeded in conjunction with the larger merchant and military classes, which simultaneously facilitated the mineral exploitation of the Western European landscape, more forcefully trying to establish their niche within the *regal* systems of power. By creating a demand for the products of mineral exploitation and simultaneously financing the wars of established regal governments, the merchant classes gradually and successfully reoriented the agrarian systems of economy and regal systems of government. Collectively, these insurgent classes found a collective voice in the rebellious pleas of Milton's Satan and his minions, who likewise seek to redefine the power structures of their immediate sphere. In this way, the upstart classes recall Satan's fallen charges which, failing as rebels in the military vein, reinvent their talents as artisans and tradesmen in their frenzied efforts to forge the gaudy palace at Pandemonium.

The figures of the miner and the merchant added a new dimension to Milton's conception of power as organized hierarchically according to the fundamentally Platonic, and later, Christian monastic models. *Paradise Lost* gives a resonant, if ultimately impotent, voice to the challenges that these upstart classes represented to the

regal and ecclesiastical power systems, whose superiority is demonstrated in their exercise of an ethic of assumed merit that is manifested through charity. In contrast, Milton defines the upstart classes of the celestial hierarchy—Satan and his fallen subordinates—according to actions and images borrowed from the classes of merchants, soldiers, metalworkers, and miners. In portraying the efforts of the fallen angles to reform celestial hierarchies to suit their purposes, Milton describes their struggles according to a more proactive (and to him, a more disturbing) ethic of self-justification and self-determinism based on diligent and rational self-interest. It is this ethic that defines his view of those "lower orders" seeking to gain an upper hand in the class struggles of his celestial hierarchy, and he found the imagery of the mining and metalworking trades best suited to represent it.

The most vivid illustration of Milton's eagerness to represent Satan and his upstart followers as reflections of contemporary economic circumstances is his characterization of the fallen angels first as soldiers and later as merchants, miners and builders. It is not accidental that the fallen angels' rebellion, as described in its early stages by Satan himself in Books I and II and by Raphael to Adam in Book V, VI, and VII, is cast in social, political, economic, and military terms appropriate to the upheavals that surrounded Milton in the middle 1600's. For example, Satan's banishment is cast in political and military terms, and is attributed to his "ambitious aim / Against the Throne and Monarchy of God." His angry response is to raise "impious War in Heaven and Battle proud" (I, 41-43) against the "Omnipotent to Arms" (I, 49). Essentially, Satan is a victim of the nepotism of the celestial hierarchy, whose "vain attempt" to assert his merit before the Son represents a doomed challenge to the celestial

power structures of God's Kingdom, which lands him in "Adamantine Chains and Penal Fire" (I, 50).

Beyond the military idioms of coup and banishment used by the narrator to describe Satan's rebellion, Satan's descriptions of himself and his "Host of Rebel Angels" (I, 37-38) also capture the rhetoric of upstart merchants and tradesmen who are essential to, but excluded from, the noble power networks as the group of fallen angels' bespeak their banishment from the celestial city. In short, Satan's ruminations to himself, as well as his exhortations to his cohorts in rebellion, are consistently cast in idioms that show how Milton conceives of his defiance as a personal slight. But his personal slight assumes political, military, and economic dimensions when God privileges the Son within his celestial hierarchy. In his address to his compatriot Beelzebub, Satan reveals that, as "the first Archangel, Great in Power, / In favor and preeminence" (V, 660-61), he is unable to accept God's readjustment of His celestial "Empire" (I, 114), which subordinates Satan's position (I, 111-16). Satan's inability to ask for grace is subsequently noted by God in Book V, where He attributes it to Satan's "envy against the Son of God"; His subsequent rebellion is due to both "Deep malice" and "disdain" (666). Upon beholding Eden from afar in the beginning of Book IV and conscious of his perpetual banishment from it, Satan acknowledges his "Pride and Worse Ambition" (40) as the source of his fallen state.

Later, Satan ruminates on his violation in economic terms, employing an idiom that casts it as a breach of monetary contract, a "debt of endless gratitude, / So burdensome, still paying, still to owe" (IV, 52-53). Having neglected to pay his celestial superiors in the currency of respect and subjection, Satan reinvents the celestial

hierarchy of Heaven in Hell and acknowledges that "myself am Hell" (IV, 75). In

redefining Hell as a state of mind, rather than as the physical environs of that "deep tract

of Hell" (I, 27) now occupied by the fallen angels, Milton connects the underworld with

familiar worldly environments which are cast in the imagery of mining, metalworking,

battle, and mineral technology. In short, Milton comments on Hell as an imaginative

recreation of the workplace environments occupied by those like Satan, whose ethic is

governed by self-determination, rather than by a doctrine of assumed merit. And

Satan's subsequent despair, privately realized in his moments of rumination, results

from his awareness of the uncertain autonomy that those seeking to rise above their

stations must negotiate.

Milton clearly seeks to portray the fallen angels' rebellion as a violation of

divine hierarchy. However, the various idioms the poet uses show how Satan's position

is also comparable to that of a capable, individualistic, and insurgent visionary, whose

stature as an economic, technological, or ideological innovator leads him to question

existing customs and practices and thus into uncharted social waters. Not fully aware of

the extent to which he violates established class and economic orders, the early class of

capitalist stepped outside of conventional protocols and practices to insert himself in a

market niche. Privately acknowledging the futility of the course he has taken to

challenge the potency of the omnipotent, Satan feels a comparable kind of anxiety about

his uncertain place. He turns his thoughts first toward his own "Infinite wrath, and

infinite despair" (IV 74). More importantly, he realizes his obligations toward those

seduced by his ambitions and resolves to mask his despair by putting on a brave face

(IV, 81-85).

Satan assumes a position of authority in the collective challenge to God's celestial hierarchy, and this position is not without its consequences. By heading into the uncharted waters of rebellion, Satan demonstrates an extreme degree of despair that, in milder forms, captures the uncertainties of proto-capitalists seeking to establish their autonomy in a competitive mercantile environment still governed by king and crown. Later, determined to turn God's creation of Adam and Eve, against their Creator Satan resolves to

> excite their minds
>
> With more desire to know, and to reject
>
> Envious commands, invented with design
>
> To keep them low whom Knowledge might exalt
>
> Equal with Gods. (IV, 523-27)

In his desire to alert God's children to the realities of their subordinate position, Satan's hyperbolic ambitions contain an echo of class consciousness albeit on a celestial scale.

Further, as the bard describes how Satan plans to tempt Eve with hints of the autonomous possibilities that might await her, he employs an idiom of class consciousness that underscores Eve's subservience. He explains how Satin plans to appeal to her imaginative impulses, "Assaying by his Devilish art to reach / The Organs of her Fancy, and with them forge / Illusions as he list, Phantasms and Dreams" (IV, 801-04). In so doing, Satan appeals to her "distemper'd, discontented thoughts, / Vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires / Blown up with high conceits ingend'ring pride" (IV 807-10). In short, Satan seeks to recreate in Adam and Eve his own ambitions, which are aligned with those of the vocation-oriented proto-capitalist. This idea is

underscored when Satan is discovered by Ithuial, and his response captures the

chemical and possibly even martial character of his violation of the agrarian Edenic

world (IV, 815-19).

The simile used by Milton here is a purposeful effort to cast Satan's violation of

Edenic perfection as a violation that assumes the form of a conjoined military and

economic exploitation of the agrarian landscape. It serves further to juxtapose the

agrarian rhythms of God's celestial creations with Satan's alchemical, pre-industrial, and

martial violations of the subterranean and later the terrestrial landscapes in his effort to

rebel against divine hierarchies. Even though his doomed independence would earn

him the admiration of the Romantic poets some hundred and thirty-odd years later, his

actions are depicted to represent those of the misguided speculator—the early

capitalist—whose violations of his world's orders are doomed by his inability to "know

his place." Nevertheless, in Milton's condemnations of the pride, ambition, and desire

for autonomy shown by Satan in rebellion against the celestial hierarchies, hints are

visible that connect these theological mandates to the economic and political

circumstances that circumscribe the poet's world.

Precursors to Milton's Epic Vision: The Growth of Industry and the World of Early Capitalism

It is safe to say that any historical period will produce its contrarians,

iconoclasts, rebels, and non-conformists who envision alternative ways of living,

thinking, and doing, and often decrying inherited patterns of belief and practice.

However, in Milton's England, the spirit of rebellion permeated society to its very core,

as individuals of bold resolution challenged established patterns of economic, political,

scientific /technical, and social practice. Moreover, in the crown's awkward attempts to maintain control over the economic, social, and religious lives of its subjects, such individuals had a clearly defined institution to rebel *against*. Against this backdrop, one notes in Satan's rebellion from God several feasible scenarios in which independent-minded people were rebelling against established forms of authority. A rough sketch of the rebellious tenor of late seventeenth-century England locates three general areas where people challenged the oppressive or stultifying belief systems inherited from previous generations, emerged as iconoclasts who represented new ways of thinking, and helped to reinvent the social practices of their world.[7]

Several individuals in a variety of spheres stood at the forefront in this period of innovation, in which old practices which maintained the economy and class structure gave way to new ones which disrupted and remade many of England's most entrenched institutions.[8] In these concerns one would see a new image of Hell, one demonstrating

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[7] The rapid expansion of London created an increased need for labor of all kinds, brought about a decline in the monitoring of worker qualificationsand produced a decline in the general quality of workmanship. Older guilds had trouble maintaining their standards. Further, profit-minded industrial innovators, particularly in the mining and metalworking trades, were not particularly well served by apprenticeship laws, for at their lowest levels these trades required minimal skill levels among workers, such that Nef concludes: "If we include the workers in heavy industries like mining and metallurgy, unapprenticed workpeople almost certainly formed the great majority" (*Industry and Government* 46). Industries developed rapidly as interested and perceptive members of the gentry, like their lower-born commercial-class cohorts, recognized the profits to be made. Despite the crown's efforts to support new industries and to create royally supported industrial monopolies, their effectiveness in challenging private entrepreneurs and in managing industries was fleeting.

[8] In the interaction between merchants and industrialists with the crown, it is important to note that while war might stimulate economic development, greater degrees of economic growth occur in peace time. The early industrialist or merchant often found himself in opposition to the desires of the crown. Moreover, his efforts were oriented toward an exploitation of the natural landscape for material benefit, and in its transformation from a site of agricultural to one of industrial production, a tract of land would come to assume a different form in the artist's imagination. A description of the early English industrialist's most common concerns throughout the country presents an interesting clue to Milton's imaginative habit of connecting the imagery of the underworld with the imagery of early industry. If the early industrialists, as Nef argues, "were eager to invest their savings in collieries, blast furnaces, slitting mills, lead mines, large breweries, sugar refineries, salt-making furnaces, and small factories for the manufacture of sheet glass, gun powder, alum, and soap," (Nef, *Industry and Government* 150), the more imaginative and aesthetically minded segment of the population—the writers, moralists, conservationists, and social commentators--would be quick to recognize the imagistic consequences in the transformation of the landscape in pursuit of profit and in defiance of a "natural" order that, created by God, was in the process of eroding.

an image as a violated landscape in which the rhythms of the natural world are displaced by the profit-minded rigidity of industrial production. Such considerations help underscore the imaginative connection between Milton's Satan and the industrial and economic pioneers of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth Century. With the emergence of these industrial and economic innovators, the inevitable social upheavals that followed also produced new thinkers who, newly conscious of their own economic mobility and social agency, looked to challenge the entrenched landowning classes. In a climate where the notions of service and servitude permeated the middle and lower levels of the social hierarchy, the new class of entrepreneurs and industrialists were both subject to strict scrutiny by the gentry and also able to exact strict codes of obedience from their employers.[9]

In the personalities that defined the various working class movements, one sees a common rebellious spirit that is also embodied in Milton's Satan, even as Milton stops short of sanctioning his celestial rebellion. In his departure from the heavily weighted—and to him, limiting—confines of God's celestial authority, one notes a like strain in Satan as the celestial agitator who, through violent rebellion, seeks to improve his lot. Beyond these conflicts which played out in the political and social arenas, however, one finds innovators who reshaped the technical and commercial spheres of

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[9] In this world, the preeminence of the notion of hierarchy in Milton's imagination is understandable. Brailsford observes that in this world, "Gentlemen carried swords; servants had only their naked hands. On this fundamental difference the class society of seventeenth century England was based" (45).

Milton's world[10] and presented equally substantial challenges to the entrenched

powers of the higher social orders.

Ultimately, one finds in Milton's day evidence that science and technologically

oriented imaginations were envisioning increasingly efficient—and, to the moralist or

philosopher's imagination, horrific—weapons of warfare which simultaneously elevated

the calling of the soldier while arousing further suspicions of the moral commentator.[11]

The Crown, the Industrialist, and the Conservationist: Mining and Metalworking as

an Intersection between Politics and Industry

Just as in *Paradise Lost*, the underworld domains of seventeenth-century

England were one area where the forces of staid authority battled those of rebellious

initiative. Even though the native soils of England have been rich predominantly in

"baser" ores like tin, iron and lead ores, and coal, English princes were generally

unsuccessful in claiming royalties from the mining of these minerals. Mining

entrepreneurs generally supervised small-scale operations and worked to enrich both

themselves and their well funded landed neighbors who invested in their effort. In this

climate, it is clear why Milton portrayed the battles over Heaven and Earth in both

mineral and military terms. The debates over mineral commerce of seventeenth-

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[10] One such individual was the father of Milton himself, a "scrivener" of influence, who represented an early version of the modern banker. His prosperity enabled the poet to live in relative autonomy, free to focus on his poetic pursuits.

[11] A good example is found during the reign of Charles II, when a weapon called the "stinkpot" was in use, which represented the extent to which imaginative efforts were spent on killing machines. The stinkpot was of particular importance in the efforts to defend the newly acquired English fortifications at Tangier. This horrific instrument inflicted a combination of flames, poison gas, and shrapnel on the Moorish enemy and was seen as instrumental in English defenses on the Mediterranean.

century England generate a comparable degree of controversy and anxiety as the

implications of their labors are considered in the public discourse of the day.[12]

Ultimately, active debates raged throughout Milton's life over the

encroachment of industrialism on woodland reserves, the use of coal as an alternative

source, and the environmental and economic consequences of resource use. In his

portrayal of the celestial kingdom and underworld in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's

engagement with these motifs is likewise evident. In his portrayal of a steadfast

defiance against authority, Milton borrowed much from the debate between the early

industrialist and those oriented toward an ethos of conservation if not yet sustainable

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[12] Moreover, various craftsmen, innovators, conservationists, and others represented the important class of transformers of industrial, social, and economic orders in Milton's England. One technical consequence in the growth of iron-working was the need for alternative fuels to support larger refining operations. From the early sixteenth century onwards, one notes a gradually proliferating iron industry in the regions of Sussex and in the Wealden forests to the south of London, one using the indirect process of the blast furnace as opposed to the more fleeting indirect processes used by bloomsmitheries of the medieval period. Such indirect processing operations increased the output of raw iron and used greater amounts of timber as fuel, such that by 1550 the iron industry was prompting outcries against its use of wood reserves while also being recognized as an increasingly essential contributor to the national economic and military strength (Schubert 173-74). It was more greatly monitored by the King's agents, a fact useful to the modern industrial historian.

Overall, between 1540 and 1640 English metallurgy changed from primarily an artisan's endeavor into something more industrial (Nef, *Industry and Government* 83). As long as beauty was among the artisans' primary concerns, demand for metals was relatively light; in the early English "industrial revolution," the use of metals assumed more utilitarian dimensions (83). Further, the rapidly shrinking supply of timber—which was important less for the sake of conservation and more for the sake of timber-based trades and industries (Schubert 217)—also held back the development of English metallurgical industry until coal was found to be a suitable substitute (Nef, *Industry and Government* 83-84).

Even as wooded reserves remained, these were likewise threatened by industrial proliferation (Schubert 220), and, in later decades of the seventeenth century, by the effects of coal-based industrial operations, which exacted a greater toll on the immediate environs of urban areas. Such a climate demanded innovations in resource management and land use policy, ones that reflected if not a mandate for the undisturbed preservation of the landscape, at least a developing consciousness towards the judicious use of resources to maintain an economic balance between iron-working and other industries that, like brewing, required timber as fuel or shipbuilding, which used it as raw material. Moreover, the controversy over timber use called attention to the economic interrelations between the growing iron industry and other economic developments, particularly the nascent coal industry that was emerging in England's northern reaches. In England, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were a much more fertile period than in France for the introduction of such labor-saving machinery, as furnaces with strong blasts and powerful engines for raising water from mines. More new branches of heavy industry were started. The people had to adjust themselves to the substitution of smoky coal fuel for wood and charcoal in their hearths and kitchen stoves, as well as in many of the kilns, forges, and furnaces of artisans and manufacturers. The new fuel stained their linen and increased their laundry bills. Many thought it gave them colds in the head and still more dreadful diseases. But they could not prevent coal from creeping into their lives, along with the technical improvements of the age, in spite of the protests of their wives, who clamored for country houses to take them out of reach of the stinking seacoal smell (*Industry and Government* 103).

use of natural resources. The poet lived in an age where developing industries

created a climate in defiance of monarchial authority and regulation, and this discursive

environment seems to have figured significantly, if unconsciously, in his portrayal of

Satan. Ultimately, Satan's character corresponds to the defiant determination of the

early industrialist to innovate in defiance of royal regulations and established traditions,

laws, and beliefs concerning industrial practices.

Entrepreneurial, Environmental and Industrial Motifs in Paradise Lost

Satan's unwillingness to accept his place within the orders of the celestial

hierarchy is cast in the idioms of a military rebellion, an economic interaction, an

anxious questioning of his ambitions, and later, a crass exploitation of Edenic resources

in an early indictment of industrialism. The images associated with Satan's rebellion,

his subsequent resettlement of his underworld domain, and his violation of Eden are

counterbalanced by the pastoral vision that Milton, like many of his literary

contemporaries, found more amenable to their idea of God's celestial spheres. Though

their fall, as prompted by Satan, is predetermined by God's celestial design, the pathway

to ascendancy for the progeny of Adam and Eve is determined by their willingness to be

"lowly wise" in tending to the pastoral, agrarian, non-commercial confines of Eden.

Significantly, Raphael's account to Adam of Satan's rebellion follows his description of

the order of the celestial hierarchy, an order that assigns greater value to the spirit world

than the material world (V, 470-79). At the center of Satan's violation of this order is

his acknowledgment of his ambitions to subvert it and to assert his own preeminence

within it. His rebellion is cast in turn in the vocabulary of a merchant speculator and

later as a military revolt when his rejection of God intensifies.

Banished to the underworld, Satan shows his skills first as a negotiator who counsels the fallen angels as they decide their best course for vengeance. Following this demonstration of his rhetorical skills, he then leads his charges in the construction of the palace at Pandemonium, an effort which demonstrates both his knowledge of mineral processes and his ability to organize the labor roles that are needed to do the work. Satan's ethic is guided not only by the ambitions that he laments from Book V, but also by the proactive initiative he demonstrates in his various roles as military insurgent, organizer of labor, and specialist in the acquisition of building materials. In real-world terms, he is the embodiment of that unsettling figure in early capitalism, the competent and charismatic jack-of-all-trades whose skills would be usefully co-opted by his social and political superiors because they were highly profitable and would be dangerous and threatening to ignore. More importantly, Satan represents a challenge to the ethics of privilege, merit, and grace that define God's celesital hierarchy.

Milton characterizes Satan's rejection of God's doctrine of celestial primogeniture as misguided ambition and doomed initiative and a sort of middle-class violation of the boundaries of a more noble class. God's loyal charges also see him this way. In Raphael's account to Adam of Satan's rebellion in Book V, the rebel angel is shown to reject the assumed merit of the Son, instead offering a vision of fuller liberation to his assembled followers (V, 787-94). In this way, Milton depicts in Satan those same qualities that would be needed to achieve both personal liberation and, more directly, financial success in the early capitalist climate of the poet's mercantilist world. Indeed, Satan's subsequent argument assumes the tone of an anti-feudal political tract,

one that privileges the idea of personal merit above social rank. Embedded within

it is a plea for lassiez-faire economic interaction, as determined by the merit, reason,

and assumed ethos of its practitioners (V, 795-802).[13]

The most lucid clash of values between the angels of the underworld and

celestial spheres is evident in Satan's subsequent exchange with the angel Abdiel, that

celestial "company man" (V, 810-48). It is not surprising that Abdiel's arguments are to

be read as more credible than Satan's which are egregious in the excess of ambition they

demonstrate. Though the sentiments of Satan's rebellion represent a credible

questioning of the nature of "natural orders," they are presented to enable the poet to

escape a direct involvement with the class struggles of his day and age. Instead of

presenting a credible and reasonable challenge to God's divine kingdom, the fallen

angels' rebellion must inevitably be doomed by its leader's uncompromising nature.

Nevertheless, Milton's epic is fully engaged with questions focused on the

nature of hierarchical or, in a more worldly sense, political tyranny and with the

questions of meritocracy that justify rebellion. In following the classical and Christian

thinkers whose traditions of *contemptus mundi* he inherited, the poet's temperament and

background would make him critical of, rather than sympathetic to, the various real-

world political conflicts and disruptions of his world. It is perhaps most accurate to say

that Milton imaginatively equated Satan's unwilling subjection to divine rule with the

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[13] It is tempting to invoke the name of Marx to discuss the social, political, and economic dimensions of the arguments Satan uses to justify both his rebellion against the celestial hierarchy and his position according to his own merits. And interestingly, as his discourses on systems of church government and regal authority reveal, Milton himself was likewise amenable to the notion of a hierarchical authority as determined ultimately by demonstrated merits. However, Marxist readings of *Paradise Lost* are ultimately anachronistic. Had Milton any underlying proto-Marxist sensibilities, they would surely have led to what was for him the inconceivable position of portraying Satan's rebellion sympathetically, rather than as a violation of God's natural hierarchies.

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tyrannical characteristics in the various political and social institutions in his own world.[14]

Clearly, given his proto-libertarian sensibilities, Milton had much to be suspicious about in the world around him, and, in imagining conflicts between an institutional presence that forcefully tyrannizes the natural and reasonable expression of an individual's identity, *Paradise Lost* provided the means to situate the unsettled affairs of the turbulent mercantilist climate of his day with the abstractions of God and scripture. His sensitivity toward the corruption and disharmony in secular and ecclesiastical realms found expression in his epic. Ultimately, in *Paradise Lost's* celestial conflicts, Milton expresses his anxiety toward the prospects for social reorganization that mercantilist policies suggest. In so doing, he implies an awareness of the developing climate of social unrest that some two centuries later would facilitate the emergence of Marxist doctrines.

In light of their contributions to mercantilism and to the idea of the emerging concept of the nation state, the mining and metalworking industries afforded Milton an especially productive basis for his depiction of the conflicts between institutional powers and those subjected to them. Further, he intuitively saw how this struggle for power creates tensions within a spectrum of social classes, and this awareness is expressed most fully in *Paradise Lost*. Milton's portrayal of Satan's rebellion against the "Tyranny of Heav'n" (I, 124) and "Man's First Disobedience" (I, 1) offered a useful

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[14] For example, one of these institutions was the Catholic faith, whose contentious history he had painstakingly researched. Another was the Anglican Church hierarchy, which he assailed in his tract *The Reason for Church Government Urged against Prelaty*. A third was the permanent institution of marriage, which he contended with in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*. Further, Milton was suspicious of royalty, whose power was usurped by the upstart Cromwell and who, in turn, brought forth his own reign of tyranny upon his English "subjects."

venue for his examination of how the established orders perpetuated their social

and political authority, if not tyranny, over the increasingly mobile laboring classes who

sought to challenge it by redefining long held notions of merit, profit, value, and wage

structure.

This vision is articulated from their initial appearance in the poem, where the

fallen angels are defined as much by their military organization as by the subterranean

space they newly inhabit. The epic's consistent association of mining, metalworking,

and militarism clearly marks the fallen angels' connection to the upstart orders whose

labors helped to define the mercantilist economy of Milton's day. In the initial

description, martial and metallurgical images dominate: having "Rais'd impious War in

Heav'n and Battle proud / with vain attempt" (I, 42-43) in defiance against "th'

Omnipotent to Arms" (49), they are "Hurl'd headlong flaming...with hideous ruin and

combustion down /To bottomless perdition, there to dwell in Adamintine Chains and

Penal Fire" (I, 45-48). The vanquished army of rebel angels finds itself in a post-

apocalyptic (and possibly, post-industrial) wasteland, a "dismal Situation waste and

wild, / A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round /As one great Furnace flam'd yet from

those flames /No light, but rather Darkness visible" (I, 60-64). In these toxic environs,

"torture without end / Still urges, and a fiery Deluge, fed /With ever-burning Sulfur

unconsum'd" (I, 67-69). The fiery, smoky, and toxic qualities of this place of

banishment is distinguished from the bucolic and sonorous character of the celestial

city, which is described in Book III, and which is characterized by its "ambrosial

fragrance" (III, 135), its "blest voices, uttering joy" (III, 346), and its "river of Bliss,"

which "through the midst of Heav'n / Rolls o'er *Elysian* Flow'rs her Amber stream" (III,

358-59). The juxtaposition of these realms of perfection and perdition is notable

not only as an imagistic contrast between Heaven and Hell but serves less directly to

distinguish between a world of agrarian rhythms and the military /industrial disruptions

of them. While Milton's description of these juxtaposed environs borrows from the

biblical and classical references that he was intimately familiar with, it also subtly

captures his anxiety about the developing industrial presence in his world that was

facilitated by mercantilist policies and practices.

Paradise Lost *as locus of Christian Humanist Tradition*

Milton's vision of Hell combines the basic fire and brimstone images of

scripture with Ovidian images of cosmic disruption. The connection of the underworld

motifs in *Paradise Lost* Books I, II, and IV, as well as the celestial battle imagery of

Books V-VII to related sections of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* have been painstakingly

noted and recorded in footnotes in the Merritt Hughes edition of Milton's collected

works (216-7, 233, 283, 289, 308, 336, 353), an editorial project that also painstakingly

notes the poem's allusions to the works of Plato, Virgil, Horace, Homer, and many other

components of the poet's educational background.[15] In a conventionally Christian

sense, Milton's vision of the underworld is derived from New Testament imagery of fire

and brimstone. In Chapter XXXIII of *De Doctrina Christiana,* for example, he

provides an inventory of these imagistic sources, citing three books in particular: Luke

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[15] In his study *Milton and Ovid,* Richard DuRocher observes that as Milton matured, he "went beyond close faithful imitations of Ovid's verses as his academic traning encouraged, to wide-ranging critical transformation of Ovidian material as his poetic genius directed him" (10). This familiarity has critical implications for *Paradise Lost*; later in his study, DuRocher explains how "in reaching out for the *Metamorphoses* in *Paradise Lost,* Milton exposes his blindness, isolation, and possibly contaminated humanistic learning, but he stands to recover the vision, power, and wonder of the fables by which Ovid transformed continues to live....Milton's dialogue with Ovid in *Paradise Lost* is part of a larger dialogue that extends throughout Milton's career" (37). DuRocher's study depicts the ongoing project of Milton scholars to explore the engagement of Ovidian motifs with Milton's works.

(xvi, 23, 26), Matthew (v, 22; x, 28; viii, 12; xxii, 13; xxv, 30; and xiii, 42), and

Revelation (ix, 1; xx, 15; xxi, 8; xxii, 14-15). The imagery from these sources is visible

in *Paradise Lost's* Books I and II and combines all of the customary elements that

connect this biblical vision of Hell to its classical equivalents: furnaces, lakes of fire,

endless voids, and eternal darkness. Further, Milton cites Chrystostomos and Luther as

further contributors to his vision of Hell, noting that its subterranean character is largely

a figurative construct, "for...the place of the damned is the same as that prepared for the

devil and his angels, Matt.xxv.41. In punishment of their postasy, which occurred

before the fall of man, it does not seem probable that Hell should have been prepared

within the limits of this world, in the bowels of the earth, on which the curse had not yet

been passed" (374-75). Ultimately, Milton conflates biblical images of the underworld,

particularly as envisioned in the New Testament, and Ovid's belief in the transformative

character of the landscape in response to universal upheavals. In so doing, he invests

the celestial battles of *Paradise Lost* with a significance that combines epic

transformations with the significance of Judgment Day.

The Rhetoric of Self-Justification in the Technical Literature of Mining

To focus exclusively on these imagistic connections between Milton, scripture,

and the classics, however, is to ignore the intense connections between images of

mining, metalworking, and militarism that Milton clearly understood and appropriated

from contemporary discourse to his epic vision. Thus, to foreground the poet's clear

embrace of Ovidian, epic, and biblical traditions is to diminish the poem's intense

discursive connections to the economic, social, and poitical debates of his time. One

must also acknowledge the intensity of the mercantilist discourse that shaped Milton's

world. These not only accounted for his imagistic transformation of his classical precursors to accommodate the mercantilist conflicts of his day, but also informed his vision of the powerful relationship between the developing institutions of military and industry that are recognizable hallmarks of his time. By combining in the imagery of *Paradise Lost* the imagery of the ancients with the mercantilist arguments of his day, Milton takes a step toward "industrializing" the various imagistic traditions of underworld imagery that he inherited from his precursors.

Moreover, to read Milton's vision of the underworld exclusively as an imagistic inheritance from classical and biblical literary traditions is to overlook the range of both scientific and technical developments of the two hundred years previous to the composition of his epic. Indeed, the extraordinarily volatile social and political conditions that framed his world also shaped his vision of the epic's underworld. In the two centuries that precede the writing of *Paradise Lost*, one finds an active and often turbulent climate of social upheaval that is complemented by an equally transformative period of technological innovation and industrial practice, an atmosphere likely to prompt the imagination of artists and writers alike.

The transitional character of the sixteenth-century imagination is also shown in the emergence of a new kind of literature, one oriented toward technical interests and concerns. Among sixteenth-century scientific writers, Vanoccio Biringuccio[16],

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[16] Biringuccio's *Pyrotechnica* was published in Venice in 1540. It was the first major treatise on practical mineral technology since the *Bergbuchlein* (1505) and the *Probierbuchlein* (1510), two multiauthored German mining manuals. Its influence was significant enough to merit partial translations into English, first in 1555 and again in 1560, as the need for practical guides to the operation of smelting operations rapidly increased.

Biringuccio's personality is resonant throughout this early practical guide to the construction of smelting facilities, to bell-founding, to munitions manufacture, and to the working qualities of particular metals and minerals. In the introduction, the author exhorts readers to see the moral superiority in mining for one's fortune as opposed to seeking it through warfare or commerce (23). Later in the introduction the author reveals his expansive geographical

Georgius Agricola, and Lazarus Erker were standardizing and facilitating the

proliferation of mining and metalworking knowledge and practices and in turn

influencing both military and commercial practices in an early mercantilist economic

climate. Collectively, these writers embody the discourses that would ultimately

culminate in the self-justifying, pro-merchant rhetoric and stand as one of the popular

discursive hallmarks of Milton's day and age.

Biringuccio's *Pyrotechnica* (1540) is comparable, both structurally and

thematically, to Agricola's *De Re Metallica* (1556), the other notable sixteenth-century

technical handbook[17] The appearance of both works within less than two decades of

one another marks the beginning of the separation of the mineral arts from the realms of

alchemy, charlatanism, and superstition associated with the medieval sciences. Instead,

the works mark the emergence of the metallurgical arts as a system of generating wealth

that is connected with national economic, military, and religious interests. In

responding, as both authors do, to the objections of the ancients toward the related skills

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knowledge (28-29), his familiarity with classical and clerical learning (32-36), and, most importantly, his uneasiness with the idea of working for one's fortune in a climate that still privileged notions of inherited wealth and assumed social merit (36-44). Within the developing mercantilist economy of sixteenth-century Western Europe, this reluctance to embrace the inherent virtues in profit-seeking stands as one of the hallmarks of this early generation of technical writers.

[17] Not only does Agricola's introduction likewise seek to provide a moral justification for the skill it details. Also the two works demonstrate a structural similarity in which efforts to establish the moral legitimacy of the mineral arts frame detailed descriptions on the specific skills needed in profitable mining and metalworking operations. Composed in the Bohemian mining village of Joachimstal where Agricola ministered and attended to the medical needs of the established mining population there, the *De Re Metallica* was published in 1556. It likewise reveals its author's intimate awareness of the vocational culture he seeks to propagate and mentions his having read Biringuccio's *Pyrotechnica* in the preface (xxvii). However, Agricola responds to the objections raised against mining and metalworking processes more aggressively than does Biringuccio, and he coments extensively upon the opinions expressed toward the underworld by such authors as Ovid, Diogenes, Juvenal, Pliny, and Horace (6-11). Noting the objections raised by these pagan writers, Agricola then seeks to validate mining's relationship to Christianity: the creator provided minerals for human use (12), and the metalworker, by fashioning them into beautiful and sophisticated objects, pays tribute to His divine glory. In so doing, Agricola argues, metals lead to the improving of human virtues, and enable human craftsmen to bring out the innate perfection of God's creation. Further, they enhance the skills of various human craftsmen, including physicians, architects, artisans, and merchants, who, in turn, pay tribute to His works more fully.

of mining and metalworking, they signal their evolution into legitimate trades. The works of Agricola and Biringuccio straddle the line between philosophy and technical instruction. Collectively, these works reveal how the mineral arts were transforming from the realm of crafts and skills as practiced by individual artisans using traditions inherited from the classics into full-fledged concerns that are engaged with the early industrial processes of militarism and mass production. Practitioners of the instructions provided by the two technical authors consciously calculated how to enhance material wealth in the early dawn of the industrial age.

In his imagistic depictions of Satan and his minions as well as in his contrasting these with the celestial orders of Heaven, Milton seems to present a subtle echo of the reservations toward mining and metalworking, and toward industrialism generally, that Biringuccio had sought, at least in part, to mollify and even to dispel some hundred years before. It is the more probable scenario that he developed these suspicions not by direct study of early industrial tracts, but through continued prompting by the Edenic verses of scripture and the pastoral lines of Ovidian and Virgilian verse. However, Milton also connects the upstart rebels to a social class whose livelihood, if not their prosperity, depended on digging ores, building roads, clearing forests, melding metals, building structures, managing laborers, soldiers, or other groups of charges, facilitating innovations in industrial process, and generally altering the landscape in drastically new ways as they transform the resources of the natural world into the raw materials for war and industry. In fact, by portraying Satan and his followers as soldiers (Books I, II, and VI), miners (I, II and VI), builders (I), and makers of munitions (II and VI), Milton

posits, whether intuitively or consciously, his awareness of the ancient economic interdependence of metalworking and militarism.

Such awareness is shown in Book I when Satan's minions resolve to remain in Hell and rebel against Heaven's authority from their subterranean locus. They appear as "a horrid Front / Of dreadful length and dazzling Arms, in guise of / Warriors old with order'd Spear and Shield" (563-65). Milton's condemnation of the modification of the landscape for economic and military imperatives is, however, more overtly expressed in Belzebeeb's contribution to the counsel held by the routed rebels. Belzebeeb exhorts his charges to wage war on Heaven and God, so that

> we may so suffice his vengeful ire,
>
> Or do him mightier service as his thralls
>
> By right of War, what'er his business be
>
> Here in the heart of Hell to work in Fire,
>
> Or do his Errands in the gloomy Deep (I, 148-52)

Reflecting the angry hopelessness of eternal banishment, the lines reveal an attitude akin to working class resentment that is directed toward celestial superiors. Further, Satan's plan reveals Milton's certain familiarity as well as common alignment with certain biases expressed in the pastoral visions of the classics, particularly Ovid and Virgil. Also hinted at in these lines is a possible familiarity with the attitudes of distaste expressed by Pliny and other classical writers, who viewed mining, metalworking, and most other large-scale industry with suspicion. Given the breadth of his learning as well as the relatively secluded quality of his life, Milton's attitude of anti-industrialism seems to have emerged primarily from his expansive reading of the classics, which in

turn served as the impetus for his rejection of the pro-industrial viewpoints like those expressed in Biringuccio's and Agricola's defenses of the mineral arts.

Because the chosen images that enabled Milton to depict his celestial rebellion include those depicting industry, wholesale modification of the landscape, and large-scale economic development, the poet presents Satan's rebellion not merely as a cosmic disruption of first the celestial and later the Edenic landscapes that idealize the natural world. Instead, Satan's rebellion is highlighted (and is cast as all the more *unnatural*) because he is willing to exploit the terrestrial mineral resources to facilitate his attacks on God's celestial kingdom. In Book V, for example, Raphael explains to a prelapsarian Adam how Satan plots his continuing rebellion even in the unnaturally manipulated celestial spheres, from

> his Royal seat
>
> High on a Hill, far blazing, as a Mount
>
> Rais'd on a Mount, with Pyramids and Tow'rs
>
> From Diamond Quarries hewn, and Rocks of Gold,
>
> The Palace of great Lucifer" (V, 756-60).

Later, after a grueling first day of battle that has dampened their ardor, Satan's charges are buoyed up by his knowledge of what lies beneath "This continent of spacious Heav'n, adorn'd / With Plant, Fruit, Flow'r, Ambrosial, Gems, and Gold" (VI, 474-75). In showing Satan's mastery over what lies "Deep under ground, materials dark and crude, / Of spirituous and fiery spume" (VI, 478-79), Milton provides what might be a subtle allusion to the frenzied pace of coal mining in his own land's rural environs. Satan subsequently declares the use and value of these underground treasures as

munitions (VI, 482-90). Satan's charges quickly get to work, gutting the landscape in a frenzied effort to grab its mineral riches in a description that again hints at the wholesale coal mining, if not munitions manufacture, that was scarring the British landscape as Milton composed his epic (VI, 509-14).

All told, Milton was clearly uneasy with what he saw as the interconnected forces of technological progress, increasing militarism, and wholesale alteration of landscapes that in the England of his day. He equates this destruction of the celestial landscape of Heaven with the destruction of the terrestrial landscape of England for industrial purposes, describing his Heaven in worldly terms, as an environment with "Part hidd'n veins digg'd up (nor hath this Earth / Entrails unlike) of Mineral and Stone" (VI, 516-17), which Satan's subordinates use "to found thir Engines and thir Balls / Of missive ruin" (518-19). By highlighting how celestial resources are accommodating to Satan's martial needs, Milton underscores his sense of how both military threats and environmental damages were made tangible by a continuing proliferation of metalworking technologies. It is also possible that, with his waning eyesight in the 1650's, he saw the early industrial skyline transformed, as if poised for battle, by the newly established munitions plants burning wood from the Wealden forests south of London and imported Newcastle coal as their principal fuels.

Nevertheless, the presence of mercantilist arguments in the celestial struggles depicted in *Paradise Lost* signals the poem's connection not only to Milton's artistic and technological precursors but to the volatile and turbulent social climate of his day and

age.[18] Clearly, Satan's rhetoric in this passage captures the economic idioms that underlie the colonialist imperatives of mercantilism. However, to focus exclusively on the colonialist dimensions of *Paradise Lost* is to overlook the poem's commentary on the more immediate developments in the domestic theaters of Western Europe itself and to particular commercial, social, and even vocational developments in Milton's England. In the climate of aggressive pamphleteering that Milton wrote in, certain topics— beyond those spiritual, philosophical, and political debates that he himself contributed to—saw frequent treatment. Likewise, in its depiction of the celestial struggles between Satan and God, Milton's poem engages with the collective idioms expressed in this discursive culture of discontent, which is connected in turn to the dynamics of social transformation, increasing militarism, and the modification of the landscape as prompted by a proliferating industrial presence.

However, more basic than the economic potential of the subterranean frontier that Satan is banished to is the fact of its simple otherness. The Miltonic underworld is presented as a blending of significant classical, biblical, Mediterranean, Britannic, and European sites, and it implies Milton's awareness of contemporary trade networks as

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[18] Historicist scholars have noted this connection. For instance, J. Martin Evans, who connects the poem to the settlement of the North American continent, has detailed the connection of Milton's epic to the colonialist agendas of the seventeenth-century Western Europen economy. He observes that the poem "interacts continuously not with any dominant set of assumptions or principles, but with an agglomeration of deeply ambivalent cultural responses to the colonization of the New World" (8). In other words, Evans implies that Satan's banishment from Heaven and his attempt to establish an imperfect replication of the celestial hierarchy in Hell is the discourse of Milton's poem, as well as an articulation of the colonialist agenda. It is captured principally in Satan's observation in Book I that

> To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
> Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav'n.
> But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
> The associates and copartners of our loss
> Lie thus astonisht on th' oblivious Pool,
> And call them not to share with us their part
> In this unhappy Mansion. (262-68)

much as it reveals his knowledge of other mythical, historical, and geographical peculiarities. Throughout Book I, the environs of Hell are consistently described as sites of pagan significance that are calculated to prompt moral associations for his readers. For example, when Satan wakes to find himself banished to the "Land that ever burn'd / With solid, as the Lake with liquid fire" (I, 228-29), his environs are described in the mythical idioms of the classics (I, 232-36). Showing Satan's desire to "make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (I, 255) in this serpentine haunt, the bard continues to outline the dimensions and features of this landscape by describing it via analogy.

As Satan begins to inspect his environs in more detail, his arms recall those described in Homeric epic. His shield is striking in its form of "Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round" (I, 285). It recalls the moon, "whose Orb / Through Optic Glass the *Tuscan* Artist views" from "*Fesole*" or "*Valdarno*" (I, 287-90). His great spear is "to equal which the tallest Pine Hewn on *Norwegan* hills, to be the Mast / Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand" (I, 292-94). This brief reference to Satan in his full war gear is deliberate and suggestive, for Milton not only echoes the descriptions of Homeric weaponry but also defines Hell's landscape in terms familiar to the expansionist practices and exploitation of resources that are hallmarks of European mercantilism. Further, littering the landscape are "His Legions, angel Forms," who, freshly routed, "lay intrans't" (I, 301) and are "Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks in / *Vallombrosa*, where th' *Etrurian* shades / High overreach't imbow'r" (I, 302-04). Combining the image of Satan's effort "to descry new lands" (I, 290) with allusions to forests, ship masts, optic glasses, etc. underscores the connection between

the settlement of Hell and the imperialistic exploitation of foreign landscapes.

Moreover, subsequent references to events in the Old Testament explain the ultimate

destiny of the fallen angels of Book I, as they later take up among "the Sons of *Eve*" (I,

364), and through "falsities and lies" (I,367) they manage to corrupt "the greatest part /

Of Mankind," forsaking "God thir Creator" (I, 367-69) through worship of "the Image

of a Brute, adorn'd / With gay Religions full of Pomp and Gold, / And Devels to adore

for Dieties" (I, 369-72). In later epochs the fallen angels are connected with the Old

Testament stories of "Idols through the Heathen World" (I, 375).

But by explaining the routed angels' subterranean environs in terms of Old

Testament references as well as through references to European and Mediterranean

geographical topography, Milton captures the character of the environment the routed

angels now inhabit in terms that reiterate the themes of migration, resettlement, and,

most importantly, apocalypse. The awakening demons are compared to "a pitchy cloud

of / *Locusts*" (I, 340-41) that "darken'd all the Land of *Nile*" (I, 343) as well as to "A

multitude, which like the populous North / Pour'd never from her frozen loins, to pass /

Rhene or the *Danaw*, when her barbarous Sons / Came like a Deluge on the South, and

spread / Beneath *Gibraltar* to the *Lybian* sands" (I, 351-55). Later, Satan's minions are

again connected to Old Testament paganism, this time to the altar-worshipping kings.

These include "*Moloch*, horrid King besmear'd with blood" (I, 392), who "the *Ammonite*

/ Worshipt in *Rabba* and her wat'ry Plain, / In *Argob* and in *Basan* to the stream / Of

utmost *Arnon*" (I, 396-99), and Solomon, who "led by fraud to build / His Temple right

against the Temple of God" (I, 401-02), and who "made his Grove / The pleasant Valle

of *Hinnom, Tophet* thence, /And black *Gehenna* call'd, the Type of Hell" (I, 403-

05).[19] Collectively, the combined images of smoke, flame, and metallic wealth are

expressed as the fallen angels begin to regroup for their resettlement effort, and these

details imply Milton's awareness of the mercantilist practices of his immediate world as

much as they reveal his intimacy with scriptural authority.

The resettlement of Hell is also analogous to subsequent resettlements across

the European and Mediterranean worlds. In developing the connection between

colonial resettlement and the colonization of Hell, Milton makes reference to three

particularly mobile—and for their times, expansion-minded—cultures: the Egyptians,

Greeks, and Celtics. His allusions to the Egyptian deities of "*Osirus, Isis, Orus*, and thir

Train" (I, 478) precede his allusion to "Th' *Ionian* Gods" (509) of Greek culture and

their pantheon of Olympic figures, including *Titan* (510), *Saturn* (512), *Jove* (512),

Rhea (513), and others (I, 514-19).

These, of course, are mentioned along side those "who with *Saturn* / Fled over

Adria to th' *Hesperian* / Fields, and o'er the *Celtic* roam'd the utmost Isles (I, 519-21).

In presenting this analogy, Milton portrays Satan's minions not merely as the

progenitors of sin, but rather as the pagan embodiments of the fallen angels who

populate—and more importantly, *settle*--the mythical Mediterranean and European

landscapes. They proliferate the various follies springing from their leader Satan,

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[19] Subsequent passages recall further reference points in Old Testament geography, including "*Moab*" (406), "*Israel*" (413), "th' *Asphaltic* Pool," (or Dead Sea) (411), "old *Euphrates*" (420), "*Egypt*" (421), "*Sion*" (442), "*Thammuz*" (446), "*Lebanon*" (447), "*Judah*" (457), "*Palestine*," "*Gath*," and "*Ascalon*" (465), "*Accaron*" and "*Gaza*" (466), and "*Damascus*" (467). These sites are known mostly for altar-worshipping mishaps and other violations of the Old Testament covenants, and help connect the celestial rebellion depicted in Book I with subsequent violations of God's mandate in the epochs that follow. Of course, one specific violation portrayed throughout the Old Testament is the worship of golden idols, and Milton's allusion to the golden calfs in Oreb (Exodus, xxxii, 4)(I, 482-84) helps to underscore the connections between precious metals and Old Testament geography.

including pride, envy, and most importantly, the avaricious pursuit of material riches. In short, in this early description of Satan's routed forces in the process of regrouping, Milton conflates basic human sins and flaws with the mercantilist and imperialist agendas of expansion.

While this conflation of colonization with the basic flaws of human nature serves to connect the Miltonic underworld to mercantilist discourses, the passage that follows provides a greater degree of both martial and mineral detail as well as more immediate geographical references to underscore this connection more fully. Speaking "With high words, that bore / Semblance of *worth*, not substance" (I, 528-29—my italics), Satan demonstrates the rhetorical flourish of a seasoned military leader who, in marshaling his troops together, defines their collective purpose. Moreover, he is no stranger to military pomp and ceremony, which is shown as he issues "straight commands that at the warlike sound / Of Trumpets loud and Clarions be uprear'd / His mighty Standard" (I, 531-33). In response, his lieutenant *Azazel*

> Forthwith from the glittering Staff unfurl'd
>
> Th' Imperial Ensign, which full high advanct
>
> Shone like a Meteor streaming to the Wind
>
> With Gems and Golden luster rich imblaz'd
>
> Seraphic arms and Trophies: all the while
>
> Sonorous metal blowing Martial sounds. (I, 535-40)

In its details of gold and gems, and allusions to "Seraphic arms and Trophies," this flag serves fundamentally as a signal of Satan's ceremonial preeminence. More importantly,

however, it symbolically captures the implied colonialist agendas of the routed

and resettling army under Satan's charge.

With his troops thus assembled, Satan continues the overblown ceremony and

his charges reveal their military might in a scene that recalls Homeric battle

descriptions, if not accounts of Roman centurions led into battle. His charges show

their martial prowess, which has not waned despite their recent defeat. At his signal,

> All in a moment through the gloom were seen
>
> Ten thousand Banners rise into the Air
>
> With Orient Colors waving: with them rose
>
> A Forest huge of Spears: and thronging Helms
>
> Appear'd, and serried Shields in thick array
>
> Of depth immeasurable. (I, 544-50)

As Milton's description reveals, the fallen angels are clearly equipped with the requisite

staffs, engines, spears, and standards that show their ready access to the celestial metal

technologies and means of production.   Marching "in perfect *Phalanx*" to cadences set

by the "*Dorian* mood / Of Flutes and Soft Recorders" (I, 550-51), the army recalls

"rais'd / To highth of noblest temper Heroes old /Arming to Battle" (I, 551-53). As a

whole, the illustration of Satan's regrouping forces reveals the poet's awareness of the

connections between metalworking and militarism, and the landscape-modifying use of

natural resources to support this celestial vision of the military-industrial complex.

Milton's militaristic idiom in this passage displays, as editor Hughes suggests

(225), his awareness of classical and renaissance martial theory. Further, this martial

idiom also serves to connect his vision of the celestial underworld to the current

economic and military relationships in his own day and age. These relationships conjoin resource use, landscape modification, economic transformation and growth, industrial production of munitions and other military implements, and an enhanced nationalist identity determined as much by economic and military might as by cultural identity. In the turbulent years of the middle seventeenth century, Milton's England was undergoing its own severe political disruptions, wholesale landscape modifications, economic transformations, and industrial development.

Again, Milton hints at his desire to conjoin the armies of Satan with the politics of his emerging English nation state. He compares Satan's soliders to those of ancient Greece, mentioning "the Giant brood of *Phlegra,*" who "with th' Heroic Race were join'd / That fought at *Thebes* and *Ilium*, on each side /Mixt with auxiliary Gods" (I, 576-79). More importantly, the connection is pushed in such a way to invoke other images, including those more familiar to his readers, those of mythic England and France; the soldiers are also held in comparison with "what resounds / In Fable or *Romance* of *Uther's* Son, / Begirt with *British* and *Amoric* Knights" (I, 579-81), and recall "When *Charlemain* with all his Peerage fell / By *Fontarabbia*" (I, 586-7). The extended comparison of Satan's rallying charges with the armies of myth and story also includes those "Baptiz'd or Infidel" who "Jousted in *Aspramont* or *Montalban, / Damasco* or *Morocco*, or *Trebisond*" (I, 582-84), and shows Milton's effort to establish the connections between Satan's Hell and various historic personages and battles, mythological landscapes and figures, and other Mediterranean and European points of reference.

Implied in this imagistic detail is Milton's desire to portray the army's movements in relation to the expansion and colonization of national and cultural boundaries. In addition, the passage also demonstrates Milton's vision of the early modern English nation defined by its economic and cultural separation from the rest of Europe. Milton's England, nearing a state of resource bankruptcy, remains geographically and economically apart from continental trade, just as his "otherworldly" Hell, as defined by classical, biblical, mythical, and southern European geographical references in Book I, is set apart from the celestial orders of God's domain. But, as his imagistic choices and depictions in this first book imply about the underworld domain of his *Paradise Lost,* his nation also strives to lessen its isolation and to fulfill the imperialist and colonialist dimensions of a mercantilist agenda.

The Rhetoric of Self-Justification in Mercantilist Discourse

Inscribed within Milton's imagery in *Paradise Lost's* Book I is a critique of mercantilist policy, particularly as it relates to the settlement and resource exploitation of foreign, unfamiliar lands and locales. The martial imagery in the book's first half precedes the more dramatic establishment of the Palace of Pandemonium, and the book as a whole describes the relocation and settlement of Satan and his rebels. But before this account can be more fully examined, one must consider the rhetorical patterns in discourses more directly tied to the mercantilist agendas of seventeenth-century England. Indeed, Book I demonstrates several rhetorical patterns that can easily be connected to merchant dialogues of Milton's day, which consistently display the habit of connecting economic wealth and military strength and allude to class tensions between the established orders and the lower levels of the social spectrum. Ultimately, Satan's

exhortations to his troops are self-justifying and self-serving, aimed at legitimizing

the merchant, military, and working classes as distinct from nobility. His resentment

and envy toward the Son, expressed privately in his attitudes of unwilling subservience

to and constant defiance of God's "natural" plan, aligns him with those restless lower

orders of the social spectrum whose efforts—as workers, builders, soldiers, and

merchants--are essential to the nation state's well being and who add to its material net

worth but are nevertheless frustrated and rebuked in their negotiation of its social

hierarchies and power networks.

A sixteenth-century precursor to Milton captures these attitudes clearly. One

Thomas Mun writes roughly two decades before Milton's period of artistic maturity, and

little of this writer of pro-trade tracts is otherwise known. Nevertheless, Mun wrote two

tracts that argue for the legitimacy and importance of the merchant's work. Beyond

their immediate value as a statement for the early justification of capitalism and the

development of foreign trade relationships, Mun's tracts serve as dialogic precursors for

Milton's account of Satan's rebellion from God. His earliest tract, "A Discourse of

Trade from England unto the East Indies," written in 1621, captures the mercantilist

imperatives of the merchant class while also seeking to validate trade relationships (and

the profits gained thereby) with foreign nations and peoples, both Christian and non-

Christian. Mun's other tract is "England's Treasure by Forraign Trade, or the Balance of

our Forraign Trade is the Rule of our Treasure," and it is presumed to have been

published posthumously in an edition prepared by John Mun, his son, in 1641, for

presentation to the Earl of Southampton. Given the consistency of their pro-merchant

rhetoric, one can assume that the dates of composition are closer than the twenty-year

gap that separates the publication dates of these two tracts. More importantly,

however, the two works articulate a pro-merchant discourse that seems encoded in

Milton's depiction of Satan in his underworld environs, for both focus on self-justifying

efforts by ambitious individuals in subordinate positions.[20]

Some twenty years later, one Lewis Roberts writes a similarly supportive

treatise on the merchant's labors, that displays an analogous imaginative habit of

validating commercial labors with a self-justifying rhetoric laced with Christian idioms.

Roberts' treatise, written in 1641, is titled "The Treasure of Traffike, or a Discourse of

Forraigne Trade." Like Mun, Roberts employs a rhetorical style that combines elements

of nationalism and themes of Christian unity amongst all levels of a state's social orders.

This style serves ultimately to justify the merchant's role in the proliferation of

Christianity as well as in the accumulation of national wealth, for the motives of

personal greed are again suppressed in this writing. This tract is equally fervent in its

defense of the merchant's role in the divinely sanctioned nationalistic imperatives of the

English nation-state and provides a vivid record of trade networks and mercantilist

economic strategies. Mun and Roberts both portray the English nation as a monolithic

national entity that justifies its self-perpetuation according to the divine sanctioning of a

Christian God. Both also display no awareness to the realities of conflict between

social classes, political factions, or religious sects, for such realities would inhibit the

articulation of their pro-commerce rhetoric. Significantly, however, these writers view

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[20] Like Satan, Mun attempts to justify his own position within the larger frameworks of Christian hierarchy, and it is possible to envision such pro-mercantilist arguments enduring over the space of a few decades. In Satan's self-justifying arguments for his rebellion against God's hierarchy and in his subsequent colonization of the celestial underworld, one hears the echoes of the turbulent ideological and social climate of seventeenth-century England and the voices of the merchant and military classes who, like Mun, sought to justify their greater stature in return for their contributions to the developing nation-state.

their struggle for self-justification in an idiom that assumes Miltonic dimensions by arguing for the increased stature of the merchant class. Just as Satan asserts the value of his rebellion against God's rule, each writer sees his trade as a necessary exercise in the pursuit of economic power, national security, and individual fulfillment.

The Extraction of National Wealth and Might from Underground Mines, or the Alliance of Mining and the Building Trades: The Foundations of Empire

The merchant's success depends upon many things, but one key element is the skill of the miner, whose role, in turn, is to gain access to and refine the raw commodities of mercantile wealth. The merchant's efforts are also conjoined with those of the artisan and the builder, who mold the fruits of the miner's labor into something that, if not merely utilitarian or militaristic, is commercially viable and expressive of some social value. Such a chain of interactions represents the means of production that enabled the early capitalist system to function profitably. In the battle images of Books V and VI, Satan and his charges demonstrate an aptitude in creating and using the means of production to their immediate purposes. The stage for this display of production capability is set in Book I when, newly expelled from Heaven, Satan's next expression of defiance toward God and his celestial kingdom is his plan to "work in close design, by fraud or guile / What force effected not" (I, 646-47). He plans a direct assault on Heaven, one in which his army's martial might is made more equal to the Almighty's. Posing the plan directly to his cohorts, he rallies them: "For who can think Submission? War, then, War / Open or understood, must be resolv'd" (I, 661-62). Ready for vengeance, his legions "highly...rag'd /Against the Highest, and fierce with

grasped Arms / Clash'd on their sounding shields the din of war, / Hurling

defiance toward the Vault of Heaven (I, 666-69).

In their warlike fervor, the fallen angels nevertheless mount no immediate

assault nor assail any Heavenly perimeter. Instead, they work their vengeance on the

underworld landscape, penetrating their fiery and barren environs to get at exploitable

mineral riches. Articulating the connection between industry, militarism, and mineral

technology, Milton depicts the frenzied digging, smelting, and building that eventually

becomes the palace at Pandemonium. From this underworld palace, Satan's charges

plan to attack the Celestial City. Their first assault is on "a Hill not far from whose

grisly top / Belch'd fire and rolling smoke; the rest entire / Shone with a glossy scurf,

undoubted sign / that in his womb was hid metallic Ore, / The work of Sulfur" (671-75).

The perpetually downward-looking Mammon, true to his scriptural origins as described

in the Old Testament books of Job (iii, 4) and Proverbs (ii, 4) and personified in the

New Testament books of Matthew (vi, 24) and Luke (xvi, 9, 11, 13), captures the

frenzied and irrational quality of the fallen angels' search for material resources. He

leads a group of Satan's legions, who, newly transformed from soldiers into an army of

miners, resemble "bands of / Pioneers with Spade and Pickax arm'd / to Trench a Field,

/ Or Cast a Rampart" (I, 675-78).

Milton's obscuring the distinctions between mining and soldiering in these few

lines is deliberate. Using this scene to connect the settlement of Hell and the mining of

its resources to the mercantilist furor for colonial exploitation of native landscapes, he

describes an industrial economy that was vividly on display in London and also in the

process of dramatically transforming his native English landscape. Such an excessively

transformative enterprise is both enabled and embodied in Mammon, the mythical figure of avarice, who is unable to reconcile natural beauty with profit, "for ev'n in Heav'n his looks and thoughts / Were always downward bent, admiring more / The riches of Heaven's pavement, trodd'n Gold, / Than aught divinie or else enjoy'd / In vision beatific" (680-84). Mammon is scarcely able to contain his mineral lust even in the celestial perfection of Heaven, and his impulses to dig for riches are given free reign in Hell. His desire to violate the underworld landscape is validated by the fallen angels' resettlement, and his desire to dig for its riches is instantaneously apparent. Mammon's frenzied digging is cast as a form of bodily violation, and the poet explains that his example is replicated by men upon the landscape of the living earth. In the rapid deforestation and pursuit of mineral riches taking place in Milton's England, Mammon's violations would be readily evident to those familiar with his avaricious habits (I, 684-90).

The bard's commentary seeks to equate mineral wealth not with the glories of Heaven even though a vision of celestial perfection is evident in the "riches of Heav'n's pavement, trodd'n Gold" (I, 682). If the embodiments of mineral perfection are disguised in the ethereal soils of Heaven, they are more suitably located in the subterranean pits of Hell. The poet cautions: "Let none admire / That riches grow in Hell; that soil may best / Deserve the precious bane" (I, 690-92). Such "precious bane" prompts those ambitious, avaricious, and vainglorious mortal spirits who, in wishing for something greater, destroy the natural beauty of God's creation. Extracting the precious metal from within the soil, they work it into sculpted forms and cast it in foolish tributes to themselves. The proportions of vanity are even greater in celestial realms (I, 692-

97). This commentary underscores the bard's anxieties toward the wholesale

manipulation of the landscape for the pursuit of material wealth. Moreover, it probably

also reveals the poet's concomitant suspicions toward the mercantilist system. The

Ovidian echoes in the passages are evident, and it is a critical habit to read *The*

Metamorphoses (particularly Books I and IV) as the imagistic precursor to Milton's

portrayal of the violated landscape.

However, in his diabolization of mining and refining of metals, Milton belies a

larger critique of the mineral processes and stages and suggests his disaffection with

cellularized forms of workplace organization, for both violate a vaguely defined vision

of the "natural" world. Employing an efficient and highly specialized sort of factory

system to organize their labors, the fallen angels quickly outdo any earthly progenitors,

accomplishing "In an hour / What in an age they with incessant toil / And hands

innumerable scarce perform" (I, 697-99). Milton wrote roughly a century before the

first significant critiques of the factory system appear, but his portrayal of the labors of

Satan's charges suggests a distrust of spirit-robbing factory labor and an advocacy of the

crafts of elevated artisanship. His suspicion of the factory system, in which systems of

production transform raw materials into units of economic exchange, seems to resonate

in his description of Pandemonium's construction. One group of Satan's charges "in

many cells prepar'd" the "veins of liquid fire / Sluic'd from the Lake" (I, 700-02).

Another group "With wondrous Art founded the massy Ore, / Severing each kind, and

scumm'd the Bullion dross" (I, 703-04). After them, "A third as soon had form'd within

the ground / A various mould, and from the boiling cells / By strange conveyance fill'd

each hollow nook" (I, 705-07). The process assumes a life of its own, and its terrible

and turbulent efficiency is enhanced with bellowing tones reminiscent of a factory's chaos: "As in an Organ from one blast of wind / To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes" (I, 708-09). And it is quick to produce results, for a "Fabric huge Rose like an Exhalation" out of the earth, "with the sound / Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet, / Built like a Temple" (I, 710-13).

Replicating the mechanical framework of the organ, which transforms their inanimate raw materials into a living form, the fallen angels likewise breathe prideful life into structure, which stands as a monument to their prideful defiance of God. Inevitably, their newly completed "Temple" captures the detail and character in its design of a fallen, pagan, morally questionable spirituality that further connects the metallic processes Milton describes in previous lines to the idol-worshipping follies of those who oppose God. Needless and ornate metallic and scultpured detail is the hallmark of Pandemonium's palace (I, 713-17). Subsequent comparisons with the newly completed architectural monstrosity liken it to the palaces of "*Babylon*" (I, 717) and "*Alcairo*" (I, 718), where "such magnificence" is "Equall'd in all thir glories" in paying well-heeled, ostentatious tribute to the pagan gods.

Once complete, the palace's doors open "thir brazen folds" (I, 724) to reveal that these interiors have an artificial quality, enhanced by a chemical haziness that suggests environs unnatural and false-seeming (I, 726-30). The palace is a symbol marking how members of Satan's "industrious crew" manipulate their environment to the service of their vain defiant needs and "to build in Hell" (I, 751) what becomes "the high / Capitol of Satan and his Peers" (I, 756-57). In his description of Pandemonium's creation, Milton combines chemical, military, architectural, and industrial idioms and

captures the mercantile character of Satan's resettlement efforts. His imagery

belies a critique of the encroaching mercantile and industrialist climate of his England.

With the building at an end, praise is given to both "the work" and "the Architect" (I,

731-2). Their palace built, the new residents then reconvene as

> Winged heralds by command
>
> Of Sovran power, with awful Ceremony
>
> And Trumpets' sound throughout the Host proclaim
>
> A solemn Council forthwith to be held. (I, 752-55)

Reinventing the governmental and martial hierarchies of Heaven, Milton presents a

more tangible portrayal of them in Hell and offers a quite visible connection between

mineral technology, militarism, government, industry, and the mercantile exploitation

of natural resources. The counsel is "call'd / From every Band and squared Regiment"

(I, 757-58), and is held in the palace's spacious hall, which is "like a cover'd field, where

Champions bold / Wont ride in arm'd" (I, 762-63). The description of this processional

ceremony for the newly settled colonial outpost reiterates the idioms of the emerging

mercantilist nation-state and shows the replication of inherited hierarchies and

organizing systems that the celestial rebels have appropriated from Heaven.

The image Milton gives to the efficient, cellularized, smoothly functioning

form of hierarchical organization is borrowed from battle motifs of Homeric and

Virgilian epic as much as it is from a more contemporary vision of state organization.

As the fallen angels gather in conference, they "Thick swarm'd, both on the ground and

in the air" (I, 767), convening to "expiate and confer / Thir state affairs" (I, 774-75).

Collected Works editor Merritt Hughes provides a footnote which explains the history

associated with the comparison of thronging armies with bees, and notes that it is

one of the most recognizable features of classical epic (231). It is evident in Homer's

Iliad (Book II, 87-90) and in Virgil's *Aeneid* (Book I, 430-36) and *Georgics* (Book IV

149-227).[21]

Ultimately, Milton's use of this particular metaphor seems to present a more

sinister vision, one aligned with Hobbes' notes of caution before Virgil's more

optimistic opinions of the beehive as a model for civil society. In Milton's vision, the

metaphor of the beehive connects industrial systems of production with cellularized

systems of labor, in which human creativity is organized into self-serving agents of

production or service. In a larger sense, in his account of the fallen angels in

Pandemonium, Milton is writing in response to a growing association between

governmental policy, trade, and industrial production. Such intertwined factors not only

exacerbated the political turbulence in his world but also had severe consequences in his

immediate environment.

Evolving Industrial Techniques: Fueling Pandemonium

Milton lived in a period when the merchant classes' efforts to achieve social,

moral, and economic justification motivated their prompting change in industrial

processes. Several of the features of Book I, including resource exploitation, labor

organization, and expanding militarism, were aspects of the political and social worlds

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[21] Further, Hughes highlights a famous article by Rebecca Smith which finds popish associations in the description of Pandemonium and argues that Pandemonium is modeled on St. Peter's Cathedral. However, beyond this range of associations, the metaphor that connects the teeming army of fallen angels with the beehive serves Milton in two important ways. The idea of the beehive as a state symbol was sufficiently present in his world to merit mention in no less of a work than the *Leviathan* of Thomas Hobbes, who used it to describe the suitable interaction among members of a Civil common wealth in Chap. XVII. Here, Hobbes argues that this naturally ordered system of government is one that is unsuitable to human needs and is an imperfect metaphor for a civil society. He reveals a contemporary vision of a much older tradition, which extends back to Homer and which views the cellularized efficiency of the beehive as an imperfect model for human society.

that the poet inhabited. Further, the consequences for the changes brought about

by the merchant classes were played out in both environmental and moral arenas as

specific industrial transformations modified parts of the English landscape to the extent

that sixteenth-century moral guardians and shapers of aesthetic judgments debated their

consequences. English timber resources, essential to all forms of local, small-scale

artisanship and proto-industry, were well on the wane by the late sixteenth century

(Schubert 218-22), having been exhausted by their essential roles in all manner of

industries, including shipbuilding, textiles, brewing, metalworking, and construction

among the most notable. The expansion of shipping networks between Newcastle and

London, coupled with the diminishing wood reserves in the Wealden forests south of

London, solidified the emergence of coal as the newest fuel of choice. Collectively,

these changes facilitated an expansion of coal-fueled technological processes.

John Evelyn, a contemporary of Milton's, expresses the suspicions toward coal-

based industrial processes that were present in seventeenth-century England. Starting in

the early 1660's, the Oxford-educated intellectual dilettante wrote many treatises on

various natural phenomena particular to the English climate and landscape, and this

habit would ultimately result in his association with the Royal Academy of Sciences.

Collectively, Evelyn's writings focused particularly on the increasing preeminence of

the coal "industry," the depletion of forest reserves, and the environmental

consequences for these developments in both rural and urban landscapes.

Evelyn's career as a scientific writer would eventually come to be defined by

his contributions to the Royal Academy, and his best known work, *Sylva, or a

Discourse of Forest Trees*, was published in 1664 and revised in subsequent editions in

1670 and 1679 (Sharp 66). The book contains a full analysis of the composition

of English forests, as well as a full discussion of the land-use policies written to

preserve them. Further, it offers a larger discussion of the enclosure laws that sought to

mark off sizeable stretches of the English countryside for resource management. It is

the most notable of several works which attempt to address the problems of the

diminishing forest reserves of Milton's day. In it one hears a distant echo of the

aforementioned *Surveyor's Dialogue*, the practical guide for estate management written

for landed gentry by John Norden, which offered a comparable caution about

diminishing forest reserves.

Both Norden's 1607 warning about the effects of the iron industry on

diminishing timber reserves and Evelyn's 1664 publication about forest composition

represent the opinions of several works that attempt to address the problems of the

encroachment of the iron industry, along with others, into the diminishing forest

reserves of seventeenth-century England. The contributions of both Norden and Evelyn

show how a very active discourse on land and resource management stretched across

several decades of the seventeenth century.[22]

The seventeenth-century debate over land use and resource management was

supplemented by further contributions from a varied group of reformers, scientists,

surveyors, naval officials, and other proto-industrialists. Collectively, these visionaries

produced works that demonstrate a major shift in perspective toward the management

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[22] Historian Sharp explains why the debate was necessary, observing that "[u]ntil the late eighteenth century, timber was one of the most basic requirements of human existence. Essential to most forms of manufacture and industry, almost all types of building, the production of most implements and machines, and to every aspect of domestic and agricultural life, timber and its allied products played a central role in the economy of Western Europe until the time when its dominance was slowly eroded by the use and availability of new fuels and materials" (51).

policies of the English forests, a change indirectly facilitated by the changing

nature of resource use in Milton's England and one examined extensively in the forum

presented by the Royal Society (Sharp 73). More importantly, the increasing

preeminence of coal burning in industrial operations prompted what seemed to be an

imaginative habit that was common to both Evelyn and Milton, one that envisioned

industrial production—and its resultant consequences--as an encroachment on naturally

ordered environs.

Because of his writings, Evelyn was soon of sufficient reputation to be

appointed to the ranks of the Royal Society, and his career is defined by *Sylva*, the best

known of his reformist tracts. However, another of his early contributions to the Royal

Society suggests a ready discursive connection to the passages depicting mining,

construction, and resource exploitation in Book I of *Paradise Lost*. Evelyn's work

Fumifugium, or the Inconvenience of the Aer and Smoak of London Dissipated,

appeared shortly after the Restoration of Charles II in 1661, within six years of the first

edition of Milton's epic poem. In his dedicatory epistle, Evelyn portrays a scene which

recalls the toxic fumes which pervade the palace of Pandemonium in *Paradise Lost's*

Book I and reveals how the problem of noxious—and easily demonized--pollution was

plaguing London of the 1660's.

Evelyn's ultimate vision is an Edenic and pastoral London cityscape, where air

is of the purest and most redolent quality. Those breathing it will be taken on an

imaginative journey of sorts, "as if by a certain charm, or innocent *Magick*, they were

transferred to that part of *Arabia*, which is therefore styl'd the *Harpy*, because it is

amongst the Gums and precious spices." Just as Milton would do a few years later in

his depiction of the celestial city, Evelyn portrays Edenic imagery by analogy, allowing readers to grasp the remote concept of clean London air by offering analogies to more remote and mysterious locales. The hyperbole demonstrated in Evelyn's invocation is striking, for it recalls the habit demonstrated by Mun and Roberts to justify a line of argument in terms of absolute good and absolute evil as defined by Christian theology. While the pro-merchant pamphleteers sought to justify the merchant's role as crucial to the development of the Christian nation state, Evelyn likewise used the Christian vision of Edenic perfection. In so doing, he prefigures the Miltonic habit of expressing his vision through an analogy to more familiar earthly images.

Evelyn ultimately argues for a mandate to purify London air by addressing its increasing putrification caused by coal smoke. Evelyn's depiction of this Edenic vision of the London cityscape is comparable to Milton's imagistic rendering of the celestial city from *Paradise Lost's* Book III and of Eden, in Books IV and V. This vision captured in the qualities of fragrance, beauty, harmony, and naturalness, all of which collectively (if unconsciously) suggest a habit of associating these qualities with the orders of a long established culture of agrarianism and with the rhetorical figures derived from the literary pastoral tradition. In a subtle expression of this attitude, Evelyn aligns himself not only with Milton but also with those customary patrician biases expressed first by Pliny and Ovid against the wholesale manipulation of the landscape for profit. Evelyn's hyperbolic tendencies in *Fumifugium's* introduction are notable too because, even in this brief dedication, they show the author's habit of portraying London's air pollution problem in Miltonic terms—as evil, unnatural, cloudy,

noxious, sulfurous and obscuring to the vision. Further, this vision of evil intrudes

on the Edenic, organic landscape and represents a violation of its natural order. Evelyn's

description follows this Miltonic pattern. The sole source and reason for Evelyn's

demonizing rhetoric is "the immoderate use of, and indulgence to Sea-coale alone in the

City of *London*," a practice that "exposes it to one of the fowelest Inconveniences and

reproaches that can possibly befall so noble, and otherwise incomporable City" (6).

Like Milton, Evelyn demonstrates the habit of viewing industries as particularly evil

and as the ultimate culprits for the plagues that encroach upon naturally ordered

environs. Evelyn's culprits are large scale industries, which recall the imagery of not

only classical and Christian underworlds, but also Milton's Pandemonium.[23]

The nefarious effects of "this horrid Smoake," argues Evelyn, impede the

London citizenry in many ways damaging to church, state, and individual alike. It

"obscures our Churches, and makes our Palaces look old;" it "foulls our Clothes, and

corrupts the Waters;" it infiltrates "our very secret *Cabinets*, and most precious

Repositories: finally, it is this which diffuses and spreads a Yellownesse upon our

choicest Pictures and Hangings" (6-7). The clear culprit for this malaise, stresses

Evelyn, is the "*New Castle Cole*," which not only causes this "suffocating aboundance

of *Smoake*" about London, but also creates a "*Virulency*" (11): "For all *Subterrany*

Fuel hath a kind of *virulent* or *Arsenical* vapour rising from it; which, as it speedily

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[23] "Whilst these are belching it from their sooty jaws, the City of *London* resembles the face rather of *Mount Aetna*, the *Court of Vulcan, Stromboli*, or the Suburbs of *Hell*, than an Assembly of Rational Creatures, and the Imperial feat of our incomparable *Monarch*. For when in all other places the *Aer* is most Serene and Pure, here it is Eclipsed with such a Cloud of Sulphure, as the Sun it self, which gives day to all the World besides, is hardly able to penetrate and impart it here; and the weary *Traveler*, at many Miles distance, sooner smells, then sees the city to which he repairs. This that pernicious Smoake which sullies all her Glory, superinducing a sooty Crust or furr upon all that it lights, spoyling the moveables, tarnishing the Plate Gildings and Furniture, and corroding the very iron-bars and hardest stones with those piercing and acrimonious Spirits which accompany its Sulphure; and executing more in one year, then expos'd to the pure Aer of the Country it could effect in some hundereds" (Evelyn, *Fumifugium* 6).

destroys those who dig it in the *Mines*; so does it little and little, those who use it here above them"(11). Evelyn's address continues in this vein, diabolizing the effects and by products of unmonitored and ill-advised industries that rely on Newcastle coal as their primary fuel.

That Evelyn's pamphlet, published in 1661, and Milton's epic, published in 1668, demonstrate imagistic parallels in their portrayals of both pastoral and putrefied landscapes is notable. That they both seem to offer common criticisms of the industrial modification of the natural landscape is also worth noting. It is most likely that, rather than through some form of indirect collaboration, both the pamphleteer and the composer of Christian epic followed a common imaginative habit among well-heeled shapers of public opinion in the sprawling, smoky, and dirty London of the 1660's and 1670's. In imaginative conjunction with one another, they seem to continue the discursive tradition begun in the writings of Pliny, Ovid, Virgil, and other classics, and later offered up by chroniclers of technical arts, by artists portraying imaginative landscapes, and by idealizing aristocrats. In this way, both the dilettante and the poet continued a long tradition in expressing reservations toward manipulation of the landscape for industrial purposes on a large scale.

Conclusion: Milton's Appropriation of Contemporary Discourse

When considered collectively, the discursive features of the works of Mun, Roberts, and Evelyn suggest that the imagery for Milton's depictions of the battles of Heaven and the settlement of Pandemonium comes not exclusively from the arcane underworld images of Ovid, Virgil, Homer, and the other classical writers he'd studied at St. Paul's school and later at Cambridge. The great pamphleteer, who knew

intimately the national debates of his day and the rhetorical means of arguing

them, surely borrows imagery available in this discourse from the early mercantilist and

industrialist climate of his age. The works of his approximate contemporaries

consistently belie a habit of casting "good" and "godly" qualities in terms according to

the rhythms of a deeply entrenched agrarianism, service to the nation's well-being, and a

diligent maintenance of "natural" aesthetics. In contrast, things "evil" and "Hellish" are

represented by images depicting a noxious, chemical, and corrosive encroachment on

these natural orders. Moreover, Milton was a London resident both in his formative

years and throughout the period during which he was beginning to envision the themes

to be considered in *Paradise Lost*, and responds understandably as a private citizen in

his artistic work. Even as his eyesight was beginning to fade in this smoky, pre-

industrial climate, he no doubt had some degree of exposure, both consciously and

unconsciously, to those transformations of the mercantilist landscape brought about by

the new engines of a new economic order. This transformation would be played out

through industrial and commercial innovations in the coming days of the factory system

where weapons, ammunition, protective habilments, and other such products came

increasingly into demand. As the son of an ambitious father, eager to ascend in social

power, Milton surely would have viewed this emerging mercantilist spirit with

ambivalence. Even as it enabled his privileged educational experience and life position,

he witnessed personally and critically its trans-personal and negative consequences.

Before Milton, a mythological vision of the underworld predominated, one

shaped by classical traditions and gradually transformed by Christian theology. This

vision accommodated a notion of transgression that gradually evolved according to the

increasingly sophisticated economic practices of medieval Western Europe.

Further, it absorbed residual Nordic, Celtic, and Arabic underworld images as these

cultures came into increasing contact with the developing hegemonies of Christian

practice and the emerging modern European nation states. *Paradise Lost* represents,

therefore, the intersection of the mythic vision of Hell and the economic practices and

interactions which reconfigured notions of sin and worldly confinement to an

increasingly commercial and mobile Christian population. Following Milton, the

images of the underworld in literature proceed along two clearly defined trajectories.

First, the post-Miltonic vision of Hell becomes increasingly grounded in money-based

notions of confinement, including poverty, limitations on social mobility, and forms of

psychological disability. In this vision, the landscape is first and foremost an economic

resource to exploit and to serve the vain needs of the humans that subdue it. The second

pattern in imaginative visions of Hell shows its reverting to the mythic stature of

Ovidian and Homeric myth. This vision is connected to the cosmic processes of

transformation, disruption, and perpetually simmering potential and is best evident in

the poetry and visual imagery of William Blake.

Though based principally on scripture and informed greatly by the underworld

images and idioms of the classics, Milton's depiction of Satan also borrows from the

tensions of class struggle and the economic and environmental changes wrought by the

increasing industrial and mercantile presence in his London of the mid-seventeenth

century.[24] In this struggle, the competent, charismatic, ambitious, and upwardly mobile

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[24] More theologian than reformer, Milton's vision of Hell anticipated objections to the "bureaucratization" of society and the wholesale manipulation of the landscape that future reformers would raise in response to the by-products of an industry-based economy just over a century later. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton signals a last expression of anxiety

craftsman and innovator demands entry into a privileged world of truths supposed

natural and eternal. Satan's legions are likewise shown to be skilled underlings as

soldiers, miners, artisans, and laborers and, in following his lead, show themselves to be

capable of organizing themselves into productive units of labor as they seek to modify

the celestial and later the underworld landscape to their temporary advantage. In so

doing, Satan and his charges follow the lead of pragmatic tradesmen, craftsmen, miners,

and other members of the industrial middle orders who sought to improve their

economic and social stature as they enhanced their nation's military and economic

prowess.

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toward the diminishing presence of the sacred views of the landscape, and, through Satan, acknowledges the secular impulse to see it primarily as an economic resource in accordance with the mercantilist vision.

Chapter 2: The Homeric Epics: Introducing Metalworking Motifs,

Defining Class Relations, and Establishing a Basis for the Christian

Underworld

Introduction

In Book XVI of the *Iliad*, Achilles sits in self-imposed exile, refusing to fight for

the Argive forces of Agamemnon and Menelaus. In their efforts to liberate Menelaus'

kidnapped wife Helen from her Trojan captors, these two brothers violate an important

ethic of the code that binds the warrior to his king. Agamemnon awards and then

rescinds his gift of the slave girl Briseis to his champion, and Achilles is outraged at

having to return one of his awarded spoils of war. Raging at the Argive King's violation

of warrior ethics and protocols, the Myrmidon leader withdraws from the camp outside

of Troy's walls, returning to his ship to ponder his options. His comrades recognize

their need for this swift-footed warrior and consider how he might be placated.

Resisting first the combined pleas of the Argive embassy, then the promise of

extraordinary wealth form the Agive kings, and finally Patroclus' plea to rejoin the

battle, Achilles continues to sit out the conflict, envisioning the consequences of a

return to his native lands. In defiant exile against Agamemnon, Achilles recognizes the

value of the contribution of his Myrmidons to the Argive cause. He also ponders his

fated but glorious death in battle as opposed to the undignified, drawn out life of one

self-exiled to his homeland. His friend Patroclus, who offers yet another plea to the

swift-footed warrior to rejoin the campaign against the Trojans, then visits him.

Resolute in his persistence to remain out of the fray, Achilles nevertheless

agrees to lend his storied armor to his comrade at arms, hoping that the mere suggestion

of his return would spur the Argives to regain their advantage over their Trojan opponents. Believing that the Trojans will recoil at recognizing the gleaming bronze armor that signals the great hero's return to battle, Achilles bestows upon his closest comrade the honor of wearing it into the fray in hopes that it will prompt him to further glory. The Trojan champion Hector, the favorite of Zeus, then vanquishes Achilles' compatriot while leading an assault on the Argive fleet. He recognizes the significance of the fallen soldier's arms. His rage is pushed to extremes by Hector's brash gesture to kill Achilles' comrade Patroclus and then compound the humiliation by stealing his storied armor and wearing it into battle. Thus prompted, Achilles decides to re-enter the fray. Significantly, his divine mother Thetis invokes the aid of Hephaestus, Zeus' son and the Olympian blacksmith, to build an invulnerable brazen suit of armor to protect her son. With these two events—Achilles' bestowing his armor on Patroclus and his subsequent re-arming by Haphaestus—the course of the *Iliad's* narrative turns. What appeared as a decisive routing of the Argive armies by the Trojan forces becomes, through various forms of divine intervention, a stalemate that slowly turns in favor of Agamemnon's charges.

Within this narrative framework, the significance of the warrior ethos to the Homeric mindset is underscored. The epic poems represent an effort some eight centuries before Christ to depict the world of the thirteenth or twelfth century BC. Their authorship is attributed to a writer whose identity is established for modern readers only by sketchy traditions and vague historical references and is further complicated by his stature as an oral rhapsodist in a world regaining its acquaintance with writing. By the eighth century before Christ, iron age technologies were yielding

implements of war, trade, and agriculture that were modifying the world

significantly in social, technological, and economic spheres. Nevertheless, the author

combined details of the world inherited in Mycenaean and other heroic oral legends

with features of his own contemporary world. As such, the poet('s) iron age, eighth-

century world differs from the bronze age, twelfth-century world depicted in the epics.

Metals and metalworking become relevant not only to scholars and historians using

anthropological evidence to date the poem and understand the world it portrays but also

to critics seeking to understand the connection between metals and metalworking and

the developing classical world that these technologies modified.

The Homeric bard reveals an inherited awareness of the significance of metals

and metal technology in the context of the world it depicts. In the imagined world of

the twelfth century BC depicted by the epics, Mycenaean influence is preeminent

throughout the eastern Mediterranean. However, it is depicted consistently with

historical and archaeological evidence from the period, as it demonstrates that bronze

metalworking technologies were in full bloom and were transforming commerce, war,

and agriculture. In their representation of metals and metalworking technology,

therefore, the Homeric, and later, the Virgilian epics depict some important features of

the bard('s) world, which was an age of transition. Haphaestus and Vulcan facilitate the

efforts of the epic heroes who wear their arms and maneuver their shields. As such,

their contributions to the perpetuation of the warrior ethic envisioned by the epic bards

are significant, possessing an economic, strategic, and spiritual significance.

Haphaestus' labors are highlighted by the *Iliad's* emphasis on individual warriors

fighting in the heat of battle, and the story's plot turns upon Achilles' armor, worn by

Patroclus, being stolen by Hector. Haphaestus, like Virgil's Vulcan (who will be considered in more detail in the following chapter), is a visionary figure whose work— necessarily undertaken in the underworld recesses beneath Olympus--is essential to the establishment and perpetuation of the "natural" world of war portrayed in the epic.

In comparing these underworld figures and the domains they inhabit, one sees an essential historical movement in the imagery of metalworking and weaponry. The elder poet seeks to promote the homogeneous, received world view of a Mycenean tribal culture, while the more recent poet uses similar patterns of imagery to promote a multi-cultural and fabricated ethos to support the nation-state ideal of empire. In their depictions of this world, the crafts and labors of the blacksmith are given a featured role. Ultmately, in the Homeric imagination, metals and their related technologies therefore represent the knowledge capital that complements, symbolizes, and defines the individual warrior's bravery and merit and facilitates the pursuit of the ultimate goal in this epic world: the attainment of glory in battle. This vision is given a more refined treatment in Virgil's' *Aeneid*, which offers a more precise vision of the significance of metals and metalworking to the proliferation of trade, of commerce, and of the values of the Roman world. In both cases, metals and metalworking technologies represent the currency that drives the heroes' ambitions. The mythic blacksmiths Haphaestus and Vulcan are portrayed as agents of transition and possess unique connections to the underworld. Just as the pursuit of oil and its related fuels and, more recently, computers and information technologies consititues the principal force that drives, shapes, and governs the military-industrial complex in its modern, late capitalist forms, so the skill of metalworking assumed a comparable form to the classical mind.

While much links the figures of Haphaestus and Vulcan, the series of

transitions that illustrate the distance between the Greek and Roman epic underscores

the differing visions of both epic poets. Of all the gods within the Homeric pantheon,

only Haphaestus has a clear vocation. At Thetis' request, he works a shield to protect

Achilles, who has just witnessed the fall of his compatriot Patroclus. His shield, which

protects Achilles as he seeks to avenge Hector for Patroclus' death, depicts a natural

world that is not without its tensions, but which nonetheless depicts a natural world

dictated by agrarian rhythms and cycles. The blacksmith's contributions enable this

"natural" world. He fashions the implements that enable the agrarian economy to

develop. He shapes the works of art that serve as the standards by which wealth is

measured and which enable the important proto-economic interaction of gift-giving

among the classical aristocracy. Finally, he creates the weapons that protect and expand

the boundaries of the community. Haphaestus' role points to his significance within an

early network of proto-economic relations, and some clarification of the historical

context of Homer's world is necessary to understand why he is important. Portraying a

world that existed some five centuries previous to the one he lived in, the Homeric bard

chronicle(s) Mycenaean culture, technology, trade, and ethics through an Attic lens. In

so doing, he (they) depict(s) a pre-economic world while living in a world that knows

coinage and money; he (they) depict(s) a bronze-age world from the vantage of the late

iron age; and he (they) portray(s) a world in which tribal loyalties and ethics predate the

trade networks and commercial relationships that were features of his eighth-century Attic world.[25]

In both the Homeric and Virgilian epics, the hero's journey to the underworld is an essential narrative feature which shapes and transforms the course of the story's progress. Further, the divine blacksmith is a marginal figure whose place in the pantheon, though secure, is also problematic. He is the only god given a clear vocation; he might be considered as the only "working class" member of the Olympic pantheon. In this way, his stature is slightly diminished, not only by his physical imperfection but also by his service to the other divinities. And yet his labors are essential to the social stratification of Mt. Olympus, for they enable other gods and goddesses to mark and flaunt their more elevated stature. If Haphaestus' portrayal is modeled on his classical contemporaries, he is a figure revered for his abilities yet despised for his contributions to war and commerce.[26] Even as the Homeric epics demonstrate an awareness of the blacksmith's significance to the war—and, later, commerce-driven character of his world—they also underscore his marginal stature as an agent of transition. In their portrayal of the blacksmith, his labors, and his underworld domain, the Homeric epics give voice to a suspicion that is given more precise articulation in the pro-agrarian, anti-commerce philosophies and aesthetics of Plato and Aristotle and, later, Pliny. The blacksmith's labors create conditions for change—transitions in military power, wealth,

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[25] In addition, the epics represent the degree to which bronze and later, iron technologies came to shape both battle and commerce in their immediate worlds. Secondly, they represent the relationship between metalworking technology, battle imagery, and the development of the narrative frames that define the epic form. Finally, they establish the imagistic and narrative traditions that help to define the literary forms and imaginative conceits— particularly in the imagery of the underworld--that appear in later Christian epics and other literary works.

[26] Fisher describes the stature of the mythic blacksmith "as a magician, a sorcerer, or a demigod" who "was honored or despised, but always held in awe" (55).

or social stature—and he himself is the prime agent of change. Ultimately, the conditions that define his labor become essential to the images of the underworld that are evident in later iconography.

The Greeks and Romans held a common distrust toward non-agrarian pursuits, toward trade, commerce, and profit-making beyond the basic satisfaction of individual and state needs. The blacksmith figure in myth and epic is a vivid expression of this anxiety toward social and technological transformation. Mining and metalworking enterprises were a necessary component in the progress of transforming the natural world, but epic commentaries give the blacksmith's labor a proto-demonic taint, regarding his capacity to influence the world with suspicion. Ultimately, a reading of the Homeric and Virgilian epics' representation of metallic materials and metalworking technologies —most notably evident in the epic's allusions to arms and weaponry—will demonstrate their imagistic contributions to the corpus of medieval and renaissance conceptions of Hell, where mining and blacksmithing continue to stand as dominant imagistic motifs.

To one seeking to understand the intersections between early metalworking technology and practice, the development of the Homeric economy, and the genesis of the Homeric underworld, it is important to recognize that Homer was an eighth-century iron-age poet rhapsodizing about a twelfth-century bronze-age world. In this way, metalworking has a historical significance, functioning in proto-economic interactions, influencing military practices, and providing a metaphoric motif for the poet's commentary on the events he describes. In their various forms, metals functioned as ornament, as armor, as currency, and as a symbol which represented the warrior ideals

of the *Iliad's* world. Secondly, Homer's depictions of metals and metalworking display symbolic significance, serving to provide commentary on the narrative at key points. Ultimately, the author or authors of the Homeric epic depict metals and metalworking as they stand within the intersection of the material with the mythic as well as between the economic and the spiritual realms, and in this light its connection with the classical underworld is confirmed.

Interconnected Developments: Mycenaean and pre-Homeric Mining, Metallurgy, Trade, Warfare, and Art

The story of mining and metallurgy from its earliest beginnings to the close of the classical age is a timeline of approximately four thousand years, displaying how the related vocations of metalworking and mining interconnect and find a focus within the related disciplines of social, economic, military, and technological history. Further, a consideration of the interrelated dimensions of mining and metallurgy is also needed to explain why Homer focuses on them so greatly and invests them with such metaphoric significance. Metalworking was an important component in technological, military, economic, social, and aesthetic arenas long before Homer, and, in his portrayal of the gods' blacksmith, the Homeric bard had a rich tradition to draw upon. It went back approximately three millennia before the bard's time and remains richly suggestive to modern archaeologists and anthropologists through historical and archaeological evidence.

Any student of Homer under the sway of new historicism must be familiar with this pattern in order to understand the subsequent Bronze Age eras that he depicted. Within these earliest civilizations, needs arose for weapons and agricultural implements,

the conceptions of specialization and property developed, and patterns of

stratification arose to distinguish owners from laborers and laborers from slaves (Clarke

32-34), and, as will be shown, all of these concepts are on display in Homer's epics.[27]

Radiating out of the Greek peninsula and into the Mediterranean, southern and central

Europe, and North Africa, Mycenaean trade networks established a social, political,

economic, and technological hegemony of sorts that was to endure solidly for over the

next millennium. The most vivid chronicling of these historical stages is in the

Homeric epics, which provide a window into this world.

Of equal significance to the student of metalworking history as to the student of

the Homeric epic, the subsequent rise of Mycenaean culture was coincident with the

progress of the Bronze Age; it would be the preeminent influence throughout the

eastern Mediterranean for the next two centuries. Interestingly, as trade for copper, tin,

and timber continued, native forest reserves were exploited to facilitate the smelting of

various ores to yield the bronze alloy; here it is important to note that the Homeric bard

is familiar with this pattern of deforestation, alluding to it with deliberately placed

similes. The poem expresses the clashing of Argive and Trojan armies as crashing

timbers (Book XVI), alludes to the Pelian woodlands that yielded Achilles' ashen spear

(Book XXI), and offers the image of brazen axe blades hewing away at the trees of

Ida's forests to build Patroclus' funeral pyre (Book XXIII). Collectively, these

allusions imply the poem's awareness of timber as a resource that feeds the wartime

necessities of weapon-smelting, shipbuilding, and energy transfer.

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[27] The Balkan region in particular saw an emerging sophistication in copper metallurgy, which gradually spread into southern and eastern Europe, as well as into the eastern Mediterranean regions as trade networks developed (see Clarke, 34).

In its allusions to metals, timber, and other raw resources, the *Iliad*
suggests an interconnected pattern of trade relations and acts of war. It also portrays
the nuanced interaction of a proto-economic system dictated by the ethics of warrior
allegiances and kinship networks. Trade relations—specifically, for timber and metals--
developed out of friend-and kinship loyalties, economic systems defined not by
commercial interactions, but by practices of gift-giving and the extension of hospitality.
These practices are of immense significance to one seeking to understand the moral
nuances of the heroic world the Homeric bard sought to depict (see Finley 102-03).
Not accidentally, both epics feature metal objects among those gifts offered for
hospitality or reconciliation, and political allegiances were solidified by the sacrifice of
resources—most obviously, metal and timber reserves—and the skill to mold them into
implements of war. Collectively, the Mycenaean trade networks, grafted onto and built
up around preexisting kinship networks, held significant influence over the eastern
Mediterranean and northern African regions, developments that led Clarke to the
conclusion that

> [t]he Homeric epics, with their fairly exact factual knowledge of
>
> the Aegean and their more misty acquaintance with the coasts
>
> and islands beyond the Straits of Messina and the Bosporus, seem
>
> accurately to embody the navigational experiences of this period
>
> and to have drawn a corpus of miners' tales to decorate old and
>
> famous stories, in the manner of the medieval minstrels. (44)

If the Homeric epics reveal a geographical consistency with regard to the routes
taken by the Argive mariners, they also reveal, according to mineral historian Robert

Boyle, a fairly accurate awareness of contemporary gold and silver mining and metallurgy (30-31). Ultimately, one can conclude that the interrelated vocations of mining, metalworking, and trade were therefore established components of the Mycenaean world that Homer chronicled.

The influence of Bronze cultures extended into the northern fringes of the Mycenaean world, into Italia and Macedonia. Thus began the "Atlantic Bronze Age," a transitional period roughly overlapping with the Greek Dark Ages between 900 and 300 B.C. This era saw the emergence of the Phoenician mercantile marine (Clarke 54), the re-emergence of influence of Peloponnesian city-states, and the continuing development of the iron-based metalworking practices that would eventually replace bronze. The most useful and significant demonstration of iron's superiority over bronze is found in the development of the sword, a weapon which is both significant to the scholar of Homer and which became more important in military practices of the first millennium B.C. Other weapons which saw improvements in design and durability were the dagger and battle axe (Coghlan 618), both of which appear in Homeric battle scenes.[28] Further, in the clan- and loyalty-based economy envisioned by Homer and in effect throughout much of the period of Mycenaean preeminence four centuries earlier, metals had a dual function. With no banking system in practice as it would be known today, ornamental metalwork served as the measure by which wealth was conceived, hoarded, and

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[28] The processes of carburizing, tempering, and quenching enhanced the tensile strength of the metal while reducing its bulk and revealed to fabricators of weapons "the best combination of hardness and toughness" (Coghlan 617). Agricultural and architectural tools developed as well as a consequence of the greater use of iron technology in the first millennium B.C.: these included nails, wire, tongs, saws, drills, chisels, and files (620). Ultimately, the metallurgical innovations that were realized in the transition from bronze to iron reverberated in political, social, economic, agricultural, and even in environmental realms. (See Forbes, "Extracting" 592). With the expansion and proliferation of metal-based economies across the Mediterranean and into Europe, a coincident expansion of trade-based economies developed across regions previously controlled by tribal systems of organization.

distributed. In the gift exchange practices that served as markers of one's social stature, gifts of ornamental and military metalwork had the additional function of establishing and reinforcing relations and networks among palace and temple aristocracies. Ultimately, the Mediterranean worlds as modified by the introduction of iron-based metallurgy and coinage mark the distinctions between the world of the Mycenaeans, the world of Homer, and the world of Homer as captured in the economic philosophies of Plato and Aristotle.[29]

The Geometric Period: Images and Aesthetics of Homeric Warfare

Artistic records—those appearing not only in other poems, but also as visual images on surviving ceramic works—also reveal the significance of mining and metallurgy to the Greek economy. The name given to the artistic style coincident with the period of the Homeric epic is Geometric. The Geometric character is most effectively captured in the repetitive and symmetrical patterns that decorate the pottery and vases of the Homeric age. These patterns encompass human figures engaged in narrative episodes and artistic scenes. Art historians find in the artwork of the

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[29] It also is probable that some system of minting and some standard of currency existed in Homer's time to complement already well developed traditions in gold, silver, copper, and tin, as well as in iron mining, smelting, and working. Further, it is equally certain that many of the trades of Homeric Athens involved metal technology, and most of the economic practices similarly required some form of metal-based currency, if not coinage itself. While there is no recorded beginning to Greek mining and metallurgy, there is sufficient evidence to provide a few dates to associate with it. Given their general biases against mining and technology, Greek geographers and historians do provide information on this feature of their world. The Laurion mines near Athens were mined for silver and lead in the second millennium B.C.by the Mycenaeans, and were reopened by Athenians around 600 B.C. Royalties for silver appear in the Athenian civic budget by 500 B.C., and the operations were probably sufficiently sophisticated to include the mechanical features of ladders, hoists, pulleys, axles, and an evident plan to the system of shafts and galleries still in evidence (Bromhead "Seventeenth Century" 2). The deepest shaft reached 117.6 m, and was limited by the water table. The ores gathered within the mines consisted primarily of lead and silver, but also included components of zinc, and iron. The miners themselves, drawn from the slave class and despised by their more genteel chroniclers, worked with wrought iron chisels, hammers, and wedges, and wore lamps to illuminate their way through the shafts (Bromhead "Seventeenth Century" 3-4). The Laurion mines are mentioned in the surviving works of the orator Demosthenes, whose preserved discourses reveal their status as an essential contributor to the city's revenues.

Geometric period not only themes connected to the Trojan war, but also evidence

of a growing trend away from notions of myth and epic and toward a rationalist

philosophy that culminates in the age of Plato and Aristotle.[30]

The problem of structural unity in the Homeric epic can be mitigated by a fuller

consideration of the forces that bring the narrative toward an effective point of

resolution. In the *Iliad* and, I shall argue, in subsequent epics, the narrative form

follows a historical blueprint: the intervention of more elaborate metalworking

technologies has the dual effect of prompting simultaneous and increasingly

sophisticated economic growth and development of both military and agricultural

technology. These related factors are the narrative centerpiece of any epic and are

essential for its development and resolution. In military milieu, the fighters with

superior numbers and weapons win the war; in a travel motif, the journey ends with

some form of resolution connected with a reclaiming of one's properties and privilege

and so has a quasi-military effect itself.

Warfare in the Iliad: *Bronze Artifacts from the Past vs. Contemporary Weapons of Iron*

In the most basic way, even the shield of Ajax, as described in his violent

struggle with the Trojan champion Hector in Book VII, illustrates the intense

connection between metalworking and economy that existed in the world of the

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[30] Geometric artwork is important to the student of Homer in two ways. First, it provides a document of daily activity contemporary to the period of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, including battle scenes that reveal typical iron age weapons: swords, spears, bridles, chariots, etc. Secondly, and more critically, Geometric art depicts visually the aesthetic form that corresponds to the narrative forms captured in Homeric oral versifying. Within this narrative framework, the components of Homer's narrative involving weapons, metalworking, battle, and underworld imagery mark important transitional points in the development of events. Ultimately, these scenes reveal the connections between metals, metalworking, and epic narrative that are of significance to the student of Homer.

Homeric epic. The design and fabric of the shield—seven hides thick covered with cast bronze—is described in detail, as is the manner of its construction. Most significantly, Homer devotes great attention to the shield's durability when Ajax uses it to fend off Hector's spear attacks. Ultimately, writes Page, Ajax stands as "the only person in the whole Greek Epic so described: the uniqueness and aptness of his description indicate again that the tradition has preserved not only the Mycenaean shield but also the name of its owner" so that

> [i]f Ajax and his shield are inseparable, it follows that the person
>
> of Ajax was celebrated in poetry when the tower shield was in
>
> vogue; and that is long before the Trojan War. The magnet of the
>
> Trojan War has attracted this hero of earlier adventures. (235)[31]

The shield of Ajax is simply the most scrutinized of many of the battle implements depicted in Homer's epics. And given their treatment of the epic subjects of battle, of loyalty, and of kingship, it is not surprising that both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* represent the arts of metalworking most vividly in descriptions of weapons. Homer shows the significance of metals and metalworking not only in the descriptions of weaponry and armaments, but also in the gifts exchanged by the epic figures that shore up their occasional loyalties toward one another.

In Homer's allusions to metals, bronze is used principally in description, and the poet's allusions are principally utilitarian—in epithets and descriptions of the implements of battle, descriptions consistent with Mycenaean designs for helmets, shields, spears, and armor. It is reductive to say that these allusions to bronze appear

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[31] See pp. 233-34.

entirely in descriptive epithets that enable the poet(s) to adhere to the metrical requirements of his hexametric epic verse form. Also they are given a history and a connection to deity that enhances the epic character of the combat. Ultimately, it is feasible to note that their purpose is at once metrical and descriptive; they serve to enhance the Mycenaean character of the weapons and warriors in the poem's heroic plot. Perhaps the best illustration of this pattern is evident in Book 5, when the poet alludes to Hector's helmet of gleaming bronze three times within a space of eleven lines (V, 780-91). This example is the most specific illustration of the poem's general character for representing arms and armor as epithets that preserve the hexametric form of epic verse. Ultimately, its allusions to bronze appear essentially in three venues: in descriptive epithets of warriors and battle, in descriptions of weapons and armor in battle, and in scenes in which armor is stripped and used as a trophy that measures one's greatness in battle.

The descriptions of various warriors highlight their spectacular battle-gear. Early in Book II, Agamemnon is roused by a dream to realize that he must proceed without Achilles. Moving toward the Argive ships to summon his gathered forces, he grabs his royal scepter and silver studded sword (53-54) and arms himself in bronze (56). Later in Book II, the poem reveals that Agamemnon's scepter is the work of Haphaestus (120-26), whose skilled labors connect the divine world of Olympus with the turbulent mortal world on the outskirts of Troy. Later yet, as the Argive chief presides over his assembled forces, the poem again alludes to Agamemnon's glorious bronze armor (670-72), a detail that asserts his preeminence over the collected forces drawn form the four corners of the Greek world. Finally, as he prepares to withstand

the surge of Trojan warriors attacking the ramparts of the Argive encampment in

Book XI, Agamemnon's glorious bronze armor is again featured. Each element in his

armor is described in detail according to its appearance as well as to its history,

including his well-ornamented greaves, breastplate, sword, shield, spear, and helmet

(17-52). Each component of Agamemnon's arsenal is given a connection to the

Olympian otherworld, and collectively the ensemble of arms and armor enables the

poet(s) to connect the struggle over Helen to the larger struggles of Olympian deities in

conflict with one another.

Agamemnon's brother Menelaus, whose effort to avenge the kidnapping of his

bride Helen represents the poem's essential struggle, is also made more magnificent

through descriptions of his armor. In his duel with Paris in Book III, he is saved from

the Trojan prince's brazen spear point by his shield and returns the parry with a series of

blows of his own that brings his opponent to the brink of death (413-35). The poem

highlights not only the urgency of the two warriors engaged in bloody combat but also

their fierceness with descriptions of bronze weapons shattering from the harsh demands

of combat (406, 416, 421-22).

The Argive Menelaus, whose brazen spear and sword are unequal to the rigors

of battle, is the victim of weapons shattering in the heat of battle. In subsequent battle

scenes, the intensity and ferocity of battle is highlighted by the clashing and shattering

of bronze spears against armor as the poem describes the combat and deaths of

individual warriors. This feature is a prominent component of Book XII, which relates

how the Trojan armies storm the rampart that separates the Argive ships from the

coastlines of the eastern Aegean. In these descriptions, the poem highlights the grisly

consequences of bronze arms insufficient to the demands upon them. In particular, lines 210-24 allude to no less than eight separate deaths in battle, describing the death-blows of spears and swords penetrating helmets and breastplates in vivid, almost pornographic detail. In these descriptions the allusions to bronze are incidental to the graphic quality of violence but underscore both their significance to the hexametric requirements of oral versification as well as relevance to epic battle imagery. That is, a battle description without colossal warriors shattering weapons on one another and dying in horrifying, gruesome, and spectacular detail falls short in epic imagery and form.

Within the conventions of epic description, the structural weaknesses of bronze weapons are revealed in a spectacular fashion in the vivid battle scenes. Similarly, the appearance of warriors in arms, the details of their armaments, the stripping of armor and weapons from vanquished combatants, and the working of metals into arms and armor must also be characterized in kind in larger-than-life detail. At select points throughout its narrative, the *Iliad* offers brutal battle imagery and a series of individual, localized conflicts over arms and corpses. Such struggles are essential components of the economy of warriors, an economic system built upon the currency of stripped and stolen arms and ransomed corpses. For example, as the battle rages into Book XVII, the poem offers details that reveal how Zeus' loyalty toward the Trojans is soon to be abandoned. The first clue occurs soon after Hector dons the battle garments of Achilles' slain comrade. Menelaus, desperate to keep Patroclus' corpse from the Trojans, vanquishes the noted Trojan warrior Euphorbus (52-55). Witnessing this conquest, Hector re-enters the fray. With uncharacteristic fury, Menelaus repels the

charging Trojan champion and, realizing his dire circumstances, quickly recruits

Ajax to aid him. The pair fight desperately to keep their dead compatriot out of

Hector's hands, ultimately managing over the course of Book XVII to move the corpse

to safe terrain despite a series of assaults upon them (XVII, 143-47, 618-20, 826-30).

Meanwhile, Hector learns that the Lycians, allies essential to the defense of Troy, have

abandoned their cause, distraught at the loss of Sarpedon, their leader. Led by a

dispirited Glaucus, they have left only a small portion of their original number and,

ready to retreat, plot to ransom their fallen commander's corpse (159-93). Ultimately,

Hector's finest moment—the conquest of the noble Patroclus and the stripping of the

armor of the great Achilles—turns out also to be the moment when, as fated, good

fortune and divine favor begin to abandon his cause. Even as Ajax decries what he

sees as Zeus' continued favor toward the Trojans (XVII, 708-28), Zeus, pitying the

decimated Argives, creates the circumstances that enable the enraged Achilles to re-

enter the battle. With Antilochus' message to Achilles early in Book XVIII, the tide of

battle turns to the favor of the Argives.

Most of the descriptions of bronze armor in the poem serve to enhance the

forcefulness of death blows that penetrate the shields. Beyond the shield of Achilles,

which serves as the artistic and narrative centerpiece of the poem, certain other shields

are given distinct attention and stand out for their ornate descriptions as much as for

their historical significance. For example, Ajax's shield stands out as much to the

anthropologist as to the military historian. Early Mycenaean Geometric pottery reveals

that bronze warrior shields were circular and sized to protect mostly the torso, and the

appearance of Ajax's body shield, which, according to archaeological evidence, didn't

appear until the time of the poems themselves, implies an anachronism.

Nevertheless, the poem goes into some detail to describe the craft of the shield's maker

Tychius of Hyle (VII, 253-58), who crafted it from seven stretched hides covered with a

layer of bronze. The shield proves its worth by barely withstanding Hector's hurled

spear (284-89), a blow that pierces all but a single hide. As Ajax parries the blow

against Hector's round shield, he manages to draw blood. Enraged, Hector hurls a

jagged boulder at his opponent, a blow that is again rendered ineffective by the shield's

durable construction. Significantly, the contest represents the best illustration of the

contrast of Mycenaean and Homeric weaponry. Ajax's weapons are ahead of their time

and perhaps help contribute to his prowess as a great warrior.

Collectively, Books XVI-XIX represent the most vivid demonstration of the

bronze-based warrior currencies operating in a system of economies suitable for a world

at war. Intangible characteristics such as loyalty, bravery, and valor are marked by the

tangible signifiers of plunder, pillage, and a verbal record of one's achievements. The

battle turns on the interchange of the bronze-based "commerce" of war—stripping

armor, securing the corpses of the fallen (and therefore, assuring their "fit" burial), and

exemplifying one's fitness for battle. Throughout this system of exchange, the

blacksmith's labors are the most important common denominator, and the relationship

of Haphaestus to the narrative is revealed as his labors turn the tide of battle toward the

Argives.

Allusions to Iron in Homeric Epic

In its allusions to the more precious metals—not only gold and silver, but, most

importantly, iron—the poem diverges from the habit demonstrated in its allusions to

bronze, which serve to preserve the metrical demands of oral composition while providing a record of weaponry in the Bronze Age. In contrast, the poem's allusions to iron consistently reveal a stronger engagement with the vehicles of metaphor and symbolism. As a valued metal, iron has a status comparable to gold. In a divine realm, it is portrayed with a degree of strength that can keep even the gods in confinement. In more worldly environs, iron is depicted first as a measure of value and prestige, but it is also a marker of volatility and a symbol of steadfastness. As an epithet, it is applied not to warriors' armor and weapons, but rather to their hearts, minds, and temperaments; allusions to iron serve to capture the rage, resolve, and determination of the *Iliad's* most powerful figures—Zeus, Agamemnon, and Achilles. Moreover, the poem works to preserve the archaic meanings implied in iron for a world that was well acquainted with its great utility.

The poem's heavy emphasis on bronze armor and weapons represents a good illustration of Page's thesis that "many of the old Mycenaean phrases—formulas indispensable in the making of oral verse on these subjects—were used perpetually, more or less unaltered" (259). The poem's heavy emphasis on bronze breastplates, spear tips, shields, and helmets is attributable not so much to the preeminence of bronze metalworking in the poets' world but rather to their efforts to preserve the inherited bricolage of oral rhapsody inherited by the poem's various composers. Put simply, while various warriors—most notably Hector, Agamemnon, and Patroclus (wearing Achilles' armor)—might have bronze helmets, breastplates, and spear tips, they have iron hearts, constitutions, and resolve. For instance, Agamemnon is described as an "Iron Warrior" in Book VII. More directly, Achilles is described as "iron hearted" by

his Argive cohorts when visited by the embassy in Book IX (602), by the visiting

Patroclus in Book XVI (37), by the dying Hector in Book XXII (421), and by the

grieving Priam, who has come to beg the return of his son's defiled corpse in the

concluding episode in Book XXIV (608). Further, as he pays tribute to Patroclus in the

funeral pyre scene in Book XXIII, he is said to lose his burning "iron rage" (203). These

descriptions, most likely the remnants of contributions by Bronze Age composers, are

calculated not only to enhance Achilles' mythic stature, but also to affirm his

connection to the gods.

This connection is affirmed by a series of other allusions to iron, which show it

to be the metal fit to confine even the gods. In Book V, for example, Diomedes'

rampage through the Trojans prompts Aphrodite to assume the form of a Trojan

warrior, eager to protect her son Aeneas. Diomedes engages in battle with her and

injures her with a blow of his sword before she is able to escape. As he pursues her he

issues taunts that cause her to seek the aid of her brother Ares—the god of War and a

friend to the Trojan cause—who leads her out of harm's way. Shaken from her injury

at the hands of a mortal, she is comforted by her mother Dione, who recounts other

instances when gods had sustained injuries from mortal hands. She recounts Ares'

capture and confinement at the hands of the giants Ephiales and Otus, who bound him

with iron chains and set him in a brazen cauldron, keeping him there for a period of

thirteen months before he could escape. Later, in the beginning of Book VIII, Zeus

summons all gods to an Olympian summit and reaffirms his loyalty to the Trojans. Any

god disobeying the mandate for his Olympian cohorts not to engage in battle with

mortals, he threatens, will be banished to Tartarus. There the offender will be, like

Ares, held captive in a brazen threshold behind iron gates (VIII, 1-19). Still later,
after Diomedes has slain Hector's driver Eniopeus, Zeus sends a thunderbolt to repel his
advancing chariots. Recognizing his disadvantage, Diomedes reverses his course.
Recognizing that the gods are not favoring him, he retreats, proclaiming that it is
fruitless to challenge Zeus, who is stronger than iron (VIII, 149-64). In these contexts,
iron is represented as the metal that keeps the gods confined; only Zeus has the ability
to break its grip. It is given a superhuman stature in these examples, which supply the
connotation that the value of iron is above and beyond its mere utility.

Even in allusions placed outside of the Olympian realm—specifically, within the
ebb and flow of battle—iron is portrayed in a context suggesting that warriors hold it
above the more utilitarian bronze. In Book VI, for example, the Argive Menelaus has
captured the Trojan Adrestus, holding him at spearpoint. The Trojan pleads for his life,
promising the Argive a multitude of precious metals as ransom for his life. He offers
bronze, gold, and plenty of iron (55-57), a detail reiterating the status of iron as a
precious metal. In Book XXIII, as the grieving Argives memorialize Patroclus in a
series of funeral games, a lump of iron sits among the cauldrons, mules, stallions, and
slave women set aside as prizes (298-301). Later, a lump of iron is awarded to one
Polypoetes, who has put this ingot farther than any of his competitors (927-41).
Affirming its value, Achilles boasts that such an ingot can keep a man with a healthy
supply of iron to last him five years. Finally, a series of iron axes is the award given in
the subsequent contest, an archery competition won by Teucer, whose skills as an
archer the poem has already given great attention to (942-78). In these passages, iron is
represented in a curious context that combines its status as a precious metal with

suggestions that its utilitarian value is vividly apparent. The possible late addition of Book XXIII, an oddly placed interlude of feasting and games appearing just after the battle's culminating moment, might serve as an explanation for representing iron in a way that connects its precious status with its utilitarian ends. Nevertheless, the two prizes jointly suggest utility—the ingot and the axes alike are the prizes awarded to warriors possessing superior physical skills, but they are presented not as tokens of achievement but rather as things to be made use of. In these examples, the functions of economy and utility are combined and imply that Book XXIII was included by a post-Bronze Age poet, one for whom iron represented not something to be hoarded but something to be used.

Further, when the poem does allude to iron in a utilitarian fashion—most vividly, in a scant few descriptions of weapons and booty—it does so most consistently in contexts that depict it as a non-precious metal. This conclusion, expressed originally in the nineteenth-century scholarship of Lang and Seymour, is examined in the introduction of the recent translation of the poem by Robert Fagles. In his introduction, Fagles accounts for this dilemma by mentioning Pandarus' iron-tipped arrow and a simile of trees felled with an iron axe, both in Book IV. These utilitarian examples of iron suggest, he argues, the inclusion of later additions to the original corpus of Homeric tales that were combined over centuries to create the narrative of the *Iliad* as it exists today.[32]

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[32] Overall, in its allusions to iron, the poem is consistently more preoccupied with its symbolic and metaphoric possibilities. Nevertheless, as a metaphor and as a metal alike, iron is given a mythic stature that surpasses the more utilitarian allusions to bronze in epithets, arming scenes, and in descriptions of particular weapons. In this way, the heroic character of bronze age Mycenaean battle tales in the 12th century B.C. were preserved for audiences in the 8th century Attic peninsula even during the four-century interlude when iron-working technologies begin to take hold.

Of course, all of the poem's descriptions of weapons, arms, and metalworking are secondary to Books XIX and XX, which describe the forge of Haphaestus and his labors in making the storied shield of Achilles. The Olympian blacksmith's labors represent a link between the mortal world of the Myrmidon commander and the divine world of his mother Thetis. The image of his labor, as envisioned by Geometric artists, is depicted in the picture on the previous page. It appears on a Geometric-period Attic vase of the 6th century B.C. and is characterized as both a typical Greek shaft furnace (Tylecote 45) and, more specifically, as an image of the forge of Haphaestus itself (fig. 11). Recognizing the peril faced by her son's army, Thetis elicits Haphaestus' help, hoping that he can fashion magical armor for Achilles. Reaching him, she finds him busily engaged in a task to finish a set of twenty-wheeled cauldrons to serve guests at his mansion. However, the Olympian blacksmith is only too happy to help the goddess who came to his aid when Hera had banished him to the depths of the Ocean. As he sets aside his tools to hear her plea, his shop is described in some detail; it consists of a bellows, an anvil, an assortment of tools, and a strongbox to contain them (XIII, 479-91). At this point in the narrative, divine sanction mainly in the favor of Zeus turns toward Agamemnon's charges. Equally significant is the involvement of Hephaestus, whose labors ultimately provide the Argives with their greatest advantage. Nevertheless, through Book XVIII several patterns and details are evident in the battle imagery chosen by the poet to depict the act of war and the ancillary codes of behavior that surround it. These codes, evident in the descriptions of

These developments, evident in the time when "Homer" composed his epic, ultimately came to transform warfare and commerce alike in the centuries that follow him.

armor, weapons, and battle imagery, reveal the relationship between the related proto-industrial vocations of deforestation, metalworking, and war.

Of course, the significance of metalworking is illustrated most dramatically in this chapter, where Haphaestus, Hera's lame son, demonstrates the transformative qualities in his craft. At home amid the bellows and cauldrons of his hand-built bronze castle, he is hard at work when summoned by Achilles' mother, the goddess Thetis, to the Argives' aid. At her bidding, he crafts a suit of armor made of durable silver, gold, and bronze, complete with helmet, breastplate, shield, and shoes. The most striking piece the divine blacksmith creates is the shield, which features a visionary scene depicting the possible outcomes of the Trojan war. These include either peace and justice, as captured in one city engaged in song, festival, and debate; order and prosperity, as depicted in the scenery of abundantly yielding farmland and herds of livestock grazing peacefully; and strife and discord, as shown in the image of a city besieged by an attacking army. In this Homeric vision of the cosmos, the entire range of world possibilities is represented in a way that anticipates the cosmic visions of future epic poets. And descriptions of ornately worked shields and arms are not unique to the corpus of Homeric poetry.

In Book XVIII, as Thetis visits Haphaestus on behalf of her son, Achilles mournfully prepares the corpse of his comrade Patroclus for its journey to the underworld. Combining elements of decorative metalworking in bronze, tin, gold, and silver (XVIII, 554-5), Haphaestus renders a scene that compares thematically with the images appearing on the shield of Heracles. Across the shield's five layers of metal, Haphaestus works a masterpiece of mystical imagery. Varying from the concentric

design portrayed in the shield of Heracles, the shield of Achilles presents a panorama of greater coherence. Instead of alluding directly to the concentric divisions between scenes as depicted in the Hesiodic vision, the Homeric vision suggests the blending of one scene into the next and the greater causal interaction between scenes. Although the two shields are similar in design and feature some common images, they differ in their symbolic emphasis, as the Homeric vision implies an interrelation between the scenes as depicted in the concentric layers. Beginning with the celestial realms of sky, stars, moon, and sun and the terrestrial components of sea and earth, Haphaestus' creative efforts recall the creation of the cosmos in the Book of Genesis (XVIII, 565-71). Following this, the blacksmith depicts two cities. In one, weddings are celebrated, and the assembled throngs rejoice in the brides' betrothals as they dance and make music within the town's marketplace. A quarrel of two townsmen, disputing the murder of one's kinsman, disrupts this celebratory idyll (572-81). With the intercession of a judge and jury, the pleas of both parties are presented. An award of two bars of gold awaits the judge who renders the most just verdict. Meanwhile, around the other city the threat of violence is omnipresent. An army camps outside its gates, ready to plunder its riches. The city's defenders brace for siege, as its other residents take cover (593-601). Ares and Pallas, appearing magnificent in their golden armor, quietly lead a detachment out of the city gates toward a field where livestock herd, hoping to launch a surprise attack against their encamped enemies. Discovered, they are attacked, and as the battle rages, the figures of Strife, Death, and Havoc enter the fray. The bloodshed begins and escalates quickly (601-29).

Beyond this scene, Haphaestus depicts a fallow field being worked by teams of plowmen. As the crews proceed along the furrows, the churning soil appears as gold, a testimony to the blacksmith's fine craftwork. Beyond this field, harvesters reap the yields on another, under the watchful eye of a king. Workers gather and bind the sheaves as heralds off to the side prepare a harvest feast under a massive oak by slaughtering an ox (639-54). Off in the distance, the blacksmith forges a wondrous vineyard full of ripening grapes. A fence, inlaid with bluish tint, circumscribes the scene, depicting the labors of youthful fruit pickers and celebrating the vines' abundance as a young boy plays upon a lyre.

Beyond this pastoral vineyard scene, tin and gold-forged bulls rumble about a farmyard, driven into a line by drovers as dogs nip at their heels. A pair of lions instantaneously appears, attacking the line and devouring one of the bulls. As the beast is rent, the hounds and hands cower alike (670-85). Beyond this violent image, the blacksmith fashions one more appealing in its Dionysian imagery: as shepherds tend their flocks in a shaded glen, he portrays a dancing circle comparable to that laid out by Daedalus in Knossos for Ariadne. Finely-clad boys and girls exchange gifts and glances, dancing with acrobatic twists and turns in circles and then rows while also celebrating their youth (689-707). As is the case with the shield of Heracles, the Ocean frames the outermost ring of the shield of Achilles, making it indestructible. Concluding his labors, Haphaestus quickly fashions for Thetis' son a breastplate and helmet, and greaves of pliant tin.

The scene on Achilles' shield is significant for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it represents the underworld segment of the epic narrative that conventionally confirms

the hero's fitness for victory. In a manner that anticipates the more precise underworld geography of Virgil and, later, the Christian world, Homer's underworld is a shadowy "otherworld" which contains all of those transformative agencies created in the human world, one that features the smith's forge as its most prominent motif. Secondly, the working of metals to produce Achilles' shield and breastplate represents a major shift in the Argive conflict with Troy. Zeus' favor with the Trojans has sustained them to this point, but the sentiments of the other gods incline toward Agamemnon, Menelaus, and the collective segments of the Argive army. Through Haphaestus' working of real-world materials into invincible protection for the preeminent Argive warrior, Hera, Apollo, Athena and others collectively supplant Zeus' favor toward Hector and the Trojans and ultimately turn the tide of the epic battle toward the emerging Greek forces. The armor is invested with a sort of supernatural commerce that connects it to successes in battle and favor with the gods. Ultimately, the Homeric battle epic can be read as an affirmation of that world's intuitive apprehension of the connection between metals, metalworking, and military might.

Of course, the shield of Achilles is much more than a piece of ornate metalwork or a gaudily decorated battle implement. It depicts elements of narrative, suggesting the unfolding of events progressing from discord and conflict toward a peaceful, pastoral agrarian utopia. It has been the subject of numerous scholarly inquiries, almost all of which universally recognize its symbolic service as an organizing feature of the poem. And like the five ages of man described in Hesiod's *Works and Days* and later in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it is not the only occasion in classical literature when a vision of history is described according to the related idioms of metals and metalworking. But a

more literal-minded consideration of the significance of metals and those who

work them deserves attention. Like the shield of Heracles, the shield of Achilles depicts

scenes that allude to its purpose in battle. In serving in the unpleasant but eternally

necessary exercises of war, the shield reveals its ultimate function, which is to protect

and create an idyllic world of harmony in which crops produce bountiful yields as

youths celebrate their good fortune as a part of a constant, repetitive cycle.[33] The vision

represented by the description of the shield of Achilles is credited to the Olympian

blacksmith, and it reinforces his significance as a mystical figure. Stanley describes the

shield of Achilles as the centerpiece of Homer's narrative technique, explaining how it

reveals a pattern of "ring composition" which insures the poem's unity of design and

the "internal organization" of its narrative components (6-9).[34]

It is no accident that the poem invests the Olympian blacksmith with the

organizing power for its narrative. And his influence as an agent of transformation and

an organizer of structures and interrelations extends beyond *The Iliad*, for the poem

consciously reveals the transformative powers of Haphaestus' real-world counterparts.

Significantly, just as Haphaestus' works reveal the concentric structures that organize

the narrative, blacksmiths and metalworks of the Mycenaean and Homeric eras likewise

provided the minerals, metals, and weapons, and later, munitions that served as the

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[33] In his book *The Shield of Homer*, scholar Keith Stanley bases an interpretation of the shield around the views offered originally in G.E. Lessing's *Laocoon*, a work displaying the finest features of the traditions of German Classicism (see Stanley 5). Stanley's contrast of the scenery of the shield of Achilles with the images on the shield of Aeneas, a conscious imitation appearing some seven hundred and fifty years later, can be applied equally well to the roughly contemporary shield of Heracles.

[34] This technique influences the narrative in such a way that the ultimate benefits can thus be summarized: "...the Homeric style is not simply a vehicle developed to ensure coherence in sequential narrative. It offers a variety of means for organizing the sequence into coexistent patterns of emphasis, parallel, and contrast that are not merely optional but, as we shall see, habitual to our poet and essential to understanding of his art" (Stanley 9).

organizing elements in their social and economic spheres. As Haphaestus' labors reveal, the blacksmith and metalworking craftsmen, while often working in the margins, were nevertheless at the center of the economic and social development of their world.

Ultimately, metal weaponry is shown as the currency that signifies value in both economic and social terms. The warrior ethic has close ties with the systems of social stratification that mark the aristocracy; in many ways, these systems are conjoined by the currency of metals. The other most significant illustration of this value system occurs in Book XVI as the brooding Achilles, still exiling himself to the battle's margins, loans his arms to his comrade Patroclus and agrees to let his comrade take charge of his Myrmidons. Having seen firsthand the Trojan champion Hector prompting his armies to the brink of victory despite the best efforts of Ajax and Diomedes, Patroclus begs the exiled leader of the Myrmidons to put his rage to rest and forget the slight of Agamemnon (XVI, 32-53).

Unable to forgive the Argive chieftain's egregious violation of the warrior ethic that has caused him to lose his loyalty to the Greek cause, Achilles nevertheless grants his comrade a single concession: he will allow Patroclus to lead the Myrmidons into battle while wearing his storied armor (XVI, 68-84). Believing such a gesture will provide a psychological advantage, frightening the Trojans and causing them to retreat, Achilles also recognizes the strategic advantages to be gained by supplementing the Argive troops with his own charges. Nevertheless, he is quick to put limits on the amount of ground that Patroclus might gain in repelling the Trojans (XVI, 96-113). Wishing to regain a measure of immortality for himself should his charges bring him victory, Achilles instructs his general to proceed only as far as to repel the enemy from

the mass of Argive ships. As Hector slashes at the ashen spear of the great

warrior Ajax, the Telemonian warrior recognizes that he must forsake his brave defense

of the Argive ramparts.

Patroclus then arms for battle in Achilles' armor in one of the poem's more

important arming scenes, donning the bronze greaves, breastplate, and helmet and

equipping himself with the Myrmidon leader's silver-studded, bronze-bladed sword and

spears. He leaves behind his leader's heavy spear of Pelian ash, knowing that only

Achilles has the skill to wield it effectively in battle (XVI, 156-73). Patroclus then

mounts Achilles' war team and prepares to lead his battle-hungry Myrmidons into the

fray.[35]

The scene is significant in its illustration of the value of battle gear as a measure

of military stature. Only as valued a comrade as Patroclus is deserving of the honor of

wearing Achilles' armor into battle. As the poem lists the various generals under

Achilles' command (XVI, 199-248), the symbolic stature of his armor becomes evident.

The Homeric similes describing the charges under Patroclus' command reinforce their

singleness of purpose and their loyalty to their leader: they are described first as bricks

in a wall (249-60), and later, as swarming wasps stirred from a roadside nest (303-13).

Each simile enhances the suggestion that their principal desire is to gain glory for their

exiled leader Achilles and to placate his rage at Agamemnon's slight. This suggestion

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[35] Page elucidates the apparent incoherence between when Patroclus' dons Achilles armor and when Hector strips it from him: "In general the structure of the Iliad is loosely knit: there is the sharpest contrast between the excellence of the narrative art *within* an episode and the weakness of connection (very often) *between* episodes. Patroclus is sent to deceive the Trojans, especially Hector, who will suppose him to be Achilles because he is dressed in Achilles' armour; that is one episode, brilliantly narrated. But the connnexion between the two episodes is wonderfully feeble,--in the second episode the poet actually forgets that Patroclus is supposed to be masquerading as Achilles" (260).

is made fact when Patroclus, wearing his commander's gear, exhorts his charges

to fight for the glory of their exiled leader and place this imperative above other

concerns (313-22).

Completing the Homeric Picture: Metals, Metalworking, and the Underworld in the Odyssey

In contrast to the vivid drama of the battle in the *Iliad*, Homer's other epic

highlights the craft, skill, and improvisational acuteness of Odysseus. Despite the

narrative's focus on the journey, several features of it still reveal clues about Homeric

perceptions of the relationship between metalworking and militarism. While the

Odyssey displays the themes of mining and metalworking to a much less developed

degree than does the *Iliad*, it still engages them to a notable degree. For instance, as

Telemachus sets sail upon his journey to escape the conspiring suitors, he goes ashore at

Pylos, where the aged King Nestor greets him. In deference to his guest's father

Odysseus, and to the goddess Athena (who, disguised as Mentor, accompanies the

young prince), Nestor commissions his goldsmith Laerces to decorate two heifer's

horns with ornate gold sheathing. In this instance, the gold has symbolic value both as

tribute and as currency. It serves to honor the deity, while at the same time it represents

Nestor's tribute to his lost comrade at arms.

In Book VI, on Zeus' mandate Odysseus prepares to leave the jealous Calypso,

with whom he had remained in uneasy captivity for years. He is ushered by the goddess

to the coast, where he is given an axe, an adze, and sufficient supplies to send him on

his journey. With his characteristic ingenuity, Odysseus fells a sufficient number of

trees to fashion a sturdy raft, which the goddess then fortifies with enough rations to

equip him for a lengthy journey. Again, the passage reveals a connection between timbering and seafaring, one of the significant forces that modified the eastern Mediterranean landscape.

In a narrative more preoccupied with travel and survival than with war and glory, the natural emphasis of the *Odyssey* focuses on the implements of transport rather than those of battle. However, certain allusions—most particularly toward the poem's end but also at other select locations—retain an *Iliadic* character. That is, they likewise preserve the effects of warrior ethics and commerce, hint at an age of transition between bronze and iron-based metalworking, invest the art of metalworking with an otherworldly significance, and portray a vision of the underworld that borrows from the motifs of mining, metallurgy, and militarism. As a travel narrative, the *Odyssey* retains only bits and pieces of the battle images of the *Iliad*. Nevertheless, particular passages preserve the Bronze-Age elements in this Iron-Age work, investing the poem's allusions to metalworking with a symbolic significance. In Odysseus' homeward excursion through the Mediterranean to Ithaca, as in Telemachus' journeys outward to learn the fate of his father, the commerce of gift-exchange is of paramount importance.

Beyond Bronze and Iron: the Odyssey's *Allusions to Trade, Gold, and Other Metals*

The *Odyssey* goes to great lengths to develop the importance of the gift-giving economy in the domestic sphere. As in the *Iliad*, the significance of gift exchange helps to solidify relations and loyalty among the aristocratic classes. To establish the value of these aristocratic relationships, the poem provides descriptions of the value of individual gifts as determined not by their material wealth, but rather by their mythic significance. In this context, objects made by skilled metalworkers assume a greater

value. For example, Odysseus is given a series of gifts from his Phaecian hosts,

who, eventually recognizing the stature of their guest, bestow gifts of appropriate

mythic value. Initially branded a profiteering trader by Laodamus, Odysseus must

respond to the lowest form of insult in the aristocratic value system (VIII, 183-90).

Significantly, this insult echoes the charge levied against him by the Cyclops

Polyphemus as he recounts the episode to his hosts later on (IX, 283-7). When his

identity is recognized and established both by the stories he tells and by his athletic

feats, Odysseus is rewarded in kind by his well heeled hosts. As the Phaecians, ever

eager to observe aristocratic protocols, make good on their promise to deliver the

wandering Ithacan to his homeland, they bestow upon him a variety of tripods,

cauldrons, bars of gold, and robes (XIII, 246-50). While the aristocratic protocols

demand the exchange of gifts to mark status and solidify loyalties, the *Odyssey* depicts

the practice of trading for textiles, items of ornate metalwork, and horses as the

pedestrian actions of the low-born.

Likewise, as the youthful Telemachus escapes from the conspiring suitors and

heads off to sea in search of his lost father, he too is treated in a fashion appropriate to

customs of aristocratic gift-giving. Visiting the aged warrior Nestor, the Pylian king,

Telemachus fears upon arrival that he is unfit to present himself to so esteemed a figure.

In the guise of Mentor, the Goddess Athena assures the reluctant prince that he's fit for

the reception that awaits him. And Nestor responds in kind, inviting the strangers into

his palace's feast and greeting them with a sip of wine from a golden cup. With such

formalities behind them, Telemachus must then endure the same accusation his father

will face in the Phaecian court: he is a either a profiteer seeking to gain from trade or

worse, a plunderer (III, 77-83). Like his aristocratic compatriots, Nestor's stature

is affirmed by his means as a host and a gift-giver. As his aristocratic identity is

likewise established, Telemachus is feted accordingly. His host commissions his

goldsmith to decorate the horns of a fine heifer, which is in turn slaughtered and

sacrificed to Athena, the divine protector of Odysseus and son. The assembled crowd

then feasts on the slaughtered beast before Telemachus and Pisistratus mount a chariot

and head off from Pylos in search of word about Odysseus.

Establishing an Imagistic Repository for Virgil: Further Connections between Metalworking, Battle, and the Underworld

Haphaestus, the underworld smith, figures in another portion of the story,

serving as the subject for the story told by the bard of the Phaecian King Alcinous. This

episode serves as an interlude in Book VIII, when Odysseus takes part in the festivals

celebrating his arrival to the bronze-covered and ornately decorated Phaecian palace

(VII, 94-109), a structure protected by silver guard dogs poised at either side of its

threshold. Golden figurines of young boys encircle the hall holding torches to

illuminate the palace feasts. Again, the stature of its residents is announced by the

ornate metal decorations, revealing how these precious metals served as a marker of

aristocratic status. So, too, the mythic stature of the metalworker is alluded to in the

bard's story, which describes how the cuckolded Olympian blacksmith uses his talents

to fashion chains of golden gossamer to ensnare his wife Aphrodite and her lover Ares

(VIII, 300-410). The story culminates as the gods decide the penalty to be paid by the

captive lover, who is soon released, escaping to Thrace in his humiliation. Retaining the

ambiguous character of the metalworker, the story pays tribute to Haphaestus's

utilitarian talents and ingenuity even as it underscores his subservience to the

more physically gifted members of the Olympian Pantheon. Collectively, the *Odyssey's*

depiction of the ornate decorations of precious metals hints at their proto-economic

function as a marker of wealth and social stature, as implied especially by a mythic

connection between the Olympian and Attic worlds. The poem's depiction of precious

metals in this light provides a context for its portrayal of the more utilitarian metals of

bronze and silver, which retain the same ambiguous character as they do in the *Iliad*.

Allusions to Bronze

With these notable exceptions, it is precisely in the depiction of bronze and iron

which shows how the *Odyssey* retains much of its *Iliadic* character. For example, while

recounting his exploits to the Phaecian court a few books later, Odysseus accepts the

king's gift of a fine, silver-studded sword inlaid with ivory as compensation for

lowbrow insults hurled at him (VIII, 440-52). He then relates how his crew had

enjoyed the goddess Circe's hospitality at Aeaea, recounting his journey amidst the

splendors of Alcinous' bronze-plated castle walls. He describes how, when his crew

had arrived at Circe's lands and ill advisedly began to forage her island for food, the

angry enchantress transforms them into swine. The wily Odysseus, with the help of the

god Hermes, manages to resist the same fate. Bewitching the witch himself with the aid

of a magic potion that renders him immune to her spells, he extracts an oath from her

that she will never do him harm (X, 380-86). At once, he is feted in a kingly manner

and devises a plan to rescue his crew. Securing their transformation from swine back to

seamen, he arranges for all to enjoy the benefits of Circe's hospitality. Taking their fill,

the sailors then plead to resume their journey. Careful not to offend the enchantress,

Odysseus begs her that he and his crew might take their leave. Agreeing, she

states that he must first descend into the underworld to the House of Death to consult

the prophet Tiresias and seek advice about his journey homeward.

The journey is cast as a sojourn to a distant island, and Odysseus is directed to

pay tribute to the restless spirits. He is led to a trench and instructed to fill it with wine,

milk, honey, and barley, and then to slaughter a ram and black ewe. He is to pour their

blood also into the trench and to sacrifice their remains in tribute to Persephone,

goddess of the Underworld and wife of Hades. Upon his return home, he is instructed

to pay special tribute to Tiresias by slaughtering a black ram (X, 569-92). Circe relates

how his prayers will rouse the spirits of the house of the dead, prompting the return of

ghosts who are eager to take their tribute. As his crew prepares to depart, Odysseus

relates to his Phaecian audience the sad tale of Elpenor, who, when overindulgent with

wine and seeking cool night air, strayed from Circe's halls and fell asleep upon her

castle's roof. Roused quickly by the sounds of the departing crew, he plunged from the

roof and snapped his neck, and so journeyed to the house of death himself. The Ithacan

king then steers his ship toward their destination on the ocean's outer reaches; soon they

reach their goal and pay their tributes. His prayers have their effect, prompting a

thronging assembly of brides, youths, old men, sorrowful young women, and, mostly,

armies of battle dead still in their bronze armor and showing fatal wounds inflicted by

bronze spear points (XI, 40-48). The slain seaman Elpenor, who laments his needless,

wine-induced death, is among their number, and he pleads with Odysseus to return to

Aeaea and burn his corpse in full armor so that, in death, he will not go unmourned.

Agreeing to perform this important warrior's rite for his fallen

subordinate, Odysseus then encounters Tiresias, who relates how an angry Poseidon,

eager to avenge the blinding of his son the Cyclops, will imperil the journey back to

Ithaca. He offers cautions on subsequent stages of the journey and alerts the King to the

suitors abuses of his hospitality back home. Tiresias then instructs Odysseus on how to

communicate with other figures in the House of the Dead, interactions that offer a form

of episodic closure to narrative details of the *Iliad*.

In his underworld wanderings, Odysseus meets an assortment of old

acquaintances, including his mother, who pined away with grief for her lost son, a series

of mortal women who'd presumed to love gods, other unfulfilled lovers, and finally

some of his compatriots from the siege of Troy. After prompting from Alcinous to

continue his story despite the late hour, he describes his encounter with the Achaean

commander Agamemnon, who had returned from Troy to die at the hands of Aegisthus,

the lover of his wife Clytemnestra. He then catches sight of his former compatriots

Ajax, Antilochus, and Patroclus before conversing briefly with Achilles, who claims

that he would readily trade the esteemed life in the halls of the dead for the debased life

of the lowest slave (XI, 555-74). Odysseus placates his grief, providing an account of

the bravery of the Pelian warrior's son Neoptolemus in the Trojan war's later phases.

Ajax, still smarting from Odysseus' cunning acquisition of the slain Achilles' arms,

keeps his distance. Other tormented mythological figures, including Minos, Orion,

Tityus, Tantalus, Sisyphus, and Hercules are also within Odysseus' mortal vision,

contributing to an underworld pantheon. This underworld vision is comprised of both

accursed or unfulfilled mortals and also those presuming to long for things beyond their

mortal station. In material terms, the underworld retains the metallic artifacts of both battle and luxury (for instance, Hercules wears his famous golden sword and bow), and those who reside in it have not been properly buried or paid tribute to. In sum, Odysseus witnesses in the underworld a pantheon of figures who have retained their defining features in an environment that is more morally ambiguous than the Christian underworld.

The last details involving bronze are the suitors' arms, which the crafty Odysseus manages to hide as he plots the slaughter of his unwelcome guests in Book XVI. Finally returned to his home, the Ithacan King plots with his son to reason with the suitors and again resorts to his cunning in getting them to see the logic of stowing their arms and spears upstairs to prevent bloody conflict among them when the wine starts to flow. Odysseus tells his son to leave two sets of swords, spears, and bucklers available to them to instigate the slaughter, and to keep the word of his return an absolute secret. He then crafts a plan to reveal his identity, a strategy more revealing of the power of iron than of bronze. Nevertheless, in the carnage that follows, father and son slay the feasting suitors with a ferocity that recalls the battle imagery of the *Iliad*, with full emphasis on wanton bloodshed as prompted by the piercing of bronze spear tips.

Allusions to Iron

In its allusions to bronze, the poem also retains much of the *Iliadic* imagery of battle. It is less descriptive of weapons and, as a travel narrative, is much more sparing of battle imagery. However, its engagement with iron—both as a material for weaponry and as a metaphor—is much more developed than in the *Iliad*. The poem's depiction of

iron continues to exploit its metaphoric possibilities. For example, upon letting

Odysseus resume his journey homeward after his seven-year captivity as her unwilling

concubine, Calypso denies that she has iron-hearted sentiments toward the Ithacan king

(V, 211-12). Later, his demoralized crew begins to chafe under his authority after

losing six of their mates at the hands of Scylla and Charybdis in Book XXII. A

crewman, Eurylochus, begs his captain to embark on the Island of the Sun, complaining

that the Ithacan's iron stamina surpasses that of his waning crew (XII, 302-04).

Remembering Circe's advice that the sacred Cattle of the Sun who reside there must

remain undisturbed, Odysseus reluctantly permits landfall, knowing that his fatigued

and hungry crew would be tempted to slay and roast one of the sacred cattle once their

supplies ran low. As the ship resumes its journey, Zeus exacts his revenge, killing all of

his crew and leaving Odysseus awash in the surging seas, where he manages to land on

Phaecian shores. Finally, as the king is delivered to his home shores by the Phaecians,

he reintroduces himself into the palace under the guise of a traveling beggar. Upon

discovering the identity of her long-lost king when she recognizes a scar upon his leg

from an old hunting injury, his aged nursemaid Eurycleia assures Odysseus that with an

iron resolve she'll keep his identity secret (XXI, 557-58). Collectively, these

intermittent details imply a rhapsodic process in which an improvising poet is making

use of details more from his immediate environment, than from the storehouse of ready-

made phrases available from inherited narrative episodes.

But even as these allusions to iron compare favorably with those in the *Iliad*,

elsewhere the *Odyssey* reflects a greater familiarity with the physical processes of iron-

working that connects the poem more to the poet's world than to the epic world he

chronicles. In Book IX, for example, Odysseus regales his Phaecian hosts with

tales of his journeys, and recounts in particular his encounter with the Cyclops. Plotting

their escape from this most ungracious host, Odysseus and his men sharpen and temper

a piece of wood that sits off to the corner of Polyphemus' cave, one that the one-eyed

monster plans soon to brandish as his club. Doing their work in the monster's absence,

they then await their chance to plan their escape and to pay him back for his having

engorged himself on their shipmates. Having overindulged himself in wine, the drunken

monster falls asleep, and here Odysseus' crewmen find their chance. They stick the

heated staff into the monster's eye and rotate it about, brutally blinding the Cyclops.[36]

Early in Book XXI, Odysseus plots with Telemachus to invent a way to make

the suitors vulnerable to ambush, instructing his son to stow their weapons with his

treasure of riches in an out-of-the-way room at his palace. If the suitors take exception

to his suggestion, Telemachus is instructed to speak in vague terms about their safety,

reasoning that with the spirits flowing and too much iron weaponry about, conditions in

the palace could become dangerous when tongues loosen (XXI, 3-14). Meanwhile,

disguised as the visiting beggar who claims to have known her husband, Odysseus wins

the confidence of Penelope. He learns of her plan to test the suitors by seeing which has

the strength to string her husband's bow and shoot an arrow through twelve iron axe

blades lined up in a row (XXI, 644-52). Her plot to prolong her widowhood—by means

of a ruse to marry when she finishes weaving a tapestry that she unstrings nightly—has

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[36] The brutality of this gesture matches the inhospitability shown by Polyphemus. In fierceness and intensity it is compared both to a shipwright's boring a beam with a drill, and also to a blacksmith plunging a newly-forged axe or adze blade into a vat of water, tempering it and bringing the cold water to a sizzling boil (IX, 426-41). The depiction can be said to represent the first part of an extended, tripartite metaphor, as Odysseus employs forged axe blades in his well-choreographed slaughter of the suitors.

been exposed. With regret she announces to her disguised husband her plans to marry the man most like her husband as determined by his strength and marksmanship. Despite his entreaties that her husband's return is imminent, she intends to proceed with her plan, one that, despite his objections, ultimately plays right into the disguised Odysseus' plot to rid his palace of the unwelcome suitors.

As Book XXII begins, Penelope retreats to the palace's storage vault as the suitors enjoy their midday feast on slaughtered cattle. The slaughter of Odysseus' herds portends their own demise. The poem describes the treasures stored away in the hidden storeroom, including bronze, gold, and wrought works of iron, and of course Odysseus' storied bow—an old gift from the Lacedaemonian Iphitus, to whom the Ithacan king had given a sword and spear in return (XXII, 35-41). As in the *Iliad*, iron in this context is also depicted as a precious metal. The twelve bronze and iron axes are described as trophies (72) and are curiously represented as artifacts of great value, rather than as the utilitarian objects that would be of greater use to the various figures introduced as the herdsmen of the palace swine-, goat-, and cows. Nevertheless, they are depicted as objects of sufficient stature to serve in contests for the high-born, contests calculated to measure the strength and military skills of those representing the warrior aristocracy. Upon Penelope's suggestion the palace visitor, who claims noble birth, is given his chance. With her son's rebuke, she quickly retreats, and Odysseus then takes the bow in hand. And only the returned king—still in disguise as a beggar— is equal to the task of stringing the storied bow with virtuoso ease, much to the disgust of the humiliated suitors. On cue, the palace is secured and the plot proceeds forward.

Odysseus then shoots his bronze-tipped arrow through the carefully-arranged axes, and with this event, the suitor's slaughter begins.

Turning his bronze-tipped arrows upon the most vocal suitor, Antinous, Odysseus begins his rampage through his halls, reclaiming them with each felled suitor. Eurymachus, one of the more sensible suitors, begs for his life and makes a desperate offer to compensate Odysseus for his hospitality, but the Ithacan turns an arrow on him as well. Telemachus quickly joins in the fray, stabbing Amphinomus and then retreating to the storage vault to gather arms to use against the provoked suitors. Joined by the loyal swineherd Eumaus and cowherd Philoetius, who have muted the sounds of slaughter by securing the palace gates, the group quickly discovers the treason of the goatherd Melanthius, who has shown the suitors to their hidden cache of arms. Securing him, they then return to the rout in episodes that rival those in the *Iliad* for their brutality and bloodshed. Aided by Athena, who misdirects the suitors' returning salvos, the foursome kills the remaining suitors as well as the prophet, Leodes. With Telemachus' testimony, the bard Phemius is spared. With the slaughter complete, the disloyal serving women are rounded up. As indicated by the aging nurse Eurycleia, these women had enjoyed illicit liaisons with the suitors, and so are judged equally disloyal. At knifepoint, this shamed assembly is ordered to clean the castle and remove any trace of the slaughter that has just occurred. Their labors complete, Odysseus punishes them with a brutality perhaps more shocking than that shown to the suitors. He hangs them all, showing the severity of the aristocratic codes dictating hospitality. The suitors deserve their brutal deaths, as do the disloyal serving women. In this aristocratic ethos, disloyalty is a sin of the greatest severity.

This point is indicated in Book XXIII, which ends the account of Odysseus' journey home and shows him peacefully reunited with his queen in Ithaca. The poem ends on a rather unsatisfactory note, with no examination of the implications for Odysseus' long journey and subsequent slaughter of the suitors. The aristocratic ethics of hospitality and revenge are maintained, and the poem offers few real-world affirmations of any ethical principles beyond these. Nevertheless, one possible avenue of inquiry is found in this late chapter's depiction of the underworld. This is the domain of warriors who have met their end in battle and of those who have met their end at the blade's or spearpoint's edge under unnatural or morally ambiguous circumstances. The twenty-fourth book, long a topic of debate among the poem's scholars, provides an appropriate epilogue to a story of revenge, cunning, and slaughter.

Summary and Conclusion: Anticipating Virgil and Christianity

In the centuries between the dawn of the Greek empire and the colonial apex of Roman Europe, a pattern of developing state apparatus would come to shape the Homeric vision of the underworld so that it would become less morally ambiguous and more infused with political, social, and economic significance. The transformation of the epic underworld—as shaped by the modifications of early industry and facilitated by the increasing quest for natural resources and the consequent proliferation of currency-based economic systems—is chiefly attributable to the increasing demand for mineral-based trades and skills as driven by the Empire's colonial imperatives.

Collectively the Homeric epics established those patterns that enable modern scholars to read epic literature in economic terms. More importantly, they provided later poets with a vast repository of metalworking, battle, and underworld motifs that

would shape the works of all subsequent composers of epic poetry. One such

epic poet would mine the Homeric treasure trove of metallurgical images roughly eight

centuries later, and with this effort Virgil reinvented Homeric metallurgical and

underworld imagery to promote a multi-cultural and fabricated ethos in support of a

nation-state ideal of empire. Informed by the Homeric vision of the underworld that

Virgil transformed into his own, later classical geographers and historians affirmed and

shaped a lingering suspicion that connected mining and metalworking with underworld

imagery. Their observations provided the raw material that shaped the Christian

connotations of Hell that would be articulated with greater detail and precision in the

medieval world.

Chapter 3: The Politicized Underworld: The Imperial Incentive in the *Aeneid*

Virgilian Appropriation and Reinvention of Homeric Motifs

As Virgilian precursors, the Homeric epics depict a world of mythic heroism, portraying the ethics and protocols of the class of warrior kings and princes and the storied warriors whose loyalties are essential to their purposes. Homeric heroism is characterized by the larger-than-life stature of great warriors whose superhuman prowess enables their greatness in battle. Their stature is measured by the number of corpses they pile up, by the legendary kind and quality of the plunder they acquire, by their alignment with and ability to manipulate the gods, and by their agility in responding to circumstances that would destroy lesser warriors.

In contrast, the Virgilian conception of heroism, as embodied in Aeneas, allows for human emotion and such frailties as doubt, weakness, and uncertainty, for Virgil's hero demonstrates a range of emotions unsuitable to his Homeric precursors; likewise, the *Aeneid's* narrative trajectory is directed toward a specific end—the founding of the Roman empire as espied midway through the story in a prophetic underworld vision. Superficially, of course, Aeneas is a combination of Homeric forms, demonstrating the traveler's wits of Odysseus and the battle skills (the *aristeia*) of Achilles or Hector. He is a traveler as well as a warrior but is entrusted with communal responsibilities beyond these Homeric models and must act—most vividly in his courtship with Dido, but also elsewhere—in a manner demanding a greater emotional complexity than his Iliadic and Odyssean precursors. "...As he begins his quest to found Rome," observes scholar R.D. Williams, Aeneas "is depicted as an absolutely typical Homeric hero, and ... in the

course of the quest he slowly and uncertainly begins to learn that his new civilization will require new ideals of behavior" (84). In this way, Virgilian heroism is an evolution of the Homeric model, portraying a traveler and warrior not seeking victory, vengeance, or a return to his homeland, but instead invested with the power to overcome confusion and self-doubt and to found a new race. Overcoming his envy for his vanquished cohorts killed in the siege of Troy, Aeneas instead effects the fulfillment of divine prophecy. In this context, his brand of heroism is directly counterposed to the Homeric warrior's heroism represented by Turnus, whom Virgil depicts as ill-suited to the task of founding a new civilization.

Nevertheless, the greatness of the Homeric epics remained undisputed to Roman sensibilities, and they offered much to Virgil's effort to articulate an imperial vision of Rome in the turbulent wake churned up by the interruption of the Caesar's imperial rule in the later half of the first century B.C. While an understanding of their fate (and eventual demise) as warriors is a steadfast feature of both Achilles and Hector, Aeneas is faced with a larger struggle that clarifies as the narrative progresses. In this way, Virgilian epic is focused as much on the individual's relationship to historical imperatives as to individual conflicts and therefore more visibly connected to the historical context in which it was written. The *Aeneid's* narrative requires that he must live up to the responsibilities entrusted to him as a survivor of Troy's fall and a recipient of Jupiter's mandate to assimilate his progeny into the Italian and Latin races. In so doing, he will establish Rome as a race, city-state, and empire, a duty requiring skills, sensibilities, and what one might call character more complex and even ambiguous than those demonstrated by his Homeric precursors.

Virgil understood the multifaceted dimensions to his empire's identity,

and in his characterization of heroism displayed an evolution of Homeric models

appropriate to his vision of empire as a political, social, and economic entity.[37] Unlike

Achilles, whose rage must be placated by vengeance, or Odysseus, who first endures the

unjust fates forced upon him by Poseidon and then punishes the suitors with similar

harshness, Aeneas's heroism is different. Ultimately, as a traveler, a warrior, and a

negotiator, his actions are consciously devoted to something larger than his own

ambitions. He acts in service to history and to the Roman empire, and his

characterization as a hero is therefore an evolution of the Homeric vision. To him,

Rome is an abstraction. He sees the empire represented in various prophetic images

which both clarify the past and explain the future. These appear on the murals in

Dido's halls (Book I); in the pageant of heroes he witnesses in his underworld journey

(Book VI); and in the images that appear on the shield that Vulcan fashions for him as

his ultimate confrontation with Turnus approaches (Book VIII).

To the poem's earliest readers, as well as to modern ones, Rome is the political

and economic entity that emerged from Aeneas's legendary efforts, a fact that

increasingly colors his, and our, perceptions of his actions and their implications.

Ultimately, Aeneas is an epic hero whose struggles foreshadow the political, social, and

even economic consequences of what will become the Roman empire. This feature of

the *Aeneid* underscores the significance of Virgil's purposeful appropriation of Homeric

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[37] Williams describes this evolution in his book, *The Aeneid.* He observes that while death in Homeric battle is "an accepted part of the expected circumstances of life" (56), the Virgilian narrative demonstrates a dual focus. It depicts what Williams describes as "the tension between optimism or pessimism," or "between Virgil's public voice extolling the greatness (actual and potential) of Golden Rome and his private voice of sympathy and sorrow over the fate of the lonely individual" (56).

motifs, including those that enable him to conjoin his conception of epic to his vision of empire. Within this context, the Virgilian appropriation of the Homeric imagery of especially metallurgy, timber, warfare, and the underworld assume a greater relevance to the later poet's conception of empire.

The *Aeneid's* battle imagery, as revealed in its descriptions of armor, weaponry, and combat, underscores the relationship between metals and militarism that drives imperialism. Further, the Virgilian depiction of Homeric trade and craft are particularly evident in the images of prophecy on the shield of Aeneas (Book VIII) and also notable in the images on the gates of Tartarus (Book VI) and the temple of Juno (Book II). These passages collectively underscore how smiths, metalworkers, and other craftsmen labor in the service of their aristocratic superiors, while demonstrating their own power to facilitate economic, political, and social transformation. As in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the "currencies" in the *Aeneid* that mark aristocratic stature—the vases, spears, shields, etc.—serve to facilitate relationships among different social orders and aristocratic power centers. In his reinvention of the Homeric "raw materials" of epic, Virgil solidified the connections between the literary characteristics of the epic form and the political concerns of an expanding Roman empire, an entity defined by its military, economic, cultural, and social dimensions. In this context, the *Aeneid's* metallurgical imagery is connected with the political imperatives of imperial expansion in cycles of military conquest, economic and cultural development, and resource exploitation— principally ore and timber. Therefore, Virgilian metalworking is one of the textual vehicles by which the prophecy of Rome is articulated to Aeneas, and it is also the principal agent through which this empire is established.

Mining, Metallurgy, and Patterns in Colonial Expansion

The Roman era of colonial expansion, prompted in part by the empire's developing interests in mining and metallurgy that prodceeded in conjunction with military expansion, as well as by the limited resources available on the Italian peninsula itself, fueled the developing commercial interaction with western Europe. This process left its mark on the mind of Virgil and on those of other writers and moral commentators of the Roman age. This exploiting of colonial mineral resources proceeded according to a pattern by which military exploration was followed by conquest and then by economic development. It was enhanced by the availability of slave labor, a consequence of military conquests over the native peoples of Europe, who, when conjoined with a labor pool of freemen, had increasing opportunities to earn their freedom (Walbank 74-75). Nevertheless, the early empire's economy continued to be agrarian in both the cities and towns, such that "the contribution of agriculture to the wealth of society was perhaps the order of twenty times that produced by trade and industry" (Walbank 74).

The patterns and processes of resource exploitation by the Roman empire deserve consideration because they reveal the extent of Rome's influence on the European continent in the three to four centuries following the Caesars. These developments, facilitated by the imperatives for resource exploitation, were to continue to transform the landscape and the lives of the subjected peoples of Western Europe until the empire's demise, a period marked by the rather drastic, and ultimately unsuccessful, measures taken by the Emperor Diocletian (284-305 A.D.) to address the drastic inflation of Roman currencies.

The intervening years between Caesar and Diocletian, therefore, provide a convenient frame to consider the period between the empire's early prosperity—the interconnected eras of the poet Virgil (70-19 B.C.), the geographer Strabo (63. B.C.-19 A.D.), and the historian Pliny (61-114 A.D.)—and its late decline. Facilitated by the imperatives of colonial expansion, the era of Roman influence over western Europe would see the imposition of imperial authority. This authority would assume the forms of resource exploitation, the imposition of systems of administration, taxation and the minting of currencies, and the beginnings of early guilds in various small-scale manufacturing trades and other forms of skilled labor.

This pattern of economic development serves as an important context for understanding the modifications of mining, metals, and metallurgy as they are reflected in Virgilian poetry, particularly in the *Aeneid.* To understand how Virgil's epic appropriates Homeric metallurgy to the service of Roman colonialism, one must consider how the patterns of Roman expansion were fueled by the empire's demand for metals and therefore for its exploitation of mineral resources throughout Europe. To understand this process, it is necessary to turn to the documents offered by the post-Virgilian commentators, the geographer Strabo and the natural historian Pliny, who supplement their discussion of geographical features and natural landscapes with commentaries that reflect the moral anxieties associated with the empire's increasing mineral and metallurgical requirements. These developments proceeded despite a strong bias, inherited from the Greeks, against mining and trade. Like their Hellenic precursors, Roman commentators on mining and metallurgy "reflect a distaste felt by classical peoples for labour underground and their preference for agrarian pursuits"

(Nef 694). These two commentators in particular present stark suspicions on the exploitation of mineral wealth. Given the authority that classical writers were invested with in the medieval world, the influence of these two chroniclers would come to assume a larger significance than in their own time.

Strabo's Commentaries on Homeric Geography

Strabo, the Hellenic geographer who provides the modern world with its best window on late Iron Age geography, is very specific in his allusions to metals in general and iron-working in particular. However, his work serves a further purpose at the intersection of Homeric literature and classical geography. His service to the empire was, like Virgil's, squarely within the reign of the Emperor Augustus. More importantly, he shares with his contemporary a high regard for the authority of Homeric epic. Both align themselves with their fellow late classical writers, "who regarded the poet as the source of all wisdom and knowledge, whose statements might require to be explained or accounted for, but could not possibly be discarded as erroneous" (Bunbury 14). This bias is clearly evident throughout his *Geography*. Just as the Homeric vision shaped Virgil's *Aeneid*, it also figured prominently in Strabo's accounts of Mediterranean and European geography which were likewise shaped by the extending spheres of the empire's colonial influence.

Strabo begins with and spends much of his first book justifying his use of Homer as a principle source for his study, explaining that the poet "knows and clearly describes the remote ends of the inhabited earth and what surrounds it; and he is just as familiar with the regions of the Mediterranean Sea" (I, 19). Developing this idea throughout his work, Strabo examines the bard's works, characters, and place names

throughout each of the seventeen books of his *Geography*, offering at places significant if somewhat strained explanations that try to connect Homreic figures with geographical points and details. Of particular interest to the student of the economic history of the Roman Empire are his descriptions of the great mineral wealth in Book II, where he describes the gold, silver, and copper mines located throughout the Iberian Peninsula (Book II). In this description, he lavishes great praise on this "rare country" fortunate in respects of great mineral wealth and agricultural fertility, and "to have within a small area an abundance of all kinds of metals" (39).

Strabo's description suggests the proliferation of pre-industrial systems of mining and smelting grounded in an interrelated system of labor, landscape modification, and exploitation of secondary resources like timber and other ores and chemicals existing in natural forms. They affirm the pattern noted by historians that connects the pursuit of mineral wealth, the transport of metalworking skills, patterns of environmental exploitation (specifically, deforestation), and the development of early currencies. Of significance in this description of Iberian mining are Strabo's allusions to Homer, which connect the vocation of mining to the epics' depictions of a mythical otherworld in both its Elysian and Tartarean forms (51 ff.). Strabo comments on the suggestion that Tartessus was a region "known by hearsay (in Homer's time) as 'farthermost in the west,' where,...(what) falls into Oceanus (is) 'the sun's bright light, drawing black night over the earth, the grain-giver'"(51). His subsequent discussion develops the connected allusions between the prosperity of the Iberian region, its people's pursuit of this region's mineral wealth, and its connections to his vision of both underworld and idyllic landscape. In the pages that follow, the geographer offers a

rather elliptical discussion that attempts to connect the Homeric vision of

otherworldly landscapes with his perceptions of Iberian geography. Strabo credits this

perception, influenced by "the expeditions of Heracles and of the Phoenicians," in

shaping the bard's "mythical invention of Tartarus that Homer had in mind (with) the

regions about Tartessus" (53).[38] Homer's habit of conjoining myth and geography,

Strabo explains, was "learned about...through inquiry," and it "gave him a historical

pretext" for both the narrative of the epic journey homeward and the underworld vision

in the *Odyssey* (53).

Ultimately, Strabo attempts to make the case that "the poet, informed through

his inquiries of so many expeditions to the outermost parts of Iberia, and learning by

hearsay of the wealth and the other good attributes of the country...in fancy placed the

abode of the blest there, and also the Elysian plain..."(55). The discussion concludes

with the point that post-Homeric poets maintained the tradition of connecting with the

Iberian landscape—in both its idyllic form and its exploitable resources—so that the

intersections between epic landscapes and geographical accounts become more

conjoined through subsequent centuries.

Collectively, the writings of Strabo are remarkable not only because they

provide a geographical record of the Mediterranean world, people, and industries, but

also because his record seeks to assert the primacy of Homer as a historian as much as a

storyteller. While his effort to link Homer to particular peoples, vocations, and

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[38] Further, this vision complements the poet's conception of the "northern and gloomy regions about the Bosporus," which had been settled by the Cimmerians, a people from the region on the northern coast of the Black Sea known for their hostility to the Ionic world of the poet, who returned this hostility by "settl(ing) them in the neighborhood of Hades" (51).

industries is strained, it is also influential enough to create and perpetuate a view

of the Homeric landscape that endures through the middle ages. The task of

articulating a vision of mining and metallurgy that prepares western Europe to embrace

forthcoming Christian notions of sin and transgression falls to his predecessor Pliny,

whose writings on metals demonstrate vivid reservations about their influence on

human character.

Pliny's Condemnations of Gold Mining and Iron-working

The commentaries of Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD) are among the most vivid

demonstrations of the aristocracy's suspicions of the empire's exploitation of the

mineral wealth in the colonial provinces. In expressing his attitudes toward mining and

metallurgy, Pliny casts a shadow of influence that extends into the middle ages, and it is

important to consider first the conditions under which he wrote. His *Natural History*

was composed later in his life during a period of relative seclusion and retirement,

assumed to be between 76 and 78 AD (Healy 33), and it was written in a period

following active and devoted service to the empire. Early in his career he'd served as a

military officer in Germany and, after returning to Italian peninsula and studying law,

re-entered public life as a colonial administrator in northern Spain, where he had

"charge of imperial revenue and expenditure" (9). Pliny's early career as a military

officer and colonial administrator corresponded with the uneasy but productive reigns

of the emperors Claudius and Nero (41-54 and 54-68 AD).

Apparently in concert with other urbane and affluent aristocrats of his day, Pliny

regarded the large-scale exploitation of natural resources—the essential imperative of

Rome's colonial expansion—with suspicion. Presumably, this view was shaped further

by his probable "eyewitness account" (9) of mining operations in the Hispania

Terraconensis region of northern Spain, which Pliny saw during his period of

administrative service. In the introduction to the volume dedicated to mining and

metallurgy in the *Natural History's* Book XXXIII, he observes, "How innocent, how

blissful, nay even how luxurious life might be, if it coveted nothing from any source but

the surface of the earth, and to speak briefly, nothing but what lies ready to her hand!"

(5).

Elsewhere, Pliny's opinions on the matter of mineral exploitation and the

production of material wealth are quite forceful. They resonate in his comments on the

gold mining operations in the provinces, ones he'd likely witnessed during his service in

northern Spain.[39] Such comments are significant for two reasons: first, they connect the

pursuit of precious metals not only to a violation of the earth as a living entity but also

engage an idiom connecting this violation with underground descent. Secondly, he

articulates a vision of the mind in turmoil, tormented by the ambition of securing

mineral wealth and ignoring the obvious violation of the landscape.[40] With the

proliferation of Christianity in the centuries that follow, Pliny's view comes to be

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[39] In describing this service, Pliny writes, "we trace out all the fibres of the earth, and live above the hollows we have made in her, marveling that occasionally she gapes open or begins to tremble—as if forsooth it were not possible that this may be an expression of the indignation of our holy parent! We penetrate her inner parts and seek for riches in the abode of the spirits of the departed, as though the part where we tread upon her were not sufficiently bounteous and fertile....The things that she has concealed and hidden underground, those that do not quickly come to birth, are the things that destroy us and drive us to the depths below; so that suddenly the mind soars aloft into the void and ponders what finally will be in the end of draining her dry in all the ages, what will be the point to which avarice will penetrate" (Pliny, *Natural History* 3-5).

[40] In summarizing his opinions relative to the destruction and exploitation of the environment to gratify human needs, metallurgical historian Healy observes that "although, in a sense, Pliny may be considered an early environmentalist, it is important to bear in mind that the motives for his *indignatio*, his impassioned outcry against luxury, differ significantly from those of present-day 'Greens': his aims...stem from an earnest desire not only to reverse the decay of Roman morality...but also to effect a return to the strict code of behaviour under the early Roman Republic" (*Science and Technology* 317-18).

associated with the Christian, hierarchial conception of the cosmos. But

elsewhere, his descriptions of the pursuit of precious metals involve more tangible

idioms, ones that connect mining not only to transgression but also to the morally

questionable, related vocations of trade and militarism.[41] Overall, Pliny's discussion—

and condemnation—of large-scale mining and metalworking operations grows out of

this belief in the greater virtues of the Homeric social system. His descriptions of the

mining and melding of gold and iron capture this sentiment most vividly, as he argues

that "[t]he worst crime against man's life was committed by the person who first put

gold on his fingers" (9),[42] before mentioning both Prometheus and Midas to illustrate

his points.

Beyond this condemnation of the avarice communicated in these mythical

allusions, Pliny's descriptions of both gold and iron depict a profound distrust of the

ways in which these metals have shaped human behavior. For example, in describing

the most extensive and environmentally damaging methods for mining gold, Pliny

describes how certain mining operations called *arrugiae*, "have outdone the

achievements of the giants. By means of galleries driven for long distances the

mountains are mined by the light of lamps, and the miners do not see daylight for many

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[41] For example, early in Book XXXIII, Pliny alludes to the episode in the *Iliad* where Glaucus and Diomedes exchange gifts in a gesture that transcends the immediate context of the conflict that pits them against one another as enemies. He notes the inequality of the exchange in terms of its monetary value (according to his contemporary contexts), but hints that the system of barter—and the signification of aristocratic virtue that accompanies it— represents a more genuine form of exchange than does the currency-based economic system of his day and age (7).

[42] To quote in full: "The worst crime against man's life was committed by the person who first put gold on his fingers, though it is not recorded who did this, for I deem the whole story of Prometheus mythical, although antiquity assigned to him also an iron ring, and intended this to be understood a fetter, not an ornament. As for the story of Midas's ring, which when turned round made its wearer invisible, who would not admit this to be more mythical still? It was the hand and what is more the left hand, that first won for gold such high esteem; not indeed a Roman, whose custom it was to wear an iron ring as an emblem of warlike valour" (9).

months" (XXXIII, xxi, 55).[43] The scene highlights the wretched labors of the

individual miners laboring in the dark, their busy attention to the dangers and burdens

of their fate, the commands of the supervisor which fracture the landscape, and the

hubris of those whose collective efforts seek to surpass steadfast Nature. Echoes of this

description in spirit, if not in exact correspondence, will resonate in *Paradise Lost* some

1600 years later.

As eloquent and detailed as his condemnation of the extensive pursuit of gold,

Pliny is no less critical of iron-working and its contributions to militarism. In the

following description of the mining and processing of iron ores he demonstrates a vague

awareness of the connections between metalworking and military conquest. He offers a

condemning vision of ironworking which not only notes the intense connection between

a society's iron-working capacities and its economic development but also anticipates

an early version of the military-industrial complex.[44] Following this discussion of

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[43] Further, his attempt to represent the empire's gold-mining operations with matter-of-fact detail also presents a nuanced description of the wholesale devastation of the natural landscape, which, again, recall the mythic destruction of epochs past: "cracks give way suddenly and crush the men who have been at work, so that it actually seems venturesome to try to get pearls and purple-fishes out of the depths of the sea: so much more dangerous have we made the earth! Consequently arches are left at frequent intervals to support the weight of the mountain above. In both kinds of mining masses of flint are encountered, which are burst asunder by means of fire and vinegar, though more often, as this method makes the tunnels suffocating through heat and smoke, they are broken to pieces with crushing-machines carrying 150lbs. of iron, and the men carry the stuff out on their shoulders, working night and day, each man passing them on to the next man in the dark, while only those at the end of the line see daylight. If the bed of flint seems too long, the miner follows along the side of it and goes round it. And yet flint is considered to involve comparatively easy work, as there is a kind of earth consisting of a sort of potter's clay mixed with gravel, called *gangadia*, which it is almost impossible to overcome. They attack it with iron wedges and the hammer-machines mentioned above; and it is thought to be the hardest thing that exists, except greed for gold, which is the most stubborn of all things. When the work is completely finished, beginning with the last, they cut through, at the tops, the supports of the arched roofs. A crack gives warning of a crash, and the only person who notices it is the sentinel on a pinnacle of the mountain. He by shout and gesture gives the order for the workmen to be called out and himself at the same moment flies down from his pinnacle. The fractured mountain falls asunder in a wide gap, with a crash which it is impossible for human imagination to conceive, and likewise with an incredibly violent blast of air. The miners gaze as conquerors upon the collapse of Nature. And nevertheless, even now there is no gold so far, nor did they positively know there was any when they began to dig; the mere hope of obtaining their coveted object was a sufficient inducement for encountering such great dangers and expenses (XXXIII, xxi, 55-57).

[44] "Next an account must be given of the mines and ores of iron. Iron serves as the best and the worst part of the apparatus of life, inasmuch as with it we plough the ground, plant trees, trim the trees that prop our vines, force the vines to renew their youth yearly by ridding them of decrepit growth; with it we build houses and quarry rocks, and

iron's utility in the creation of implements of death and destruction, Pliny offers

a discussion of the metal's various apologists, observing that "the art of former days did

not fail to provide a more humane function even for iron." He observes its use in the

more humane sphere of architecture and in sculpture. He takes the further step of

attributing to the benevolence of nature those limits on "the power of iron itself" which

"inflict(s) on it the penalty of rust, and the same foresight by making nothing in the

world more mortal than that which is most hostile to mortality" (231).

Throughout his commentaries, Pliny consistently offers vivid condemnations of

the supposed benefits made by metallurgical innovators and reinforces the sense of

violation that mining works upon the natural landscape. If gold mining is responsible

for human transgressions on the natural world, iron-working is responsible for human

transgressions on humanity itself. Throughout his descriptions of gold and iron, Pliny

continually reinforces these two fundamental views. The first is that innovation in

mining and metallurgical sciences accommodate new expressions of human vanity and

destructiveness. The second is that new advances in the technologies permit one people

to subject another to their political agenda. In this way, he gives voice to suspicions

that run contradictory to the colonialist imperatives of the Roman empire but which also

resonate in the subsequent centuries in an ascetic Christian theology. His opinions

reflect the attitudes of the educated, sophisticated Roman aristocrat toward the

wholesale manipulation of the natural world to suit human vanities and appetites for

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we employ it for all other useful purposes, but we likewise use it for wars and slaughter and brigandage, and not only in hand-to-hand encounters but as a winged missile, now projected from catapults, now hurled by the arm, and now actually equipped with feathery wings, which I deem the most criminal artifice of man's genius, inasmuch as to enable death to reach human beings more quickly we have taught iron how to fly and have given wings to it. Let us therefore debit the blame not to Nature, but to man" (Pliny, *Natural History* XXXIV, ch. XXXIX, p. 229).

blood lust. Although Pliny articulates no overt loyalty to the ascetic scholars whose ideas ran counter to the excesses of imperial authority, he clearly offers views that criticize the patterns of social development that the empire sought to facilitate through its continued colonialist imperatives. Ultimately, his views would circulate as trade relations developed in the empire's later stages. Later, Christianity would come to appropriate the motifs of mining, metallurgy and trade as shaped by the Homeric vision and influenced by the geographer Strabo and the natural historian Pliny. Making use of these biases, the early moral guardians of post-empire western Europe applied them to the developing commercial practices in an increasingly Christianized hegemony which was borrowing from the ancients to help itself articulate ever more precise visions of sin and Hell.

The Virgilian Notion of Empire

The pattern of expansion, colonization, and economic development continued through the reign of the Caesars and shaped, albeit in different ways, the collective imperial vision of Virgil's epic, just as it shaped the geographical observations of Strabo and Pliny's readings of the natural world. Within this context, it is important to note that the readings of Pliny and Strabo reflect the expansionist ambitions of the early empire's economy, which in turn enabled a system of largely unregulated economic practices and mineral exploitation throughout western Europe. Virgil's epic appropriates Homeric metallurgy to the service of Roman colonialism, investing the moral authority granted by Homeric epic into the patterns of Roman expansion as fueled by the empire's demand for metals and its exploitation of mineral resources throughout Europe.

These developments proceeded despite a strong bias, inherited from the Greeks, against mining and trade. The collective mindset of the imperial Rome seems to have justified large-scale mineral and environmental exploitation as long as it took place in the empire's outer reaches. And while Virgil, Strabo, and Pliny might express reservations about these patterns of exploitation, they are fully invested in the civilizing mandate afforded to the colonial processes they describe. Of the three, Virgil offers the strongest voice of support for this mandate by adapting and modifying the Homeric depiction of metals, metallurgy, and the underworld to serve particular nationalistic ends in an era of significant colonial expansion and economic development. While Strabo follows this pattern of Homeric appropriation, Pliny serves to provide an appropriate cautionary voice to this otherwise enthusiastic colonizing agenda. In this way, Virgil's depiction of weapons, industry, and the underworld reflects both the quaesi-industrial trade practices of his age as well as the Roman empire's expansionist imperatives.

The "civilized" Roman empire guided the development of its subdued territories, introducing the practices of trade and primitive industry, promising alignment with a superior cultural entity, and allowing for the structural benefits that such an alignment promises. While the observations of both Pliny and Strabo testify to this belief (with qualifications) in the process of colonial subjugation and in the rightness of imperial expansion, Virgil seeks to express a vision of empire highlighted by specific cultural and political properties. The Virgilian empire assumes a common racial identity as perpetuated through the past and refined over time by fortunate alliances. The relationship between empire and colony is captured in a passage from

the *Aeneid's* Book VI, lines 847-53, which Williams describes as "the most

famous lines in the poem" (39).[45]   These lines represent the crux of the most important

transitional book and condense the political imperatives of Rome into the exhortations

of Anchises to his son during their underworld tour. The phrase *pacere subjectis,* or

"peaceful subjection," has particular resonance in this passage, for

> [t]his was the great Roman claim, that having conquered they
>
> (i.e. Rome) were generous to the conquered. In comparison with
>
> most other conquerors of the ancient world this was true—it was
>
> something which Julius Caesar especially prided himself on after
>
> his conquest of Gaul—but all students of Roman imperial history
>
> will easily think of plenty of exceptions....(40)

The subjection of the conquered was followed by the process of colonization, where

Roman traders and craftsmen shaped existing native practices, adapting them to serve

the empire's needs. Colonial outposts were quickly established in regions rich in

mineral resources, which were quickly exploited and transferred back to Rome by an

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[45] excudunt alii spirantia mollius aera,
(credo equidem), vivos ducent de marmore voltus;
orabunt causas melius, caelique meatus
describunt radio et surgentia sidera dicent:
tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento
(hae tibi erunt artes) pacique imponere morem,
parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.

(Others will forge the bronze to softer breath,
no doubt, and bring the sculptured stone to life,
show greater eloquence, and with their rule
map out the skies and tell the rising stars:
you, Roman, remember: Govern! Rule the world!
These are your arts! Make peace man's way of life;
Spare the humble but strike the braggart down.—trans. Copley, p. 140)

established transportation network both on sea and on land in the patterns described above by economic historians.

Virgil's vision of empire, then, correlates to the expansionist imperatives of his day and age. It is resonant in the *Aeneid's* appropriation of the most distinctive features of the Homeric epic, which lent themselves to the expansionist agenda of Virgil's Rome. This vision defined his notion of heroism and in particular his portrayal of Aeneas. It also informed his characterization of Troy's enemies, who represent forces opposed to the civility that is to stand as the hallmark of imperial Rome and who inhibit Aeneas's efforts to re-establish Troy on the banks of the Tiber. It shapes Aeneas's interactions with aristocratic cohorts Dido, Evander, and Latinus, who collectively represent the different entities that Troy must negotiate. It is evident in Virgil's account of Aeneas's underworld journey, a vision informed equally by mythic, heroic, moral, and political visions.

Most importantly, the Virgilian vision of empire is equally evident in the poet's rendering of battle and weapon imagery, and it shapes finally his engagement with images of metal and timber and communicates his awareness of them as the "raw materials" of both epic and empire. In this context, these features of the *Aeneid,* borrowed and adapted from their Homeric precursors, help to solidify the connections between the Virgilian epic and the empire's expansionist agenda. In this way, the motifs of Roman mining and metallurgy—as supplied by economic historians as much as by the records left by Strabo and Pliny—have an implicit resonance in Virgil's adaptation of Homeric heroism, battle, weaponry, and the underworld.

Virgilian Heroism

Empire and epic hero are conjoined in Virgil's imperialist political thought, in

the growth of Aeneas's character, as well as in his effort to establish Rome. The *pietas*

that Aeneas, like Rome itself, slowly and gradually embraces over the course of time

counterbalances the entrenched *furor* of Turnus or the irrational passions of Dido, who

represent the chief obstacles to the successful establishment of the empire and the

outdated visions of Homeric heroism. Williams declares that "Aeneas is to be the

founder not only of a new city but also a new way of life, a new non-Trojan, non

Homeric way of life" (35). In this context, his purpose differs from those models of

Homeric heroism, especially Achilles, whose impulses favored *furor* at the expense of

pietas. In the Virgilian imagination, a new hero is entrusted with the task of

establishing the beginnings of the political, cultural, ethnic, and economic entity of

"Rome," and, unlike the Homeric heroes, his actions and character are framed by this

larger objective.

In his gestures to the imagery of Homeric warfare, Virgil portrays a prophecy

where the brazen chaos of barbaric warfare is curtailed by the greater strength of steeled

resolution, as facilitated by the culture, craft, and commerce introduced by a benevolent

Roman empire. In this context, Aeneas must necessarily evolve from his Homeric

model to represent a more refined hero, one whose greatness in battle complements his

dawning awareness of political imperatives.[46] In justifying his portrayal of Dido and

Turnus as impediments to the Rome of his imperial vision, Virgil creates a context for

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[46] See Williams 80.

making their subjection both purposeful and morally sanctioned while revealing

a colonialist agenda in which moral imperatives are aligned with the social, political,

and ultimately economic imperatives of Rome's expansionist agenda. In depicting

Aeneas neither as the savage, furor-driven Turnus, nor as the peace-loving Latinus,

Virgil articulates a vision that combines Homeric savagery—when warranted—with

Roman refinement and *pietas*. In this way, Aeneas reveals that while he is morally

superior to his enemies, he is—even in the throes of battle—capable of executing a

propitious, instantaneous justice that has as its first agenda the proliferation of empire.

In Book X, during Aeneas's killing spree between lines 513 and 832, his savagery is

evident, but it is also rational: his killing is selective, directed at those warriors whose

furor and pride shows through their assault on him.

The Political and Imperial Significance of the Virgilian Underworld

The Virgilian underworld is not just a spatial location but also a crucible that

serves as the site of Aeneas's ultimate moral transformation from a hesitant leader to a

founder of empire. Virgil's underworld is the moral crucible that shapes Aeneas's

heroism. As such, it is connected with the symbolism of metallurgy as much as with its

imagery, in a manner relating to alchemical processes of purification and

transformation. Souls, penitents, and purified beings reincarnated are transformed

within the Virgilian underworld, and the process is most vivid with Aeneas himself.

The Virgilian underworld is also a spatial and geographical locus, and the geography of

the underworld shows Virgil's borrowings from classical precursors (see diagram, Otis

289) while the symbolism of the Virgilian underworld borrows from the idioms of

metallurgy to describe Aeneas's evolution as a model of heroism suitable to the

Roman epic.

Two details that precede Aeneas's initial descent serve to connect the symbolic

world of Virgil's Hades to the real world of Roman industry and metallurgy. While

mentioned only incidentally in this stage of the story, the matter of timber reserves

emerges with greater significance in Book X. In Book VI, however, Aeneas seeks

prophecy from the Delian seer once his charges reach Italian shores. He is invited to

the underworld, twice to cross the River Styx, to seek his departed father Anchises,

whose advice, he envisions, will help clarify duties which, to this point, remain

uncertain. After felling trees to build an altar to pay tribute to the spirits of the

underworld and plucking the golden bough to exchange for his safe passage, Aeneas

begins his journey. Further, as the mortal Aeneas plots to cross the River Styx, his

Sybiline escort informs him that in plucking from the golden bough, "the branch will

come away with ease if you are elect of Fate" ("namque ipse uolens facilisque sequetur,

si te fata uocant" VI 146-47).[47] Once broken, "a second grows like it, with leaves and

stems of purest gold" ("primo auulso non deficit alter aureus, et simili frondescit uirga

metallo," VI. 143-44). Of the significance of this gesture, Otis observes that it is not

only a mark of Aeneas's fate but also his emerging *pietas* (288-89).

This stage of Aeneas's underworld journey provides two seemingly incidental

details which link the mythic world of Virgilian epic with the economic world of

Augustan Rome. In providing these two details Virgil alludes to both the Roman

reliance on wood reserves and his belief in the organic quality of metals. Roman

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[47] *Aeneid* text transcribed from: < http: / /www.thelatinlibrary.com /verg.html>

reliance on wood had reached such a point by the Augustan age that the Italian peninsula was almost fully deforested. In presenting these details, Virgil belies a belief in the organic quality of minerals, one expressed in the subsequent generation by Pliny in more objective detail and one that held well into the sixteenth century. Metals mined from underworld veins were plant-like in their ability to replenish themselves once extracted from the earth. These two details, seemingly ancillary, depict the interconnections between Virgil's underworld imagery and the industrial ambitions of his day and age.

Even as Virgil chronicles a mythical region, he continues to borrow from popular metallurgical idioms to chronicle the evolution of Aeneas's heroism. Given signs from the gods about where to enter the otherworld's environs, Aeneas's journey begins. What he finds in this shadowy domain underscores Virgil's perceptions of the association between metalworking, economy, and a nation's political identity.[48] Collectively, these figures offer classical precursors to the imagery that comes to shape the mouth of Hell in later Christian iconography. They demonstrate the worst features of human ambition and human despair and subtly hint at the connections between the spiritual conditions of those in the underworld domain and the "real" conditions of Roman *realpolitik*—conditions that are articulated more forcefully in Book VI's pageant of heroes.

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[48] With his Sybiline escort, Aeneas enters a world of layers and levels that is defined by its landscape features as well as by its spatial geography. His first encounter is at Hell's throat, where he sees the allegorical figures in pageant: Sorrow, Vengeance, Care, Disease, Old Age, Hunger, Want, Toil, Sleep, Death, War, and Sedition. These allegorical figures run the gamut from personal afflictions (Care, Disease, Want) to economic and political violations (Toil, War, Sedition). Appropriately, the Furies stand amidst them bound in chains, while in the middle of the motley assembly stands Foolish Dreams.

Residing beside these figures are the various Centaurs, Gorgons, Scyllae,

Hydrae, and other monsters of mixed breed, notable for their indeterminate stature and

their marginalization from the pantheons of classical myth. In the crucible-like character

of the Virgilian underworld, their mixed imperfect form is of significance. Ill-defined

and impure, these creatures represent the organic, living analogues to the impure ores

and other materials that are yet to be refined and made whole by the allegorically

metallurgical processes in Virgil's underworld crucible. They represent an extreme

form of the unrealized character that Aeneas is as he begins his descent—vaguely aware

of his prophecy and responsibility, but uncertain of his willingness to undertake it, the

Trojan refugee needs some form of purification to embody fully the heroism destined to

him as Rome's founder. After passing over the muddy stream Acheron and convincing

Charon, the Stygian boatman, that Aeneas is fit to cross the river twice, the pair resume

their journey.[49]

   Catabaesis is the term given to the conventional underworld journey in epic

literature, and it implies a psychological transformation as much as an excursion

through a mythic, underworld terrain. Otis argues that the term applies much more

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[49] What follows is a pre-Dantean geography of the underworld that attempts to define sin in spatial terms. The Virgilian underworld represents degrees of deceit, transgression, or folly by its comparative distance to the world above. Those closest to the Stygian border are those who died at birth, whose transgressions and virtues go unrecognized. Next come Love's lepers, or those who succumb to some form of irrational, romantic *furor* and are wronged by romance gone awry. Here, Aeneas reunites briefly with Dido, and his excuse for leaving her—even as he reiterates Jupiter's divine mandate—does little to quell her agony. Before reaching the walls of Dis and the fork in the road that leads them to Elysium, Aeneas and his escort come across the inglorious battle-dead of the Trojan war, those doomed by treacheries and duplicities ill-suited to their otherwise significant moral stature as glorious warriors.

   At that point, the two come to the flaming river Phlegethon and encounter Tisiphone, the Fury charged with the task of guarding the condemned. Significantly, the gates of this domain are of stone and its towers are of steel. The collective image of fire, steel, flint, smoke, pitch, and stone recall the blacksmith's hearth, as do the hissing irons and rattling chains that Aeneas and his Sybilline guide hear echoing from within. In this kingdom of torment, the two learn of the ambitions whose grasp excelled their means, the fraudulent, the presumptuous, the wrathful, the tyrants, and those who imagine themselves god-like. This unfortunate collection embodies a type of transgression even more severe than the inglorious war-dead, and their greater distance from the mouth of Hell marks them as the pagan precursors to the lost souls of Christianity. The collective series of images equates metalworking with both transgression and ambition, as the worst of sins. It offers in cruder form an indictment of the pre-capitalist imperatives that were regarded as vulgar, marginal, and transgressive behaviors in Virgil's world.

readily to the epics of Virgil than to Homeric epic, as Aeneas's underworld

travels are motivated by and have entirely different consequences from those of

Odysseus.[50] The narrative positioning of Aeneas's *catabaesis*, in book VI, is therefore

significant to Virgil's effort to chronicle the emergence of Aeneas's heroism: "The

whole plan of the Odyssean *Aeneid*," argues Otis, "…is to reserve for the sixth book, for

the symbolic death and resurrection, the full revelation or dissipation of ignorance that

alone can produce a final and unshakable *pietas*" (237).[51]

The transformational character of the underworld, expressed in a metaphor that

combines the idiom of metallurgy with the politics of empire-building, enables Aeneas

to overcome a mindset where he has been "backward-looking, obsessed with the

miseries which his mission has involved" (Williams 93). Shortly after re-uniting with

Anchises, Aeneas catches sight of a verdant grove, "a haven of peace, where Lethe

flowed," on the banks of which "flitted the nations of mankind like bees in a meadow

on a summer's day" ("seclusum nemus et uirgulta sonantia siluae, Lethaeumque domos

placidas qui praenatat amnem," VI.704-07). Wondering about the forms he sees,

Aeneas is treated to an elaborate description of the transformational processes

experienced by "souls whose fate binds them to flesh once more" ("animae, quibus

altera fato corpora debenture," VI.713-14), and who return to the earth in purified form.

Aeneas is to learn from Anchises about his future heirs, the future sons and daughters of

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[50] See Otis 225.

[51] The arguments of Otis and Williams engage the idioms of life, death, and rebirth to examine the evolution of Aeneas's heroism; however, it is in this context that Virgil's engagement with metallurgical metaphors is most evident. To this point, the stages of Aeneas's underworld journey—his burning the pyres, plucking the bough, and seeing the marginal underworld characters—help to establish Virgil's effort to couch his change in the transformational idioms implied in Augustan metallurgy. And in the course of his travels to this point, Aeneas has undergone some form of transformational process. His journey has begun with a prophecy (VI.83-97), one offered by the Sybil predicting landfall, bloodshed, and battle with the "new Achilles" ("Achilles Natus," 89). For a description of Virgil's underworld geography, see Williams 91.

the Roman nation, and in this way Virgil underscores the connection between the

transformational process of empire and the politics of nation-building. In the gardens of

Elysium and the subsequent catalogue of Roman heroism will be shown to elaborate on

this feature of the Virgilian underworld. However, the long discourse (VI. 724-51) that

precedes this catalogue of heroes of the Roman nation underscores the interconnections

that Virgil envisioned between politics of empire and the metallurgical metaphors

applied to the transfiguration of souls.

In the long passage, Anchises explains to Aeneas the cosmic orders that shape

the world and therefore his presence in Elysium's fields of joy. Anchises explains how

"from mind and spirit comes life,…which is from Heaven, a seed of fire that glows

bright, so far as flesh cannot repress it" ("totamque infusa per artus mens agitat molem

et magno se corpore miscet…quantum non noxia corpora tardant," 727-31). This "fire

within" yields the flesh, an imperfect form, a "pitch-dark prison" ("carcere caeco")

which "blinds us to the light" of the Heavens ("lumine uita reliquit," 734). This

imperfect form which humans inhabit, Anchises reveals, assimilates various corporeal

evils which mark the soul when the body gives way in death (735-38), evils "deep

ingrained" in the soul where "much has hardened fast" ("penitusque necesse est multa

diu concreta modis inolescere miris," 737-38). In death, the souls serve penance for

wrongs done in life; "some, like a cloak laid off, hang to the winds; some lose their

stains by flood and swirl, or cautery of fire" ("aliae panduntur inanes suspensae ad

uentos, aliis sub gurgite uasto infectum eluitur scelus aut exuritur igni," 740-42). In this

way, the elements of wind, water, or fire are the agents of transformation, but beyond

their actions their effects—the purification of souls to remove their imperfections—are

described in an idiom that is principally metallurgical. The consequences of this purification, as Anchises then relates, are those in which "our hardened filth is sloughed," and "intelligence pure as of Heaven, is left, and breath, and fire" ("purumque relinquit aetherium sensum atque aurai simplicis ignem," (746-47). Intelligence, the element of "pure" mind, describes the souls residing in Elysium and captures the purified state that the virtuous Anchises resides in. His life's choices and weaknesses having been "burned" clean, Anchises exists in a state of purity according to the idioms of metallurgical practice as Virgil understood them. Finally, after "a thousand circling years," the gods enable these souls to "gain forgetfulness," and to "put on flesh again," or to reenter the material orders of the cosmic realm ("has omnis, ubi mille rotam uoluere per annos, Lethaeum ad fluuium deus euocat agmine mango," 748-50). In repeating the cycle, the "purified" souls re-acquire those corrupting elements in an endless process of purification and corruption. In this way, the spiritual system that Virgil describes has its links to the metallurgical theories of his day and finds its roots more in Plato's *Timaeus* than in Homer's *Odyssey*. Nevertheless, as subsequent passages reveal, this explanation of cosmic orders is deliberately placed at a point in Book VI so that its connection to Rome's destiny becomes clearer, linking the metallurgical idioms with the proliferation of empire.[52] In Book VI, Virgil depicts

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[52] Virgil's awareness of the transformational idioms has two probable sources, both of which are conjoined by metallurgical idioms. In the *Timaeus*, Plato borrows from the metallurgical idioms of Heracles, describing how gold, representing the most purified (or "fusile") state, is derived from burning matter at great temperatures. A slightly less pure matter is adamant, and is followed by copper, and then rust, each representing a greater proportion of earthen impurities in each material (1183-84, 58b-59d). In the *Statesman*, a less canonical dialogue, Plato portrays the "true practice of statesmanship" in the idiom of metallurgy, showing a connection that would be useful to Virgil's *Aeneid.* In this dialogue, Socrates's interlocutor describes how a statesman must "act like gold refiners" performing a role that facilitates the separation of "elements which are quite different from statesmanship, the elements which are quite foreign and repugnant to it, but there still remain the precious elements which are akin to it" (1074-75, 303 e). Virgil might or might not have been familiar with these allusions, but they demonstrate that he had available a well-established tradition that conjoined transformational processes with the idioms of politics and metallurgy. Of Virgil's

Aeneas's transformation from a burdened, reluctant leader of outcast refugees to

a more capable figure, fortified with a vision of his future and secure in his purpose and

destiny. Otis's extended quote reveals the transformatonal character of Virgil's

philosophical disquisition but fails to recognize the important connections between the

vernacular of metallurgy and the proliferation of empire.

And just as the residents of Elysium, Anchises explains, re-enter the corporeal

realm after a period apart, so does Aeneas re-enter the world with a clearer sense of his

mission. When the blacksmith's shop forges the materials for combat and battle to

establish empire, Aeneas's *pietas* is simultaneously forged and shaped by his experience

in the underworld "cauldron." And with its geographical positioning in relation to the

hopeless underworld of Tartarus, Elysium demonstrates yet another significant

transitional idea. These two underworld sites are necessarily juxtaposed to show

Elysian purity and refinement in opposition to the scum, dross, and impurity of the

realm of Tisiphone, a pre-christian (and pre-industrial), bottomless pit of Hell. Granite

columns enclose her realm, and a steel tower stands beside its gates. From within come

forth "wild screams, the savage whistle of whips, the hiss of irons, the rattle of chains"

("hinc exaudiri gemitus et saeua sonare uerbera, tum stridor ferri tractaeque catenae,"

VI. 557-58). Throughout, its chains, shrieking, and eternal torment of the guilty define

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sources for this passage, Otis observes that "[m]uch has been written of its sources but there is really little here that Virgil could not have gotten from the Myth of Er and countless other reflections of this or other Platonic myths in middle-platonic and neo-pythagorean writings. The dualism of body and soul, the contamination of the soul by the body, the necessity of a long post-mortem purgation, eventual reincarnation with temporary oblivion of former existences were all part of a very well established ideology. Virgil's primary reason for using it here was to provide an explanation of the show of future Roman heroes....

The purpose of Anchises philosophical disquisition is not in fact *religious* so much as it is patriotic and Roman. The solemn philosophy seems to be used only because it reflects the majesty of Rome as Homeric mythology could not....[Virgil] uses platonic dualism—a philosophy in which the body in all its temporal-material conditions is heavily discounted—in order to validate an essentially *historical* scheme of values. It is to Rome, Augustus, the *imperium sine fine* that he points the goal, the true meaning of human action and *pietas*" (301).

the realm of Tartarus. Residing within are those who rebelled against Olympian

authority—notably, the Titans, the sons of Aloeus, Tantalus—plus all those nameless

others who profited in life from fraud, adultery, duplicity, tyranny, or other rebellions

from office, duty, or service (608-24). In this way, Virgil implies that the moral failings

of those within the realm of Tartarus have an economic and political character. The

punishments they endure, described only in sketchy detail, ultimately represent the basis

for the underworld visions that are modified by the expanding Christian vision of Hell.

Recognizing the walls forged on the hearth of the Cyclops and the arch and

gate where they must place the bough and sprinkle fresh water as their gifts of

appeasement, Aeneas and his Sybilline escort move past Tisiphone's realm toward the

joyous fields of Elysium. Aeneas immediately recognizes a vision of the future, one

that dramatically counterbalances the vision of torment he has just witnessed. In this

realm, he beholds instead a vision of victorious warriors, the sons of Teucer, their

horses grazing and arms and chariots sitting idly by (648-55), enjoying the fruits of their

triumph. Among those assembled in this celebration are they whose lives, like their

Tartarean counterparts, are defined by their economic and political character. In this

realm, however, reside the virtuous, those "who for their country bled,…who led saintly

lives,…whose discoveries made a better world, (and) those who by doing good earned

men's remembrance" ("hic manus ob patriam pugnando uulnera passi, / quique

sacerdotes casti, dum uita manebat, / quique pii uates et Phoebo digna locuti, / inuentas

aut qui uitam excoluere per artis /quique sui memores aliquos fecere merendo," VI.

660-64). Fittingly, Aeneas finds among those purified souls ready to return to their

corporeal state as the virtuous perpetuators of Rome his own father Anchises,

who immediately accounts for all that his son had just witnessed in his underworld

journey.

Indeed, Aeneas's experience of the juxtaposition of Tartarus and Elysium and

Virgil's implication of its political dimensions are a necessary precursor to the true

purpose of this *catabaesis*. Reuniting with his father and gaining a more refined

perspective of his own mission and purpose, Aeneas catches another glimpse of Rome's

future, an empiric vision that Anchises must again translate for him (VI. 756-886). In

this prolonged interpretation of Roman history, described as "the longest of the patriotic

passages in the *Aeneid*" (Williams 36), Anchises explains the course of Rome's

development as Virgil makes direct reference to its "second founder" Augustus and to

the glories of his age (791-805). Williams' prolonged interpretation of the passage

explains how it is divided into two essential parts, separated by Anchises' question to

Aeneas after seeing the ghost of Augustus (806-07) and a conjoined pendant (36).

Beginning with Aeneas's own progeny, the line continues through Rome's founding

with Romulus. This detail sets the stage for the "second founding" of Rome, or the

restoration of the empire under Augustus after the period of civil unrest ending in 27

B.C. In lines 791-805, a passage offering a "promise of a new Golden Age for Rome,"

Williams notes how "the majority of the passage is concerned with military supremacy,

with special importance attaching to the panic of the River Nile at Augustus' coming

(VI.800), a reference to Augustus's victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31

B.C." (37-38). This emphasis on the civilizing power of Augustus and Rome is resonant

throughout the remaining lines, alluding to various influential families, avenging kings,

and other significant political figures. Particular attention is given to Brutus, "the founder and hero of Republican Rome, who was renowned for having got rid of the dictatorial tyranny of kingship" (38) before, Virgil implies, being undone by his own ambitions—an impulse that aligns him with Turnus against the civilizing presence of Augustus. Other influential figures follow, as "the tone changes again from sorrow to triumph as the pageant ends with a crowd scene of Roman victors, the conquerors of Greece" (Williams 38).[53]

As reflected by the figures in this pageant, Virgilian heroism is defined by a morality that connects a warrior or politician's greatness to his service to the empire. By implication, this pageant of heroes depicts those who heroically enabled the maintenance of Rome's power, the extension of its boundaries, and, ultimately, the exploitation of colonial resources. This theme is implied in the lines that follow (VI. 847-53).[54] As noted above, these lines most lucidly define the empire's civilizing and colonialist agendas. "This idea that empire was the destiny which the gods had laid upon the Romans," argues Williams, "is dominant throughout the *Aeneid*, and seems to have been widely believed in Virgil's time" (39). Rome's "mission," Aeneas learns, is "to establish peace throughout the world (by means, of course, of military conquest), and then to build on that foundation (*imponere*) the civilization of Rome" (40). Following this resounding mandate of Rome's agenda, however, Virgil presents a note of disquieting loss, as if tempering such a patriotic work with a consideration for its human costs.

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[53] For a useful summary on the way this pageant scene pays tribute to Roman imperial destiny, see Williams 38-39.
[54] See n. 45, p. 144.

The final note of Aeneas's underworld tour is his encounter with

Marcellus, that figure of Roman greatness and destiny that is, simply put, too great for

earthly realms. The historical Marcellus, prefigured as the heir to Augustus and already

demonstrating a notable degree of military prowess, was dead by the age of 19:

"Anchises explains, as he laments Marcellus' fate, that Rome would have seemed too

powerful to the gods if Marcellus had been hers to keep. And the long pageant, mostly

patriotically triumphant, ends on a note of bewildered tragedy" (Williams 40). Just as

he chose to end the poem with Aeneas's slaying of Turnus, Virgil's choice to end his

patriotic underworld pageant with this discordant note has provided critics with matter

for debate. Otis declares that Virgil's last word is "characteristically one of *humanitas*,

of the human price of empire and the lesson in moderation that this imposes" (6:870-71)

underscoring the notion that "[t] he ordeal of empire is based on sacrifice, especially

sacrifice of the young." What ultimately "makes the *Aeneid* so much more than a piece

of Roman propaganda, is its mitigation of success by accepted tragedy" (303-04).[55]

In this way, Aeneas is "forged" from Homereic raw materials into a Roman epic

hero in the crucible of underworld. In this locus, images of metallurgy and chemical

processes—the flame and smoke, the smelting and annealing, the evaporation and

condensation—complement other descriptions of transformational processes.

Collectively, these idioms represent allegorically the processes of psychological

transformation that enable Aeneas to see his actions in relation to the ultimate destinies

of Rome. The transformational character of the Virgilian underworld, the place of

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[55]See Otis 303-04.

Aeneas's annealing /purification, anticipates the Christian purgatory, a locus

equally connected to the images of purification, condensation, and crystallization.

These chemical processes, so essential to the Virgilian conception of empire, come to

shape and inform subsequent systems of spiritual symbolism, notions of spiritual

preparation, and conceptions of atonement.

Additionally, in the Virgilian underworld the essential components of the pre-

capitalist world are emphasized in the juxtaposition of Tartarus and Elysium and, in

particular, in the transformative metaphors that connect the idioms of metallurgy with

the imperatives of empire. These include allusions to the products and processes of the

metalworking craft, an emphasis on the soldiers and warriors who, fallen in battle,

inhabit its environs, and the condemnation of those ambitious to improve their financial

and material circumstances. Significantly, lines 847-53, those regarded as "the most

important lines in the poem" (Williams 39), capture the interrelationship between

metals, epic, and empire. In this brief passage, just as Aeneas is introduced to the vision

of Marcellus, Anchises notes how this youthful hero of the empire is "splendid in the

spoils of war" and will "set Rome aright, …bring [ing] down rebellious Gaul and

Carthage and a third time offer[ing] captured arms to Mars" ("hic rem Romanam

magno turbante tumultu sistet eques, sternet Poenos Gallumque rebellem, tertiaque

arma patri suspendet capta Quirino," VI. 856-59). The passage is telling in its

appropriation of Homeric motifs—stripping armor and measuring stature by the spoils

of battle—to the service of Rome's proliferation. In this allusive way, Virgil's epic

underworld anticipates the Miltonic vision of empire more vividly than does that of his

Homeric precursor. In the *Aeneid,* he offers to the medieval mind the epic "raw

materials" to articulate the idea of empire more fully, including the motifs of metalworking, trade, militarism, and profit-seeking.

Of the overall character of the *Aeneid's* first six books, Otis observes that "what Virgil was trying to describe was how a *Roman* hero, an Augustan prototype, could emerge from both the normal man and the Homeric hero he originally had been" (307). In chronicling this transformation, Virgil recreated the mythical underworld of his Homeric precursors, yet his depiction shares a thematic resonance with the more contemporary accounts of mining and metallurgy of Pliny and Strabo, as well as with the larger economic and political implications of the empire's proliferation. As Aeneas encounters a pageant of heirs, he enters an environment of political significance. Just as the mineral operations of the real world served the empire's military and economic needs, so does Virgil's underworld depict an environment in which political, military, and economic matters shape the characterization of the individuals residing there. Politicians who maintain the empire's traditions of greatness accompany the conquering war heroes who protect Rome from its enemies, bring the barbaric outer regions under its domain, and facilitate the exploitation of their material resources to serve the empire's ends.

Virgilian Battle and Weaponry

If Augustan metallurgy provided the transformational metaphor for Virgil's effort to depict Aeneas's evolution into a hero suitable for Roman epic, then the narrative positioning of this progress in Aeneas's tour of the underworld of Book VI is the turning point of the *Aeneid*. Unlike the Homeric epics, which feature acts of man and god as the external forces which shape the course of narrative, the *Aeneid's*

outcome hinges on the "forging" of Aeneas's character into one that measures up

to the demands placed upon it: "the point," observes Otis,

> of the climactic sixth book is to show how Aeneas found *for*
>
> *himself* the steadfast *pietas* that could dispense with further
>
> divine warning....He begins as a man whose *pietas* has to be
>
> reinforced from without; he ends as a man whose *pietas* is his
>
> own, internal possession. (309)

Returned from his underworld journey with his *catabaesis* complete, Aeneas begins the

work of establishing the Trojan colony on Italian shores. And in this stage of the

narrative, Virgil's engagement with the metallurgical metaphor that combines epic

heroism and the political imperatives of empire becomes clearer in his reinvention of

another Homeric motif. The shield of Achilles becomes the shield of Aeneas, and in

depicting its construction Virgil offers a clearer articulation of the Homeric expression

of the connections between metallurgy, militarism, and empire.

Aeneas and his remaining band achieve landfall on the shores of Italy in the

beginning stages of Book VII, just as King Latinus hears the oracle's advice not to

allow his daughter Lavinia to wed Turnus, a union that would assure his assumption of

the kingship of Latium. It is in this book where Aeneas first encounters his central foil

for the Iliadic portion of the *Aeneid*, and at this significant point the fury Allecto makes

her first appearance, portending the war that must be fought in order for Aeneas to

fulfill his destiny in establishing Rome. While Allecto's suggestive identity as the aged

Crone Calybe has been discussed above (p. 21), Virgil's decision to include this detail

underscores the significance of metallurgical idioms in connection with battle and

empire. Ultimately, the narrative of Book VII serves merely as a precursor for what follows in Book VIII, when Venus asks Vulcan to craft for the Trojan warrior an invulnerable suit of armor. Like Achilles, Aeneas is given the divinely crafted armor as a sign of the supernatural imperative to be successful. This episode, which echoes the *Iliad's* Book XVIII, reiterates the importance of the blacksmith within the mythic pantheon. Having established in Book VI the value of metallurgy as the idiom that defines the forging of the Roman epic hero, Virgil now applies the idiom to the worldly circumstances of battle, again purposefully adopting a Homeric motif to connect metallurgy and militarism.

Aeneas, having sought the aid of the rustic king Evander and his charges at Pallentum, hears of the various groves, shrines, forests, and other native features of the region that cosmopolitan Rome will one day rest upon. Venus, knowing that battle is near and her son in peril, seeks the aid of Vulcan. Retreating to his forge on the Sicilian coast near Mt. Aetna, Vulcan enlists the aid of the Cyclops to arm the Trojan warrior. The charges immediately set to work, fashioning a shield capable of withstanding the strongest of spears, as well as other implements of war, which she subsequently delivers to her son—a helmet, sword, corselet, greaves, spear, and shield. Their splendor is revealed in the dazzling visionary inscriptions that Vulcan has depicted on the shield's face, which prophesy future Roman military triumphs. Just as Haphaestus, his Greek forbearer, is depicted in the *Iliad*, Vulcan—the shadowy dweller of an underground forge—is portrayed with a visionary quality in Book VIII. His armor is designed with symbols which serve, to Virgil's readers, as the harbingers of imperial glories and military triumphs to come.

On the shield that Aeneas bears into battle, Virgil includes significant moments in the empire's military history. Within the shield's design Vulcan inscribes significant moments in the evolution of the Roman empire. He includes the mythical story of Romulus and Remus and the founding of Rome; the abduction of the Sabine women and the settlement of the Sabines; the heroism of Tullus Hostilius and Horatius Cocles; the defeat and flight of Cleopatra; the defense of the Capitol from the Gauls by Manlius; the victory of Emporer Augustus at Actium; and the subsequent imposition of order by the Augustan-era military on the barbarian tribes of Asia (Zetzel 198-99). Within this series of scenes, Virgil captures the narrative of Rome's development from a mythic construction to its military and political control throughout the Mediterranean, into Africa, and into Europe. He concludes with events connected with the Augustan age and shows a clear pattern in the evolution of Rome from its legendary beginnings to its status as empire.[56]

Like his Homeric precursor(s), Virgil also employs the device of the shield to imply his awareness of the connections between metalworking, militarism, and the proliferation of empire. The narrative context captures this connection vividly: he portrays Vulcan's labors in book VIII before the Italian and Rutulian armies clash or, as Williams observes, "the last moment in the *Aeneid* before the large-scale description of battles and bloodshed begins" (41). Ultimately, Virgil offers a more forceful—and, given the more direct political imperatives of his epic, a more purposeful—articulation of the Homeric awareness of the interconnections between battle, metals, and weaponry. Williams notes the distinction, arguing that the shield of Achilles has "no special

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[56] For a discussion of Virgil's adaptation of Homeric shield imagery from Book XVIII of the *Iliad*, see Williams 18.

relevance to the immediate context of the poem." In contrast, he observes that

"in Virgil there is no direct reason for Aeneas to have a new shield, but the opportunity

at this particular point in the poem to present pictorially aspects of future Roman glory

exactly suited his poetic requirement" (41).

And the events rendered on the shield are chosen for both their mythic and

historical significance, serving as reminders to Virgil's original readers of the triumphs

in the mythic past as much as in those in the present Augustan age. Collectively, these

events are placed in a context that explains and justifies the extraordinarily horrific

battle scenes in the *Aeneid's* last four books (Williams 41) in pursuit of what classicist

James Zetzel describes as "establishment of order, peace, and empire," and "the victory

of order over disorder, of West over East, of male over female, of civilization over

barbarism" (199).[57] That this prophetic vision, inscribed in metal by the Olympian

blacksmith is one of only three significant glimpses into Virgil's world that the poem

offers is testimony to the power that Virgil invested in the metalworking arts. Taking

his cue from Homer, his epic precursor, Virgil chose as his text the metallic armor on

which to inscribe Rome's future, implying his perception that military and economic

expansion follows the crafting of arms, shields, and spears.[58] Such military artifacts

are the most appropriate cultural sites to record his imperial vision.

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[57] For an interpretation of the events depicted on the shield, see Zetzel 199.

[58] The poem's commentators have, again, much to say about the images Virgil chose to represent Rome's future and the empire's greatness. For instance, Williams explains that "[t]he choice of the scenes depicted is governed by various factors" (41-42). Ultimately, the metalworking skills of Vulcan and the worldly followers of his trade are, as much as the soldiers who conquer and the generals who lead them, among the significant facilitators of Rome's expansion. Zetzel's argument affirms this point, observing further that "[w]hen Virgil introduces Vulcan's forging of Aeneas's shield, he makes two significant comments" (200-01). Grandsen draws further significance from the shield's *ecphrasis*, or purposeful description, explaining that it "holds up the narrative and sums up the meaning of the poem" (95). He then describes the significance of its later scenes to the poem's implied readers, who would, he argues, recognize the political and military significance of the glories depicted, which highlights "Virgil's annalistic record of the Roman past from earliest times down to his own yesterday" (See Grandsen 95-96).

Metals and Timber: "Raw Materials" of Epic and Empire

To the humanistically oriented student of the *Aeneid*, Virgil's purpose seems to examine the juxtaposition of those figures, like Dido and Turnus, who prove ill suited to the duties before them and those like Aeneas who reluctantly embrace them and grow into their responsibilities. The ultimate expression of Virgilian virtue in the *Aeneid* is the realization of one's duty, however tragic or grim, and the injunction to embrace it while disregarding more human impulses. This is particularly the case in the *Aeneid's* descriptions and images of battle.[59]

However, in emphasizing this humanistic agenda in the Virgilian battle scenes, Williams's interpretation marginalizes an alternative interpretation of the *Aeneid* that highlights the nationalistic imperatives of the epic form. It is the balance of humanist and nationalist concerns that defines the imagery of Virgilian warfare. The ultimate ambition of Virgilian epic is to understand the distance between individual and nationalist imperatives, and the ultimate expression of Virgilian virtue is the subverting of the individual's inclinations in favor of greater communal purposes. Virgil understood that these elements of the Homeric epic lent themselves to the more overtly political dimensions of his epic project. Couched in the language of the epic, such images and motifs capture a discourse in which literary and political themes more overtly overlap. Indeed, the nationalistic agenda is inscribed in the discourse of epic narrative and expressed in the depictions of battle heroism, weaponry, metals, the underworld, forests, and timber-felling.

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[59] In describing Virgil's appropriation of Homeric battle themes, Williams observes a consistent tone of humanistic bathos that shapes the poet's depiction of epic warfare (see p. 18).

As images, these are the "raw materials" of epic form; as characteristics

of a people and resources at their disposal, these are the "building blocks" of empire. In

this way, the Homeric pattern of allusions to Pelian ash becomes the Virgilian allusion

to Idean pines, a purposeful appropriation of Homeric timber imagery to the service of

the nationalist dimensions of Virgilian epic. Further, the Homeric epithets describing

Hector and Achilles in battle become the literary descriptions of Aeneas, Turnus, Pallas,

and others, descriptions which connect the hero's struggles with the establishment of

empire. Rome's reliance on colonial resources, captured in vivid terms in the writings

of Pliny and Strabo, is also resonant in the Virgilian adaptation of Homeric battle

imagery. Virgil gives tangible expression to the Homeric conceit that images of timber

and metals are equally essential to the epic form as well as to the nationalist's agenda.[60]

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[60] Beyond the underworld and metallurgical images discussed above, a final expression of the interaction between the imagery of epic and the expansion of empire is evident in Virgil's description of the refugees' flight from Troy toward Italy. Aeneas's displaced charges encounter many of the same landmarks that Odysseus encountered and experience many of the same hazards. Since Aeneas and his charges are constantly forced to restore depleted resources, their travels reveal much about what the landscape might have had to offer along the Italian peninsula to nautical traffic throughout the Mediterranean's history.

For instance, in Book V Virgil describes the Trojans' flight from Carthage and Queen Dido and their subsequent return to the Sicilian coastline around Eryx, where the refugees stop to replenish their energies and supplies. In this encampment, Aeneas organizes funeral games for his charges to pay tribute to his dead father Anchises. After the various sailing, boxing, running, and archery contests, the gods' temporary favor turns away from the displaced Trojans, some of whom begin to grumble against the constant journeying. These voices of doubt become more vocal, and, tired of wandering, a contingent of Trojan women sets fire to their fleet (V, 641-700). Recognizing the opportunity to pare from his charges those fatigued with travel (709-18), Aeneas acts on a prophecy to set up the Trojan colony of Acesta on the Sicilian coastline. Taking respite in Sicily, he resolves to rebuild his damaged fleet on a smaller scale and fortify it only with the stoutest of warriors—those who can withstand the conflicts in hostile terrain that are sure to follow, carrying forward the Trojans' resettlement efforts (750-54).

Such real-life shipbuilding efforts, employed on a large scale, would diminish the woodland forests on the Sicilian coastline. As on the Italian peninsula, the effects of deforestation were becoming more evident as the Roman navies and shipping industries expanded to accommodate Rome's consumption of colonial resources. While it remains uncertain whether Virgil consciously sought to reflect current economic realities in details like this one, it is clear that his epic comments on the necessary exploitation of resources needed to establish and perpetuate the empire's domains. While this point is underscored by greater attention to timber images in Books X and XI (discussed below), it is important to note here a deliberately placed narrative sequence in Books V-VII that describes the necessary interaction between metals, timber, and metallurgy that suits the expansion-minded imperatives of a growing empire.

After failing to boost morale with the funeral games and recognizing the waning hopes of his band of refugees, Aeneas heads to the underworld to seek a clarifying vision from Anchises. Armed with the security of his father's prophecy after his underworld journey in Book VI, Aeneas resumes his quest to re-establish the Trojan nation. His travels take him up the Italian peninsula, to the Tiber's banks, where he intrudes on the courtship dynamics that will unite the peninsula's tribes in blood confederacy. In Book VII, as hostilities mount between the

Finally, in the poem's later stages of battle that follow the account of

Vulcan's crafting of Aeneas's sword in Book VIII, Virgil indicates his awareness of still

another dimension of the relationship between metals, militarism, and economics.   In

Book IX, Turnus's Rutulian charges mount an attack on the Trojan strongholds and

threaten to burn their ships.   Virgil relates how the ships had been made from the wood

taken from groves in the Trojan region of Mt. Ida, from forests that Phyrgia, mother of

Jove, held in especially high regard.   In offering the trees up for the timbers of Trojan

boats, Jove must assure his mother that they will, one day, return to their natural form as

Ocean nymphs (77-122). Intervening to save her favorite trees from destruction by

Rutulian flames, Phyrgia transforms them into dolphin-like nymphs who swim away to

the amazement of their attackers (123-25).[61]   Virgil's placement of this scene is crucial.

Not only does it underscore the significance of timber to nautical and trade enterprises,

but these Phyrgian nymphs contribute to the outcome of the battle and, ultimately, to the

success of the Trojans to establish settlement on Italian lands.   In Book X, these same

combined forces of Trojans, Italians, Tuscans, and Etruscans led by Aeneas, and the confederacy of Latins, Rutulians, Laurentians, and Argos led by Turnus, the Latin rituals in preparing for war are described. Emphasis is given to the native blacksmiths' preparation of swords, helmets, and weapons. The Roman cities of Atina, Tibur, Crustumeri, Ardea, and Antemnae are described with anvils out, their smiths busily shaping helmets, shields, breastplates, and greaves, on hiatus from their normal routine of melding plows and scythes (VII, 625-36). If the description is consistent with customs in Virgil's Rome, it reveals that smithing operations are of sufficient importance to have some public function in wartime, and that the smiths themselves, were public servants of a sort. Their art was tied to the economic and military fortunes of their community. By depicting both "two-edged steel" ("ferro ancipiti decernunt") and "bronzes flash(ing) in the sun" ("aeraque fulgent sole lacessita et lucem sub nubila iactant," VI 525-27), Virgil underscores with this account his awareness of the Homeric regard for metalworking in the conjoined contexts of warfare and economics. An invocation to the muses to sing of the epic battle follows this extended description (641-46), reiterating the Homeric resonance of the battle scenes and images that follow.

[61] Williams' discussion of this remarkable and seemingly ill placed transformation of Trojan ships into nymphs calls attention to its odd placement within the poem's most dramatic battle scenes. He argues that it is "[a]n episode highly appropriate for a mythological poem like Ovid's Metamorphoses, but it is most unexpected in the realistic battle scenes which Virgil has begun to set in train" (61). Moreover it "has an otherworldly serenity and beauty about it which contrasts sharply with the scenes of horror and bloodshed in the rest of the book" (61), and serves the poet's habit "to put in juxtaposition moods," in this case "serenity and horror." Overall, "[t]he effect of the episode is to suggest that what we call the 'reality' of human life is somehow balanced, perhaps even negated, by things outside our ken. It is a vision of a pastoral imaginary world which defeats the hard facts of human existence"(61).

nymphs serve to protect Aeneas's gathered charges from the dangers of battle

[including three hundred from Ilva (Elba), "where men mine the noblest steel" ("insula

inexhaustis Chalybum generosa metallis," 174)] and even alert the Trojan leader to the

perils of his son Ascanius, in scenes describing battles on both land and sea (215-45).

In Book IX, however, they appear in an interlude just before the tragic story of the

poorly prepared warriors Nisus and Euralyus, whose youthful inexperience and

ambitions merit their downfall at the hands of Turnus's superior charges.

Later, the inexperienced Pallas, the son of the rustic Arcadian king Evander and

Aeneas's protégé, also meets his end at Turnus's hands as Book X ends. His death is

marked in a ceremony of Homeric resonance in the beginning of Book XI with a

massive pyre, into which all manner of war spoils are thrown (184-96). Drances, an

elder ambassador from Latium whose suspicions had been aroused by Turnus's

"haughty looks and sneers and barbed remarks" ("quem gloria Turni obliqua inuidia

stimulisque agitabat amaris," 336-37) and who himself had "vexed (him) forever with

charges and ill will" ("infensus iuueni Turno sic ore uicissim orsa refert," 122-23), then

makes overtures to a returning Aeneas. He sets a truce in which "they went their ways

in peace, unharmed, Trojan and Latin together." The object of their efforts is to "raise

(Troy's) fated walls" ("fatalis murorum attollere moles," XI 130) and to "bear on (their)

backs the masonry of Troy" ("saxaque subuectare umeris Troiana iuuabit," 131).[62]

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[62] In this rustic world, masonry assumes a wooden form: "Tall trees rang to the ax; the ash was felled, and pines that touch the stars; with wedges men split oak and scented cedar, and wagons groaned beneath their loads of elm" ("ferro sonat alta bipenni / fraxinus, euertunt actas ad sidera pinus, / robora nec cuneis et olentem scindere cedrum / nec plaustris cessant uectare gementibus ornos," XI 135-38). Amidst this scene of harmonious deforestation, the news of Pallas's tragic end spreads. Latin sentiment turns toward Aeneas as word of Turnus's brutal slaying of his protégé spreads.

The Rutulian prince's remaining allies, wavering themselves, then begin to debate among themselves the futility of resisting the Trojans. One such ally, King Latinus himself, mulls over offering his enemies tracts of woodlands—ideal for shipbuilding—should they wish to make peace with the Latins and continue their campaigning in other lands in ships made from native timbers (XI. 316-29). Of course, such talk at this late stage only serves to enhance the fury of Turnus, Aeneas's sworn enemy. And the conciliatory gestures of his former allies merely enhance his rage to defeat the Trojans and Aeneas in particular. Revealing in its depiction of the deforestation that was mandated to maintain ocean-going vessels, the above passages are significant for other reasons as well. They likewise show that Virgil envisions the sacrifice of pastoral, native landscapes in the name of military and commercial progress. Such progress, inscribed on the poem's final conflict between Turnus and Aeneas, and the Trojan hero's victory over his enemy, signals the triumph of colonialism over native pastoralism. This triumph is represented in the conclusion of the epic narrative with the establishment of the Trojan settlement on Tiber's shores.

Conclusion

Collectively, Virgil's appropriation from the Homeric motifs of metals and timber are directed not only toward this end, but also toward the destiny and historical vision of the Roman nation state that is to follow. The *Aeneid* borrows and makes extensive use of Homeric conceptions of the underworld. Inscribed on the narrative of Aeneas's underworld descent and the scenes of warfare and settlement that follow are images and details that comment on the colonial penetration into an environment of rich natural resources.

In total, Virgil's epic depicts a more deliberate iconography of Hell, a more spatially certain geography of underworld, and a more precise vision of the relationship between metals, militarism, resource use, and landscape modification than do the Homeric epics. Ultimately, the *Aeneid* demonstrates Virgil's fuller awareness of the politics of landscape than is evident in Homer. This theme is one that he develops more fully in his pastorals, georgics, and aecologues: in comparison with the metalworking and underworld imagery of Homer, that in Virgil's *Aeneid* offers a more precise identification of the early industrial arts with the emergence of a political and geographical entity approximating the nation state. While the Roman writer is diligently observant of the conventions established by his Greek precursor(s), the focus of his narrative is directed not toward prolonged siege or the reclaiming of home territories, but rather the establishment of a future nation. Written in conscious imitation of Homer, the *Aeneid* combines features of both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. That is, it combines the battle imagery of Homer's first epic with the components of the quest narrative that shape his second. Yet, while Virgil acknowledges the pantheon of classical deities and epic conventions, his identification of metalworking and industry is of a more precise and practical order than that evident in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In other words, he is more fully engaged with the political imperatives associated with epic poetry. Inscribed on the discourse of epic is a nationalist agenda. The inscriptions are in images of metallurgy, timber, industry, and underworld, and in the *Aeneid* these motifs, consciously adopted from Homeric precursors, shape and define the vision of Virgilian heroism essential to the identity of the warrior and the proliferation of his empire.

Chapter 4: Christianizing Virgilian Images: Syncretizing the *Aeneid*, the Church Fathers, and the Epic Influences from the Nordic and Germanic Worlds.

The Proliferation of Virgilian Epic Motifs

More so than any other literary figure from antiquity, Virgil effected an extensive influence on medieval thought. Positioned to transmit the epic form, its imagery, and its philosophical influences to the proto- and early-Christian world of Boethius, Augustine, Bede, and less directly, the *Beowulf* poet(s), Virgil shaped a discourse that extended through the middle ages and well into the Renaissance. In the chapters that follow, I hope to show how the Virgilian appropriation of Homeric conceits—especially the metallurgical, military, and underworld imagery of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*—initiates a discourse that conjoins the politics of empire and the poetics of epic form, and resonates in the major works of the early, as well as the high middle ages, the Renaissance, and into the early modern age. As shaped by Virgil's *Aeneid*, this discourse combines metallurgical and pre-industrial imagery, depictions of battle and warfare, underworld motifs, and colonialist themes. It is central to the epic form, comments on the evolution of the state from an entity defined by ethnic and family loyalties into an institution defined by economic, social, and political institutions, and echoes in the epic literature of the Nordic, Germanic, and most importantly, the Anglo-Saxon traditions. Ultimately, my purpose in this chapter is to show how the Virgilian conceits of underworld and metalworking imagery find their way into the works of the late classical and early Christian church fathers. The end point of this discussion is the

cultural milieu of the *Beowulf* poet (s),[63] whose epic is, as I argue in the

following chapter, informed by Virgilian resonances in the series of early Christian

sources to be discussed here.

In his study *Virgil in Medieval England,* Christopher Baswell notes in the

exegetical traditions of early manuscript study an allegorizing pattern in the textual

glosses that appear on medieval Virgilian manuscripts. In reading these glosses,

Baswell attempts to understand the influence that the poet had on patterns of medieval

allegoresis. Further, he discusses the extraordinary degree of thematic connection

between the *Aeneid*, Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, and other works by the early

church fathers, particularly those of St. Augustine. On the connections between the

Aeneid and the *Consolation*, Baswell focuses particularly on the transitional Book VI,

which portrays Aeneas' underworld journey and which offers Virgil's most explicit

vision of the Roman empire as a political, social, and cultural entity. Baswell

comments on the "widespread association throughout the Middle ages between the

cosmologies of Boethius and *Aeneid* 6," and notes that the "broader tendency" among

medieval writers is "to compare the entire works, explaining one through the other."

This effort is directed ultimately toward reading the *Aeneid* not as historical epic but

rather for "spiritual education" (60).

Augustine's reliance on Boethian and Virgilian thought is evident in both *De*

Civitas Dei, his reading of Rome's decline through the lens of Christian spirituality, and

in the *Confessions*, his spiritual autobiography. The early chapters of *De Civitas*, which

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[63] As is the case with Homer, the term "the Beowulf poet" is conceptually inadequate. Like the Homeric epics, it is also possible to see *Beowulf* as a collected amalgam of disparate episodes provided by a number of Germanic sources. Despite this inadequacy, for the sake of expediency I will hereafter use the term "the Beowulf poet" to refer to those individuals—oral composers and scribes alike—who collectively facilitated the transformation of this poem from its preliterate, oral form into a written manuscript.

will be examined more fully below, collectively represent a critique of Virgil's

pro-empire *hubris*, which is articulated specifically in the all-important lines 847-54 of

Aeneid's Book VI cited previously in Chapter 3.[64] In these early chapters, Augustine's

work engages the same themes of fortune and divine foreknowledge found in the earlier

Consolation. In the work's middle stages Augustine is preoccupied with notions of sin

associated with the parable of Cain and Abel, ideas echoing as much in his conception

of post-imperial, post-Roman politics as in the epic conflicts between Beowulf and his

monsters. Finally, as Augustine's critique of the Roman world concludes, he invokes an

ethos based in the writings of the New Testament in an attempt to show their

applicability to the post-Roman world. Ultimately, the syncretism of Virgilian and

Boethian themes is notable through these two most significant works of Augustine, and

their echoes in the works of the Anglo-Saxon poets are also resonant. Baswell notes

"frequent explicit citations of the *Aeneid*, both positive and negative" in *De Civitas Dei*

and observes further that "the implicit Virgilian structure and references of the

Confessions would also have been apparent to many readers" in the medieval period

(33). Ultimately, the works of Augustine represent one major conduit by which

Boethian, Virgilian, and Homeric influences informed that monastic world, wherein the

Beowulf poet transformed a Germanic legend into a Christianized epic.

The poem itself will be considered in the following chapter, along with the

"text" of the burial tableau of Sutton Hoo, the archaeological evidence gathered the

seventh-century burial mounds in East Anglia. This chapter's focus is on the conduits

which enabled the transmission of Virgilian epic motifs and images and made them

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[64] See n. 45, p. 144.

available to Anglo-Saxon monastics and poets. The composer(s) of *Beowulf*

had a range of other influences from the post-Roman world which shaped the poem's

depiction of the underworld, battle imagery, descriptions of metals and weapons, and

the overall use of the epic form. It is possible, for instance, to note the extensive

Virgilian influence in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, particularly in Bede's account of

the "miracles" that enabled an underworld vision at the beginning of that work's Book

V. In this passage, one discerns how most monastic libraries contained some significant

Virgilian presence which shaped post-Roman conceptions of history and literature and

arguably even extended into the epic of *Beowulf*. Such patterns are also evident in the

post-Augustinian writings of St. Gregory and the eighth-century monastic Felix, who

authored the *Life of St. Guthlac*. Further, the poem's Nordic character is reflected in its

direct allusions to north Germanic peoples and lands, which collectively reveal its

explicit and less direct connections to Germanic and Old Norse epics. Collectively, the

poem combines the disparate influences of the classical, early Christian, Germanic, and

contemporary worlds, and each of these elements must be examined to understand in

detail how *Beowulf*, following the lead of the post-imperial and early English church

fathers, Christianizes the epic "raw materials" of metals, battle, and empire provided by

the *Aeneid*.

Classical Influences: Homeric and Virgilian Epic Influence in Beowulf

It is impossible to note the transmission of the epic form from the classical to

the Old English period without highlighting the Christianizing processes that changed

how classical epics were read. As described above, Baswell's study interprets the

patterns of textual exegesis in Virgilian manuscripts—as revealed in glossed notes—in

an effort to understand how the *Aeneid* influenced medieval thought and literary

traditions. Two of his arguments are of relevance to anyone seeking to understand the

interconnected features of the underworld, metallurgy, and the political and social

dimensions of the epic genre.

The first argument describes the evolution of Virgilian epic into medieval

spiritual allegory, and I hope to show how this approach will eventually shed light on

the epic form of *Beowulf*.[65] In the late medieval world of Chaucer and the Gawain poet,

to what extent did the *Beowulf* poets of the Old English period also see his hero's

experience through the lens of allegory? *Beowulf* scholar Margaret Goldsmith, whose

1970 study *Mode and Meaning of* Beowulf represents one of the landmark works of

Beowulf scholarship, notes an allegorizing habit in the Anglo-Saxon world that is also

borne out of a familiarity with the *Aeneid*. While comparable, this pattern is less

developed than that in the late medieval world. Explaining that "*Allegoria* in Bede's

time was not a category of formal structure, but a mode of figurative writing which

might inhere only intermittently in a given work, in that it involved moral and spiritual

symbols and figurative passages" (76), Goldsmith maintains that

> [t]he allegory in *Beowulf*, as I believe, is intermittent and
>
> concerns only one aspect of man's life, the contest with the

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[65]According to Baswell, the essential precursors of medieval spiritual allegory are the underworld episodes in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the epic underworld of *Aeneid* VI. By the time of Chaucer, Baswell notes, "[t]exts from Latin antiquity were increasingly approached as models of life in this world, rather than as a means of transcendence and contempt of the world. The exegesis, literal and allegorical, took on a more strongly moral tone, and the explication of the literal level shifted much of its attention from historical difference to contemporary analogy, that is to classical characters as exemplary or cautionary figures"(138). Virgil's intuitive grasp of the allegorical possibilities of the epic form is suggested by the ready application of *the Aeneid's* narrative to medieval allegoresis. The conjoined images of metallurgy, battle, and the underworld serve an important purpose in this application, providing the narrative features which enable the epic character's moral and spiritual growth. Virgil's medieval audience would have understood Aeneas' underworld descent in Book VI as a "second birth" of sorts, and would, according to Baswell, understand themselves in similar terms: as "spiritual pilgrims" making a comparable journey through life (117-19).

Enemy. Though the poet quite probably knew the *Aeneid* with its

accompanying symbolic commentaries, there are no signs that he

was influenced by it except in the most general way. (76)

The thematic linkage—and the common preoccupation with battle, metals, and the

survival of a race—becomes clearer within this allegorical framework.[66] The conjoined

components of metallurgy, battle, underworld, and empire enable the ready application

of the *Aeneid's* epic form to the allegorizing habits of mind in both the Old and Middle

English periods.

However, the character of Anglo-Saxon allegoresis of the *Aeneid* is more

muted than that of later medieval writers, reflecting a more muted habit of

"Christianizing" Virgil, which is the issue to be considered here. Goldsmith argues that

the "apparent ease by which biblical and exegetical symbolism was absorbed by the

Anglo-Saxons" was shaped by the "change in cultural ideas" that was evident as

England was Christianized in the seventh and eighth centuries. The growing Christian

influence in this period "altered the function of heroic poetry and at the same time

inevitably changed the meaning of traditional secular symbols" (64). In this way, the

symbolic elements from both classical and Germanic heroic traditions—metals,

weapons, and battle images prominent among them—were invested with an "almost

necessarily" allegorical dimension (64). Goldsmith describes how the scholars of the

early English Church, suspicious of the *Aeneid's* pagan origins, would have

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[66] I hope in the subsequent chapter to demonstrate how the allegoresis of *Beowulf* is more developed than Goldsmith maintains. However, it is important to note here that the application of Virgilian themes to the epic form is demonstrated by the Anglo-Saxon and medieval poet alike.

followed the lead of the pagan commentators Servius and

Macrobius in discovering symbolic meaning in the more

superstitious passages of the epic so that the *Aeneid* came to be

read in the Christian schools as a historical epic with allegorical

elements. (64)[67]

A reading of the conflict between Beowulf and Grendel or the Dragon is less amenable

to this interpretive habit but gains credibility when considered in light of the

allegorizing habits of the early Anglo-Saxon literary imagination, which are enabled by

the allegorization of Virgilian epic and underworld imagery, and are on display in the

early Christian writings of Augustine, Gregory, Bede, and Felix.

Virgil's Conduits: Modifying and Allegorizing the Epic "Raw Materials" of the Classical World

Any effort to examine the interconnected themes and epic features shared

between Virgil's *Aeneid* and *Beowulf* must consider therefore how Virgil's influence

shaped the early Christian thought in the post-Roman world. Baswell cites the "largely

unanalytical" efforts of scholar Pierre Courcelle as "the most complete" study of the

influence of Virgil on writers through the sixth century and provides citations that

establish "the extent to which Virgil penetrated the language and imaginations of not

only the learned early fathers—Jerome, Lacantius, Augustine, Ambrose, Tertullian—

but also Christian poets (Paulinus of Nola, Ausonius) and epitaph writers" (32).

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[67] In contrast, later medieval readers of the *Aeneid* would approach the poem with a more entrenched habit of allegorizing. Baswell shows how exegesis in the later manuscripts recovered from medieval libraries demonstrates the habit of reading the classics with a "Christianizing allegoresis" which would emphasize more heavily the spiritual ramifications of Aeneas' underworld descent in Book VI. Among the overlapping patterns of allegoresis in the late medieval versions of the Aeneas story, Baswell notes a "willingness to identify Aeneas with Christ, and other epic players with characters in the drama of salvation" (157).

Further, Virgil's works were firmly embedded in the *trivium* of medieval education, as "Virgil was among the most frequently mined sources for elegant Latinity. At almost any period, and in almost every educational center of the Middle ages," notes Baswell, "a student of grammar and rhetoric would gain an intimate knowledge of great swaths of Virgil's texts, even barring any direct contact with Virgilian manuscripts" (33). These educational influences complement the "cultural *auctoritas* attached to Virgil himself, the historical context and its counter-tradition, and the illustrations" which combine to show "ways in which the story and setting of the *Aeneid* could be grasped without, necessarily, any direct access to Virgil" (30). Moreover, "in the thirteen surviving book lists from Anglo-Saxon libraries, Virgil is mentioned twice, at the beginning and toward the end of the period" (31). The conduits by which Virgilian epic motifs might have reached the *Beowulf* poet are many and varied, and two examples might best illustrate how Virgilian themes managed to resonate in the Anglo-Saxon monasteries in which the *Beowulf* poet might have melded the story's Germanic motifs with Christian themes.

Augustine's De Civitas Dei

One work in particular demonstrates the *Aeneid's* easy proliferation into the thought of the post-Roman world. This "the most famous instance" (Baswell 33) of a text bridging the gap between the late classical and early Christian worlds is Augustine's *De Civitas Dei*, or *The City of God*. Demonstrating vividly the reliance of the Church fathers on post-imperial thought, Augustine's *De Civitas* represents a convenient mid-point in the intellectual transitions in a period defined by the boundaries of the *Aeneid* and *Beowulf.*

Not one of Augustine's most accessible works, *De Civitas* nevertheless captures in its form and organization the intellectual transitions that remake Virgilian motifs from the late classical world into easily allegorized ideas useful to the Christian world, forming in itself a Christianized imperial vision. In its prolonged consideration of the *Aeneid* in its early chapters and in its examination of the larger social dimensions of the Old Testament parable of Cain and Abel in its later ones, Augustine reads Rome's demise in both political and spiritual terms. In this discussion, one sees the ready application of these reinvented Virgilian themes to the vision of Christianized national identity that is hinted at in Beowulf and developed more fully in later epics.[68]

As the recently fallen seat of the decaying empire, Rome is the model and monument of a corrupt pagan spirituality, standing in contrast to the City of God. Virgil provides an essential counterpoint to Augustine's arguments in the early chapters of *De Civitas*, and nowhere is this feature more evident or overt than in the book's opening pages. Augustine relies on the *Aeneid* as a springboard for his own interpretation of Christian spirituality and uses its colonialist agenda as a counterpoint to his effort to

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[68] Given that Augustine's view of Rome is the inevitable downfall of the earthly city, or the city living in willful ignorance of God's dominion, a few of his observations on Roman spirituality will illustrate the *Aeneid's* indirect influence on the monastic world of post-Roman Europe. In Book V of *De Civitas* Augustine argues that Roman virtues were in fact those "which the true God, whose powers are also the kingdoms of the earth, condescended to help in order to raise the empire" (158). Reading then the famous lines 847-54 of the *Aeneid's* Book VI, Augustine juxtaposes the "worldly agendas" of the major figures of Roman intellectual life—Virgil, Cato, and Sallust—with the "godly messages" of Scripture: 2 Corinthians (i.12) and Galatians (vi.4). In so doing, he points out the roots of the empire's corruption, arguing that Rome fell short of the celestial empires of God's kingdom by placing their faith in a "Civil Theolgy," a primitive and inadequate expression of the true God: "if these gods, false and many, were unknown or contemned, and He alone was known and worshipped with sincere faith and virtue, they (the Romans) would both have a better kingdom here, whatever might be its extent, and...would afterwards receive an eternal kingdom" (135).

God favored the Romans to an extent, contends Augustine, such that he "helped forward the Romans, who were good according to a certain standard of an earthly state, to the acquirement of the glory of so great an empire...." Ultimately, however, their Civil Theology failed them, when they paid tribute to the glories of the celestial kingdom in their own "temples of Virtue and Honor" (161) and failed to recognize the futility in their "worshipping as Gods the Gifts of God" (161). A Civil Theology based on Godly principles, implies Augustine, is necessary for the reinvention of an earthly empire guided by Christian principles. The stated objective of the work is to describe not the fallen Rome, but instead this "City of God," "[a] city surpassingly glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat" (3).

ascribe models, patterns, and limits to the divine realm. Significantly, the "King"

of the celestial city, argues Augustine, "has in Scripture uttered to His people a dictum

of the divine law" (3) in words appropriated from Virgil's imperial vision (Book VI,

853-54)[69] and central to his imperialist agenda:

> "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." But
>
> this, which is god's prerogative, the inflated ambition of a proud
>
> spirit also effects, and dearly loves that this be numbered among
>
> its attributes to
>
>> "Show pity to the humbled soul, and crush
>>
>> the sons of pride." (3)

In his effort to articulate his vision of the celestial empire, Augustine justifies his need

to "speak also of the earthly city, which though it be mistress of nations, is itself ruled

by its lust of rule" (3). Implicit in the argument of the early chapters are the writer's

efforts to establish the distance between the "spiritual" colonialism of Christianity and

the imperial colonialism of the *Aeneid*. The argument proceeds to equate the spiritual

imperatives essential to the building of God's empire, as articulated in the New

Testament books of James (iv. 6)[70] and I Peter (v.5)[71] with the famous lines 853-54 of

Virgil's work. And as the early chapters of *De Civitas Dei* demonstrate, Augustine

positions himself as the "anti-Virgil," offering a critique of the agenda of imperial Rome

even as he borrows similar motifs for validating the Christian faith. And in his forceful

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[69]See n. 45, p. 144 and discussion that follows.

[70] This book warns God's people against "friendship with the world" (iv.4) and instead offers a Virgilian echo in its admonition that "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (iv.6). In this way, God extends His grace toward those peoples who humble themselves before him.

[71] This chapter contains essentially the same message, as that in James, that "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (v.5).

commentary against the epic propagandist for Roman imperialism, Augustine's

writing highlights Virgil's influence as a blueprint for Augustinian faith. Evident from

the initial pages of *De Civitas*, Augustine's critique of the *Aeneid's* political imperatives

implies a notable distrust of the epic motifs which involve both metalworking and

underworld imagery.[72]

In *De Civitas'* Book XX, for example, Augustine provides an involved

consideration of the properties of Hell, noting the eternal fires appropriated from

Virgilian imagery of the *Aeneid's* Book VI. More significantly, in Book XXI

Augustine articulates a vision of the eternal punishment that awaits those enemies of the

City of God, just as Virgil had provided a similar vision for the enemies of Rome in

Aeneas' underworld journey. Horrible presences that reside in a realm "contrary to

nature...are called monsters, phenomena, portents, prodigies," things, he argues, that

"ought to demonstrate, portend, predict that God will bring to pass what He has foretold

regarding the bodies of men, no difficulty preventing Him, no law of nature prescribing

Him His limit" (778). In offering this view, Augustine preserves the classical biases

against mining and metalworking articulated by Pliny, those which had become

representative for the classical world as a whole. Indirectly, he comments upon the

unnatural politics of Roman imperialism, which relied on colonial resources to fulfill

the empire's needs. Such events established how Rome was founded and run on an

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[72] Augustine's sole mention of metalworking is a passing reference to the passage in Genesis 4:18-22 that refers to the artificer of brass and iron. This reference is placed in context in a discussion of the generations that followed Cain and perpetuated the perversions that result in the fallen state of the earthly city (503), and its relative insignificance in this analytical context affirms the value of metals and metallic imagery as a *symbolic* element in the imperial objectives of the epic genre, and in his later discussion Augustine himself partakes of this conceit. Nevertheless, as one would expect in a work dedicated to Christian spirituality, Augustine's commentary on the Virgilian underworld is extensive and seeks to redefine it according to Christian sensibilities.

unnatural premise, one showing how the empire embodied the struggle of those

"who are separated from the kingdom of God" (779).

Such reasoning leads him toward a commentary on the passages in *Aeneid* VI on

transformational processes, in which he removes the moral ambiguity from the Virgilian

underworld and imbues it more forcefully with the Christian connotations of Hell.

Specifically, Augustine critiques the Virgilian notion of the afterlife, arguing against the

idea that all souls are cleansed in a purgatorial period before reentering the worldly

realm in a pure state (*Aeneid* VI, 716-33).[73] In arguing against the possibility of gradual

purification from the Virgilian notion of purgatory, Augustine establishes the

permanence of eternity in the Christian underworld and the finality of God's judgment

of man's actions. Essentially, Augustine removes the mutability from the Virgilian

notion of purgatory and instead places a stricter character of judgment on human

actions.[74] The importance of these arguments about purgation, judgment, and divine

providence apply indirectly to evolving medieval conceptions of metallurgy, as

medieval commentators on the natural world judged earthly materials according to a

system of value that was as much based in spiritual as monetary value. In considering

the idealization of the human form in the spirit world, Augustine implies that its perfect

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[73] To quote in full: "They who are of this opinion would have all punishments after death be purgatorial; and as the elements of air, fire, and water are superior to earth, one or other of these may be the instrument of expiating and purging away the stain contracted by the contagion of earth. So Virgil hints at the air in the words, "some hang aloft for winds to pierce;" at the water in "whelming tide;" and at fire in the expression "in burning fire." For our part, we recognize that even in this life some punishments are purgatorial—not, indeed, to those whose life is none the better, but rather the worse for them, but to those who are constrained by them to amend their life" (784).

[74] To quote in full: "All other punishments, whether temporal or eternal, inflicted as they are on every one by divine providence, are sent either on account of past sins, or of sins presently allowed in the life, or to exercise and reveal a man's graces...but God, who by His just though hidden judgment permits it to be done, sins not. But temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but all of them before the last and strictest judgment" (784).

form is no longer material but uncorrupted in an idealized state. On these

principles Augustine bases his vision of his Godly city.

Ultimately, Augustine defines Godly perfection as that which is revealed in the

eternal incorruptibility of the material form. In Book XXI of *De Civitas*, Augustine

attempts to note the interconnections between virtue as defined by both Roman

paganism and New Testament scripture, hinting that Virgil understood that salvation is

achievable even by those who walk among sinners.[75] Augustine's critique of Virgil is

tempered by his habit of noting the apparent consistencies between Virgilian and

Christian conceptions of virtue. While Augustine stops short of arguing for Virgil's

proto-Christianity, as later medieval writers will do, he does invest the humanist

features of Virgilian ethos with proto-Christian possibilities, in spite of the poet's vain

glorification of imperialist Rome.

Nevertheless, Augustine and Virgil are ultimately divided on the subject of

purgatory, and his conclusions mark the unyielding distinctions between the classical

and medieval views of the material world.[76] In articulating this vision of the Virgilian

purgatory and the transmigration of souls, Augustine reveals a blueprint for

understanding the conceptions of the material world, one which holds stark implications

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[75] To quote in full: "I frequently wonder that even Virgil should give expression to this sentence of the Lord, in which He says, "make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (Luke XVI. 9) and this very similar saying, "He that reviveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matt. X. 41). For when that poet described the Elysian Fields, in which they suppose that the souls of the blessed dwell, he placed there not only those who had been able by their own merit to reach that abode, but added—"...they who grateful memory won /By services to others done." That is, they who had served others, and thereby merited to be remembered by them. Just as if they used the expression so common on Christian lips, where some humble person commends himself to tone of the saints, and says, Remember me, and secures that he do so by deserving well at his hand" (808).

[76] In response to the commentary on the transmigration of souls in *Aeneid* VI, Augustine asks, "what shall the body be, when it is in every respect subject to the spirit, from which it shall draw a life so sufficient, as to stand in need of no other nutriment? For it shall no longer be animal, but spiritual, having indeed the substance of flesh, but without any fleshly corruption. (855)

for the medieval conceptions of metals and metallurgy. In concluding his discussion of Virgilian purgatory, Augustine asks, "in what incorruptible body will they more suitably rejoice than in that which they groaned when it was corruptible?" (857)[77] In the Augustinian notion, the idea of perfection is explained as an eternal stasis, rather than a process of becoming. He ascribes a quality of permanence to the state of perfection, and his views help to explain the vision toward the "more perfect" metals like gold and silver and those "less perfect" like lead and iron. Indirectly, his spiritual views help shape conceptions toward the material world in the centuries that follow.

St. Gregory's Dialogues

Augustine's influence is evident in the writings of three early church fathers, St. Gregory, Bede, and St. Guthlac, who in turn pass Virgilian motifs and Augustinian conceptions of the underworld along to the world inhabited by the *Beowulf* poet, or at least to the scribes who recorded his work. *The Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great*, written during the papacy of St. Gregory (590-604), represents an intermediary between the underworld vision of Augustine and the more fully Christianized perspective of Bede, and their resonance, albeit less direct, is also notable in *Beowulf* as well. In Book 4, Gregory builds on the Virgilian and Augustinian arguments in envisioning the afterlife for faithful souls and provides material enabling readers to grasp the late sixth-century concept of Hell. Following a discussion of how sinful souls bear eternal torment in celestial Hellfire, Gregory cites the demise of King Theodoric as one such example.

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[77] Augustine elucidates on this point: "For thus they shall not feel that dire craving which Virgil, in imitation of Plato, has ascribed to them when he says that they wish to return again to their bodies. They shall not, I say, feel this desire to return to their bodies, since they shall have bodies to which a return was desired, and shall, indeed, be in such thorough possession of them, that they shall never lose them even for the briefest moment, nor ever lay them down in death" (857).

He then relates to his fellow interlocutor, his deacon Peter, the story of one

Repartus, "a prominent man" (229), whose momentary death provides occasion for a

journey into the otherworld for the purpose of teaching us "that we should use the

opportunities given to us to correct our evil ways" (229). The fires of Hell, as reported

by Repartus, are described in the form of a giant funeral pyre, and Gregory interprets

this image to mean not that "wood is burned in Hell," but rather "to give…a vivid

picture of the fires of Hell, so that, in describing them to the people, they might learn to

fear the eternal fire through their experience with natural fire" (230).

Interestingly, in a subsequent passage Gregory relates further the imagery of

the otherworld with the motifs of the spiritual world, partaking in a tradition clearly

inherited from comparable and better known images from the classical world like the

fiery environs of Plato's cave, or like those in the Homeric and Virgilian underworlds.

Gregory describes the simultaneous deaths of two individuals, Eumorphius and

Stephen, whose deaths are described as a journey on a ship from Rome to Sicily.

Gregory interprets the image in this fashion,[78] explaining "[t]hat he should sail to

Sicily is best explained by recalling that in the islands around Sicily there are more open

pits burning with fires from Hell than in any other region" (235). In themselves, these

passages show the Christian appropriation of both realistic imagery and classical motifs

to provide the underworld with its characteristic qualities and to equate the state of

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[78] To quote in full: "it is not surprising that in the vision a man of flesh and blood saw an object which was physically real to him, and through it was given to understand that the soul is transported spiritually. That he should sail to Sicily is best explained by recalling that in the islands around Sicily there are more open pits burning with fires from Hell than in any other region. And these are becoming larger every day, as well-informed people tell us, for, with the end of the world approaching, it seems that the openings of Hell are enlarged in order to receive the great number of lost souls who will be gathered there to be cast into eternal punishment. God made these fires appear on the surface of the earth in order to correct the minds of men. Unbelievers who had heard of the torments of Hell and still refused to believe were to see these realms of torture with their own eyes" (235-36).

spiritual torment with corporal forms. Fire is obviously the most important

element in this process, representing an intermediate place between the corporeal and

spiritual realms.[79]

Like Augustine, Gregory departs from the Virgilian habit of viewing the fiery

otherworld as a place for the purification of souls. Gregory maintains that "there is one

kind of fire in Hell, but it does not torment all sinners in the same way, for each one

feels its torments according to his degree of guilt" (254). Additionally, however, he

follows the mandate expressed in Matthew 25:46 on the permanence of eternal torment

for those judged to be condemned: "Just as the joys of Heaven will never cease, so, too,

there is no end to the torments of the damned" (254). God's rationale, Gregory explains,

is to extract from the sinner a just punishment for sins committed in this world and use

the example of the sinner for the benefit of the saved: "being a God of love, [He] does

not gratify His anger by torturing wretched sinners" (256).[80]

The Augustinian influence in Gregory's vision of Hell is evident, and its

departure from Virgil's conception of the underworld is visible.[81] Written in 594,

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[79] Ultimately, the image of fire serves St. Gregory in a manner comparable to its service in the Virgilian underworld: Gregory explains that "[i]n His unbounded mercy, the Good God allows some souls to return to their bodies shortly after death, so that the sight of Hell might at last teach them to fear the eternal punishments in which words alone could not make them believe" (237).

Gregory's vision of the otherworld contains a rich assortment of images, including beautiful dwellings made of bricks of gold, which are contrasted with noxious streams of evil-smelling vapors lying across a bridge (241). Gregory cites *Genesis* 19:24, or the story of God's destruction of Sodom, as the source for these punishments for overindulgence in carnal pleasures.

[80] To quote in full: "However, since He is a god of justice, the punishment of the wicked cannot satisfy Him even if it continues eternally. All the wicked condemned to Hell are being punished for their wickedness ....Yet there is another reason why they burn, namely, that the elect may see in God all the joys they experience, and may see in the damned all the tortures they escaped. Seeing the terrible punishment for sin which they avoided with God's help, they become all the more conscious of the eternal debt of gratitude they owe God for the Graces they received" (256).

[81] Historian Peter Hunter Blair contends that English monasteries from the seventh and early eighth centuries would have access to, as well as a strong interest in transmitting, the corpus of Gregory's works, particularly his *Homilies*, his *Pastoral Care*, and his *Morals*. "There would certainly be copies of all these works," Blair notes, "in the libraries at Wearmouth and Jarrow," where they would be accessible to Bede, the Northumbrian monastic and historian.

Gregory's influence on the underworld vision of the Anglo-Saxon church is

evident, and echoes of it can be seen in Beowulf's various underworld sojourns as well.

Absent of references to Virgil and other classical authors, the work is nonetheless

fraught with scriptural references that show the beginnings of a Christian underworld

vision which, though not independent of pagan influences, aspires toward a degree of

autonomy. Nevertheless, while the work makes no direct connection to the themes of

Aeneid VI, its reliance on the Augustinian vision of the underworld is thematically

evident.

Bede's Ecclesiastical History

Just as it is in Augustine's *De Civitias Dei*, the Virgilian influence is equally

pervasive in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, a work of

ecclesiastical character which relies overtly on the *Aeneid*. Composed in 731 A.D., this

work combines elements of history, myth, biography, and epic, and the Virgilian

influence is evident to even a casual reader. Like Augustine's *De Civitas, Ecclesiastical*

History represents another avenue by which the *Beowulf* poet, either directly or

indirectly, gained access to the Virgilian notions of the underworld. However, in

reading Bede's work with an eye on the shadows cast over it by the Roman poet, one

does well to keep in mind the words of historian Blair, who argues that even though

allusions and even direct quotations from the poet appear in the work, it is nevertheless

impossible to conclude that Bede had direct access and full familiarity with Virgil's

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Indeed, "we are not likely to be mistaken in thinking that the major works of Gregory the Great were more frequently copied in Anglo-Saxon scriptoria in the age of Bede than those of any other writer" (*World of Bede* 295).
Gregory's influence on the vision of Hell would be particularly powerful in the world of Anglo-Saxon monasticism, such that Colgrave and Mynors, translators and editors of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, observe that one may regard Gregory's *Dialogues* "as the chief Western source of those visions of Heaven, Hell, and purgatory which formed an important genre in medieval literature and reached its highest point in Dante's *Divine Comedy*"(128-29).

works. Blair describes how Bede's knowledge of the *Aeneid* might have been
fragmentary and problematic, as his degree of access to them is as uncertain as is his
willingness to embrace their themes,[82] noting that *florilegia*, or "the compilations of
scholiasts and encyclopaedists were the principal means through which fragments of
classical literature...reached western Europe in the times of Isidore and Bede" (*World of
Bede* 289-90).

As such, the medieval writer would likely rely on such a work for apt quotations
from one of the ancients even though such reliance on scribal copies would be at the
mercy of all errors that might occur in a *florilegium* several times removed form its
source. Blair notes an exception significant for the purposes of this work, citing the
Leyden manuscript that "contains Pliny's *Natural History* and ...is thought to have been
written in northern England,...the only work from classical antiquity which we can be
certain that Bede knew at first hand, though even then he only knew parts of it" (*World
of Bede* 290). Ultimately, just as "we would not nowadays suppose that a casual
reference to Scylla and Charybdis implied that its author had read Homer's *Odyssey*,
Virgil's *Eclogues*, or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*" (290), modern readers cannot assume that,
because Bede *relied* so significantly on the *Aeneid*, he'd actually read the text as a
whole. So even as the Colgrave and Mynors edition of *Ecclesiastical History* notes
direct quotations from Plato, Pliny, as well as two specific references to Virgilian
Eclogues and six to the *Aeneid*, the exact extent of his command of Virgil's epic remains

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[82] Noting "Bede's hostility towards the reading of secular works," Blair nevertheless describes how "we have no
means of determining the extent to which classical literature was known in the England of Bede's age in general and
to Bede himself in particular" (*World of Bede* 289). In this light, "[i]t is of course possible to compile a list of the
passages which Bede cites from classical works and such a list would include the names of Virgil, Ovid, Terence,
Lucretius, Martial, Sallus, and one or two others, but it would be folly to suppose that Bede drew his citations
firsthand from copies of the works of these writers in the libraries at Wearmouth and Jarrow" (*World of Bede* 289).

an elusive point. And as is the case with Bede, it is likewise possible to presume

in the *Beowulf* poet /scribes a comparable command of Virgilian materials.

However, just as in *De Civitas Dei, Ecclesiastical History* is powerfully

imbued with Virgilian motifs. Bede's appropriation of them is perhaps not conscious or

deliberate, but it is also not accidental. While there are plenty of connections that can

be drawn between Virgil's and Bede's narratives, it is important here to note the

common nationalist dimensions that apply as much to the former's epic as to the latter's

history. Indeed, the Virgilian conceits of nation-building are central imperatives in both

works. Just as the Virgilian notion of heroism focuses on the humanist dimensions of

Aeneas' destiny, so does Bede focus on the agonies, struggles, and visions of the Church

fathers who had, by his time, gained the upper hand in their efforts to convert the

Saxons away from Germanic paganism. Finally, a Virgilian echo is significant in

Bede's vision of the underworld which is detailed in that work's Book V. Even though

Ecclesiastical History depicts the underworld vision not, as in *Aeneid* VI in the middle,

but rather toward the end of the narrative's development, a consideration of Bede's

narrative strategy in his historical account will reveal how the associations between

metalworking and the underworld are conjoined, just as they are in both Homeric and

Virgilian epic.[83]

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[83] Historian H.R. Loyn, whose observations on the trade and technology of early Saxon England will be considered more fully below, offers a few remarks about one passage in Book V, Chapter XIV of *Ecclesiastical History*, where "Bede tells of an unworthy brother, a man of dark thoughts and deeds, whose drunkenness and devotion to his smithy rather than to the church were tolerated only because he was such a skilled smith. The status of a smith in England does not seem to have been particularly exalted" (104). However, Loyn's observation fails in considering the context of the observation within the larger narrative. The account is not an incidental detail but is rather placed after two chapters which offer specific and vivid explanations of the underworld as Bede envisioned it. Further, in the long narrative that stretches over five books, Bede's account comes to assume a form that reconfigures a Virgilian *catabaesis* so that it is appropriate not only to the Christian conception of salvation, but also so that it is contextually suitable for his narrative of the developing Christian faith in England.

After four books in which he describes in detail the geographical features of the island of England, the various kingdoms, personalities, and rivalries of the developing monarchies in the sixth and seventh centuries, various miracles which validate God's mercies and the holiness of his saints, the significance of particular sites and places, the controversies associated with the divisions between the Irish and Roman churches, and the personalities, dilemmas, and ultimate godliness of the various fathers of the English church, Bede's history approaches the present time. In Book V, Chapter XII, he relates the story of Brother Dryhthelm, describing "a memorable miracle (which) occurred in Britain like those of ancient times." Brother Dryhthelm's story begins as a dying father of godly character who passes away and then comes back to life and takes up residence at the monastery of Old Melrose, or the former home of St. Cuthbert. Having returned from death, the new monk relates what he had seen during his sojourn in the afterlife, a journey modeled on *Aeneid* VI. Dryhthelm describes his guide, "a man of shining countenance and wearing bright robes" (489). The pair walks toward a rising summer sun, passing a broad valley to their left. One side of the valley rages with fire, while the other side storms with ice and hail. The souls of men are tossed back and forth between the two sides, such that when the fierce heat becomes unendurable they are tossed into the icy cold. The visitor reports how a countless multitude of misshapen spirits ("innumerabilis spirituum deformium multitudo") are being tortured in this manner. Thinking that he sees Hell, the visitor is told by his guide that "this is not Hell as you think" ("non enim hic infernos est ille, quem putas") (491).[84]

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[84] The pair proceeds on their journey, coming to a place where the darkness is thick and overwhelming. At this point Bede describes the pair journeying on "through the shades in the lone night" ("sola sub nocte per umbras"), quoting directly from the *Aeneid's* Book VI (line 268). Suddenly they see a shooting flame rising and falling from a great pit.

As Brother Dryhthelm's underworld account closes, Bede then begins a

new chapter which relates another underworld vision. In this vision, a dying layman in

the realm of the Mercian king Cenred refused to make confession for his sins, and was

forever ignoring the king's advice to make penance, even as he took ill.[85] Bede then

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At the pit's bottom, the visitor sees human spirits which, like the sparks, are tossed high and fall back into the depths of darkness ("spiritibus hominum, qui instar fauillarum cum fumo ascenditum nunc ad sublimiora proicrentur, nunc retractis ignium uaporibus relaberentur in profunda"). An "indescribable stench" ("fetor incomparabilis") rises within the dark and vaporous realm. Hearing "wild lamentations" and "harsh laughter" all about himself, the visitor beholds jeering demons tormenting condemned souls, including one tonsured like a clearic, one a layman, and one a woman" (493) ("adtonsus ut clericus, quidam lacius, quaedam femina"). Spying the unwelcome visitor, the spirits rush toward him, threatening to pull him into the fire with their or their "fiery tongs which they held in their hands" ("forcipibus quoque igneis, quos tenebant in manibus"). The panicked visitor catches sight of a bright light coming up towards him, which causes the hostile spirits to flee and disappear.

Recognizing that his guide has frightened off the tormenting spirits and rescued him, Dryhthelm then relates how he is then led into a "serene and bright atmosphere," where he sees a wall "endlessly long and endlessly high everywhere" ("murum permaximum, cuius nequi longitudini hinc uel inde neque altitudini ullus esse terminus uideretur") (493). Suddenly finding themselves on top of the wall, the pair are greeted by a "fragrance of growing flowers" and a divine light in which "innumerable bands of men in white robes, and many happy people sat around" ("in hoc campo innumera hominum albatorum conuenticula sedesque plurimae agminum laetantium") (493). In this place, the visitor begins to envision the kingdom of the sky ("esse regnum caelorum, de quo praedicari saepius audiui") which he had often heard of. But again, his guide explains that "this is not the kingdom of Heaven as you imagine" ("non hoc est regnum caelorum quod autumas") (493).

Instead, a vision follows which explains the visitor's otherworldly experiences in their entirety. The guide explains what the visitor has seen: the flames and cold is the place of those who confess on their deathbeds, who are delayed access until judgment day; the mouth of Hell, which holds all souls banished to it for all eternity; and purgatory, where those who practice good works and live virtuously remain until they are received into the joys of the Heavenly kingdom on judgment day. The kingdom of Heaven itself is "near the place where you heard the sound of sweet singing, amid delightful fragrance and glorious light" ("ad cuius uicinia pertinet locus ille, ubi sonum cantilenae dulcis cum odore suauitatis ac splendore lucis audisti") (495). Thus exposing the visitor to this glimpse of the divine, the guide then instructs him that he must return to the realms of the living and instruct them in the proper preparations for entrance into the godly realms. Thus informed, the man returns to earth, taking care to instruct "only those who were terrified by fear of the torments or delighted with the hope of eternal joys and were ready to make his words a means of spiritual advancement" ("illis solummodo qui uel tormentorum metu perterriti uel spe gaudiorum perennium delectati profectum pietatis ex eius uerbis haurire uolebant") (497). Thus concludes Bede's first and most graphic account of the underworld journey, in which the borrowings from both Virgil (the Heavenly guide, the "saved" and "condemned" souls, the return journey) and Augustine (the purgatorial state, the permanence of the condemned) are both notable, even as Bede relates how "it is from his account that these particulars which we have briefly described came to our knowledge" ("per cuius relationem ad nostram quoque agnitionem peruenere, quae de his pauca perstrinximus") (497).

[85] Lying on his deathbed, he relates a vision in which a pair of handsome youths comes to visit the ailing layman, and presents him an "exceedingly small" book which recounts his good deeds, "et haec errant nimium pauca et modica" ("but they were very few and trifling"). The youths take the book and depart, and suddenly appears a group of "malignorum et horridorum uultu spirituum" ("an army of evil spirits with horrible faces"), which seat themselves around the dying layman. The foremost spirit "prererens codicem horrendae uisionis et magnitudinis enormis et ponderis pene inportabilis" ("took a volume of enormous size and almost unbearable weight, horrible to behold, and ordered one of his followers to bring it to me to read"). The unfortunate layman finds all of his sins extensively catalogued therein, and finds himself resigned to the realm not of the handsome youths, but rather to that of the horrible spirits. Two of the spirits then respond in kind, striking the dying man with one dagger into the head and another into the feet: "These daggers are now creeping into the interior of my body with great torment and, as soon as they meet, I shall die and, as the devils are all ready to seize me, I shall be dragged down into the dungeons of Hell."("qui uidelicet modo cum magno tormento inrepunt in interiora corporis mei, moxque ut ad se inuicem perueniunt, moriar, et paratis ad rapiendum me daemonibus in inferni claustra pertrahar ") (500-1).

relates the dying man's final days and laments his everlasting punishment in eternal torment because of his failure to repent. Next, he provides a moral commentary on the vision, explaining how it demonstrates the need for living mindfully and with an eye toward one's eternal judgment. God provides humans with these visions of the afterlife, Bede explains, so as to assure that they will repent before the opportunity is lost.

The significance of these scenes lies as much in their placement within the historical narrative of *Ecclesiastical History* as in the vision of judgment and of the afterlife that each provides. Indeed, Book XV's account of the unworthy smith whose habits are tolerated because of his superior skills as a metalworker is conjoined to these accounts not only by their proximity in the narrative, but also because, in their placement within the work's larger narrative, the passages demonstrate Bede's relationship to Virgilian epic motifs. Like the unfortunate layman, the smith is a lost soul. Preoccupied with the delights of this world, his eyes are averted from godly things, such that "he used to remain in his workshop day and night, rather than go to the church with the brothers to sing psalms and pray and listen to the word of life" (502-3) ("in officina sua die noctuque residere, quam ad psallendum atque orandum in ecclesia audiendumque cum fratribus uerbum uitae concurrere consuerat"). In the example of this unworldly brother, Bede notes that "It happened to him...that he who is not willing to enter the church gate humbly of his own accord, is bound to be carried against his will to the gates of Hell, a damned soul." ("Unde accidit illi,...quia qui non uult ecclesiae ianuam sponte humiliates ingredi, necesse habet in ianuam inferni non sponte damnatus introducti.") (503-05). Bede draws great significance from the smith's

example, noting that he was "a man of dark mind and dark deeds" ("tenebrosae

mentis et actionis"). At the point of death, he "saw Hell opened and the damnation of

the devil and his followers," and "saw his own place of imprisonment among them"

("uidit aperta Tartara, uidit damnationem diaboli et sequacium eius; uidit etiam suum

infelix inter tales carcerem"). The significance of the story, Bede relates, was in how it

"spread far and wide and roused many people to do penance for their sins without

delay" ("ac longe lateque diffamatum multos ad agendam et non differendum sclerum

suorum paenitudinem prouocauit") (504-05). He concludes the chapter with the

following hope: "may the reading of this account of ours have the same effect" ("utinam

exhinc etiam nostrarum lectione litterarum fiat!")

The placement of these underworld episodes is significant, for shortly after

them Bede returns to the central themes that have been pervasive throughout his

historical narrative: the resolution of the Easter Day controversy, the continuing

Christianizing of the English, and the enduring examples of the pious fathers of the

English church. Preoccupied with work and with his own delights, the smith is

nevertheless a man of great skill and importance to his community. In casting his

eternal banishment Bede not only recalls the underworld domains of Haphaestus and

Vulcan, but also connects the arts of metalworking with the Christianized vision of the

underworld more forcefully, indirectly articulating a vision that could easily have been

appropriated by the *Beowulf* poet.

As the subsequent narrative draws to a close, Bede relates episodes that point to

a vision of worldly solace and godliness, a sort of Christianized prophetic vision. These

ideas are reflected in the examples of church fathers Adamnan, Wilfrid, and Acca,

whose pious examples enable the church's enduring into the present time.

Moreover, the Pictish king Nechtan, eager to embrace the new faith, converts his

people, and Bede provides a letter from the monk Ceolfirth which explains the logic of

the Roman date for celebrating Christ's ascension. Ultimately, the smith's demise

portrays the passage toward Hell that validates the vision of worldly Godliness that

Bede portrays in the final pages of *Ecclesiastical History*.

Although his historical narrative isn't organized around the *catabaesis* motif in

Aeneid VI, he is sufficiently influenced by Virgilian conceits to ensure an underworld

vision figures prominently in his historical narrative that recounts the Christianizing of

the English people after the prophetic visions presented in classical epic.[86] The

Virgilian influence is integrated into Bede's text in the form of references, but its overall

significance to *Ecclesiastical History* is much greater, shaping both Bede's narrative of

the Church's development and justifying its worthiness to continue to shape the

Christian development of these formerly heathen peoples. Indeed, this benediction in

many ways expresses the same desire, expressed in Augustine's *De Civitas*: for wholly

Christianized people to inhabit the Godly City. This awareness and preservation of

Virgilian notions of the underworld, and their syncretic melding with Christian

underworld visions, proceeded along side a developing metalworking skill that was

essential to the Church's achieving of symbolic and institutional authority. In the end, a

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[86] Even though Bede provides a brief summary of events in the final chapter of his work, it is in Chapter XXIII, or the penultimate chapter, where he offers a vision of worldly peace as a tribute to God's power and glory: He relates that as his work concludes in the year 731, the Picts and Irish live peaceably with the English, even as the Britons continue to resist the catholic church. Nevertheless, "in these favorable times of peace in prosperity" ("qua adridente pace ac serenitate temporum"), the Northumbrian race is oriented not toward the art of war but toward godly pursuits. Therefore, Bede offers this benediction: "Let the earth rejoice in His perpetual kingdom and let Britain rejoice in His faith and let the multitude of isles be glad and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness"("In cuius regno perpetuo exultet terra, et congratulante in fide eius Brittania, laetentur insulae multae et confideantur memoriae sanctitatis eius.") (560-01).

reborn Empire of the Christian spirit seeks to build the City of God through mining, militarism, and warfare.

The Life of St. Guthlac

Written in about 740 or 750, Felix's *Life of St. Guthlac* presents an important complement to Bede's work, possibly a more vivid vision of the underworld and an equally important syncretic blending of the various visions of the underworld inherited from the Christian and classical traditions. Composed between about ten and twenty years after *Ecclesiastical History,* this work describes the life of the martyred saint who was said to have been born in 674, fought against the Britons on the Welsh border near Offa's dyke, emerged from this violent pagan background of Mercian nobility to enter the monastic life, and entered his hermitage at the remote island of Crowland, a Roman barrow on the eastern fens, making his home on a site where others had hoped to find buried treasures. In this place he becomes a Christian warrior, enduring Satan's temptations and waging war "against the foul forces of darkness" ("adversus teterrimi hostis insidias"), armed with "the shield of faith, the breastplate of hope, the helmet of chastity, the bow of patience, and the arrows of psalmody" ("scutum fidei, loricam spei, galeam castatis, arcum patientiae, sagittas psalmodiae"). One such battle includes an underworld sojourn to the gates of Hell, which is notable for the richness of its imagery.

While in retreat Guthlac becomes a confidant of the future Mercian king Aethelbald, dies suddenly while in prayer in the year 716, and later appears to the king and promises his ascension to the kingship, which takes place in the same year. Significantly, the account of Guthlac's life says as much about the knowledge of its author and his reliance upon individual sources as it does about the saint, and it is clear

that the cleric Felix, its author, knew the works of Gregory the Great, was

familiar with at least some of Bede's writings (particularly his *Life of St. Cuthbert*,

which he patterned his own work after), and was fully familiar with the *Aeneid*. More

importantly, Felix's work, written "shortly before or shortly after Bede's death" in 734

(Blair, *World of Bede* 280), combines more visibly the graphic underworld motifs of

both classical and Christian traditions, the rich legend of treasure hoards, and the

traditions of Germanic heroism with those of the saint's life. To the student of

underworld imagery in the early English church, it is a valuable illustration of disparate

traditions molded into a single depiction of the gates of hell, and a valuable and

contemporary complement to the underworld imagery in Bede's narrative. Further, the

episode of Guthlac's underworld journey is described in rich and lurid terms, portraying

the monastic hermit after the manner of saints, and possibly after Beowulf himself, as

the righteous soldier confronting the ungodly underworld forces of darkness and

despair.[87]

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[87] Sitting alone in his retreat, Guthlac keeps his nightly vigil of prayer and fasting when he is suddenly besieged by a troop of "foul spirits" ("inmundorum spirituum") (103). Bursting forth from earth and sky alike, these spirits were "ferocious in appearance" and "terrible in shape" ("aspectu truces, forma terribiles"). They had "great heads, long necks, thin faces, yellow complexions, filthy beards, shaggy ears, wild foreheads, fierce eyes, foul mouths, horses' teeth, throats vomiting flames, twisted jaws, thick lips, strident voices, singed hair, fat cheeks, pigeon breasts, scabby thighs, knotty knees, crooked legs, swollen ankles, splay feet, spreading mouths, raucous cries "(103).
("capitibus magnis, collies longis, macilenta facie, lurido vultu, squalida barba, auribus hispidis, fronte torva, trucibus oculis, ore foetido, dentibus equineis, gutture flammivomo, faucibus tortis, labor lato, vocibus horrisonis, comis obustis, buccula crassa, pectore arduo, femoribus scabris, genibus nodatis, cruribus uncis, talo tumido, plantis aversis, ore patulo, clamoribus raucisonis ")
These unpleasant spirits attack the genuflecting hermit, wresting him from his house and dragging him about the swampy environs of his fenland hermitage. Guthlac remains unmoved, his faith steadfast despite the pain they inflict with "whips of iron"("flagellorum ferreorum")(105). Dragging him then to the uppermost reaches of the gloomy and freezing skies, they carry Guthlac "to the accursed jaws of Hell" ("ad nefans tartari fauces"). Reveling in the horror of this event, Felix spares no detail in his account of the vision before the suffering and steadfast saint: "For not only could one see there the fiery abyss swelling with surging flames, but even the sulphurous eddies of flame mixed with icy hail seemed almost to touch the stars with drops of spray; and evil spirits running about amid the black caverns and gloomy abysses tortured the souls of the wicked, victims of a wretched fate, with various kinds of torments. (105) ("Non solum enim fluctuantium flammarum ignivomos gurgites illic turgescere cerneres, immo etiam sulphurei galciali grandine mixti vortices, globosis sparginibus sidera paene tagentes videgantur, maligni ergo spiritus inter favillantium voraginum atras cavernas discurrentes, miserabili fatu animas impiorum diversis cruciatuum generibus torquebant.").

The distinctive features of the author's description of Guthlac's

subterranean sojourn—the flames, the sulphrous eddies, the wretched sinners tortured

and tossed about, the extremes of ice and fire—show his connection to the underworld

images of the Christian tradition. They easily connect with Bede's account in *The Life*

of Saint Cuthbert, which Felix was clearly familiar with and which he "uses very

considerably" (16), according to textual editor Bertram Colgrave. And in maintaining

one's heroic resolve in the face of such demonic threats, one finds themes applicable to

Beowulf. Whether Felix ever saw *Ecclesiastical History* remains an open question. He

had access to many other saints' lives, including those of Saints Martin, Paul, Antonius,

and Benedict, and his "frequent Virgilian echoes" (Colgrave 17) though none

specifically to the *Aeneid's* Book VI. Together they demonstrate a full familiarity with

the underworld imagery of the classical tradition.[88] Clearly, the Virgilian resonance is

prominent in these post-imperial works, and, in his effort to conjoin the seemingly

contrary conceptions of Christian and Germanic epic heroism, the *Beowulf* scribes had a

vast repository of sources available to aid in the Christianizing of this ancient story of

Germanic heroism.

Anglo-Saxon Metalworking and its Ecclesiastical Applications

Beyond the symbolic significance of the fires of the underworld provided by

Bede, Felix, and other Christian influences, the growing presence of Christian

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[88] Thankfully, just as the underworld sojourners in both the classical and Christian traditions are rescued by godly intermediaries when their peril becomes most paramount, so is Guthlac wrested from his demonic captors and returned to his earthly realm. As he faces the "yawining mouths" ("patulis hiatibus") of the "fiery entrances of Erebus" ("igniflua Herebi hostia"), the demons pointing him toward "the bowles of Styx" ("fibrae Stigiae") and "the gulfs of Acheron" ("aestivi Acherontis"), Guthlac remains defiant toward the demons, those "sons of darkness, seed of Cain, who are but dust and ashes" ("filii tenebrarum, semen Cain, favilla cineris") (107). Then, with "with outpoured radience" ("aethereis sedibus"), St. Bartholomew appears "with golden brilliance" ("aureo fulgore") from "Glorious Olympus" ("radiantis Olimpi") with his Heavenly charges to ward off Guthlac's captors. His minions bear Guthlac on their wings back to his hermitage, where they pay tribute to the strength of his convictions. So ends the Saint's underworld journey.

monasteries themselves in post-Roman England did much to facilitate the

metalworking arts, and perhaps even in their monastic association strengthened the

connection between the metalworking arts and the Christian conceptions of the

underworld. The *Beowulf* poet needed few reminders of their practical and symbolic

worth. Notable for their distinct aesthetic styles as much as for their innovative design

features, the Anglo-Saxon churches represented an outlet for skilled builders, craftsmen,

and metalworkers to contribute to their unique character of ecclesiastical ornament and

decoration.[89]

The Anglo-Saxon habit of building Christian churches on the sites of pagan

worship evolved into the practice of rebuilding the early Christian churches in more

expansive and impressive forms. The sophisticated character of eighth-and ninth-

century church construction and decoration combined the skills of carpentry, stone

masonry, metalworking, glazing, and the weaving of ornamental textiles. These early

examples of trade and artisanship collectively point to a developed network of itinerant

clerics and laypersons who worked in ecclesiastical service. As much as the early

missionaries, abbots, abbesses, bishops, and other ecclesiastical office holders helped to

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[89] For example, the Northumbrian King Edwin, whose conversion, baptism, exile, and martyrdom are described in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, built a small wooden church for his baptism at York in 627 (Blair *Anglo-Saxon England* 146), which was further expanded into stone during the reign of his successor Oswald. Among the earliest of the Anglo-Saxon churches, this larger stone church eventually fell into disrepair in the decades that followed its expansion. However, in its period of greatest influence it featured glass windows, a wooden altar, and an ornate golden cross and chalice. The latter objects were presumably the works of itinerant tradesmen, but possibly the works of one or more monastic smiths like the unfortunate fellow described by Bede. After this period of disrepair, the church of Edwin and Oswald was refurbished by the Northumbrian archbishop St. Wilfred in 670.

In this year, Wilfred commissioned a series of repairs for Edwin's church, including a new roof of sheeted lead, the reglazing of broken windows, and the construction of new altar vessels and other furnishings. The records of this commission are lost to history, but the possibility is strong that the work was done by "in house" ecclesiastical monastics who were assisted by both itinerant tradesmen and local laborers. Such was the nature of the construction crew in the English post-imperial age. The church itself was destroyed by Danish invaders in the late tenth century and was then rebuilt after the Norman conquest. However, the original altar cross and chalice, from Edwin's conversion, were then taken to Canterbury, where they survived as relics of the early Northumbrian church before being lost—presumably, also to Danish looters in the early eleventh century.

establish the church's infrastructure in its early decades, these tradesmen created

the ecclesiastical motifs, ornaments, and vessels that assured its symbolic power and

spiritual preeminence. By the late tenth and early eleventh century, Danish invaders

would pillage Anglo-Saxon churches that are distinguished as much by the ornate

character of their internal décor as by the relative sophistication of their design and

construction.[90] Through both literary record and architectural evidence, therefore, it is

clear that the early English Christian church did much to enhance the associations

between metalworking and the underworld which it had inherited from the traditions of

the classics. This process took place in both literary borrowing and in the church's

appropriation of the metalworking arts to serve its own ends.

Germanic Influences: Pre-Christian Conceptions of the Blacksmith, Metalworking, and the Underworld

The Kalevala

In post-Roman Europe another influence also comes to prominence in shaping

the conceptions of the underworld as imagined by Christian sensibilities. This influence

is found in the native epic traditions, which blended syncretically with the residually

classical and growing Christian motifs to reinforce not only the role of the smith and his

labors but also to underscore their connections with underworld images. In addition to

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[90] Commenting on this realm of ecclesiastical artisanship, Blair describes how "the English acquired a high reputation abroad as metalworkers and their decorated textiles were of such excellence that they gained the reputation of being pre-eminent in this art" (*Anglo-Saxon England* 191-93). Even though "the mind cannot visualize" the Anglo-Saxon church when its "image must be reconstructed from accounts" (184), one such example of its grandeur can be found in a description of the house at Peterborough. Restored in the late ninth century by the Bishop (and later, Saint) Aethelwold, it featured "three crosses adorned with silver, two silver candlesticks and two covered with gold, one silver censer and one of brass, one silver water vessel, four silver chalices and four patens. There were also ten hanging bells and seven handbells. A very substantial wardrobe of ecclesiastical garments included six mass vestments, four copes, eight stoles, eleven subuculas and nineteen albs, as well as curtains, seat-covers and two gilded altar cloths" (Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England* 191).

his symbolic importance in classical epic and his imagistic resonance in the

Hellish environs depicted in the writings of the early Christian church fathers, the

blacksmith figure—and the materials he creates—also resonate significantly in the

Finnish, Nordic and Germanic folklore traditions; any examination of the elements of

metalworking in *Beowulf* must consider their connection to these other folkloric

traditions. The Finnish *Kalevala* can be said to have the least thematic connection with

Beowulf, but it merits examining because of the prominence it gives to the blacksmith

figure.[91] Despite its incomparability with the more "literary" epics considered in this

study, this collection of works nevertheless attempts to portray a developing national

identity, but more importantly it demonstrates the associations between metalworking

and the health and economic prosperity of the larger agrarian society it represents.

The story itself, "a sort of poetical museum of ancient Finno Karelian peasant

life" (xiv), is episodic in nature and meanders through the adventures of three major

characters: Vainamoinen, the "eternal sage," whose adventures oddly recall those of

both Adam and Prometheus; Lemminkainen, the young lover whose amorous pursuits

demonstrate his recklessness as much as his great passion; and Ilmarinen, the

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[91] This work is of a different character than its counterparts in other traditions. The songs were collected from unlettered Finnish bards in two stages by one Elias Lonnrot, a medical doctor and scholar of Finnish language and folklore, whose travels enabled his exposure to the more rural regions of his native land. The first version appeared in 1835 and the second, published in 1849, increased the amount of material twofold (See Magoun xiii). Like many nineteenth-century belletristic efforts, Lonnrot's ambitions were to provide a focus for "the national consciousness then fast developing among the Finns, who had been growing restive under their Russian masters. To some extent, the *Kalevala* thus became a rallying point for these feelings..." (xiv).

Just as Homeric scholars puzzle over the origins of the story, scholars and editors of the Finnish epic likewise consider "whether the Finnish people or Lonnrot is to be regarded as the maker of the *Kalevala.*" Editor Magoun argues that the "homogeneous epic is the work of Lonnrot. But Lonnrot put the *Kalevala* together not as a real scholar or literary artist but as a singer of traditional songs" (354). The epic is a reflection of the Finnish national consciousness to the extent that only Lonnrot's contributions amount to "a few hundred linking verses" (355). And though the poem's narrative structure is not as ordered as the Homeric poems or its events oriented toward some ultimate battle, it does achieve a degree of coherence through the "consistency of the personal characterizations,...the animistic-magic underlying tone of the view of nature, and above all the epical verse form, with its alliterative runs and variations or parallelisms" (358).

"craftsman" and "eternal smith," whose skilled metalwork earns him the bride of

the North Farm and whose efforts create the sun and moon. Etymologically, the

Kalevala has associations with blacksmithing terminologies from the closely related

Baltic languages, and this association underscores the associations between the poem

and metalworking itself (Magoun 393-94). Ultimately, Magoun equates the *Kalevala*

with other epics by stating its relationship to the national identity of the Finnish people,

arguing that "certain typical fundamentals of the Finnish national character are outlined

in the *Kalevala's* great personal characterizations" (359). Indeed, the story's emphasis

on homespun charms, ointments, folk remedies, and other treatments for assorted

maladies testifies to its native character.

However, as in other classical and Germanic epics, the blacksmith's figure is

highlighted in the *Kalevala* and can be said therefore to occupy a position of importance

in the Finnish epic consciousness. A steady worker who is given few god-like

attributes, Ilmarinen is a character worth considering in fuller detail. This "eternal

smith" is introduced in the epic's Book 9, shortly after the aged Vianamoinen explains

the origins of iron. The metal is of divine origins, borne of the "Nature Spirits." Three

virgin maids, whose breast milk spills onto the earth, represent the source of a different

variety of iron: from the first comes bar iron; from the second, steel; and from the third,

iron ore (9:29-104). Newly created, the anthropomorphized iron endures in the swampy

fens of the north country and is then combined with fire to produce tools and weapons.

Once created, the "eternal smith" is born to make this material available for use by

human kind, and at this birth the poem clearly reveals an uneasiness with this moment.

Recognizing the possibilities in the buried iron, Ilmarinen places it into a forge and

liberates it from the bog's confinements. Using his inborn skills, he fashions a variety of tools and weapons, which are soon shown to be insufficient until he discovers an important tempering agent, a liquid containing lye and honey. Thus tempered, the worked iron becomes an agent of cultivation as well as an agent of destruction.

What follows after iron's introduction is a series of charms against its abuses, which reveal the poem's awareness of the double-edged nature of both metals and the smith's work. The poem provides charms against death by deceit and in battle (271-342) and then presents a series of charms for stanching blood, for medical ointments, protection, and bandaging (343-516). Collectively, these details imply that in the Finnish epic consciousness, the creation of iron occupies a position comparable to that held by the opening of Pandora's box in classical mythology, or the Promethean bringing of fire (a form of power) to human use. More importantly, these details represent the characteristic reservations shown in all epics toward the blacksmith and his work. True to the form of Haphaestus, Vulcan, and other epic "culture heroes" who teach people how to live and survive, Ilmarinen initiates behavior with good and bad consequences.[92] With the help of slave and serf subordinates and despite a series of false starts, Ilmarninen's labors bear fruit. The sampo eventually emerges, much to the maid's delight (355-432). Ultimately, however, the smith's value is apparent after he

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[92] In Book 10, following Ilmarinen's initial appearance, he is encouraged by Vainamoinen to woo the Maid of the North Farm, a site representing a vision of Viking prosperity. It lies in proximity to the so-called Domain of Death, a vision of the subterranean locus that replicates the epic pattern of combining metalworking with the underworld. This juxtaposition replicates the pattern in Homeric epic that opposes the underworld with images of agrarian pastoralism and prosperity. Ilmarinen is introduced to the maid by Vainamoinen, the eternal sage; to win the bride, Ilmarinen must fashion a mysterious object called *sampo*, which "is pictured as a three-sided mill, one side or face grinding out iron, one salt, and one money, all in unlimited amounts." It serves as "a producer and symbol of prosperity" in this mythic agrarian world and becomes, according to Magoun, "central to much of the action of the *Kalevala*" (400). It is appropriate and significant that the blacksmith is its agent and creator, and in this role Ilmarinen and his labors replicate the pattern of highlighting the smith's importance to the health and prosperity of the proto-economic world of the epic.

performs a series of tasks reminiscent of the twelve labors of Hercules and essential to the health of North Farm, including plowing a snake infested field, catching wild animals within Death's Domain, and snatching a dangerous fish from the subterranean river (19:33-312).

The Poetic Edda

While the *Kalevala* replicates the pattern by which the smith's importance to the collective consciousness of a developing national identity is emphasized, the poetic *Edda* from Old Norse myth engages the smith figure in a more self-conscious fashion. Additionally, the connections between the Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon worlds are more established and evident, and the smith character of the *Volundarkvitha* section of the poetic *Edda* reappears in both the literature and folklore of the Anglo-Saxon world. Associations between the story of Wayland (also Weland, Volund, Velent) and Anglo-Saxon literature are evident in both *Beowulf* and in the *Deor's Lament*, and before these links can be considered the smith's story must be understood in more detail. Volund is described as the son of the Finnish king Wade, possibly because of the magical characteristics that were conferred upon that region by the preliterate Norse and Swedish worlds.[93] Despite this explanation he is generally thought to be a character

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[93] Volund is known for his great skill in metalworking, which he had learned from dwarves from the north, a region variously described as either Iceland or Lapland. He is especially regarded as a maker of fine jewelry, and according to the story he lives with his two brothers and their Valkyrie wives, who have been brought to Ulfdalir from the shores of lake Ulfsjar to live with their betrothed. After seven years of bliss, the Valkyrie women long to return to their homes, and they disappear one day. Although the distraught brothers go to find them, Volund stays to fashion his wife Allwise a few pieces of ornate jewelry, confident that his artistry is powerful enough to lure her back home. Meanwhile, the Swedish king Ninuth, aware of Volund's skilled craftsmanship, learns that the smith waits alone in Ulfdalir and comes with his men to Volund's home to capture him and to claim the smith's works as his own. The smith is out hunting when the intruders arrive, and they look around his shop, amazed by the splendor of his works. Ninuth is particularly taken with some rings that Volund has fashioned and takes the most ornate one for himself. Later, he presents it to his daughter Bothvild. When a weary Volund returns from his day of hunting he falls asleep, making him easy prey for the concealed intruders who lie in wait for him. When he wakes, he finds himself fettered by the Swedish intruders. The bound smith is then brought to Ninuth's castle and is brutally lamed and banished to

with origins in Saxon folklore whose importance to the Norse mythic world

enabled his movement northward and also across the sea to England, where he takes

residence in the Berkshire region. He comes to assume an active role in the folklore of

that region in particular, and his fame is such that he becomes a bit player in the

literature of the Anglo-Saxons as well.

Nordic and Germanic Blacksmithing References in Beowulf

Volund's character translates into the literature of the Anglo-Saxons as the

story of Weland or Wayland (his ME name). His most prominent mention occurs in

Beowulf, where Beowulf's breastplate is described in line 406 as "smithes orthancum"

("the skill-work of smiths"), and where Beowulf himself refers to his breastplate as

"Welandes geweorc" ("the hand-work of Weland"). Elsewhere, as Beowulf prepares to

do battle with Grendel in line 1453, he dons a helmet that is described as "worhte

waepna smith, wundrum teode" ("the work of the weapon smith, maker of wonders").

Finally, as a triumphant Beowulf returns from battle having slain both Grendel and

Grendel's mother, he presents Hrothgar with a rune-inscribed golden sword hilt that is

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Saevarstath, a nearby island, rendered unable to escape. There he serves the king as a slave laborer, using his smithing talents according to Ninuth's whims, all the while plotting his revenge against his captor.

The smith manages to find one of his long lost brothers, who fashions for him a pair of wings that he might use to escape when an opportune moment presents itself. But Volund, preoccupied with thoughts of revenge, bides his time in King Ninuth's service. One day the king's sons steal out to Saevarstath in a bout of youthful mischief. They are amazed by the smith's works, and the seething Volund lures them back the next morning by promising to show them even greater splendors. When the next day comes, the smith lies in wait for the two sons, who, dazzled by Volund's works, make easy targets for his plotting. He lops of their heads and fashions their skulls into elaborate goblets which he gives to the king's wife. From their teeth, he makes a brooch for Ninuth's daughter Bothvild. She has taken to showing off the ring her father had stolen from Volund's shop, but has accidentally damaged it. Pleased with her brooch and eager to meet its maker, she also sneaks out to Saevartath, hoping to get the ring fixed. Once there, the plotting smith plies her with beer and with her resistance diminished, has his way with her, leaving her carrying his child.

Meanwhile, Ninuth begins to worry about his absent sons and wonders where they have disappeared. Suspicious, he summons the smith, who then proclaims his vengeance on the grieving king. Thus vindicated, he dons the pair of wings his brother had made for him and escapes from the place of his captivity.

described as both the "wondersmitha geweorc" (the work of the wonder-smith,

line 1681), which bears the stories of earlier battles and adventures.[94]

Ultimately, the *Volundarkvitha* is the most prominent of the stories of the

Poetic Edda that highlight the smith's labors, demonstrating the essential nature of his

craft and pointing to his uneasy and potentially dangerous relationship with the royal

powers. The *Beowulf* poet's debt to the *Eddic* verses for his attitudes toward the smith

and toward metallurgy is evident, and his comments on the themes of sword-smithing

and weaponry will be considered in more detail below.[95] And while the tradition of

weaponsmithing clearly links the Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon epics, other episodes in

the Poetic *Edda*—most notably, the *Voluspo* and *Grimnismol*--provide a vision of the

underworld of Norse myth as a place of torment and eternal doom for fallen warriors

and develop more fully the associations between the smith, metalworking, and the epic

underworld. However, the *Edda's* portrayal of metalworkers and metalworking are not

exclusively linked only to the literature of the Anglo-Saxons, for several characters are

also shared with the *Nieblungenlied* of Germanic myth. From these connections it

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[94] Such reverence toward the smith's works is a common feature in the traditions of Germanic, Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon literature. In his edition of the *Beowulf*, Klaeber notes that "[i]f a weapon or armor in Old Germanic literature was attributed to Weland, this was conclusive proof of its superior workmanship and venerable associations. The figure of this wondrous smith—the Germanic Vulcanus (Hephaistos)—symbolizing at first the marvels of metalworking as they impressed the people of the stone age, was made the subject of a heroic legend, which spread from North Germany to Scandinavia and England" (145).

[95] Of the contributions of Volund (or Weland) to the Anglo-Saxon perceptions of weapons and metalworking, *Beowulf* editor Wrenn observes that "[w]ith the conquest of parts of Southern Germany by the Celts in the sixth century B.C., and their introduction of iron weapons, etc. to the Germanic peoples, we have the beginning of that association of iron with magic symbolized in the magician-hero Weland, who has left traces in High German, Scandinavian, and English poetry.... [The "magician-hero" Weland] may [also] still be remembered in England in references to his story on the early Northumbrian Franks Casket, a carving in Leeds parish Church, or Wayland's smithy, still to be seen on the Berkshire downs. The word *weland* simply means 'an artificer' (from *wel, 'art' or 'artifice'). His story is told in a lay (*Volundarkvitha*, 'Weland's lay') in the Old Norse Poetic *Edda*, a late saga (*Thidrekssaga*, 'Theodoric's saga'); and partly in the Anglo-Saxon *Deor*. Any weapon of an excellence no longer to be equalled, inherited from an earlier and more skilled age, is apt to be described in O.E. heroic poetry as "*giganta geweorc*" (1562) or "*eald-sweord eotenisc*" (1558) or as the work of Weland (as at 1.455 and in *Waldere* 1.2)" (54-5).

becomes feasible to envision a shared cultural milieu which permeated all three

societies and is represented in their epic literature. Beyond these literary traditions,

however, it is also useful to understand the patterns of economic and social interaction

that underscored the blacksmith's importance in the day-to-day lives of the Anglo-

Saxon peoples.

Approaching Nationalism: Metals and Metalworking in Post-Imperial English

History, Economics, and Archaeology

Beyond the imagistic traditions provided by the church fathers, who served as

conduits for Virgilian themes and images, and the Germanic epics, which collectively

valorized the blacksmith figure, an understanding about the importance of metals,

blacksmith, mining, and other metals-oriented economic enterprises to the developing

national conscious in post-imperial England can be discerned in the perpetuation of

these practices after the Romans' departure. Even after the withdrawal of Roman

armies from the whole of western European colonial outposts, most mining sites

maintained small operations that continued to contribute significantly to the residual

economies left after the fall of Rome, and both the Germanic Saxons and their

migrating predecessors figured significantly in the preservation of imperial-age mining

practices. In these operations, crude tools made ores accessible, and woodland reserves

in close proximity made smelting operations possible. Additionally, groups of itinerant

and specialized craftsmen seemed to meet the needs of economic systems designed

around agrarian systems and meant to support the sustenance and defence of royal

households. Mining and metallurgy seem in particular to be favored vocations of the

tribes in the Germanic regions, and any Anglo-Saxon preoccupation with the

metalworking arts must be seen as an outgrowth of the Germanic roots of those

newcomers to England.

Post-Roman mining remains something of a mystery to historians,[96] and the

best records are provided not by tracts or documents, but rather through archaeological

excavations and literary documents. Indeed, the abundance of treasure hoards,

decorated goblets, storied weapons, and precious metals and gems provides an

indication of well developed technical and economic sophistication that can be

discerned behind the mythic worlds depicted in the poetry of the Germanic, Nordic, and

Anglo-Saxon worlds.[97]

Ultimately, the melding of the English kingdoms of Mercia, Kent, Wessex,

Sussex, Frisia, Anglia, and later, Northumbria into something approaching a unified

state entity was, of course, a slow and gradual process. There is no clearly narrative

pattern which can accommodate the various military, political, and ecclesiastical

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[96] See Bromhead, "Seventeenth Century," 12.

[97] Nevertheless, true records are scant; historian H.R. Loyn observes that "even in the darkest of the so-called Dark Ages two commodities were in active circulation: iron and salt" (101). Nevertheless, Loyn declares that evidence of ironworking operations in Anglo-Saxon England remain "disappointingly small," as scant references to iron mines are found in the *Domesday Book*. This record of the Anglo-Saxon age does make brief mention of iron-working operations in Sussex and provides evidence of both "a concentration of iron-workings" and a custom of payment in iron still in practice in 1066 in the west country, particularly in Gloucester, and also in Northamptonshire, Linconshire, and Yorkshire (101). Further, Loyn describes the use of lead in such small-scale industries as church construction and salt-mining, and silver as the preferred method of coinage, making it "peculiarly subject to royal control" (102).

Loyn's analysis ultimately points to a bias against metalworking, claiming that despite the "superstitious awe" given to certain storied swords, weapons, works of gold, and mythic figures like Weland, "the status of a smith in England does not seem to have been particularly exalted" (104). He ascribes this contradictory view toward smithing in part to "the techniques of warfare in pre-Feudal England," which "led to an inferior status on the part of the smith" (105). While his works might have great mystique associated with them, the smith himself was, according to Loyn, regarded somewhat ambiguously: "The absence of cavalry with all that its techniques implied to the smith in the way of special armour, harness and weapons must have tended in that direction (i.e. of the smith's inferior status). The skilled work that was needed was performed by exceptional craftsmen under close royal or episcopal patronage. The exotic goldsmith was sure of his reward, and from time to time they are mentioned as beneficiaries, even receiving land, in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries" (105). In this way, one sees a sort of class system applied to the metalworking arts, as determined by the status of the metals worked or the stature of the person the smith labored for. The status of the smith himself was seemingly tied to the social importance attached to his labor and his materials, and the importance, awe, and uneasiness associated with this figure in literary and historical records must be placed within the larger political developments of sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-century history and the figures associated with the evolution of disparate post-imperial monarchies into a more unified state entity.

developments that led the loose confederacy of rival kingdoms in post-Roman England toward a unified identity as defined by religious practice, political institutions, unified currencies and economic practices, and trade with other regions. However, the distinctive features of a primitive English nation state—its gradually proliferating Christian faith, its emergence as a distinctive commercial identity, and the elevation of prominent kings whose rule unified regions marked previously by internecine conflict—were clearly notable in the eighth and ninth centuries. The course of England's developing national hegemony was interrupted by early tensions between the English and Irish churches, the internal rivalries between kings of both pagan and Christian faith, and a series of invasions by the Vikings, the Danish, and later, the Normans. However, the two best indicators of a developing national consciousness are closely conjoined in their imagistic makeup. Beginning in 1938 and across the seven decades since, the poem *Beowulf* has enjoyed a rich association with artifacts recovered from the archaeological excavations at Sutton Hoo, in East Anglia, and in these two resources one finds the most vivid points of entry into the role of metals and metalworking in both the epic imagery and political consciousness of the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

Chapter 5: The Appropriation of Virgilian Motifs into the Ideals of Germanic Heroism in *Beowulf*: Development of an Anglo-Saxon Economy and National Consciousness

Virgilian Resonances in Beowulf

Although it is possible that the *Beowulf* poet understood the *Aeneid*'s narrative and patterned parts of his work after it, I believe that the likelier scenario is that comparable features emerge from the archetypal epic form itself and the cultural values this literary form expresses. Epic concerns include heroism, duty, warfare, and challenges to fate and/or the favor of the gods. Within the epic's narrative dimensions, the imperatives of warfare must be enhanced by describing the implements of battle in detail and by portraying them with a mythic stature that connects the hero's actions to the heroics of past warriors and battles. The epic's preoccupation with warfare and battle is oriented also to its subsurface concerns with communal well-being. Within the parameters of the epic form one can also note its secondary, but no less notable, focus on proto-state politics, economic practices, and visions of fit leadership. In considering the factors which connect the themes and images of *Beowulf* with the *Edda* and *Kalevala* of Norse tradition, the *Nieblungleid* of Germanic traditions, the writings of the fathers of the Christian church, and most importantly, the traditions of classical epic, my study restricts its focus to weapons, battle, armor, and warfare, and similar patterns in the portrayal of metals and the underworld as shared material in the epic form itself. [98]

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[98] If there is a Virgilian dimension to be recognized within the narrative of *Beowulf*, it likeliest comes from the poet's passing familiarity, rather than his intimate acquaintance, with the *Aeneid*. Even so, however, the thematic and narrative similarities that connect *Beowulf* with its precursors from the classical world still stand out notably. Like Achilles and Aeneas, therefore, Beowulf is driven toward a fuller embodiment of the virtues associated with the leader and protector of his people. Unlike them, he is the early embodiment of Christian virtues in a world that is only

Essential to the Virgilian characterization of the epic hero are the

conceits of *sapienta et fortitudo,* first presented in a significant article in the history of

Beowulf scholarship by critic R.A. Kaske. Kaske cites the work of medieval historian

Ernst Curtius as the source for his conclusions about Anglo-Saxon epic. Curtius noted

an epic "formula" reflected in sources as diverse as Statius and Isidore of Seville, as

well as in the stories of the ancient Irish hero Cormac, in the Old Norse Eddic verses,

and in the Old Testament writings, particularly in the Book of Job. Applying these

ideas, Kaske describes how *sapienta* includes qualities and skills as diverse as "practical

cleverness, skill in words and works, knowledge of the past, ability to predict

accurately, prudence, understanding, and the ability to choose and direct one's conduct

rightly" (272).

In this way, the quality of kingly wisdom can be located in a variety of mythic

traditions and is amenable to the classical, Christian and Germanic heroic vision. If

Aeneas develops a form of *sapienta* suitable to the founding of an empire, then Beowulf

can be said to develop one appropriate to Christian sensibilities. Ultimately, the

description of Beowulf's death, coupled with the poem's later preoccupation less with

the Virgilian themes of imperial destiny and inevitability and more with the equally

Germanic and Christian concerns of fate and temporality, suggest the poem's effort to

portray Beowulf as an early Christ figure (*imitatio Christi*) in the Anglo-Saxon world,

one suitably tinged with both Christian and Germanic heroic ethos. Such syncretism is

not unknown in the late medieval world of seventh- and eighth-century western Europe:

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beginning to understand their nuances fully and to connect the abstractions of scripture with the practical concerns of maintaining a society.

like the Franks casket, the well-known historical artifact which bears motifs of

both Germanic and Christian iconic significance, the poem suitably melds both

perspectives in a conjoined prophetic vision.[99]

The kingly ideals realized by Beowulf are therefore intertwined with the

poem's admittedly awkward articulation of heroism as a Christian virtue. Like Aeneas,

Beowulf progresses from hero to hero-king. Ultimately, it is the Christian church

fathers—particularly Augustine, Gregory, and Jerome—that enable the reinvention of

the imperial thematics of Virgil's *Aeneid* into materials appropriate to Christian

spirituality. In short, the influence of the church fathers enabled the appropriation of the

Virgilian hero motif–for all of his proto-Christian dimensions—into a form suitable to

both the fledgling Christian church of seventh-century western Europe and also to the

far-ranging Germanic hegemonies still prevalent across its northern reaches. Both

Virgil and the *Beowulf* poet are preoccupied with concern for the "fit" kingship of a

struggling empire. In chronicling his hero's demise toward the poem's conclusion, the

poet refers to "Gods gemet," or "God's worthiness," in line 3057. Ultimately, like

Aeneas, Beowulf's transformation into a fit king employs the motifs of *catabaesis* and

proceeds along discernibly comparable lines to his Roman counterpart, including an

underworld sojourn heavily tinged with both Germanic elements and metallic imagery.

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[99] The early medieval church, clearly preoccupied with the effort to reinvent Virgil's epic hero as a Christian martyr, shows a like pattern in the reinvention of the hero borrowed from Germanic myth. *Beowulf* fuses both influences into an expression of early nationalistic consciousness. The poem's syncretism is shown visibly in its narrative structure, which is directed toward Beowulf's realization of the kingly (and Christian) qualities of *sapienta et fortitudo*, In fact, in its early preoccupation with armor, heroism, and glory, there is precious little *sapienta* on display in the poem's early phases. The hero's own realization of this quality occurs gradually, a result of Beowulf's own encounters with enemies and realization of the temporality of the worldly glories that come his way in defending Heorot. Just like Aeneas, he must proceed through a narrative journey that prepares him for a realization of his destiny, but this destiny is in accord with spiritual, rather than imperial imperatives.

Over the course of his narrative and with his triumphs over his enemies, the epic hero becomes the demonstration of a fit king, suggesting powerfully that he is one suited to this growing national and Christian consciousness. In a smiliar way, like Turnus and Achilles, Beowulf's central foils--Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon—are driven by an unchecked rage and represent the irrational threats and passions that inhibit the establishment of a safe, balanced, and ethically sustainable community. In this way, Beowulf's circumspection contrasts with Grendel's bloodthirsty rashness, and Grendel's mother's vengeful impulses contrast with the level-headed perspectives supplied by both Waeltheow and Hyglac. Just as Turnus' fury contrasts with Aeneas' reserve, so does Hector's hesitancy contrast with Achilles' fury. The epic habit of balancing foils—Beowulf and his monsters—brings the idealized Germanic hero three times against dark creatures of praeternatural strength and instincts.

By its nature, epic is concerned with themes relevant to state politics and well-being–leadership, prosperity, virtue, economy, while the foils to the epic hero stand for ideals opposed to this vision of communal good. So like Turnus and Achilles, Grendel is driven by unfettered rage and demonstrates the kind of antisocial ideals that the epic hero must master and overcome. Later, the Dragon, guarding his rusting hoard of formerly storied gifts now reduced to rubble amidst his fiery underworld domain, represents an amplified version of this irrational sensibility. Ultimately, the foils for epic heroism represent a counterpoint for an effective demonstration of fit kingship.

Other characters from *Beowulf* also have distant ancestors in Homeric and Virgilian epics.[100]

In the Christian version of classical epic, the hero's service to his people and empire is appropriated into a larger ideal of service to God. Encoded in this ideal of divine servitude is the obligation of fit service to the community according to principles of Christian faith. The "fit" king is, in short, replicating the divine mandates of God. Kaske ultimately portrays a juxtaposition of "worldly" *sapienta*, as revealed in the hoard, vs. "Heavenly" *sapienta*, or the avoidance of pride or sin. He observes that "This freedom of Beowulf from the motives leading to avarice and pride explains also why he is the man who has seemed to God *gemet* for the undertaking: as his *fortitudo* makes him the right man to face the physical terror of the dragon, so his *sapienta* makes him the right man to face the spiritual dangers of acquiring the hoard" (302). Ultimately, implicit in the vision of *sapienta et fortitudo* articulated by *Beowulf* is an early vision of the Holy Roman empire. The Christian notion of world-hatred both complements and complicates the ethos of warrior commerce articulated by Homer and transformed by Virgil's imperial vision. In the case of both Aneas and Beowulf, the hero's triumphs are ultimately for the future generations of his people and assure their salvation in celestial if not imperial terms—a realization of both Virgil's imperial mandate and Augustine's civil theology. Ultimately, one possible way to read Beowulf's demise is to regard him as a Christ-like figure who is sacrificed to reiterate

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[100] For example, like the counselor-figures of Priam, Nestor, Anchises, and Mentor, Hrothgar is a model for the contemplative, measured wielding of power; moreover, if Kaske's characterization is to be believed, he is, like Priam, also an imperfect and over-contemplative model of kingship awaiting replacement by Beowulf, who eventually proves to be a more fit king-in-waiting. Just as Achilles, Agamemnon, and Turnus represent destructive action, Hrothgar, like Priam, represents a form of destructive inaction (see Kaske).

the power of God's kingdom. Just as Christ himself is done in by the failings of

his disciples, so is Beowulf brought down by the failings of his people, more so than by

his own lapses. But as Kaske claims, this fall and death is an inevitable and necessary

part of the poem's Christian message: "in both Germanic and Christian terms the fact of

death, of final phyical defeat, is inevitable and relatively unimportant. What *is* of

desperate importance is having fought the good fight" (308).

Christianizing Virgilian Heroism: The Significance of Metals and Metalworking in Beowulf

Given the traditionally haphazard pattern of composition in the traditional

formation of epic literature, the epic form itself is naturally amorphous and only reaches

a point of fixity once set into written form. Preliterate poets, like Homer and the

Beowulf poet, acquire and integrate various individual episodes, molding them

extemporaneously into larger and more cohesive narrative wholes. Time and chance

dictate the transformation of a narrative composed orally into a transcribed account

showing a composite portrait of a society's origins and development. In contrast,

literate poets, like Virgil, also create narratives gathered from pre-existing motifs,

arranging these according to highly structured imperatives of plot and theme. In its

effort to explain a society's origins and to convey a vision of epic heroism—whether

composed orally or in writing—the form also expresses a community's class

relationships and ultimate political identity.

In this collective identity, the blacksmith is a compelling and essential figure.

His importance to epic imagery affirms and challenges the class relationships of his

world. He is strongly associated with the underworld realms that are essential to epic

motifs and occupies space that in its imagistic representation is much like the blacksmith's art itself: morally ambiguous, marginal, and troubling to the sensibilities of the epic poet. His troubling portrayal is connected to the state's expressions of power, for he is simultaneously an agent of its development and a potential threat to its order. Of diminished stature within the class systems of the warrior ethos, the blacksmith is nonetheless vital to the community's industry and commerce and is given a foundational, and hence a mythic stature by epic poets who recognize his *potential* as an agent of transformation.

If the smith is an ambiguous figure in both the Germanic and classical worlds, he is regarded with an even greater suspicion in the Christian world because in his metalworking knowledge he possesses a mysterious wisdom and an ancient, pre-Christian knowledge of craft. Within him are the *potential* means to pursue misguided knowledge and the power to disrupt class relationships with the various dimensions of his art—coinage, weapons, jewelry, tools—in short, he controls the elements of commerce, profit and wealth generation, and warfare. Further, the knowledge of the smith reflects his capacity to disrupt the eternal orders of the celestial kingdom. If the classical worlds struggled with the concepts of economics as a practical science, they understood the moral dimensions of the matter of wealth generation and saw the blacksmith's role as essential to the profit motive. Within his proper sphere, the blacksmith enables one to live in balance and harmony, providing the means to define one's appropriate service to himself and his community. But serving outside his "fit" duties, the blacksmith is often the agent that enables the proliferation of sin, pride,

covetousness, and social transformation. If not fully respected for his art's

significance, he may become problematic.

The attitudes of anxiety, uncertainty, and awe toward the blacksmith and the

metalworking arts are especially on display in *Beowulf,* just as they are in the *Aeneid.*

In the latter case, Virgil's idea of blacksmithing and the underworld is closely

connected with his vision of conquest and Rome's imperial destiny. In *Beowulf,* the

poet gives metals and the metalworking arts a comparable emphasis, going to great

lengths to demonstrate the relevance of the blacksmith's arts to the heavily

Germanicized warrior ethos that is evident throughout the poem, but most prevalent in

its early stages. Further, the smith's contributions to the arts of warfare and to economic

interactions, as expressed in the poem, show a character reminiscent of precursors in

both Germanic and classical epics. For example, as Beowulf and his Geatish retainers

respond to Hrothgar's summons and arrive on the shores of Danish lands, the poet goes

to great lengths in lines 209-51 to describe how impressively attired and resplendent the

disembarking warriors appear in their "beorhte frætwe, guðsearo geatolic,"[101] their

"brightly-shining mailcoats, well-wrought battle gear" (lines 214-15). Throughout the

first two thirds of the poem, the poet emulates the Homeric pattern in reiterating how

Beowulf's arms and armor are connected to a mythic past, rich in traditions of

metalworking, battle, and warfare.

Reaching Danish shores, the new arrivals are greeted by a Scylding watchman

who notes their "beorhte randas, fyrdsearu fuslicu," or their "brightly-gleaming shield-

bosses and excellent accoutrements" (231-32), and concludes that these visitors are

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[101] *Beowulf* text transcribed from: < http: / /www.georgetown.edu /labyrinth /library /oe /texts /a4.1.html>

"searohæbbendra, byrnum werede," or "warriors, a company in mailcoats" (237-

38). Beowulf smoothly allays the suspicions of the wary coastline sentry, who declares

his lord's battle-prowess to his armored visitors. Explaining the purpose of their visit,

Beowulf and his retainers are then led to Heorot as the poet again describes the visitors

in glowing terms. He highlights their ornately decorated helmets, which feature

"Eoforlic scionon ofer hleorbergan gehroden golde, fah ond fyrheard," or a"boar's

image shining, over gold-ornamented face-guards, fierce (looking) and fire-hardened"

(303-05).

The narrator's seemingly inordinate preoccupation with the arms and armor of

Beowulf and his men is brought into fuller focus as they are escorted into Heorot,

making their way along a stone-paved path (see lines 3121-31). The nuanced character

of this description is shown in the lines that follow. Hrothgar's herald, noting the

impressive bearing of Beowulf and his men, equates their impressive armor with

worldly achievement. In so doing, he sets into motion an important pair of contrasting

ideas that jointly express one of the poem's central themes. Storied weapons and armor,

along with other objects of worked metal, are infused with a symbolic value associated

with glory and worldly achievement. These values stand for the transitory and temporal

values associated with worldly realms and stand in contrast to the greater rewards of the

hereafter. Preoccupied with this contrast, the poet uses weapons, armor, and metals as

symbols that enable him to develop this theme fully.

The motifs of metals and metalworking contribute to the fashioning of the hero

in classical epic, and this pattern is also clearly evident in Anglo-Saxon epic. But the

symbolic associations of weaponry and armor are also given a Christian dimension. In

the early stages of *Beowulf,* as the hero enjoys his first significant triumph, the poet uses weapons (and other metal objects) as symbols of worldly temporality to underscore the transitoriness of the glories won by the triumphant hero. In this way, the ethos of the classical warrior is appropriated to Christian service by contrasting worldly with divine glory: when used in defense against monsters, dragons, tyrants, and other forces of darkness, the hero's weapons are used to underscore the ultimate eternity and steadfastness of the celestial domains. As in classical epic, a weapon's sacred qualities are given in its mythic history and divine association. In *Beowulf,* where Homeric, Virgilian, Germanic and Christian epic motifs are conjoined, weapons also serve as both agents and symbols of service to community, to empire, and to God.

The interconnected themes of service, heroism, and eternity are enhanced by the poem's early focus on the bearing of Beowulf and his retainers and their impressive war implements. In a passage some eighty lines later, when Beowulf greets Hrothgar for the first time, the poet again highlights his armor, referring to his "searonet," or corselet, as "smithes orcanum," or "the work of wonder-smiths (405-06). The focus on weaponry is somewhat ironic, as Beowulf then decleares that he will fight Grendel without the benefit of weapons, for "Dryhtes dome," apparently to lend greater ethical (and perhaps divine) justification (i.e., "the Lord's judgement") to his efforts to rid Heorot of its greatest tormenter. However, should the bloodthirsty Hell-fiend take his life, Beowulf requests that his "beaduscruda betst," or his "best battle corselet," be returned to his lord Hygelac. This gift of his Geatish lord Hrethel is "Welandes Geworc" (455), or the work of Weland, the storied smith of Eddic verse. According to

the ethos of Germanic heroism, this storied corselet must remain "in the family"

should Beowulf meet his unfortunate but justly fated end at Grendel's hands.

The poet credits the Germanic origins of Beowulf's corselet, noting its storied

qualities associated with the armor and weapons fashioned by Weland. In so doing, he

offers further enhancement not only of its mythic character, but also of the preeminence

of God's domain as well. In the case of the smith from Old Norse legend, one can note

inevitable parallels with the blacksmiths of the classical world, Haphaestus and Vulcan.

Indeed, the phonetic similarities between "Weland" and "Vulcan" suggest a Germanic

appropriation of a classical motif, which *Beowulf* serves to reinvent under a Christian

topos. Moreover, both smiths of the Germanic and the classical world are lame, and

both labor in service to a higher lord, demonstrating their status in a subordinate social

class. They are the mystical workers of the divine world who maintain an uneasy

relationship to gods of more esteemed stature because they are both essential to and also

possess the power to disrupt the celestial hierarchies.

The poet's initial preoccupation with arms and weapons gives way to a more

reserved attitude once Beowulf defends Heorot. It is possible that the *Beowulf* poet

consciously counterbalanced his poem's early preoccupation with the arms, weapons,

and stature of the Geatish visitors to Heorot with his hero's initial hesitation to use them

in battle (and later in their failure to defend him in his ultimate struggle). Ultimately,

the poem's ambiguous attitude toward the metalworking arts not only reflects the poet's

struggle to meld the ungainly traditions of Christian ethos with the classical and

Germanic epic traditions, but also to portray the hero in a manner that, while modeled

on the epic heroism of Achilles and Aeneas, is also amenable to the divine martyrdom

of Jesus Christ. In this way, the prophetic vision suggested in *Beowulf* is directed not toward the prosperities realized in a healthy empire, but rather the temporality to be acknowledged in a world dictated by Christian sensibilities. In short, the poem's contradictory attitude toward weapons and armor, and also toward prizes, tokens, and other metal ornaments, demonstrates the poet's effort to depict in Beowulf a developing Christ-like character, a concept best illuminated by an influential and historic interpretation of the poem.

The process of transforming Beowulf from an example of heroism from Germanic myth into an embodiment of heroic Christian martyrdom begins with his decision to fight Grendel *without* armor, a decision justified by his claim that "ðær gelyfan sceal Dryhtnes dome se þe hine deað nimeð" (lines 440-41). Later, as Beowulf feasts with the emboldened denizens of Heorot, he reiterates his vow to kill Grendel or to lose his life trying. As the celebrations die down, the poet portrays an odd reversal from the pattern displayed in classical epic: instead of donning his armor, Beowulf *removes* it in an odd but purposeful reinvention of the arming scenes of the *Iliad* and *Aeneid.* The poem describes briefly, but in detail, how the hero removes and sets aside his mail coat, helmet, and sword before awaiting his battle with the one who "Godes yrre bær," or "the one who bore God's anger" (711). Beowulf does so out of an odd sense of fairness: despite Grendel's fury and bloodthirstiness, he knows no weapons (677-87). To fight Heorot's tormenter with no weapons himself, Beowulf believes that "halig Dryhten mærðo deme, swa him gemet þince," or "holy God shall decide between us, how so he thinks is just" (686-87).

Nevertheless, metallic imagery does figure prominently in Beowulf's battle with Grendel, just as it will with his later battles with Grendel's mother and with the Dragon. Specifically, the battle between the two assumes the form of a quasi-apocalyptic struggle for the ages, as the very fate of Heorot hangs in the balance. In its account of this struggle, the poem's description of Grendel's Hell-bent fury is supplemented by his bursting through the tempered, iron-bound entrance ("Dura sona onarn, fyrbendum faest,"—"the iron-bound door, bound fast by fire," lines 721-22) before devouring his first victim. About fifty lines later, as the pair's struggles set the very foundations of the hall to tremble, the poet reveals how its upper gables are held fast with "irenbendum searoþoncum besmiþod," or "iron-bonds, skillfully worked by smiths" (774-75). As the metal-worked joints, doors, and beam-fittings strain under the intensity of the struggle, these passages further solidify the connection between metals, metalworking, and the epic form. And just as the comparable images from *Aeneid* VI reinforce the mandate to fulfill an imperial destiny, so do these reinforce the apocalyptic struggle between good and evil which pervades all of Beowulf's battles.

As historians of the Anglo-Saxon period have shown, it is not improbable that the Beowulf poet would have had at least a passing familiarity with the narrative of the *Aeneid*. Still, the *Beowulf* poet, on the whole, shows only a random effort to include classical motifs in the larger narrative, and it is ultimately a safer position to assume that arming scenes, gift-exchanges, and suggestions of a prophetic vision are fundamental to the epic form. For instance, a celebratory gift exchange takes place in the celebration of Beowulf's slaying of Grendel. It is in the spirit of indebted thankfulness that Hrothgar bestows on Beowulf his standard, helmet, armor, sword, and mead-cup (see lines 1020-

34). Since a pattern of gift-giving has already been established by the poem by this point, it seems safer to suggest that the significance of exchanging storied arms, armor, and other objects of worked metal with mythic histories and associations was as important in the pre-industrial Germanic world as it was in the Mediterranean regions in the time of Homer.

Another feature shared by *Beowulf* and the classical epics is the arming scene, which is demonstrated in *Beowulf* in the hero's preparations to do battle with Grendel's mother. While Beowulf *disarms* for his battle with Grendel, as discussed above, he dons his storied battle-gear for his subsequent conflict. Lines 1441-54 depict Beowulf's preparations in a drawn-out account, detailing the donning of his ring-mail, boar-crested helmet, shield (again, one "worhte wæpna smið, wundrum teode," or "wrought by weapon smiths, wonderfully fashioned"–lines 1451-52), and sword. This final item is bestowed by Unferth as the aforementioned offering of peace. Named Hrunting, it proves unequal to the task of slaying Grendel's mother and so lives up to the reputation of inferior and more brittle Nordic iron. Hrunting's failures demonstrate the supposedly inferior quality of Swedish-forged steel in comparison with the more reputable weapons forged by Germanic smiths, and the poet is eager to reiterate the questionable quality of Unferth's weapon as Beowulf struggles with Grendel's mother in the heat of battle (lines 1522-28). With the estruction of his sword, one finds the first notes of worldly temporality that will dictate Beowulf's fate in his final and climactic battle. Despite the failures of his weapons at this middle juncture, Beowulf is again victorious for the grateful denizens of Heorot and returns there for another celebration of triumph. In this

description, another common feature is revealed that suggests further connection, if not a common narrative pattern, shared by *Beowulf* and its epic precursors.

Indeed, the epic story of *Beowulf* replicates the patterns established in the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* by demonstrating a common habit of providing a vision of the world's destiny as inscribed on a battle weapon. The shields of Achilles and Aeneas provide this supernatural dimension in the classical epics, and an overlooked feature of *Beowulf* is its use of this common motif. While the themes associated with the classical historical vision demonstrate an evolving conception of the nation state in the various images of agrarian cycles, epic battles, and influential agents of change, the images on the sword hilt taken from Grendel's mother and given to Hrothgar show a purpose more connected with the poet's effort to emphasize the transitoriness of human affairs and the supreme authority of God. The sword is a decisive factor in Beowulf's victory and is described by the returning and triumphant warrior in lines 1676-86. He calls his weapon a gift from God, the "ylda Waldend," or "Great Wielder" (1651), who provides the Geat champion with an "ealdsword eacen," or "mighty and ancient sword," (1663) at the moment of his greatest need. In this way, the higher powers of God make Beowulf vulnerable with Hrunting's failure in battle, but they also protect him with this gift (line 1658), providing both the spiritual imperatives for his victory over Grendel's mother and the notes of worldly temporality that will figure in the hero's ultimate battle.

The consequences for this second and more impressive victory are shown in the images inscribed on the sword's hilt, which provide a similar, if less descriptive, vision for the historical destiny of Heorot. Significantly, the images are used not to express the glorious historical vision of empire, but rather they underscore the transitory

qualities of the world and the eternity of God's domain. If the *Beowulf* poet's

understanding of Christianity is partial and seemingly incomplete, he does fully grasp

the importance of subordinating worldly achievements to divine glories. The sword-

hilt's mythic character is shown in the fact that it was both the weapon of "harum

hildfruman," an "old battle-chief," and also the "enta ærgeweorc," or "the ancient

work of Giants" (line 1679); as Hrothgar inspects his storied gift from the conquering

warrior, he notices the images on this "wundorsmitha geworc," or "work of wonder-

smiths" (1681), which serves as a document "fyrngewinnes, syðþan flod ofsloh,

gifen geotende giganta cyn," ("on which was written of ancient strife, when the flood

slew the giants," 1688-89).

The sword-hilt's inscriptions are significant for several reasons. Firstly, the

image portrayed shows the fate of the non-believers, who, like Noah, perish by flooding

because of God's wrath. Secondly, the sword serves as the document of its own

creation, functioning in this context to connect the mythological past with the (more)

historical present. That this record occurs on a battle weapon is fundamental to its

historical imperatives, for, as shown in the *Aeneid*, weapons enable the establishment of

a kingdom founded on divine mandates. Significantly, Beowulf's gift immediately

precedes Hrothgar's admonitions about the transitory nature of worldly fame, an

extended lesson bringing in examples from the historical past to underscore his points

(see lines 1700-84). However, Hrothgar's message to Beowulf, given at the hour of his

greatest triumph, exhorts him to be wary of worldly glories and attainments, events

signified in the heroic rituals of gift-exchanges. In this way, the motif connects *Beowulf*

with classical and Germanic epics, even as it subverts the gift-giving rituals depicted in

them. As the gift is made subordinate by Hrothgar's exhortations that Beowulf

value eternal ideals above tokens of worldly glories realized, the gift exchange ritual

serves to affirm the poem's Christian dimensions. Indeed, in these scenes one notes the

subversion of classical ideals within developing motifs of Christian epic.

While weapons and armor portrayed in *Beowulf* are those associated with the

mythic traditions of Germanic metalworking, the poet uses them to enhance both the

Germanic mythos and the Christian symbolism of the poem. These most mythic

swords must show their temporal inferiority in the face of the eternity of God even in

Beowulf's most intense moments of battle and in the scenes where he enjoys his greatest

battle glories. Against the forces of evil, time, fate, and destiny, the failure,

deterioration, and immolation, the eventual destruction of the poem's various swords,

goblets, armor, and rings—all of these enable the poet to subordinate the ambitions of

the material world (highlighted in classical epic) to the ultimate powers of God's eternal

domain: their temporality underscores God's eternity. The poem moves discernibly

toward a fuller statement of this message towards its final third. The dragon's

underworld barrow is not only the best example of a subterranean realm that is distant

from God's eternal domain and represents a preoccupation with worldly concerns.

Also, the dragon himself is the monstrous embodiment of the sin of avarice, and his

underworld domain is the site for the obsessive hoarding of non-essential metals, those

that reflect the quality of *malitia*, or "perversion of the mind and will" (Kaske 303) in

their holder. This final stage of the poem marks both the perpetuation of the epic

association between metals and the underworld, and the Christian reinvention of this

motif. The concluding episode to Beowulf's heroic life preserves not only the motifs of

classical epic but also presents those images with a moral bias that helps to underscore its Christian themes.

After Beowulf's largely peaceful and profitable fifty-year rule, he finds his kingdom threatened by its most daunting enemy. In the fifty-year interlude since Beowulf's return to his Geatish lands, his bestowal of gifts to Hygelac and his eventual assumption of the Geatish kingship are the seeds sown for the betrayal that lead to his demise. In contrast with his earlier and more favorable descriptions of mythic armor, weapons, and other objects of worked metal, it is clear that the poet's attitude toward metallic objects has transformed, and that he wishes to associate the gold hoard in the poem's later stages–after lines 2200—not with the achievement of worldly glories, but instead with perversion, loss, and temporality, which in turn underscores the eternity of God's domain. The poem makes very clear the demonic associations between the dragon, his gold hoard, and his underworld barrow. More evident is the poet's effort to align its hero in these later stages less with the Germanic heroes of the past, and more with the martyrs of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, however, metals and metallic imagery continue to figure prominently in this effort to conflate the epic hero and the Christian martyr.

Early into this final third of the poem, a nameless exile from Beowulf's kingdom is shown raiding the Dragon's barrow, and the demise begins for the Geatish king, who for fifty years has preserved his kingdom in spite of a series of conflicts with the Swedish and Frankish peoples. Despite his perseverance in these battles, a more formidable and primal threat remains in the "draca ricsian, se ðe on heaum hæþe hord beweotode, stanbeorh steapne," the "raging flame dragon, which from the high heath

watched his hoard, a steep stone-barrow" (2211-13). The exile steals from the

"hæðnum horde" (the "heathen hoard") an ale-cup while the Dragon unwarily sleeps,

soon inciting his fury against the Geats.

The text in this passage is obscure, as damage to the manuscript has caused

difficulties for generations of scholars. Nevertheless, it is clear that the "synbysig," or

"sin-tormented" exile's actions (line 2226) violate not only the Dragon's domain, but

also unleash a more general evil by introducing tainted treasures into Beowulf's

kingdom. In his violation of the dragon's underworld "eorðhuse," ("earth-house,"

2234), the exile returns to the world those "ancient treasures," or symbols of worldly

glory ("ærgestreona," line 2232) which

> swa hy on geardagum gumena nathwylc,
>
> eormenlafe æþelan cynnes,
>
> þanchycgende þær gehydde,
>
> deore maðmas

(in earlier days	of certain men
an immense legacy	a noble race
thoughtfully	had hid therein
valuable treasures.)	

> (2233-36)

The conflation of classical and Christian imagery is first evident in the poet's

descriptions of the barrow, using images reminiscent of the descriptions of the mouths

of Hell encountered by other underworld sojourners in saint's lives and in accounts like

that discussed above from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. In this way, the

morally ambiguous underworld of classical epic assumes the characteristics of the

condemned, forsworn underworld environs of Christian imagery.

In the lines that follow, the poet provides an address given by the aged one who

had originally buried the treasure that had much later fallen into the Dragon's hands.

The speaker, lonely and forlorn, had outlived his once-noble cohorts and seen their

demise. The passage reads like a prophecy of doom and foreboding, alluding to the

possibility that these golden riches had been the root and cause of the deaths of the

speaker's people. Given in lines 2247-66, the speech refers to the vanished trappings of

successful warfare: it mentions rusty helmets giving way to battle-damage

("beadogriman bywan sceoldon, ge swylce seo herepad, sio æt hilde gebad

ofer borda gebræc bite irena," 2257-59); and deteriorating mailcoats no longer usable

("byrnan hring æfter wigfruman wide feran, hæleðum be healfe," 2260-62). The

narrator seems to recall directly the poem's earlier descriptions of the nobility of the

Geatish warriors in their armor, only now these once gleaming and now rusting artifacts

stand as symbols of the world's transitory nature. The speaker alludes to a mailcoat,

sword, and helmet, and laments that no worthy warrior will live to use them again in

battle. In this way, the later part of the poem represents a reply to the poet's earlier

effusiveness about the armor and bearing of Beowulf and his retainers. Having been

left to time and tide, the buried hoard is discovered by the dragon who tends them

avariciously and with great zeal.

In comparison with his compatriots, the dragon occupies the deepest realm of

evil in the poem, a position enhanced by both his subterranean domain and his hoarding

of gold. He is the most formidable of Beowulf's enemies and the most obvious

foil to Beowulf's realization of kingly virtues. In short, the dragon's underworld

environs are those most closely aligned with the imagery of metals and metalworking

because he is the most Hellish of Beowulf's foes. While Grendel's evil can be

explained by envy or (like his mother) vengeance, the dragon represents a form of evil

characterized by rage, fury, and avariciousness, as shown in his frenzied hoarding of

gold, his enraged breathing of flames, and his excessive self-absorption which borders

on megalomania. His world is clearly out of step with the balanced domain that is

founded on Christian precepts that Hrothgar and Beowulf seek and that Beowulf has

clearly known during his period of rule. Having lived fifty winters and ruled his people

with a fit, but subtly flawed balance of *sapienta et fortitudo,* Beowulf must necessarily

see the seeds of imperfection sown within his kingly realm. Such hints, as revealed in

the theft of the dragon's goblet from his underworld lair, reveal the temporality of

Beowulf's kingly virtue in the face of God's greater powers. The suspicions of

corruption are revealed as Beowulf's *comitatus* fails while facing the dragon's power

and fury. The failures of Beowulf's retainers are also his own, signs of the imperfect

rule of his realm. Nonetheless, they also affirm the contrasting eternity of God's

domain.

And the dragon's barrow, as noted above, is given a heavily hellish association,

one aligned with the burial of precious metals and the avaricious hoarding of them and

one suitable for his stature as the most primal embodiment of evil. In lines 2270-76, for

instance, the poet associates the dragon with both fire and his subterranean habitat. The

dragon is described as an "uhtsceaða," or "dawn-predator," who finds his

"hordwynne," or "hoard-treasures" exposed to the open air by one who

"byrnende biorgas seceð," or "seeks the burning barrows" (2270-72). Enraged at this

transgression, he shows his Hellish fury. This evil serpent, or "nacod niðdraca," flies by

night's gloom enveloped in flames, or by "fyre befangen" (2273-74). Held in dread by

all folk, moreover, he is condemned to seek the "hæðen gold" perpetually (2275-77).

Ultimately, the association between the dragon's underworld entries and images of Hell,

and, most importantly, the dragon's eternal occupation in such dusky, toxic environs

powerfully suggests that the poet was at least familiar with some of the descriptions of

underworld descents portrayed in the saints' lives and by Bede (if less so with those of

Homer and Virgil), and that he borrowed from these imagistic traditions in his portrayal

of the dragon's underworld barrow.

On the whole, the poem *Beowulf* recalls important imagistic patterns in

metallurgical imagery as established by epic precursors; more importantly it

demonstrates their appropriation of and transformation into Christian motifs. On the

eve of his fatal (and inevitable) battle with the dragon, Bewoulf knows that his wooden

shield is unequal to the fiery gusts of the dragon's breath. He follows the lead of

Achilles and Aeneas, who, facing their most climactic battles, benefit from mythic

weapons which help to bring about their triumphs. Likewise, Beowulf commissions the

fabrication of a "wigendra hleo,"–literally, a "protective covering"– but more

precisely, a specialized shield of worked steel to prepare for his ultimate battle against

the dragon (2338). And as in classical epic, the poet ties this shield to the larger fates of

the warrior-king and his people. Lines 2341-44 highlight Beowulf's forthcoming battle

with the dragon, in which his weapons and armor fail him. His demise, coupled

with the dragon's death as well, stand as symbols of the transitoriness of life itself.

As Beowulf and Wiglaf enter the dragon's barrow immediately before their

ultimate battle, the poem portrays their entrance through a "stondan stanbogan," or

"stone archway," where the pair behold a "stream ut þonan brecan of beorge," or

"stream which bursts forth from a cave," and "þære burnan wælm heaðofyrum hat," or

"there burned surging, hot heath-fires" (2546-47). Moreover, the pair face additional

perils as "ne meahte horde neah unbyrnende ænige hwile deop gedygan for dracan

lege," or "they might not deeply venture into the deep unburned anyways, for the

dragon's flames" (2547-49). Braving this toxic and Hellish entry to the dragon's

subterranean haunt, the pair beholds his closely guarded riches. Lines 2756-82 provide

a description reminiscent of the Sutton Hoo excavations, offering perhaps the most

thematically contradictory, if not simply the most detailed literary description of the

underworld surviving from the Anglo-Saxon imagination. Clearly, the characterization

of the dragon as a monstrous entity ruled by the pursuit of gold serves as a counterpoint

for Beowulf's gradual departure from the habit of placing value in worldly treasures,

and, as richly as the poet describes them, it is of utmost necessity to the Christian

thematics of the poem that Beowulf turn his back on them. The mortally wounded hero,

having been failed yet again by his sword, lies awaiting his death. In gazing upon—and

then refuting—these most glorious of earthly treasures, Beowulf demonstrates his

fitness to realize the greater treasures that await him in the world beyond. As Kaske

describes, "this maintenance of a right attitude toward the gold, with the resulting

preservation of his spirt from avarice and pride, is by definition *Sapienta*—itself

traditionally a treasure, and more precious than all other earthly treasures" (300).

Given such emphasis in descriptions early in the narrative, objects of metal are treated

with a more complex, contradictory, and emotionally laden manner by the poet as the

poem's Christian themes intensify toward its end.

Under Wiglaf's direction, the slain Beowulf is immolated by a massive

funeral pyre, upon which are hung various helmets, shields, mailcoats, and other objects

of worked metal ("helmum behongen, hildebordum," and beorhtum byrnum, 3139-40;

for complete description, see lines 3132-42). In alluding to the imminent destruction of

these battle implements, the poet goes to great lengths to show how, just like Beowulf

himself, these symbols of the warrior's worldly glories and achievements are

transformed into nothingness by the rising flames. This ending scene is crucial in

reiterating how the poem's early preoccupation with metals and weaponry—

demonstrating the poet's initial allegiance to the traditions of classical and Germanic

epic—is subverted as the poet seeks to articulate the heroic vision of Christian epic.

Ultimately, in his heroic death and disavowal of the worldly glories that he has achieved

in life, Beowulf lives up to the behests of Hrothgar (1724-58) and Waelhtheow (1160-

87). In providing needed perspective on his heroics at Heorot by admonishing him to

place value on eternal things, they show the necessary, if incomplete, characteristics of

sapientia et fortitudo that Beowulf himself will realize in his life's waning moments and

will show in death as an example to his people.

The Warrior's Commerce vs. Developing Currencies in the Age of Offa,

Alfred, and Edward

In the tense and strife-riven climates of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries,

Anglo-Saxon royal houses would have been well served by the ideals of the Germanic

heroic age and the tempering Christian themes which are clearly on display in *Beowulf*.

Further, they would have a significant emotional investment not only in the

blacksmith's practical labors but also in their iconic and symbolic values. In such an

environment, the teller of the *Beowulf* poem would find a willing audience. In

commenting on its audience, editor and scholar C.L. Wrenn argues that, as

distinguished from epic, it is better understood as a Germanic poem of an heroic and

tragic nature. In arguing that the term epic is more suited to a poem of structural

characteristics reflecting a classical world view, Wrenn discounts the patterns of

consistency between the classical and the Germanic heroic worlds (42).[102] If the term

"epic" is better applied to the works of Homer and Virgil, Wrenn suggests, then the

term "heroic" is more suited to the ideals of Germanic valor on display in the poem.

However, historian Blair suggests a closer association between the classical and

Germanic worlds, describing how the realities of the Anglo-Saxon court mirror the

poem itself while also noting that "'[t]ill at least the eighth century, the Anglo-Saxon

royal household wears an almost wholly military aspect, and there is little room for

much beyond" (*Anglo-Saxon England* 210-11). As in the Homeric and Virgilian worlds,

systems of gift-giving enabled an exchange of loyalty for military service in the

Beowulf poem as well, and objects of worked metal, among other things, served within

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[102] See Wrenn, 42, for fuller clarification.

this dynamic. At its simplest level, in fact, *Beowulf* depicts a system of commerce modeled on those represented in the Homeric and Virgilian epics, most vividly in the example of the generous lord given the monikers of "ring giver" and "giver of gold." Indeed, in depicting the heroic ethos of the Germanic world, the poem portrays the rewarding of valor and service to the lord with the symbols of status— weapons, goblets, rings, and other metal tokens of commerce—in a warrior-based economy modeled on Virgilian and Homeric examples.

This warrior-based system of commerce is a particularly important feature of the poem, especially in the context of the development of metals-based currencies in Anglo-Saxon England. Echoes of a system of gift exchange in return for bravery and loyalty help to establish the world of the poem as an idealized version of a storied past, for they illustrate distance between the world of *Beowulf* and the world of its audience. As the movement toward a more unified England proceeded through the age of Bede, through the eighth century, and into the reign of King Alfred, the warrior ethos of the poem would show a significant contrast to the developing systems of regal finances where the primary methods of exchange were still in kind and currencies were only gradually transforming commercial interactions. The systems of gift exchange would stand out in a world where a homegrown, silver-based system of coinage, introduced by the disparate kingdoms south of the Humber, was gradually displacing the predominant gold-based currencies of Merovingian Gaul, as illustrated by those coins recovered at Sutton Hoo, by the middle of the seventh-century. Blair states with confidence that such coins, called *scettas* and known for their uneven and debased silver content, "were being struck in England in considerable numbers in the seventh-century and in much of

the eighth" (*Anglo-Saxon England* 287). As any form of coinage or currency is

absent from the narrative of *Beowulf*, this observation further underscores the distance

between the age of the poem, defined by its ethos of loyalty and heroism, and the age of

the audience, defined increasingly by the commercial factors that dictate court

relationships.

Fortuitously, the aforementioned excavations at Sutton Hoo have yielded much

evidence to situate objects of worked metal as important icons within the larger political

and economic currencies of the Anglo-Saxon world. In so doing, these excavations also

have enlivened the debates over how accurately *Beowulf* itself reflects and comments

upon the political and social world of its audience. While the artifacts recovered at

Sutton Hoo further complicate the issue of whether the poem is an outdated heroic tale

from ages past or one in step with the climate of its age, they do ultimately underscore

the importance of metalworking—in symbolic as well as practical realms—to the

eighth-century Anglo-Saxon political economy, and resonate in an epic that is either

contemporary or was composed up to three centuries later.

Beowulf *and Archaeology: The Significance of Sutton Hoo*

The excavations at Sutton Hoo have continued in phases through the decades

since their initial discovery in 1938, and have enabled historians, anthropologists,

archaeologists, and literary critics alike a number of further clues to the world of the

East Anglian kingdom, its connections with Europe of the Dark Ages, and its

remarkable connection to the poem *Beowulf*.[103] The intrinsic significance of Sutton

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[103] The phases of excavation have included extended archaeological efforts in the period after the Second World War, and from 1965-71, 1983-86, and 1986-92. The collective archaeological efforts have produced suggestive artifacts for those wishing to understand the institution of kingship, the developing economic interrelationships, and

Hoo lies in what was recovered from the excavations, what these artifacts reveal about seventh-century metalworking, and what they contribute to an understanding of *Beowulf*. The "most notable feature" of the artifacts, according to historian Stenton, "is the remarkable elaboration of their adornment" (50). This observation refers specifically to a sword and scabbard, a helmet, shield, and spear, and two insignias of royal power, a whetstone and standard. However, it also applies to other recovered items, including bronze bowls, silver spoons bearing hints of Mediterranean Christianity, and other various buckles, brooches, jewelry, and other items of worked metal. When the artifacts are considered in full, "no parallels have been found elsewhere in England," observes Stenton, and "few treasures which are at all comparable have been found in any part of the whole Germanic north" (50).[104]

Ultimately, like the poem itself, the artifacts recovered at the Sutton Hoo ship burial suggest a world standing uneasily between Germanic paganism and Christianity, between a tribal ethos and a developing conception of monarchy, and between an autonomous group of self-subsistent people and a population interconnected economically with allies elsewhere in England and across the North Sea. In this way,

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the nature of spiritual practices in seventh-century East Anglia. Two major figures from the realm of archaeology — the aforementioned Rupert Bruce-Mitford, whose analysis of the Sutton Hoo artifacts became his life's work, and Martin Carver, the chief supervisor of the next generation of excavations—stand paramount in the effort to interpret the Sutton Hoo investigations. Both present contradictory viewpoints on the recovered artifacts and represent different generational perspectives on the significance and meaning of this rich archaeological yield.

[104] In addition to expanding the field of inquiry for the historian, the recovered artifacts are also valuable for the student of Anglo-Saxon literature. In particular, they demonstrate consistencies with the imagery of *Beowulf*, such that, as scholar Rosemary Cramp observed in 1957, "the rich gold treasure from Sutton Hoo brought the immediate recognition that the descriptions of lavish burials and gold-adorned armor in *Beowulf* could no longer be dismissed as poetic exaggeration or folk memories of an age of gold before the Anglo-Saxons came to England ..."(57).

Moreover, as *Beowulf* scholar and editor C.L. Wrenn observed two years later, "...[t]he high aesthetic qualities shown by the *Beowulf* poet—and by implication, therefore, his audience, had been fully demonstrated not so long before by the craftsmen of East-Anglia who worked the wondrous gold and jewelry of Sutton Hoo"(329). Subsequent decades have produced few answers, but rather have yielded an abundance of theories about the interconnected poem and artifacts which seemingly reflect similar worlds of technical sophistication, spiritual practice, and heroic ethos.

the best means of understanding the anthropological significance of Sutton Hoo

and its connection to *Beowulf* is to acknowledge the uncertain possibilities which

conjoin the stories of the epic poem and the unearthed artifacts of iron, gold, and silver.

Much is suggested in the artifacts themselves. Their rich detail, symbolic

value, and implied utility tell us much about the stature and significance of smiths,

jewelers, and others skilled in the metalworking arts. Providing the symbolic insignias

which invest their offices with the icons of power, prestige, and supernatural authority,

the skills of the metalworker would be of immense value to the Anglo-Saxon warrior

king, just as they would be to the early English monastic. A series of objects—the so-

called Sutton Hoo helmet, shield, sword, and scabbard—reflects a clear utilitarian

purpose in battle but reveals a symbolic significance in its design. Other recovered

objects—specifically, the so-called whetstone and standard—demonstrate significance

as icons functioning within the developing institutional structures of royal and

ecclesiastical politics in seventh-century England. Collectively, and much like the

Beowulf poem itself, these artifacts capture the transitional nature of a world moving

from a pagan to a Christian ethos: "One could almost set forth," Wrenn observes, "the

Germanic ideal touched by oncoming Christianity, of the hero as prince, alike from the

artifacts of Sutton Hoo and from *Beowulf*" (329).

Any effort to discern the identity and interpret the significance of the individual

memorialized in the highly revealing "Mound 1" (also called the "Great Mound") is

complicated by the ambiguous character of the items left behind. The implements of

warfare imply an obvious connection to battle; the standard and whetstone imply some

degree of political or social authority; and the silver spoons of Mediterranean origin

imply both a connection to the continent and an awareness of the Christian faith. But much like *Beowulf* itself, the recovered evidence suggests rich possibilities about the identity and life of the buried individual but provides few definitive answers. Ultimately, the Christian character of the Sutton Hoo burial remains, just as it does in *Beowulf*, an open question, presenting tantalizing clues to support many a nuanced reading of the evidence.

Ultimately, like the poem *Beowulf*, the worked metal items recovered at Sutton Hoo provide important clues about Anglo-Saxon political geography, social customs, and seventh-century religious orientation. The findings of the excavations highlight both the ambiguous spiritual practice and the Nordic and Germanic character of people who are eager to preserve their distinct cultural, religious, and economic autonomy. Tantalizing hints—like the silver spoons of Mediterranean origin—complicate the mystery of East Anglian spiritual practice. Comparable excavations of similar burial mounds—elsewhere in England, on the continent, and in Sweden—demonstrate no similar Mediterranean or Christian connections. Before the iconic and symbolic significance of individual artifacts can be considered, however, it must be noted that the collection as a whole underscores the importance of the individual metalworkers and jewelry makers who created the cultural capital that enabled the displays of social, political, and religious power. With these considerations in mind, it is now appropriate to begin an extended examination of select artifacts to understand what they reveal about the socioeconomic significance of the metalworker in Anglo-Saxon life and art.

The first and most important types of Sutton Hoo artifacts to consider include the implements of battle: the sword, shield, and helmet. Each has a distinctive history

and symbolic importance, and, as objects of demonstrable utility, each has a clear

function in a society where the idea of warfare—perhaps more as an abstraction than as

a direct practice—shapes the prevailing ethos and defines social relationships.

Moreover, as much as a visual impression can be equated with a literary rendering,

these three artifacts demonstrate visually the splendors and mythology associated with

weaponry, just as the *Beowulf* poet captures these qualities in verse. Anthropologist

Heinrich Harke describes the "complex ritual symbolism" that weapons serve within the

Anglo-Saxon burial, illustrating their service as "ethnic affiliation, descent, wealth, elite

status, and age groups" (164). The focus of much interest and analysis since their

recovery from the grave barrows, the Sutton Hoo sword, shield, and helmet reveal as

much about the economic and technical sophistication of the East Anglian world as they

suggest about the mythic character given to weaponry and to the metalworking arts.

Iconic Value in the Implements of Warfare: The Sutton Hoo Sword, Helmet, and

Shield

The first matter to consider in regard to the Sutton Hoo sword, shield, and

helmet is why they were included in the burial ritual. Given the Christian church's

disapproval of mound burials, as well as its uneasy tolerance of native pagan burial

customs, the weapons, like the other artifacts and the ship burial itself, demonstrated an

affiliation with pagan customs. Obviously, they reflect the stature of the buried

individual and say much about his ethnic affiliation and cultural heritage. Historian

R.R. Clarke observed in 1961 that "intimate links between East Anglia and Sweden are

provided by the sword, helmet, and shield in the Sutton Hoo ship-burial, as these were

almost certainly made in Sweden" (qtd. in Raw, 181), providing a view affirmed a few

years later in the fuller discussion provided by Green (134-36). Moreover, just as

the ritual symbolism of the burial reveals much about the individual memorialized, the

implements of battle—particularly the sword—represent a symbolic dimension in the

world of the loyal warrior fighting in defence of his lord.

Despite all of their associations with battle and warfare, however, the relevance

of the sword, shield, and helmet to the notion of the "warrior burial," which has been

"used throughout the archaeological and historical literature," has been called into

question by Harke, who considers the term—particularly as applied to Sutton Hoo—to

be "simplistic and even misleading" (150). Instead, weapons served the additional

function of marking the degree of one's membership in the ruling aristocracy. Though

discouraging to the effort to align the warrior's mound burial ritual in *Beowulf* directly

with the mound burial ritual, this observation only enhances the significance of

weapons and the associations they held both during and in commemoration of the life of

the Anglo-Saxon aristocrat. Ultimately, the weapons of the Sutton Hoo mound 1 serve,

according to Harke, as "symbolic markers" (158) of an individual's age and status, and

the inclusion of a richly decorated and ornate sword, helmet, and shield not only point

to the exalted stature of the buried individual but are also calculated to make a statement

about his ethnic, social, and religious affiliations.

Just as it is in *Beowulf,* the Sutton Hoo sword, coupled with its richly decorated

scabbard, has captivated scholars, historians, and anthropologists alike. As noted

above, anthropologist Harke notes great significance in the inclusion of swords within a

mound burial in his survey of excavated sites. He argues that in combination with

drinking horns and select other weapons (axes, seaxes), swords in burial mounds were

"high-status weapons" (See Harke 158; Hedegar 294; Davidson 12). When considered in comparison with the sword, the helmet represents an entirely different though no less impressive variety of metalwork and expands the range of skills and techniques associated with Anglo-Saxon smithing, metalworking, and weapons manufacture (Green 70; Bruce-Mitford 199). As with the sword, the polished, finished helmet would present an impressive vision, combining a variety of metallic glints as well as some intricate design details. Clad in helmet, sword, shield, and armor, the East Anglian warrior in full *vectigalia* would be an intimidating figure. Moreover, stamped into the bronze sheets were "decorative and symbolic subjects" that had been impressed by dies, contributing to the complexity of Anglo-Saxon iconography (Bruce-Mitford 199).

The helmet as a whole was given extensive attention from Bruce-Mitford, who made extensive connections between the design features and construction methods evident in this artifact and other comparable ones. Further, he has used this information to help his argument about the high degree of cultural connection between East Anglia and Sweden (199).[105] Ultimately, archaeologist Carver summarizes the significance of the helmet for modern individuals attempting to understand the intersections between an artifact's utility and its symbolic significance. He describes how "this form of the helmet has become the Sutton Hoo icon and is now used the world over to signify things

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[105] As are others of Bruce-Mitford's conclusions about the Sutton Hoo artifacts, this degree of connection between East Anglia and Sweden—as revealed in the design and décor of the excavated items—has been questioned by scholars in subsequent generations. Writing in 1959, editor and scholar C.L. Wrenn echoes the thesis about the Helmet's clear Swedish origins, observing that both shield and helmet "are probably from the neighborhood of old Uppsala, and that they were from 100 to 150 years when placed in the Sutton Hoo cenotaph" (318). Further, like Bruce-Mitford, Wrenn argues that both "a Christian as well as a Wodenistic interpretation" (320) could be given to the designs cast on these "Swedish ancestral heirlooms of the East Anglian Wuffingas" (320)

mysterious, menacing, or pagan," and "its heavy metal dome and dark sagging eyes" recall "the image of the modern helmeted biker in dark glasses" (*Burial Ground* 29).

The shield recovered from mound 1 probably had a degree of detail comparable to that of the helmet, and recapturing its intricacy has proven difficult. Many of its more notable features have eroded over the course of time, and archaeologists are left to speculate about matters beyond its physical dimensions and design characteristics. Discovered between the helmet and the standard, the shield was shown to be made primarily of wood, and so was almost entirely decayed when unearthed. Fortunately, its metal fittings and decorations had endured and could withstand restoration, enabling further reconstruction of the shield as a whole.

The designs on the shield serve as further testimony to the range and skill of Anglo-Saxon metalwork and the intricate designs that captured the symbolic associations of these weapons. Bruce-Mitford explains how these aesthetic details enable the conclusion that the shield " in all probability is a Swedish piece," which "may have been brought from Sweden just before the burial took place, but it was more likely to have been an heirloom" (72; also see Green 70-72). As shown collectively in the sword, helmet, and shield, the character of Anglo-Saxon metalwork is tinged with post-Roman, continental, and Nordic influences, which suggest combined associations with both Christian and pagan spirituality.

Icons of Social Power: The Sutton Hoo Standard and Whetstone

The second series of objects to examine serves a more iconic and less utilitarian function. These are the Sutton Hoo standard and whetstone, which in

appearance imply a measure of iconic significance in the expression of political and social authority. This possibility is enhanced by their inclusion in the ship-burial ritual, an observation made by Bruce-Mitford, who comments that "it seems impossible to doubt that the Sutton Hoo burial is royal in the sense that it reflects a royal court, the top stratum of Anglo-Saxon society" (3). The collective tableau of the objects organized within the grave "suggest(s) that it was a king's grave" (5) although others have ventured that the buried individual might have also been a distinguished Swedish visitor or immigrant; a prominent member of the household of the Wuffings, the East Anglian royal dynasty; a "relapsed" noble who, in dying, abandoned the new faith and returned to his pagan origins; or a Wuffing monk,who returned from a continental journey bearing exotic gifts for his household.

The confusion over the individual's identity obscures the meaning of the whetstone and standard, two of the more prominent items that seem to reflect secular power. The whetstone, or "scepter," is a decorated stone bar which would serve a direct purpose in a social and ceremonial context that, according to Bruce-Mitford, can "scarcely be anything but a ceremonial object, associated not so much with an individual as with an office." Further, it would be a natural symbol for a warrior king and an expression of his power as "the giver and master of swords of his war-band" and "the head of a fighting elite in an heroic period" (6; also see Carver, *Burial Ground* 170). Equally puzzling to investigators, the staff (also called the "stand" or "standard") presents its own unique symbolic mysteries to Sutton Hoo investigators. Efforts to interpret its significance and possible utility have been hampered by the stag's misplacement on its apex; but even in its accurately reconstructed form, the staff

remains an object (or icon) of great ambiguity. Serving in either symbolic or

utilitarian purposes, it is distinguished because "no such objects are known in Germanic

archaeology" (Bruce-Mitford 8), and *Beowulf* offers no mention of such an object (10).

Other Notable Individual Artifacts: Gold, Silver, and Bronze

As mentioned above, the two spoons of Mediterranean silver depict the fullest

and most vivid suggestion of Christianity among the Sutton Hoo excavations. They

bear the names "Saul" and "Paul" in a Greek script, and are said to make direct

reference to the Apostle Paul. Bruce-Mitford observes that "the fact that the spoons are

a pair and the coupling of the name Saul with Paul, seem to put it beyond doubt" that

they refer directly to the Apsotle. In addition, the so-called 'Coptic' bowl, which held

another bronze hanging bowl, was discovered in the original 1939 excavation.

Equipped with handles and a foot stand, this bowl shares characteristics with those

found in other excavations of Anglo-Saxon graves. However, it is the other bronze

bowl—a hanging bowl, equipped with hooks and loop handles and mysteriously

decorated with inlaid, ornate, Byzantine-looking metal patterns—that is, according to

Green, the real object of interest; combined with a hundred other such specimens, it

"pose(s) one of the problems, still unsolved, of early Anglo-Saxon archaeology" (Green

72). Also included among the discovered items was a series of a eleven silver bowls,

plus a silver ladle and cup, in addition to the two spoons discussed above. The most

distinctive silver piece is the so-called "great silver dish," which is of much greater

volume than the two bronze bowls and was recovered from the opposite side of the

Sutton Hoo burial chamber (Green 74).

Lastly, of the forty gold coins recovered from a leather purse, at least thirty-seven of them were of Merovingian origins (the remaining three had been rubbed smooth). These reveal that commerce based in continental systems of currency was in place during the dates given to Sutton Hoo burial ritual. While a system of imperial coinage governed trade relations during the period of Roman occupation, no system of coinage native to the East Anglian region was extant at the time of the burial. Coupled with the items of Mediterranean silver, the gold coins add a further dimension of complexity to any effort to interpret the Sutton Hoo burial. Clearly, the East Anglians were no strangers to the idea of monetary exchange, and evidence of their trade relations in slaves, metals, and textiles with the Franks and with the Holy Roman Empire reveal a measure of craft-based commerce that proceeded across whatever fluid international boundaries that might have separated ethnically distinct groups of people. Likewise, it is probable that such practices were a part of their vision of the afterlife and that items fashioned from precious metals would be of use to the recently deceased individual beginning an afterlife journey.

The Collective Tableau: Interpretations of the Ship Burial Ritual

Collectively, the objects of Mediterranean silver and bronze simultaneously enhance the mystery of the individual memorialized at Sutton Hoo. As a collective whole, the artifacts imply not only an awareness of something beyond a native craftsmanship, but also reveal that the buried individual had sufficient social and economic prestige to get such exotic items of foreign origins. Beyond their implied Christian associations, they recall the dazzling splendors of the eastern Roman world that would assume a mythic place in the Anglo-Saxon mind. On a practical level, these

artifacts imply connections to the trade networks, political systems, cultural influences, and spiritual practices from a range of regions across the European continent.

Beyond the spiritual vision and political consequences that lie behind the Sutton Hoo tableau, the cultural implications revealed in it prohibit one from declaring the degree of cultural interaction between the East Anglian Wuffing dynasty of the seventh-century and the Nordic and Frankish worlds. Further, the significance of such interactions demonstrates the emerging concept of the nation-state, a concept dependent heavily on the conjoined elements of epic literature, metalworking arts, and underworld imagery. In describing the degree of interaction between the East Anglian world and the Viking societies of Sweden and Norway, historian Christopher Scull observes that the Sutton Hoo artifacts suggest a "cultural affinity" between them, rather than any direct commercial and political linkage, and that it is "legitimate to talk of a late Saxon state" (17).[106]

From Sutton Hoo to Beowulf: Envisioning the Anglo-Saxon Empire

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the Anglo-Saxon notion of empire was far removed from the monolithic entity envisioned by Virgil. The Anglo-Saxons saw their world as one not defined by boundaries, commerce, destiny, or the features of the emerging nation state, but rather as one that was conflicted in its sense of identity. Clues to their imperial vision are provided not only by the epic Beowulf but also in the

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[106] While it would be misleading and erroneous to consider the Anglo-Saxon world as a "state" in the seventh century, it is perhaps less so to recognize the elements of statehood that are reflected in the ship-burial ritual. Scull argues that two elements of state identity—foreign contact and trade relationships—were "particularly important to the development of permanent institutions of administration and the consolidation of royal power in middle Anglo-Saxon England." The essential component to dynastic power is "land and the surplus that it generated" in the various Saxon kingdoms (Scull 18), and the commodities that reflect these relationships are found in the Sutton Hoo tableau.

Sutton Hoo Tableau. These texts conjoin to suggest the conclusion that Anglo-Saxon England was not an economic entity in the imperial sense, for it had no symbolic center needing to be sustained by expansionist practices and by wealth derived from taxes or incomes generated in colonial outposts. At best, the "empire" represented in the disparate kingdoms of early Anglo-Saxon England was in its capacity to replicate self-sustaining kingdoms, in which the emphasis was on resource maintenance more than on expansion or acquisition. Moreover, it was a loose confederacy of kingdoms conjoined by language and by a common sense of vulnerability to enemies to the Scottish north, the Nordic east, the Celtic west, and the Frankish south.

Essentially, the Anglo-Saxons of the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries were caught between worlds. With no true sense of "nationhood" and only the vaguest sense of a collective identity, pre-conquest England clung to the image of a vague and idealized Germanic past but also acknowledged the uncertain idea of a Christian empire founded on Roman imperial models. Nevertheless, the Anglo-Saxons maintained and appropriated an entrenched tradition of metalworking skill and developed trades based on this kind of artisanship. The surviving metalworking patterns help to demonstrate the cultural and even economic affiliations between the Anglo-Saxons and the Frankish, Germanic, and Nordic cultures of post-Roman Europe. Given their importance in articulating the iconic power in both the ecclesiastical and political realms, it is safe to say that eighth and ninth-century metalworkers served church and state alike. The corpus of Anglo-Saxon poetry serves as the document that enables the modern student of the period to understand the significance of the metalworking crafts and trades to the developing world of post-Roman England.

In the conjoined worlds of *Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo, smiths and metalworkers held power as agents of change, facilitating both the economic transformations that took place as the residual imperial economy of post-Roman England gave way first to localized trade networks and systems of currency and later to more homogenous systems of trade and government. The mythic character of the dark-age smith, as captured in the traditions of Germanic, Norse, and Anglo-Saxon epic, emphasizes his position as an agent of change; serving the new and developing royal and social institutions, he also maintains the images and icons from older, departed orders. The use of Roman imperial iconography on early currencies and royal iconography of post Roman Europe and Anglo-Saxon England reflect the smith's role in maintaining the images of power in a world struggling with transition. Smiths and metalworkers shape the implements that enable battle and warfare to become essential economic and political ventures and help to facilitate the changes throughout the island as its governing imperial authority collapsed and was tranformed into localized kingships. As the post-imperial chaos of fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries gave way to more stabilized economic and political systems of the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, smiths and metalworkers were the principal technological agents behind the scene who enabled the development of trade relationships, the establishment of currencies, and the evolving power of governmental and ecclesiastical institutions. Like *Beowulf*, Sutton Hoo provides a window on the metalworkers' crucial roles as agents of transformational processes.

Despite its ultimately non-Virgilian character, *Beowulf* remains the most vivid statement of the Anglo-Saxon conception of empire. Moreover, in its depictions of

metalworking, armor, underworld imagery, and transformative process, it

demonstrates the imagistic and thematic features that define the epic genre. The

Beowulf poet could only vaguely envision an empire as a political entity conjoining the

mythic Germanic past and the predestined Christian future, but he nevertheless sought

to define his hero more according to this belief system and less after the fashion of any

residual Virgilian models that he might have known. Yet like Virgil and the architect of

the Sutton Hoo burial tableau, the *Beowulf* poet also understood the interconnection

between the symbols of political authority and the labors of artisanship that made them.

He articulates this awareness by highlighting metals as symbols of one's skills as

warrior, as markers of one's political significance, and finally, as symbols of the greater

powers of God's domain.

Chapter 6: The Sword and the Coin I: The Monetary Perversion of Chivalric Idealism in the *Song of Roland.*

Introduction: Situating Roland *within a Nascent Commercial Ethos*

The emerging pattern of underworld imagery in epic works to this point

in the study proceeds according to the following trajectory: Looking backward to

the world of the ancients, one finds that the epic underworlds of Homer and Virgil

are morally ambiguous places that acknowledge the mysterious powers of the

metalworking craftsman but regard his labors with suspicion and anxiety.

Moving forward to the post-imperial climate of the Anglo-Saxons, the epic

underworld of the early medieval world continues the pattern of regarding the

metalworker with suspicion but also recognizes in a perfunctory way the

contributions made by the worker of metals to the developing idea of the nation

state as a distinct ethnic, social, and economic entity. As the previous chapter

argued, the Anglo-Saxon vision of Hell was shaped by a residually classical

distrust of mineral technology, and a syncretism between native Germanic

traditions of the underworld and borrowed imagery and iconography of early

Christian literature which was itself shaped by motifs supplied in the *Aeneid*. In

looking forward to depictions of the epic underworld of the medieval and late

Renaissance, as envisioned particularly in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, one finds

expressions of suspicion toward large-scale industrial development which holds

the underworld residents as agents of a destructive commercial, industrial, and

military economy. In this environment, the wholesale destruction of the

landscape is given a morally unambiguous alignment with the pursuit of profit.

This vision of Milton's is shaped by many influences, but essentially combines the mercantilist philosophies that dictated the economic climate of his world with the epic traditions of the ancients.

I argue that the medieval vision of the underworld was defined by its inheritance from classical traditions, particularly as captured in the Frankish epic *The Song of Roland* as well as in more graphic detail in the *Inferno* of Dante Aligheri's *Divine Comedy*, which is considered in the following chapter. That vision was further shaped and transformed by an economic climate that was generally short on technological innovation but discernibly innovative in its development of monetary exchange systems and the proliferation of networks of political power. The end products of mining and metalworking include the armor and weapons that are the tools of the soldier's trade, the coins that enable the merchant's profit, and the mines and early factories that bring profits to the early capitalist. Writers of medieval epic ultimately highlight the powers associated with the growing presence and influence of the bourgeois class, who are those most likely to profit via the proliferation of increasingly sophisticated metalworking technologies and systems of monetary exchange. In this way, the epics of the medieval period, as well as other dominant literary genres, were influenced heavily by a growing commercial culture that helped to reshape ideas fundamental to the epic form into motifs that accommodated increasingly complex economic and political systems. The *Song of Roland*, the principal focus of the current chapter, shows in its rich and purposeful deployment of grandiose

chivalric images the incursion of a nascent commercial ethos which corrupts the chivalric ideals of duty and faith.

The *Song of Roland* simultaneously valorizes the ideals of Christian knighthood and acknowledges in unflattering terms the slowly developing capitalist impulses which sprang from the commercial climate of northern Italy and encroached upon the chivalric class's vision of itself. This Frankish epic is best described as an articulation of the medieval crusading ideology, but it also reveals the encroachment of commercial ideals upon a chivalric hegemony. This self-perception was largely free of any representation of a developing and profit-minded bourgeois class in the 12th century *chanson de geste*, where the ultimate themes express loyalty and the fulfillment of duties to one's lord, king, and God. In the case of *Roland*, the plot moves toward a conclusion that articulates the ideal of fit service to the exclusion of values that might be deemed self-serving.[107]

However, the poem's subtler aspects of character development emerge when one moves beyond the habit of seeing it as pro-courtly and pro-crusading propaganda (Owen 21-29). This double purpose captures the poet's conflicted views between *Roland's* superficial interpretation as an expression of a crusading ideology and his subtler focus on the humanist dimensions of the characters, their conflicts, and the encroachment of bourgeois values into their chivalric world.

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[107] Historian John Mundy describes the story's vision of heroism as one of "suicidal and Christ-like sacrifice [which] was the model of how to win fame by arms" (10). In contrast with the other epics of the medieval world, the poem is characterized by what medieval scholar and translator D.D.R Owen describes as "the interplay of antithetical elements" (21) expressive of the poet's "double vision" (26), or a "blend of approval and disapproval" (28) toward his characters and their actions.

Ultimately, it is important to keep the arguments of scholar Robert Francis Cook

in mind when considering matters of interpretation relating to the French epic:

"[t]he *Song of Roland* is about ideals and attitudes rather than specific local

practices" (18). Nevertheless, the late eleventh- to mid twelfth-century range of

dates assigned to the *Song of Roland* is of significance in any effort to consider

the poem's epic themes in the context of the economic realities of its world.

Additionally, the poem provides ornate descriptions of arms, armour, and

weapons used by its characters. And these details, coupled with a consideration of

the knightly motives of the main protagonists, imply much about the economic

implications associated with the crusading ideology. In the poem's account of

arms, weapons, and battle, as well as in its consideration of the notion of "fit

heroism," the poem portrays a growing bourgeois presence in the world of the

chivalric class even as the poet labors mightily to keep this notion from

encroaching on the poem's valorization of the Crusades, a mindset described by

historian Norman Cantor as a display of "military force and religious devotion"

(Cantor 331).

Ultimately, in its focus on the spiritual and symbolic associations of

weapons and weaponry and in its condemnation of a non-chivalric ethos, the

poem belies an awareness of the economic and political significance of a

growing—and to the poet, troublesome—bourgeois ideology in the larger social

and economic spheres. Initially, the *Song of Roland* is of great significance to any

effort to understand the relationship between the individuals who fought in battles

associated with the Crusades (both pagan and Christian), the weapons they used

in combat, and the way they fought. And any reading of the *Roland's* pro-
crusading propagandistic qualities must consider the economic realities that shape
them. In this way *Roland* shares the characteristics of other eleventh- and
twelfth-century chivalric epics, which are, according to scholar Jesse Crosland,
"imbued with both the nobler ideas of feudalism, with its loyalties to lord and
peer and with its evils" (3).[108] And these ethical views are in large part defined by
the juxtaposition between the dying chivalric values of an older class of knights
and nobles—embodied most visibly in the actions of Roland—and an
encroaching and, to the noble class, threatening value system based on profit,
trade, and commerce.

Scholar and theoretician Peter Haidu's study on the political dimensions
of the *Roland* supplies useful contexts to connect the text to the social and
political fabric of the world it reflected, and a consideration of his views is needed
to examine the poem's economic dimensions in fuller detail. The story highlights
and champions the traditional chivalric virtues of duty, service, and piety; the poet
also uses methods familiar to the student of modern propaganda techniques, such
that *Roland* successfully demonizes the pagans and infidels even while also
expressing a strange admiration for them (36). In this context, argues Haidu, "the
figure of the 'Saracen' in the *Roland* becomes merely another representation in
the essential problematic which is at work in (the representation and reality of) the
Frankish polity" (38). Explaining how "the financial value of objects destroyed is

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[108] Cook describes the tensions of the *Song of Roland* in more precise terms, locating the most pronounced ideological divisions in the poet's polarizing distinctions between the values of Charlemagne and those of his enemies. He observes that Saracens and Christians are "not fundamentally alike," so that "[f]rom the very first, the epic portrays the clash of two sets of ethical views" (4).

continuous with the value of the body itself" (47), Haidu notes the ultimate

economic, political, and psychological implications of these descriptions. The

Chanson de Roland, he explains, "displays the thirsty pleasure and satisfaction of

war's destructive violence," particularly when "it engages in the gratuitous

fracture of aesthetic and economic value conjoined in the precious stones of

knightly armor, the signs of value" (48).[109]

Therefore, in order to understand the significance of the battle scenes and

armor as depicted in Roland, some understanding of the narrative's basic features

is necessary. In the world of the poem, the concepts of loyalty and duty are

paramount, the enemy clear and threatening, and the description of the events,

conflicts, and imagery of battle is purposefully hyperbolic. The knightly

economy of the tenth and eleventh centuries was much like the warrior economies

of the classical world, which were based essentially on pillage and service. As

long as the knight served his lord and shared his wealth, he occupied a position of

relative security. In the *Chanson de Roland*, therefore, the poet's anti-bourgeois

anxieties are most visibly on display when he focuses particularly on the "works"

of the artisan class—in his descriptions of the images of metals, weapons, and

armour—which themselves delineate the older chivalric order. Essentially, the

Charlemagne of the *Roland* is portrayed as a strong king because the Frankish

kings of the eleventh-century were weak and were largely unable to contain the

knightly classes who depended upon violence, pillage and brutality toward the

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[109] Moreover, according to Haidu, this "antirational economy of conspicuous consumption, of joyful destruction, of waste, of *depense illimitee*' inhabits certain corners of the *Roland*, presumably the most primitive, those which hark back the most to nomadic beginnings. In this theme, beauty and economic value are mere indices of joyfully destructive violence" (48-9).

peasantry to maintain their tenuous class standing. They were a warring class

accustomed to a world of violence and pillage, and the ideology of chivalry put

the best possible face on these disreputable habits. The *Chanson de Roland*

portrays how the economy of chivalric warfare is corrupted by more sophisticated

forms of economic interaction, and the nexus of this conflict is in the essential

narrative tension between Ganelon and Roland. The *Roland* poet's greatest

contradiction is in his condemnation of the interactions of the early commercial

climate of eleventh-century France and his subtler acknowledegment of lasting

values in this means of economic interaction.

Knighthood, Nobility, and Service: The Encroachment of Commerce on Chivalric Ideals

The ideology of knighthood and the construction of beliefs that defined this

noble class (and those embodied in the *Roland*) fail to square with the political realities

that determined the class relations and separated the sparse population of nobles from

the more abundant and unpredictable peasantry.[110] In its effort to articulate pro-

Christendom and pro-crusading ideology, as well as to affirm the stature of the chivalric

class, the bearing and stature of the noble warrior is of considerable importance to the

ideology of the *Roland* poem and is consciously and ostentatiously depicted by its poet.

More importantly, to modern readers it is an equally revealing trope in any scholarly

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[110] In defining these differences, the observations of Marxist historian Haidu are particularly useful to help distinguish the social relations that the *Song of Roland* comments on. Arguing that the maintenance of social equilibrium between nobility and peasantry required a "dispersal, permanence, and mobility of police power," Haidu demonstrates how this end was achieved "by the readily available means of mounted professionals in the delivery of military force, the armed retainers known as chevaliers or knights" (51).

effort to recognize the encroachment of bourgeois values into the chivalric ideals

the poet articulates. [111]

In summary, Haidu describes the knights as a "hinge group" who were not only

"essential to the reproduction of the socioeconomic order," but also "susceptible to an

identification with the peasantry," such that "their allegiance to the ruling class had to

be secured" (61). While his analysis is open to the criticism of overgeneralization about

the makeup of the knightly classes, it is reinforced by the observations of historian

Jonathan Riley-Smith, who shows how the violent habits of eleventh-century chivalric

society were appropriated by church reformers, particularly the formidable Popes

Gregory VII and Urban II (4) who were the most vocal proponents of the Crusades. In

this way, the violent ideals of Frankish knighthood were refashioned by church

mandates, which employed an idiom of knightly warfare in their spiritual rhetoric and

helped to create the idealized vision of knighthood as shown in the *Chanson de*

Roland.[112] Ultimately, this twelfth-century Frankish epic expresses powerfully the idea

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[111] While the significance of noble weapons–particularly, swords and lances–will be considered more fully below, at this point it is important to return to Haidu's discussion of the complex social positioning of the knightly class. An examination of his arguments will help to affirm the symbolic and class-specific values placed on swords, armor, lances, and other implements necessary to the noble mounted warrior. More importantly, Haidu's arguments will help this effort to affirm the uneasy anxieties bestowed upon the profit-minded miners, metalworkers, and blacksmiths of lower class standing, whose labors nevertheless enabled these signifiers of nobility to possess their meaning. Haidu offers a useful generalization of the knightly class, describing them as "men of modest wealth" whose "economic basis was typically the possession or use of a small, landed patrimony, ranging from a couple of manses to fifteen or so" (60).

[112] Nicolson's discussion affirms the evolution of knighthood from a position between the hinges of nobility and peasantry, as she explains how the various terms referring to the mounted warrior–the Latin *miles*, the French *chevalier*, the Spanish *caballero*, the German *ritter*, as well as the English *knight*–implied service above soldiering. Nicoloson points to the work of historian Georges Duby, who showed that by the middle decades of the eleventh-century, the ideas of soldier service and wealth (a dependable expression of noble status) were aligned more closely, for "it was necessary to be wealthy in order to have the armour, weapons, and a horse..." (53).

As the eleventh-century passed into the twelfth, for example, skills in combat increasingly required more specialized drill and training; occasions to practice and demonstrate one's skills in the handling of sword, lance, horse, armor, and other implements of noble weaponry–the storied jousting tournaments of medieval epic and romance–were growing in popularity among the noble classes. Ultimately, as Nicolson explains, "certain sorts of warfare became theologically acceptable" (54) between roughly 1150 and 1250.

that the armed warrior of noble stature is expected and required to engage in distant conflicts in service of both God and King.

Yet the poem's examination of the knightly ideals also expresses anxieties about the problematic stature of the knightly class. As the example of the traitor Ganelon will show, the class entrusted with protecting the aristocracy is also susceptible to the newly present temptations of profit and value; indeed, in the poem's juxtaposition of Ganelon as a proto-capitalist profiteer with Roland as the embodiment of fit service and Christ-like sacrifice, the poem's expression of anxieties toward the preservation of chivalric ideals becomes more readily apparent. And in this context, it is interesting to note that the acrimony between Roland and Ganelon is suggested to be financial in nature (see Haidu 57, 100; Cook 18). Indeed, during his trial, where Ganelon defends himself against the charges of treason, he claims that his acrimony toward Roland is derived from the latter's shady financial dealings with him (line 3758).

Cook describes how previous generations of critics have judged the emperor Charlemagne's inability to handle properly the poorly disguised and deeply personal conflict between Roland and Ganelon and used this position to label the French emperor as a "weak king" (18). Breaking with this critical tradition, Cook argues instead that the poet uses Charlemagne's name "not (as) a reference to a historical person," but rather as "the invocation of a positive, civilizing force in the world" (3), whose energy is threatened by the clash of values embodied in the protagonist Roland and the antagonist Ganelon. The poem's central antagonist as well as the chief threat to the "civilizing force" embodied in Charlemagne, Ganelon is nevertheless a man of stature in his Emperor's court. He recognizes Roland's overly zealous service to his lord (laisse 30)

and is stung by Charlemagne's subsequent affirmation of the younger knight's opinion that retreat is necessary.

The Commercial Ethos: A Reading of Ganelon

Motivated principally by the pursuit of autonomy and profit, Ganelon stands opposite Roland, who embodies the virtues of service to one's lord and one's faith. The poem's essential themes are based on this contrast between glorification of chivalric virtue and demonization of profit and commodity exchange. Indeed, the pagan King Marsile of Saragossa is shown in the earliest stages debating whether to follow Charlemagne back to France, where he will bestow gifts, surrender himself, and embrace the Christian faith. In laisse 8, Charlemagne is described as pleased with his profitable campaign through Moorish Spain, as it has netted booty—in the form of "D'or e d'argent e de guarnemenz chers,"[113] or "silver, gold, and costly arms" (263)— for his loyal knights.

Within the first dozen laisses, the poem acknowledges not only the economic intersections between crusading and profiteering, but also the value clash between Roland and Ganelon. As the Franks debate the terms of Marsile's offer, Roland is quick to voice the Saragossan king's history of duplicity and is immediately suspicious of so grandiose an offer. When Ganelon hotly rebukes his overly cautious stepson, who might possibly be overlooking how the benefits to the pagan king's generosity might extend to Charlemagne's warriors, his own profiting impulses are revealed: in his advocacy of Marsile his language is telling: "Arrogant advice should not prosper" or "Cunseill d'orguill n'est dreiz que a plu munt" (228). Nominating himself for this most

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[113] *Roland* text transcribed from: *Chanson de Roland.* Bibliotheca Augustana.
<http: / /www.fhaugsburg.de /~harsch /gallica /Chronologie /11siecle /Roland /rol_ch05.html.>

dangerous duty, Roland is told that, as a member of his emperor's "duze per

mar," or "twelve peers" (263), Roland is too valuable to serve as emissary to the pagan

king; he nominates Ganelon to serve in his place. Why Ganelon? Because of his earlier

advocacy of Marsile, perhaps Roland believes that his stepfather is best suited—and on

better terms with the Saragossan. Nevertheless, the poem's essential tensions have

begun to emerge.

Having been selected as emissary because of his advocacy—but against his

wishes—Ganelon is also presented with his earliest and best opportunity for profit, and

he soon recognizes how to make these circumstances work to his favor. Smarting from

the rejection of his plan to accept the terms of Marsile's surrender (and the cartloads of

booty that come with it), Ganelon stands in opposition to the chivalric ethos embodied

in Roland. Moreover, in his advocacy of Marsile's offer of surrender, Ganelon clearly

realizes that the defeated king has little power to negotiate but also sees the profits to be

gained at the expense of his defeated foe. Clearly, these opportunistic impulses mitigate

the anger he feels in response to his nomination as emissary (laisse 20), where he seems

to recognize that goods earned easily through an enemy's surrender are harder won in

battle. In arguing to accept Marsile's offer of surrender, he clearly shows himself to be

aware of the quick profits to be gained by the Frankish armies, some of which are

destined to come his way. After his advocating a position of trust toward the Saracens,

Ganelon then puts on a public expression of lament about his forthcoming journey.

Roland has related how Marsile had previously beheaded earlier emissaries (laisse 14),

and Ganelon declares that he likewise might not return to see his wife and son (laisse

23). Like any venturer facing uncertain prospects, Ganelon's willingness to weigh risks against profits stands out as the central feature of his character.

In preparation for his journey into Saragossa, Ganelon dons his armor, which is described in particularly ornate terms (laisse 23). His golden spurs command particular attention, as does his sword (345-46). Having named his weapon Murgleis, he will later give it to seal his conspiracy with Marsile (laisse 48) as the pair plots their betrayal of Roland and Charlemagne. At this stage, however, the description serves to distinguish Ganelon as a man of distinction with an appreciation for the value of the currencies of knighthood. While the poet provides more ornate and purposeful descriptions of majestic arms and weapons in the poem's later stages, it is important to note how this moment in the narrative offers the first instance in a recurring pattern of highlighting arms and armor. In the uncertain and possibly melodramatic moments before Ganelon's departure, he laments the perils associated with his meeting with the enemy and delivering news that their offer of surrender has been rejected. At this point, however, it is hard not to believe that Ganelon also recognizes the position of power he occupies and the potential for profit that might be realized as he brokers for peace. After his successful service in Charlemagne's army, Ganelon is both experienced in battle and in the ways of the Saracens. He recognizes that the defeated Marsile has offered a king's ransom in order to buy his life (laisse 3) but possesses little bargaining power, so the rejection of such easily won booty must gnaw at the knight who, ahead of his time, is focused on profit.

Thus Ganelon's subsequent meeting with Blancandrin, Marsile's emissary, is fraught with implications not specifically economic in nature but rooted in the exchange

of the currencies of medieval warfare. In this encounter of two exchange-minded individuals, Ganelon has already indicated his belief that Marsile is ready to negotiate and that there are profits to be gained. And readers too realize this, having seen Marsile's offer of gold, silver, horses, animals, and other fine curiosities (laisse 3), which would require "50 carts" to carry back to France and which would enable Charlemagne "to pay his mercenaries well" (34). Both Blancandrin and Marsile show themselves to be willing deal makers. In conjunction with the two Saracens, Ganelon encounters an exchange-based ethos that runs contradictory to the ethic of service that he has left behind in Charlemagne's court but that is truer to his own nature as one who has known economic hardship and a secondary stature in a system of equals. In Ganelon's example, it is important to remember that what the poet portrays (justifiably) as disloyal treachery can also be seen as opportunistic profiteering, which the poet and his original audience would have no choice but to condemn.

Historically, critics have been justifiably unkind to Ganelon, whose treasonous behavior has invited scorn. Like the poet, scholars of this medieval French epic are unwilling to consider Ganelon after the fashion and in the spirit of Milton's Satan, as the rebelliously courageous force who fights an unwinnable battle against the world. In this way, any close look at the economic clues to Ganelon's treason have, to this point, gone unexamined.[114]

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[114] Again, the opinions of scholar Robert Cook provide a useful perspective on Roland's demonized stepfather. In a military sense, Ganelon IS guilty of treason and is deserving of critical and moral scorn for "using the enemy's desire to be rid of Charles as the lever of his promised vengeance" (27). But Ganelon's position, rooted in his conflict with Roland, is not further explained by the poet, other than the aforementioned detail about the debt owed by by the stepfather–a detail which emerges in his trial toward the poem's conclusion (line 3758). And in his willingness to privilege profit and self-ambition over the more knightly (and military) values of loyalty and service, Ganelon is going against the mandates of the chivalric ethos. As Cook describes, "Ganelon alone goes to the length of denying the rules of his society and risking great harm to Christendom, his own civilization, for the sake of a grudge" (29).

But Ganelon's willingness to deny the rules of his world reveals the essence of his character. Ganelon's "treason" lies particularly in the severity of his departure from the ethos of his world, a departure so severe because the idea of "doing business"--with one's cohorts as well as with the enemy--is a concept still alien to the chivalric ethos. In twelfth-century France, moreover, it was an idea that was only beginning to vie with the ideals of service and thus presenting a significant threat to the institution of knighthood. The idea of knighthood as a profit-making venture would emerge more powerfully in the coming decades and centuries, as mercenary brigades would become increasingly common. But in the pro-crusading ideology of *Roland*, venture, exchange, and profit must necessarily assume a demonic stature, which is what makes Ganelon a problematic figure. Motivated by an ethos of exchange, he lives amidst an ethos of service, and Cook's condemnatory arguments provide a useful articulation of the character's poor match with the circumstances he occupies (38-9). To continue with that most medieval of metaphors, it is alternatively possible to argue that Ganelon is the profiteering weak link in the chivalric chain and that the pro-chivalric poet had no choice but to demonize his profiteering impulses.[115]

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[115] Further, as the poem's "ordering force," Charlemagne nevertheless fails to provide Ganelon a clear mandate to bring to his meeting with Marsile. In the conference where Charlemagne and his retainers debate Marsile's offer, Ganelon expresses one opinion and hears others which both support and contradict his own views (laisses 14-16). Departing as emissary, Ganelon is left with no clear consensus on whether to take the Saracen's offer (the formidable Naimes likewise suggests that it is a good idea to do so). With the rare opportunity to exert himself in his King's service but also according to his personal initiative yet still smarting from Roland's harsh (and rather tactless) rebukes, Ganelon acts in conjunction with the Saracen emissary Blancandrin, who sensibly observes that while Roland is generous in bestowing the spoils of war upon his own retinue, he is also unmerciful to enemies, overly ambitious, and "a dangerous man who wants to make everyone surrender / And who lays claim to every land" (393-94). From his vantage as enemy, Blancandrin clearly sees Roland's megalomaniacal qualities and is in accord with Ganelon who, though perhaps jealous of his greater stature and prospects, also sees his stepson as a loose cannon who needs reining in. With this common ground established, Ganelon's opportunity to deal with the Saracens presents itself. On this platform he is drawn into the plot to control his stepson's overzealous service to Charlemagne (406).

Also, the lack of a clear mandate from above enhances Ganelon's own bargaining power. He realizes that, with Blancandrin and Marsile, he has a common enemy with Roland, who not only has shown his disdain for both parties, but also seeks to perpetuate a war that has already stretched over seven years (laisse 31). And as the

It is important to note that, throughout his exchange with the Saracens, Ganelon continually reiterates his devotion to Charlemagne, showing a willingness to serve his emperor in the most hostile of circumstances. As the Saracens begin to deal and bargain with him, Ganelon's instincts for profit are aroused to the point where he helps to orchestrate the conspiracy against his stepson (laisse 43-44). Ultimately, Ganelon realizes that Roland's death would weaken Charlemagne's position in Spain but would improve the prospects for a French retreat (laisse 40). In a military sense, Ganelon *does* commit an act of treason in order to make himself a profit. But in a moral sense, he helps to orchestrate a plot to bring peace between the Saracens and Franks, negotiating for a French retreat by eliminating his army's most battle-hungry personality. In this complex web of deals, Ganelon's actions stand at odds with a crusading and chivalric ethos; but in a moral, humanistic, and economic sense, which is a foreign, pre-Machiavellian strategy both to the poet and to the pro-crusading ideologues he writes for, Ganelon actually advocates a peaceful, profitable, and less violent resolution to the seven-year conflict between the Franks and the Saracens.

In sum, there are two essential ways to regard Ganelon's treason: first, it represents an encroachment of the bourgeois ethos into a chivalric hegemony, such that it is necessarily demonized. Ganelon conspires not against Charlemagne, but against Roland, who has already shown himself to be his stepfather's sworn enemy. Shown with limited social capital in the court of Charlemagne, he is able to enhance his

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pagan and Christian emissaries reach the Saracen king, Ganelon makes overtures that, at least outwardly, lie within accordance with Charlemagne's and Roland's wishes (laisse 33). Despite Marsile's angry outburst at hearing the terms of Ganelon's offer, the knight coolly stands his ground and reiterates Charlemagne's terms. He then provides a means for all three to align themselves less against Charlemagne and more against Roland himself, as the hot-headed knight is already a sworn enemy of the Saracens. As broker of the peace, Ganelon avails himself to immediate profits in the exchange, acquiring a gift of "sable furs / worth more than five hundred pounds in gold" (515-16).

position and stature by dealing with the Saracens and by profiting from those dealings. Even as he plots against Roland, Ganelon refuses to sell out Charlemagne's army and works to assure their peaceful and profitable return to France (laisse 43). Secondly, Ganelon also establishes how a Saracen attack on Charlemagne's rear guard would ultimately improve prospects for a return to peace after a prolonged battle with the crusading Franks (laisse 45), for in destroying Roland they are ridding themselves of their most violent nemesis. An overjoyed Marsile rewards Ganelon handsomely for his plan (laisse 46), which is less a treasonous plot and more a strategic plea—in essence, Ganelon "sells" the prospect (and opportunity) for peace to the Franks, offers his sword Murgleis as a symbolic token of his sincerity (laisse 46), creates the opportunity to rid himself of his sworn enemy, and enriches himself and his army greatly in the process. In a world which regarded both human life and wealth in greatly differing terms, the morality of Ganelon's actions is glaringly heinous, as it is to the poet and to those within scholarly traditions already well established. However, from a modern vantage, his actions are circumspect except in his willingness to "do business" with the Saracen infidels and in his willingness to sacrifice Roland for the greater good of both sides.

While Marsile and the narrator himself both describe Ganelon's actions as "traison," or as a betrayal of one's moral duties, the term fails to acknowledge the humanistic benefits of Ganelon's plan, nor does it do justice to his recognizing and exploiting the occasion to bring peace to the Saracens. And for his role in assuring Roland's position in the rear guard of Charlemagne's army, Ganelon realizes a healthy profit in the form of various gifts: swords, armor, jewels, gold, silver, hostages, and a substantial annual gift of gold coins. Ultimately, in his conspiring, Ganelon's business

skills are clearly on display, and his instinct for profiteering is shown at Roland's expense.

Chivalric Idealism: A Reading of Roland

And as Ganelon's foil, Roland affirms his stature as the embodiment of chivalric (and Christian) virtue, which necessarily runs contrary to the newer bourgeois ethos of profit. However, in his heroic defense against the ambushing Saracens, Roland also can be said to act in a manner that affirms Ganelon's suspicions toward him. At this early point in the story, Roland has already shown himself to be impulsive, ambitious, vicious in battle, and uncharitable toward his enemies. And his actions as leader of the rearguard represent one of the poem's most problematic elements. From one vantage, Roland's character and actions depict steadfastness, resoluteness, and a willingness to accept fate—virtues which the poem clearly highlights in its pro-crusading and pro-chivalric message. While Ganelon lines his pockets, conspires against his stepson, and makes his king and cohorts richer in the process, Roland's fierce devotion to rigid ideals of service and chivalric duty lead to his botching his duties as protector. This, in turn, leads to the deaths of knights in his retinue and places the armies of Charlemagne at even greater risk. While the poem casts Roland's demise as the consequence of Ganelon's treasonous rejection of the warrior ethos, the poet simultaneously calls into question the substance and purpose of that same ethos.

In his service in Charlemagne's rear guard, however, Roland makes several decisions which affirm Ganelon's assessment of him. Upon accepting his charge as leader at Ganelon's nomination, Roland makes his first mistake by refusing any military help from Charlemagne beyond the 20,000 troops that he himself commands. Placing

the sentiment of honor above duty, Roland refuses to fortify his forces; in this

way he fails to offer additional protections for his men (laisse 65), but more importantly

he brings greater risk to Charlemagne's withdrawal from Spain. In a strategic context,

he might be confident in the ability and service of those he commands, but in this belief

he overlooks an even more fundamental military axiom: strength in numbers. Moreover,

adding to the number of soldiers in his command might prove useful in the

topographically tricky terrain of the mountain pass at Ronceval (described in laisse 66).

In valuing duty over strategy, Roland makes his first mistake. In so doing, he highlights

the incompatibility of his chivalric ethos with what his army really needs: a more

realistic military strategy. Even with Ganelon's plots against him, it is Roland's own

short-sightedness as a military strategist which ultimately works against him.[116]

Troubled by the aforementioned premonitions, Charlemagne initially objects to

the nomination of Roland as leader of the rear guard and expresses his reservations

about Ganelon. While the loyal, eager-to-serve Roland willingly accepts the

responsibility offered to him, he also takes yet another opportunity to disparage his

stepfather to his emperor. He does this by recounting a seemingly minor event, but one

that is fraught with great symbolic significance: the passing of the staff, which signified

Ganelon's acceptance of duties as emissary. At a moment that is seemingly

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[116] Yet Roland would, at least initially, seem prepared to handle the duties before him. He begins by appointing a subordinate, Gautier del Hum, to watch the passes' higher reaches. While Roland plans, Charlemagne acknowledges his premonition of Ganelon's treachery. In fact, however, it can also be argued that Ganelon has acted not in a treasonous fashion but rather in his army's best interests. Not only has he brokered for peace (and ended a seven-year conflict), but he has also enriched his king, his cohorts, and himself in the process. And given Roland's reputation, Ganelon has also nominated the most qualified, capable, independent, fearsome, and loyal knight to supervise the rear guard. Even had he not arranged for Roland's service in this position, the position itself would need to be filled—someone would have to serve in it, even as angry Saracens plotted against the retreating Franks. And Ganelon has assured a safe return for the vast majority of his army, even as the poet portrays his negotiations with Marsile as treasonous. Moreover, in describing Charlemagne's premonitions, the poet further demonizes the enterprising Ganelon in spite of the fact that Roland's actions affirm his stepfather's worst suspicions and fears.

inappropriate to call attention to such details, Roland is quick to point out that,

unlike his clumsy and duplicitous stepfather, he has not dropped the bow passed to him

by his emperor. Even in accepting willingly the duties before him, Roland still takes the

occasion to criticize his stepfather (laisses 60-61). Moreover, he refers to Ganelon as a

"base and low-born man" or a "malvais hom de put aire" (laisse 50, line 763),

underscoring the idea that his stepfather is inclined to advance socially through dealings

that are treasonous to a chivalric ethos. Finally, Charlemagne has the power to reassign

the rear guard duties and clearly wishes to, fearful of losing so valued a warrior as

Roland; but he fails to exercise this power. In sensing Roland's betrayal by Ganelon,

Charlemagne has the means to act on it. So as Roland prepares for his rearguard duties,

he refuses his emperor's offer to increase fivefold the number of knights available to

him, thus marking the beginning of one of the poems's most problematic features.[117]

As Charlemagne anguishes, the Saracens likewise amass their troops and ready

themselves for their attack on him. Lassiez 69-79 describe the pagans' preparations in a

purposeful manner, devoting great emphasis to the ornateness of their arms and armor

and the formidability of their warriors. All are eager for a crack at Roland, who has

shown himself to be their fiercest nemesis. The significance of the narrator's

description of their arms will be considered more fully below as a reflection of

encroaching bourgeois values on chivalric ideals; however, it is also important to note

that these stanzas serve here to display this encroachment. Their ornate and fanciful

arms reflect the currencies of battle that align the Saracen warriors with the bourgeois

[117] And critics are prone to defend Roland's decisions as leader, overlooking arguments which undermine the hero's stature as the representative embodiment of pro-crusading ideology and chivalric virtue. Having promised to fulfill his duties, Roland admirably fulfills the ideals of service that he has accepted as his responsibility (see Cook 45-48).

values of Ganelon, who has, like them, been swayed by the allure of wealth. The focus then turns back to Roland, who shows a radically conservative ethos when he refuses to fortify his troops in response to Charlemagne's offer. However, in so doing, he has already placed his army at a strategic disadvantage.

The biggest of Roland's lapses comes in laisse 83 after Olivier has returned in a previous stanza to report that the Saracen armies outnumber Roland's twenty-thousand troops fivefold. Olivier implores Roland to blow his horn and signal that he needs the aid of Charlemagne's army. But having already refused his emperor's offer and being bound by an overwhelming sense of duty that prohibits him from acknowledging his need for help, Roland refuses. And it is the tone and substance of this refusal that might give a reader pause, suggesting that, in his zealous devotion to the ideal of service, Roland is deluded about the realities around him. Instead of offering a strategic rationale for not strengthening his army (after all, in a tight space a few well-placed, disciplined, loyal, and well-coordinated units *might* be able to defend themselves against a much larger army), he instead offers a revealing statement: "Throughout the fair land of France I should lose my good name" ("En duce France en perdreie mun los") (1055). While one's reputation in a chivalric hegemony is of vital importance, Roland's response might strike a modern reader expressing the egocentric narcissism of a deluded martyr. His subsequent proclamation, "Straightaway I shall strike great blows with Durendal; Right up to its golden hilt the blade will run with blood" ("Sempres ferrai de Durendal granz colps; Sanglant en ert li branz entresqu'a l'or") (1056), does little to acknowledge the gravity of his contingent's circumstances. In a semi-literate world governed by oaths and other expressions of loyalty, such

proclamations are admirable; but it is likewise hard for a modern reader to see Roland's narcissistic bravado as an expressiono of chivalric virtue.

Roland's overdeveloped notions of service and duty might be familiar and appealing to the world of the poem's original audience. This group seemingly longed for a return to a more traditional chivalric ideology and likely bristled at the self-directed mindset brought about by the incursion of a commerce-oriented ethos. Likewise, Roland's notion of service is also somewhat foreign to a modern sensibility, whose ideas of loyalty and service have become all the more shaped by humanist influences. For example, on the brink of battle, Roland is so enamored with the idea of spilling pagan blood that in three consecutive lassiez (83-85), he brings forth the image of his sword Durendal covered in Saracen blood to its very golden, gem-studded hilt. Even as Olivier, his chief lieutenant and most reliable strategist, implores him to summon aid from Charlemagne, Roland becomes all the more eager to engage the Saracens with his outnumbered contingent (laisse 86). And his rationale embodies the most ideal vision of chivalric (and Christian) service: loyalty to one's lord even in the face of death (1089-93).

Obligingly, Olivier acquiesces to Roland's bravado despite his better judgement (laisse 88), as Roland once again alludes to his sword (1120-23). As before, Roland embodies the chivalric ideal in abandoning any self-centered conceits, including common sense. Instead, as he vows to strike with Durendal, he expresses the hope that his reputation as a "noble vassal" will endure in death should his trusted sword fall into the hands of others. In the laisse that follows, the Archbishop Turpin, a mounted cleric who is presented as one of Charlemagne's most trusted counselors, offers the troops a

blessing. Turpin promises that Roland's men, should they meet their ends in combat, will die gloriously as "blessed martyrs," who "will take their place in paradise on high" (laisse 89, 1134-35). Fortified with such a vision, Roland's men are reminded by their leader yet again of Ganelon's treason. Having fixed visions of both martyrdom and betrayal in their minds, Roland leads his men into the treacherous mountain pass, and all head into battle facing probable death, mindful of their betrayal by their profit-minded cohort.

Nevertheless, despite how the poet (perhaps unintentionally) demonstrates that Roland's apparent blunders and errors are clearly avoidable, many a critic has justified them as reflections of a chivalric mindset.[118] Roland's warrior ethos results in the epic hero's exaggerated idea of service which must necessarily stand in contrast to Ganelon's eroding chivalric ethos, as well as his proto-commercial sensibilities. Moreover, because it is unsuited to either example (battlefield service or Christian charity), the proto-commercial ethos of Roland's stepfather must also be cast as treason, just as it must lead to the demise of Roland himself. As his comments to Olivier on the brink of battle reveal, Roland is fatally invested with the conceits of service and duty; as such, he lacks the necessary balance of self-focus and responsibility to his subordinates that any good leader—in a commercial as well as a military environment—must have in

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[118] Cook offers a useful explanation of Roland's actions, explaining that "the pagan attack is not a surprise, and because as part of the preparations for it Roland has made promises of resistance in the presence of people who are aware that those promises may be tested....Any feudal warrior who knows his business might make such promises in the line of duty, whatever his character" (54). Just as it is easy to note Roland's over exaggerated sense of duty in light of the promise he has made to Charlemagne, it is also a critical temptation to defend Roland not only for his choice to go it alone, but rather because he has, Cook argues, "already committed himself to fight if attacked, and if he calls for help instead he will be breaking his word....Still, the rules are there: one suffers for one's lord; Charles cannot both move his army and defend himself. The rear guard is only too obviously needed. The question is whether the rules will finally work if they are followed despite such failures" (65). The rather gymnastic defenses of Roland's battlefield errors, like those offered by Cook, must overcome the problem of conflating two essentially contradictory impulses—service to one's lord in battle and extending Christian charity.

order to assure the survival of the enterprise he has committed to. Roland's

willingness to die in the service of Charlemagne is admirable, but his insistence on

achieving glory while dying the *right* way–that is, in dying foolishly–betrays his service

both toward his king as well as toward those under his command. [119]

In his role as Roland's lieutenant, Olivier unintentionally serves as the

conscience of Roland's contingent and represents in himself the humanist sentiments

that are more fully revealed in Ganelon's character. At this point, the *Roland* poet

chooses to highlight his protagonist's heroic stature (laisse 91), alluding to Roland's

impressive horse, spear, arms, and confidence, such that "the arms he bears become him

well" (1154), even as he once again refuses Olivier's imploring him to sound the

oliphant to summon aid from Charlemagne's army (laisse 92). Meanwhile, his pagan

enemies, no less resplendent themselves in their full armor and bearing, also amass for

battle. Like Roland, each Saracen warrior boasts of the damage he'll do to the enemy

according to medieval battlefield tradition (Cook 59). And in the combat exchanges

that follow, each pagan warrior is promptly met with a death blow from the Durendal-

wielding Roland. The first such victim is Marsile's nephew Aelroth, who had in the

previous laisse boasted that "Today the fair land of France will lose its fame / And

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[119]Again, Cook presents a rather extended defense of Roland's actions, arguing that he could take the "expedient" course in blowing the horn and summoning aid, but to do so is in fact "a response to immediate circumstances with no reference to what may be lost in the long run" (66). "And yet," continues Cook, "the entire structure of the given word now depends on Roland's constancy, and that structure is basic to the feudal bond...All circumstances are irrelevant to the test except one: whether Roland's promise, as qualified, is fulfilled. Once it has been, then the future is as safe as one knight can make it. To act on that basis is Roland's greatness, and what sets him apart from Olivier (67). According to such reasoning, the sounding of the horn would be "shameful," for "every profession, every functioning caste, has standards of performance, and in the case of the soldier, feudal or not, they are often especially stringent. In short, I suggest that when Roland uses a word like 'reputation' or 'shame,' he is referring to concepts that are already defined, things that the community has full knowledge of and a legitimate right to judge. Olivier never counters his claims with any ethical argument. He does not say that proper knightly behavior is generally known to be something besides what Roland thinks. The hero's comrade is concerned with numbers and survival" (69). While such arguments continue to ignore the humanist dimensions of the chivalric ethos, they do explain why the battle moves forward: because Roland's strategically questionable decisions force it.

Charlemagne the right hand from his body" (1194-95). Then, on cue and in

gruesome detail, the poet describes the forcefulness of Roland's blow and the damage

he inflicts to the hapless pagan. The epic battle is on, and the poet now devotes his full

attention to its intensity.

Arms and Weaponry in Roland*: Reflections of a Growing Presence of Bourgeois*
Values in 11ᵗʰ⁻ and Early 12ᵗʰ⁻ Century Chivalric Epic.

What follows next is a series of laisses that highlight the ferocity of the Franks

in battle by showing the destruction of arms and armor in graphic detail; in so doing,

these passages also call attention to the encroachment of bourgeois values upon the

chivalric class. To this point, several generalizations about armor, battle, and weapons

are possible. Swords have names, indicating the power of relationship between warrior

and weapon as valued by narrator and audience. Of this general characteristic of

medieval warfare within the chivalric classes, Nicolson focuses on the sword in

particular, observing not only that "swords were very valuable, to be passed down from

one generation to the next," but also that the more notable ones of the twelfth and

thirteenth centuries shared a common mythic attribution to "Galaan the smith, the

divine Wayland of Norse epic" (104).

These works of artisanship would probably be impractical to wield in battle but

are meant to reflect on the bearing and status of the warrior. Indeed, the *Song of Roland*

dramatically underscores the heavy social capital applied to the weapons it depicts:

these are composed of the finest metal work, and swords are gem-studded and

frequently implied to descend from mythic origins.[120] Perhaps the most telling

feature of this epic is the poet's vivid, often overly detailed and occasionally irrelevant

description of the grandiose and ornate weapons that these medieval super heroes

carried into battle, a feature that serves to reinforce the warriors' value, courage, and

heroism.[121]

Laisses 93-108 serve particularly to associate weapons with a noble reputation

and proceed according to the following pattern: a Franksih warrior confronts a Saracen

enemy with his sword or spear; upon engagement, the force of the Frankish warrior's

blow shatters the Saracen's shield, smashes through his hauberk, and strikes through his

finely polished armor, leading to the particularly gruesome death of the infidel. The

victorious Frank will either then taunt his fallen enemy by reminding him of the

perpetual damnation that awaits him as a pagan, or he will proclaim "Monjoie!" which

is "l'enseigne Carlun" ("the battle-cry of Charles) (1234). But the poem does more than

to call attention to the finely bejeweled pagan arms or to suggest that the finely crafted

gem-studded battle implements used by King Marsile's charges lack substance and are

merely vainglorious ornament. Instead, the poet also highlights the fierce and

determined devotion of the Frankish warriors who are fixated on more eternal value and

so are willing to destroy them. In this way, the violent and horrifying destruction of

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[120] Claiming that "[t]he text leaves no doubt" about their importance, Haidu explains that the poem's ornate depiction of arms and weapons are "brilliant and costly in their exotic manufactures and in their ornamentation," and serve as the "concretization of the warriors' value...", "their heroism as a precipitate'" and "signifiers of the courage and the heroism of knights, ready for battle, ready for death" (77).

[121] Cook describes this feature of the *Song of Roland* as essential to the work's purpose as epic, explaining that "a large number of [the text's later] lines are given over to matters of ornament: descriptions of the pagans' armor and horses, and lists of their horrible deeds (78)....The battle scenes, in grouping (for example) all the Christian successes together, then all the pagan victories, clearly fall under the sway of a coherent narrative impulse and are not merely scorekeeping. Still, they have a specifically epic function of displaying action at length and for present purposes require little detailed analysis" (78-79).

such beautiful armor ultimately serves to underscore the value of concepts like

service and duty while affirming the worth of the weapons themselves. Moreover, these

descriptions of destruction highlight the name, spiritual associations, and gilded and

gem-studded details of a given sword or piece of armor and are relevant to the chivalric

and ultimately nationalist imperatives of the epic by highlighting Frankish resolve,

ferocity, and duty in the face of battle. There is much about the accounts of battle in the

Song of Roland that compares favorably with battle imagery in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*.

One such particularly gruesome description is found in laisse 104. And in the

laisse that follows (105), the poet continues to describe the carnage that Roland wreaks

with Durendal. To this point, the narrator has only described Frankish victories, yet in

laisses 109-110 he sounds a note of foreboding that suggests that the battle is going in

favor of the Saracens. The warning is sounded in laisse 111, as a mightly storm sweeps

across France (1423-33). And when the first Frankish warrior, one Engeler of Gascony,

is finally slain (117), a furious Olivier goes on a rampage through the Saracen ranks,

killing ten enemies in quick succession (118). Throughout these laisses (117-26), the

poet describes in graphic detail how no Frankish death goes unavenged. Nevertheless,

their greater numbers enable the Saracens to gain advantage, and the poem alternates in

describing the deaths of Charlemagne's warriors and the vanquishing of infidels. In all,

the outnumbered Franks, with God on their side and assurances of a blessed afterlife,

kill four thousand pagan warriors (127), but suffer their own heavy losses in the

process. In this way, these laisses confirm the poem's previously sounded notes of

foreboding.

And after the heavy losses that this engagement with the pagans has wrought upon his outnumbered forces, Roland decides finally and too late to summon Charlemagne's forces. Called out by Olivier by this change of mind and heart, Roland sees for the first time how his miscalculations, and perhaps his hubris, led to the deaths of the men under his command (laisse 128). Despite Olivier's protestation that to do so at this late juncture would be even more shameful, Roland replies that the act of blowing the horn will be performed with a degree of nobility not possible earlier for, as the battle has raged, "I have struck most noble blows!" ("Colps i ai fait mult genz!") (1712). Again, Roland calls attention to his deeds in battle before the noble resistance shown by the vanquished knights under his command. Meanwhile, an angry Olivier presses his case, decrying the ignomy that they would be held in by calling for aid too late (131). Only the intervention of the Archbishop Turin prevents their dispute from escalating, and yet the archbishop mitigates their tensions oddly, reminding the pair that their arms bear the blood and marks of glorious battle, and when discovered in death by Charlemagne's army, they will be judged to have died gloriously. With this tenuous note of peace achieved, Roland sounds the horn, summoning aid. And the force of his blast causes a rupture in one of the blood vessels of his temple, a wound that will soon claim him. Hearing the summons, Charlemagne worries aloud that Roland needs his aid, while Ganelon, his treasonous plot imploding, tries to reassure his king by reminding him of Roland's habitual hot-tempered impulsiveness. But with another blast, the king is duly convinced of his rear guard's distress; sensing Ganelon's betrayal, Charlemagne has him seized and kept captive.

Finally, in laisse 140, a dying Roland realizes that his end is near. He mourns those who have lost their lives under his command (1852-53) and, sounding the faintest note of regret, wishes for their eternal peace in the celestial sphere beyond (1855-56). In a state of delirium with his own death fast approaching, Roland heads into battle once more, wielding Durendal with great mastery. He promptly slices in two an unfortunate pagan, one Faldrun of Pui, and then quickly sets about disposing of twenty-four others. When the pagan king Marsile subsequently arrives in battle (laisse 142), he promptly replies in kind, killing a foursome of Franks before engaging with Roland himself in the ultimate battle scene of this first phase of the poem.

And despite their greater skill and fierceness in battle, the Franks soon recognize their disadvantage as their numbers diminish. And when the formidable pagan warrior Marganice deals Olivier a mortal death blow with a spear-thrust that pierces his armor (145), the Franks' defeat seems inevitable. Olivier's frenzied attacks in the waning moments of his life (147-50) end with a deluded strike at Roland, whom he has confused with his enemies. Roland graciously pardons his dying friend and lieutenant, and the two part as companions and comrades, rather than as they were moments earlier, as warriors divided by strategic disagreements. And in watching his lieutenant die, Roland is likewise overcome by the fates of battle when the broken blood vessel in his temple, hemorrhaging his life away, causes him to lose consciousness.

At long last, the Franks are eventually down to their final three warriors, including a dying Roland, a spent Gautier del Hum, and a fading Archbishop Turpin of Reims. Once more Roland sounds his oliphant, but it sounds weakly as he suffers from the blood bursting forth from his temples. As he nears his end, sixty thousand from his

own army rush to his aid, sounding their own bugles to mark their arrival and to assure their fading cohort of their approach. Hearing Charlemagne's armies approaching, the Saracens capitalize on the last few moments of their advantage while Roland teams with the fading Turpin. The duo pledges to fight to their deaths, and the battle continues as they maintain a brave effort to withstand a pagan flurry of arrows and spears. One blow strikes Roland's horse Veillantif dead, and he is left with no way to pursue his enemies. Even so, they flee him because, having seen his furious final few minutes of battle, they are convinced of his supernatural ability to resist death (laisse 158). Recognizing the chance this moment affords them, they retreat, thankful to have survived this encounter with their most powerful nemesis.

The pressure on him now abated, Roland then sets out across the battlefield to gather his fallen charges (laisses 162-64), wishing that the dying Archbishop will give them a final blessing. In profound and overdue mourning, Roland senses that his own demise is immediate. In his delirium he slays one final pagan warrior, an ignoble fellow who has feigned his death on the battlefield in order to assure his prospects for escape. As this fellow tries to take Roland's oliphant and sword in order to claim him as a victim, Roland kills him. The Frankish hero then begins the protracted process of dying, a prolonged affair appropriate to his epic stature, which is drawn out by the poet over a full six laisses (171-76).

Throughout the battle scenes, the poet's habit of highlighting the markers of the chivalric class—by calling attention to weapons, arms, and armor—indirectly affirms the presence and importance of the artisan class, and the proto-capitalistic bourgeois elements within it that created these symbols of wealth and stature. The artisan class

contains the creators of the symbols of value within the chivalric class; in short,

one class cannot exist without the other, and this is one of the messages indirectly

conveyed in the poem's battle scenes where the gratuitous and violent destruction of

arms and weapons is highlighted. The best example of this aspect of the poem is found

in Roland's final few moments of life after he has killed the pagan warrior who has tried

to make off with his sword Durendal. Despite the narrator's clear bias toward

Charlemagne and his Christian legions, his admiration toward pagans is expressed in his

descriptions of pagan warriors ready for battle. Such admiration is conveyed in the

apocalyptic scenes of battle that follow Roland's death when Charlemagne and his

forces converge on the Saracen destroyers of the rear guard and wreak their vengeance

on them. In laisse 231, for instance, the description of the armor and bearing of pagan

Emir Baligant highlights his impressiveness. In this passage in which the Christian

Charlemagne and the Moslem Baligant prepare to engage in apocalyptic battle, the

narrator's hostile tone toward the pagans becomes uncharacteristically conciliatory (See

Cook 107).

Significantly, the weapons themselves are the markers which establish the

credentials of nobility. And it is the labor of the blacksmith that is indirectly valorized

in Roland's willingness, but more importantly in his inability, to destroy Durendal

against the hard sardonyx.[122] And this weapon's storied qualities are fully revealed in

laisse 173, where one finds catalogued the holy relics that are embedded in its hilt.

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[122] The symbolic destroying of Durendal is significant, for it highlights the power of the association between the noble warrior and his weapon (2304-09). With this proclamation, Roland begins to strike his ornate and finely crafted weapon against a nearby rock of hard sardonyx (laisse 172), a compelling gesture that highlights his life's finality.

While lamenting the necessity of destroying his weapon, Roland bewails the destruction of its finest features (2344-51). With Roland's death, the epic proportions of the battle intensify. Roland's death takes place on the eve of the ultimate battle between the pagans and the Christians, and after Charlemagne's forces arrive to find his rearguard slaughtered and the retreating enemy fading into the distance, they begin to mass their troops. In laisse 183 the poet reveals that Charlemagne's sword contains a relic of the lance that injured Christ on procession to Golgotha. Despite this spiritual fortification, the emperor remains troubled. In laisses 184-86, on the eve of the story's climactic battle, he sleeps restlessly and has visions that portend the demise of his empire.

The battle that follows Roland's death is cast as the "battle to end all battles" which stands as one of the distinctive hallmarks of epic literature. After bewailing Roland's death in laisses 206-10 (in a manner that strikes a modern reader as excessively histrionic), Charlemagne and his assembled army give all those Franks who have perished at Ronceval as proper a Christian burial as is possible in the pagan lands they occupy. Roland in particular is given a fitting burial (laisse 214), and with this grim duty completed, Charlemagne prepares to resume his departure to France. Two messengers halt his plans with news of Baligant's having arrived at Ronceval to avenge Marsile's losses. The preparations for this ultimate battle are soon underway.

What follows in laisses 217-27 is a full, vivid description of massed soldiers preparing for a decisive battle that will alter history. Charlemagne leads the Franks in donning his armor, and his charges follow suit. At this point it is important to note how the motif of the arming scene, one of the most vivid hallmarks of battle descriptions in

classical epic, endures in the *Chanson de Roland* (laisse 218). And in laisse 220-27, the various divisions of Charlemagne's army are described, ten in total. These include Frenchmen, Bavarians, Germans, Normans, Bretons, Poitevins, Flemings, Frisians, Lorranians, and Burgundians. Each division is distinctive in its accomplishments, leadership, and fitness for battle. In all, this collection of divisions boasts a total of over 300,000 soldiers and presents an impressive front to the massing armies of the Emir Baligant. Their virtues as Christian warriors are embodied in Charlemagne himself, who is described in his full battle finery in laisse 229 (lines 3110-20).

Like Charlemagne, Baligant is described as a warrior of impressive bearing (lines 3155-64), dressed in golden armor and bearing the finest weapons and shields. Just as the divisions of Charlemagne's army are described, so are the various elements that constitute Baligant's assembled forces (laisses 237-40). However, while the accomplishments of the Christian armies under Charlemagne's command are highlighted in the poet's description, the most dominant characteristics of the pagans are their beast-like ugliness and infidel worship of false gods. They neither love nor serve the true God, and this lapse assures their beast-like stature in the eyes of the poet. The moral dimensions of this epic battle are established by laisse 246 when it (finally) begins.

The battle between the armies of Charlemagne and Baligant is no less violent than that between Roland and Marsile although the outcome is more definitively and decisively rendered. It is evident that even though the poet describes this second round of battle scenes with comparable energy and detail, he seems more preoccupied in this

phase with the descriptions of the warriors. And as scholar Haidu observes, these descriptions serves as an important unifying function, establishing the identity of the warrior class as not just soldiers in battle but also as defenders of faith. Both are conjoined in "the values of knighthood" and "the class identity of warrior knights…on either side of the religious divide" (46).

In fact, given its intense focus on the distinctions between pagan and Christian warriors, the poem invokes an even more fundamental feature of epic literature, one evident in both pre-and proto-Christian works. Haidu notes a "primitive and animistic trait" in the poet's habit of bestowing the "status of a personage for the instruments of war," a practice "indicative of a more fundamental level of significance" (47) to the epic than its distinguishing between the pagan and Christian cultures. Indeed, in his personification (and indeed, fetishization) of the warriors' arms and bearing, the poet not only reveals his appreciation of the ancient habit of personifying the implements of battle; he also shows the more modern awareness of their value as commodity of the sort that would betray an economic function in clashing with infidels, that is, in crusading itself.

As before, the battle between Charlemagne's and Baligant's forces is fierce and bloody. Even as the poet's description of this second and final battle is no less graphic, it is more condensed. Despite this brevity, the poet notes how both sides engage one another even more fiercely than did the armies of Roland and Marsile (laisse 249), so that "[t] battle is terrible and grevious" ("La bataille est merveilluse e pesant," line 3381). An example of the poet's apparent relish in his descriptions of the battle's violence is evident in laisse 254, where Baligant's brother, the king Canabeus, strikes at

Naimes, Charlemagne's most trusted lieutenant. The pagan pierces the Frankish warrior's helmet and delivers an almost mortal head blow. Only with God's help is Naimes able to survive, when a charging Charlemagne intervenes with a timely blow that penetrates the pagan's gem-studded shield and pierces through to his heart. Having delivered a forceful blow, Canabeus receives a mortal one in return, and his demise follows soon after. And blinded by grief from his brother's death, the Emir himself goes on a killing rampage. The poet captures the intensity of these events in a passage that recall's Roland's earlier engagement with Marsile's forces (3481-88).

Finally, as he senses the fortunes of battle turning against him, an anxious Emir invokes the names of an all-inclusive panoply of non-Christian deities, including the classical Apollo, the pagan Tervagant, and the Islamic Muhammad. (Indeed, throughout the poem the poet is apt to portray all non-Christians with a very wide brush-stroke.) But in return for better fortune, he promises to fashion golden idols in tribute to all of them, but of course the gesture is powerless against the will of the Christian god, and the pledge is insufficient to turn the fortunes of battle back in his direction (laisse 259). Summoning his counselor and prophet Jangleu for consultation, he learns that his fortunes are on the wane (laisse 260). A few stanzas later (laisse 263), the Emir begins to recognize the inevitability of defeat.

As daylight recedes from the battlefield and night begins to fall, the events of the day's battle lead to one final climactic encounter between Baligant and Charlemagne. Refusing the Frankish Emperor's offer to repent and to accept the Christian faith, Baligant then attacks Charlemagne in an exchange of epic swordplay. The emir lands a decisive blow that shatters Charlemagne's helmet and bites into his

skull (laisse 267). But a fearless Charlemagne, certain of the rightness of his cause and of the inevitability of victory and of his place in Heaven, returns the Emir's blow with even greater force (3615-19).

As discussed above, battle and dying scenes are drawn out affairs, combat is ritualistically violent and bloody, and the narrator is particularly long on hyperbole in describing these scenes. Beyond the affirmations of monetary, social, and spiritual value contained in the poem's description of lavish weapons and armor adorning the limbs and bodies of both pagan and Christian warriors, their destruction serves an even more important purpose (see Haidu 47). The violent and horrifying destruction of such beautiful armor ultimately serves to underscore the value of concepts like service and duty while affirming the worth of the weapons themselves.[123]

Ultimately, with Charlemagne's decisive blow delivered, the battle ends. The few remaining pagans flee back to Saragossa, where a waiting King Marsile, upon seeing the Emir's retreating forces, realizes his fate and dies from grief. The Franks, in hot pursuit, storm the walls of the now defenseless city and proceed throughout the night to destroy the many pagan idols that lie within Saragossa's many mosques and synagogues, such that "neither sorcery nor falseness will be left there" ("N'i remeindrat ne sorz ne falserie") (3665). With Saragossa secure, Charlemagne then gathers the deceased King Marsile's queen Braimonde and quickly returns to France. The battle is over, and Christendom has emerged triumphant. But there remains one consideration to

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[123] And as Haidu asserts further, inscribed in these scenes is the class standing of "*chevaliers*," or the "professional guild of elite warriors" (52), and in their destruction of the currency of knighthood one finds the indicators of its social and even commercial value. The scenes themselves, explains the critic, serve to affirm the knight's social standing as "a sign of potential and actualizable violence in the daily cavalcade through peasant spaces" (52). In this way, the carnage depicted by the Roland poet itself represents a class-(and commodity) based signifier for a social category whose standing was ultimately problematic and was justified by its violent tendencies (see Haidu 52).

address briefly in this effort to understand how the *Song of Roland* lies at the

point of intersection between the currents of a diminishing code of chivalric ethos and

the emerging commercial sensibilities that contradict and threaten it. This point, of

course, is found in the ensuing "trial scene," which essentially concludes the poem,

where Ganelon's treason is unveiled before the divided court of the Emperor

Charlemagne.

The so-called "trial scene," which affirms the treasonous dealings of Ganelon,

likewise reveals how the arms and weapons given so much loving description in the

poem are also to be seen as elements of commodity within a larger system of warrior

ethos that is shown as corrupted by the corroding influence of commerce. Indeed, in the

ritual of the trial by combat, the "rightness" of the outcome is not only shown in the

divinely mandated abilities of the combatants; it is also embedded in the weapons

themselves. With the epic battle between the Franks and the infidels concluded, the

poem shifts its focus toward the more troubling issue of Ganelon's guilt. And in the

resolution of this final conflict of the poem, the poet's reservations about the

encroachment of a commercial ethos upon chivalric culture are vividly on display.[124]

Ade, Roland's bride-to-be, quickly asks Charlemagne about her betrothed.

Learning of his death, she falls to her feet as the stammering emperor rather tactlessly

offers one of his sons to replace her vanquished love. She then dies in a paroxysm of

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[124] Cook describes the implications of this trial by combat, arguing that it is "not an arbitrary procedure for those who believe in a justice, divine in origin, that transcends our ability to perceive." Instead, the judicial duel is, Cook argues, "a way of making God's will visible," which is "made necessary by the court's failure to give proper consideration to the matter at hand" (120). While the poet believes in the threat that Ganelon poses to Charlemagne's court and that, more generally, people of his mindset pose to a neatly ordered world in which the chivalric ethos is the ultimate ordering principle, there are nevertheless some extraordinarily nuanced dimensions to the poem's final scene (see Cook 112-13). The drama of Ganelon's trial is immediately amplified at the very moment of his return to Aix and to Charlemagne's court (Cook 120).

grief and shock, leaving the troubled emperor to try the traitor who is believed to

have brought about Roland's death. Ganelon, bound in chains and straps and beaten

with sticks, awaits his trial, while Charlemagne summons thirty vassals from throughout

his empire to serve as judges in his trial (laisse 273, 3699-3704). Charlemagne's initial

charge, expressed in laisse 278, betrays his belief in Ganelon's guilt. Ganelon's cryptic

reply, which has been discussed earlier above, is again worth noting. Alluding to a

previous occasion where he notes how "Roland wronged (him) in respect of gold and

wealth" (laisse 279, line 3758), Galelon alludes to motives against Roland that are not

treasonous in nature but are rooted more in economic imbalances which run contrary to

and, indeed, directly damage chivalric conceptions of service. In short, *if* Roland owes

Ganelon money or has taken money from his stepfather unjustly, then the knightly

interaction between them is complicated by this new financial element.

And in further reply to Charlemagne's charges (laisse 279), Ganelon notes his

long record of service to Charlemagne and his army, as well as his accepting of the

particularly dangerous job as emissary to Marsile as tensions with the Saracens

mounted. He recounts his troubled dealings with his stepson and declares that the

wrongdoings he is charged with are better termed as revenge rather than treason. In a

sense, his claim has merit, for it is conceivable to imagine that his dealings with Marsile

take place because Roland's "wrongs" have impoverished him; in this way, he is as

much a victim of Marsile's misdeeds as is Roland when the rearguard is ambushed.

Nevertheless, the ugly specter of money and commerce has encroached upon the duty-

bound culture of Charlemagne's court, and its ruinous effects threaten the whole courtly

edifice that serves as one of its primary ordering principles.

The narrative's ultimate message about honor, service, and the importance of combat is shown in its final events, affirming the significance of combat in a military-spiritual ethos, where the concept of "rightness"—spiritual, moral, legal, ethical—is paramount. This is particularly the case in this concluding trial scene which serves to establish Ganelon's guilt and is not without its extraordinarily nuanced dimensions. Nevertheless, with these penultimate events it would seem that Charlemagne's object lesson has been completed, and he might take some time to enjoy his court's restored loyalty and newly found security from the encroachment of influences poisonous to his finely ordered chivalric world. Indeed, with the conversion of Bramimonde, the deposed Marsile's refugee wife, to Christianity, it would seem that the narrative's violent and discordant ending has moved toward some form of moderate, if distinct, resolution.

Nevertheless, with the day passing and a slumbering Charlemagne getting some needed rest, he receives a vision from Saint Gabriel that calls him to a new disturbance and a new threat to his world. Awakened by this troubling news, he tugs at his white beard and laments his "wearisome" duty to defend Christianity against pernicious influences, be they infidel, commercial, or legal. Perhaps in these last few lines he becomes aware that the chivalric orders of his world are inevitably giving way to more troublesome, unpredictable, and unstoppable ethical systems. But in total, the overall message of the poem seems to suggest that the demands upon those who live according to a chivalric ethos are exacting and are easily exploited for political benefit and that the chivalric ethos of ages past is threatened by a newly emerging commercial element, a conflict underscored by the poem's striking use of battle armor and imagery

and embodied by the conflict between Roland and Ganelon. To understand the practical dimensions of this reservation as expressed by the poem, it is now necessary to consider some of the principal texts, developments, and ideologies which challenged the chivalric institutions of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and introduced corrupting commercial influences into this problematic world.

The Growth of Commercial Culture in Medieval Western Europe: Changing Icons of Power in the Investiture Conflicts between Crown and Cross

The most significant evolution in currency was to happen in the late twelfth century, an epoch coming just after that of the *Roland* poet. Until then, silver coinage served as the principal medium in commercial transactions. The next phase of medieval commerce was to come with the reintroduction of the gold coin, which was enhanced by gold production in Africa and Spain, although it had never entirely died out in Spain, Sicily, and the farthest reaches of southern Italy (827). The silver *dinar* would prove to be of an irregular standard, so in the middle of the thirteenth century the Italian city states took to minting their own commercially oriented gold coins. The results were the *genovino* of Genoa and the Florentine *florin*. Ultimately, by the fourteenth century, the florin "[w]as destined to travel along the increasingly important trade routes into northern and western Europe, and to become the prototype of most later European gold coinage" (Spufford 829). With the demise of silver coinage, the first great stage of the medieval mercantile economy was concluded (Supfford 831). It is also possible that these commercial developments bolstered the scientific conclusions about the mineral superiority of gold shown in Albertus's *Book of Minerals*. However, it remains to be

seen how this phenomenon, the reemergence of the gold coin, would influence

the commercial and social climate of medieval Europe.

The notion of the "feudal world" is a concept that requires some examination,

for it has been misrepresented as a uniform system of economics and government by

historians of generations past. An alternative and more encompassing viewpoint which

accommodates the growing commercial culture of Western Europe was, explains

historian Norman Cantor, expressed in the classic study *Feudal Society*, written by the

French historian Marc Bloch in 1940.[125] Ultimately, Bloch's broad definition of the

term offers a view of feudalism as a system not exclusively determined by economics,

but as "rather a multiplicity of factors of which manorialism was only one" (215). Such

a definition is intriguing to one examining the history of early capitalism, the

development of systems of exchange, the evolution and proliferation of production

technology, and the consequences for such new innovations and methods of

interaction.[126]

In the climate of tension that defined the political environment in the twelfth

and early thirteenth centuries, warfare assumes two forms: wars are fought to increase

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[125] A useful discussion of the problematic nature of the term of "feudalism" is provided in Cantor's *Medieval History*, where the author explains how it "was invented by English and French lawyers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was popularized by the political philosopher Montesquieu," who used the term "in a pejorative sense" to arouse "the wrath of the French bourgeoisie" (see 214-15).

[126] Economic historian Jaques Heers argued in 1974 that a widespread practice of extending credit and granting loans was pervasive in particular medieval environs as early as 900 A.D. (621). He argues further that the idea of the "Feudal" economy, (which he calls a "real custard pie of a term") is better replaced with "seigniorial," which implies a degree of economic interaction –and no economic predominance--between landed, manorial, ecclesiastical, and merchant-controlled lands and properties (626-31). Ultimately, Heers concludes that "the ideas and the practice of 'modern capitalism' were, then, established very early in the 'Middle ages'—they certainly ran throughout the period. They penetrated down into different social levels, many of which were both very humble and alien to the world of business. Such ideas and practices were far from absent from rural life, and the seigneurs conducted their businesses and cultivated their lands much as the merchants and financiers organized their affairs. Far from simply "exploiting" and wasting, they knew how to keep books, invest and look ahead. 'The Capitalism of the great' and, even more, 'the feudal economy' are then no more than clichés that bear no relation to reality" (653).

or defend state boundaries, to quell opposition with one's territorial/political enemies, or to gain access to natural resources in distant lands. Ultimately, the wars of kings were fought for reasons that are glaringly practical. In contrast, other medieval wars were fought with a characteristic and irrational fervor that describes warfare undertaken in the service of a higher ideal or abstraction, such as in the name of one's faith or to quell others that were deemed infidels. Battles undertaken under Christian auspices were inevitably fought under some kind of papal mandate. Under such auspices, the motifs and images of chivalry were easily appropriated to lend moral authority to conflicts sanctioned by the church, the most telling of which was the crusading ideology valorized in the *Song of Roland*. In this process of imagistic appropriation, however, one sees the first hints of the growing irrelevance of chivalric institutions and their gradual displacement by commercial ideologies.[127]

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[127] In the world of the *Roland* poet, society was violent in both the common and noble classes; a series of eleventh-century popes, most notably Leo IX (1049-54), Gregory VII (1073-85), and Urban II (1088-99), helped to reorient the troublesome chivalric classes away from their various habits of waging wars in the domestic sphere, used the crusades as a means of redirecting these classes toward foreign enemies, and thus indirectly enabled a more commerce-oriented society. One such effort to condemn the habits of the domestic chivalric class as irrelevant and to re-channel it into a pro-crusading body is found in the writings of the influential theologian St. Bernard of Clarivaux (1090-1153), the "self-appointed conscience of the mid twelfth-century church" (Cantor 369). Writing in the early 1130's to Hugh de Payens, the first Master of the Temple of Jerusalem (1118-1137) and the first leader of the Holy Order of the Templars, Bernard both laments the institution of secular knighthood and praises its reinvention into a more spiritually oriented vocation. His document is an open letter called *De Laude Novae Militae* (*In Praise of New Knighthood*), and his approval of the growing institution of the holy orders is clearly evident. But first he expresses his disapproval of the institution of secular knighthood in what will be shown as an attempt to appropriate it for the church.

Describing how "Bernard's contempt for ordinary knights knew no bounds," Howarth then cites the cleric's most vitriolic condemnation of the secular institution of knighthood. Addressing this hated group directly, Bernard berates them for all that the Roland poet seemingly admires; he focuses particularly on their fixation with ornament and reveals the continuing incursion of an apparently commercial ethos into this chivalric institution: "You encumber your horses with silk, and you cover your armour with indescribable frippery. You paint your lances, your shields, and your saddles. The bits of your bridles and your stirrups are encrusted with gold and silver and precious stones. With pomp you decorate yourselves for death, and you ride only to ruin...Are these trinkets the trappings of a knight or the tawdry ornaments of women? Or perhaps you think that your enemy's weapons will be turned aside by gold? That gems will be spared? That silk cannot be pierced?" (Howarth 74-75).

Bernard continues in this vein, assailing the frivolity of knighthood by equating it with womanhood, and by attacking the masculine virtues of those who ride into armed combat with "hair so long you cannot see" and "clothes...so long they brush your feet" (75). Thus decorated, "you hide your delicate, tender hands in enormous sleeves—and then, dressed up like this, you go and fight for the most vain and ridiculous things!" (75). In

The use of the sword as a symbol in the political maneuvering between church and crown is one of the hallmarks of the crusading rhetoric. And it is not accidentally chosen, at least not in the early eleventh-century epoch captured in *Roland*. Historian Ernle Bradford proclaims, "The success of the First Crusade must be seen as stemming largely from one instrument—the sword" (*Scimitar* 95). But the growing use of the sword as a rhetorical trope within the investiture conflicts continued for another two full centuries.[128] Moreover, the sword (and armor) had significant influence as symbols of spiritual power, authority, and divine mandate, encompassed much of the pro-crusading ideology, and took tangible forms in the creation of the holy orders which facilitated the crusades themselves.129 In the name of service, the knighted class

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condemning these acquisitory aspects of knighthood, Bernard seeks to redirect this increasingly materialistic institution toward more spiritually-oriented pursuits.

Bernard's real purpose is in this open letter to Hugh de Payens, of course, to serve as advocate for this "new" vision of knighthood that, in contrast to the above sentiments, enables the knight to realize spiritual integrity, masculinity, and ultimately, obedience to holy rather than secular institutions. In short, it conjoins the functions of the knight and the monk, and indirectly leads to the creation of a sort of papal army heavily invested with swords, armor, and other symbols of spiritualized warfare. Less directly, such a vision enables the proliferation of more commercial forms of interaction which proceed uninhibited by the troublesome chivalric classes.

[128] There were several different tangible manifestations of the idea of the holy sword, all of which took shape as the church worked to solidify its stature as a political entity within the developing nation-states of medieval western Europe, and as a commercial ideology gradually encroached upon feudal ideologies to redirect patterns of social interaction. However, the most vivid expression of the spiritual sword was in the conjoining of monkhood and knighthood, which took shape in the creation of the Holy orders. Two of the three major Orders were Frankish in origin: the Hospitallers, which were the earliest; and the Templars, which were the most volatile, and whose influence ultimately represented great threats to the emerging medieval national powers. Each would achieve its greatest predominance by the later stages of the twelfth century, and both would vie for influence as the Christian defenders of Jerusalem. A third order, the Teutonic knights, "followed in its basic principles the rules and regulations established by its two predecessors" (Bradford, *Scimitar* 128) but they also showed the adaptation of the Frankish conception of holy knighthood into a Germanic form. The first two examples merit consideration as manifestations of the "spiritual sword," for each represented a church army of sorts and served a specailized function within the crusading movement; indeed, with the wane of the crusades, the different fates of the Hospitallers and Templars also provided an instructive window into the economic transformations that took shape between the worlds of the *Roland* poet and that of the *The Divine Comedy*.

[129] In both contexts, the feudal system confined the most influential and important elements of battle to a limited number of well fortified individuals whose combat activities enabled their stature as members of the knighted class who were privileged to have the sword as their distinctive weapon. And this class was especially invested with the hierarchical *weltanschauung* characteristic to all areas of the medieval world, regarding their warfare as an essential expression of their service to a lord, a king, and ultimately, a God, and in this way the sword evolved from a utilitarian weapon of war into a symbol that affirmed spiritual mandates. Cantor, for example, describes the "hierocratic ideals" of Pope Innocent III, who maintained that "the spiritual sword was superior to the earthly sword" (448), while Dante scholar John Scott describes how the pope's successor, Innocent IV, used the metaphor, as drawn from scripture, to justify his deposition of Frederick II in 1245, thereby asserting the rule of papacy: "On this

invested its military efforts with a significance that invariably highlighted the

symbolism of the implements it used to fight its battles. The metaphor of the sword is

essential to understanding the investiture conflicts of the eleventh through the early

fourteenth centuries, for it is a symbol of power and divinely granted authority.[130]

By Dante's time, the sword as a symbol of political authority would continue to

figure prominently, especially with the escalation of commerce and the continuing wane

of chivalric influence. The best example is in the papal bull *Unam Sanctum*, which was

issued by Pope Boniface in 1302 (in the poet's 37th year). In summary, this document

claimed that "both the material and the spiritual swords were in the power of the

Church: the material sword to be used for the Church "by kings and soliders, but at the

will and by permission of the priest." Moreover, "One sword ought to be under the

other and the temporal authority subject to the spiritual power." (Scott, *Political*

Purgatory 26)

Ultimately, the investiture conflicts, those struggles between the church and the

crown for political authority in the tenth through the fourteenth centuries, are easily

conceived as a struggle of symbols, a metaphoric swordplay between papal and regal

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occasion Innocent used the argument of the two swords (cf. *Monarchia* III.iv) against the emperor. According to Innocent, the two swords given by Christ to St. Peter (Luke 22, 38) and his successors signified their *plentitudo potestatis*, in other words their supremacy in both temporal and spiritual affairs. A variety of interpretations abounded since Henry IV first quoted it in 1076 in an attempt to establish a total separation between royal authority and the authority of the priesthood. Moderates tended to see it either as devoid of allegorical significance (*Monarchia* III.iv.16) or as signifying the two Testaments—also, the sword of God's Word and the sword of action (*Monarchia* III.ix.19). Innocent, however, used it to imply that papal authority created the Emperor and that he should wield the 'material sword' at the Pope's command" (Scott, *Political Purgatory* 23).

[130] The metaphor first appears in the scriptures, but comes to figure in the pro-imperial writings of the German Emperor Henry IV (1056-1106). From those beginnings, the metaphor merits mention regularly in writings focused on the investiture conflicts through the subsequent centuries. For example, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, whose *Treatise on Consideration* appeared in 1153, begins a discussion of the matter by quoting Luke 22:38 and concludes that "both swords, namely the spiritual and the material, belong to the Church, and that although only the former is to be wielded by her own hand, the two are to be employed in her service" (qtd. in Tierney 93-94). And Ricardus Anglius, an English monastic composing a glossary on the tract Compilatio I, writes in the year c. 1200 that "just as all are subject to the pope as regards the spiritual sword so are they subject to the emperor as regards the secular one..." (qtd. in Tierney 161).

institutional authority, in which the papacy appropriated the military motifs of

the chivalric classes to assert its own influence as the regal class, particularly in Dante's

world, increasingly inclined toward commerce above warfare.

If the *Song of Roland* articulates a strong affirmation of chivalric hegemony and

invests it with an ethical and spiritual authority, the *Inferno* signals the demise of this

habit and the escalating influence of commerece as a guiding moral presence. Indeed,

the sword's symbolic meaning can easily be expanded to encompass much of the pro-

crusading ideology that conjoined the pursuit of divine mandate and the habit of warfare

into the tangible forms of the Holy Orders, enabling the idea of the "holy knight" to

flourish in high middle ages even as the commercial ethos, particularly in Dante's

Mediterranean world, was growing more entrenched.[131]

Europe in the thirteenth century had evolved from a culture of service and

chivalry into a culture of commerce and exchange, and the institutions known to the

Roland poet underwent radical transformation in the century and a half that followed.

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[131] However, the sophistication of European commercial and financial culture of the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries was to develop at a rate inversely proportional to the relevance of the Holy Orders generally and the Templars in particular. With the eroding interest in crusading as the decades progressed, and with the continuing defeats in the Holy Lands to Turkish and Islamic princes, the Templars would eventually lose their central mission in the service of the Church and would also fall victim to their own economic shortsightedness, as well as to the Church's pronounced stance against practices that suggested usurious profit-seeking. In this way, the continuing presence of the sword as a metaphor for institutional power is shown in the painful decline of the Templars, who lost their competitive economic edge even as they were becoming increasingly obsolete in the *outremer*.

However, if the Templars' decline can be traced to the traumatic investiture conflicts in the early decades of the fourteenth-century, their larger economic and political failures of the previous century helped to facilitate their sordid ending. In short, the Templars' were slow to evolve from their original image as Christian warriors, even as they grew more powerful as a financial institution. And this evolution would have damaging consequences: As Cantor observes, "[T]he history of the Templars consistutes one documented case of religion playing a part in the rise of capitalism" (411). With the loss of the Holy Land and the growth of commercial culture (and despite their successes in this capacity), the Templars were on a path toward irrelevance even before Philip the Fair's ascension. Howarth notes that they are usefully contrasted with the more adaptive Hospitallers, who "recognized the route to survival" in a "change in structure, joined with a continuity of function," and so redirected their focus toward economic interests. Ultimately, the root causes for the decline of the Templars help to explain the larger cycles that caused the blunting of the blade of the "Spiritual sword" of the church, even as this symbol continued to serve as a hallmark for eroding chivalric interests.

In the eleventh-century Frankish world of the *Roland* poet, these trends would be at best primitive if not foreign or treasonous. However, on the Italian peninsula inhabited by Dante in the later thirteenth century, these trends were perhaps most intensely expressed in the evolution of the great city-states, which began slowly and gradually to challenge the agrarian hegemonies across southern and western Europe, and reached into France, England, and Scandinavia as well. The proliferation of systems of coinage developed according to both commercial necessities as well as patterns expressed in the natural philosophy of the ancients and reinvented in revealing works like Albertus's *Book of Minerals*. Moreover, as commerce and trade developed, Europe's mineral requirements became greater, and in this way Albertus's work is also revealing as it positions his native Germany as a locus of mining activity. If trade was centered in the emerging Italian city states of the tenth and early eleventh centuries, then resource exploitation was taking place in the commercial and cultural backwaters of England and Germany, which provided the materials to enable this trade.

However, the most significant developments were in the cities of northern Italy, which had natural access to trade routes, resources, and markets. In these locales, which, according to economic historian John Najemy, "had long been centers of international and regional trade," soon "developed complex artisanal and industrial economies as well" by the thirteenth century and experienced the inevitable "upset [to] traditional patterns of aristocratic dominance," such that "[t]he old mercantile and military elites were challenged by newcomers whose numbers, wealth, and ambition increased social mobility and political tension" (5). Localized in northern Italy, the fluctuation of currencies mirrors the larger demographic and social patterns of medieval

Europe, and provided writers of epic with new and problematic means to develop

their narrative conflicts and visions of heroism. Elsewhere across Europe, similar

patterns of unrest and social upheaval inevitably gave rise to conjoined spiritual and

economic crises which resulted in the regrettable epoch known today as the Crusades.

Conclusions

The poet's relish in describing the battle in graphic detail is on full display

throughout the *Song of Roland*. Collectively, these passages show the poem's

preoccupation with the conflict between a chivalric and a commercial ethos. The

passages that call attention to the majesty of knightly bearing reveal the poet's belief in

its importance; in addition, they also demonstrate how an increasingly commercial ethos

intrudes upon it; indeed, as shown below, the poem's preoccupation with arms and

armor–both in their resplendent glory and their gratuitous destruction–marks them as a

locus where the chivalric and commercial currents of the poet's twelfth-century world

intersect. In short, the arms and armor of the *Song of Roland* are the commercial

signifiers of the chivalric class; in Roland's gratuitous destruction of pagan armor (and

the warriors therein encased), we see his rejection of the markers of worldly glory and

the ascendancy of Roland's Christ-like stature.

It is tempting to read the *Chanson* in a manner that conflates Roland and Christ

so that it captures the spirit of the pro-crusading ethos and replicates the medieval

pattern of Christianizing the Virgilian epic hero. However, such a reading also places

profound limitations on human autonomy and unrealistically restricts the possibilities

that individuals in the twelfth century had available to them. Unlike Christ, Roland has

the occasion (and, if one considers his responsibilities toward those in his command, the

obligation) to position his army in a place that at least strategically offers, if not

assures, its survival.[132] While the poet might wish to glorify Roland's desire to die in

battle under glorious circumstances, he neglects to consider how such an ambition

might reflect if not a moral failing, at least the poor strategizing that would lead to the

death of those under command, or worse, needless death in battle. Of course, the poet

must portray Roland in this unrealistic manner in order to enable him to die something

akin to a martyr's death, which valorizes what was rapidly becoming an outdated

chivalric ethos by making his hero more Christ-like.

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[132] In a practical sense, Roland's willingness to die in battle serves no practical good even as the prospects of death in battle in service to one's lord would hold as much appeal to the twelfth-century chevalier as they would to the ninth-century member of the warrior king's *comitatus* following the lead of *Beowulf*. Not only does such reasoning by modern scholars neglect the growing humanist sentiments of the age, but it also ignores the moral implications of needlessly sacrificing the lives of others.

Chapter 7: The Sword and the Coin II: The Appropriation of Chivalry, and the Confrontation of Godly Morals with the Mercantile Economy in Dante's *Inferno*

Introduction: Reconfiguring Chivalry in Commercial Spheres

In the roughly two hundred years between the composition of the *Song of Roland* and *The Divine Comedy*, the institution of chivalry was growing less relevant in practical terms even as it assumed a greater iconic and mythological importance to the papacy and to the lower-level noble classes. The institution of knighthood assumed a problematic role in the investiture conflicts between pope and emperor and was easily appropriated into the service of papal authority in the epoch of crusading. Later, as commerce replaced knighthood as the essential controlling force in the lives of people in the later middle ages, chivalric institutions were increasingly recognized as threats to civil order and so became increasingly marginalized from mainstream social interactions. While the problematic status of chivalry is hinted at in *Roland*, the epic which ultimately seeks to affirm and valorize the institution, it is tellingly excluded from Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, an epic work in which knighthood is rendered less relevant and commerce assumes the role as the most prominent and, therefore, the most problematic social institution.[133] Within the entire course of the pilgrim Dante's

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[133] In a larger sense, when comparing the epic imagery in *Roland* with that in Dante's *Inferno*, the most sailent change is in the transition from the former's heavy emphasis on battle and chivalric codes, as embodied in the symbol of the sword and the splendors of knightly armor, to the latter's intense preoccupation with matters relating to economic transactions, as suggested in the recurring allusions to coinage and commerce.

underworld journey, several significant narrative trajectories emerge which help

to shed light on the ideological and imagistic shift that reshaped chivalric institutions

and facilitated the growth of commerce in the roughly 150-year period that spanned the

Song of Roland and *The Divine Comedy.* One salient narrative thread in particular

helps to shed light on the relationship between commerce and transgression, as the poet

envisioned it. Dante and Virgil encounter the various ordered levels of sin and the

sinners that inhabit them on their downward trek through the *Malebolge* into Hell's

ninth circle. Over the course of the journey, they encounter souls corrupted by the

influence of money. And residing within these lower domains are those practitioners of

the most "economic" of the sins in this underworld vision. In its composition, Hell's

overall geography is shaped heavily by the notion of abused commerce, and its eighth

circle in particular resembles a debased nation-state that is united in its disharmony and

debased by its economy.[134]

To understand the imagistic transition from the sword (or the *Roland* poet's

preoccupation with battle and weaponry) to the coin (shown in Dante's preoccupation

with commerce) as the dominant motif, it is necessary to begin with the network of

conflicts which controlled the political landscape between the eleventh and thirteenth

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The fact that both Roland and Ganelon merit mention in Hell's ninth circle suggests that the *Roland* story gave Dante pause. Ultimately, this minor detail from the *Inferno's* thirty-first Canto provides a sense of closure in a transition from chivalric to commercial ethos; Dante saw the complexities of both and identified commerce—in armour and weapons if not in swords—as the root cause. While the Roland poet valorized the sword as the fittest symbol of chivalric virtue, Dante invests the coin with the highest capacity for imperial (re)unification of his divided Italy. His *Inferno* marks the continuing evolution in defining transgression less as the failure of warriors' virtues as the moral failings of the commercial class befitting the monied culture that he criticizes throughout this underworld sojourn.

[134] Clearly, Dante understood the need to assign a moral value to the spatial geography of his underworld. In monetary terms, he affirms the consequences of illegal commercial interaction and fraudulent double-dealings and is better able to distinguish between a "fit" commerce that is morally balanced and equitable and a debased form that is exploitative, prodigal, manipulative, and immoral.

centuries in Western Europe. The document that helps shed the greatest light on this transformation features underworld imagery that portrays the evolution of Europe as a commercial culture in which secular interests become predominant as spiritual institutions struggle to remain influential in the lives of people. This document is Dante's *Inferno*, and it is fraught with references not only to the commercial climate of the poet's age but also to the crusading epoch that was in its deathbed as the poet wrote.

Dante Aligheri and Florentine Commerce and Politics, c. 1300

One must take several steps backward to gain a clear focus on the changing regard for metals, armor, and the underworld in the roughly 150 years between the creation of the *Song of Roland* and the *The Divine Comedy*. To put the matter most simply: the former is the outgrowth of a feudal ethos and represents a pro-crusading form of Christian propaganda in its most visible form. But even so, and as has been argued, the *Roland* still belies the very real threat of encroachment by a disruptive, proto-commercial ethos into this ordered chivalric hegemony. In contrast, the *The Divine Comedy* depicts a more vivid intersection between spiritual, economic, political, and cultural systems. In this way, it represents the first great epic of the post-crusading world, and depicts the first significant occasion where commerce influences epic literature. To bridge the century-and-a-half gap between the two works, the transitory qualities of late feudalism—which the *Roland* poet valorizes and which Dante rejects— must be examined before the *Inferno* itself bears inspection.

Living and writing at the sunset of the crusading epoch, Dante saw and depicted in his works the dulling of the blade of the "spiritual sword" of papal authority and political influence. Moreover, as he lived through the latter-day stages of the ongoing

investiture conflicts, he witnessed and suffered the consequences when his pro-

papist Guelfs waged continual conflicts with the pro-imperial Ghibellines. In this way,

Dante also witnessed and described how the sword as a symbol of institutional authority

gave way to another object of worked metal that was also invested with a heavy

symbolic significance: the coin. Ultimately, *The Divine Comedy* portrays what is

perhaps the greatest symbolic transformation of the medieval period–the changing

notion and character of medieval power and currency. As the author of several political

and philosophical tracts, all of which were heavily preoccupied with the notion of the

Christian empire, and as the composer of the greatest of the medieval epics, Dante

portrayed how the currency of the chivalric ethos–so vividly on display in the *Song of*

Roland and embodied in the symbolism associated with the sword–gives way to a

money-based currency, where the coin is not only the embodiment and the symbol of

institutional power but is also central to the moral and philosophical concerns of his late

medieval world. For convenience, this currency will be termed the "currency of office"

and is, in Dante's world, very much a "double-edged sword." It is captured in

expressions of social and political influence that come about when one occupies a

position of economic advantage, and in its abuse one is easily led into a moral

netherworld where the consequences of its capacity to corrupt are on display. At this

point, some consideration of the poet's early years provides a necessary starting point to

an examination of his developing vision of empire, in its moral, economic, and political

dimensions, as it appears in the *The Divine Comedy's Inferno*.

In the later stages of the thirteenth century, Florence was reeling from a series

of challenges to its economic, commercial, political, and cultural predominance that had

been levied by its rivals on the northern end of the Italian peninsula. And while

Virgil's Roman empire was enjoying a period of expansion during the years when he

wrote his epic tribute to it, Dante's Florence was in a state of relative stagnation brought

about not only by its own internal conflicts but also by the emergence of Genoa and

Venice as its chief commercial rivals. From his early years, the poet and son of a

struggling and somewhat impoverished family of noble lineage sought to fulfill his

ambitions within this turbulent world, and one can assume that Dante's political vision

was inevitably shaped by the volatile climate of his early public experience (see

Mazotta 5).

In both his political tracts and his epic poetry one sees the lifelong effort to

apply some unifying principles to a world view that was shaped by this fractious

climate. And despite its late thirteenth-century struggles, Florence was also well suited

to provide this vantage to a nimble mind like the poet's. Historian Edward Peters

describes the importance of Florence's rich intellectual and literary culture to its civic

identity, observing that it "took shape under the eyes of the writers, artists, and

preachers who were the most eloquent praisers of the city and its life" (261). So the

young Dante's political thought and literary ambitions were supplemented and shaped

by associations with a series of noted and influential intellectuals and literati of his

native city: such interactions provided a comparable sort of unifying influence. The

young poet's literary connections likewise brought a sort of order to a complicated

system of power networks (see Mazotta 5-6).

The most obvious unifying principle in Dante's fractious Florentine world was

most likely supplied during this formative time, and it came via the poetry of Virgil.

The works with the epic voice of the Roman empire resonate in Dante's works—

and particularly in the *Inferno* in ways both obvious and subtle. The *Inferno* is probably

the most vivid literary expression of the underworld in the late medieval imagination

and is striking because, like the Virgilian underworld, it portrays the economic and

political basis to many of the transgressions represented within it. Like the rest of

learned medieval Europe, Dante associated Virgil with the Roman empire, the epic

form, and with the morally tenuous geography of the underworld. And just as the

Virgilian conception of the underworld is conjoined with his vision of a world shaped

by Roman cultural and imperial hegemony, so is Dante's conception of a Christian

imperial hegemony likewise embedded in his underworld descent and journey, where

the author of Rome's great epic serves as his guide.[135]

Ultimately, in the pilgrim Dante's witness of the various elements of this

underworld sojourn, the poet Dante portrays a vision of empire that conjoins moral,

theological, and economic dimensions and is traceable ultimately to the powerful

northern Italian city-state of his early and formative years. But embedded in the details

of the pilgrim Dante's underworld journey with Virgil as his guide, one also finds

references to the economic, political, and even proto-industrial dimensions of his vision

of empire, the last provided in an allusion to an early Venetian munitions factory which

is detailed in his *Inferno's* fifth chasm. In describing how Dante pays homage to his

classical influences by reshaping them to suit his portrayal of the socio-political and

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[135] Beyond the influence of Virgil, however, other classical authors cast a long shadow in Dante's prose and poetry alike. For example, the influence of Boethius is clearly evident in Dante's self-reflective ruminations on his position as a wandering exile of his native Florence. Both the philosopher of the late Roman world and the poet of the late medieval world were banished from their native cities after productive civic careers, and in both Boethius's *Consolation* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy,* each author /narrator figure envisions himself as a pilgrim on a path toward philosophical and spiritual truths while being aided by a beneficent guide.

economic realities of the northern Italian world of the late thirteenth and early

fourteenth centuries, Mazotta observes that Dante's works are "part of the

consciousness of his age, which, in turn, cannot be understood without him" (2).[136]

Finally, before Dante's political thought can be examined in more detail and applied to

a reading of the *Inferno*, a few words are necessary to establish the symbolic value given to the

coinage of his region so vitally oriented to commerce. To a thirteenth-century intellect like

Dante, the coin was imbued with an extraordinarily potent symbolic function, one which rivaled

the chivalric /ecclesiastical investment in the symbol of the sword.[137] To understand Dante's

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[136] Beyond his immersion in the literary culture of his native Florence, Dante was also obligated--as a promising and well connected young man--to navigate his way through a complex network of social associations as he embarked upon his public career. The typical elements in such a network included "associations for the building of churches, drinking and gaming clubs, youth associations, masters' guilds, literary circles, and religious confraternities," which, Peters reports, "divided and subdivided the social and culture life" of the city-states in Dante's northern Italy (261). Further, scholar and critic Joan Ferrante provides a useful synopsis to the variegated character of the political and economic intersections of these cities, noting how "[in] the major cities of northern Italy, the world in which Dante lived, commerce dominated" while political power in Dante's Florence "was almost exclusively in the hands of great banking, commerecial, and industrial families" (315).

     In his early public career, the poet balanced his occupational duties and intellectual ambitions with his allegiance to the "White Guelfs," a political faction that maintained a moderate but reasonable belief in the idea of a theocratic papal empire ruled from Rome. In later years, from an embittered and more cynical vantage, Dante would evolve from this position, but in the last decade of the thirteenth-century this allegiance factored into all decisions related to his career. His membership in the guild of apothecaries and physicians dates from the latter half of this decade; even though the poet probably never examined a patient or concocted a tonic, Peters describes how in Dante's world "membership in a guild was essential for holding political office" (262).

     By 1301, as Boniface VIII parried with King Philip the Fair, the Capetian King of France, and as the demise of the Templars was in its beginning stages, Dante also found himself to be the victim of political maneuvering in his native city. The Black Guelfs, more devout and extreme believers in the notion of a theocratic empire under papal authority, seized power and immediately branded the poet, then serving as ambassador to Rome, as a traitor. As was often the case when a holder of office was forced to deal with victorious rivals elected to higher positions, Dante was accused of barratry, or the sale of office, by his Guelf rivals shortly before his banishment from Florence in 1302. Such judgments carried the sentence of death and confiscation of property and were levied against the poet's sons as well as himself. Holding a theocratic vision more moderate than that of his enemies, he was cited on "several charges of political corruption...that would have sufficed for his execution had he returned" (Peters 262). The charges were renewed in 1315 and affirmed the dangers of holding office with one's rivals in power in the great Italian city-states of the late medieval world. Dante spent the balance of his life--from 1302 until his death in September of 1321, in exile; in this purgatorial state, he lent his services as an advisor to the White Guelf factions in other courts, and enjoyed the patronage of various royal benefactors, including the German Emperor Henry VII. However, his period of exile was essential to the fulfillment of his literary and philosophical ambitions, as it was in this period when his most important political tracts were written; and it was probably in the last decade of his life when he wrote the *The Divine Comedy*.

[137] Historian Peters provides some perspective on this vision, highlighting the emergence of the merchant class, the growth of markets and trade routes, and the transition from warfare to commerce as one of the central features of the later eleventh and twelfth century in western Europe. In these developments, the symbolism of trade itself underwent a transition. "By the end of the eleventh century," Peters explains, "trading conditions had improved," so that "[s]ome lay and clerical authorities worked out the rudimentary structure of markets and fairs and began to create a protected identity for merchants." Ultimately, explains Peters, "[e]cclesiastics worried more about the moral consequences of the merchant and his money than about his sword and his wrath" (*Europe* 152). Of course, this

effort to invest currency with this moral and spiritual dimension, one must begin in his

native Florence, whose currency—the gold florin—had a significant place not only in the

economic climate, but also in the political and national imagination of its populace.[138]

For Dante, the symbolism of coinage was significant, and Ferrante stresses his

conjoining of money and language as key moral dimensions in his pro-imperial politics.

In his vision, a strong, pure, vital system of currency was a symbol of state unity and

universality whereas a debased impure currency was a symbol for human debasement

and corruption (Ferrante 366). In this way, Dante's condemnation of the fraudulent

and, in particular the counterfeiters, is particularly pronounced. Ferrante explains that

"in the final section of fraud, Dante places those who falsify the most basic elements of

human intercourse or exchange: identity, words, metals, and coins" (354), showing how

Dante's habit of using financial language in his moral vision is done with deliberate

effect.

Dantean Political Thought: Conjoining God and Commerce

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transition proceeded unevenly and at varying paces within different regions. However, in Dante's Mediterranean world of the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, this transition had proceeded dramatically and exponentially faster than in western Europe's more northern and remote reaches, and its implications were significant to the poet's vision.

[138]Mundy describes how the "Florentine florin of 1252 and the Venetian ducat of 1284 really established gold coinage" (119-20), and in his banishment Dante became preoccupied with its capacity to corrupt and to create disunion, which is shown throughout his underworld journey. Dante scholar John Scott describes the embittered poet's rejection of this most visible emblem of Florence's greatness in more detail, explaining that one particularly striking feature of the embittered poet's banishment from his native city was in his "denunciation of the very symbol of Florentine prestige: the gold florin, first minted in 1252 and a source of intense municipal pride. Everything that had contributed to Florence's greatness and economic supremacy was rejected by her exiled son. Having become universal currency, the florin was praised even by the Dominican friar Remigio de' Girolami. Remigio told his Florentine audience that God had given Florence 'seven singular gifts: abundance of money, a noble coinage, abundance of population, a civilized way of life, the wool industry, skill in the production of armaments, and a vigorous building activity in the contado.' Remigio's eulogy of the florin "praised its 'nobility' for three reasons: it was made of the best gold, it was decorated on one side with the image of John the Baptist and on the other with the Florentine Lily, and it was accepted throughout the world [even among the Saracens, etiam inter Saracenos]'" (Davis 1984, 206, qtd. in Scott, Understanding Dante 325).

Dante's conception of empire was shaped by the investiture conflicts.

Born into a Guelf family and tradition that held to the efficacy of papal theocracy, he became inclined toward Ghibellinism, or a belief in a secular imperial ideology later in his life and largely as a consequence of his exile. The poet's investment in the Virgilian conception of empire, articulated in his early works *Monarchia* and *De vulgare eloquentia*, is profound. Moreover, despite the imperial leanings of Dante's later years, his conception of empire is also heavily invested in Christianity; and it is in these two tenets—the Virgilian and the Christian—that Dante's political philosophies are based. Standing at the crux of the conflict between the Guelph papists and the Ghibelline supporters of the Holy Roman Emperor's Frederick II and Henry VII, Dante expresses a political philosophy that negotiates these conflicting factions in the early fourteenth-century peninsula. His epic underworld of the *Inferno* represents a fuller articulation of a philosophical system that achieved a balance between these two opposed viewpoints.[139]

The Divine Comedy is the best expression of this conjoining of conceptions of political organization and spiritual affirmation. Dante's characteristic habit grew gradually, since his view of imperial Rome as a sacred act of divine sanction was not well articulated in his earlier writings and is likely that his conception of empire's role in shaping human morality was gained from his familiarity with "Aristotle, Virgil, and

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[139] According to Dante scholar Charles Till Davis, Dante's conception of empire was unifying and all-encompassing. The poet believed that "empire or monarchy signifies the command directing all other commands, the jurisdiction embracing and authorizing all other jurisdiction, the will uniting all other wills" (68). And Rome was his model for this belief. Dante's use of the word *imperium* implies the emperor's universal authority, which was ordained by God (see Davis 68-71; Scott *Political Purgatory* 29). Davis refers to Dante's imaginative habit of reinventing Roman imperial majesty under Christian auspices as his "Virgilian-Christian" complex, a pattern most vivid in *Inferno* 2, 13-33, but also recognizable in other medieval perspectives on the imperial poet.

Augustine" (Davis 72). Despite his disavowal of Rome's pagan gods, he deems

the empire and history of Rome sacred, thus allowing him to connect the dignity of the

offices of emperor and pope. In his world, the empire was "enfeebled," and the church

had, through its increasingly commercial inclinations, "sacrificed its purity to an

obsession with wealth and temporal rule" (72). His imaginative effort to connect church

and empire is founded in a belief that each seeks to recover its early purity by returning

to its original state of poverty. In his *Monarchia* he argued that "[t]he emperor should

escape cupidity / by possessing everything, and the pope and other clerics by

possessing nothing, like Christ and his apostles" (see Davis 72-76).

Ultimately, in his political and historical vision, the empire is just and divinely

sanctioned, and on these beliefs are Dante's political philosophies based. His belief in

Rome's preeminence "simply affirmed that (its colonial) conquests were willed by God,

and God's will as expressed through his providence was by definition just....[S]o for

[Dante] force was not only the material cause of conquest but the way to discover

God's will" (Davis 77). The *Donation of Constantine*, Dante believed, was the one act

which brought about the demise of Roman imperial authority and the spiritual and

moral aspirations he felt it embodied. In this conception, it is vital that the emperor and

pope remain in distinct offices and should have no collaboration. The emperor's role is

to create "humana civilitatis," a peace on earth that is calculated to enable humans to

reach their full moral potential. The pope's role is focused toward Heaven, and he

should point the souls of people in this direction (Davis 78). In this way, the poet is

responding to a central concern in medieval political philosophy: the continuing

conflict between king and pope which is described by Cantor as an "equilibrium"

between *ecclesia* and *mundus*, or the church and the world (228). Dante's effort

to achieve this balance, at least as expressed in his underworld vision, is supplied in his

investment in the symbolism of currency (see Cantor 228-35). Ultimately, Dante's habit

of imaginatively conjoining the imperial and ecclesastical realms is one deeply

embedded in medieval political thought, and his reconciliation of these two

contradictory forces is achieved through his understanding of the intersections between

morals and money. His attention to the matter of commerce and his investment in the

symbolism of coinage and currency further underscores his imaginative journey through

the underworld while escorted by Virgil, the most visible proponent of Roman imperial

majesty.

A Reading of The Inferno *(Robert and Jean Hollander's Translation)*

In response to the essentially fragmented character of his native Florence, to

the inevitable disruptions caused by the commercial growth in northern Italy of the

early fourteenth century, and perhaps also to the consequences of his tortured exile from

the city of his birth, Dante used his political tracts and his poetic works to reconcile the

contradictions in his world and to seek a sort of closure on the turbulent events that

shaped his life. His lifelong efforts to reconcile contradictory ideas–public service vs.

private ambition, Guelfism vs. Ghibellinism, church vs. crown, healthy economic

interaction vs. debased profit-seeking–reflect the pursuit of this closure, and his

achievement of a unified vision is reflected in *The Divine Comedy* as a whole. Dante's

epic is a work of remarkable symmetry and order and, written consciously as an

imitation of the Virgilian epic, held the aesthetic of symmetry in high regard. The

thirty-four canticles of the *Inferno* combine with the thirty-three that form the

Purgatorio and *Paradiso* respectively to create a composite work of one hundred

cantos divided into three equal segments. Each segment–underworld, middle-ground,

and Heaven–depicts one dimension of the natural universe.

The poem's initial canticle vividly depicts many of the poet's misgivings about

his early fourteenth-century world. And because of its conscious alignment with the

Virgilian underworld, the *Inferno* pays tribute to what Dante saw as the unified world

achieved by the Roman empire while also highlighting the fractured, disharmonious,

and "fallen" character of his own world. As will be shown with the pair's gradual

descent into the *Malebolge*, or eighth circle of Hell, one notes a gradual escalation in

the degree to which violations of commercial figures are depicted in the *Inferno's*

underworld. In this deeper level of Hell, one notes a continuing evolution of money-

based violations. The narrative development culminates in the *Malebolge*, which is

easily seen as a parody of a healthy and functioning economy.[140]

The first canto of the *Inferno* assumes the form of what Dante biographer

Stephen Bemrose refers to as an "anticipatory prologue" of the *Comedy* as a whole. The

early stages of the poet's underworld journey are wrought with symbolism; critics agree

on this point but debate about what individual symbols—particularly the lion, wolf, and

leopard that the poet encounters with his journey's initial steps–might represent. The

underworld sojourn is, Bemrose explains, allegorical—that is, the details readers

encounter represent symbols which have a basic implied meaning that should be clear to

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[140] And with this gradual descent into this world of debased commercial and moral interaction, Dante begins the process of re-visioning a reestablished version of the Roman empire that is organized according to Christian principles. Dante sees a strong and consistent currency as essential to this goal, for it serves to unite the empire's commercial dimension, just as his poetry unites its cultural dimensions, under a common moral framework. Ferrante comments on the poet's heavy moral "investment" in the commercial dimensions of his language (366-67).

all informed readers but are also laden with more ambiguous and abstract

possibilities as well (115-16).[141]

The poet had several reasons for identifying Virgil as his underworld guide

collectively underscoring Dante's investment in the notion of a Christian empire.[142] Put

simply, the symbolic importance of Virgil's service in Dante's underworld cannot be

overstated. Bemrose outlines a series of reasons which explain why Dante chose the

Roman poet as his underworld emissary, placing emphasis on both literary and

historical precedents established by Virgil (117). An individual capable of restoring

Italy to Rome's former imperial greatness, Virgil suggests, "questri non cibera terra ne

peltro"[143] ("shall not feed on lands or lucre"), but instead is guided by "sapienza, amore,

e virtute" ("wisdom, love, and power") (I.103-04). This individual will be "Di quella

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[141] Proceeding in concert with this conceptual journey to a place of greater awareness, a reader of the *Inferno* also finds an ordered system that categorizes sin by degrees of severity and intentionality. Dante found greater severity in sins willfully committed, which he organizes by degree and depicts in Hell's stratified recesses. The severest and most willful sinners, of course, inhabit Hell's deepest reaches in the eighth and ninth circles. The space for those whose commercial dealings were debased, exploitative, or otherwise immoral is in the eighth circle, and Dante's moral system is particularly condemnatory toward the fraudulent of any stripe. In the eighth circle, one encounters frauds of various kinds, including panderers, diviners, hypocrites, and flatters. But one also sees frauds who have sinned specifically in monetary dealings: simonists and barrators, who have sold office; thieves; fraudulent counselors, who have purposefully betrayed those to whom they were entrusted; and counterfeiters, who misrepresent value and who profit from false semblance. In this place, the pilgrim Dante is exposed to the moral consequences of debased commerce and duplicitous politics. Nevertheless, despite the severity with which they are judged and condemned, the sinners in Hell's eighth circle are above the treacherous, whose violations against one's country, class, or cause merit their banishment to the lowest level in the ninth circle of Hell. These mortal sins are rooted less in the pursuit of favor or profit and are condemned more harshly as violations of basic moral laws. Such are the conceptual levels of Dante's underworld.

[142] The pilgrim Dante is fraught with doubts and cares as he begins his journey, but is comforted by a guide and mentor who appears in the first canto to explain to Dante the necessity for its purpose. Just as his father Anchises appears in the midst of Aeneas' underworld journey to provide a necessary perspective and historical vision, so Virgil serves in this role for the reluctant Dante. As noted above, the Florentine saw the poet of Rome's imperial greatness to be one of the guiding influences in his own poetic and political imagination. Moreover, in asking Virgil to lead him through the caverns of the inferno to "la porta San Pietro," (I. 134), or the entrance of Purgatory at St. Peter's gates, Dante reveals the common medieval conceit of viewing the Roman poet as a proto-Christian, or as the pagan visionary who presaged the birth of the Christian world. As biographer Bemrose explains, "Virgil remains a virtuous pagan lacking God's grace; indeed he is very frequently presented as representative of what unaided human reason can achieve, and not achieve, without divine revelation" (117).

[143] *Inferno* text transcribed from: *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata a cura di Giorgio Petrocchi.* Edizione Nazionale a cura della Società Dantesca Italiana. [Milano]: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1966-1967. <http://world.std.com /~wij /dante />

umile Italia fia salute," or "the salvation of low-lying Italy" (106) and will restore

it to its former stature as a unified empire, but it will endure as a model of Christian

statehood. Such an individual is aloof from the impulses toward passion, wealth and

power that are embedded in the perversions of commerce, profit-seeking, and politics.

The pair soon reaches the edge of Hell's second circle, where they will first encounter

those who have fallen victim to sins rooted in money. These individuals will be seen

again–among the prodigals and avaricious in the fourth circle, which is described in

Canto VII; and later in the eighth circle, where the consequences of a debased

commerce are more vividly present.[144]

In its totality Dante's underworld portrays individuals who had experienced a

variety of life circumstances, and their condemnation is rooted in various transgressive

states of mind, which Dante ranks according to intentionality as well as to severity. As

described above, these sins are based in a variety of lapses or excesses; they include

transgressions that are emotional (hopelessness, anger, envy), intellectual (ignorance),

moral (perversions, unnatural inclinations, malevolent impulses), financial (fraud, debt,

prodigality, miserliness, usury), and political (simony, barratry, flattery, treason).

Those guilty of sins associated with money and commerce are found in circles VIII and

IX, while the lowest circle of Hell is reserved for those who commit the most damaging

violations against humanity (betrayal and murder); in both cases, the severity of the sin

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[144] With his guide, the pilgrim Dante proceeds through the gates of Hell; his conceptual journey actually begins, in Canto II, where the poet consciously aligns himself with both Aeneas and Paul, or more symbolically, with the empire and the church. The physical journey into the underworld begins in the third canto, where the poet, guided by Virgil, enters the Gates of Hell. The inscription above them presents the unforgettable words "Lasciate ogni speranza, voi che entrate," or "Abandon hope, all ye who enter" (III. 9). In considering this message, one must examine what circumstances might explain the condition of "hopelessness" in the poet's world, and its relationship to the idea of transgression. One can consider the conditions of confinement or enslavement–which is what many of the underworld's condemned now feel--as obvious examples of a hopeless state.

is dictated by the intentional willfulness of the sinner. In contrast, the sinners in

the first circle of Dante's underworld are defined by their voluntary cowardice; the poet

seems particularly harsh toward those who passively accept their life circumstances and

refuse God's directive to find one's natural place.

Later, passing by Minos and into Hell's second circle, Dante and Virgil soon

encounter "those who make reason subject to desire" ("che la ragioin sommettono al

talento," V 39), who inhabit circles two through six. Upon entering Hell's fourth circle,

the pair is greeted first with the chiding taunts of Plutus, the classical god of wealth,

who has been reassigned by the poet to this debased state as guardian of the realm of the

avaricious and prodigal. They are presented there with the vision of two opposing

groups of shades–the avaricious and the prodigal–who perpetually hurl insults at one

another as they dance around in a circular pattern. The misers berate the prodigals, who

respond in kind. Both are conjoined, explains Virgil, by a common characteristic: with

their "myopic minds" ("guerci si della mente") they are ill equipped to "judge with

moderation when it came to spending" ("che con misura nullo spendio ferci" VII.41-

42). These two groups are forever fated to joust verbally, exchanging taunts of "why

hoard?" and "why squander?" as they assail each other for their habits of squandering

and hoarding. Virgil condemns their fate as wholly undignified. Of their perpetual

battle, he declares, "I will not waste choice words describing it!" ("qual ella sia, parole

non ci appulcro!" VII.60), underscoring his belief in the fit economy of language. From

this point, the Roman launches into an explanation that teaches the pilgrim about the

machinations of Fortune and the fleeting and transitory nature of wealth (VII.63-66).

The curious pilgrim then asks his guide about how Fortune controls the flow of wealth.

He is initially rebuked, but Virgil then describes her in a way that is understandable to the "foolish creatures" ("creature sciocche," VII.70) of humanity and couches his explanation in terms that connect the flow of wealth with imperial influence. Fortune serves as "a general minister and guide" (VII.78) "for worldly splendors" (VII.77) who distributes them arbitrarily (VII.79-87). [145]

The next significant landmark is the gate to the subterranean city of Dis, which is the point of entry into lower Hell. With their passage into this city of Satan, they leave behind the realm of "lesser" sins–those prompted by irrational and uncontrollable passions–and move into a space where the sins are intentional and the sinners had committed them purposefully.[146] The pair's entrance to Dis is initially blocked by the rebellious angels who defend the city gates and who are unwilling to allow the living pilgrim access to their dead realm.

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[145]The element of Fortune's arbitrariness in Dante's attitude toward wealth and currency is central to his moral system. Virgil's description of Fortune is quite traditional; in death, he sees how it has fractured the once unified Rome, and in expressing this sentiment he adheres to the same Boethian image that would figure later in the writings of Petrarch and Boccaccio and shape Chaucer's thought almost a century later. However, in Dante's estimation, the machinations of an arbitrary and whimsical Fortune can be muted with a stable currency and a "moral" system of economic exchange that maintains both a unified empire and private wealth in relative measure. The discussion of this point is shown in later cantos (XVIII-XXX), in the ten levels of the eighth circle of Hell (the *Malebolge*), where the poet revisits the discussion on the intersections of morals and money. At this point, however, it is important to note the poet Dante's focus on the emotional dimensions associated with money, and how it can lead people into irrational behaviors that become immoral. Plagued by shortsightedness and vain ambition, humans are ill-equipped to understand Fortune's essentially neutral nature and to see that she celebrates her role as an agent of change. She rejoices in the reassignment of wealth according to her own discretion, and humans have little occasion to understand the eternal character of Fortune's actions.

[146] Before the pair pass through the city gates, however, they encounter a condemned soul that is likely, according to critics, modeled on one of Dante's Florentine familiars, a probable political enemy of the Black Guelfs, those responsible for the poet's exile (Hollander 146). This unfortunate individual is Filippo Argenti, and he is condemned to the rather horrific fate of self-consumption–he chews on himself out of spite because he cannot direct his anger toward others. Dante's rather childish rebuke of the unfortunate Argenti (VIII.37-39, 52-54) contrasts with his relatively sympathetic response shown to the lustful and gluttonous sinners in Cantos V and VI, and it also marks his conceptual growth as one whose attitude toward sin is evolving.

The city itself appears on the other side of the Stygian swamp, and it is described as a fiery and reddish enclave of mosques and ramparts, made so by the perpetual flames burning within it (VIII. 69-75). Its residents, the fallen angels who rebelled against God and Christ, are perpetually primed for battle. Significantly, "le mura mi parean che ferro fosse," "its walls seemed made of iron" (78). The iron symbolizes not only the warlike character of Dis and its denizens but also the hardened wills of the sinners who have passed through it. These willful sinners contrast to those above, who deserve a lesser condemnation because they are slaves of appetite and not purpose (Hollander 147).

Their entry into Dis is contrived by the poet Dante according to a martial

metaphor of penetrating the city walls, enabled by a superior force after a difficult

beach landing. Hollander explains how this metaphor has developed subtly over the

past two cantos, and culminates in "the moment of successful entry of the walled City

of Dis" which "narrates a military campaign"(see 164). It is perhaps incidental that this

martial action follows the poet's depiction of the sins of avarice and prodigality. But

their proximity is notable and is possibly also deliberate. When the images of money-

oriented sins are conjoined with the combat images that follow, the sequence is perhaps

purposeful. Indeed, the occasions of Dante's later martial imagery, such as the

Venetian arsenal described in Canto XX, are also presented in close proximity to his

considerations of sins emerging from debased monetary practices and attitudes. In this

context, it seems that the poet understood—like the epic poets before him—the strong

connections between money, metals, and militarism. [147]

In Dante's conception of the ordering of sins according to their severity, the

description is particularly useful in shedding light on his understanding of the

intersections between money and morals. Virgil explains,

> Since the vice of fraud is man's alone,
>
> It more displeases God, and thus the fraudulent
>
> Are lower down, assailed by greater pain.

> Ma perché frode è de l'uom proprio male,
>
> più spiace a Dio; e però stan di sotto
>
> li frodolenti, e più dolor li assale. (XI.25-27)

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[147]See Hollander 163, 178-81; Musa 85

This description is important to the pilgrim's understanding of the sinners to be

encountered in the circles of lower Hell. The poet's most involved discussions of sins

connected with money, commerce, and economy take place in the seventh and eighth.

The fraudulent are to be encountered in the *Malebolge*, the ten strata that make up

Hell's eighth circle. Before these are met, however, the pair must journey through the

first circle of lower Hell and seventh overall, which is the domain of the violent.

Following Aristotle, Dante identifies three levels of violence—against others, against

the self, and against God—and condemns the sinners accordingly. Usury in particular

is a sin against God and is worthy of the greatest degrees of condemnation. Dante

includes in Virgil's explanation references to Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Physics*, and in this

explanation one finds the fullest statement made by Dante the poet about the

intersections between money and morals. The avaricious and prodigal of Hell's nearer

(and now more elevated) levels are merely incontinent (82-84). The sins of violence,

fraud, and treachery deserve a severer banishment. Fraud in particular represents a

violation of intention and purpose (XI.52-66).[148] In his discussion of this point, Virgil

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[148] An act of fraud represents, Virgil explains, a violation of intention and purpose; when committed in a political or legal context—against one who is cynical, complicit, or already prone to distrust—the exchange severs the natural bonds of love that maintain an harmonious and unified climate essential to state and imperial unity. As described above, Dante conceives of a unified state as a moral imperative. In contrast, an act of fraud committed against those one is prone to trust ("with faith in the deceiver")—such as clerics, legal and spiritual advisors, and family members—is treason. Such an act breaks two bonds that unify people, those of love and faith. Thus, those who commit this form of fraud deserve a severer banishment and are sent to the very seat of Dis, its most nether region, where they take up residence with Satan himself (64-66). Dishonest interactions that involve money—most prominent in simony or barratry, or the sales of office—but also present in pandering and theft—represent violations of trust but not of faith, as both participants in the transaction approach it with ignorance at best or more likely with no faith in the deceiver (Musa 94). Such an exchange severs the bonds of love that are needed to achieve a moral and, ultimately, political unity. For this reason, the fraudulent are banished to the *Malebolge*, the penultimate circle of Hell, which lies just above Satan's residence. Interestingly, Dante's conception of usury as a sin not of fraud, but of violence, also merits consideration. It is a sin of violence against God, the severest form of violence, and the usurious occupy a level just above the fraudulent. Of this separation between usury and fraud, Ferrante explains that "[b]y placing usury in the circle of violence rather than in fraud, Dante seems to distinguish" between lending at profit from outright financial duplicity (244).

describes the "unnatural" character of usury, noting that it is profit that is divorced from labor. It is not directly related to daily sustenance, which is the sort of natural labor exemplified in the book of *Genesis* (XI.103-11).[149]

To his credit, Dante understood the concept of a market as a place of commercial intersection where currency and commodity are exchanged. However, his vocabulary in describing this space of exchange would be tinged by an Aristotelian vocabulary: the idealized, unified Dantean market--the one essential to a unified empire--is a place where money, morals, and nature intersect in the form of a "fit" commerce which is modeled on the processes of nature as designed by God. "Natural" and "moral" orders intersect in the form of sustaining labor, fair wages, and market prices that reflect the "innate" values of commodities and products. However, his explanation reflects no conception of other imperatives in a functioning economy: growth, transition, and adjustment. This limit is perhaps explained by his heavy investment in the idea of a unified empire, for such an entity is essentially static. In his condemnations of usury and fraud, Dante leaves no space for economic inevitabilities: the continuing emergence of new markets, the fluctuations of prices and profits, and the patterns of class mobility. All are shaped by and responsive to economic cycles that invariably proceed over time. This underdeveloped conception of economics also accounts for Dante's habit of demonizing martial imagery, a pattern that links him with other writers of epic and portrayers of underworld imagery. In short, Dante understood

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[149] In its fallen condition, Hollander explains, humankind, "as is recorded in Genesis (3:17), must earn its bread in the sweat of its brow, precisely by following the rules of nature and whatever craft it practices. And for this reason usurers are understood against nature..." (196-97). In Virgil's expression of the idea of a "natural" means of exchanging money and maintaining oneself with a balanced sustenance, Dante reveals his own economic thought (see Ferrante 342-44).

the moral implications of the developing military-industrial complex in the

northern Italy of the fourteenth century but not its economic necessity.[150]

Meanwhile, their olfactory senses appropriately benumbed, the pair descend

into the seventh circle–the first level of "lower Hell"-- to begin the twelfth canto. The

imagery in this less condemned level is also not without its commercial dimensions,

which are suggested both in the kinds of sins depicted and in the martial images that are

on display. They proceed along a pathway which is imagistically reminiscent of a

quarry or a mine shaft. The personalities within the domain follow the example of their

unnatural environs, beginning with the Minotaur, who was the product of an unnatural

union between human and beast and thus the product of an act of violence against

nature. This domain is populated by Centaurs, and by various others prone to acts of

violence–in particular, tyrants--who met their ends in acting on their bestial natures and

wrathful habits. In their depiction, these Centuars show Dante's habit of portraying the

monstrous guardians of Hell according to martial motifs–in this case, as Sinclair

observes (164), they are the *condittieri*, or the hired soldiers of tyrants.[151]

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[150] Significantly, Dante is willing to "finger" several who commit sins of incontinence, naming those who are lustful, gluttonous, wrathful, or heretical. But his discussion of usury identifies none who practice it. Perhaps this is because he was familiar with the necessity for banking and commerce, but in exile he was removed from financial circles where these were practiced. Nevertheless, Dante's condemnation of profit and usury is closely aligned with the sins in the level below, the *Malebolge*, or the domain of the Fraudulent. As Ferrante explains, "Each section of fraud involves illicit profits, the first five by direct sales of what should not be sold, the last five by more subtle manipulations" (Ferrante 344). This important dimension to Dante's underworld will be considered when the pair reach this deeper (and apparently, more commercially oriented) circle of Hell.

[151] They now reside in the bloody mire of the river Phlegethon. While their service to Dante and Virgil makes them more agreeable, it follows their pattern of service to the violent tyrants they now torment: "Phlegethon is Dante's challenge to military adventure and public violence, with all their glory and gain" (Sinclair 165). And in their passage through the seventh circle, the pair see all manner of tyrants historical and (to Dante) contemporary, including Alexander the Great, Atilla the Hun, the Guelf warlord Opizzo Il d'Este, and the Ghibelline strongman Ezzelino III da Romano (Hollander 214-15). Guided by the Centaur Nessus, Dane and Virgil manage to ford their way through the bloody river, avoiding these violent spirits who are perpetually drowning within it.

As suggested above, the Centuars who patrol Phlegethon's bloody banks and assure the torment of the condemned tyrants within are portrayed to suggest a martial motif, for "some early commentators saw in them a portrait of the bands of mercenary cavalrymen who were such an important feature in the horrendous wars of Dante's divided Italy" (Hollander 210). Solider figures are an essential component in the maintenance of Dante's underworld

The next group of condemned have been hurled across Phlegethon and
have taken up residence in the gnarled vines that lie across the bloody river. Having
passed over to this realm in the previous canto, the pair meet another group of familiars
in Canto XIII who have been condemned to this deathly realm of gnarled woods. What
will follow lies just below in a deeper level of this realm of the violent, where sins of
usury associate metals with money and serve to "update" their relationship within the
epic form to suit the commercial climate of Dante's age. Indeed, just as in the Homeric
and Virgilian underworlds, metals, especially in the form of arms and weapons, figure
prominently. But in the circles below, Dante continues to introduce a new element that
has, to this point, figured less prominently in epic underworld imagery: coinage and the
commercial sins associated with it. Such influences damage the possibility of a unified
empire, a point underscored by what is by now recognized as a slight but notable
change in Dante's narrative technique.[152]

As Canto XVI begins, Dante and Virgil occupy a slightly lower level of the
same circle and are greeted by three conjoined shades (XVI.22-27). The unfortunate
trio, the pair soon realizes, are unified in a wheel-like fashion that prevents their
independent movement. These individuals are soon distinguished as "warrior
sodomites" (Musa 135) whose importance to the Guelf party was well known in

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hierarchy, and the poet routinely recognizes the opportunity to connect martial motifs and elements of classical
motifs to underscore this imagistic pattern. Ultimately, however, while they "represent the particular sin of violence
to others," they become, in a sense, God's tyrants, as they are "turned to God's use in punishing these mortals who
sinned in this way" (212).

[152] In portraying this "new" element of Hell, Dante is eager to obscure the boundaries of hell's various circles and
portrays his passage through them with a narrative technique that helps him to "(avoid) keeping his canto borders
'neat'" (Hollander 246). This series of interconnected cantos, in which the passage among the various borders of hell
begins to take place within the canto rather than at its close, also marks an increasing habit of connecting the various
elements of the epic vision first introduced by Homer and later reshaped by Virgil: metals, military imagery, money,
and the connection of each to a vision of political unity. The agricultural motif introduced by Brunetto is also
deliberate; when paired with the conjoined image of the peasant's spade (XIV. 96-97), it not only reinforces
metalworking as essential to the survival of the healthy nation-state but also positions Dante the poet as the prophet
and champion of a reestablished Roman empire.

Dante's Florence.[153] The underworld travelers then pass the sodomites and descend down to the banks of the River Phlegethon, which has (apparently) curved around according to their path of descent. They behold one swimming up to the water's edge when Virgil inexplicably tosses the cord to Dante's garment into the water, knowing that the gesture will lead the mysterious swimmer their way. This meeting proves essential to Dante's subsequent encounter with another group of sinners who wallow in an unnatural form of commerce and will soon to appear in Canto XVII. The meeting will also enable their descent into the realm of the fraudulent where other commercially motivated sins will also be on display. Clearly, commerce is no stranger to the lower reaches of Dante's underworld.

The figure they meet is Geryon, and, despite his fantastically monstrous characteristics, which are depicted in some detail (XVII.10-27), he proves to offer the means by which Virgil and Dante descend into the fortified realm of the fraudulent that lies within the highly ordered *Malebolge*, or Hell's eighth circle. [154]

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[153] Despite their alignment with his family's political positions, Dante highlights their role as agents of divisiveness. Unified in structure but divided in spirit, they symbolize Florence's (and Rome's) divided stature not only in their sins against nature but also implied in the sins against commerce suggested in their subterranean "cruising" (Hollander 262). They are Guerra, Aldobrandi and Rusticucci, and, while the pilgrim Dante laments their debased condition, he also decries how the pursuit of profits has undermined the civic virtues recalled by the condemned trio (XVI.67-75—see Hollander 278).

[154] His guide dispatches the poet to converse with those shades who are gathered on the very edges of the seventh where the pair now stand. As Virgil negotiates with the monster to assure his services in transport, Dante tries to converse with those gathered shades at the circle's farthest reaches, who resemble dogs or horses fighting off nagging insects in the summer heat. Undistinguished by names or faces, they are instead defined by the colored purses that hang about their necks, upon which their gazes are forcefully directed. Here at the margins of the seventh circle, these usurers embody the "spatial connection between the sins of Violence and those of Fraud" (Musa 144). The pilgrim recognizes escutcheons that are inscribed on three of the purses, and the first two of these are identified by Hollander (295-96; Musa 144) as belonging to the Gianfigliazzi and Obriachi families, whose associations with the banking and moneylending trades are documented even as the figures' precise identities are still yet fully to be discerned. The third figure, termed the "'star'among the usurers" (Hollander 296), is most likely a Paduan, one Reginaldo delgi Scrovini, and it is he who Dante engages in conversation. He blithely tells Dante of the ineptitude of Florentine usurers, who are easily surpassed in wealth by their Paduan cohorts. Reginaldo expresses his particular wish to gloat about his superiority over Florentine Giovanni Buiamonte, whose condemnations await.The unfortunate Giovanni, according to Musa, "took part in public affairs and was honored with the title of "knight" in 1298. His business, money lending, made his family one of the wealthiest in Florence; however, after going bankrupt he died in abject poverty in 1310" (Musa 144-45). Interestingly, unbeknownst to himself, Reginaldo will also see his usorious

As noted above, in the *Malebolge* one discerns the final stages of a gradual narrative pattern depicting economic violations of increasing severity. With this passage into the eighth circle, the "evolution" of usury into sins of fraud becomes evident. The *Malebolge* is best considered as a parody of a self-sustaining economy where goods of dubious merit are bought and sold. In their torment on the outer margins of the seventh circle, the usurers are just barely excluded from what for them would be a delicious realm of profiteering.

Virgil successfully enlists Geryon to lead the pair downward, and, once mounted atop their beastly courier, a hesitant Dante resolves to assume a brave front. Virgil, however, has no such qualms about their immediate descent, directly instructing Geryon to proceed slowly (XVII.97-99). While Virgil has "tamed" the monstrous guardian after the fashion of the tyrants who had tamed the mercenary centaurs /*condittieri* in the nearer borders of the seventh circle, a terrified Dante is only reminded of the mythical figures Phaeton and Icarus, whose wreckless flights brought about their demise. The poet is mindful of the sounds of roaring, wailing, and bellowing, and the buffeting winds that shake them about as they descend into the dark abyss below. They soon reach bottom, and Geryon departs directly.

With his departure, the pair first discerns *Malebolge*'s daunting ramparts, thick walls, and deep moats. The description begins Canto XVIII, where it is described as a

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greatness undone by his son Arrigio, whose "penitential desire to make up for paternal usorious practice reputedly moved (him) to endow the construction of the Scrovegni Chapel, its walls devoted to Giotto's frescoes, one of the most beautiful interior spaces in the Western world" (Hollander 296). Their conversation over, Reginaldo "distorse la bocca e di fuor trasse la lingua, come bue che 'l naso lecchi," or "twisted his mouth and stuck out his tongue like an ox that licks its nose" (XVII.74-75). As apparently perplexed by this Paduan braggart as he is eager not to displease his guide, Dante retraces his steps to find that Virgil has negotiated their transportation out of the seventh circle and into the *Malebolge*.

well fortified castle, difficult to penetrate because of the vast array of obstacles which protect it. A series of moats and pits defend a vast wall while a series of bridges offer the only means of access (XVIII.1-15). The "iron-colored rock" ("pietra di color ferrigno," 2) that makes up the wall further highlights the castle's self-enclosed positioning and warlike function. In the whole of its composition, the *Malebolge* can be said to present an imagistic portrait that shows Dante's understanding of the conjoined elements of warfare and commerce. Like the usurers who are excluded from this domain, the fraudulent within it also seek, through debased commercial and political interactions, to benefit–in profit, if not in political advantage—from their interchanges.[155] At this stage, it is important to note that the first and the tenth levels portray in particular detail the sins associated with debased commercial interactions. The panderers, seducers, and flatterers–to whom, on earth, the matter of appearance is particularly important—are shown as scabrous, beshitten, and immersed in filth. The counterfeiters, who occupy the tenth and lowest strata of the *Malebolge* (and who, Dante believes, commit the most damnable forms of fraud), are also, on earth, invested in the appearance of genuineness and of value.

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[155] Moreover, in this realm Dante the poet is further expanding his narrative strategy, not coincidentally at the mid-point in the *Inferno's* 34-canto structure. In Cantos III-VII, the pair traveled through the circles of Hell where the sins were judged to be those of incontinence; their descent proceeded essentially at a rate of one circle per sin. The sins of anger and heresy–whose condemned occupied circles 5 and 6—were featured in Cantos IX-XI. With the sins of violence, which occupy the seventh circle, described in Cantos XII-XVIII, Dante's depictions become more graphic, his references more pointed, and his organization more arbitrary. In this trip through lower Hell down to the seat in Cocytus, Dante is less willing to write an "end stop" into each canto, preferring instead to continue or "enjamb" the narrative of one Canto into the next without a clear transitional opportunity. This pattern is particularly evident in Cantos XII-XIII, as well as in Cantos XV, XVI, and XVIII; the narrative is particularly expansive in the realm of the fraudulent, implying that despite the heavily stratified geography of Hell, there are really only a handful of motives which prompt genuine sin. Dante's detailed treatment here also serves to emphasize that one cause permeates Circles 7 and 8, and that, of course, is money. Given his heavy investment in the imperial potential of an idealized commerce, Dante is particularly willing to condemn commercial interchanges in their most debased forms. In Cantos XVIII-XXX, ten separate varieties of fraud are discernible, even as the narrative continues the pattern of conjoining the cantos across the descending layers of the *Malebolge* (for a discussion of the symmetrical patterns in the narrative through the *Malebolge*, see Hollander 310). While monetary associations can be ascribed to all ten varieties of fraud, the first and last are particularly salient in their commercial implications.

The eighth and ninth circles of Hell are depicted in the second half of the

Inferno's thirty-four canto narrative.[156] Because of its self-sustaining nature, the

Malebolge deserves consideration as a distinct entity patterned after a medieval city-

state in which military activity is frequent and honored while commercial interactions

are an inevitable and interlocking necessity. The term itself, which Hollander describes

as a "Dantean coinage made up of words meaning 'evil' and 'pouches'" only begins to

hint at its distinct martial and economic character. Indeed, the ten individual levels

within this realm of the fraudulent are ultimately united in their commercial application,

just as the economic life of a walled medieval fortress-town encouraged a network of

interconnected economic relationships, both "official" and informal. And this

"communal" character to the *Malebolge* is also affirmed and highlighted by the

narrative technique that the poet Dante uses to portray his pilgrim's descent through this

fraudulent realm, one that interconnects the cantos in a manner largely unseen in earlier

stages of his journey. As in any commercial space, where things and concepts–

commodities–are bought and sold, the consequences for commercial interaction are

vividly identified in the *Malebolge*.

The "commodities" that have been traded and for whose sake these "traders"

(Dante calls them "sinners") have been condemned to this realm are, predictably, less

products and more abstractions. Or they are commodities that lie in close connection

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[156] Proportionally, the eighth circle receives the greatest amount of attention from Dante, who devotes a full thirteen cantos (XVIII-XXX) to portraying his pilgrim's descent through this underworld fortress. However, patterns of symmetry also emerge within specific sections of the *Malebolge* as well: the first third of the journey begins with Canto XVIII and proceeds through XXI; the second begins in XXI and continues through XXVI; and the final stage, which also begins in XXVI concludes with Dante and Virgil's "final descent"–in Canto XXX–into the domain of Lucifer, who sits submerged in the frozen waters of Cocytus in the very seat of Hell. Within each stage of this descent through Hell's eighth circle, one notes deliberate patterns in image and theme and distinct narrative threads which help to define the three sections of the *Malebolge* and highlight the economic and military character of each.

with abstractions: those things that have historically motivated humankind's baser instincts–flesh, power, prophecy, office, and title. In the world above, *Malebolge*'s residents had bought and sold these things, having inflated their values in ways that appeal to the irrational instincts of the buyer and that merit the condemnation of the seller. In this way, they have landed in Hell's eighth circle.

In this pantheon of debased commerce, several individuals stand out. As will be shown, the arrangement of *Malebolge*'s commercial structure–which begins with pandering and prostitution and culminates with alchemy and counterfeit–is purposeful. As a realm of distinct sins of comparable and (in Dante's mind) increasing severity, the *Malebolge* shows its communal stature in relation to the other realms of his Hellscape; it further demonstrates a unified character in two distinct ways: first, the ten cantos that comprise Dante's excursion to the pit of Hell are divisible into three distinct stages, with each stage showing its own specific narrative and imagistic patterns. Secondly, because the overall "theme" of lower Hell–and the *Malebolge* in particular–is centered around sins relating to the misuse and abuse of money, the first and last levels comprise a boundary of sorts. Residing within these border realms are those practitioners of the most "economic" of the sins in this underworld domain, and they provide the boundaries that define the *Malebolge* as a sort of paretic and debased state entity populated by tortured souls who have committed sins with money. With the further descent into Cocytus, into Hell's ninth circle where Satan rules from his frozen domain,

the eighth circle represents in its composition a debased nation-state that is united

in its disharmony and debased by its economy.[157]

In Cantos XVIII through XXI, one finds "unnatural" monetary transactions.

These involve either the illicit selling of commodities in a manner that violates

individual or institutional dignity or the transformation of the abstract (moral autonomy,

political influence, etc.) into the concrete (money). The sins portrayed in this first third

essentially involve the selling of what shouldn't be sold: the self, another's flesh, office,

influence, etc. In this way, the theme of the first third of the eighth circle is built around

the idea of an unnatural economy. The sinners who reside in the first and second

bolgia–notorious panderers, flatterers, and seducers–are conjoined with those depicted

in Cantos XX and XXI. These are the simonists and barrators, whose respective sale of

ecclesiastic and governmental office reinforces their own corrupt involvement in the

selling of the sacred. In both contexts, Dante seemingly equated the moral

transgression of the sale of office even as the simonists and barrators occupy the third

and fourth *bolgia* respectively (Hollander 360).[158]

The sins of pandering, seduction, and flattery in the first and second *bolgia* are

coupled with those of simony in the third and barratry in the fifth, for Dante saw the

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[157] With the narrative's passage into Canto XVIII, where Dante and Virgil first enter the *Malebolge*, one notes a corresponding transition in Dante's poetic voice. Hollander observes that "one has the feeling that Dante, having finished his apprenticeship, now has achieved a level of aesthetic performance that may have surprised even him" (310). Indeed, with their entry, one finds the pilgrim Dante showing a more confident and less conciliatory attitude toward the sinners he encounters (see discussion in Musa 162-63). And this attitude is clearly on display in the pilgrim's interaction with the sinners he meets in the "margins" of the *Malebolge*'s economy.

[158] In Canto XVIII, Dante first encounters Vendico Caccianemico, an important Bolognese political figure from the late thirteenth-century, who would regularly "sell" his sister Ghisolabella in return for political advantage (lines 54-57; Hollander 310). In keeping with the larger thematic pattern of connecting the fallen figures of classical myth with the fallen contemporaries of the poet's world, Dante then portrays the mythic figure of Jason, the renowned captor of the golden fleece and noted seducer of both Hypsipyle and Medea (Hollander 310). The canto then ends in a gruesome fashion, as the renowned court flatterer Thais wallowing in excrement, condemned to this distasteful fate because she wore a "false front" above.

common link between them: both are thematically connected with prostitution,

which is presented as one of the overarching themes of this first section of the

Malebolge. In the first case, one sells the spirit of the self or the body of another; in the

second, one sells the spirit of the church or the government.[159] The final figure in the

third *bolgia* to earn Dante's undying scorn is the Roman Emperor Constantine (306-37),

whose legendary gesture to Pope Sylvester I (314-35) provided the crucial justification

for the next millennium for those who asserted the church's control over the crown.

Constantine's leprosy, according to the legend, had been cured by Sylvester, and the

relieved emperor then granted temporal sovereignty to the church. This gesture,

documented in the apocryphal document *The Donation of Constantine*, had yet to be

exposed as a forgery (that would follow in the sixteenth century) and was held to be a

genuine expression of church preeminence in the investiture conflicts.[160] An

emboldened pilgrim condemns this gesture in terms that imply a debased relation

between money and marriage (XIX.115-17).

The canto ends as Dante and Virgil then enter the realm of the Diviners, who

occupy the fourth *bolgia*. As Canto XX begins, Dante espies several figures, their

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[159] The Canto XIX begins with an address to the first simonist, one Simon Magus, whose efforts to "buy" the Holy Spirit are chronicled in Acts 8:14-24 (Hollander 324; Musa 158). This first "prostitution" of Godly power has been replicated by "wretches of his kind," or "miseri seguaci," who "are greedy for gold and silver" ("per oro e per argento avolterate"), and who "prostitute the things of God, that should be brides of goodness" ("le cose di Dio, che di bonate deon essere spose...rapaci," XIX.1-4). It would be misleading to say that the three simonists portrayed in the third *bolgia* "stand out," for all are buried head first with only their feet exposed to the burning flames which perpetually torment them. This unfortunate trio of Popes includes Nicholas III (1277-80), Boniface VIII (1295-1303), and Clement V (1305-14) (Musa 160; Hollander 324-25). Dante held his contemporary Boniface in particular disdain: his "support of the Black Guelphs and the French forces in Florence earned him Dante's unflagging emnity" (Hollander 325). His morally suspect successor was perhaps even more deserving of the poet's scorn. His appointment "secured" by the French King Philip the Fair, Clement ruled according to the king's mandates; he not only moved the Papacy from Rome to Avignon, but also complied with the king's efforts to assure the bloody demise of the Knights Templar. He is particularly deserving of Dante's scorn for prostituting the moral integrity of the church while lining his own pockets. He is shown as "committinig fornication with the kings" ("puttaneggiar coi regi a lui fu vista," XIX. 108).

[160] See Musa 161-63; Hollander 327.

heads wrenched backwards, condemned to a posture that renders them unable to discern what lies ahead. This is the fate of those visionaries who presume to challenge Biblical prophecy, and the Theban Tiresias is counted among this group. Also within its ranks is Manto, the mythic founder of the Virgilian homeland of Mantua. These visionaries stand in contrast to Biblical prophets who interpret a genuinely divine vision, and the tears of a now weeping Dante—seemingly alluding to the epic vision he himself articulates—have been read as an expression of remorse for the prophetic bent that pervades *The Divine Comedy* (Hollander 341). The prostitution motif continues into the fifth *bolgia* and into Canto XXII where Dante shows the sins of barratry and graft, which represent, as described above, a form of "secular simony." Continuing the theme of debased commerce he also introduces a change that begins in Canto XXI by portraying the ominous vision of "the Venetian arsenal" ("l'aranza de' Viniziani," XXI. 7).

This detail signals a change that is to persist through the next several cantos, marking an imagistic transition from debased marital *images* in the first third of the *Malebolge* to martial *motifs* in its middle third. But the image of the arsenal is memorable and purposeful. Hollander suggests that "Dante paints his scene as though he had seen the pictures of Brueghel before they were painted" (360); even if this point can be contested, it is nevertheless probable that he understood the ready application of early industrial imagery to his vision of Hellscape. At any rate, the image captures not only the busy labors of shipbuilders in winter (XXI.7-15), but also the "sticky tar" ("pegola spessa") that they use as "the punishing agent of this *bolgia*" and "the apt sign of the nature of barrators (whom we today would call 'grafters'), working in secret and

leaving such practitioners enlimed with its sticky sign, attaching to all who

practice this kind of fraud" (Hollander 360). They are conjoined with the simonists as

prostituters of office but are also distinguished by their fuller involvement in everyday

economic interactions. The pitch permeates the entire *bolgia*: it is "sticking to the

banks on either side" ("'n'viscava la ripa d'ogne parte") of the descending river

Phlegethon that is soon to pool in the icy reaches of Cocytus in the seat of Hell below.

Here, in the sixth *bolgia*, the pitch serves to mark the domain of those who profit from

illicit commerce or from the sale of office or who line their pockets off the honest

production of craft- and tradespeople.[161] The pilgrim Dante offers a report (XXI.54-57)

which reinforces both the military imagery and the motif of "grotesque humor" (Musa

177) that pervades Cantos XXI-XXVI with a series of culinary images. Collectively,

these are among "several which unify these cantos" (Musa 177) in the middle third of

the *Malebolge*.

While an overconfident Virgil maintains his composure as the approaching

Malebranche quickly and threateningly surround him, a cowering Dante watches

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[161] Marked by the image of the arsenal, the second group of interconnected images and narratives within the *Malebolge* begins in Canto XXI and continues into XXII. With its departure from the fifth *bolgia* and passage into the sixth, the pair leaves behind the barrators and proceeds into a new phase of the journey through Hell's eighth circle. They are now squarely within what is best described as the *Malebolge*'s "military-commercial" district and are no longer on its economic fringes. However, what pervades there is no less illicit, for it includes all manner of corruption, gaming, thievery, hypocrisy, and false counsel, all of which persist in the pursuit of profit. The military and commercial motifs conjoin in the image of the arsenal in the previous canto, and the prostitution motif is "secularized" in its entry into the realm of commerce. In this realm, the dominant motifs are the images of militarism and of gamesmanship, recalling those who profit by guile if not by force. All are complicit in their effort to disrupt healthy economic exchanges, which represent the lifeblood of any community, nation, or empire, and their actions represent a violation of this ideal.

The military-industrial motifs of the sixth *bolgia* are embodied in the *Malebranche*, those winged demons who assume a martial air (albeit a dysfunctional one) and who torment the sinners therein condemned. They assume the form of soldiers, and their leader Malacoda ("evil tail") wields clear authority over his charges until they are beyond the reach of his gaze. These subordinates are also given grotesquely comedic names: Barbariccia ("Curlybeard"); Ciriatto ("Swine face"); and Rubicante ("Red face") stand out as examples. Collectively, because they are simultaneously amusing and terrifying, these *Malebranche* are part retainers of Satan and part Keystone Cops. They line the river's banks, prodding at the barrators submerged in the tarry pitch below.

worriedly from afar (XXI.67-69). Virgil proves equal to the threat they pose and perhaps shows even a bit of *naivet'e* toward the dangers they might make. Once again, however, he negotiates passage into the sixth *bolgia* below. Once summoned, Dante rushes to rejoin his guide, all the while fearing that their monstrous escorts, who now surround him, might break the deal (XXI.92-96).

Explaining the bridge that Dante and Virgil were hoping to use to cross into the next *bolgia*, Malacoda assigns a cadre of ten of his fellows to escort the pair across another bridge, unknown to Virgil, which also joins these two levels. As noted above, a series of motifs–military, grotesque, culinary–serve to conjoin the middle portions of this journey's narrative; in the canto that follows, Dante introduces another intriguing motif with the element of gamesmanship.[162] From his position, Dante observes the barrators, noting the "ch 'entro v'era incesa," or "people poaching" (XXII 18) in the pitchy waters below.[163] It is likewise no accident that this occasion, where the captive

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[162] This new element results in the barrators' malevolent captors being almost upstaged by their condemned captives, hinting that the spectre of social mobility–a necessary feature of any active and healthy economic climate—might also prevail even within the debased economic realm of the *Malebolge*. This particular episode will continue through Canto XXIII, the "longest episode in the *Inferno*" (Hollander 362). Dante begins it by recalling his own military experience, continuing to show this motif as the most notable in the middle third of the journey through the eighth circle (XXII.1-12).

[163] One unfortunate sinner, slower than his associate to move with the approach of the malevolent *Malebranche* and their two guests, finds himself caught and enduring their assorted torments. Dante quickly learns the story of this unfortunate sinner, one Ciampolo, who had performed his acts of barratry in the service of King Thibault of Navarre (Hollander 380) but about whom little otherwise is known. He is quickly set upon and abused by his devilish captors, such that "tra male gatte era venuto 'l sorco," or "the mouse had fallen in with wicked cats" (XXII.58). But the barrator Ciampolo proves as wily as his captors are cruel and serves as the narrative focus of the middle third of the *Malebolge*. Smarting from the wounds inflicted by the *Malebranche*, Ciampolo uses a question posed by Virgil– asking whether he knows of any Italian barrators imprisoned among his condemned cohorts–as the occasion to orchestrate his escape. The abusing devils are rebuked by their leader for overzealously abusing their captive in the presence of their "guests," as Ciampolo quickly identifies his cohort, one fra Gomita (XXII.82-87). Hollander's note confirms this characterization, saying that the good Friar "abused his position to traffic in the sale of public offices" until an indiscretion which enabled the escape of prisoners in his keeping merited his immediate hanging (381). His friend Ciampolo shows himself to be likewise as conniving in death as in life. He tactfully creates a space for himself by offering to summon any "Toschi o Lombardi," or "Tuscans or Lombards" he knows who might be of interest to Virgil and Dante. The *Malebranche*, incensed at the delay, abuse him further (100-02), but "Ciampolo uses Dante and Virgil to set up his countermeasures" (Hollander 381) by requesting that the captors disappear so that more captives might be lured toward their guests. Sensing his motives, the devils nevertheless acquiesce to his request, so that they might abuse those whom Ciampolo had offered to summon. Their captive promptly slips away,

bests his captors, takes place in the most "commercial" of *Malebolge*'s environs,

the industrialized Hellscape where those who profit from graft and sale of dubious

commodities reside. Having sinned in the realm of commerce, they have occasion to

work their duplicity on their brutal, physically superior, but less mentally astute captors.

In this way, Dante portrays the commercial region of this underworld realm as a place

where the orders of power can be (at least momentarily) reversed, just as they can in

any functioning economic climate over time. In so doing, he acknowledges the

potential for social disruption which resides in any prolonged commercial dynamic.

The episode continues in Canto XXIII; the brawling *Malebranche*, showing

their dysfunction, eventually restore order to their contingent in time to realize that

Dante and Virgil have left them behind. In their departure, the pair borrows from

Ciampolo's tactful demonstration, managing likewise to outwit the devils; in so doing,

they assure their passage down to the sixth *bolgia*.[164] Soon the pair is within the realm

of thieves, who occupy the seventh *bolgia* and who are chronicled in Canto XXIV.

Much of the canto's narrative is spent describing the climb down into this realm, a

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leaving the devilish guides with the empty promise of inflicting further torment; he escapes, diving back into the boiling pitch. The devils pursue but come back empty-"clawed" (XXII.130-32). The angry *Malebranche*, their opportunity to inflict further pain now lost, then turn on one another (for a discussion of the layered conflicts at work in this episode, see Hollander, n. 97-99, p. 381).

Virgil and Dante also recognize the opportunity to escape from their threatening captors as Canto XXIII begins. However, it is useful at this juncture to consider Musa's reading of Ciampolo's maneuvers (182-86). Further, in the devilish donnybrook that follows Ciampolo's escape, Musa notes a further alterior motive shown by some of the devils in their desire to "'pick a fight' with the responsible devil–Alichino" (Musa 186; also see Hollander 381-82 for a full explanation of the layered deceits that take place in lines 100-23).

[164] Here, they enter a realm of "gente dipinta," or "laquered people," who are so characterized because they are covered in "gilded mantles" (Hollander 396). Their morose expressions, covered by cowls, recall the Clunaic monks (63), whose austerity belied their order's great wealth. Golden on the outside but leaden within, their heavy cloaks cause these hypocrites to move slowly but likewise enable Dante and Virgil to converse with them. They recognize two as "Frati godenti," or members of the "Jovial Friars," an extravagant holy order. This pair's extravagant rabble-rousing violated their order's mandate to bring peace to Bologna, their divided city (see Musa 193; Hollander 396-97). They also encounter Caiphus, the hypocrite of Biblical fame. In their conversations, Virgil learns that he had been fooled by the *Malebranche* in the previous *bolgia*. He had been informed by Malacoda that while the first bridge had collapsed, a second bridge would enable their passage from the fifth to the six *bolgia*; here he finds himself to be the victim of another lie.(see Musa 194, n. 141; Hollander 398). With this information, the episode of the previous cantos concludes, leaving both Dante and Virgil more appreciative of the destructive power of fraudulent duplicity.

feature that captures the spatial depth of the descent. Once within this abyss,

Dante and Virgil see sinners accosted by serpents and witness an individual whose fate

it is to be perpetually burned, reduced to ashes, and then reformed as himself.[165]

This scene of imagistic transition helps to signal the passage from the

Malebolge's middle to its final third. The conjoined military, martial, and grotesque

motifs are giving way to another series that shape and define the final three *bolgia*.

These are more grotesque but less comic, more martial but less military, and more

connected to the tangible concept of currency while less commercial in nature. The

thieves, condemned to various forms of shape-shifting, betray the violently unnatural

forms that prevail in the lowest reaches of the *Malebolge*, closest to the seat of Hell.

Dante informs his readers that this grotesque account of shape-shifting has no parallel in

the works of either Lucian or of Ovid (XV.94-99).[166]

The "artistic device" shown in this transformation likewise accompanies the

increasing severity of sins portrayed in the *Malebolge*'s lower three levels with an

overtly grotesque motif. While readers might feel simultaneously entertained and

horrified by the abuses meted out by the *Malebranche* and by the threats they pose, our

reactions to the grotesque motifs in the later *bolgia* assume a different form. Just as the

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[165] He is the Tuscan thief, one Vanni Fucci, whose crime was not only to steal sacred objects from the Temple of St. James in his native Pistoia (see Hollander 417, n. 132-39) but also to walk free when an innocent was punished for the thefts. In his declaration to his visitors, he serves to prolong the martial theme of these middle *bolgia*, ending the canto by prophetically proclaiming the upheavals that are to come both in his native city and in Dante's Florence (XXIV.145-51). In Canto XXV, as they descend further, the pair is still in the presence of this notorious thief, seeing him attacked by serpents as he delivers blasphemous rants toward his underworld visitors. He is quickly swallowed by serpents as was another thief, the mythic figure of Cacus, who had stolen a herd of cattle and was brutally and summarily killed by an angry Hercules. Yet another thief, one Cianfa, is then shown conjoining with a large reptile, and the two merge into one monstrous form.

[166] The graphic and horrifying transformation of the two theives—Cianfa and Agnel—also signals a narrative transition as well—from a motif of the grotesquely humorous to one of grotesque horror. Of this blending of human and reptilian forms, Musa observes that "the blurry presentation offered to the reader represents an artistic device on the part of Dante to enhance the fluction of identity given to metamorphosis itself" (212).

Florentine thieves metamorphose into grotesque forms in Canto XXV, so does

the *Malebolge* itself change its imagistic character. The motif of benign grotesquerie

gives way to a more foreboding strain of abjectivity, one which shapes the depiction of

the severer sins of fraud as captured in the imagery of Cantos XVII-XXX. Making its

first appearance in the ungainly, indeed revolting conjoining of thieves and reptiles,

Dante's images will become even more disturbing in the *Malebolge*'s lower levels.

Readers are prepared for abjectivity by the transitional quality of Canto XXVI,

which is dominated by classical figures as much as by imagistic motifs. The classical

elements include Virgil's addresses to Ulysses and Diomedes and Ulysses' account of

his last voyage, which merited both his departure from his family in Ithaca as well as

his efforts to convince his aging and exhausted crew of the worth of their journey to the

ends of the known earth.[167] Despite the chorus of arguments which point to the heroic

character of Ulysses's quest for knowledge (and Dante's wish to portray this quest

favorably),[168] it is most important to note how the dominant motif in the canto is the

flames themselves, highlighting the duplicitious qualities ascribed to the brave but

tormented souls residing in this eighth *bolgia*. An image of sinners engulfed by flames,

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[167] The journey would ultimately result in their deaths. What stands out, however, and what signals the growing severity of the sins that Dante and Virgil are now encountering in this lower region of the *Malebolge*, is the imagistic motif of flames which pervades the canto. It begins with an "ironic apostrophe" to Dante's native Florence (Hollander 437), in which the pilgrim affirms that "per lo 'nferno tuo nome si spande!", or "your fame resounds through Hell!" (XXVI.3). Later, as the pair makes their "solinga via," or "solitary way" toward the eighth *bolgia*, Dante espies the flames below; these images dominate the visual character of this canto and are closely connected with the sins that the travelers are to encounter. In Virgil's explanation of the flames (XXVI.47-48), one sees the perpetual torment of the sinners held captive there.

These spirits occupy the eighth *bolgia* and are perpetually "longing to captivate the minds of those upon whom they practiced their fraudulent work" (Hollander 450). While he will soon intensify the grotesque character of the imagery in Hell, in the eighth *bolgia* the pair remain in the domain of the deceivers, who, even in their *condemnation*, merit a degree of *admiration*. The accounts the false deceivers give to explain their sins are layered and subtle; only the easily swayed–like those betrayed in the world above–are victimized by their sinful ways. If Ulysses' account of his deception (and the critical debate that surrounds it) of his bedraggled crew in their last and fatal voyage is any indication, the pattern of discourse that follows in this next Canto will be equally loaded with subtle shades of meaning.

[168] Summarized in Hollander, 451-54.

guilty of what Musa terms "Fraudulent Counseling" (221), dominates the canto.

Ulysses in particular would seem to merit condemnation as a "false counselor";

Hollander, in reading the subtleties of Dante's portrayal, describes this hero of classical

epic "in modern parlance" as "a con artist, and a good one, too" (453). The flames

signal a benign beginning to an imagistic pattern that will quickly become more

grotesque.

As Canto XXVII begins, Dante continues the imagistic motif of sinners

shrouded in flames. Indeed, there is grotesqueness in the complexity of the discourses

used by these false counseolors, and one must vigilantly attend to the distance between

the deceiver and what he ultimately claims. This detail is as necessary in reading the

account of Ulysses as it is in hearing the testimonies of one Guido de Montefeltro, who

serves as the central figure of this canto.[169] Dante conceptually links the two main

figures of the eighth *bolgia*, and critics have offered a variety of reasons to explain why.

For this inquiry, it is most important to note that both were military figures, both were

skilled in the persuasive arts, and both had ulterior motives in their motivational efforts.

Most importantly, in Dante's *Malebolge*, both endure a similar torment.[170] And in the

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[169] Shrouded in flames, Guido's sight and voice are obscured, and the flames burning his tongue limit his powers of expression. He misapprehends Dante, seeing the living traveler as one like himself, a condemned shade. Struggling to address the pair of travelers, he nonetheless asks for news of his native city, the war-torn Ravenna. Dante tells Guido of the tenuous peace which has provided a respite from its ongoing turmoil. The poet then asks for news of his sinful habit of false counsel which has condemned him to the *Malebolge*; in reply, the shade speaks the memorable lines which serve as the epigraph to Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (XXVII.61-66). He then details how his patterns of false counsel have prevailed through his career, first as a noted Ghibelline captain whose skills in warfare led to his recruitment by the papacy. Envisioning a life of retreat, he was disappointed to become one of the favored military advisors of Pope Boniface VIII (see Hollander 468), where his duties were again turned towards warfare against his former Ghibelline cohorts. Nevertheless, he claims to have retained a bit of autonomy, which is reflected in the deceitful counsel he gave to Boniface. He states, "l 'opere mie non furon leonine, ma di volpe," or "my deeds were not a lion's, but the actions of a fox" (XXVII.74-75).

[170] But because Guido is spatially removed from Ulysses, he seems to endure a severer fate, one that helps push the narrative's imagistic motif toward a slightly more grotesque depiction. Both can be said to be "grotesque" in their sensibility, self-awareness, and debased (i.e. rhetorically manipulative) patterns to their discourse. In placing them in this *bolgia*, Dante sees something unsettling about the distance between each figure's intentions and actions.

narrative which chronicles the travelers' progress through Hell's fortress, both serve to signal Dante and Virgil's entry into the lower third of the *Malebolge*, where, true to epic form, an escalation of the poem's martial motifs proceeds with an intensification of its images of the grotesque.[171]

Indeed, the gruesome imagery in *Malebolge*'s lower third is "ratcheted up" in Canto XXVIII, as signaled in the very first tercet (XXVIII.1-3). Immediately the poet recalls a series of horrifically bloody battles, mentioning a series fought in close proximity to his native Italy, both ancient and contemporary: Apulia, Ceprano, and Tagliacozzo are most prominent in this list.[172] Their graphic nature is acknowledged by the poet, and the image, "suggesting layers of excavated battlefields, each containing vast areas of wounded soldiers holding out their mutilated limbs, gives us some sense of Dante's view of the end result of war, sheer human butchery" (Hollander 483). Nevertheless, while this effort to depict the "end result" of warfare continues the military motif over from earlier chapters, the poet states that the images he has just introduced offer no comparison to those horrifying scenes he witnesses in the ninth *bolgia* (XXVIII.19-21).

A series of disturbing images follows and prompts the worst visions of battlefield dismemberment. This is the realm of the schismatics where sinners themselves are rent asunder, just as they themselves had rent asunder a variety of groups and institutions whose strength, Dante implies, was in their unity. One

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Moreover, both have belied the trust placed in them by others and used their guile to the advantage of those they serve, a sin that Musa terms "military fraud" (230).

[171] Ultimately, however, some narrative process is evident between the pair's encounter with Ulysses and their departure from Guido, for "the canto opens with Ulysses' flame calm and steady (vv. 1-2) and ends with that of Guido writhing" (Hollander 470). Like the figures within these two cantos, the images which help to comment on their significance are likewise subtle and layered.

[172] Catalogued by Hollander 482.

especially graphic image, for instance, depicts the gutted body of the "fallen

Christian" (and Muslim prophet) Muhammad, whose fate is to be perpetually torn and

rent (20-27); others who experience similarly gruesome fates are also soon to appear.

With these images, Dante clearly aligns this lower third of the *Malebolge* not only with

battlefield imagery to continue the martial motifs he's established, but also with a more

pronounced grotesque aesthetic which contradicts the humorously gruesome images

he'd depicted in the Cantos of *Malebolge*'s middle third. The schismatics, having

brought disharmony to their worlds and causes, are rent into disarray. Dante's

sensitivity to such disharmony and divisiveness is clearly shown in this seemingly

gratuitous rending of flesh which makes Canto XXVIII distressingly memorable.

As before, the poet combines a number of ancient schismatics with those who

would be recognizable to an audience of his contemporaries, and strangely the sinners

are "ranked" according to the severity of their divisiveness: those who have used

manual skills for creating disharmony are merely amputees (no hands); those who use

eloquence are rendered speechless (their throats are severed, or tongues cut out). The

most memorable image—and perhaps the most disturbing in the whole of the *Inferno*—is

the vision of one Bertrand de Bron, a noted writer of military poetry who "loved to see

destruction of towns and men."[173] Condemned for his divisiveness in the English court

of Henry II, Bertrand must bear his head about in his hands, such that "Di se facea a se

stesso lucerna," or "Of himself he made himself a lamp" (XXVIII.124). In this

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[173] To clarify, Hollander offers an analogy to a modern military figure: "One thinks of Robert Duvall's character in Martin Scorsese's film *Apocalypse Now*, who lived for the smell of napalm in the morning" (486). While Hollander misidentifies the film's directior (it was, in fact, Francis Ford Coppola), his analogy is worth noting.

unenviable posture, he is fated perpetually to run about "with his head cut off,"

stoically accepting his condemnation (XXVIII.139-42).

Shaken by the carnage he has just witnessed, the pilgrim Dante has no problem

acknowledging the sin of schism; the poet, in contrast, had seen it first hand. Such a

view is in keeping with the unifying vision of Dante's imperial sensibilities, as well as

with his disdain toward the divided Florentine world that had exiled him. Entering the

realm of the falsifiers who occupy the *Malebolge*'s tenth and lowest level, Dante the

pilgrim confronts the sinners who commit the most damaging and divisive sins as

imagined by Dante the poet. And in this next Canto XXIX, the poet maintains the

disturbingly grotesque motif of portraying these sinners in their most gruesome

abjectivity.[174]

This tenth and final level of the subterranean fortress represents its lowest

boundary; as in the first level, the poet uses a series of metallurgical, military and

commercial images and allusions to reinforce the idea that, as a whole, the eighth circle

symbolizes a realm of debased commercial interaction. Still among the fraudulent, and

having already encountered alchemists and magicians, Dante the pilgrim sees another

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[174] A series of similes stand out in the poet's effort to portray the severity of this sin, and Dante once again uses disturbing and unsavory images to connect this Canto to the previous one: Mentioning three hospitals–Valdichiana, Maremma, and Sardegna—he asks readers to envision them emptied of malarial patients for the duration of the summer (June through September) and these placed in an outdoor pit (XXIX 46-51). In the imagistic progress from dismembered limbs to ones rotting and diseased, Dante has continued the grotesque patterns of the body's defilement which imagistically link these two cantos. Moreover, the corrupters–falsifiers, counterfeiters, alchemists, magicians, and others who violate the laws of nature and the uniting potentials of humankind–are condemned to this place of contagion, perpetually to claw at their itching and scabrous bodies with filthy nails (79-84). Graffolino (109-11) and Capoccio (136-39), two unfortunate figures, stand out. Both are alchemists and, it is implied, falsifiers of other varieties. With their corruption of metals, they are fated to inhabit bodies corrupted by this pervasive malarial contagion in the tenth *bolgia*.

series of sinners which Dante the poet condemns even more powerfully: those

who debase commerce, the lifeblood of any functioning and unified empire.[175]

Significantly, the Canto's major figure is the lethargic, dropsy-laden, and

immovable form of Master Adamo, a forger of Florins who appears deformed and

inverted, as if "[f]ashioined like a lute" ("fatto a guisa di lëuto," XXX 49).[176]

Ultimately, in the pantheon of frauds that reside within this tenth *bolgia* of the eighth

circle of Hell, Dante locates the most important elements that lead to the fracturing of

empire, and these are heavily invested as much with metals and money as they are with

morals.

Master Adamo's subsequent explanation for his counterfeiting activities further

helps to show that Dante connected a debased currency with a fractured empire.

Adomo readily (and rather pridefully) admits to his illicit manufacture of debased

florins (XXX.73-75). Despite his prideful admission, Adamo fails to accept

responsibility for his actions, arguing that his sin was ultimately not of his doing; rather,

it was undertaken in the service of the Guidi, a prominent family of Romagna, who had

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[175] As Canto XXX begins, Dante carries the motif of gruesome body imagery into this last *bolgia*, recounting the brutal slaughters committed by victims who have lost the favor of the gods. In their madness, they have committed heinous acts of violence which are described in graphic detail. As before, however, the images of those beset by madness are less horrifying than the scene that is soon to unfold. Still in the presence of the two scabrous alchemists, whose corruption of metals represents a violation of the natural world, the poet is startled when another pair of sinners dashes forward. Like a rabid pig, one grabs at Capoccio's neck, gnawing at it before dragging him away (XXX.22-27). As the other shade is held at bay, Graffolino explains that the first attacker is one Gianni Schicchi, a reenowned impersonater who used his talents in mimicry for his financial advantage. See Hollander, p. 515, n. 42-45.

[176] While this forger will merit further consideration, it is important to note the three varieties of fraud that the pilgrim has thus far encountered in the tenth and lowest level of the *Malebolge*, as well as the fourth kind which he will soon discern. The pilgrim has met alchemists, an impersonator, and a forger to this point; he is soon to meet a perjurer and then will leave the eighth circle. It is important to stress the monetary dimensions of these sins: two of the four forms of fraud directly involve metals (and require a knowledge of metallurgy); more importantly, one directly involves an undervalued and debased currency. A third is condemnable when used for financial gain, and the fourth, in the case of Sinon, results in the destruction of Troy, the precursor to Rome's imperial greatness.

forced him to debase the golden florin (marked by its stamp of the Baptist) with

"three carats of dross" ("tre carati di mondiglia," XXX.90).

In this way, Adamo embodies the mindset that ultimately destroys empires. In

placing the blame for introducing debased currency on the Guidi, his anger is

"understandable." But "his placing the entire blame on them for his own misdeeds is

typical of certain sinners, always finding a cause for their failures in the hearts and

minds of others" (Hollander 516). And his sin, which Dante sees as not only the most

important embodiment of the *Malebolges'* debased economy but also the most

damaging to the poet's imperial vision, is the severest in the eighth circle. Ambitious in

life, Adamo is condemned here in death to anemic lethargy, jousting verbally and

trading weak blows with Sinon as the two engage in a perpetual "violent and amusing"

quarrel over whose sins were the greater. A transfixed Dante watches their enervated

jousting until admonished by Virgil, who tells the poet that "the wish to hear such

things is base" ("che voler cio udire e bassa volgia," XXX.148). But in their departure

from the tenth *bolgia*, Musa observes that the "corrupt sense of values of the Fraudulent

is here symbolized, in the case of the Falisifiers, by the corrupt state of their minds and

bodies" (254). Dante and Virgil leave this hellish and diseased fortress behind; they

depart from the economic centerpiece of the *Inferno* and descend into its ninth and

deepest circle.

In this realm of the treacherous, they encounter four kinds of betrayers: those

who inhabit Caina (betrayal against relatives), Antenora (against party or homeland),

Ptolomea (against guests), and Judecca (against rightful lords). The most prominet

figure who is roughly contemporary with Dante is the Pisan Count Ugolino (XXX), a

figure alternately admirable and pathetic, who, in exile, was not only forced to

see his children starve in front of him but finally brought to eat their flesh as well. He

had involved them in a plot of his own making, in which Ruggieri, his fellow

conspirator, had turned against him. In death, while gnawing perpetually on the skull of

his enemy, he must also acknowledge his patriarchial failings and has even merited

sympathetic readings from those inclinied to romanticize his fate. Toward the center,

closest to Satan himself, they encounter the expected figures of Brutus, Cassius, and

Judas, that "unholy" trinity who betrayed both church and empire and who represent the

antithesis of Dante's vision of a reconstituted, rechristianized Roman empire (XXXIV).

Lucifer sits at the center, submerged in ice at the seat of Hell, and the pair must climb

up his frozen body as the two begin their journey out of the *Inferno*.

Of course, this quick summary of the pair's journey through Cocytus, fails to

do justice to its full imagistic and historical complexity. But there is a pair of figures

briefly—and almost incidentally mentioned—whose appearance in Dante's underworld

deserves consideration. Just as Dante and Virgil enter Hell's ninth circle, they hear a

mournful horn-blast which signals their arrival into this dismal realm. The pilgrim

describes the sound as one that would have "made the loudest thunderclap seem faint"

("tanto ch'avrebbe ogne tuon falto fioco," XXXI.12-13).

This familiar sound comes from the *Song of Roland* when Roland finally and

too late summons Charlemagne's aid (XXXI.16-18). The mournful blast recalls not

only the ambush of Roland's men but also the treachery of Ganelon which made them

vulnerable to the Saracen attack. But interestingly, Dante's use of the simile suggests

that even though he "knew (the *Chanson*) in a form probably most unlike anything we

read today," he would follow the pattern of "most medieval readers (who

believed that) there was perhaps no worse betrayal than that of Ganelon" (Hollander

530). The mere mention of Roland by name in the ninth circle of Hell breaks Dante's

pattern of naming the virtous in the realm of the depraved. This detail is best shown in

the fact that Beatrice, his guide through *Purgatory* and *Paradise*, is never mentioned by

name in the *Inferno*, nor are any of the emperors that the poet associated with Rome's

imperial majesty.

Dante's willingness to refer to Roland by name suggests that he was dismissive

of the idea that Charlemagne's greatest knight be considered as a Christ-like figure who

met his tragic death through the betrayal of another. Indeed, the Canto's focus on the

horn-blast rather than on Roland himself serves to suggest that Dante wished to

associate the sound less with Ganelon's betrayals and more with Roland's failures as a

leader. In the sound of the horn blast, one is reminded as much of Roland's prideful

refusal to summon help as of his betrayal by Ganelon. In Dante's mind, both are

"fallen" although the sin of betrayal committed by Ganelon seems to rank only slightly

lower in severity than Roland's violations as a military commander.

Reading Florentine Politics and Economics into the Inferno

As emphasized above, Dante's sensitivity to the debasement of currency and

commerce grows out of his desire for a return to the imperial greatness of Rome, which

he believed was achievable through the agency of florin-based commerce. Throughout

the *Inferno* one finds evidence of debased economic practices and insulted currencies,

and these portrayals prefigure a more elevated form of commerce which stands as one

of the hallmarks of imperial majesty; modern scholars have recognized the importance

of Dante's political and economic thought and have identified it as a crucial point

of entry into his epic poem. Indeed, scholar Joan Ferrnate has produced the most

definitive examination on the political dimensions of Dante's work, and any assessment

of how *The Divine Comedy's* political and economic dimensions intersect with its

literary character must acknowledge several of her observations. The most important of

these detail the extraordinary philosophical correlation between the *Monarchy,* his most

important political tract, and the *Comedy,* his epic poem.[177]

Ferrante's study shows how Dante based each of the *Comedy's* books on an

"overtly political subject," in order to focus "on the political entity that serves as the

model for that cantica: in Hell, it is Florence, in Purgatory, Italy, and in Paradise, the

Roman empire" (47). In this way, he envisioned the stark juxtaposition between the

vibrant, bustling, commercially sophisticated, ambitious, and (in his mind) morally

suspect Florence of his birth, the disjointed, "self-seeking smaller states" (50) of the

politically turbulent Italian peninsula of his time, and the departed empire of centuries

past, which he regarded as the ultimate expression of paradise, a paragon of civic virtue

and justice which "was the inevitable and only possible model for Dante's paradise"

(52).

Such a climate made it easy to draw out analogies between his native city and

the qualities of the individual sinner, which he did through "a series of identifications of

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[177] In addition to using the *Comedy* to express "the human need for a structured society in Paradise," Ferrante explains how Dante's epic also "reinforces the other major arguments of the *Monarchy,*" including "the proper relation of papacy and empire,...the divine Destiny of Rome, and the need for empire" (45). Moreover, in the whole of the *Comedy* Dante also "deals with the question of empire as the ideal form of government by dramatizing through Hell the dangers of the lack of strong central authority and through Paradise the benefits of a well-functioning empire.... Dante underscores the divine destiny of Rome all through the *Comedy,* by choosing Virgil as his guide, by pairing Aeneas with Paul as the models for his journey, by using Rome and Israel as the chosen people whose virtues and vices provide the exempla in Purgatory, by having the Roman eagle represent divine justice in Jupiter, and by making Christ a "citizen" of the heavenly Rome (45).

Florence with particular sins" (60-61). Thus, Dante's Florence, "[b]ecause it serves both as a macrocosm of individual moral corruption and as the symbol of secular resistance to the empire in Italy (the self-styled anti-Rome), it is the most suitable model for Hell" (61). Ultimately, Ferrante summarizes the philosophical as well as the personal reasons for Dante's choice to identify hell with his native Florence given its stature as the ambitious, commercially aggressive aspirant to the greatness of the Roman Empire (61).[178]

In such an environment, the conjoined factors of commerce and currency play a role of imagistic significance in Dante's vision of the underworld. Dante's Florence, a commercially dynamic place, experienced its share of economic upheavals and social transformations, and even the poet's banishment can be read as a consequence of his city's commercial volatility. As a result, the commercial and political sins that individuals fall into are particularly on display in the *Inferno*, occupying much of the eighth circle. More importantly, those sinners who occupy the eighth circle are four levels removed from the avaricious, who occupy the fourth circle, and whose sins focus less on the perverse forms of commercial exchange and more on the habit of valuing their wealth unnaturally. The money crimes are positioned but one level removed from Cocytus, the very seat of hell. The lowest reaches of the eighth circle contain the

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[178] In the "concrete, physical reality" (65) of the hell that Dante based on the Florence of his age, Dante enumerates the "characteristics (that) medieval Florence shares with hell" to show that its residents live in "the hell they create for themselves" (65). And to be fair, medieval Florence's worst characteristics were shared with other medieval cities, including "the narrow curving streets filled with the traffic of vendors, muggers, the crippled and mutilated, [and] the stench of human excrement" (65). But despite this typical urban ugliness, early fourteenth-century Florence also bore the scars of its tumultuous past which merit mention in the *Inferno* (65-66).

In this way, the political dimensions of Dante's hell are pronounced, as the poet "shows how all sins contribute to social disorder, not only the overtly disruptive sins of violence, fraud and treachery but even those that seem most personal. Lust, gluttony, greed have sociopolitical overtones; even heresy and suicide are presented within a political context" (133). Further, the pilgrim Dante "moves in Hell from vices which seem to be personal and simple to more and more overtly social faults," so that "[b]y analyzing the structure of Hell, ...we can see how Dante reveals the hidden corruption that undermines society and how he unmasks the respected public figures" (137).

perpetuators of fraud, which, according to Dante, represented the greatest insult

to his imperial vision.[179] Dante is particularly critical toward the sins of barratry, or the

sale of government office, and simony, the comparable sin in church government.

However, the most egregious, damning, and condemned level of the eighth circle is

reserved for those whose sins conjoin economic, universal, and social violation

(Ferrante 188).[180]

Given the emphasis on business and the money that enables it in his native

Florence, Dante would have had much inspiration upon which to base his underworld

account and in particular to depict the commerce and money-induced sins in the eighth

circle. According to Ferrante, the poet "accepts commerce as an essential part of life in

a complex society, as a basic form of exchange, like language, though vulnerable to the

same kind of abuses and in need of the same kinds of control" (311). And the poet was

well suited to make this imaginative investment in the concept of commercial

interactions, for his familiarity with the commercial world began with his family of

origins where his "connection with the commercial world was personal."[181] Further, in

noting that "commerce and literature were not mutually exclusive in (Dante's)

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[179] Ferrante's summary of the composition of the eighth circle is usefully included here: "Dante emphasizes the importance of fraud by dividing the eighth circle into ten sections and devoting thirteen cantos to it, more than a third of the entire cantica of Hell. He arranges the ten sections so that they seem to be distortions or intensifications of the larger categories of Hell's nine circles or the manipulation of the impulse to those sins in others, the organizing of sin for profit...The souls in the eighth circle prostitute every aspect of human life, the body (sec. 1), the mind (2), God's gifts of the sacraments (3), of prophecy (4), of government (5); they practice willful deception in politics (secs. 6,8,9), commerce (7,10), and religion (9)" (167-69).

[180] Ferrante offers a useful qualification to this point: "Counterfeiting is even worse than tampering with the elements, because it threatens political stability directly. The last scene in the circle of fraud is, fittingly, a violent exchange of fists and words between the liar, Sinon, whose false words helped to destroy Troy, the future Rome, and the counterfeiter, Adam, whose fake florins caused severe economic and political problems for Florence, the would-be Rome" (188-89).

[181] "He was the son of a banker or money-changer, the brother-in-law of a moneylender; he himself engaged in some business and was a member of a guild, the "Arte dei medici e degli speziali," primarily involved with drugs and spices, though he probably joined the guild to further his political career" (Ferrante 311).

Florence," Ferrante cites two well known contemporaries of the poet, Dino

Compagni and Giovanni Vallani, who "mediate most directly between their society and

later generations" (312).

Much is revealed about Dante's attitudes toward trade and commerce in the

way he represents money, whose spiritual and linguistic values extend beyond its

function as currency. The poet "is concerned with money as a basic instrument of

exchange, an essential tool of society, very much in the way language is" and "often

connects the abuse of language with the abuse of money."[182] Moreover, Dante saw

currency like language; both provided a necessary unifying force to bring together the

disparate and often opposed city-states on the Italian peninsula, if not the whole of

Western Europe. Moreover, both money and language facilitate the state's

development and ensure its prosperity, and so have a moral function beyond their

obvious service as agents of human exchange and interaction. However, both are prone

to be misused and corrupted in the wrong hands—money can bribe, buy power, and

interfere with justice while language can seduce, flatter, and deceive. While the

redeemed souls in his Paradise have evolved beyond the currency of language, those

condemned to his Inferno are obsessed and consumed with the currency of money.

Ferrante argues that "Dante himself is both a poet and a merchant in the *Comedy*" not

only because he uses his poetic language to serve "as an intermediary between God and

man" but also because "he travels to foreign realms" while seeking "to acquire the most

valuable goods available to man and bring them back to sell to his countrymen for their

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[182] To clarify this point Ferrante cites "the first example of gibberish in Hell" used by "economic sinners"
(the miser and prodigals) "who attack each other with words as they did the providential order with riches;
blasphemers, who defy god with words, are in the same division of the seventh circle as usurers; liars and
counterfeiters are together in the last section of the eighth circle as the worst practitioners of fraud" (325).

own good" (328). As such, "from the beginning of the poem Dante uses

financial imagery to describe his own journey and experience as well as the spiritual

debts and treasures of the souls he sees" (329). In his underworld, "financial language

in Hell is applied to sin and evil" (329) such that "Hell is a great sack which holds the

treasure of evil (7.17-18...)" (330).

To understand his effort to invest currency with this moral and spiritual

dimension, one must begin with the florin, which had a significant place not only in the

economic climate of Dante's native Florence, but also in the political and national

imagination of its populace. For Dante, the symbolism of coinage was significant, and

he conjoined money and language as the key currencies in his pro-imperial politics. In

his vision, a strong, pure, vital system of currency was a symbol of state unity whereas a

debased impure currency was a symbol of human debasement and corruption (Ferrante

366). In this way, Dante's condemnation of the fraudulent and, in particular, the

counterfeiters is particularly pronounced. Ferrante explains that "in the final section of

fraud, Dante places those who falsify the most basic elements of human intercourse or

exchange: identity, words, metals, and coins" (354). Dante's habit of using financial

language in his moral vision "permits the reader to extend the issue of vows to oaths in

commercial contracts," so that Dante is "arguing for truth and prudence in business as

well as in religion and politics"and "for a careful consideration of one's needs and

resources" which must be "weighed against the external situation before one commits

oneself to any contract with God or man" (Ferrante 362-63). In this way, the message

that resonates throughout the recesses of Dante's *Inferno* contained "commerecial

overtones" which not only gave them "particular force for much of Dante's audience"

(Ferrante 362-63) but also showed the poet's effort to accommodate the

conjoined epic motifs of metals, militarism, and commerce to his Christianized imperial

vision.

Chapter 8: Negotiating Salvation and Reconciling God and

Commerce in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

Introduction: The Shadow of Dante: The Divine Comedy's *Imagistic Influence in Medieval and Early Renaissance English Literature*

A relatively brief six decades passed between the death of Dante Aligheri in 1321 and first mention of his achievement in English literature in the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer. It is safe to say that the Italian poet's influence on later poets was profound and that his ideas proliferated into the minds of later writers of the fourteenth century. In an impressive display of archival record keeping which was undertaken in 1921 to celebrate the sesquicentennial anniversary of Dante's death, professor Paget Toynbee compiled a chronological record of the occasions where the Italian poet was paid tribute by English writers and artists. Not surprisingly, the first recorded English translation of his poetry, as well as the first mention of his name, is found in the poetry of Chaucer.[183] Moreover, the English poet saw the Florentine in the way he also saw Virgil: primarily as an authority on hell, and a conduit for residual imperial idealism. Ultimately, therefore, it is reasonable to identify a field of Dantean themes and images throughout Chaucer's poetry and especially in *The Canterbury Tales*. According to Chaucer biographer Donald Howard, the English poet, guided by his Florentine precursor, wrote with an ear toward what are best described as the distant echoes of the Old Humanist tradition (Howard 30). In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Chaucer found one of Old

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[183] According to Toynbee's record, references to Dante are found in both *Troilus and Criseyde* and in the *Parliament of Foules*. He is also translated in the *Legend of Good Women* and in the *Legend of Dido*, and his influence is pervasive throughout *The Canterbury Tales* as well. Perhaps the most notable instance of Dante's presence in this work is in "The Monk's Tale," which is essentially a translation of the "Ugolino" episode from the *Inferno's* Canto XXXIII (Toynbee 3).

Humanism's most important conduits. And the influence provided by the Florentine poet for his English epic predecessor complemented equally powerful and profound resonances left by Florentine poets of later generations, Petrarch and especially Boccaccio.[184]

If Dante is recognized as the writer of the great spiritual epic, then Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is the great epic as well as the great comedy of late medieval human experience. The work has also been described in terms of a "mercantile epic" as patterned after Boccaccio's *Decameron*, if to a lesser degree. Even as "Chaucer's storytellers span the social ranks and only some are mercantile," as Howard argues, it is clear "commerce is (the) semantic field" of the "General Prologue" (Howard 407), just as it is in the deepest circles of Dante's *Inferno*. The commercial orientation among select tellers of the *Tales* underscores the tension in Chaucer's own mind between his merchant background and courtly inclinations, between his Boethian-influenced Christian spirituality that prepares for the hereafter the necessity of making a living in this imperfect sensory world.

Within this reinvented epic form, Chaucer's connections to the *Divine Comedy* and his larger inheritance from the Old Humanist tradition emerge with close scrutiny. Indeed, several of Chaucer's most notable works—like those of his English contemporaries—have close thematic connections with Dante's epic.[185] Like the

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[184] For a discussion of Chaucer's Florentine influences, see Wallace 50-53.

[185] Providing a more contemporary perspective on Dante's influence on fourteenth century English literature, scholar R.A. Shoaf describes how, beyond his obvious influence, Dante's imagery indirectly permeated the works of Chaucer, where it is pervasive in previously unrecognized passages in the "Man of Law's Tale" (197). The controversial argument that the Italian poet's influence is also evident in the works of the Gawain poet is also examined by Shoaf, who explains how one can read the later cantos of the *Purgatorio* into the *Pearl's* idealized landscapes (190). Ultimately, Shoaf tries to account for Dante's wide presence in the works of the most canonical texts and authors of late medieval English literature by asking, "who is to say there were no manuscripts of Dante in

pilgrim Dante, the pilgrim Chaucer begins his journey—as do his pilgrim

cohorts—in a state of psychological and intellectual darkness. Like the pilgrim Dante at

the outset of his journey, they are also clearly invested in matters of the world. But as

the journey progresses and as the later tales are told, the motley group realizes a sort of

metaphoric salvation that clarifies as *The Canterbury Tales* begins to reveal itself as a

salvation epic. Unlike the Florentine poet, however, the Londoner delights in keeping

his eponymous narrator in a state of darkness: where the pilgrim Dante learns and

grows, the pilgrim Chaucer remains rather oblivious to the larger significance of his

journey. This feature of Chaucer's salvation epic illustrates one of a handful of

instances which reflect, according to biographer Howard, the poet's willingness to

parody Dante (240).

Beyond this impulse to parody, however, one finds in Chaucer's works a larger

effort to connect with Dantean epic motifs. The salvation epic, as shown in *The*

Canterbury Tales, allowed Chaucer to pattern a narrative after precedents influenced

less directly by the salvation narratives of the Church fathers while using imagistic

influences of Virgil and Dante to achieve his epic ambitions. In particular, the salvation

epic afforded Chaucer the occasion to reexamine the Dantean concern of reconciling

commercial necessity with the pursuit of salvation.[186]

England in the fourteenth century?" He answers by arguing that "we need to honor the evidence of literature itself. Even as Dante, first in this as in so much else, understood that poetry without a theory of poetry is futile, the cacophony of voices dismembering Italy; let us also understand that interpreting texts without a theory of the evidentiality of texts is futile, too. Or worse, it forecloses our reading by denying a priori the data of texts themselves" (200).

[186] If the dominant motifs in Dante's underworld are focused around transgressions relating to coinage and commerce, then his influence led other writers of late medieval epic and romance likewise to regard money and commerce as central preoccupations. This concern is particularly evident in *The Canterbury Tales*, which, as will be shown below, are heavily invested with a commercial dimension. In short, unlike their epic precursors, the "work" of the Dantean underworld is also the work of Chaucer's pilgrims: rather than making arms and armor, they are engaged with a more problematic, more "alchemical" pursuit of "making" money.

Narrative Structure of The Canterbury Tales: *The Significance of* "The Knight's Tale" *in Conjunction with* "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale"

Working in conjunction with this spiritual dimension is the *Tales'* more commercial dimension, which is embodied in the figures of the Miller, Reeve, Wife of Bath, Franklin, Cook, Physician, Merchant, and others, who are clearly people of business and trade and are skilled in making profits. In contrast with those pilgrims directly affiliated with the Church (again, in varying degrees of legitimacy), these individuals are more overtly connected to the commercial life of Chaucer's world. Like their spiritual cohorts, some are more honest than others. The imagery of "The Knight's Tale" and "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale," when melded into the overall sequence of *The Canterbury Tales*, allows for the conflating of the spiritual and commercial dimensions of their epic pilgrimage.

The epic character of *The Canterbury Tales*, as tinged by the influences of early commerce as well as by Christian spirituality, is ultimately reinforced by the concluding Parson's tale, which culminates the work as a whole and which represents Chaucer's most explicit theological statement. Collectively, the *Tales* demonstrate a structuring principle and imagistic logic that, after the fashion of epic, is heavily reliant on the imagery and thematic possibilities of arms, metals, and metallurgy. Further, in light of these features, the placement of "The Parson's Tale" is deliberate, and this deliberateness is signaled by the positioning of "The Knight's Tale" and "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale." Chaucer ordered the tales deliberately, so as to prepare his pilgrims for "The Parson's Tale" and their arrival into the New Jerusalem, a signal of their

salvation. In this way, Canterbury itself becomes a sort of divine destination

patterned after the City of God.

According to the pattern established by "The Knight's Tale," "The Canon's

Yeoman's Tale" serves as a precursor to the "The Parson's Tale," the final story that

also serves as the "First Mover Speech" for *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole. Over the

course of this larger narrative frame, Chaucer has made the message more appropriate

to the realities of the world inhabited by the Canterbury pilgrims. Ultimately, what

conjoins "The Knight's Tale" and "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" within the overall

structure of *The Canterbury Tales* is each tale's common investment with the imagery

of metals, and their shared depiction of an opposing engagement with this imagistic

centerpiece.[187] Beyond their structuring dimension within "The Knight's Tale," which

establishes the allegorical role of metals within the chivalric, commercial, and

ultimately spiritual ethos of *The Canterbury Tales* themselves, they serve as metaphors

to the Canon's Yeoman. To the Knight, metals are symbols of eternity and permanence

and are representative of the chivalric order he envisions in his tale. They provide

structure to the world, just as Theseus' Boethian addresses provide structure to the

chaotic events of the tale. To the Yeoman, however, metals are symbols of temporality

and mutability and represent the transmutation of souls brought about by purgation.

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[187] Just as "The Knight's Tale," with subtle and purposeful exceptions, ignores the commercial dimension as irrelevant for a romantic world that is shaped by an idealized chivalric ethos, so "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" is consciously engaged with matters of commerce and debt, examining economic motivations and temptations in spiritual terms. What expresses these conjoined commercial and spiritual dimensions in both tales is their shared connection to metallic imagery. Further, the structural pattern established by "The Knight's Tale"'s heavy emphasis on the imagery of arms and armor is maintained in the commercial character of many of the intervening tales, and this theme is brought to the forefront in the commercial and metallic images of "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale." The thematic "structure" afforded by this metallic imagery—first as arms and armor, later as elements of commercial transaction—is brought to its ultimate end by "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale"'s engagement with themes of alchemical transmutation.

Their structuring function is diminished by alchemical process, itself the fullest

embodiment of the spiritual chaos brought by commercial interaction.

Establishing the Structure and Introducing the Motifs of Epic: Considering "The Knight's Tale"

Seen from the worldly vantage of most of the Canterbury pilgrims, "The

Knight's Tale" is a stiffly formal story, which clings powerfully to the conventions of

medieval romance and tragedy. It is appropriate to the representative viewpoint of

medieval nobility, which by the fourteenth century was clinging to distant echoes of this

chivalric idealism. The Knight, as the embodiment of this view, goes to great lengths to

impose the symmetrical structure, romance conventions, imagistic grandeur, and

philosophical resonance on his story, as revealed in his self-monitoring commentary

which surfaces throughout its telling. But as will be argued in the paragraphs below,

this self-monitoring habit is the key to the true purpose of "The Knight's Tale": to serve

as a model that establishes the larger narrative pattern of *The Canterbury Tales* as a

whole. Chaucer's initial placement of this tale is therefore deliberate, as is his

willingness to allow readers to see the Knight's effort to force it into such a highly

structured narrative framework that is dictated by the strict conventions of medieval

romance.

As a whole, the tale is excessively formal in its insistence on order, symmetry,

and philosophical comment. It easily lends itself to parody, as will be shown in those

tales told by the less genteel tellers who follow the Knight. In its highly structured

arrangement, "The Knight's Tale" not only establishes the narrative patterns and motifs

in the sequence of tales that follow, but the Knight also presents in his tale an idealized

vision of the world that quickly degenerates in the more ribald tales that follow,

thus establishing a need for a "purifying" tale that is told late in the narrative's

sequence. This role is served by the confessional tale told by the Canon's Yeoman,

which, in its late position, marks the beginnings of the more moralistic and penitential

tales told in the concluding tenth fragment.

As the inagural tale, "The Knight's Tale" offers a field of thematic and

narrative structuring dimensions. Put simply, it is fully resonant with ordering elements

that have attracted scholarly attention over several decades.[188] The scholarly

preoccupation with the tale's "order" has evolved into a larger effort to identify the

sources for the Knight's epic and romantic visions and to account for their chaotic

reinvention first in Fragment I but also in the tales of the middle fragments. The tellers

that follow share few of the Knight's nobler, chivalric inclinations (and pretensions) and

tell stories which alternatively debase, expound on, challenge, reinvent, and ultimately

transform the tragic-epic dimensions of his tale. For example, it is clear that the tales

that follow the Knight's, particularly those of the Miller and Reeve, are both patterned

after it but also reduce it to scurrilous parody. Because of her idealized position,

Emelye becomes the focus of much of "The Knight's Tale's" philosophical and courtly

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[188] One classic discussion of the tale's structuring elements, "Form Texture, and Meaning in Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale'," was penned by scholar Charles Muscatine in 1950. He argued that its "symmetry" is "the most prominent feature" of the poem and enables it to "fulfill our demand for unity" (64). However, Muscatine explained, it is the poem's *unity through regularity* (his italics) that has particular meaning in *The Knight's Tale* (64). Noting the poem's essential unifying features in the consistency of detail and dialogue, in the symmetry and pace of narrative elements, and as embodied in the ordering figure of Theseus and in his Boethian predisposition, Muscatine establishes the unities which shape the tale (69-70). Muscatine's observations about the function of order *within* "The Knight's Tale" itself would seem applicable as well to the relationship between the tale and those less noble, more ribald, and more comically vindictive tales that follow.

The observation would seem as applicable to the highly structured tale of the Knight as it would to the narrative pattern of the salvation epic that constitutes the design of *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole. In them, Chaucer sought to portray several threads that would suggest a narrative progress which demanded great faith from the readers in the narrative designs not of humans, but of the divine. "The Knight's Tale" serves to alert readers to this dimension of the overall narrative structure of the *Tales* as a whole.

preoccupations,[189] and later generations of scholars have noted how these themes resonate elsewhere, providing a further structuring link between "The Knight's Tale" and those that follow.

"The Knight's Tale" is defined as much by its symmetry as by its imagery. To a beginning reader of *The Canterbury Tales*, the distinctive hallmarks of the tale are its intensely chivalric themes and its rich imagistic detail. An experienced reader, however, familiar with the critical traditions which have shaped readings of the tale, will over time begin to sense a few discordant notes in the overwhelming degree of order that shapes the tale.[190] And as signifiers within the texts, the knight's descriptions of armor, weapons, and battle help to preserve the chivalric balance of the conflict. Arcite, pining over his lovesickness while serving undercover as Philostrato in the Athenian courts of Theseus, discovers the recently escaped Palamon. Enraged at his cousin's liberation, he nevertheless tempers his hatred toward him with an insistence on a fair resolution to their romantic conflict. As shown in line 750-58 and 770-78, Arcite insists that the conflict be resolved fairly, for each will have the requisite arms and weapons to do battle with one another. The emphatic fairness of the conflict, even more so than its intensity, seems to be of most importance to the teller of the tale. Moreover, to this point in the story, after seven years have elapsed and during which both Palamon and

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[189] Cooper's analysis also presents several distinctive themes and motifs which are presented in the initial "standard" tale and picked up in those that follow (227). Also see Muscatine, *French Tradition* 123.

[190] In his study *The Idea of* The Canterbury Tales, Howard notes this pattern in the tale, observing that its teller "represents the dominant class in medieval society, and his tale is a composite picture of its mentality" (234). And in telling his tale, the Knight shows the habit, if not of apologizing for his highly descriptive language, of at least continually interjecting his own voice to move the story forward. He abbreviates his accounts; he apologizes for the inadequacy of his descriptions; he states that his words, inadequate to describe the events, limit his description—and then proceeds to provide full, overblown detail. These moments of authorial intervention are termed "ironic intrusions" and deemed essential by Howard to Chaucer's rendering of Knight's story, for they serve to "give us reason to approach it skeptically" (174).

Arcite have undergone great personal hardships over their love for Emelye, she remains blissfully unaware of their conflict over her.

However, as the pair prepares to do battle to decide for themselves who will win her, the chivalric gestures shown by Arcite would seem to assure a fair fight and a fair result; yet neither Palamon nor Arcite will win because of unfair advantage. And the fight, though fair, is also fierce: "up to the ancle foghte they in hir blood" (802). In a most improbable segue, however, the knight leaves the pair in this blood-drenched state, changing his narrative focus to an oddly placed, if not seemingly inappropriate philosophical disquisition (804-14).

While Theseus is soon to show himself again to be the essential ordering influence in the story, he is indulging in the relatively frivolous recreation of hunting at this point, and soon discovers the bloody cousins in mortal combat (line 840). It isn't until line 873 and again in 879 when an exhausted Palamon reveals whom the pair fight over. An angry Theseus, foiled in his mandate to keep the pair imprisoned, condemns them to die. But the weeping Hyppolyta along with Emelye (and a string of other ladies of court who have joined them) manage, in tearful protestation, to convince Theseus to show mercy toward the cousins. The Athenian duke's first significant philosophical disquisition, presented in lines 927-1011, seems inappropriate at this place after the oddly discordant narrative juncture that has just passed; ennobling and reflective, his speech praises both love and the cousins' service to it. He finally alludes to Emelye rather flippantly in lines 948-52. In granting her this status as the object of the cousins' desire (and the cause of their bloody fighting), Theseus in fact never consults Emelye about her own thoughts or wishes. The battling cousins are forgiven in line 967, and

they tactfully express their gratitude to their Athenian captor.

Theseus then unveils his plan to determine what destiny has mandated for the warring cousins (lines 971-1011). His plan, initially grandiose and fraught with chivalric idealism to the inexperienced reader of the tale, later shows itself to be perhaps inappropriately heavy on pomp and ceremony. Still having expressed no preference for either cousin or, for that matter, any desire to maintain her own autonomy, Emelye also awaits the fulfillment of Theseus' vision. He declares that the matter, already seven years in the making, will wait another year for its resolution. In real time, the cousins have by all realistic accounts passed into mature adulthood and can no longer be considered as the impulsive, longing, hot-tempered youths who were first rescued from the Theban dead and thrown into Theseus' Athenian prison. In lines 992-1003, Theseus details his plans: whoever "wins" the battle of the two hundred assembled knights will be presumed to have earned the favor of both love and fortune; Palamon and Arcite's joy, upon hearing this plan, contrasts with their earlier ashen-faced fears of death. The year's reprieve they have earned through Theseus' mercy veils the suggestion that he has granted it for his love of courtly ceremony.

Theseus's plan to resolve the romantic conflict between Palamon and Arcite concludes part II. As part III begins, the Knight yet again interjects his own self-monitoring voice into his account of the events that lead up to the chivalric spectacle that will determine Emelye's fate. In interjecting his own voice, the knight indicates his desire to devote full attention to the chivalric majesty and imagistic symmetry of the

grounds that Theseus has commissioned for the winner-take-all battle between

the two cousins.[191]

The statues of Venus to the East, of Mars to the West, and of Diana to the

North are described in grandiose detail, even as the Knight's own self-monitoring habit

surfaces in lines 1023-24, 1056-59, and in 1109-11. In each of these passages, he not

only changes the focus of his narrative but also expresses the fear of being negligent,

forgetful, or of failing to provide the most vivid picture of this grand stadium that will

host the tournament. These interjections also show the Knight's devotion to the idea of

telling a "proper" story, that is, a story suitable to one of his rank. The story the Knight

wishes to tell is symmetrically balanced, philosophically informed, and, most

importantly, properly expressive of his chivalric values. In its telling, his near obsessive

devotion to this ideal is signaled by his recurring, self-monitoring interjections. Behind

these frequent interjections, one finds the subtle notes of Chaucerian sarcasm that

prompt a closer look at this noble and chivalric world.

However, while his account of the temple of Venus suggests that he is familiar

with the follies of love, the vividness of his description, read in conjunction with the list

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[191] Each temple is decorated with its distinctive hallmarks. And in the words that he chooses to shape his descriptions of each temple, the Knight provides a window into his own experience, if not a full glimpse of his psyche. In describing the temple of Venus, the Knight "reckons" the details it features (lines 1075, 1086). Interestingly, he falls into the imagistic habit of his predecessors in equating epic battle with iron and steel, for he mentions these three times within lines 1117-36, a passage devoted to the details of the temple of Mars, the god of war. More importantly, in his account of the imagistic detail of this unhappy place, the Knight lapses into the idiom not of the teller of a tale, but as a pilgrim–after the fashion of Dante and Virgil–on a journey through the underworld. Instead of describing what his hearers might see–as in his description of Venus' temple–he reports what he himself has seen: listing the details individually, using the words "saugh I" throughout this visual rendering (lines 1137, 1147, 1152, 1159, 1170). The Virgilian and Dantean dimensions of this underworld yet again connect the horrors of the battlefield with the working of metal and perhaps also are calculated to suggest what horrific battlefield scenes the Knight himself might have also witnessed (1156-69). Conquest, that fullest objective of all battles personified, sits atop, supported by all of "Mars People" who support him. Almost mercifully the Knight's description of Mars' temple ends. But it is almost twice as long as his description of the temple of Venus (80 lines vs. 48 lines). Even so, each account ends with a similar statement: he could go on and on in his description of each place but must keep his story moving forward (lines 1095-96, 1181-82).

of battles he's fought in from the "General Prologue," likewise suggest that he has much firsthand acquaintance with the horrors of war. This point is reinforced not only by the length of his description of the temple of Mars (lines 1112-92) as compared with that of the temples of Venus (lines 1060-1108) or Diana (lines 1196-1230) but also by the intensity of his description. Although perhaps an incidental detail, it is also worth noting that the Knight's description of Mars' temple sits at almost precisely the narrative midpoint of the entire 2250-line tale. While he is to use the visual idiom again in his description of the hunts depicted in the imagery of the temple of Diana, his self-monitoring habits assert themselves powerfully as he indicates his own need to hurry through it: "As shortly as I can I wol me haste, / to tell you al the descripsioun" (1194-95). And even though he continues to use the visual idiom present in his account of this last temple (again, using "saugh I" in lines 1198, 1204, 1207, and 1209), he concludes with a significant qualification of what he's "seen" in Diana's temple: "There saugh I many another wonder storie, / The which me list nat drawen to memory" (lines 1215-16).[192]

The extravagant theater is befitting to the extravagant event that Theseus hosts. The knight's love for chivalry, shown so vividly in his description of the stadium that Theseus has commissioned, is reinforced further in his account of the assembled

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[192] Whether for the sake of brevity or because he has recalled long suppressed and painful memories, the Knight's language is deliberate. In his descriptive tour through this elaborate stadium, the Knight details both the horrors of the battlefield as well as the violence of the hunt. In these accounts, experienced readers might discern his deliberately chosen idiom that emerges perhaps out of his conflating of his own memories and experiences with those "stories olde" which shape the visual imagery of Theseus' grand theater. Significantly, the final image of Diana's temple–and if the Knight's description has done them justice, the other temples as well–have been painted under the direction of one who spared no expense, one who "with many a florin...the hewes boughte" (1230). With his liberal spending of Florentine currency, these powerful images are ultimately a credit to Theseus himself, whose "grete cost arrayed thus the temples and the theatre every del" (1232-33). In these sentences, one hears the voice of Chaucer, who, in his day job as Clerk of the King's Works, would be responsible for carrying out the commissions for such ornament and would know the bottom-line costs for this kind of extravagance.

warriors. This account elevates this romantic grudge match into an ennobling

display of chivalric spectacle (1243-51). And in the lines that follow, Chaucer

reinforces the the nobility of the occasion (1252-58). But it is the descriptions of the

warriors whom Palamon and Arcite have chosen to do battle with that most fully

enhance the chivalric spectacle. The diverse weaponry of the knights reflects the varied

lands they hail from: Lycurgus, King of Thrace, accompanies Palamon, and is

resplendent in his bearskin-covered battle dress and golden crown. He sits high in his

chariot, pulled by four white bulls and surrounded by fierce wolf-hounds, "as the gyse

was in his contree" (1279). Likewise, Arcite has also gone eastward to find his

champion, the Indian King Emeretus. He also cuts an exotic figure, riding a steel-

covered bay steed, shining in his golden, pearl-and-ruby encrusted battle gear, and

bearing at hand a white eagle. These two embody the impressive array of "dukes, erles,

kings" who "were gadered in this noble companye, / For love, and for encrees of

chivalrye" (1324-26).

As one who is described as having fought for the ennobling cause of

Christianity, the Knight further understands the importance of describing how each of

the tournament's principals–Palamon, Arcite, and Emelye—must all pray to and receive

signs of loyalty from the god figure they pay homage to. The Knight chooses to focus

on the details of each prayer. His authorial voice continues to intrude in an effort to

keep his focus on the substance of each invocation, rather than on the (presumably)

more enticing details of Theseus's hosting, the dancing and storytelling of the

assembled guests, or on Emelye's orisons in the service of Diana (which are, he says,

explained in Statius' *Thebiad* and other "bokes olde"). Finally, before he once again

interjects to change the direction of his story, the Knight details how Saturn, no stranger to such unresolved stalemates, promises Venus that he will resolve this earthly conundrum by orchestrating an outcome which will further obscure the machinations of fate to human sensibilities.

Finally, as part IV begins, the Knight's authorial interjections continue to shape, compress, and provide balance to the narrative as it moves toward its philosophically justified resolution. Ultimately, Saturn's machinations bring the contest to an ending that is, to human sensibilities, unsatisfying. The chivalric splendors are on full display as contest day arrives, as is Theseus' ordering presence: first, with the contest nigh, he imposes rules which make it less violent, less barbarous, and more "chivalric"— his rules make the contest more like a joust than a tournament fought to the death (lines 1679-1702). Next, when a victorious Arcite, having "staked" his rival, falls from his horse and sits paralyzed and dying, Theseus quickly declares the contest to be a tie. But even he knows that these events compromise both the chivalric ideals and the comfort to be taken in the universal order that is supposed to resolve the conflict justly. Like the noble duke, readers are also supposed to be disappointed with this less-than-satisfying outcome.

Put simply, readers require a sense that the events are justified according to some form of moral if not universal order, and Arcite's unfortunate fall at the moment of victory fails to bring this sort of satisfaction. The Knight's ultimate purpose, of course, is to bring some perspective to these unfortunate (and to readers, unsatisfying) events, and the mitigating presence of Theseus serves to achieve this end. With a fallen Arcite at death's door, he "gives" Emelye, as his prize, to Palamon while a grieving

duke turns to his father, Egeus, one "that knew this worldes transmutacioun"

(line 1987). This gesture begins the process to restore "order" to events that, at least to

human sensibility, have concluded unjustly. And the Knight himself oversimplifies this

effort. Egeus' speech is calculated to provide perspective in a time of conclusion (1985-

91).[193]

The funeral procession and pyre that signal the conclusion of his tale capture

the hyperbolic grief of the mourners. The spectacular grieving, in its thorough

destructiveness, borders on the grotesque. For example, the meadow where the burial

takes place is populated by an impressive variety of trees: "ook, firre, birch, asp, alder,

holm, popler, / Wilow, elm, plane, ash, box, chasteyn, lind, laurer, /Mapul, thorn,

beech, hasel, ew, whippel-tree" (2063-66). In describing these trees, the Knight's voice

yet again intrudes: "How they weren feld shal nat be told for me" (2067). His gesture

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[193] When considered more closely, however, the speech is a mere band-aid for a world of healing and fails to address properly the confusion that reigns in Athens. The grandiose tournament has ended in tragedy, and the substance of Egeus speech—that we are all earthly pilgrims and must die sometime and that death ends our worldly pain—would only seem to provide requisite comfort at a very superficial level. It is also possible to envision the *sentential* of the message as suitable to a leisured audience unfamiliar with the desperate sufferings of the two unfortunate lovers. Indeed, as a resolution to the unjust events wrought by Saturn, the speech in fact promises more than it delivers and brings an unjustified sense of order to a world in pain. This dissatisfaction is nothing if not enhanced by the Knight, who, instead of allowing Egeus to provide a further justification and fuller perspective on these tragic and unsatisfying events, again interjects to move the story forward: "And over al this yet seyde he muchel more /To this effect, ful wisely to enhorte /The peple, that they should hem reconforte" (1992-95). It is as if the Knight, eager to finish his story, doesn't want to bother with the finer philosophical details that are needed at this point in the tale.

Given its brevity, the speech does bring a sense of resolution, however unjustified. This sense of resolution is enhance by exaggerated splendor in the funeral that Theseus plans for the fallen Arcite, a stately memorial "most honorable in his degree" (1998). Arcite's funeral, like the events that have proceeded it, is heavy on spectacle. The Knight's continuing editorial interjections offer a sense of justice, symmetry, and chivalric idealism to a tale that challenges a reader's needs for a satisfying resolution. Spectacle, not philosophical or spiritual substance, provides the vehicle by which Theseus achieves this resolution for his world, and the Knight for his audience. Theseus' reordering of the events to give Arcite a spectacular funeral helps to reestablish, as the Knight emphasizes, a divinely mandated (if philosophically hollow) sense of justice. The duke commissions a massive bonfire to be built on the site in the wooded meadow where he himself first discovered the cousins locked in combat years before and plans for Aricte's immolation in full Knightly honor: draped in gold cloth, wearing white gloves, a sword at is side, and a green crown of laurel on his head: noble horsemen, bearing his resplendent arms, follow. Imagistic richness, more than philosophical comment, is clearly the Knight's strong point in storytelling, and his description of the majesty and spectacle of Arcite's funeral is eerily, perhaps disturbingly reminiscent of the disillusioning chivalric spectacle that has just concluded. It is possible that Chaucer wished to portray this funeral as something imagistically connected to the tournament, and clearly the Knight portrays them in comparable terms, equally impressed by both. A tearful Theseus, followed by a bedraggled Palamon and a weeping Emelye pay their final respects.

not to describe the felling of the forest is not repeated in the Knight's graphic

detailing of Arcite's funeral pyre; even the surrounding meadows are scorched as the

flames engulf Arcite's pyre, "that brente as it were wood" (2090). In explaining how he

will not provide the full details of Arcite's funeral, the Knight ultimately relates it in

great, almost horrific detail. As the woods are consumed by flames, the stateliness that

the Knight envisions in his description of the funeral seems at odds with the hyperbole

with which he describes the mourning. Finally, with Arcite mercifully "bren to ashen

colde" (2099), the knight moves to conclude: "shortly to the point than wol I wende, /

And maken of my longe tale an ende" (2108).

What enables this resolution more fully than the destructive spectacle of

Arcite's funeral, however, is the more abiding passage of time. If Theseus and his

people take an unjustified degree of solace from Egeus' speech and indulge their grief

in the irrational carnage of Arcite's funeral, their healing is, in fact, made more

plausible by the years of disillusionment that follow after this tragic ending. It is the

passage of time that finally (and once more) enables the Athenian duke to bring the

events to a satisfying resolution (at least to a sensibility shaped by the chivalric idealism

of medieval romance). Some years later, after the chaos and pain of Arcite's funeral

have subsided, Palamon and Emelye–still grieving and unmarried—are summoned to

Athens by a sadder and wiser Theseus, who hopes to supply some worldly perspective

on the events which have come to shape their lives. In this context, he delivers his

famous "First Mover" speech, which brings a note of philosophical dignity, if not

spiritual resolution, to a story shaped powerfully by conventions of medieval romance.

And his declaration (or really, his mandate) that Palamon wed Emelye might bring a

note of worldly reordering to their world, offering a sort of resolution in terms appropriate to medieval romance.

Theseus' resolution "To maken vertu of necessity" (2184), or to accept the cards that one has been dealt, although once again oversimplifying the complicated and traumatic events of the story, serves the important thematic purpose of connecting the Boethian resonances of this pagan world with Christian spirituality, a synthesis which is more fully articulated (from a Christian vantage) in "The Parson's Tale." The First Mover speech provides a thematic link which helps connect the forcefully maintained narrative pattern of "The Knight's Tale" with the more organic, more chaotic, and more universal narrative pattern of the salvation epic as a whole.

Indeed, when stripped of its imagery, philosophy, and divine mandates, the tale is grossly unsatisfying to any reader or hearer with any appreciable humanist sensibility. Unfortunately for the Knight, his cohorts on this pilgrimage show this humanist sense quite vividly not only in their (mostly) commercial orientation, but also in their willingness to take the structures presented in "The Knight's Tale" and to rend, retell, and remake its elements into the various parodies, debates, exempla, and ribaldries that are to follow. In short, the storytelling habits of the Canterbury pilgrims devolve from the stiffly conventional and highly structured worlds of medieval romance, epic, and tragedy, which the Knight's story fully embraces and embodies, and are made more "humanistic" by the "earthier" reinventions and reinterpretations of matters, themes, and materials first presented in "The Knight's Tale."

More importantly, such a departure perfectly suits the narrative trajectory of the salvation epic, which serves as the overall structuring motif of the *Tales* as a whole.

Interestingly, just as "The Knight's Tale" must end with Theseus' "First Mover" speech, a detailed philosophical statement that attempts to provide perspective on and bring closure to the story's chaotic but doggedly ordered events, so must the salvation epic of *The Canterbury Tales* end with the Parson's meticulous and all-encompassing sermonizing that brings closure to the multifarious tales—and the perspectives of the tellers—through the course of the pilgrimage. Just as Theseus, Palamon, and Emelye must survive the Hellish flames of Arcite's funeral pyre, so must the pilgrims collectively pass through the Hellish underworld described by the Canon's Yeoman. Egeus's speech, which is otherwise unequal to the demands of the narrative moment it is placed in, at least succeeds in equating the idea of pilgrimage in the world of "The Knight's Tale" with the larger idea of "pilgrimage" as is required by the narrative of Chaucer's salvation epic. And while the "pilgrims" of the Knight's imagination inhabit a world that is shaped by the conventions of medieval romance, the pilgrims of *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole inhabit a world that is shaped by a more realistic, more universal humanistic sensibility.

To Chaucer himself, to his audience, and certainly to the profit-minded pilgrims he portrays, this more humanistic sensibility is shaped not by a world view that is imprisoned by the conventions of medieval romance, but is guided by, among other things, the agency of self-determination. In the largely materialistic orientation that most of Chaucer's pilgrims show, they see commerce as the best vehicle to improve their worldly fortunes even though such an initiative must later be tempered by a fuller perspective. Indeed, the tales that follow the Knight's serve to dispel the illusion that the world "works" according to the order that Thesus has dictated within the story and that

the Knight has used to shape it. Chaucer's pilgrims, like his audience, encounter

the tight structures and rigid conventions of "The Knight's Tale" in the first story in

order that they might be liberated from them, and be prepared for the realization of

worldly salvation that is signaled by the Parson's Tale.

Anticipating Deliverance I: Negotiating the Chaucerian Underworld as Represented

in the Prelude to "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale"

In the "The Canon's Yeoman's Prelude" and "Tale" one finds both the most

vivid depiction of metallurgy in the works of Chaucer. In considering the Chaucerian

view of metals and metallurgy, it is best to distinguish between the practical science of

alchemy and the metaphoric value that it offered to medieval philosophers and

practitioners. Tempting to charlatans and to those wishing to swindle others to make a

quick profit, the science of alchemy also offers a perfect model for those philosophical

individuals who wished, in turning lead into gold, to examine how the imperfect matter

of the world might be purified in order to achieve a greater state of earthly perfection.

At its most basic level the science of alchemy was, according to scholar Maurice

Hussey, "a topic for burlesque" (3) among medieval writers, and, in orchestrating the

Canon's hasty and embarrassing departure from the Canterbury pilgrims, it seems that

Chaucer had this aspect of the science in mind. Chaucer's disdain for the "slydinge

science" (Fragment VIII, 732) is borne out in its apparent contrariness with the "Great

Chain of Being," that most basic of medieval philosophical precepts (Lovejoy 59; see

also Hopkins 15-22) or the belief that all worldly substance is ranked according to the

purity of its material being. Chaucer's relationship to metals and metallurgy was purely

theoretical except in instances where it assumed mercantile forms, and he would be

most inclined to consider the "science" of metallurgy in alchemical and ultimately in philosophical terms.

Reading Commercial Implications in Medieval Mineralogy

A modern reader familiar with the beliefs and biases of classical naturalists like Aristotle and Pliny will note how the *Book of Minerals* by the thirteenth-century monastic Albertus Magnus represents the early redefinition of their precepts for a world based on commerce. Its heavy emphasis on gold and gold mining corresponds with the growing demand for gold and silver to be used in the florin and other emerging currencies from the same time period. In Albert and Dante's times, such fledgling currencies were thought to possess a spiritual character capable of uniting the western world in ethical, non-usurious commerce. By Chaucer's time, commerce would come to assume a more dominant role in social relationships, to the point where the poet conceived of his salvation narrative in largely economic terms. Albertus's *Book of Minerals* played a practical role in this expression, as his views of metals and metallurgy are not representative of a thirteenth-century mindset but better regarded as a unique expression of a *monastic* viewpoint at this time which is not only colored by the inherited traditions of the ancients but also invested in the practical knowledge—and its economic applications—that resulted from the itinerant monk's wanderings.

Throughout much of Albert's writing, one grasps his spiritualized conception of alchemy, in which the science serves as a metaphor for purification via quest and an

outward expression of internal transitions.[194] In his portrayal of the Canon and

his Yeoman, Chaucer borrows significantly from this discussion.

It is safest to regard the *Book of Minerals* for what it is: a compendium of

accumulated knowledge catalogued according to the long established traditions of

similar compilations of the ancients. Its value as a historical record and as a reflection

of intellectual, moral, and spiritual viewpoints toward the *industry* of mining is

discernible.[195] It is an early textbook to which modern readers turn to learn the extent of

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[194] In expressing this view, Albertus's allegiance to the ancients is evident as he echoes the long tradition of aligning metals with planets and investing each with differing degrees of a "divine spirit" which is most prominent in gold and descends according to the "rank" ascribed to each subsequent planet. He notes the "reason they call the seven kinds of metals by the names of the seven planets: naming lead, *Saturn*; tin, *Jupiter*; iron, *Mars*; and gold, the Sun (*Sol*); copper, *Venus*; quicksilver, *Mercury*; and silver, the Moon (*Luna*)," and explains how the ancients locate in these "different numbers in their composition...the constitutions of the seven planets" (168). However, Albertus's opinions also show a characteristically medieval—albeit, economically revealing—bias in his comments on alchemical processes, in his innate belief in the moral superiority of gold and in his habit of ranking all other metals below gold in terms of stature and purity while suggesting that they nonetheless possess the innate substances that can be distilled to achieve its "perfection." However, despite this apparent affirmation of alchemical theory, he also brings a healthy skepticism to the practical science of it, questioning its practical implications (171-72).

In his discussions of gold Albertus relied on ancient philosophies of natural science and chemical traditions, where his reverence for the fit authorities of the past is clearly on display. In a subsequent passage, however, he remains eager to resolve contradictions between the natural science of the ancients and the physical realities and economic possibilities that he and his contemporaries were able to observe in the natural world, noting how "still there was recently found a nugget weighing a hundred marks [about 50 pounds]" (229). Nevertheless, in describing the more utilitarian metals of iron and steel he reveals a more practical strain of knowledge. Detailing how Germanic smiths worked steel into weapons, Albertus notes their reputation of crafting weapons prone to shattering and brittleness. This point suggests that their renown was still growing since the processes that maximized steel's hardiness and tensile strength were yet known.

A modern reader of the *Book of Minerals* finds four essential elements. Firstly, one sees the ongoing reverence for the opinions of the ancients, one of the hallmarks of medieval thought. Albertus follows the lead of earlier medieval philosophers and intellectuals in showing this respect for the views of natural philosophy which were shaped by classical commentators like Aristotle, Pliny, and the apocryphal Hermes. Secondly, one finds in Albertus's writing a contemporary record of the mining regions, practices, and mine-based economies in the regions of Bavaria and throughout southern Germany; given the probable date of the *Book's* composition, it is feasible that the ores taken from these regions found their way into the currencies that were in full circulation by the close of the twelfth century across the Alps and into the Italian peninsula and the northern Mediterranean regions to the south. Lastly, one sees Albertus's awareness of the fraudulent character in most forms of alchemical practice (172). Interestingly, one of the most distinctive hallmarks in Albertus's writing is its freedom from expressions of bias against mining like those expressed by the ancients, or comparable reservations about its unnatural nature. It is also a point of debate about the extent to which he understood the practical implications of the mining industry's ultimate production.

[195] Economic historian Peter Spufford declares that "the transformation of the coinage of Europe in the thirteenth century was only made possible by the vastly increased supplies of precious metals that were being mined throughout the century" (814), a development reinforced by the practical discussions of metallurgy within the *Book of Minerals*. Such a movement would be taking shape in the backdrop of the peripatetic monk's life, whose examination of various sites of mining and mineral activity may have witnessed operations responding to the demand not only for changing patterns in trade and currency but also for an increasingly complex economic system that was emanating

medieval conceptions of the chemical composition of rocks, stones, and metals.

Reading Albertus's discussion of metals in the context of historical and economic

developments, however, one sees a window into not only the way they were viewed in

the realm of natural science, but the kind of attitudes that reflect commercial practices

and economic development as well. Albert's views figure prominently in the

Chaucerian conception of alchemy, such that the beliefs articulated in the *Book of*

Minerals resonate in Chaucer's world even as the English poet understood, perhaps

more so than his Florentine cohort, the potentially corrupting powers that alchemy held.

More so than Albert, Chaucer grasped alchemy as a metaphor for the kind of

profiteering impulse he depicted in many of his pilgrims.

As early as two decades before Chaucer's birth, the "science" of alchemy had

already descended into total disrepute. The Canon and his Yeoman, once joining the

Canterbury pilgrimage, must be considered first as "practitioners of roguery" who are

intent to conspire against the pilgrims (Read 14). But they are overmatched in this

collection of commercially savvy individuals, who include a few swindlers of equal if

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from the Italian peninsula, spreading throughout the Mediterranean, and creeping into the mountain regions of southern Germany which formed the backdrop of Albertus's world.

It is possible that in his effort to resolve the apparent contradictions of the natural world, Albertus was more than willing to regard the destruction of the landscape and the pursuit of profits as perfectly reasonable activities which posed no challenge to his Christian convictions. In his work one finds no such reservations about wholesale alteration of the landscape in pursuit of material riches, and indeed his thorough effort to understand metals according to their basic nature betrays his position as an advocate for developing the German mining industry that he was so intimately familiar with. In this highly specialized discussion of the history of coinage and currency in post-imperial, dark age, early medieval, and early renaissance economic history, Albertus's discussion of metals is more than just a repetition of Aristotelian precepts on the natural science of metals. The history of western European currencies serves as an index not only of the efforts of various medieval emperors, kings, and princes to envision themselves as inheritors of the traditions of imperial Rome, but also the currencies themselves reveal the degree of economic sophistication and interaction within various domains and across the region as a whole. Lastly, currencies serve as a measure of political if not social unity within a given region and help modern students to reconstruct the various power relationships that existed between overlords and their subjects. Indeed, Spufford describes a climate of changing and rivaling currencies as dictated by the demand of particular metals, the rise and fall of governments with actual minting operations, the gradual debasement of particular currencies, and the conflicts between competing systems of trade and currency (790-831).

not greater skill (the Pardoner and Miller would seem to stand out as the best

examples). Chaucer, however, with his characteristic regard for the subtler dimensions

of the alchemical science, also recognized its metaphoric value and used it, via "The

Canon Yeoman's Prelude" and "Tale" in conjunction with "The Knight's Tale," as an

important structuring component in the overall narrative strategy of *The Canterbury

Tales.*

Chaucer encourages readers to scrutinize the Canon and his Yeoman as a pair

of late arrivals to the Canterbury pilgrimage and is inclined to portray their science of

"elvysshe nyse lore" (line 842) with his characteristic subtlety. It is also possible to

envision the Canon and the Yeoman having come to the pilgrimage at a critical stage in

their alchemical endeavors, one which suggests that they have exhausted all their arts

and are individually in the process of questioning their own effort and dedication to

them.

However, that Chaucer wants readers to see this crisis in their scientific efforts

is borne out in the Canon's quick departure. In his subsequent portrayal of the Canon as

well as in the tale he relates, Chaucer hints the Yeoman's distress with his work, his

boss, and his life. In a tale full of Satanic imagery that Chaucer deliberately placed

toward the ending of the overall narrative structure, the Yeoman hints at a complicated

relationship not only to his science, but also to the just departed Canon.[196] The occasion

of the pilgrimage, with the mediating presence of the Knight and the Host, enables the

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[196]Eminent Chaucerian G.L Kittredge argues that the Yeoman is realizing that "he has become the dupe as well as
the accomplice" (qtd. Herz 231) to alchemy's ambitious aims and to the material temptations it offers. Lawrence
Ryan argues that much of the tale's metaphoric value stems from Chaucer's portrayal of the Yeoman as a one-
dimensional, "spiritually confused and terrified creature" (299), or a simple man who finds himself at an ideological
crossroads. Charles Muscatine, another eminent Chaucer scholar, describes the Yeoman's waning attraction to
alchemy as that "of the believer, not of the scientist (read—the Canon) who sees in technology another secular
religion" (215).

Yeoman to break from the Canon, who, in his brief time with the pilgrims as well

as in his supposed portrayal in his Yeoman's tale, seems to have a more practical

investment in alchemy.

When contrasted with the Canon described by the Yeoman's tale's *Pars*

Secunda, aspects of the Pilgrim Canon's character are revealed and underscore

Chaucer's recognition of the metaphoric possibilities of alchemy that serve *The*

Canterbury Tales' overall narrative structure. Put simply, the Canon himself might be a

charlatan, but the Canon portrayed in the Yeoman's tale is definitely a charlatan and

swindler.[197] Perhaps the reason for the late placement of "The Canon's Yeoman's

Prelude" and "Tale" within the overall narrative framework of *The Canterbury Tales* is

because of its deliberate imagery, which is, as critics have argued, calculated to show

Satanic associations. In hearing the Yeoman describe his account (his experience?) of

alchemical charlatanism, the pilgrims are exposed to a sort of symbolic underworld

catabaesis which prepares them for their ultimate salvation. The events in Homer's

underworld help prepare Achilles for his ultimate battle; those in Virgil's prepare

Aeneas to initiate Rome's imperial destiny; likewise, the pilgrim Dante's underworld

sojourn prepares him for the greater revelations that follow.

Patterned as much after the motifs established by Virgilian epic and preserved

by his poetic progeny, as by the Christianized Virgilian influence evident in the

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[197] On this point, scholar Edgar Duncan argues that "There is some evidence…that (the Yeoman's Canon), in contradistinction to the *other* Canon (portrayed in *Pars Secunda*) was a serious, conscientious experimenter" (645). He was, according to scholar John Riedy, attracted to "the high ideals of conduct which (alchemical texts) prescribed" (35). The portrait of the Canon in the tale told by the Yeoman is less flattering, depicting the Canon as an alchemist charlatan who is out to swindle sponsors for his own gain. Though perhaps not a direct reflection of his departed boss, it is nonetheless, according to Hartung, "really a prognostication of what the Canon in *Prima Pars* is on the way to becoming" (112).

historical and biographical accounts of Bede, Gregory, and Felix of the eighth

and ninth centuries, the salvation epic narrative of *The Canterbury Tales* includes an

imagistic encounter with an underworld domain which prepares the pilgrims for their

ultimate salvation. In this way, Chaucer both borrows from and reinvents the epic form

for his own theological ends, and "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" serves an important

role in this adaptation. At this late stage of their journey Chaucer's pilgrims, in their

exposure to the smoky and acrid alchemical den depicted by the Yeoman, are exposed

to a Satanic realm that they must endure and imaginatively transverse in order to

achieve their deliverance, which is expressed in the subsequent "Parson's Tale."

This extended sermon, which culminates the narrative of *The Canterbury*

Tales, is the fullest expression of Chaucerian theology and appears more a theological

florilegium than a narrative tale. It is told more in Chaucer's voice than in that of his

character, and in hearing it the pilgrims are exposed to the ultimate theological truths as

Chaucer understood them and as they are revealed primarily in scripture. To achieve

this salvation, however, they must "pass through the fires" of the Yeoman's prelude and

tale; in its imagery, Chaucer portrays a realm fraught with Satanic images that are

shown in the smoke, fumes, and fire that result from the alchemists' "unnatural" efforts

to transmute one metal into another.

Utimately, the important feature of the Canon's Yeoman and his tale is less in

the teller and more in the imagistic character, the thematic content, and the narrative

positioning of his tale. With "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale"'s penultimate position in

the narrative's sequence, Chaucer wants his readers to see the volatile nature of

alchemy, which he invests with a heavily metaphoric dimension. Both an arcane and

learned scientific tradition which is undertaken to unlock the mysteries of the

world and of God as well as a vehicle for charlatan and swindlers to make quick profit,

alchemy provides the imagistic means to allow the pilgrims to experience a form of

catabaesis that prepares them for their salvation.

With these points in mind, experienced readers familiar with the course of *The*

Canterbury Tales' narrative as a whole will note how "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale"

serves a purgative purpose, one universally applicable to a narrative sequence that leads

to deliverance and Christian salvation. In its demonic imagery, Hellish fires,

commercial undertones, and interest in both the imagistic transmutation of metals and

the thematic transmutation of souls, "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" presents a message

appropriate for pilgrims on the brink of their arrival into Canterbury and on the brink

metaphorically of realizing their salvation.

In the confessional quality to the Canon's Yeoman's discourse, first in his

prologue and later in both parts of his tale, the pilgrims find him in the depths of

despair. Discolored, embittered, and in debt, he is almost a lost soul. But paradoxically,

the pilgrims gain from his disappointments, and in sharing his knowledge of the world,

not just about metals and alchemical process, he enables their deliverance and realizes

his own (Howard, *Idea* 296). The dramatic entrance of the Canon and Yeoman might

perhaps signal much more than the addition of a pair of late arrivals to the Canterbury

pilgrimage. Overtaking the procession at "Boghtoun under Blee" (556), the sweating

twosome arrive on the brink of its completion, so that, as the canon says, they might

ride "in this myrie compaignye" (586). However, it is his Yeoman who proves to be the

more gregarious one. When asked by the host if his lord might be willing to join in the

storytelling occasion, the Yeoman is quick to praise his Canon, saying that "he is gretter than a clerk, ywis" (617) and that the gathered pilgrims all will benefit from a knowledge of his work. Moreover, the Yeoman boasts that he could transform the road to Canterbury, "clene turnen (it) up-so-doun, / And pave it al up of silver and of gold" (625-26).

It is hard not to note in this boast a note of hyperbolic grandeur reminiscent of the now distant "Knight's Tale," but the host hears a note, if not of desperation, at least one that arouses his suspicion. He warily asks the Yeoman about why his Canon, capable of such grandeur, wears such tattered garments. If capable of such grand feats, asks the Host (quite reasonably) why is it that the Canon's "overslope nys nat worth a myte" (633) and why he seems "so sluttish" so that he can afford no "better cloth to beye, / If that his dede accorde with thy speche" (637-38). The Yeoman, perhaps recognizing that he's led himself and his Canon into dangerous waters, might also perhaps recognize the rare opportunity to grasp a moment of liberation from his master. In the socially varied atmosphere of the pilgrimage, the Yeoman begins to reveal his truer side, one shaped by his disappointed homage to his master. He reveals how alchemists, if not the lord that he himself serves, misuse their knowledge. They live meanly in poverty on the disreputable outskirts of towns, and this life has led the Yeoman to his current discolored, poisoned, disappointed, and impoverished state.

In response to the host's pointed questioning, the Yeoman offers not so much an explanation of the pair's plight as a confession of their failure (lines 665-83). The Canon, perhaps embarrassed or perhaps even sensing his hold on his Yeoman weakening, recognizes that he is also in hot water and is about to be revealed, if not as a

mere failure, then as a fraud and a charlatan. In this brief introduction, it is hard

not to note the role served by the Host in redefining the Yeoman's relationship to his

Canon, and the Yeoman's first declaration is to give voice to the experiences of trial,

frustrated ambition, and disappointment that he has known as the Canon's assistant.

With the Canon's hasty departure, the Yeoman's disappointment endures, even as his

relief is palpable. Significantly, he expresses himself in an idiom that defines his Canon

in terms that conjoin money and devilry (705-09). Moving away from his wish to have

the devil take his master, the Yeoman begins to emerge from the depths, asking for

deliverance from his life of despair and frustration: "Now wolde God my wit miyghte

suffise / To tellen al that longeth to that art " (714-15).

In this way, he sets into motion his confessional narrative, in which he

establishes a pattern of imagery that is to continue through both parts of his tale,

revealing the folly of misdirected ambition and the spiritual debasement which results

from the unnatural pursuit of profit. As shown vividly in the first part of his tale, the

Yeoman shows demonstrates a considerable knowledge in the science of alchemy.

However, his pursuit of knowledge in the Canon's service has, he reveals, brought him

to a state of disillusionment and exclusion of his spirit. Faith continually disappointed

has left the Yeoman frustrated. In honoring chemical authorities and acknowledging his

debt to them, the Yeoman establishes themes important to the spiritual character of his

tale.[198] But instead of bringing others to the temptations of alchemy, as he had earlier

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[198] In discussing its substance, Howard observes the narrative pattern in earlier tales where he highlights recurring themes of intellect and idealism. "The pilgrims are," he notes, "all great intellectualizers," and their "ideal narratives all impose upon experience an intellectual construct of one kind or another" (*Idea* 297). "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" conjoins the ideals of alchemy with the worldly obsessions of wealth and profit (297). The gratification of *curiositas* and the satisfactions of worldly wealth conjoin themes which constitute the Yeoman's appropriate message to the pilgrims. These related desires are particularly on display in the *prima pars* of "The Yeoman's Tale"; in

before the Host's pointed questioning, the Yeoman shows a change of mind.

With these revelations come his deliverance, for he extends a sort of instructional charity to his listeners as he divulges his "sins." In this role, he serves a transformational purpose at this late narrative placement in the *Tales*. He is the fallen sinner who, in relating his example, saves others from making the same harrowing choice.

Having realized that his "labour" with the canon "is in veyn" (727), the Yeoman shows a preoccupation with the losses and disappointments that he encountered during their seven year association, including lost monies, misspent labors, and unrealized profits. His despair is expressed as a sort of spiritual debt, which is captured in the monetary idioms he tends to use. What the *prima pars* of his tale ultimately accomplishes, and will repeat as reoriented in its *pars secunda*, is the sense of his soul's transformation. To imagine such transformation, the alchemical idioms serve Chaucer well: the Yeoman describes terms appropriate to the purification of metals, which hint at the purification of his soul through the "lampes brennyng bothe nyght and day" (802), such as "furneys of calcinacioun" (804), "diverse fires" (809), and "combust materes" (811) pervade the alchemical environment. Put simply, with the Canon's departure and as shown in the content of his address to his now-fellow pilgrims, the Yeoman comes to realize that he has been through an exorcism of sorts:

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describing how his monetary and emotional investments in the "slydinge science" (732) have brought him to states of physical and spiritual poverty, the yeoman reveals the depths of his impoverishment (734-45).

Of all thise names now wol I me reste,

For as I trowe , I have you toold ynowe,

To reyse a feend, al looke he never so rowe. (859-61)

The "feend" that he sees present in the alchemist's works is no longer within him, and

in the confessional account on the purification of metals he describes, one may trace the

gradual purification of his own soul. The depth of his despair is also the moment of his

liberation from his enslavement to alchemy and from that vain, profiteering, eternally

and foolishly hopeful mindset that runs contrary to divine mandates and has brought the

Yeoman to this low, sickly, and impoverished state. In his disavowal to pursue the

philosopher's stone, the Yeoman ceases to be its servant.

His accumulated knowledge of the science is nothing if not impressive. For

example, in keeping with the tradition of medieval cosmology as inherited from the

ancients, he follows in the practice of ordering metals according to the sequence of the

planets (822-29). However, from this impressive cataloguing of chemical and material

classes, laboratory procedures, and knowledge inherited from alchemical traditions, his

monologue progresses from this body of knowledge to a troubled self-examination,

where the pilgrims see the Yeoman's internal strife, doubt, pain, and inner madness, the

end consequence of his lifetime of "selle and spenden of this craft" (882). Almost

unconsciously, he moves toward a reflective, multifaceted, and almost schizophrenic

dialogue with himself in which he details one of the many laboratory disasters–and

disappointments–that he has taken part in: "Ful ofte it happeneth so," he reveals, where

"The pot tobreketh and all is go" (906-07). His shattering pot reflects the salutary

shattering of the Yeoman's world after his Canon has departed. Once again, the devil is

fully present in the Yeoman's disheartening and spiritual bankruptcy of his

alchemical quest (915-18). The devil's presence, he soon points out, comes both from

the disappointment of failed discovery, but also from the unrealized yet hoped for

profits. And within this fractured monologue, he equates his spiritual disillusionment

with the anxiety of the merchant. One of his self-created voices, responding to the

exploded crucible, equates the loss with the ebb and flow of profits experienced by the

merchant:

> "Us most putte our good in aventure.
>
> A marchant, pardee, may nat ay endure,
>
> Trusteth me wel, in his prosperitee.
>
> Sometyme his good is drowned in the see,
>
> And somtyme comth it sauf unto the londe." (946-50)

Wearied from both financial and spiritual disappointment, The Yeoman is suddenly

moved by a moment of personal crisis. His despair, amplified to a lesser degree, is also

shown by other pilgrims: the Miller, Reeve, Cook, Pardoner, Physician, and Merchant

come immediately to mind. In realizing his newfound liberation not only from the

Canon but also from alchemy itself, the Yeoman is able–along with select other

pilgrims–to realize a newfound receptivity to that real world beyond one where

heavenly mysteries are not exploited for vain profits or false human glorification.

Ultimately, in realizing this message, it is the example of the Yeoman himself and his

alchemist cohorts, rather than the tradition of knowledge he embodies, which serves as

the exemplum to the other pilgrims (957-69).

Relieved that he has escaped Satan's grip and is no longer burdened to exploit those divine mysteries beyond human sensibility, the Yeoman begins his tale's *pars secunda*, where he revisits the process by which one becomes–like himself those long years before–enmeshed in the promise of alchemy. Such reflections continue to bring his purgation and to have instructional value for his audience. In its basic sense, alchemy represents the impulse for profit, for getting gold without expending the labor necessary to acquire it, and helps to explain the Yeoman's habit of conflating demonic and monetary idioms. If the confessional character shown in both the prologue to his tale and in its *prima pars* is calculated to signal the Yeoman's liberation from the states of physical, monetary, and spiritual poverty that he has suffered in the grip of alchemy, then his tale of the swindling canon further expresses the transmutation not of substance but of his soul.

Scholars disagree about whether his tale reflects his own experience with his Canon, or whether it merely expresses his disappointment through his continual frustrations. However, what's most significant about the Yeoman's tale is its alchemical imagery and the transmutational process this imagery captures: the promise of worldly temptations, he reveals, lie within the Hellish fires of the fictional Canon's crucible, and the pilgrims must collectively move beyond this temptation to reach their full salvation. The alchemical transformations the Yeoman describes are ultimately understood as externalizations of the pilgrims' inner changes. Ultimately, the Yeoman brings to the Canterbury pilgrims their "final trial," where they must both walk through Hellish fires and resist easy temptations in order to realize their salvation. Even from his debased stature, the Yeoman serves as the transmutational agent who enables this

passage; in his role as liminal guide, he achieves his own salvation.

By all logical narrative scenarios, it would be suitable for the pilgrims to hear a tale about the ritual purification of metals, which reflects the purification of their souls. But alas, "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" of a swindling alchemist accomplishes a different, more important purpose. In his account of the priest's seduction by the promise of alchemy, the pilgrims see an allegory of transmutation which alerts them to the state of their own souls. In his divulging of the alchemist's "trade secrets," the Yeoman follows the pattern of the revolting but strangely appealing Pardoner, who has likewise divulged his own shady dealings. But it is the tale's illustration of the lurid grip of wealthy ambition on the soul that is of significance in the larger context of this salvation narrative, especially for the worldly bourgeois pilgrims on display in *The Tales*. In witnessing this most vivid–and ultimately empty–commercial ambition, the Canterbury pilgrims, especially the most profit-minded among them, are themselves readied for purification from this most worldly impulse.

Much attention has been directed to the crucible of the swindling alchemist in "The Yeoman's Tale" as the locus of transformational process–not of the transubstantiation of metals, but of the seduction of the gullible priest's soul. As the tale itself shows, the promise of the transformation of matter into a more perfect (and more valuable) state is empty, fraudulent, and spiritually disorienting. It is the soul of the priest, rather than the substance of metals, that is transformed by the promise of alchemy's riches and by the fictional canon's legerdemain. Ultimately, *pars secunda* of "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" is the story not of material transformation, but of

spiritual disorientation. The Yeoman makes this purpose–the purification of

souls, others as well as his own–immediately clear (998-1001).

The Yeoman soon invokes the figure of Judas to describe not the false

alchemist he is soon to depict but the false science which causes "shame or los" (1009).

The intensity of the Yeoman's account to this point hints at, but never overtly

expresses, the deceit of his recently departed master. Later he assures the pilgrims that

he wishes not to equate his master with the swindling Canon of his story (1088-1100).

It is the illustration of the swindle, a crime judged by Dante as one of the darkest

crimes of fraud and betrayal, which stands out in his story. However, the priest's

seduction by alchemy is its major theme. Monetary idioms expressed in references to

loans, indebtedness, repayment, and the spectre of great wealth also help to make its

message relevant to the lives of its hearers. Approaching an affluent priest of a dubious

character (presumably, his services as "an annueleer" (1012) in plague-torn London,

coupled with his "servysable" relationship to his "wyf" (1014) have helped to line his

pockets), the false canon sets about "bisechynage him" for "a certyn /of gold, and he

would quite it him ageyn" (1024-25).

Even though only sketchily acquainted with his hearers, the Yeoman constructs

characters in this introductory portrayal who are easily identified with the fiscally shady

members of the pilgrimage—his portrayal of the alchemical con-artist would clearly

resonate with his immediate audience. Just as most of the pilgrims are skilled in

maintaining the appearance of honesty (even though the dim-witted pilgrim Chaucer's

observations serve to give readers pause), the false Canon is likewise quick to do so.

He claims that he will soon repay and quickly establishes the image of legitimacy in his

prompt repayment of the priest's loan. Having earned the priest's trust,

witnessed his fiscal wherewithal, and perhaps glimpsed into his profiteering (and

gullible) character, the canon then promises that he will teach him "to werken in

philosophie," which, he claims, has enabled his prompt repayment to the impressed

priest.

And with this gesture, the Yeoman begins to demonstrate the spiritual damage

done by those who, like the priest, are lured and transfixed by the promise of alchemy

and by the wealth it will bring. The Yeoman describes how the the "roote of al

trecherie" sits within the fraudulent Canon himself and prompts those "feendly thoghtes

in his herte" which tempt and divert Christians from the true path. Such is the manner,

the Yeoman proclaims, by which "Cristes peple," are brought "to meschief" by the

fiend: "God kepe us from his false dissymulynge" (1072-73). As described above,

select critics have argued for the equating of the Canon, that swindling alchemist, with

the anti-Christ himself, and it is hard not to note the dominiant images and motifs—

money, debt, noxious vapors, and poisonous fumes—which dictate this portrayal. And

again, this depiction is particularly suitable for the other Canterbury pilgrims, who have

succumbed to temptation in comparable, if less vivid and graphic, terms. Indeed, more

than a few of the story's listeners might see themselves in the duped priest, that "sely

innocent" who has become "blent" by "coveitise," or by his lust for money (1076-77).

The Yeoman's subsequent denial that it is his own Canon that has worked this

fraud on unsuspecting victims adds a rhetorical flourish which serves to legitimize his

position as an agent in the transmutation of souls. Given the experiences he has

described and the knowledge he reveals, it is safe to presume that he has seen this

damage inflicted on covetous victims, even as he maintains that he was, like his

Canon, a legitimate believer in the promise of alchemy. The Canon's departure, he

implies, results not out of fear of exposure as a fraud. Rather, he flees because he

maintains his misguided faith in a science that the Yeoman himself has lost: if alchemy

is not false, the Yeoman implies, it is more important to see it as spiritually bankrupting.

In this way, the now departed Canon represents a lost soul, and the Yeoman can claim

an authoritative familiarity with those in this plight. If anything, the Yeoman can be

said to value the alchemical sciences even as he is embarrassed by their manipulation by

profiteering frauds like the Canon of his story. His devotion is such that it has become a

part of his "visage": "fumes diverse / Of metals...consumed and wasted han (his)

reednesse," rendering him unable to blush on behalf of his science (1097-1100).

Having established his ethical authority and legitimized himself to the Canterbury

pilgrims, the Yeoman's Canon then divulges the tricks that fraudulent alchemists use to

tempt the gullible.

In the lines that follow, the Yeoman details the impressive array of tricks that

create the false image of spontaneously generated riches. Behind closed doors and

away from the prying eyes of servants, the fictional canon proceeds to "heer bigynne /

In the name of Crist, to wexe a philosofre," while declaring that such knowledge is

available only to those privileged "few to whiche I wolde profre / To shween hem thus

muche of my science" (1122-24). Within the framework of his story, the Yeoman

succeeds in replicating the emotional climate in which such "feendly" duplicity is

possible. He creates a forbidden, occult atmosphere in the closed and secluded environs

where his canon works his false magic and where he divulges his "secrets" after having

established trust and promised great riches. These "secrets," the Yeoman shows,

are really clever sleights of hand performed before the gullible priest, who is soon to be

seduced by alchemy's false promise. The Yeoman skillfully creates a mood to his story

in which the excitement of forbidden secrecy combines with expectant anticipation to

enhance the priest's temptation. In this role, the Yeoman is akin to the experienced

used car salesman who has become a consumer advocate. With his false magic on

display before the giddy priest, the swindling Canon fully involves his dupe in the

excitement of discovery. Invoking the powers of Hell which, he implies, he has god-

like mastery of, he instructs the priest to gaze into his crucible and "Put in thyn hand

and grope. / Thow finde ther silver, as I hope" (1236-37). Continuing to employ the

priest's help in the demonstration of his "magic," the canon casts metals into his

crucible and invokes the priest to blow, fanning the toxic flames. In this noxious

atmosphere, the canon's satanic visage emerges in the Yeoman's commentary: he is,

again, the "roote of all cursedness" (1301) and follows the well known demonic

character in which he "semed freendly to hem that knewe hym noght, / But he was

feendly bothe in werk and thoght" (1302-03).

As Chaucer has established over the preceding stories and intervening

narratives, many of the pilgrims themselves have been seduced by the allure of wealth;

in the story of this priest, whose soul is captured by the fiend himself, they might see

the worst sides of their profiteering impulses portrayed. And the priest's gesture—to

buy perpetual access to this forbidden knowledge which assures, he believes, perpetual

wealth—would surely strike a chord with the more fiscally unscrupulous pilgrims who

work their own "alchemies of scale." Delighted by the promise of alchemy, the priest

offers to pay the canon for his knowledge; and the canon is happy to oblige,

valuing his forbidden secrets at 40 pounds (then, a majestic sum). In portraying the

story of the priest's seduction to the promise of wealth, the Yeoman has cast this ritual

act of seduction to the world for those about to disavow it and has cast this seduction as

essentially a financial transaction. In hearing of the beginning stages of what they now

see as a long, disappointing journey, one in which the priest tries, never successfully, to

replicate the canon's alchemy, his only recourse—short of denying the science that has

seduced him—is to lapse into the fraudulent charlatanism of the canon who has duped

him. In short, the priest, himself no great moral bastion to begin with (it is suggested),

will gradually evolve into the fiendish canon.

In this exemplum, the pilgrims find their deliverance. Concerning "[t]hey that

hath been brent," he asks, "Allas, kan they nat flee the fires heete?" (1407-08). This is

the ultimate lesson of alchemy; now fully liberated from its grip and strengthened by his

having released others from similar impulses, the Yeoman invokes three practitioners of

the noble science, "Arnold of the Newe Town" (1428), the mythical Hermes

Trismegistus, he who is "philosophers fader" (1434), and Senior Zadith, "a disciple of

Plato" (1448), each of whom justifies the esoteric mysteries of alchemy within the

natural orders of the world. In fleeing the "fires heete" of the world, as the Yeoman

reveals, the pilgrims will realize their godly destiny. This is the ultimate point to be seen

in the true search for the philosopher's stone. It must end, the Yeoman concludes, with

the realization that it is Christ's own secret, not one "men for t'espie, and eek for o

deffende" (1470); Christ will reveal this secret, the Yeoman now realizes, in His own

way and on His terms. In his benediction, the Yeoman shows that, in his liberation from

alchemy, he has rejoined the faithful at what is for him, as well as for his pilgrim

cohorts, a most fortunate time (1472-81).

With "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" at its end, the pilgrims find themselves on

the outskirts of Canterbury, passing through "Bobbe-up-and-down" (2), or Harbledown,

a scant two miles from their journey's end. In their metaphoric journey toward

salvation, they are about to disavow the world more fully, a message which will

resonate in "The Manciple's Tale." Before "The Parson's Tale," that concluding sermon

which categorically details the various sins and how to avoid them (and in which both

"misericorde," or mercy, and "resonable largesse"—as opposed to "fool-largesse"—are

prescribed as relief against the sin of avarice), the Manciple's penultimate message to

the pilgrims features a lecture on the evils of storytelling and serves to recast the

fictional world that they have each helped to create over the course of their journey.

Understanding the Biographical Basis for the Commercial Character of **The** **Canterbury Tales**

From the poet's earliest experience as a well-to-do son of the merchant class

who was sent to the royal courts at a young age to "learn gentry,"[199] Chaucer seems to

have negotiated a lifelong tension between the commercial values of the merchant and

the communal world of ritual and ceremony in the courts of Edward III and Richard II.

One of the poet's most lucid comments on this position between worlds is expressed in

the "General Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales*, which portrays a wide variety of

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[199] Chaucer was, after primary schooling, dispatched to the House of Ulster to "learn Gentry" under the care of Prince Lionel, the third son of Edward III, and his wife, the Countess Elizabeth. In this new and socially elevated realm, the young poet-to-be would encounter a world where the notion of money would stand in stark contrast to the position it held in the imagination of the merchant's world he'd left behind. The courtly world that Chaucer now inhabited revolved around the gallant extravagance and chivalric idealism of Edward III and his wife, the Queen Phillippa.

individuals who pursue profit often in morally dubious ways. Scholar Paul

Strohm characterizes the varied makeup of the Canterbury pilgrims as "neither a

complete census of fourteenth-century English society nor an enumeration of its most

influential ranks" (14). Instead, explains Strohm, they are calculated to represent the

"three estates" of the medieval social world: the noble, or seignurial class, as embodied

by the Knight; the spiritual class, as represented by the Parson; and the laboring

agricultural class, as depicted in the character of the ploughman. These three figures –

and the tales they tell–serve a symbolic role within the overall structure of *The*

Canterbury Tales, and journey alongside not only "assorted other gentils," but also a

"very full review of the middle strata" of late fourteenth century English society.

Ultimately, argues Strohm, the pilgrims' gathering "confirms a vital premise about the

relationship between social position and worldly behavior" (14).

Biographer Brewer is likewise emphatic about the importance of the variety of

the Canterbury pilgrims: "Altogether they give a remarkable panorama of England in

the fourteenth-century as reflected in the many facets of Chaucer's mind," he writes,

and the "processional form" of his work "should not be a journey by a fully

hierarchical, highly organized, exclusive institution, like a court or an army." Instead,

the occasion of a pilgrimage transcended traditional class boundaries: it was "purposive

yet voluntary, with minimal organization, open to change" (*World* 197). These scholarly

observations reinforce the idea that the structure of the *Tales* is, ultimately, a reflection

of the poet's own liminal position between two clearly defined social spheres.

Throughout the poet's life, his position between clearly defined worlds–

between those of his merchant's upbringing and his courtly education, between his roles

of service to chivalric ideals and his practical efforts in courtly law and finance,

and later, in his detached neutrality in the conflicts between the Lancastrian factions of

the royal family (to whom Chaucer had close ties) and the ascendant merchant advisors

to the crown (to whom the poet had equal, if not greater loyalties). This position of

ambiguity is described by biographer Brewer as most prominent in the poet's later

years, where, as a "old tired man," Chaucer "cared little for faction," "had friends in all

camps," and "may well have looked on with distress and anxiety, but he may

equally...have felt himself detached from these passionate and dangerous worldly

concerns" (211). As the poet was moving toward the realization of this more detached

position, he was also populating his imaginative Canterbury pilgrimage with a diverse

assortment of individuals from all social levels. Perhaps this more universal vision

stands as an expression of this lifelong position of negotiation between diverse social,

economic, and political positions.

So just as it is thoroughly resonant throughout Dante's *Inferno*, the ideology of

commerce is even more pervasive in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. A preoccupation

with the relationship between money, commerce, and moral order is most likely

attributable to the poet's unique exposure to a variety of realms of commerce and

attitudes toward money. These begin with his decidedly bourgeois roots. The poet

emerged from an influential family entrenched in the guild of the vintners (wine

merchants) and the fiscal awareness that he showed throughout life emerged from these

upper middle-class origins.[200] The poet's interest in matters of personal economy and

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[200] John Chaucer, the poet's father, had risen to a position of relative stature within the vintner's guild, and also benefitted from the deaths of close relatives–from both his and his wife's families–from the plague's first significant outbreak in 1348-49. This family tragedy nonetheless enabled the wine merchant to increase his holdings; by default

monetary policy, as shown in his unmistakable portrayals of select Canterbury

pilgrims were first shaped by his family's emergence in the dynamic, rough-and-tumble

commercial and social culture of early fourteenth-century London,[201] he would later

serve the courts of Edward III and Richard II in important fiscal capacities.

Conclusion

Such information about the complicated picture of the economic world in

Chaucer's life and his complicated place within it is essential to any effort to envision

how "The Knight's Tale" and "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" represent the narrative

"bookends" of *The Canterbury Tales*. Both the Knight and the Canon's Yeoman,

despite their vastly differing social positions, are heavily invested in idealized world

views that seemingly (and in the Knight's case, subtly) run contrary to the fallen, often

debased environs they inhabit. Moreover, both have a monetary investment in metals in

their material form that serves in diametrically polarized ways: the knight, just returned

from a series of grim battles on the continent, can be considered at worst as a seeker of

plunder whose paramount concern is the external presentation of himself. An

experienced veteran just returned from a campaign on the continent, his stained and

tarnished armor is notably at odds with the armed knights grandiosely described in his

tale. In contrast, the Canon's Yeoman has physically internalized his metallurgical

vision, having developed a sickly pallor over many years spent working in darkened

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he acquired not only "extensive, income-producing properties" in both London and Middlesex, but beyond these his holdings would eventually include "a brewing establishment, twenty-odd shops outside the city wall of London at Aldgate, ten and a half acres nearby, and various properties in Middlesex and Suffolk" (Howard, *Idea* 7). Both of Chaucer's most highly regarded biographers, Howard and Brewer, acknowledge the significance of the plague's outbreak in 1348-49 on the poet's youthful imagination, not only because of the horrific toll it took on the poet's extended family and the rest of the English population, but also because of the economic turmoil that would reverberate for the next three decades. Indeed, the Black Death of 1348-49 is described by Howard as Chaucer's first "'big' memory" and "the first public event he would recall" (*Chaucer* 12). However, despite the trauma of the plague's first major outbreak, the Chaucer family continued in its pattern of upward mobility.
[201] See Brewer, *Chaucer* 4

laboratories and inhaling noxious fumes in the Canon's service while seeking the shimmering but elusive promise of alchemical lucre. This contrast, however, shows an additional consistency, as each teller's relationship to metals as physical substances symbolizes and comments on his pursuit of some idealized spiritual realization.

"The Knight's Tale" is certainly Knightly: highly structured, obsessively symmetrical, intensely chivalric, and solidly representative of its teller. It is highly ordered in its imagery and ambitious in its philosophical bearing. Indeed, a modern reader, made cynical by the recent critical debate about the Knight's character and experience, might find appealing the suggestion that it is intended as a subtle parody on chivalric values. It is arguably the most appropriate fictional material for a pilgrimage and sets the structural tone for the more ribald tales that follow. Likewise, the Yeoman's greatest quality, beyond his obvious and expansive knowledge of metals and their transformative properties (or lack thereof, as shown in the frustrated experiments he details in lines 719-822), is his honesty, which emerges from his despair: he comes clean with the pilgrims because he has nothing left to lose. His confessional tone captures the depth of his despair and also serves an important symbolic function within the overall structure of Chaucer's salvation epic. Metals provide an essential symbolic and conceptual element to the Christian narrative toward salvation. References to metals, those who wear them, those who work with them, and the chivalric and chemical images they present—all jointly combine to provide a sort of structure in the imagery which borrows from the epic traditions and helps to justify the soul's salvation, as shown by the pilgrims' arrival into Canterbury, the allegorical New Jerusalem.

If "The Parson's Tale" is to be seen as the narrative end point and culmination

of a salvation epic with heavily mercantile overtones, the tales of the Knight and Canon's Yeoman serve essential roles in preserving a narrative coherence within a sequence of tales that offer, within and among themselves, both tantalizing connections—narrative plotlines, imagistic and thematic consistency, and other assorted generic, historical and astrological threads—as well as maddening ambiguities. Essentially "The Knight's Tale" and "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" stand out as the symbolic beginning and ending of this narrative progress: one tale establishes narrative and worldly structure, while the other comments on its worldly degeneration. Metals figure prominently in both, as well as in the allegorical process of the narrative as a whole: as weapons, as coinage, and ultimately, as the basic elements of alchemical transmutation and purification.

As invested as he was with the mercantile dimension, Chaucer stopped short of realizing spiritual fulfillment in worldly terms and recognized the importance of the narrative culmination of his pilgrims' allegorical journey. Edmund Spenser, the next great writer of English epic, was no less invested with the epic motifs of metals, mining, and the underworld supplied by Virgil, Dante, and Chaucer himself, and he would further adapt them to the next great developmental phase of the genre. Instead of portraying epic as spiritual quest, Spenser, prompted noticeably by Dante and more so by Chaucer, would augment its mercantile dimensions in the service of statism, a more defined economic and political entity.

Chapter 9: Revisiting Virgil: Propagandizing Colonial Hegemony

and Realizing Social Mobility in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*

Transition: From Chaucerian Salvation to Spenserian Imperialism

As has been shown, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is best seen as a salvation epic that seeks to reconcile the worldly imperatives of commerce with the divine mandates of Christian charity. Such spiritual mandates, according to Chaucer, run contradictory to the worldly pursuit of profit. If Chaucer's epic can be seen as the most significant English spiritual epic in the age of early mercantilism, *The Faerie Queen* has come to be read in recent decades according to scholars of both old and new historicist bearings as an imperial epic from the dawning age of English colonialism. The beginnings of colonialism represent an intermediate step between the salvation epic of Chaucer and the creation epic of Milton, which (as I have also argued) is a spiritual epic with heavily industrial overtones. Moreover, Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* displays a similar tension between the spiritual and worldly imperatives shaped by the poet's life and world, articulating his personal ambitions while reflecting his world's economic pressures and state ideology. In the works of Spenser, written some hundred and fifty years after those of Chaucer, the colonialist impulses expressed in *The Faerie Queene* portray the economic necessity and advantageous character of resource exploitation, which was proceeding in the colonial outposts of Ireland where Spenser served the crown.[202]

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[202] Until the advent of new historicist readings in the last two decades, Spenser largely remained, with exceptions, a writer whose reputation was unmarred by the disasters of Elizabeth's reign. However, as demonstrated by a series of influential readings, particularly those of scholars Willy Maley and Andrew Hadfield, a new line of critical inquiry has become available to readers of Spenser's epic. Likewise, scholar Richard Rambuss focuses on the implications of the "open secret of Spenser's careerism" (29) a fact which shaped not only his social mobility but also his role as an enforcer of brutal English colonial policies toward the Irish, first in the service of Sidney and more vividly under Lord Grey of Wilton. According to biographer Gary Waller, Spenser wrote his epic in a milieu that was calculated to advance the triumphs of the English colonial agenda, where the "ideological resonances" (20)—those problematic signifiers of the poet's Englishness as well as of the English national identity itself—found articulation in *The Faerie*

Despite a common focus on concerns that can be traced ultimately to the contemporary politics and economies of their respective ages, Spenser, far more so than Chaucer, revisits the imperial epic themes established by Virgil. If Virgil provided the imperial tropes for Spenser's epic, it can also be said that Chaucer helped to influence its cultural and linguistic dimensions. Ireland provided the theater for the poetic expression of Elizabethan social and political currents as Spenser envisioned them. Within the larger Elizabethan hegemonic structure, the poet, in an attempt to locate his own channels for social advancement, found it initially profitable to conflate his poetic and social ambitions. Ultimately, the colonial enterprise in Spenser's epic represented a necessary arena for a reconfigured version of the epic of salvation, one defined in more overtly capitalistic terms. Spenser first invested himself fully in this enterprise, but across the seven-book structure of *The Faerie Queene* grappled with the doubts and tribulations toward an ideology of economic and political missionizing in Elizabethan England. In this way, the poet depicted the new road to remodeling the pagan in Christian, Protestant, and capitalist terms. Ultimately, he configured his colonial ideology as a sort of secular crusading, yet over the course of his experience in Ireland a subtle but discernible shift is evident in Spenser's own attitude toward this Elizabethan enterprise, as reflected in his differing treatment of chivalric images.

As recent critics have established, Books IV-VI of *The Faerie Queene*, in comparison with Books I-III, reveal Spenser's growing uncertainty with his investment in the Munster Plantation scheme, as well as his changing attitudes toward the

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Queene, an epic that glorifies what scholar and prominent Spenser apologist C.S. Lewis himself called the "detestable policy" (Lewis, qtd. Waller 19) of colonial suppression.

landscapes and people within view of the Kilcolman estates that signified his

social ascendancy. Building on these recent critical trends, I posit a reading of

Spenser's epic treatise that aligns it structurally, imagistically, and thematically with his

political views on the Irish situation as expressed in the *View of the Present State of*

Ireland, his only known political tract. This prose document serves as a useful

supplement which helps to account for the poet's subtle but discernible imagistic shift

across the seven book narrative of *The Faerie Queene.* One finds Spenser's growing

disillusionment with the English colonial policy, especially in chivalric motifs and

patterns of battle imagery in Books I-III as compared to Books IV-VI. The *Mutability*

Cantos, which conclude the epic, represent the best expression of Spenser's

disenchantment with the failed English colonial policy, then breathing its last gasps in

the late years of the sixteenth century. Tyrone's cultivation of an emergent Irish army to

match the English forces proceeded in conjunction with Spenser's composition not only

of *The Faerie Queene's* later books, but also of the *View*; ultimately, it is impossible to

compare the battle imagery of his epic in the early books with that in the later ones

without considering the uncertain and increasingly volatile climate that emerged

between Spenser and the Irish in his Kilcolman environs.

The *Faerie Queene's* two-part structure is distinguished by a six-year gap

between the 1590 and 1596 publications, and Books I-III are distinguished from Books

IV-VII—and from the narrative structure of the epic as a whole—according to what is

essentially a two-part structure to the arguments of the *View*. This tract is composed in

dialogue form between two interlocutors and outlines the myriad problems with both

Native Irish and Old English societies in Ireland before arguing for a solution based

around military occupation and gradual settlement. Although it is an oversimplification to divide the *View* into these two basic sections, it is accurate to note that the first half's emphasis on criticizing the customs of the Irish and Old English is distinguished from the discussion of colonial imperatives of the later part. Essentially, the theme of the first half is that the Irish are not what they seem, and their very lives are governed by a sort of innate secrecy which outsiders are unable to fathom, sentiments that by 1596 had already been captured imagistically in Books I-III of Spenser's epic. The argument of the second half seeks to establish how the influences of English civility will eliminate this maddening characteristic of the Irish, and the thematic dimensions of Books IV-VII are more in accord with this vision.

The dominant thematic motifs of Books I-III and Books IV-VII follow the respective argumentative and thematic patterns established in both parts of the *View*: Books I-III depict the Irish people and customs according to the idea that they resist signification, and are never—to the colonizing English sensibilities—quite what they seem. In contrast, Books IV-VII follow the pattern of the later section of the *View*, in which the imaginative results of Spenser's surveyorship are applied more directly to his epic project. His characters negotiate here a landscape that has been "mapped" and colonized: it is more familiar, its features have been named, and it is ultimately more "civilized" according to English sensibilities, even as long standing threats to this new civility openly persist. Upon such ideas is his epic project in Books I-III redirected to

the revised one in Books IV-VII that is more reflective, more personalized, and

less prone to the propagandistic impulses of colonizing rhetoric.[203]

A Reading of The Faerie Queene's *Epic Imagery: Books I-III: Idiomatic Connections with the* View of the Present State of Ireland

In Books I-III, chivalry is presented both as a statement of masculine power

and a statement of resistance to feminine power, and finds particular expression through

the idiom of Elizabeth's colonialist policy. In the sword and the shield, one sees both

the occasion to strike out at the other, as well as the restriction of the self in contact with

the other. In Books I-III, the motif of armor likewise serves as a sort "exoskeleton"

which protects the chivalric heroes from the amorphous, shape-shifting (and in one

notable case, mantle-covered) characters they face who dwell ominously in the

Faeryland landscape. If the stated purpose of the Faerie Queen is, as Spenser's prefatory

Letter to Raleigh indicates, "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and

gentle discipline," then the education of the principal heroic figures in Books I-III—

Redcrosse, Arthur, Guyon, and Britomart—collectively embody this process of

fashioning. Through the course of the books' intertwined narratives, each figure

undergoes trial and realizes a greater, more complete version of the self, and this more

developed version of the heroic self represents a fulfillment of the English colonial

vision. The imperative "to fashion" such an individual is itself patterned after and

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[203] With the 1596 publication of *The Faerie Queene*, that phase of Spenser's colonial experience had clearly passed, and it is likely that his expression of key ideas in the *View*, as in other works composed within that six-year time frame, helped to facilitate this psychological and intellectual development, and find expression in his growing ambivalence toward the colonial project. Interestingly, as Spenser's own status at Kilcolman became more tenuous in the later 1590's, the trajectory of his epic in some ways anticipates the ultimate failures of the Munster settlement.

establishes the agenda of the colonial experience that Spenser himself underwent

in his effort to fulfill his service to the court of Elizabeth.

The dominant motifs of Book I-III, however, are best embodied in a specific

passage that connects the thematics of Spenser's 1590 epic with his political tract most

likely composed by 1596. Irenius, one of two interlocutors, is more familiar with Irish

ways and customs, and it is perhaps no accident that his name is patterned after Irena.

This tyrannized female figure is liberated in Book V by Artegall, the allegorical

representation of Lord Grey de Wilton. Nonetheless, Irenius' criticisms of the Irish

essentially focus on their secretive and mysterious qualities. In describing Irish dress,

Irenius is quick to point out the many ways in which the basic garment, the mantle,

enables the wearer to conceal self, effect and motive. Why, asks Eudoxus, the other

interlocutor, is it "necessarie" to "cast off" such a "commodious" garment, which serves

as "housing, bedding, and clothing"? In lengthy reply, Irenius outlines the reasons why

such a useful "commoditie doth not countervaile (its) discommoditie": "...it is a fit

house for an out-law, a meet bed for a rebel, and an apt cloke for a thiefe" (57). Irenius

then provides a knowing inventory of its useful applications for outlaw, rebel, and thief

alike: the outlaw "maketh the mantle his house, and under it covereth himselfe from the

wrath of Heaven, from offence of the earth, and from the sight of men" (57). Likewise,

the rebel also makes his mantle "serviceable" in "his warre that he maketh (if at least it

deserve the name of warre)." It enables him to "flyeth from his foe, and lurketh in the

thicke woods and straite passages, waiting for advantages" under its protective cover.

Finally, the thief is served by the mantle in "so handsome" a way, "as it may seem it

was first invented for him, for under it he may cleanly convey any fit pillage that

commeth handsomely in his way, and when he goeth abroad in the night in free-

booting, it is his best and surest friend." Later, in the light of day, the mantle enables

the thief to "passé thorough any town or company, being close hooded over his head, as

he useth, from knowledge of any to whom he is indangred" (58). Ultimately, Irenius

seems to express the Spenserian belief that this article of clothing not only provides

camouflage to criminals, but also is the key to their efforts to resist the English: anyone

"disposed to mischief or villany may under his mantle go privily armed without

suspicion of any, carry his head-piece, his skean, or pistol if he please, to be always in

readiness" (58). Likewise, the mantle enables what Spenser and other English

moralizers saw as the innate licentiousness of Irish culture, as it provides "coverlet" for

the "lewde exercise" of the Irish woman and allows her to "hide both her burden, and

her blame" (58). An appalled Eudoxus, shocked at the duplicitous utility afforded to the

Irish by their mantles, sees the need to abolish it. Likewise the *glibbe*, the Irish custom

of growing one's hair long to conceal one's face, is similarly ascribed these demonic

qualities.

Ultimately, the mantle and *glibbe* enabled the Irish to seclude, conceal, and

misrepresent themselves to English eyes and minds, and Irenius' complaints cohere

closely with those offered by the various military commanders who engaged the Irish

guerillas in battle. Moreover, the description mirrors one of the definitive effects of

Books I-III: things are, to English eyes and minds, not what they seem, and in such a

world of secrecy the rational, truthful individual is constantly at peril. The description

applies as much to the wild landscapes that Spenser was engaged in colonizing as to the

brooding motifs that depict the antagonists who constantly threaten the chivalric heroes

in his epic. In Spenser's estimation, the mantle is a useful symbol for an innate characteristic he ascribes to the Irish: they are never what they appear to be and have the means to change and modify themselves according to setting and circumstance. This is the custom which defines the Irish according to English sensibilities, and this description of the mantle is applied elsewhere—to Irish husbandry techniques, to living arrangements, to religious practices, etc. Through Irenius, Spenser argues for the necessity of garrisoning Ireland to impose English models of civility, by means of which the Irish will be broken of this habit of appearing as something else. Such sentiments likewise resonate in the epic's first three books.

Indeed, the heroic vision articulated in Books I-III speaks to the colonizing experience in a number of ways, so that *The Faerie Queene's* moral imperatives, as indicated by Spenser in the Letter to Raleigh, is really one demanded by those persons of Elizabethan society who must do the colonizing work to spread English hegemony across worlds that are simultaneously threatening, alien, and alluring. In short, the simplified purpose of Spenser's poem is to instruct the English "self" to withstand both the threats and temptations posed by the native "other," and in the poet's mind the native Irish, along with those assimilated English overlords from the Anglo-Norman period, represented the greatest threats to Elizabeth's colonial imperatives. Further, in Spenser's poem one finds comment on his own precarious place as the marginal but ambitious position seeker who, rather than navigating the overcrowded and socially perilous world of Elizabeth's court, elected to do the queen's colonizing work and advance his country's interests in these threatening, faraway lands.

A reading of Books I-III highlights the connections between

steadfastness, as embodied in the virtues allegorized in each Book's central character,

and their armour, which symbolizes this steadfastness in the face of an evanescent,

shape-shifting landscape populated by peoples appearing first in an appealing and then

in a threatening guise. Collectively, the books embody the historic and mythic grandeur

of England, and the prophetic vision at the end of Book III establishes the colonial

imperatives of each character's journey through Faeryland. The threats faced by the

heroes of the 1590 *Faerie Queene,* especially Redcrosse but also Guyon and Britomart,

are tangible and life-threatening and are allegorical representations of those threats not

only to the self but also to the larger health of the nation. Such threats are particularly

mettlesome in the exercise of colonial nation-building, and in this way also Books I-III

differ from IV-VIII, where the conflict is more wanton and arbitrary and the chivalric

imagery less purposeful.

The secretive characteristics of the Irish are signaled immediately in the first

Canto with the introduction of the figure of Archimago (I.I.29), who soon exerts his

divisive forces over Redcrosse and Una. Appearing as a kindly, scripture-reading

hermit who offers the pair a night's respite, Archimago—whose name translates

roughly into "the first image"—immediately sows the seeds of discord in Redcrosse's

mind. The knight sees his betrothed acting unfaithfully in a "false dream" (I.I.43. 9)

contrived by Archimago and worked by his agent Morpheus. In his very name,

Archimago, the first among images, stands for a sort of false perception which leads the

unwary astray; he is one of the many threatening characters who populate the brooding

landscapes of Faeryland and challenge the virtues embodied in the heroes of Books I-

III. With his nocturnal machinations, both Una and Redcrosse see false visions of the other (I.II, 5 , I.II, 11), and their subsequent disunion sets into motion the central imperative of this allegorical narrative. With their reunion eleven books later, the symbolic justification of British colonialism is established.

The embodiment of duplicity in Books I-III, however, is revealed later in Book I, and is, not coincidentally, cloaked in a mantle. The figure of Duessa, who appears first as Fidessa and whose embodiment of faith will be shown graphically to be false, is introduced in Canto II and is pervasive throughout the rest of Book I. In loose conjunction with the three knights, the Sarazin brothers Sansfoy, Sansloy, and Sansjoy ("without faith," "without loyalty," and "without happiness"), Duessa seeks to disrupt Redcrosse's effort to reunite with Una and to forestall a realized Faeryland under the dominion of Glorianna (Elizabeth). Both Redcrosse and Una come into contact with the Sarazin brothers; Redcrosse slays Sansfoy and takes up with Fidessa, who, when her mantle is removed, will be memorably exposed as Duessa (I.II.15-19). Likewise, her betrothed having angrily departed after the false nocturnal vision of her faithlessness, Una takes up with Archimago, who, true to form, has disguised himself as Redcrosse. Upon seeing Redcrosse /Archimago and wishing to avenge his brother's death, Sansloy attacks the false Redcrosse, slays him, and takes Una as his prize. While Redcrosse and Fidessa journey to the House of Pride, Una herself is condemned to resist Sansloy's advances until rescued by the Satyrs early in Canto VI. Both Redcrosse's trip to the House of Pride and Una's rescue are problematic ventures which show the Spenserian habit of hiding a more troubling reality behind a character's or icon's seemingly benign visage.

As Canto VI begins, Una holds a lustful Sansloy at bay until rescued by

a group of Satyrs. Satyrane (20), a child of a human mother and a Satyr father and a

well-known figure throughout Faeryland, finds Una at the center of the Satyrs ongoing

diurnal celebrations (28-29), "rescues" her, and informs her of what he believes to be

Redcrosse's "death" (really, the death of Archimago at the hands of Sansloy). Later,

the pair finds this same false representative of Una's beloved, and Satyrane slays him.

Meanwhile, the escaped Redcrosse has encountered the giant Orgoglio, whose

destructiveness is compared with the effects of cannon fire (I.VII.13). The overmatched

knight is easily defeated and banished to Orgoglio's dungeon, where, by the

machinations of his loyal servant dwarf, he is able to convey the news that he is still

alive. The dwarf tells Una of Redcrosse's misfortune, and the timely appearance of

Arthur (I.VII. 29) promises his eventual rescue. Significantly, in the account of

Arthur's arrival the narrator devotes great detail to describing his armor, made by

Merlin and well-suited to his mythic stature (I.VII.29-36). Arthur's shield serves as a

self-justifying lens by which "all that was not such, as seemed in sight / Before that

shield did fade, and suddeine fall" (I.VII.35. 3-4). In other words, it is the perfect

chivalric foil for the amorphous and shifting enemies that lurk in this Faeryland

otherworld. Likewise, serving as a most noble embodiment of English virtue and a

vivid embodiment of its glorious mythic past, Arthur soon convinces the distraught Una

that Redcrosse's rescue is both possible and necessary.[204] He pledges to do so in the

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[204] Noting that as Spenser "insists that the allegory is merely the pleasing surface of a national epic built on the firm foundation of unadorned history and ethical and ethical philosophy," Erickson demonstrates how "Arthur embodies the criteria that define the traditional epic hero" (25). Moreover, "Spenser saw that the myth of Arthur was of far greater significance to the history of England than random political facts about a minor figure out of ancient history" (29).

name of Glorianna and her Kingdom Cleopolis—allegorical representations of

Elizabeth and London.

Likewise, both Arthur and Redcrosse are central to Spenser's notion of English

civility; the former assumes a mythic dimension, while the latter offers a more historical

and mythical effect within Spenser's allegory. As such, they serve key symbolic roles

in the pro-colonialist rhetoric of Book I. Una unites Arthur and Redcrosse at the

intersection of mythic and historic pasts. In the episode historical England is "rescued"

by its mythic past (Canto VII).[205]

In Book I, one finds the strongest justification for English colonialism, and the

events of the later books serve as a powerful framework for the pro-colonial ideology

that shapes the remainder of the epic. This message is particularly important in the

framework of the 1596 version of *The Faerie Queene*, where Spenser's motives in the

later books seem less expressive of this confident nationalist ideology. However, in

Cantos IX-XII of Book I one finds many of the Virgilian motifs that engage the

nationalist imperatives of epic literature: the storied lineage of both Redcrosse and

Arthur (whose heritage, being mythic, is more uncertain (I.IX.4)), the respective

representatives of England's historical and mythic pasts; the underworld catabaesis, in

which an ailing and distraught Redcrosse, seeking succor in the abode of despair,

undergoes a physical and spiritual penitence to prepare him to realize his historical

destiny as the perpetuator of English civility; finally, Redcrosse beholds a vision of

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[205] In his prefatory Letter to Raleigh Spenser elaborates on the role served by the historical Arthur, and this brief history serves as "a unifying narrative invention, an epic political quest set in the distant past, a myth of national destiny…and an allegorical investigation of ethical action" (Erickson 29) which shapes Spenser's portrayal of his epic's mythic hero.

Cleopolis, the glorious city of the realm of Gloriana, as a sort of realized New Jerusalem, and it is his destiny to perpetuate these civilized values across the world. The ultimate vision of Book I, with its emphasis on unity and wholeness, is realized with his arrival to this "city on a hill" (IX 55), which Redcrosse espies first from afar.

Stanzas 55-68 are especially important to express Spenser's epic vision, but in Stanzas 65-66 in particular Faeryland is shown as a place to forge figures and potential for the English nation—and therefore boasts its own political imperatives.[206] In Canto X, this message is powerfully reinscribed by the process of Redcrosse's penitence, and his lineage is also presented in proper Virgilian detail. Indeed, he is bestowed with the name of St. George, England's patron saint, because he realizes his duty to serve the Virgin queen Una and to spread her civilizing influence (I.X.55-62). Moreover, his Saxon origins are described in fit detail (I.X.65). As his recovery is deemed complete, he must now face his final challenge in battle that assures the destiny bestowed upon him. Ultimately, Redcrosse's repentance is pivotal in establishing an uplifting tenor and the ideological imperatives of Book I. To reconcile Redcrosse's purgation and penance with aims of English nationhood, one must understand them as emblems of a process of Anglicizing. The meaning of the hero's experience is as much a political as a spiritual statement.

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[206] Faeryland stands as a site where a sort of "political catabaesis" takes place after the fashion of the Virgilian underworld where state heroism is created and where chivalric implements (weapons, armour) again represent the symbols of state imperatives. Moreover, within Faeryland "various historical, legendary, and mythical times coexist, past, present, and future must be treated as relative, not absolute terms." As it is "free from the burden of any particular time," argues Erickson, "Spenser can use it to coordinate the historical circumstances, the political and religious events that occur and are destined to occur in the places that compose the political geography surrounding Faeryland" (6).

As Canto XI begins, Redcrosse encounters the Dragon, presented as a destroyer of nations (I.XI.14) whom he must slay. As his "godly armes may blaze" (I.XI.7.9), Redcrosse faces this ultimate combat and, though injured, is replenished by drinking from the well of life (I.XI.29). As the clashing of metal resounds in their frenzied fight, a strengthened Redcrosse gains advantage (32-44) and finally slays the Dragon. In victory he realizes his fitness to serve his queen and country in even greater service. In Canto XI.13-14, the Dragon is a threat to and a destroyer of nations, which the newly named St. George must slay. In stanzas 32-44, iron imagery is the dominant motif of St. George's fight with the Dragon. The imagery of this battle serves, as it has done many times in past epics, as Spenser's acknowledgment of the links between metals, militarism, and nationhood. The first hint of the influence of colonial activity and the first gesture to Spenser's own colonial experience likewise occurs in Canto XII of Book I, when Redcrosse earns the blessing of Una's father. The knight must return to Faeryland for six years to serve Glorianna (Elizabeth), ensconced at Cleopolis (London, Court), at her bidding. With the Dragon slain, the work of nation-building must go on. Despite personal desires, Redcrosse departs in Stanza 41. Duessa appears to remind him of his duties in the Celtic Fringe (30-32, Book X); Duessa and Archimago represent a constant threat and overcoming them is ongoing.[207]

Several important patterns are established in Book I which serve to frame the subsequent books of Spenser's epic. In the first canto of *The Faerie Queene*, a

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[207] This is the message of the final Canto, in which Redcrosse learns that even in the moment of his greatest glory he must remain true to greater duties. These are revealed as his duty in Faeryland, where he must serve for a full six years before he is able to wed his beloved Una. Such is the grim work of colonial enterprise, and in agreeing to this seemingly unreasonable mandate Redcrosse embodies his willingness to do the hard work needed to spread English civility. While Archimago appears yet again to try to thwart Redcrosse and Una's marriage, he is himself thwarted and imprisoned, and a humbled knight leaves for Faeryland to begin his grim and determined obligation.

disoriented Redcrosse Knight leads Una and her servant to Archimago's

hermitage after a grueling confrontation in the Den of Errors. Promising respite from

the foreboding, cavernous landscapes which pervade the poem as a whole and are

particularly stark in Book I, the shelter offers the shaken trio a night's rest in what seem

to be unthreatening, austere, but spiritually enriching environs. We soon learn,

however, that Redcrosse's victory over Error is less than total, for he is, at Archimago's

secretive prompting, soon led to perceive Una's unfaithfulness. Here begins his

separation from her, a moment which initiates a psychological journey that ends with

their reuniting and Redcrosse's realizing his historical destiny and the finer points of

courtly behavior.

Throughout Books I-III, arms and armour serve as agents of battle and

implements of truth (after the fashion of the *Song of Roland*). Book I in particular

recalls an heroic age of battle splendours, wars, and tournaments past. Redcrosse is "Y

clad in mightie armes and siluer shielde" which bears "old dints of deepe wounds" and

"the cruell markes of many a bloodie field" (I.I.1. 2-3). The bloody battle stains he has

endured are replicated on the "bloudie Crosse" he bears upon his breast, a "dear

remembrance of his dying Lord" (I.I.2. 1-2). The details harken back to England's

crusading past and reinforce the notion that though the crusading ideology of long ago

is a distant precursor to the colonialist ideology of Spenser's world, its imagistic tenor

serves a justifying function (see Miller 15).

In this way, Redcrosse embodies the conjoined imperatives of ecclesiastical

and secular power and thus serves as a crucial indicator of Spenser's investment in

chivalric imagery. Moreover, in Book I, the moral imperatives are further justified by

knighthood motifs. Redcrosse, the hope of the English nation, sees the detritus

of fallen empires and hastily departs from the House of Pride. Chivalric splendor

imagistically dominates Book I: battle, swordplay, armour, and pageant; Spenser clearly

borrows from the past to articulate his vision of a future unification of English church

and state. While this pattern recurs throughout the epic, it is somewhat diminished in its

later books, save for Book V. Also in Book I, a reader can note that Spenser is

thoroughly indoctrinated in the symbolism, iconography, and philosophy of nation-

building, but as one is only vaguely aware of the implications of the English colonial

project in Ireland, his epic serves primarily as a vehicle for the expression of

Elizabethan ideology. In later books, hints of his personal ruminations will emerge to

complicate this confident picture.

It is in the collective effect of Books I-III where the various strands of

Spenser's thought—as represented by his Platonic inclinations, his Virgilian influences,

his belief in the native virtues of Chaucerian poetry, and his own colonial experience—

combine to articulate a colonialist agenda which places England as the inheritor of the

imperial tradition.[208] It is likewise arguable that the "real" epic dimension of Spenser's

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[208] The English interaction with the Celtic fringe was to challenge the philosophical assumptions that are especially vivid in the heroic figures and moral obstacles they face and overcome in Book I. The colonialist agenda, established in Book I's cantos X-XII, is restated in Book II's invocation/prelude (stanza 2). Overall, Book II's themes build upon the colonialist imperatives established in Book I, for Spenser continues to comment on the central virtues needed to resist the pull of the colonial other. Nowhere else in The Faerie Queene is the seductive pull of Faeryland more evident. As in Book I, the land is populated by a mysterious other that also shows shape-shifting tendencies and taxes the resolve of Guyon, the Book's principal figure. Beyond this obvious connection, there are several other epic parallels that conjoin the books: like Redcrosse, Guyon embarks upon an underworld journey, one more graphic and more accommodating to the traditions of classical epic than any journey undertaken in Book I. In this journey, Guyon encounters the familiar underworld figure of Mammon, who, true to his classical and biblical forms, rifles through the underworld in search of metals of worth which feed his "pompous pride" (II.VII.17. 7). Mammon's charges are engaged in the familiar pursuits of working metals and minting money in order to feed their courtly aspirations, as embodied in the figure of Ambition (II.VII. 46-47), who resides most visibly in familiar courtly environs. Guyon embarks on this underworld sojourn as a part of a larger journey, in which his earlier slaying of Pyrochles prompts a discourse on victory and defeat, familiar motifs throughout Book II (II.V.15) that supply historical and mythical perspective for the prophetic vision of "Troynovant," the "New London" which appears in Book X and which represents, according to Erickson, "the destined setting for the realization of the Tudor

poem is most discernibly confined to its first three books, which comment on

England's effort to subdue and colonize Ireland and which demonstrate a fuller epic

imperative than Books IV-VII. These books, in contrast, focus more fully on the

subtler, but no less challenging effort to introduce civil virtues into a conquered land

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apocalypse" (78; see also Berger 157). In this way the recreation of an idealized English kingdom is as much a process of destruction as of creation. In the prophetic vision before Guyon, Spenser envisions a melding of the colonial self with the native other where the colonizers impose civility and draw from the primitive energies of the colonized. In order to reestablish the best aspects of their culture, the colonizers must first flush out and destroy its worst elements.

This message is reinforced by the central imperative in Book II, which circulates around Guyon's encounter with the Bower of Blisse, that forbiddingly appealing locus of temptation where Acrasia assails the focused steadfastness of determined knights with her feminine wiles. Just as Redcross was to endure a period of testing to assure his moral fitness for the mandates of the Faerie Queene, Guyon's encounter with the Bowre is foreordained as early as Canto I (52), is mentioned again in Canto V (27), and it remains his ultimate destination throughout. The Bowre, located in the House of Temperance, is also where Guyon learns of the "Chronicle of Homeland." In this description Spenser shows his cartographer's eye and appreciation for native geography which he will bring to a description of Ireland in Books IV-VI.

Just as Canto X from Book I depicted the process of Redcrosse's *catabaesis* and described the prophetic vision he held for the English nation, Book II.X also depicts Spenser's Virgilian inclinations as well as his effort to connect Roman and English empires. For example, Spenser's colonial vision is also pronounced in his effort to conflate the histories of England, Rome, and Europe in Book II.X. 72. The Elves he portrays are ultimately best seen as agents of empire-building. Only when Guyon and Arthur are treated to the "Chronicle of Briton Kings," that combination of mythic and historical rulers of England which it is their destiny to serve and which they encounter in the House of Temperance, is Guyon prepared for his encounter with the Bowre, an episode that proceeds more along the narrative lines of an epic seduction than an epic battle. By Canto XII, Guyon, who is fortified by visions of his historical destiny and confident in the colonial imperatives which Spenser has hinted at throughout Book II, begins self-righteously destroying Acrasia's den of iniquity (XII 42). Placed in the final Canto, it stands as the ultimate heroic act of Book II. With the Bowre destroyed, the virtue of Temperance is held preeminent as central to the colonizing imperatives envisioned by Spenser.

The pattern of conflating great societies according to their imperial history is reinforced in Book III. Embodying the virtue of Chastity, the woman warrior Britomart likewise undergoes a set of experiences in her travels that prepare her for a role in nation-building. As in Books I and II, Book III presents both the underworld imagery and the historical vision that must be properly regarded by the heroine as she realizes her destiny. However, even more so than in Books I and II, Book III contains both direct and indirect references to Ireland and to the English colonial efforts there. In Canto II, for example, readers are introduced for the first time to the figure of Artegall, the allegorical representation of Lord Grey. In this context, Artegall is equated with Achilles (25) in Spenser's effort to connect Troy with the Eastern empires and also with English colonial expansion (III.III.22-23). Artegall is also beloved and pursued by Britomart, who seeks to realize with him an ideal of chastity not founded on the notion of abstinence, but rather on an idealized notion of monogamous love. Such an ideal stands in contrast to the loose sexual mores which the English found in the communal order of Gaelic society. In this union, the prophetic vision of history will reveal the reinstitution of English rule in Ireland (III.III.33), and such a vision will, according to the Magician Glauce (who reveals the prophecy), replicate the actions of "Great *Gormond*," who "Hauing with huge mightiness Ireland subdewd" (33. 5-6). Ultimately, Britomart heads into battle seeing herself as the protector of "the royal seed, the antique Trojan blood / Whose Empire lenger here, then euer any stood" (III.III.42. 8-9). Her arming scene, in stanzas 59-62, represents another echo of Homeric and Virgilian epic.

The pattern continues in the Book's later Cantos, and the Spenserian habit of conflating the elements of Virgilian epic continue to augment his own colonialist leanings. Learning in Book IX (stanza 38) of a "third kingdom," a "Troynovant," or "New Troy," that is to arise from the English nation, Britomart, like Redcrosse and Guyon, must be assured that she is fit to do this work. In Book XI, she is reassured by the ornately detailed tapestries she sees in the House of Busyraine, cosmic images which reinforces her need to "Be bold, be bold," but also to "Be not too bold." Upon such beliefs she is able to work her rescue of Amoret and to reunite her with Scudamor, the romantic union embodying the virtue of chastity which Britomart herself seeks with Artegall and which provides narrative closure to Books I-III of the 1590 *Faerie Queene*.

and to bring the "mere Irish" and their more recalcitrant Old English overlords

into civil orders more fully modeled on English social structures. In Books I-III of

Spenser's epic, one sees, in short, an *imperative* which contrasts with the *mandate,*

expressed in Books IV-VI, to implement an ideology of civil order.[209]

Moreover, readers see at the conclusion of Book III a "definite celebratory

closure" in which the ending embrace of Scudamor and Amoret and the continuing

chastity of Britomart represent the perpetuation of English morals and virtues. In this

way, argues Susan Wolcott, "the 1590 *Faerie Queene* stands out dramatically against

the poem as a whole" (121), and Spenser himself had yet to make use of "aesthetics of

incompletion" (122) which mitigated those narrative threats to the linear progression of

his epic and served him with the publication of the 1596 version.

A *Reading of* The Faerie Queene's *Epic Imagery in Books IV-VI and* The

Mutabilitie Cantos: *Imagistic Connections with the* View's *Later Sections*

In its later stages *The View* presents an ambitious plan for land management

built around the idea that garrisoning will bring the people under subjection and

eventually into civility. Spenser's surveyorship is evident in this plan. For Spenser,

effective land management is the imperative which brings civility to Ireland (*View* 143).

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[209] Spenser's epic heroes undergo a process of education that enables them to serve as the guardians of English values, beliefs, and civility—in short, of "Englishness" that must endure in opposition to the threats and temptations posed by the "Gaelic other." Like the poet and his colonial cohorts, they are entrusted with the duty of making cultural and political inroads into this dark, mysterious, and morally corrupting world and can only briefly enjoy respite in remote outposts that are constantly assailed by this corrupting other. The landscapes of Books I-III are marked by hidden caverns and realms of forbidden temptation and are peopled by intemperate and immoderate personalities who, through their duplicitous characteristics threaten the resolve of the sturdy English heroic temperament. These are the landscapes of the threatening world of Gaelic otherness; and in addition to the threats posed by this world, Spenser also saw the damning consequences of his colonial forbearers to resist them. The Anglo-Norman colonizers of earlier centuries, having succumbed to what Spenser saw as the immoderate appeals of native Irish society, represented a disastrous vision of the consequences of a failed colonial enterprise. Their corrupt world, implies Spenser, lacks the moral imperatives expressed in *The Faerie Queene* I-III and the steadying influences of Plato, Virgil, and the poet's own native English culture.

Essentially, the *View* begins by noting the lack of organization and documentation in current Irish customs; once this pattern is established, the *View* argues for a remedy of managed, measured, and economically viable social organization. In the book's middle sections, Irenius explains the ultimate results that grow out of the Irish predilection for secrecy, chief among them the omnipresent trouble that colonists must live with. He explains,

> Every day wee perceive the troubles growing more upon us, and
> one evill growing upon one another, insomuch as there is no part
> now sound or ascertained, but all have their eares upright,
> wayting when the watch-word shall come, that they should all
> arise generally into rebellion, and cast away the English
> subjection. (92)

In response to Irenius' continuing argument that "it is vaine to prescribe laws" upon a people who continually resist them, Eudox asks if there might be other means to reinforce the colonists' efforts to civilize Ireland. Irenius replies, "Even by the sword." Wild nature requires "a strong hand...before the tree can bring forth any good fruite." Ultimately the untamed land and people of Ireland need "the royall power of the Prince" (93). It is conceivable that the sword described here as a symbol of lawful subjection is imaginatively linked with that used by Artegall in Book V, for both stand as symbols of an effort in suppression calculated to have a civilizing influence. In this way Irenius justifies the violence that must be worked in order to quell the rebellion and save the colony, and with it the promise of civilized life for the English in Ireland.

Following these symbolic expressions of the need for violence in the service of colonial mandates, Irenius then outlines a more pragmatic plan to implement what he regards as necessary and justified violence. Irenius spends the balance of the *View* explaining the details of this plan, but begins by describing how the "strong power of men" must "perforce bring in all that rebellious route and loose people, which either doe now stand out in open armes, or in wandering companies doe keepe the woods, spoyling the good subjects" (93). In short, he calls for an intelligence to be gained by mapping these formerly wild domains, so that those uncivilized remnants from the defeated native culture might be brought under subjection.

Irenius' plan specifically calls for militaristic solutions by establishing garrisons at strategically important localities such as Ballinecor, Knockelough, Wicklow, Shillelagh, Wexford, and Dublin, so that these soliders "shall be always ready to intercept (the) going or comming" (115) of those displaced inhabitants who insist on returning to their native lands. He also calls for the establishment of a standing army populated by English veterans of the Irish wars, who, familiar with its landscapes, will be able to administer effectively a policy of submission and mercy, by which those rebels who capitulate will be treated more favorably than those who persist in rebellion (118). The native Irish will be "assured of life and libertie" and "be onely tyed to such conditions as shall be thought by her (Majesty) meet for containing them ever after in due obedience" (118). The soldiers who serve the crown honorably will likewise be rewarded with estates in the colonized land, and thus the reach of English civility will pervade Ireland further. In this way, Spenser advocates a colonial model which "the Romanes observed in the conquest of England" (120).

The idea that the Irish landscape has assumed a "surveyed" character in Spenser's imagination is resonant throughout this later section of the *View*, in which Irenius continually asserts the need for strategically viable garrisons to be placed in important and troublesome centers throughout Ireland and populated by set numbers of experienced soldiers. When their period of service is complete, these would take residence in the land of their service and continue to advance a civilizing influence. After assailing the various traditions—a haphazard system of land management, a faulty system of patronage and loyalty which conjoined lords and peasants, the intermingling of Old English and native Irish institutions (the Old English lordship which persisted in its rebellion, an ineffective legal system, a corrupt Catholic church, the lack of a diversity of trade options for the peasantry)—Irenius presents a chilling description of what is needed to wrest Ireland from the primitive Irish society he compares with Saxon England. The passage presents a telling vision of the "civilized" landscape of Spenser's imagination, outlining other "needfull points of other publicke matterss no lesse concerning the good of the commonwealth" (156).

Advocating a kind of cultural extermination, Irenius details a policy of land management that is designed essentially to mitigate the secretive nature of the Irish people and to bring them, he argues, into the realm of legitimate trade and vocation. He expresses a desire "that order were taken for the cutting and opening of all places through woods" to enhance "the safety of travelers, which used often in such perilous places to be robbed, and sometimes murdered." Likewise, bridges must need be built over select rivers with gates at each end, so that "no night stealths which are commonly driven in by-wayes, or in blinde fordes unused of any but such like" will encourage both

safe travel and viable trade. Further, "some little fortilage, or wooden castle"

should be set "in all straights and narrow passages" to "keep and command that straight,

whereby any rebels that should come into the country might be stopped that way, or

passé with great peril." In addition,

> All high wayes should be fenced and shut up on both sides,
>
> leaving onely 40 foote bredth for passage so as none shall be able
>
> to passse but through the high wayes, whereby theeves and night
>
> robbers might be the more easily pursued and encountred….(156)

Beyond these costly measures, Irenius outlines the need for other surveillance and

monitoring precautions—the establishment of town walls, the availability of law

enforcement officials, the close monitoring of town markets, the assignment of

individuals to specific trades, and the availability of inns to accommodate travelers.

Essentially, Spenser, through Irenius, calls for a network of interrelated towns that are

conjoined by civic and political necessity. Irenius then argues for a system of military,

architectural, governmental, and economic necessities which must be introduced into

the Irish landscape as a means for civilizing the people, so that "these and other like

ordinances might be delivered for the good establishment of the realm, after it is once

subdued and reformed…" (158). In short, Irenius argues for a "civilization" of the Irish

landscape through the establishment of trade networks, legal authorities, and

construction projects to serve the civic good. These costly but necessary measures will

transform the Irish from a secretive people into a public one with what Irenius and

Spenser see as a common civic purpose, and upon such measures rest the hopes of a

civilized Ireland patterned after English social practices.

The passage articulates motifs that provide a useful point of entry into a discussion of the imagery of the later half of the 1596 *Faerie Queene*. Like the latter half of the *View*, Books IV-VI of *The Faerie Queene* also portray the "surveyed" landscape. In contrast to Books I-III, which were composed by a royal agent dutifully surveying the Queen's newly acquired properties as he himself was realizing his dream of estate ownership, the two former works were written by a more established poet, who, soon after marrying into wealth and influence, was settling into a contested landscape as an estate owner which he deemed his own by ideological right. Threats remained omnipresent, but as expressed in the *View*, Spenser's interest in Books IV-VII is in creating and appraising the value of Elizabeth's conquered colony and in creating a return on her colonial investment. Spenser's legal wranglings with Lord Roche would surface intermittently to puncture his idyllic world, but the re-emergence of the Irish in the later 1590's under Tyrone validated those shape-shifting characteristics ascribed to them decades before. [210]

In its transitional character, Book IV demonstrates a subtle shift from a rhetoric of conquest and colonialism to a rhetoric of settlement and cultural appropriation.[211] Book IV also shows the beginnings of a subtle shift in combat imagery, as its focus turns from the protective functions served by the chivalric motifs in Books I-III to the

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[210] Likewise, the presence of the rebel Irish punctures this later edition of Spenser's epic. Commentators of the 1596 *Faerie Queene* note, according to Hadfield, that the second edition is a "dark work" that "abandons the hopes and buoyancy of the first, with its belief that the body politic can be influenced or even transformed by the sage advice of a 'Poet historical.'" Instead, critics suggest that in his second, expanded edition of his epic Spenser "has retreated into a private world in which personal figures replace public ones" ("Books IV-VII," 125). Suggesting that the revised Books III-VII of the 1596 *Faerie Queene* indicate "a political and philosophical sea change" (126) in Spenser's mind, Hadfield argues that Book IV is the "most diffuse and arguably the least focused" of *The Faerie Queene's* seven books (126).

[211] Likewise, scholar Richard Rambuss argues that Book IV shows a "reconfigured" relationship to Queen Elizabeth, mirroring the "array of limitations—governmental, militaristic, amorous—imposed on (her male court subjects) in a political domain headed for nearly fifty years by an unsubordinated woman" (105).

gratuitous fighting and overblown chivalric splendor of the later books.

Beginning in Book IV and continuing through Book V and much of Book VI,

characters engage in chivalric combat which is done more to reinforce their elevated

social standing and to celebrate their romantic interests than for the raw imperatives of

survival in a hostile and forbidding landscape.[212]

The characters Amoret and Britomart encounter are likewise prone to false

self-presentation. Having regained her appealing form after her stripped mantle had

unveiled her true nature in I.VIII, Duessa has regained her bearing as Fidessa, the

embodiment of faithfulness. With her new paramour Paridell and the couple Ate and her

knight Blandemour, Duessa journeys with this foursome toward the House of Ate, the

seat of Discord. However, in these unsettling environs the chivalric spectacles are

gratuitous, sensational, and ultimately unnecessary. The impulsive Blandamour

provokes Britomart and is quickly set down. Paridell, taking up for his humbled friend,

fights an arriving Scudamour on his behalf, and the battle between the two is quick,

violent, and indecisive. Provoked by the false Florimell's appearance, Blandamour's

whimsical claiming of her, Duessa's scandalmongering, and Ate's natural prompting,

the "false friends" Blandamour and Paridell engage in testy scuffles once within the

House of Discord in a manner appropriate to their disharmonious company (IV.II.15).

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[212] Even as the virtue that it celebrates is friendship, the true substance of Book IV's narrative, the "frustrated romance" of Amoret and Scudamore simultaneously recalls those romances of similar quality—principally, those of Redcrosse and Una, Britomart and Artegall, and Malbecco and Hellenore—and anticipates the "unresolved and painful erotic narratives" (Hadfield 125) to come in later books. Spenser had ended the 1590 version of *The Faerie Queene* with Scudamour and Amoret in a hermaphroditic embrace that brought suitable narrative closure to that edition, but with the 1596 expanded republication of the poem he was forced to rewrite that ending and to perpetuate their separation. As Book IV begins Scudamor has recently been separated from his beloved, and Amoret travels with Britomart in search of him through some of those dark and brooding landscapes which bear many of the hallmarks of those portrayed in the first three books. And as Amoret and Britomart are soon separated, the narrative currents for the remainder of Book IV are soon put into motion, marking a larger imagistic transformation from the first three books.

Later, the three brother-knights Priamond, Dyamond, and Triamond engage in a chivalric contest with the knight Cambello (IV.II.42). Each brother possesses a particular battle skill, and each one's soul passes into another's upon death. Likewise, Cambello, who is protected from death by his magic ring, has warded off many suitors who seek the hand of his sister, the maiden Canacee. The story was originally told by Chaucer, to whom Spenser pays tribute here as the "well of English undefiled" (IV.II.32. 8). After Cambello slays the first two, their souls pass into Triamond; because both combatants are protected by supernatural elements, their battle is long, tense, and grueling. Eventually, Spenser highlights the weariness shown by both after long fighting (IV.III.36-38), and in them he seems to hint at the futility of continuing warfare which he'd experienced in his own life and world. Interestingly, the chivalric motifs used in these early cantos of Book IV seem to deploy chivalry as the imagistic counterpoint to the virtue of friendship, and chivalric combat is used to introduce the discordant notes that detract from true friendship. Indeed, in the first stanza of Book IV's Canto IV, Spenser waxes on the nature of friendship, meditating on those forces which "mortall foes doe turne to faithfull friends,/And friends profest are changed to foemen fell" (IV.IV.1. 2-3). Throughout Book IV, readers are asked to reconcile the book's tremendous emphasis on chivalric combat—much of it gratuitous or ill-considered—in light of the virtue supposedly celebrated. In his great emphasis on chivalric splendors shown by the mostly undeserving combatants in Book IV's early cantos, Spenser seems to refigure his investment in knightly motifs.

Indeed, the appearance of the figure of Artegall, who has already assumed a major role in Book III and whose romance with Britomart will constitute the major

narrative direction of Book V, seems to support Spenser's imaginative

reconfiguration of chivalric motifs and images. His arrival to the House of Discord is

described in IV.IV.39-42 when "A straunger knight, from whence no man could / In

quyent disguise, full hard to be describe" (2-3) appears on the scene, ultimately to

expose the false Florimell. Artegall's armour, significantly, "was like saluage weed"

(4) and with this detail Spenser reintroduces the pun which will dominate much of

Books V and VI. The word appears twice more in the stanza's description, as his armor

> [w]ith woody mosse bedight, and all his steed
>
> With oaken leaves attrapt, that seemed fit
>
> For saluage wight, and thereto well agreed
>
> His word, which on his ragged shield was writ,
>
> *Saluagesse sans finesse*, showing secret wit. (IV.IV.39. 5-9)

The choice to portray Artegall not as an heroic figure in chivalric, if battle-tested

splendors after the fashion of Redcrosse, Arthur, Guyon, and Britomart but instead as

"the saluage knight" in "wyld disguise" raises eyebrows and seems to indicate

Spenser's turn away from the displays of chivalric splendor which he'd described so

vividly in Books I-III, but especially in Book IV's earlier cantos. One manifestation of

Artegall's "secret wit" is, explains Hadfield, "the potential recuperation of savagery as a

crucial component of the civilized, a theme which develops more extensively in Book

V" (138). Artegall arrives as the tournament in the House of Discord escalates to a

free-for-all, and it is through his timely swordblows that Cambello and Triamond,

whose friendship has outlasted their earlier contest, are declared winners. Ironically,

Artegall is bested by another knight arriving late, who, unbeknownst to both, turns out

to be his beloved Britomart. With Artegall's arrival, it is as if Spenser is

modifying the images he uses to present those heroic figures that are most worthy of

readers' identification and admiration. If, in the *View* he juxtaposes the secrecy and

nativism of the Irish with the transparency and forthrightness of the English, then his

heroes in *The Faerie Queene* should likewise display the requisite chivalric finery in

their arms and shields. However, Artegall is of a different order. A clue to his

depiction is supplied by passages in the *View,* where Irenius relates how this "good

Lord" was "blotted with the name of a bloody man" although he was truly "the most

gentle, loving, affable, and temperate" of judges toward the Irish. Irenius explains that

it was the

> The necessitie of that present state of things [which] inforced him
>
> to that violence, and almost changed his naturall disposition. But
>
> otherwise he was so farre from delighting in blood, that
>
> oftentimes he suffered not just vengeance to fall where it was
>
> deserved. (103)

Essentially, Irenius relates how Lord Grey sought to realize a "saluaged" reputation by

killing selectively so that he would not have to kill randomly. Through his speaker,

Spenser uses this point to explain his Lord's seemingly brutal actions both in the Dublin

pale, but especially in the infamous Smerwick massacre. Both events were notorious

and brutal, but Grey's judgments, Spenser implies, were carried out as measures

calculated to prevent even greater violence. In *The Faerie Queene*, Artegall, Grey's

allegorical representation, is portrayed as the embodiment of justice, and his "secret

wit," which suggests that his savagery is done in the name of salvaging justice, is

shown in the "saluage" disguise he has donned. His subsequent portrayals illustrate this

point.

Nevertheless, as the events wind down at the House of Discord, Britomart, who

is still seeking to reunite Scudamour and Amoret, has grown weary with the contesting

and returns to her quest. Meanwhile, Scudamour, apart from these chaotic events, seeks

refuge in a small blacksmith's shop, which is soon shown as the house of Care. This

aged and unattractive figure prompts fear and worry in all who come within his reach,

and his ill timed hammer blows and noisy perpetual work at his smithy prompt

worrisome dreams in Scudamour (IV.V.40-43), who remains convinced of Amoret and

Britomart's infidelities. Significantly, the unsavory aspects of metalworking are

invoked here to reinforce the idea of discord that pervades the book and that stands in

contrast to the ideals of friendship displayed when the various separated characters,

including Amoret and Scudamor, as well as Artegall and Britomart, are reunited.

Visions of his beloved's unfaithfulness in his mind, a restless Scudamour endures the

"burning cinders" of Care's torments, with which he "under his side (is) nipt, that forst

to wake" until he flees in desperation.

Meanwhile Britomart and Artegall, separated since early in Book III, are

subsequently reunited in the most unlikely of ways. Journeying with a fatigued and

restless Scudamour early in Canto VI, Artegall seeks redress on the knight who had

recently bested him in the tournaments at the House of Discord. This same knight soon

appears, and the pair sets upon him. However, this knight is Britomart in disguise,

again equal to their charge and again able to unseat both. From his position of

disadvantage Artegall fights nobly and with a hearty blow manages to split the helmet of his foe. With this swordstroke his beloved's visage is revealed, and he falls prostrate before her. With peace soon restored through the realization of each lover's identity, the ideal of friendship is soon invoked. The pair of lovers, newly reunited, vow to help Scudamour search for his beloved Amoret, and as the canto ends they are again on her trail.

Unfortunately, readers finally learn that Amoret has been held thrall by the hideous figure of Lust, the uncontrolled force which brings harm and imbalance to idealized friendship (IV.VIII.5-8). While the "saluage" knight Artegall wears the trappings of nature which obscure and reshape his armour, Lust is "engirt about" with "a reath of yuie green" and "all his haire was like a garment seene" (IV.VII.7. 1-3), Living on "the spoile of women" (IV.VII.12. 4).he brings them into despair and soon consumes them. Aware that he has come to feast on her, Amoret escapes his foul grasp and flees as he gives chase. With the fortunate appearance of the knight Belphoebe, who happens to be "hunting then the Libbards and the Beares / In these wild woods, as was her wonted joy" (IV.VII.23. 7-8), and the squire Timias, Amoret is soon rescued after Lust has overtaken her. The pair come to her defense, and Belphoebe's timely arrows find their mark in her erstwhile pursuer. On death's doorstep, his soul takes flight to Hell (IV.VII.32). Prince Arthur soon arrives and treats Amoret's wounds, vowing to help her reunite with Scudamour.

Meanwhile, Scudamour himself arrives upon the scene, having encountered visions of their reunion as well. As Canto X begins, Scudamour, not recognizing his beloved in the assembled crowd, recounts his winning of her to them. His account

begins with his taking the Shield of Love, an artfully inscribed panorama that

recalls the Shield of Achilles from the *Iliad*. Scudamour has beheld the shield on his

approach to the temple of Venus. Upon seeing its inscription, which states that ""whose

ever be the shield, faire Amoret be his" (IV.X.8), he realizes that he must do battle with

the temple guards so that he might claim it. The shield motif not only gestures epic

traditions but also conflates these with the romantic and moral imperatives that shaped

Spenser's idea of the virtue of friendship. The episode by which Scudamour wins the

shield and, by extension, assures his reunion with Amoret precedes his arrival at the

Great Venus Temple, seat not only to the mythic examples of the friendship ideal but

also to all of the extreme dimensions of human friendship: doubt, delay, discord and

concord, love and hate, and all other faculties that dictate the course of close human

interactions. The figure of Concord, who maintains balance within the virtue of

friendship, sits between Love and Hate and keeps them in harmony. Moreover, she

provides an important imagistic counterpoint to the figure of Ate, who has led her

"friends" to the House of Discord in earlier books. Having witnessed these images up

close in his journey through the temple, Scudamour then realizes that his destiny is to be

with Amoret, whom he has espied at the foot of Venus' altar. With her in hand, he

emerges from Venus' domain having been shaped by her civilizing influence, defending

himself with his shield and embracing the abundance and prosperity which result,

Spenser implies, from harmonious human relationships.

The ultimate union in Book IV is soon to follow, however, and it is in this

account where the effects of Spenser's surveyorship are realized. Given the Book's

intense focus on reuniting disparate characters, Spenser then expands this narrative

pattern to include the geographical features of England and Ireland, weaving

these into his larger consideration of harmonious concord.[213] Within the geographical

reaches of Faeryland one finds the conjoined landscapes of England and Ireland, which

are united under the auspice of the English empire: even as the narrator wonders, as he

does periodically throughout the canto, if he has memory to recount all rivers,

especially those of the "saluage cuntries, through which they pace" (40), he nevertheless

embarks on a detailed, four-stanza description of the river nymphs that represent the

Irish landscape.[214] Ultimately, the marriage of rivers serves to demonstrate the epic

sensibilities in Spenser's melding of cartographical impulses, which he picked up as

much from his experience in surveyorship as from the imperative to reduce the

"otherness" of the Irish landscape and make it fit for colonization. The passage

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[213] By most critical accounts, the climax of the book is in the marriage of the Thames and Medway rivers, which are included in Canto XI's account of Marinell's reunion. A guest of Proteus at the wedding, Marinell helps facilitate the escape of Florimell from Proteus' subterranean prison. The episode shows Spenser's effort not only to apply the ideals of friendship to the geographical features of English dominion, but also to connect the geographies of England and Ireland under the same auspices. A seeming digression, the lengthy catalogue of the assembled wedding guests includes both mythic river deities and makes mention of the sources and landmarks on those waterways that run throughout continental Europe, especially through England and Ireland. In the catalogue of rivers (IV.XI.20-21), the poet provides hints of the idea of surveyorship in the epic habit of cataloguing assembled details, and in this way Spenser capitalizes on the customary patterns in classical and medieval epics that catalogue various elements according to their rank and stature. This catalogue of the various waterways of Faeryland seems calculated to establish the breadth of its dominion, and in this way Spenser conflates both the mythic and the factual dimensions within his Faeryland geography.

As a result of this wedding scene, the rivers assume a courtly guise (IV.XI.29) and are thus listed according to their rank. The scene suggests that Spenser has applied the idea of surveyorship to his own courtly experience, and in his knowledge he has achieved a sort of "mastery." But most significantly, in this wedding of two English waterways, the tributary Medway and the vital Thames, Spenser takes pains to highlight the presence of the most important Irish rivers, who stand prominent among the guests. In this way, the features of Irish geography are "mapped" in conjunction with the most important elements of mythic, historical, European and, most significantly, English geography, so that all affirm and reinforce the imperatives of English dominion and empire. "Starting out on a global scale," writes Hadfield, "the geographical focus of the procession gradually narrows inwards towards the British Isles"; collectively "the rivers all bring elements of their histories with them, and, although some rivers transport sad memories, ultimately the image appears to be one of unity and harmony" (143). In this way, the Irish rivers stand "in neighborhood of kingdome neere" (IV.XI.40. 3) but "only on the condition that much of the history they carry with them is hidden from view" (Hadfield 144).

[214] Seemingly a "meditation on a map of the British Isles," the pageant stands instead according to scholar Harry Berger, as "an exercise in transforming map images and information into quantitative meter" in which the poet transforms "the relatively superficial play of verse and fancy...to the revising play of poetic imagination" (211)—in short, imaginatively "mapping" a now familiar landscape to suit his poetic and epic purposes. Scholar Wayne Erickson describes the marriage of the Thames and the Medway as a symbolic realization of a nationalist and imperial destiny between England and Ireland, "where the prophetic English nation would be established in Arthur's marriage to Gloriana" (90).

demonstrates the greater accessibility of the Faeryland landscape in Books IV-VI

as opposed to the more ominous terrain of Books I-III.

Canto XII begins with yet another apology from the beleagured narrator, who

bewails the "endlesse work" in his effort to "count the seas abundant progeny, / Whose

fruitfull seede farre passeth those in land, / and also those which wonne in th'azure sky"

(IV.XII.1. 1-4). Meanwhile, wandering among this august company and capitalizing on

the distraction they provide, an inauspicious Marinell is able to rescue his beloved

Florimell from Proteus' underworld dungeon, and her rescue constitutes the substance

of Book IV's final canto. Here the pattern of separation and reunion, which has dictated

the course of Books III and IV and shaped Spenser's idealized view of friendship in

both romantic and non-romantic terms, is brought to a close.

With its closure, readers are again asked to consider the problematic figure of

Artegall. In the prologue to Book V, the narrator reveals his feelings of foreboding as

well as his hesitant familiarity with the Faeryland landscape. Moreover, he details how

justice is an ideal which held greater currency in older days than in these fallen times,

and one hears a Virgilian echo in his bewailing of the "fallen" state of current affairs.

As revealed in the *View*, Spenser found much to admire in Lord Grey's judicial

sensibilities even as these were questioned vehemently by others. In stanza 11 of the

prologue, he addresses the "Soverayne Goddesse, that doest highest sit" (1), and pays

tribute to her "great iustice praysed over all: The instrument whereof loe here thy

Artegall" (8-9). From the beginning of the first canto, Spenser clearly establishes Book

V's central narrative current: Irena's liberation from her "afflicted plight" (V.I.4. 3) with the tyrant Grantorto.[215]

With the tremendous emphasis on chivalric ritual in Books IV-VI, and especially in Books IV and V, readers note another change in Spenser's handling of chivalric images as compared with Books I-III. While displays of knightly prowess were certainly a recurring feature of the 1590 version of *The Faerie Queene*, they were likelier—especially in the cases of Redcrosse, Arthur, Guyon, and Britomart— demonstrated by individual knights in singular combat under life-threatening circumstances. Even though the chivalric games shown to be violent and risky in Books IV and V and the motif of knight errantry is just as pervasive as in earlier books, the knightly heroes of Spenser's later books are in a land that is overall less hostile, and they are less isolated. In this way, the pattern of chivalric imagery seems more suited to

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[215] Through Artegall's heroism, Irena will be "restored" to her "rights" (V.I.4. 8). It is not hard to locate the political dimensions in this allegory, and Hadfield describes her as "an image of Elizabeth's sovereignty over Ireland" and "the bodily manifestation of her legal right to rule as a separate kingdom justified by her imperial power and now threatened by the marauding usurper, Grantorto" (151). And as Canto I proceeds, readers learn of Artegall's childhood, in which he was taught "right" justice (stanzas 5-8) by the goddess Astrea, and also of *Chrysaor*, Artegall's sword of justice which formerly belonged to Jove, who had used it against the Titans. It serves "both to mystify the ruling order and expose its myth" (Hadfield 150) and provides a vivid complement to the knight's "saluage" armor.

In his description of this storied weapon, which "of the most perfect metal it was made," Spenser spares no detail. It was "Tempered with Adamant amongst the same /And garnisht all with gold upon the blade" (V.I.10. 2-3), and in its rigid durability one finds the absolute of justice symbolized. It will be Artegall's principal weapon in his struggle to perpetuate justice, and in this description is once again seen the preeminence of the symbol of the sword in Spenser's mind; it is hard not to recall the accounts of those attempt to explain this feature of the poet's imagination (Waller 24; Berleth 156-57—see also p. 447 n. 231). Astrea recognizes when her charge is ready to be unleashed unto the world and in her departure assigns *Talus*, the "man of yron mould, / Immoueable, resistless, without end," to accompany him. Equipped with "an yron flale" with which "he thresht out falsehood and did truth vnfould," Talus serves, like Artegall's sword *Chrysoar*, as another example of the allegorical weight assigned to metallic imagery, and represents the enactment of Artegall's largely implacable judicial instincts, "a figure who reflects the age of iron and acts as a fearsome counterpart to Artegall" who is himself "distanced from the brutality of Talus' actions" (Hadfield 151). The pair will emerge into Faeryland not only to liberate Irena, but also, with Astrea's return to "her race" in Heaven, to spread the virtue of justice "Mongst wicked men, in whom no truth she found" (V.1.11. 3-4).

Their path to their ultimate destination, however, is convoluted and frequently diverted, and these detours comprise most of Canto II. In the Canto's later books, howver, the story turns to the reunion of Marinell and Florimell, and in them it is important to note the recurring imagery of chivalric splendors that continue to pervade this narrative thread. Interestingly, these tournaments and other displays of chivalric grandeur are likelier the province of established peoples living in settled lands rather than those of colonists seeking to settle in a hostile native land.

an established colonizing people who have enforced a greater degree of dominion over their conquered subjects.

Moreover, Book V seems also calculated to justify the policies of excessive force employed by Grey during his tenure as Lord Deputy. Even as Books I-III use lofty Platonic ideals and Virgilian motifs to provide rhetorical buttressing for the violent colonial policies that Spenser had helped to enforce, Book V likewise presents a number of oddly placed disquisitions on the nature of justice that are seemingly calculated to exonerate Artegall /Grey. For example, in IV.1, the narrator begins by proclaiming that "who so vpon him selfe will take the skill / True Iustice vnto people to diuide, / Had neede haue mighty hands" (V.IV.1.1-3). This is so, "For power is the right hand of Iustice truly hight" (9). The statements of the narrator are in this instance more important than the episodic details of the Canto's narrative, for they provide rhetorical and ideological force for Spenser's effort to exonerate the maligned Lord Deputy. Ultimately, it is safe to say that in the historical allegory of Books V and VI, Artegall serves a role comparable to that served by Grey in 1580-82, which was essentially to enforce an ideologically justified policy of violence.[216]

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[216] Artegall, however, unlike the eternal virtue he represents, is not infallible. And his weakness is shown in his overblown chivalric gestures to Radigund, the queen of the Amazons, whose story constitutes the narratives of Cantos IV and V. Radigund, "in armes well tride" (V.IV.33. 5), subjects the knights she defeats in combat to the choice either of death or the demeaning lives of women's work; when in battle with her to save Sir Terpine, a condemned knight Artegall loses to her of his own will and submits to the Queen's mercy. Even as his sword *Chrysaor* inexplicably reappears later, the narrator reports that the victorious Radigund strips the arms of her captive and displays them "hang'd on high, that mote his shame bewray." The more important Freudian detail follows: next, she "broke his sword, for fear of further armes" (V.V.21. 8), symbolizing his lost potency. More importantly, the broken sword symbolizes the element of human fallibility in what Spenser presents as an absolute virtue, just as in the 1590 edition of *The Faerie Queene* one sees the motif of chivalry presented as both a means to protect oneself and a means to penetrate an uncivilized "other."

Presumably still in his "saluage" disguise, Artegall is nonetheless victimized more by his own civilized habits than by a more potent enemy.[217] Noting "the crueltie of womenkynd / When they haue shaken off the shamefast band...t'obay the heasts of mans well ruling hand," Spenser assails the "licentious libertie" (V.V.25. 1-6) of women who capitalize on men's better impulses. Presumably, in her virginal glory, Elizabeth stands aloof from such criticism, and the poet does well not to consider the point. Nevertheless, even in her position of power Radigund is unable to stop herself from falling for the noble Artegall (V.V.28) and with courtly intrigues decides to "test" his resolve to resist her. The steadfast hero endures as word of his captivity reaches Britomart, and much of the middle cantos consist of the account of Artegall's rescue and reunion with his beloved and her skillful slaying of the Amazon queen. In a narrative account which extends into Canto VII, Britomart's rescued hero reappears in women's clothing, and Britomart returns his armor and thus suitably restores his chivalric dignity. Finally, recognizing the imperatives of his need to liberate Irenius from Grantorto's tyranny, she sadly sees him off.[218]

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[217] Scholars who advocate historicist readings of the Book V allegory easily identify Radigund as the Countess of Desmond, the second wife of "the rebel Earl" Gerald Fitzgerald, who journeyed to Dublin to seek an audience with Grey in 1581, presumably to negotiate on her husband's behalf. In this case, the Lord Deputy's chivalric impulses worked against him, and in Spenser's estimation the Countess was working treasonous double dealings as she took advantage of Grey's polite and respectful treatment of her. Spenser's narrator is not above chastising his hero for this lapse.

[218] A refocused Artegall sets off again to rescue Irenius, but again is distracted by other matters. Eventually, in the company of Arthur, he reaches the palace of Mercilla, which represents an idealized vision of a just and unspoiled court (V.IX.28-33). In these morally lofty environs Duessa is on trial, as judged by the figure of Zele, and is opposed to a variety of figures representing the civilizing institutions that she runs contrary to: Kingdoms care, Authority, Nations, Religion, and Justice (43-44), all implied to be the "building blocks" of civilized empire. In this way, Duessa, largely recognized to represent either the Catholic Church, or more specifically Mary Queen of Scots, is ultimately presented as a threat to civilized order. Those figures who serve as "aduocates for her to plead" (V.IX.45. 2) include Pity, Regard (for womanhood), Danger, Nobility (of birth), and Grief, and Zeal's judgment of her is swift (45). Zeal embarks on a rigid cross examination of Ate (discord), who reveals Duessa's true cohorts: Murder, Sedition, Incontinence, Adultery, and Sedition. A chagrined Arthur, perhaps representing England's Catholic past, "his former fancies ruth he gan repent," while Artegall stands "with constant firme intent" (V.IX.49. 2-4) as Zeal pronounces Duessa's guilt. Despite the fact that "she of death was guiltie found by right," Mercill "would not let just vengeance on her light" (V.IX.50. 4-5) and with this verdict Duessa disappears from Spenser's epic.

In the later cantos of Book V, the pattern of justice embodied by Artegall moves away from its mediating role in individual disputes and assumes a greater role in liberation from tyranny. Equally significant and clearly related is Artegall's association with Arthur, whose combination represents the ideal and tradition of English justice, to which Spenser assigns this liberating role. Her justice extending to "the Americke shore" (V.X.3. 6), Mercialla hears an appeal from two "Springals" (V.X.6. 2) children of Belge, who seek their liberation from the tyrant Geryoneo, the son of Geryon (6-9). With this detail, Spenser justifies the English wars against Catholic Spain and France in the Low Countries. Indeed, the implied obligation to liberate those tyrannized by the various forms of Catholicism is resonant throughout Book V, but is especially evident in these later books. In Canto XI, the story finally returns to Artegall's liberation of Irenius, and in his encounter with the aged knight Sir Sergis he offers his own culpability in her tyranny:

> Too much am I to blame for that faire Maide,
>
> That haue her drawne to all this troublous strife,
>
> Through promise to afford her timely aide,
>
> Which by default I have not yet defraide. (V.XI.41. 2-5)

With these lines Spenser alludes to the "fallen" stature of the Old English, under whose direction Ireland was brought to this state of tyrannized control by the Catholic church. The protestant judicial sensibilities which Artegall embodies are those which stand in opposition to this tyranny, and Spenser casts the battle for Irenius as yet another chivalric tournament, in which Grantorto allows Irenius to find a champion to fight him

on her behalf (40-42). En route to this battle, Artegall, reunited with Talus,

encounters the Lord Burbon and his Lady Flourdelis, who also are subject to

Grantorto's tyranny, and Burbon allows as how he had been knighted by Burbon but is

upbraided by Artegall for having changed his shield. Nevertheless, the pair defend

itself against the gathered rabble, and as the final Canto of Book V begins the narrative

has finally reached this ultimate endpoint, the stage for battle now set.

Indeed, after an initial meditation on tyranny, that "impotent desire of men to

rain" which "can keepe from outrage, and from doing wrong, / Where they may hope a

kingdome to obtaine" (V.XII.1. 2-7), Artegall, "appointed by that mightie Faerie,

Prince, Great gloriane, that Tyrant to fordoo" begins his journey into battle.

Significantly, as he must cross a Faeryland waterway, and "To the sea shore he gan his

way apply," (V.XII.3. 3-8) the allegorical associations with Ireland are pronounced. As

they land on hostile shores, Talus disperses the rabble that greets them so "all those

troupes in vew / Did win the shore, whence he them chast away" (V.XII.5.7-8). A

grieving and captive Irenius takes solace in her champion Artegall and feels a glimmer

of hope with his arrival. The fight between Artegall and Grantorto proceeds "with such

force and furie violent" (V.XII.17. 5) that there is initial doubt that Artegall is up to the

challenge. Answering Grantorto's fury with agile parries and shrewed strategy so that

he "well did ward with wise respect" the "huge stroke" (V.XII.21. 1-5) of Grantorto's

sword blows, Artegall resembles "a skillful Mariner" who "doth reed /a storme

approaching that doth peril threat" (V.XII.18. 5-6) and who keeps himself out of harm's

way while answering to his opponent's fury. Eventually, with his storied sword

Chrysaor magically again in his grip, Artegall "stroke" his foe "on the hed, /that with

the souse thereof full sore aghast," and so "he did him smite with all his might and maine" (V.XII.23. 2-6). With this death blow, Irena is liberated, and her people "shouted for all joy of (Artegall's) successe, /Glad to be quit from that proud Tyrants awe" (V.XII.24. 2-3).

The historical allegory of Book V offers yet another connection between the overall narrative of *The Faerie Queene* and Spenser's *View*, as both works are preoccupied with the reevaluation of Lord Deputy Grey's actions and policies. Interestingly, Canto XII is ultimately focused less on Artegall's triumphant liberation of Irena and more on his dispiriting dismissal from this engagement. With Grantorto's death, Artegall embarks on the true purpose of his liberation of Irena, which is to learn "true Iustice how to deale," and he stays "day and night employ'd" in "buisie paine" considering "How to reforme that ragged common weale" and dispensing justice with Talus' exacting hand (26). Indeed, if the passage on the aftermath of Irena's liberation is read in conjunction with the *View*, one might see here those reformist efforts that are described more fully in the prose work's later sections and that Grey might have himself initiated had he not been dismissed from office prematurely.

Further, it is possible to read into those passages of the *View* the moral mandates which underlie the grandiose chivalric spectacle of Irenius' liberation as described in *The Faerie Queene*. Alas, however, Artegall must depart "...ere he could reform it (the land of Irena) thoroughly" (V.XII.27. 1), and in his departure he encounters the two Hags Envie and Detraction, who berate him scornfully. His detractors accuse Artegall of having stained his sturdy sword *Chrysaor* "in guiltless blood of many an innocent" (V.XII.40. 7), even as the hero maintains "his right course,

but still the way did hold" (V.XII.43. 8). Overall, throughout Book V, Spenser

has discoursed on the nature of justice and has established that it must be meted quickly,

uniformly, and universally if civility is to proliferate through an uncivil land. As

chronicled in the *View*, these reforms are extreme and costly, and the justice to be

exacted on those who resist them is swift. Rambuss writes that the *View* is "of a piece

with Book 5, and the same thematics of reformation, replanting, and cutting off

(pruning *and* decapitation) traverse both texts" (112). Further, it is ultimately feasible

to read into the reformist measures advanced in the *View* a possible blueprint for the

unwritten Books VII-XII of *The Faerie Queene*.

If Book V is the most historical of Spenser's allegory, then Books VI and VII

are the most autobiographical. In Book VI the poet celebrates the virtue of courtesy,

which embodies not the values of a civilization in development but rather those of a

settled, mature, and established society with a well ordered civic life. Again, the ideal

of courtesy connects Spenser's epic with the later section of the *View*, in that both are

preoccupied with the importance of implementing a civilized value system on a

conquered people. The story of Calidore constitutes the central narrative thread of

Book VI, but again the figure of Arthur serves an important complementary role to

connect courtesy with England's mythic past and history. Moreover, in this final full

book of Spenser's epic, his allegorical rendering of experiences that can easily be read

as figurative marks another stage in the thematic consistency between *The Faerie*

Queene and the *View*. The Spenser made more "Irish" seems aware of his separation

from England even as he continues to call for its civilizing influence. His comments on

his own experience which, expressed allegorically, serve to refocus the epic imperatives

of Book VI's later cantos and likewise reinforce his call for the civilizing

influence of his homeland. The virtue of "true curtesie" that he shows in the prologue is

"now so farre from that, which then it was, / That it indeed is nought but forgerie"

(VI.Pro.5. 1-3). Addressing his Queen, he expresses the wish to restore the ideals of

courtesy which emanate first from the courts of Elizabeth, flow out into the world, and

return to her just as "from the Ocean all rivers spring /And tribute backe repay as to

their King" (V1. Pro.7. 4-5).[219]

As the nature of the narrative in the first part of Book VI is episodic, it proceeds

after the fashion of Books IV and V. Moreover, the landscapes of the 1596 version of

Spenser's epic are less forbidding as a whole, and his heroes negotiate them more

easily. In essence, they are more familiar, and his knights are not only less prone to the

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[219] Significantly, Calidore is first presented meeting a returning Artegall, who in returning from his "late conquest" (VI.I.4. 5) recognizes that his civilizing responsibility has been passed to a successor. Calidore informs him that

> "where ye ended haue, now I begin
> To tread an endlass trace, withouten guyde,
> Or good direction, how to enter in,
> Or how to issue forth in waies vntriyde,
> In perils strange, in labors long and wide" (VI.I.6. 1-5).

The implication from these lines is that Calidore is entrusted with the responsibility to finish the work that Artegall has begun by exerting a civilizing influence. Significantly, his task, rather than to assure Irena's continued liberation, is to pursue The Blatant Beast... / And through the world incessantly doe chase, /Till I him overtake, or else subdew" (VI.I.7. 1-3). Clearly, the allegory continues to be focused on the civilizing of Ireland, a point reinforced when, after Calidore describes the hideous creature he seeks, Artegall responds that he'd recently just seen such a creature on "the saluage Island I did leaue" (VI.I.9.1). However, before the encounter is to take place, Calidore likewise becomes involved with many a lesser opportunity to extol the virtue of courtesy.

The first takes place when Calidore learns of Briana from a young, freshly shaven knight who tells him that the Lady desires to make a special mantle for her lover Crudor from the beards of passing knights. The courteous knight turns toward Brianna's castle, where he is soon rebuked by her. In reply, he reports that his intrusion upon her domain is justified, for while "it is no blame to punish those, that doe deserue the same," it is nonetheless imperative that

> They that breake bands of ciuilitie
> And wicked customes make, those doe defame
> Both noble armes and gentle curtesie.
> No greater shame to man than inhumanitie. (VI.I.26. 6-9)

Brianna summons her beloved at this slight, and Crudor is soon in intense combat with Calidore, who manages to unseat him. Instead, however, of finishing him off, the hero then "lectures" both in an oddly placed discourse on the necessity for courtesy in civil interactions: "nothing is more blamefull to a knight," he explains, "Then the reproach of pride and cruelness." Therefore, he intones, "what haps to day to me, to morrow may you" (VI.I.41. 1-9), and with this point made he promises to save Crudor if he promise to behave more courteously: "Vnto all errant knights, whereso on ground, /Next that ye Laides ayde in euery stead and stound" (VI.I.42. 8-9).

misapprehensions that put them in peril, but there are fewer devices on the order

of false dreams, false images, and other psychic tricks which might land them in peril.

Likewise, between the beginning of Book IV and the middle sections of Book VI,

Spenser seems somewhat imprisoned by the epic structures which had shaped the 1590

edition of the poem. The episodic, almost whimsical structure of the narrative, in which

various threads emerge, disappear, occasionally cross, and ultimately weave together,

seems to diminish the allegorical force of the work as a whole. The historical allegories

of Book V, for instance, provide shape to the narrative as a whole; but until they lead up

to Artegall's liberation of Irena the events are largely random. Likewise, there are a

series of allegorical and symbolic figures who populate Book VI, but one sees that they

soon comment on Spenser's personal concerns and so give a more tangible shape to this

final complete book. As in the later section of the *View*, Spenser's preoccupation with

the proliferation of civilizing influences across Ireland result in characters whose

allegorical weight is more significant and more personal.

As before, Arthur makes timely appearances in Book VI to represent mythic

English virtues; another knight, Calepine, his beloved Lady Serena, and the figure of

Meliboe (another Chaucerian echo) also figure prominently. Each contributes to the

book's message on the civilizing virtue of courtesy. But other figures serve to

personalize the allegory and suggest that Spenser was using this final book to comment

discernibly on the turmoil at Spenser's Kilcolman estates in the 1590's, which would

culminate with his flight from these hard won lands in 1598. These figures include the

Saluage man, Pastorella, and the Blatant Beast himself, as well as a group of noisome

Brigants which figure prominently in later cantos. Presented initially as allegorical

figures which help expand on the civilizing function of courtesy, these figures come to comment on Spenser's own increasingly volatile Kilcolman experience.

The voiceless Saluage man, unlike Artegall in his disguise as the "Saluage Knight" in Book V, comes to represent an allegorical embodiment of the pun on "saluage" which pervades Spenser's epic. His voicelessness is "particularly important," explains Hadfield, for "the lack of speech…links him to countless accounts of such savages brought back by travelers and colonists, principally from the Americas," and he possesses an "innate knowledge of good" (175). He appears initially in Canto IV when he rescues a wandering and lost Calepine from the woods. Calepine had just bestowed a rescued newborn to the childless couple of Matilde and Sir Bruin, and this new progeny secures them against losing their land to the giant Cormoraunt (VI.III.30-31). But in the wake of this gesture the knight errant wanders the woods aimlessly until rescued by this voiceless figure who dwells in the natural world. The Saluage's innate nobility is evident in a series of gestures.[220] Ultimately, he can be said to represent the "hope" that Ireland's saluages will be saluaged, and he proves himself to be pliable to the control exerted on him by Arthur, Calepine, and others. In the Spenserian vision, this figure represents the hope that Ireland can be brought to courteous civility through the steady hand of English direction, and it is easy to see the Saluage man as a character for the unwritten books of Spenser's epic. Significantly, despite the nobility shown by

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[220] First, he rescues Calepine and Serena from the discourteous Sir Terpine and later lends comfort to the despairing Lady Serena, who, injured from her attack by the Blatant Beast, also mourns her lost beloved as he wanders the woods after rescuing the newborn, unable to find his way back to the Saluage man's lair. The Saluage man dons Calepine's armor and acts as Serena's protector (VI.V.6-9), his actions revealing an innate compassion that melds with Spenser's idea of courtesy. This point is not lost upon Serena herself, who tells Arthur of this "wylde man" with her who shows a "milde humanity, and perfect gentle mynd" despite his living "Amongst wylde beastes, in desert forests bred" (VI.V.29. 7-9). Later, the rash young Timias balks at the armed Saluage and tries to disarm him, but the provoked protector is stayed by Arthur's steady hand. Through these events in Canto V, the Saluage man's civilized potential is revealed.

the Saulage man, in Canto VIII the idea of Saluagery is interrogated more fully when another group of Saluages prepares to dine on Lady Serena. A wandering Calepine returns in the nick of time to save his beloved from the saluage's sword point, and the pair is reunited.[221]

With the Book VI narrative returning to its account of the actions of Calidore, however, one sees a sharpening focus in Spenser's own vision as well as the emerging spectre of further violence which would afflict the poet at a personal level. The dimensions of Spenser's Kilcolman experience seem to intersect with his epic vision in the later stages of Book VI, and this pattern is shown as the narrative returns to Calidore in Canto IX. The heroic characters of Books V and VI engage in episodic conflicts, suggesting that Faeryland has become less forbidding and ominous and perhaps even less foreign. In short, the land, while still hostile, is more familiar, and the colonial tendrils can be said to have taken greater root in Spenser's imaginative rendering of his epic landscape. In the later parts of Book VI, however, the poet seemingly becomes more insistent on exhorting its pastoral character, and in this insistence one senses that Faeryland is also becoming more vulnerable. The Blatant Beast, Calidore's principal objective, looms in the background throughout this final book, and readers sense that

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[221] In its middle cantos, however, Book VI strays away from its description of Calidore's exploits, focusing instead on these episodic narratives. In one episode in Canto VI, Timias and Serena seek succor from an aged hermit, once a knight but now one skilled in medical and spiritual healing. He preaches *contemptus mundi* and offers among his prescriptions for healing the mandate to "shun secresie, and talke in open sight" (VI.VI.14), a moral which resonants throughout Spenser's epic. The episode precedes Arthur 's subsequent liberation from the castle of Sir Terpine. In its wake, Arthur upbraids the cowardly Sir Terpine, when the fleeing knight takes refuge under his Lady Belinda's mantle "not with manhood, but with guile" (33-34). The Saluage man slays scores of the castle's minions, and is on the brink of slaying Terpine himself until stayed by Arthur. Later, a humbled Terpine and Belinda plot against their English captor. Arthur is equal to the test and hangs the discourteous Terpine from his heels in effigy. Given the calls for transparency in both the *View* and in the example above, it is feasible to read into the episode the continuing tensions between the English colonists and the Old English and Irish rebels whose loyalties remained fluid and arbitrary through the middle 1590's until their animosities ultimately rose up in another bloody war as that decade moved toward closure.

something apocalyptic is at stake in their confrontation. However, in the more

immediate account of Pastorella, the daughter of the shepherd Meliboe and soon

Calidore's beloved, there are also larger dimensions to their ongoing interaction.[222]

Having unsuccessfully spanned the breadth of Faeryland in search of the

Blatant Beast, a frustrated Calidore espies the beautiful shepherdess Pastorella, who

shows higher habits of mind (VI.IX.10) despite her simple appearance.[223] Eventually,

Pastorella refocuses her affections away from the piping shepherd Colin and toward

Calidore himself, and in these two figures one might note complementary features of

Spenser's imagination itself, for the poet is captivated by the pastoral vision he holds of

his own Kilcolman estate: it is both and at once a seat of courtesy and simplicity, and in

this vision Spenser's disdain for the machinations of royal courtliness are pronounced.

In love with the pastoral vision easily embodied in Pastorella, Calidore disavows his

quest for the Blatant Beast and pledges to "set his rest amongst the rustike sort, / Rather

thaen hunt still after shadowes vaine / Of courtly fauour, fed with light report.../and

sayling always in the port" (VI.X.2. 6-9). In this impulse one hears echoes of Spenser's

own voice.

In this settled and rhythmic landscape one sees, however temporarily, no hint

of incursion from the ominous world beyond in Faeryland. Instead, Calidore is

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[222] Moreover, the authorial voice of Spenser himself seems more fully interjected into these final Cantos. The collective effect of these details and events suggests that the epic imperatives of Spenser's account—so pronounced in the 1590 version of *The Faerie Queene*—have reasserted themselves in his poetic imagination, as prompted by the specter of growing threats to his Kilcolman estates.

[223] Her father, the wise shepherd Meliboe, invites the knight into his home, where Calidore sings the praises of the Shepherd's "happie life" (VI.IX.18. 8). In the stanzas that follow, Meliboe delivers a rhapsodic disquisition on the virtues of the pastoral life, commenting on both the simplicity and the feelings of contentment that troubled souls find when living according to the rhythms of nature (20-25). In this impassioned discourse, it is tempting to note strains of Spenser's own idealized vision for his estate, and in Meliboe's disavowal of "the pride of youth" and his seeking "further fortune" at "roiall court" (VI.IX.24.2-6) one finds echoes of the poet's own experience. An impressed Calidore reveals his own desire to live in "low degree" (VI.IX.28. 9) and to live with "courtesie amongst the rudest," a way of life which "breeds good will and fauour" (VI.IX.45 5-6).

captivated one day while walking upon a "hill planted in an open plain"

(VI.X.6.1) called Mount Acidale but reminiscent of Arlo Hill, visible just beyond

Spenser's own estate boundaries and "the most localized earthly setting in *The Faerie*

Queene" (Erickson 68). As Colin Clout pipes ("who knows not Colin Clout?"—a

reference to Spenser's own poetic alter-ego), Calidore beholds a vision of dancing

ladies surrounding the three graces, those daughters of delight," who preside over this

supernatural celebration. Recognizing that "Those three to men all gifts of grace do

graunt" (VI.X.15. 4), an enraptured Calidore wonders at "this straunge sight, / Whose

like before his eye had neuer seene" (VI.X.17. 1-2). At this key moment the stanza

records a blissful exhortation that seems to conflate Calidore's pastoral ecstasy with

Spenser's own:

> Pype jolly shepheard, pype thou now apace
>
> Vnto thy loue, that made thee low to lout:
>
> Thy loue is present there with thee in place,
>
> Thy loue is there aduaunst to be another Grace. (VI.X.16. 6-9)

Wishing to know "what it was" that he sees, Calidore approaches, and with his

unveiling the moment of bliss passes. The dancers quickly "vanished all away out of

his sight," and Calidore realizes his "mishap," which has punctured his idyllic vision

and made him realize that Colin has also "fell for despight / Of that displeasure." His

rapture also punctured, Colin "broke his bag-pipe quight / And made great mone for

that vnhappy tune" (VI.X.18. 1-8).

Though distraught, Colin explains to Calidore about the three graces,

describing how they bestow on "men" the "complements of curtesie" and together

comprise the virtue of "Civility" (VI.X.23. 1-9) which is revealed most fully in these idealized pastoral environs. The voice of native virtue, Colin details the qualities of the landscape in its most ordered, settled form. As expressed above, there are intensely autobiographical dimensions to the figures of both Colidore and Colin. Of their association in Book VI, Rambus writes of the "divided or doubled poetic persona, incorporating both the questing knight of the open, serendipitous romance world of the poem, and the retired shepherd of its closed, occluded pastoral domain" (123). In their dialogue (20-28), and even in the similarity of their names, one sees Spenser's own effort to reconcile his past experiences with his future vision, particularly in light of the discord that is soon to intrude on this pastoral interlude. Colin explains that the naked graces are "without guile / Or false dissemblance" (VI.X.24. 3-4).[224]

If the two images that Spenser envisioned for Ireland overlap—the ordered, transparent landscape of the *View* and the bucolic pastoral of Book VI—then Spenser's pastoral vision is conflated with an ordered agrarian economy, and the image, though seemingly contradictory, ultimately reveals two related strains of the poet's thought. In Stanza 28, Colin describes one of the middle dancers, more beautiful than the rest, explaining that "another Grace she well deserves to be." In this passage he addresses Glorianna, "the greatest majesty," asking her pardon for celebrating this maid's beauty.

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[224] In this idealized vision, the graces represent the transparency that Spenser calls for in *The View of the Present State of Ireland,* and this quality reinforces courtesy, civility, and most importantly, civil order. It is tempting to connect the pastoral vision of Canto X with the Ireland that Spenser imagines in the *View*, as an agrarian state where monitored bridges and waterways and fortified garrisons preserve transparency, prohibit deceit, and preserve "natural" order. Throughout the epic as a whole, but especially in its final Book, Hadfield notes a "symbiotic relationship between grand metaphysical speculation and current political problems," which "dictates the ending of the poem as it brings the reader back into the sphere of contemporary political problems, factional disputes, and the search for patronage" (174). In this way Calidore's arcane rhapsodizing, along with Meliboe's moral exhortations, say as much about the poet's real-life circumstances as they do about his ultimate philosophical and ideological objectives.

Here scholars find evidence that Elizabeth's preeminence has been surpassed by

Spenser's own poetic idealization of his wife Elizabeth Boyle, whom he'd married in

1594 and idealized elsewhere in the *Prothalaminon* and *Epithalamion*, two pieces that

celebrated their marriage. With the poet's earlier turn away from court, and with his

effort to celebrate courtesy in the pastoral, one finds mirrors of Spenser's own

experience recorded at this late stage of his epic. Moreover, the subsequent intrusions

into this pastoral vision begin to show themselves first cryptically with reference to a

mysterious "envinimd sting" (VI.X.31. 1) that strikes a reflective Calidore after his

dialogue with Colin. These then surface more dramatically and likewise mirror

Spenser's experience.[225]

In the later cantos of Book VI, Spenser has apparently rediscovered the "other"

which fueled the epic imperatives in his first three books.[226] Misfortune finally presents

itself when "lawlesse" Brigants (VI.X.39.3—see n. 220) capture Calidore's beloved and

take her, along with Meliboe, his wife, and Coridon to port to be sold in slavery. The

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[225] A tiger assails Pastorella, and Calidore steps in for the simple, fleeing Coridon to slay the beast, revealing to his beloved that his romantic rival is "fit to keep sheepe" but "unfit for loves content" (VI. X.37. 4). Even now as Pastorella's true lover, Calidore stands on the brink of "Fortune fraught with malice, blood, and brute," and blowing up "a bitter storme of foule aduersity" (VI.X.38. 7-9). In this transitional stanza, Spenser is either alluding to or even presaging those tensions and difficulties which disrupted the life of bucolic pastoralism he'd finally realized at Kilcolman. A group of marauding "Brigants" appears (VI.X.39.3), possibly modeled on the McSheeheys, those Irish henchmen of Spenser's Old English neighbor Lord Roche. These unsavory theeves intrude onto the scene as robbers who prey on the simple shepherds, stealing their sheep and rustic possessions and making of Meliboe and Pastorella's domain "the spoil of theeves and Brigants bad / which was the conquest of the gentlest Knight" (VI.X.40.7-8). Again, autobiographical notes resonate here and are especially evident when these same Brigants reach their lands via subterranean passages hidden "from view of living wight, and couered over." They live in underworld domains amidst "continuall candlelight, which delt / A doubtful sense of things" (VI.X.42.), suggesting that "they are a threat much more obviously close to home both inside and outside the fictional world of the poem" (Hadfield 184). With these details, it seems as if the forbidding Irish other—which had become less pronounced in the middle books of Spenser's epic—has resurfaced. In this description one hears echoes not of the episodic conflicts engaged in by the heroes of Books IV and V, but rather those of the lonely knights in Books I-III who negotiate forbidding passages and take solace in ominous retreats that require their eternal vigilance.

[226] In these later cantos of Book VI, Spenser's epic trajectory is shaped less by his original nationalistic imperatives and more by the experience which shaped his time in Ireland. Writing when the English colonial project in Munster was becoming gradually more vulnerable, Spenser experienced firsthand the tensions and distractions which intruded on both the nationalistic vision he held toward his epic and the pastoral values he assigned to his Kilcolman estate (Hadfield 184).

message is reinforced in the first stanza of the following canto when the narrator

ominously intones that "Here on earth there is no sure happiness" (VI.XI.1. 6). Then he

begins to detail the events that follow. In these lines, one hears notes of uncertainty that

belong to the poet as well as to his narrator's voice, and it is hard not to sense Spenser's

own growing fears toward the tensions outside Kilcolman's estate borders. Pastorella's

"sad plight" (VI.XI.2. 9) (happening "as Fortune had ordained") gives her a "sad

mournefull hew" (VI.XI.3. 3-8), but the lustful slave merchants at port nonetheless find

her attractive and turn to fighting with the Brigants over her. With Pastorella's

precarious fortunes, one sees likewise the precarious position that Spenser saw his own

lands in during the 1590's.[227]

And so, as the Brigants and Merchants battle over a fading Pastorella, Meliboe

and his wife are slain while Coridon escapes to alert Calidore of his beloved's plight.

Wearing his armour below a shepherd's mantle in order to disguise his true intentions—

therefore adopting the necessary secrecy shown by his enemies—Calidore learns of

Pastorella's whereabouts from some shepherds in the employ of the Brigants and

invades their den under the cover of night (42-43). Interestingly, perhaps having

learned something from his time within this simple pastoral world, Calidore, like

Artegall before him, seems to have sensed a value in secrecy and disguise that

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[227] It is possible that writing in the years before the 1596 publication of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser was becoming reacquainted with the tensions and difficulties he must have expected from his Old English neighbors but even more so with the displaced native Irish who'd formerly roamed his Kilcolman estates. The scene that unfolds is disturbingly prescient of the violent ending that Spenser experienced at Kilcolman, when, with Tyrone's emergence and the native Irish in open rebellion, he was forced to flee his lands and take precarious refuge on Ireland's southern shores. Admitting that "the landscape of Book VI is not necessarily that of rural Ireland" and that it could equally be an England unable to contain hostile forces and challenges to its fragile civilized order," Hadfield nonetheless argues that "even when Ireland is not represented as a figure or series of figures within the text, it determines the conditions of representation" (174). If not a direct comment on Spenser's lands, the disruption of these pastoral environs is nonetheless revealing as an indicator of the turmoil in the poet's mind caused by his contemporary Irish situation.

transcends his own pursuit to exact justice. He rescues his beloved and slays

several of her captors (45-49), bestows on Coridon the sheep that had been stolen from

Pastorella's family, and generally restores a sort of order to the scarred pastoral world.

With this duty accomplished the Canto ends, and as Canto XII begins Calidore must at

long last return to his original duty, the pursuit of the Blatant Beast. The narrator notes

that one's "course is often stayed, yet never is astray" (VI.XII.1. 9), and with this

comment one finds hints that, like Calidore, Spenser's own efforts to live and write

within the bucolic environs of Kilcolman were "stayed" by serious distractions posed

by threats and disputes over his estate properties. In negotiating these distractions, his

conception of the Blatant Beast was reshaped from an abstract opponent of the courtly

ideal of courtesy into a more tangible threat to English civility.[228]

In the months following the 1596 publication of the expanded version of *The*

Faerie Queene, Spenser probably experienced greater levels of dispute, growing

uncertainty, and further threats to his hard won lands. The only poetic record of

Spenser's post-1596 experience is in the fragmented *Cantos of Mutabilitie*, which were

calculated to be part of a celebration of the virtue of constancy. The confident

[228] The story of Claribell and Bellamour begins the final Canto of Book VI, and in this story Pastorella's true parentage is revealed. A baby, the fruit of their forbidden affair, is placed by a handmaid into a field and is taken home by Meliboe, a shepherd who raises the child as his own. The story serves as a pleasant interlude before Calidore's final pursuit of the Blatant Beast, and he shamefully recalls the duty he'd accepted long ago but had long since set aside. Soon he finds the Beast within a monastery, laying waste to its icons and scattering the monks residing there. The Beast, an embodiment of slander and discord, has a mouth of many "tongs," including those of dogs, cats, Bears, Tygres, reproachful men, and serpents (VI.XII.27). Quick to gain advantage, Calidore subdues the beast, fends him off with his shield, places an iron muzzle on him, and restrains him with a strong chain. In this way his discourteous habits were temporarily "stayed" by his iron constraints and by his temporary obeisance to courtesy (VI.XII.37). But alas, the beast has since escaped and is now "at liberty againe" (VI.XII.38. 9), roaming now among "all brethren borne in Britain land," such that "none of them could ever bring him into band" (VI.XII.39. 8-9). Ultimately the beast is shown to intrude upon the poet's labors themselves, so that "ne spareth he the gentle Poet's rime, / But rends without regard of person or of time" (VI.XII.40. 8-9). No stranger to the disparaging scorn of the beast in previous years, Spenser suggests that in his settled environs he experiences a new form of "venomous despite" whose absence had once kept his "former writs" from "blameful blot" (VI.XII.41. 3-4) in earlier years but places his poetry—and along with it, his pastoral vision—in greater peril.

nationalism expressed in the 1590 *Faerie Queene* reveals the great suspicion,

expressed in the first section of the *View*, that Spenser felt toward Ireland and the Irish

and depicted in its brooding landscapes. Likewise, the expanded 1596 version of the

epic portrays a landscape that is "surveyed"—it is settled, more familiar, not without

conflict, but one more easily negotiated by his heroes. This landscape is replicated in

the picture of a civilized Ireland that Spenser envisions in the *View's* later stages.

Lastly, the *Cantos of Mutabilitie* were published in 1609; the title page of this folio

edition of the epic as a whole indicates that this two-canto fragment is "parcel of some

following Booke of *The Faerie Queene*" and so was composed in these final years at

Kilcolman before Spenser's retreat in November of 1598. In the dispiriting lines of

these final two cantos, one finds the final clues about Spenser's attitudes toward the

failing Munster settlement that seem to presage the gathering turmoil that the poet

would soon write amidst. Hadfield notes the "potent irony" of the Cantos in light of

"the imminent destruction of the Munster Plantation—including Spenser's own estate,"

such that "the encounter will establish either English or Irish hegemony" (191).

Erickson is more direct, observing that "in the hills around Kilcolman Castle Spenser

witnessed first-hand the contemporary effects of Mutabilitie's power" (68).

The first clue to this self-identification with his allegory is supplied in the

narrator's allusion to the "cruel sports" of Mutability, which break the laws of nature,

justice and policie and even challenge the fundamental distinctions of right and wrong

(VII.I.6). Just as the newly nationalistic Irish gather their forces and reassert their claim

over their native land, so does the figure of Mutabilitie herself, a young Titaness, who

had been banished from Jove's Olympic pantheon, return to reassert her claim to it. A

bemused Jove explains to her that the gods rule Heaven through conquest, having

"wonne the Empire of the Heavens bright." By presuming her rights to reclaim them

she assails this natural order. Most significantly, just as Spenser saw the environs

around his estate becoming increasingly hostile and contested, so does Mutabilitie make

her claim to her rightful estate in the woods of Arlo Hill. This was a former favorite

bathing spot of the Goddess Diana which she'd abandoned after being espied by

Faunus, and Spenser could easily see it just beyond his estates. Betraying notes of the

poet's fatalism, the narrator explains how the enraged goddess had laid "an heauy

hapless curse" upon these lands, so that

> Wolues, where she was wont to space,
>
> Should harbour'd be, and all those Woods deface,
>
> And Theives should rob and spoile that Coast around.

The curse endures, for "to this day (the lands) with Wolues and Thieues abound, /Which

too-too true that lands in-dwellers since haue found" (VII.VI.55. 4-9). Nevertheless, the

assembly meets under the irreproachable judicial sense of Nature, who hears

Mutabilitie's claim to the lands. And in her arguments, it is hard to discern whether

Spenser aligns himself with Mutabilitie against Jove, or whether as the current "in-

dweller" he sees her as an upstart. However, her claim for sovereignty is based on the

fact that even as all earth "unto Mutabilitie (is) not thrall," it is nevertheless "chang'd in

part, and eeke in general" (VII.VIi.17. 9) through her influence. She proceeds upon a

cosmic catalogue of things that are under her domain, asserting her sovereignty over the

seasons (18), life-cycles of man and beasts (19), the "ebbe and flowe" of rivers, lakes,

and oceans, (20), winds and clouds (20), hills (20), sea-creatures (21), air currents (22),

climates (23), and even the earth's most foundational elements: "Fire into Aire,

and Aire to water sheere, and Water into Earth," for "all are in one body and as one

appeare" (VII.VII.25. 6-9). Mutability establishes that all these are under her soverign

reign, and the gods have usurped these from her.

Throughout this final canto, Spenser reveals the contradictory idea that the

surveyed landscape is paradoxically the most vulnerable, and perhaps as an expression

of this sentiment he continues Mutibilitie's advocacy of her claim. In stanzas 28-47 she

presents a pageant of Seasons (28-31), Months (32-43), Day and Night (44), Hours of

the Day (45) and finally, Life and Death (46). Having established her case that in "this

lower world who can deny / But be subject still to *Mutabilitie*" (VII.VII.47. 8-9), she

continues on in this vein by establishing that the gods themselves are under her

sovereign control. Having left no example untouched to make her case, Mutabilitie

finally rests it (56). Nature rules and sides with the gods on the argument that those

who aspire to perfection, as all things do, "do worke their own perfection so by fate"

(VII.VII.58). The final two stanzas, the narrator reveals his dissatisfaction with nature's

verdict for Mutability, though lacking by heavenly standards, "in all things else she

beares the greatest sway" (VIII.1.5). With notes of wistfulness, the speaker longs for a

"time when no more Change shall be," and a steadfastness that "is contrary to

Mutabilitie" (VIII.2. 2-5).The stanzas end with his invocation to "that great Sabbaoth

God," whom he hopes will "graunt me that Sabbaoth's sight" (2). In these final lines

one hears the imploring notes of a confused and disillusioned voice seeking greater

wisdom and distance from a sense of dissatisfaction with the course that Fate has led it

toward.

Because of their fragmentary nature and concluding position, the *Mutabilitie Cantos* nonetheless betray an interesting effort to provide a note of closure to Spenser's epic. Instead, however, they serve more powerfully to perpetuate a feeling of uncertainty, so that in the end Spenser's poem assumes a form as enigmatic as the landscape and people in his vision of English colonialism. "Ireland, as represented in *The Faerie Queene*," writes Hadfield, "is a body of overlapping and conflicting texts which presents a whole series of figures: good and bad savages, pliable loyalists, disgruntled colonizers." Moreover, "The poem is a vast and colonizing work trying to absorb all the representations it can and subject them to its own structure, familiarize and absorb the alien" (200-01).

Spenser's Irish Experience: An Historical Background

In the seven books of *The Faerie Queene*, one sees both the valorization of the colonizing ideology and a realization of the failure of the Tudor colonialist policy. This ambivalence is reflected most vividly in the poem's epic imagery, but also in the *View of the Present State of Ireland*, which provides a necessary complement to Spenser's epic as well as a more objective statement of his colonialist ideology. To understand both the emergence of this ideology and his growing disaffection with it, one must consider both the historical patterns established in sixteenth-century England, as well as specific elements in Spenser's life which uniquely positioned him as a commentator on the drastic efforts by the English to colonize its neighbor to the west.

Given the overall tenor of Spenser's Irish experience across nearly two deades, it is not surprising that he would develop conflicted feelings toward the confident vision of English colonialism that he first brought to these alien Irish shores. In noting that the

Elizabethan age was the "flowering time of English-Speaking culture and

national sentiment," historian Richard Berleth observes that it "seems rude" "to insert

the Irish debacle" into the otherwise glorious catalogue of Elizabeth's

accomplishments.[229]

The concept of Irish nationalism as be shaped by Elizabeth's Irish wars would

emerge among the people in the middle decades of the seventeenth century, dividing the

character of its peoples and contrasting starkly with the English nationalist ideology of

the Elizabethan age. In its depiction of epic imagery, particularly in its descriptions of

warfare, arms, and battle, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* sheds light on the economics and

politics of sixteenth-century English colonialism. More importantly, the poem registers

over the gradual process of its creation the poet's increasingly ambivalent attitude

toward his personal and professional commitment to the increasingly tenuous colonial

project in Ireland. The Second Munster Plantation, which enabled Spenser's social

emergence, became to Elizabethans "a consuming mission, conceived in imperial

might, and implemented by the full efforts of the English nation" (Berleth 217).[230]

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[229] Berleth explains that "Ireland was not a minor theater": "In modern parlance, the pacification of Ireland began with a policing action, which escalated to full scale operations, which resulted in a near total depopulation of the countryside, which was amended by wholesale colonization and usurpation. On the other hand, Ireland gobbled up the Queen's men, resources, and energy for more than thirty years. The Irish wars destroyed reputations, bankrupted great families, and culminated in the first authentic colonial venture in English history" (xiv).

[230] Scholars are divided over the question of attributing a nationality to Spenser's writing. In recent decades, critics have begun to question the essential "Englishness" of Spenser's works, more than half of which were completed in Ireland. They argue instead that his later ones are expressions of a divided nationality, one that can be seen as "very much an Irish poet" even as "the Irish have never claimed him" (Berleth 224). Over the past twenty years a generation of critics, enabled by the colonialist perspectives of Edward Said and spearheaded by scholars Hadfield and Maley, has begun to regard the Irish dimensions of Spenser's experience more strongly as factors that shaped in particular his later works. Hadfield, for example, describes how "Said's analytical framework is a necessary antidote to a tradition which has often taken the Englishness of English literature for granted," and the place of "sixteenth century Ireland within the English-dominated British Isles" is itself an intensely problematic issue (2). Hadfield's ultimate argument is that Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* and *The Faerie Queene* are not only "works of imperialism," but also "works which attempt to articulate a sense of a national identity in exile" (3).

Spenser came of age in a climate of distrust and brutal hostility between the English crown and the radically different culture practiced by both the prominent Anglo-Irish overlords and the entirety of Celtic "natives" subservient to them. England's uneasy peace with the island to the west was shattered with the Irish Rebellion of 1579; suddenly, the island that had previously enjoyed the "blessings of neglect" found itself at the nexus of political and religious currents, such that "influential men" among Elizabeth's court "believed that the Irish emergency was part of a vast conspiracy," warning that "Catholic Spain and agents of the Holy See had entered this back door of England to overthrow the Crown." Thus, in their desire for nominal control of their native lands, the Irish instead "thrust themselves into the forefront of a grave international crisis" (Berleth 3), which, though it would prove beneficial to the social prospects of a young and ambitious poet, would result in those bloody conflicts that would take place on their shores for decades and centuries to come.

And Spenser too would end up on those shores, serving the crown in a variety of such increasingly important capacities as military command, land acquisition, surveyorship, and later, colonial settlement. His professional duties allowed him eventually to develop an intimate emotional, topographical, and imagistic—but above all, problematic--acquaintance with the Irish landscape and its people. A number of adjectives are needed to describe the trajectory of Spenser's twenty-five year Irish experience: threatening, rewarding, bloody, fulfilling, disillusioning, productive, terrifying, devoted; collectively even these fall short of capturing the spirit of his time there. His poetry Berleth calls "the most interesting legacy of the plantation years" and

"a window through which the lives and actions of the first English colonists are seen" (224).

Ultimately, as Berleth argues, the best articulations of Spenser's experience in Ireland are found in *The Faerie Queene*, the epic he composed there, and in that "terrifying" treatise of pro-Tudor colonialist rhetoric *The View of the Present State of Ireland*. In this way, such an effort to gain perspective on Spenser's gradual and growing ambivalence toward Elizabethan colonial ideology must consider the Desmond Wars, two bloody decades that proceeded the poet's arrival to Irish shores. As Grey's secretary, Spenser would experience between August and November of 1580 a military rout, images of both courtly civility and the consequences of brutal suppression, and a shockingly bloody massacre of surrendered troops.[231] Beyond the imaginative effects inscribed on the poet's mind in these turbulent months, the reach of the influence exerted upon him by Grey himself remains an open question.[232] Along with his brutal

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[231] Having reached Ireland in the aftermath of Pelham's summer bloodshed and seeing the carnage first hand in his travels across Munster, Spenser would then soon behold the effects of the horrible brutality worked upon the native Irish. In its wake, the desolation of the Munster countryside would have a profound effect later that September on the young secretary in Lord Grey's service. When he marched through the now barren lands, he marveled at the starving survivors "who "looked like anatomies of death" and "spake like Ghostes crying out of their graves," while barely surviving in "a most populous and plentiful country suddenly made void of man and beast" (qtd. in Berleth 132; see also Maley 66). In the wake of such ghastly images, the war proceeded as if fueled by nothing more than the bloody inertia of the previous months' conflicts. Later, under the fanatically Puritan command of Grey, Spenser would participate in the infamous siege of Del Oro, in early November of 1580, where some 500 surrendered Spanish soldiers were rounded up, confined to fort, and subsequently mutilated by English swords, under Grey's confident direction and Raleigh's eager command. Their bodies were stripped and then tossed over the rocky coastline into the Atlantic. In the aftermath of this bloody atrocity, Spenser never stopped defending his Lord Deputy, writing blithely that "there was no other way but to make that short end of them which was made" (176). He honors Grey both in a dedicatory epistle to *The Faerie Queene* and also in the knightly character of Artegall, and it deserves extended consideration to connect these tributes to the bloody, deprived, and disturbing views of Ireland that the poet saw in his first half year there. Moreover, he takes great pains to justify Grey's actions in the *View* as well, and it might be said that the historical exoneration of him was one of the great mandates of Spenser's later writing.

[232] Historians are divided in assessing the Lord Deputy's character and his policies. His "religious zeal" recommended him for Irish duties as much as his Puritan leanings and courtly alliances with Sidney and other key advisors to the Crown, who were willing to overlook his family's dubious service in Scotland in decades past. His grasp of theoretical battlefield tactics is betrayed by several notable miscalculations committed under his command across a two-decade career in both Scotland and Ireland. In Ireland, according to Berleth, he would "carry off his campaign by preconceived plan, seldom suiting his actions to the peculiarities of the country" (154). His openness to contradictory messages, first from the crown but also from Elizabeth's retainers, further complicated his position, and

predecessors and short-sighted administrative followers, his Irish service was likewise indirectly responsible for uniting disparate peoples against a common enemy and his contributed to the emerging pattern of Irish nationhood. Spenser's comments on Grey, his Puritanism, and the colonialist ideology he stood for would permeate the *Faerie Queene* in both subtle and overt ways; his devotion to Grey nevertheless served the poet in ideologically, artistically, and socially beneficial ways.

After the final fall of the Desmonds in 1583, the conflicts were to continue sporadically under Baltinglass and later under Tyrone. But by 1581, Spenser would be one of the beneficiaries of the Crown's resettlement policy. He was rewarded for his service with a series of increasingly prominent offices and valuable lordships, and his shrewdness as a speculator of confiscated properties would help his cause. Beginning with the gift of a lease of properties at Enniscorthy, which the secretary then sold to purchase land at New Ross, Spenser would become a landholder of ever greater renown. He held land that was formerly owned by Baltinglas near Kildare from 1582 to 1584, and at Effin in 1585 and 1586. Soon thereafter another opportunity presented itself, this one in the confiscated lands of Sir John of Desmond. With the rebel's unlikely demise, his lands in central Munster became possessions of the crown and were soon divided up, and by 1592 a list of prominent settlers across the land "read like a roll call of Grey's army" (219). Among the beneficiaries were Sir Walter Raleigh and Captain Thomas Norris, but a smaller castle and plowlands came available to a formerly penniless English secretary and poet. Spenser's Irish experience, and the realization of

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by 1582 Lord Grey was awaiting his recall from a Crown that was frustrated by his lack of progress. His brutal reputation was reinforced by a disastrous famine which swept across war-torn Munster between late 1581 and early 1582 and killed an estimated 90,000 people.

his ambitious drive toward upward mobility, would culminate in his residence at

Kilcolman castle as part of the Munster resettlement, which he took full possession of in

1588. Within this estate's distinctive landscapes, which will be considered more fully

below, he would compose his epic tribute to Elizabeth and her colonial project.

The Innate Otherness of Irish Armies: The English Military vs. Irish Gallowglass and Scottish Kerne

A consideration of the various Lord Deputies and other administrators, as well

as the innate otherness of the Irish armies, peoples, and culture, is essential to any study

of *The Faerie Queene*'s iconography, for these are the figures upon whom Spenser

would come to base his allegorical portraits. In the increasingly hostile environs around

Kilcoloman in which Spenser composed both *A View of the Present State of Ireland* and

the final Cantos of *The Faerie Queene*, he wrote amidst the reawakening vision of Irish

rebellion. In these later cantos, one sees in the epic images of battle, armor, and

weaponry not the confident chivalric splendors so valued by Elizabeth and her

influential courtiers, but rather an imagistic character of a more reserved and pliable

quality and a landscape alternatively idealized and threatened. Taken together, these

powerfully suggest the poet's personal ideology in transition. Such images were shaped

by Spenser's dramatic exposure to Irish soldiers and Irish people, and it is important to

understand some of the historical realities that lie behind the poet's weighted portrayals

of that Gaelic "other" which so shaped the imagistic detail of his epic.[233]

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[233] Between roughly 1567 and 1583, as the Desmond Wars ravaged Ireland, the contrasts between Irish and English cultures would become apparent even to the most casual observer. A useful illustration of this difference is evident in the military dimension, which serves as a point of entry into the Irish world that shaped Spenser's epic imagination. Set against larger patterns of conflict, suppression and settlement in Ireland's northern and western reaches, these wars were essentially a series of battles localized in southwestern Munster. They unfolded in two basic

Berleth relates a contemporary account of battle between the guerrilla

rebels of kern and gallowglass of Fitzmaurice and the armies of Sidney who sought to

pacify them.[234] The account encapsulates the notions of otherness applied by English

eyes to the Irish soldiers and the landscape supporting them: clearly, the inscrutable and

terrifying impression left by the Irish kern and gallowglass mirrored the forbidding and

foreign character of the landscape. For the English, battle was a matter of necessity to

enforce colonial ideology. For the Irish, battle had been essentially a matter of habit

and temperament, composed largely of native impulses. The contrast in battle

techniques between the conscripted armies of the English and the rebel bands of Irish

would loom significantly in the Desmond Wars, but would become less visible in the

1590's with the emergence of the English-educated Lord Tyrone.[235]

Spenser's colonialist epic is most fully invested in chivalric images of

battlefield combat, and this pattern is most clearly discernible in the confident

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phases (1567-71 and 1579-83) between the combined forces of the Old English Desmond clan and the loose confederacies of Gaelic militias they assembled and the New English occupying forces.

    Eyewitness testimonies lend credence to the vivid otherness of Gaelic culture as reflected in their military techniques. The historical record of the first half of the sixteenth century is fraught with accounts of English armies besieged by native bands of warriors, who seemingly would retreat into the landscape as quickly as they'd emerged from it (Lennon 5). English soldiers, drawn from the lower social ranks (Ellis 344), were particularly vulnerable to the harsh climate and "disease environment" (Lennon 8) that lingered outside the towns.

[234] "The lurking rebels will plash down whole trees over passes, and so intricately wind them...that they shall be a strong barricade, and then lurk in ambush amongst the standing wood, playing upon all comers as if they intend to go headlong forward. On the bog they likewise presume with naked celerity to come as near our foot and horse as is possible, and we cannot or indeed dare not follow them. And thus they serve us in the narrow entrances into their glens and quagmires of their mountains, where a few muskets well placed, will stagger a pretty army" (qtd. 58).

[235] If the essential composition of the Irish armies in the Desmond Wars and later was dictated by a disparate but interlocking network of clan loyalties, the English armies can be said to have been amassed according to a policy of social cleansing. While settlement opportunities awaited the ambitious soldiers of fortune in the middle and lower noble orders, the conscripts under the Lord Deputy's commands were essentially the rabble of English society. They were, however, shaped into fighting units according to the prevailing military technologies and theories of the day and so presented a formidable opponent to the defending Irish rebels when not hampered by inexperience, disease, climate, and desertion. Contributing to the chronic lack of morale among the rank-and-file English soldiery in Ireland and the corrupt habits of its quartermasters and officers was Elizabeth's notoriously tight control over her treasury's purse strings. The temptation for soldiers to peddle their weapons to their Irish opponents was ever-present. Also, many of her Lord Deputies carried out her objectives at great personal expense. This was especially the case with Sir Henry Sidney, Spenser's early patron, who spent himself into bankruptcy in fulfilling his duties to the crown.

depictions of chivalric heroism that shape the imagery of Books I-III. The anti-

papist Spenser practiced the common Elizabethan habit of appropriating chivalric

motifs to idealize contemporary state ideologies.[236] This conceit, which connected

England's chivalric splendors of the past with self-justifying ideologies of the present,

stood in marked contrast to the relatively deprived conditions of the rank-and-file

soldiery described above. However, it served the important purpose of highlighting an

English national consciousness which perpetuated the position of the upper classes and

representing the poet's aspirations to penetrate this social matrix.

Mapping Ireland: Patterns of Representation of Irish Landscape and Culture in **The**

Faerie Queene *and the* **View of the Present State of Ireland.**

With few cohorts, Spenser saw the imaginative possibilities in Ireland's

"ancient worth." He recognized "the vitality of its culture" and "the preeminence of the

early Irish church," so much so that he judged the land "not a backwater" but "rather a

decayed garden corresponding to the first Eden" (225). Upon these notions were

Spenser's conceptions of the Irish landscape imaginatively mapped, the force of whose

imaginative reach was enabled greatly by the mysteries ascribed to the land itself.

Indeed, the mapping and chronicling of Irish lands was a sketchy matter—focused

largely on commercially coastal ports and coastlines—until 1570, when it was made

necessary by the need for increasingly frequent military incursions. Spenser's

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[236] Citing the work of Camile Paglia in discerning the connections between chivalric motifs (called a 'male exoskeleton'), images of epic heroism, contemporary aristocratic values, conflicts with Catholicism, and self-justifying ideologies of colonial domination, biographer Waller describes the "enormous, even obsessive, detail" of chivalric imagery, "or more precisely, its Elizabethan revival," in Spenser's poetry (See Waller 28-31). More specifically, Berleth connects this larger pattern with a crucial moment in Spenser's Irish service, one that resonates discernibly throughout *The Faerie Queene*. In late September of 1580 when Lord Grey received the "Sword of State" and was ceremonially invested in Dublin as the Lord Deputy of Ireland, the chivalric splendor of this passage of office was on fully display (see Berleth 156-57).

contributions to this cartographical effort were significant, and if one considers

both *The Faerie Queene* and *A View of the Present State of Ireland* as projections of this

service, several interesting patterns emerge. The problematic character of Spenser's

familiarity with the Irish landscape, gained as a result of his service to the Tudor

colonial effort, is expressed imaginatively in *The Faerie Queene*. The work stands as

an expression of the tension between the "conception of an ordered, rational universe

and the mutable world of the Irish" (Berleth 198-99), or the values of the English

colonial ideology with the essentially tribal character of the native Irish and their

assimilated Anglo-Norman overlords.

Likewise, it is possible to envision the *View*, composed either

contemporaneously or slightly later than the epic, as less the pragmatic expression of a

comparable ideology and more the marker of Spenser's altered epic vision. In both epic

and prose treatise, the landscape of Ireland is familiar to native insiders but prompts

paranoia and suspicion to outsiders; in *The Faerie Queene,* the various "defenders" of

English virtues—Redcrosse, Arthur, Guyon, Britomart, Artegall, etc.—inevitably

confront the forbidden forces that lie in the "native" landscape and resist these civilizing

virtues. Such "native" hostiles, seen by the colonialist mind as simultaneously

forbidding, withdrawn, tempting, and perilous, possess a knowledge of their landscape

that is both mysterious and appealing to colonizing settlers.[237] Scholar Richard McCabe

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[237] In 1585, two years after his taking possession of property at Effin and three years before his taking residence at Kilcolman, Spenser was actively involved in the surveying and mapping of Munster. Pressed into an odd role possible only in a colonial outback, which combined the official documentation of both cartographical surveying, and observation of the people, Spenser would develop "a feeling for the countryside" and the mythic past of the survivors making do there. In this way, he would become familiar with the landscapes and peoples in Kilcolman's vicinity and would be well prepared by 1588 to take possession of the castle itself.

Having by then advanced professionally to the rank of Clerk of Munster, Spenser was often called away from Kilcolman on official duties. Nevertheless, the duties of his surveying would serve him well while at home on

describes the "Irish context" of *The Faerie Queene,* which is established by the dedicatory sonnets that frame the introduction. These poems, argues McCabe, "attest to a desperate sense of cultural isolation in a 'savadge soyle'" (64).

The attitudes expressed by Spenser and others toward the Irish landscape and its population are mirrored in the epic landscape he depicted in *The Faerie Queene.* It is important to note that the forbidding images ascribed to the Irish lands and people are largely the perceptions of outsiders. Although the Old English and Gaelic peoples differed significantly in custom and habit, both associated regularly and had, over the centuries since the Anglo-Norman settlement, worked out patterns of mutual interaction in economic and social spheres and had assimilated one another's culture. Thus, it is important to credit some of the social realities that were less visible through the lens of Tudor colonialist ideology. These realities, made available by modern historians, are obscured by contemporary accounts, which include the predictable patterns of landscape and iconographic imagery, as well as the expected discomfort with cultural otherness that Spenser relied upon in his epic. Journeying through the southwest across the ravaged landscape in 1580 months after Grey's embarrassing defeat at Glenmalure,

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his newly won estate. He would busy himself in its affairs and management, writing "knowledgably about plowlands and hides, virgates and oxgangs, all terms for the dividing of acerage" (Berleth 229). Complicating this idyllic picture, however, were the residual conflicts between the estate and the lands in its proximity, which were controlled by the Irish Lord Roche and his retainers of the McSheehy clan. These displaced Irish had made the lives of previous tenants difficult and managed to harass and drive away Spenser's predecessor. They would over time conjoin themselves with the surging forces from the North under Tyrone's leadership to drive the poet out of the land in which he'd made his fortune, and upon which he'd based his disturbing political treatise as well as his glorious imperial epic.

The end result of Spenser's colonial service was to make this forbidding landscape more familiar, more amenable to settlement, and more "suitable"—in both tangible and imaginative terms—to an English morality and ideology. The English poet was one small element from among the many and varied "axes and engines of the civil and military organizers" who "began to subdue (Ireland) to some extent" over the later decades of the sixteenth century (Lennon 3) and who sought to reinvent their culture on Irish lands. His interest in the landscape itself—as a commodity, an imaginative resource, and a measure of his own social advancement—is most pronounced during these early years at Kilcolman. As the Crown prepared for an invasion by Spain and responded to other related tensions on the continent, the English expatriate would, along with many a profit-seeking social climber, temporarily realize the zenith of his social ambitions in this newly subdued, "mapped" landscape.

Spenser beheld a "savage soil" that was "left almost wast through long wars"

such that "a brutish barbarism" has "spread over a fair land" (qtd. Berleth 165).

This imaginative rendering of the Irish landscape and its people, well described

by Berleth,[238] is shaped as much by the nature of the poet's Irish service as by the

imagistic character of the lands themselves. The problematic nature of the Irish

landscape and its people was underscored by the problematic status of the land itself, as

a residually loyal subject of the English nation and also as a mysterious cultural and

topographical entity unto itself. The poet's allusions to the "salvage" character of the

people and the lands are first expressed in his allusion to Ireland's "salvage soils" in the

1590 version of the poem's dedicatory sonnet to the Anglo-Irish Lord Ormond, and the

notion of the "saluage" character of Faeryland likewise resonates throughout *The Faerie*

Queene. These allusions represent a useful point of departure in an effort to become

familiar with Ireland's role in shaping the poem's epic landscapes.[239]

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[238] Taking momentary refuge in the Ormond estates at Kilkenny, where he composed these verses, Spenser saw the contrasts, and would "[n]ever forget the countryside beyond Kilkenny; in his masterpiece *The Faerie Queene*, he repeatedly contrasts empty, brooding landscapes, where travelers are suddenly beset, with the cloistered civility of an isolated and barricaded home. Plot and character are frequently of Italian origin, but the caves and forests are inimitably Irish, and the fragility of civilization a lasting theme" (Berleth 165-66).

[239] In considering the extreme viewpoints expressed in the propagandistic epic of colonialism and the genocide-justifying treatise, the senses implicit in Spenser's use of the word "salvage" apply as much to the landscape he chronicles as to the man himself. Maley writes, "Spenser is the Salvage man in this double sense, the salvageable and the compulsively barbarous," as in Ireland the poet finds affirmation, as his mouthpiece Irenius states in the *View of the Present State of Ireland*, that "'it is but the other day since England grew civil,' and so savagery is never far away" (6). Upon such ideas, Maley bases his "appraisal" of the poet in light of his Irish experience, enabling his conclusion that "the intractability of Spenser's texts is due, at least in part, to the complexity of the Irish colonial situation" (8). Likewise, Hadfield explains that the pun reconfigures a reading of the three-book 1590 edition of the poem after one has read the expanded, six-book 1596 edition, thus "forcing the reader to return to the first books and reread them in light of later developments" (138). In the specific case of *The Faerie Queene*, this observation applies readily to Spenser's imaginative rendering of the Irish landscape, in which one finds, to conclude Maley's metaphor, much that can be salvaged from its "salvage" reaches.

Ultimately, Maley argues that Spenser's Irish "experience" begins not with his services under Sidney in 1577 or Grey in 1580, but rather "through his "contact with the Irish colonial milieu" which had begun several years before. This contact is evident in a work as early as his *Shepherdes Calendar*, which was published in 1579, although most of the poem was believed to have been composed over the previous decade (42). Elizabethan Ireland was, as has been shown, a land of "ambiguous status, being neither kingdom nor colony" in which "the physical division of the English throne (is) implicit in the Irish viceroyalty" (9). As a result, the divisions between "English" and "Irish" were complicated because Elizabeth's Ireland "manage(d) to be in two places at one time, simultaneously

The Tudor policies for the Munster resettlement essentially rested upon

such beliefs and proceeded according to both a self-preserving plea for national security

and a self-promoting belief in cultural superiority. It is here important, however, to

stress the ambiguous character assigned to the Irish landscape and its people by the

Elizabethan imagination and to begin to draw connections between a problematic

variety of elements: the landscape itself, native Irish, Old English, and New English

peoples of Elizabethan Ireland, the images of violence and slaughter which shaped

Spenser's imagination, and the colonial imperatives which fueled his ideological

impulses (see Hadfield 201).[240]

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situated on England's border and at the uttermost extremities of civilization," and in it the English writers of the sixteenth century discovered "both exotic excess and domestic disorder" (52). The presence of the Old English as "intervening subjects" and as "a distinctive English society in their own right" (53) further problematizes the transformation of Ireland "from feudal fiefdom to colonial staging post" during Spenser's time there. One constant factor to emerge from the range of positions that Ireland held in the Elizabethan mind was the belief that the English presence there perpetually represented, according to Maley, a "civility-under-siege" (53) in which the mandate for resettlement was self-evident.

    Likewise, Hadfield is also inclined to note the problematic distinctions between English and Irish which complicated the Tudor colonial policies and shaped Spenser's epic. Arguing that the poem "demands to be read within a cultural context where its status is uncertain and insecure" (114), caught "between two interrelated but opposing poles of representational and political possibilities" that determine "its hybrid, generically elaborate, and confusing form" (115). Moving outward from the poem, Hadfield then considers the "figure of Ireland" in Spenser's imagination itself. This idea, he explains, "serves as a vehicle for expressing the ideological anxieties of Spenser's understanding of Elizabethan culture, so that such fears pervade the representation of Ireland" in *The Faerie Queene* itself (129). In Spenser's writing, therefore, "Ireland does more than problematize the relationship between English religion and the politics of a wider world; it also exists as the site of potential chaos where Englishness and its attendant certainties (truths) are turned against themselves in an orgy of violence, never to be redeemed" (133)

[240] Beyond Hadfield and Maley's insights, other scholars also note the seemingly bipolar character of the Spenserian landscape of *The Faerie Queene* according to the imagistic resonance of Ireland itself, as well as the to colonialist impulses that would be conjoined in Spenser's fertile imagination during and after that bloody fall of 1580. Scholar Susan Wofford locates in the poem's allegorical form a "psychological" landscape in which "many" of its "places and commonplaces represent spiritual or emotional aspects of the characters themselves," such that "to learn to read Spenser's poem is to learn that everything …can represent an aspect of the hero or heroine's own psyche" (116). Likewise, scholar Richard McCabe comments on the significance of the allegorical form's intersection with the multifaceted character of Irish lands and peoples (63). The attribution of "demonic" characteristics to the Irish landscape and its people resonates through most commentaries on Ireland. This imaginative investment in the landscape is, at least in part, defined by its innate otherness—and subconscious appeal to—English sensibilities. Ultimately, what is feared, forbidden, and resisted by Spenser's allegorical figures is likewise what is subconsciously desired by the poet and his readers. In his study *Mapping the* Faerie Queene, scholar Wayne Erickson usefully deconstructs the epic imagery of Spenser's Faeryland and applies the schizophrenic distinctions between "self" and "demonic alter ego" more fully to the landscape of Spenser's epic. He lists "allegorical cores" in specific sites which lie within both the upper and lower worlds (5) and notes three epic "lines" of British, Tudor, and biblical prophecy across the narrative as a whole (6). Likewise, with his stature as "England's own Virgil" (as his Tudor contemporaries would come to see him) (20), Spenser, argues Erickson, was "concerned to assert the epic status of a poem dominated by the conventions of romance" (19).

The facts and features of Irish geography intermingle with the images and dimensions of Spenser's own epic landscape, as the poet "builds the world of political history into his poem" (25). This history is both from the distant past and from the poet's own experience; shaped first by his military and cartographical service to the crown as secretary to the Lord Deputyships, Spenser's vision of the landscape was later reinforced by the images he was greeted with in his settlement at Kilcolman. Arguably, the *Faerie Queene* afforded Spenser the opportunity to reflect upon the meaning of his ten years of colonial service. Beyond the confident vision of pacification and settlement in the early books, the more unsettled aspects of his experience—combined with the increasingly threatening climate that he resided in at Kilcolman in the later years of his decade there—would prompt his reflection upon its darker realities. The classical traditions which helped shape Spenser's epic project likewise inform its imagistic detail and give shape to its ideological resonance.

Overall, these traditions inform and justify the vision of the "gentleman" fashioned in Books I-III, who is capable of withstanding the temptations of the Irish culture and impose English civility upon it. Such an individual is educated according to a common pattern that includes not only elements of Platonic thought—as articulated in the *Republic*—but also Virgilian historical prophecy, as expressed in the *Aeneid*. Finally, the culturally significant influence of Chaucer, that "well of English undefiled"—is also evident in the linguistic structure, imagistic detail, and spiritual implications of *The Faerie Queene*'s first three books. In this first stage of *The Faerie Queen*, a reader familiar with epic patterns and chivalric images will note the easily recognizable dynamics of east and west, of self and other, of a Christian empire of the

spirit and an imperial ideology of English nationalism, one which recalls in

particular the chivalric imagery and crusading ideology shown demonstrably in the

Song of Roland. In *The Faerie Queene* the nationalistic implications are vividly on

display, just as they resonate in the *View.*

Beyond engaging Spenser's fears of an "apocalyptic" outcome to the colonial

experience he'd invested his life work in, the *View* likewise offers several revealing

details which enable a greater understanding of *The Faerie Queene's* landscapes and

images. Composed in the mid 1590's and deemed by historians to be ready for

publication by 1596, the *View* allowed Spenser to articulate rationally and tangibly what

he had expressed metaphorically and imagistically in Books I-III of his epic to

crystallize the ideas that shaped Books IV-VI. In many ways, it is an imagistic and

ideological mid-point which also shows his thoughts turning away from the confident

colonialist agenda of the 1590 publication of the first three books. Indeed, the shared

currents that conjoin the "civilized" and "disorderdered" cultures run both ways. In

establishing that *"The Faerie Queene* is not a work which deals incidentally with

Ireland but one which is framed by its author's own Irish experience," Hadfield argues

that both Spenser and his poem were "'corrupted' by their relationship with Ireland,"

such that "*The Faerie Queene* demands to be read alongside *A View of the Present State

of Ireland"* (202).

Conclusion

In his effort to validate his own colonial experience, one notes the uncertainties

which he first overcame and later was forced to acknowledge as he sought in *The

Faerie Queene* to supply a validating pretext for his service to the crown in the cultural

backwaters of the Irish pale.[241] In this landscape, as in all epic, the hallmark

motifs—armor and weapons, underworld images, and scenes of battle—serve to

advance the poet's principal purposes. In the case of *The Faerie Queene*, these

purposes are primarily directed toward the short term realization of the English

settlement in Ireland and the long term vision of the establishment of an English empire.

As the first great epic statement of English imperialism, Spenser's poem articulates a

vision shaped by these moral imperatives.

However, Spenser's tribute to Constancie, the virtue identified in Book VII's

preface and first published in a 1609 folio edition of *The Faerie Queene*, serves as the

best epitaph for his epic and imperial ambitions. These late cantos have become

ironically best known for the fragment that acknowledges Mutabilitie's power to change

tides, times, and fortunes. The force of Mutabilitie's arguments and the brevity and

flippancy of Nature's verdict seem to betray Spenser's sentiment that change is, in fact,

inevitable. Yet her decision serves to offer one final hint of confidence in the ideology

that has shaped the course of his epic from its very inception. The imperial dimensions

of Nature's verdict reinforce the eternity embodied by Jove and those in his domain

and, by implication, offer a faint, distant, mistimed, and ultimately ill considered echo

of justification for a waning Munster colonial settlement effort.[242]

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[241] Beyond the political philosophy expressed in the *View*, Spenser validates his own colonial experience by depicting in his epic poem through several morally justifying lenses, including Platonic philosophy, Virgilian epic, and in his gestures to the traditions of English poetry, specifically to Chaucer and Skelton.

[242] In a purely economic sense, it likewise is possible to argue that Spenser's vision of colonialism was underpinned by a belief in the economic value of self-sustaining land acquisition, rather than in what will come to be seen as the more viable pattern of resource exploitation, which would serve to reinforce the economic dependence of the native peoples on their colonizers.

In this light, any reader wishing for comment on Spenser's epic effort might profitably note its imagistic and thematic consistencies with his *View of the Present State of Ireland*, a contemporary document which shows a pattern of imagistic consistency with *The Faerie Queene*, seeks to achieve comparable objectives, and provides a more direct, less allegorical commentary on the poet's mind and world view in the mid-1590's. What disrupts the otherwise general consistency in the two-part structure of *The Faerie Queene* and the *View* are the notes of reservation expressed in Book VII, which are absent from the *View*. It is likely that the fervor that Spenser brought to his colonizing treatise was outlasted by the waning energies he invested into his epic project.

It is disheartening to envision a beleaguered and overtaxed Spenser, his six-book epic newly repubished by the early months of 1597, with his lands at risk, his family harassed when venturing off of their estate and even vulnerable on its formerly secure environs, news of Tyrone's emergence coming via dispatch from beyond, no hope of military aid arriving from a perpetually parsimonious Crown, his former lofty hopes for the Munster settlement slowly dying on the vine, yet still composing Book VII's final cantos and personalizing their allegory. Even as all of the worldly factors that shaped his epic vision crumble before his eyes, he doggedly persists in these final cantos, trudging toward another book of *The Faerie Queene*. His beloved Kilcolman and Arlo Hill just beyond have changed from a signifier for his long path of social emergence and a justification for his epic project to a contested space where the machinations of Fortune merit debate by the gods themselves. He was also realizing, Erickson suggests, the relevance of Diana's curse on Arlo Hill to his own precarious state: "The curse

was," Erickson writes, "played out in Spenser's own life when he and his family were forced to flee this troubled land" (68).

Nevertheless, the composition of a political tract that is interrelated and contemporary with his epic shows the uniqueness of Spenser, who, like Milton, was both an epic poet and a political theorist. The political works provide a point of entry into each writer's use of epic motifs, and in the case of Spenser the associations are notably pronounced. In this way, his epic vision differs from that of Milton, who despite his reservations toward the nascent industrialism of his contemporary London, nonetheless saw the economic and epic potential in its details, sordid as they might be.

Epilogue

The epic poets from Homer to Milton recognized mining as the activity that makes metals available to human commerce and warfare. It requires both a large-scale manipulation of the landscape and a descent into underworld regions. Within the epic narrative, the underworld regions represent a problematic, morally ambiguous space where metals figure prominently and comment typologically on the commercial and social ambivalences of the epic poet's world. Composers of both oral and written epic poetry have negotiated the economic realities and practices of their worlds, the traditions and conventions of the genre that they inherited and reinvented, and the influence of other narrative, imagistic, and thematic superstructures that likewise shaped the epic form and defined its motifs.

The common symbol that connects the epic genre to its economic and social life is its imagery of metals and metalworking because, as materials of empire, these are as essential to a culture's immediate survival as to its economic health long into the future. Moreover, into the world of Milton, the imagery of metals and metalworking in epic poetry helps to define and transform a culture's social hierarchy frequently to represent the currency that defines its class system. All epic texts through *Paradise Lost* support economic and social readings grounded in the symbols and imagery of metals and metalworking. The motifs of metals and metalworking are present continuously in the epic line because they depict the pragmatic cultural underpinnings of the world that the poet seeks to glorify.

Milton begins this study because he is the last great writer of English epic, the terminus of the line, the last writer in a position to mythologize metalworking as epic

material. With the onset of the seventeenth century, cultural forces that included

technical innovations and developing industrial practices also completed the demise of

epic that had been in process since the emergence of commerce in medieval times.

Battle became industrialized, as armies relied on industrial processes to outfit soldiers

and create armaments. Metalworking operations proliferated with the introduction of

the blast furnace, leading to the early versions of the military-industrial complex. With

these developments, the substance of human existence was transformed, increasingly

identified with and appropriated to nationalist purposes. In this way, Milton is the last

writer in a position to connect metalworking and warfare with the epic underworld and

to ascribe to epic materials a mythic dimension that allows for comment on the social

conflicts and class struggles of his time.

Economic realities and practices gave shape to the epic form and defined its

motifs, and the reinvention of these motifs, enabled as much by the Romantic

movement as by the onset of the Industrial revolution and the waning of Puritanism,

reconfigured the essential nature of underworld imagery to achieve a field of diverse

imperatives. Post-Miltonic texts which aspired to epic ambitions had new vantages

from which to consider the genre's form and substance, and the genre itself can be said

to have been weakened by the de-mythologization of metals and metalworking as

afforded by the industrial revolution. The Miltonic underworld represents and depicts

the moral imperatives of Puritanism, but after Milton's time new technological practices

enabled industrial proliferation, that reconfigured notions of individual identity and

inalterably changed the character of epic, such that its composers could no longer

conjoin those long associated motifs in authentic ways. Even as the epic form was

increasingly called upon to document the development of nascent statehood,

represent cultural virtue, and depict the infrastructural dimensions of a people according

to nationalistic imperatives, the common themes and motifs, including battle (weapons),

journey, underworld descent, and articulation of social strata became artifacts of the

pre-industrial age. The epic motifs that defined the genre from Homer to Milton were

appropriated to nostalgic efforts by imagining people of untenable virtue and heroism.

In the epic line from Homer to Milton, select historical developments help

explain how each new age reconfigures and uses the ancient epic ethos to its own

unique purposes. Patterns of colonial exploitation practiced by the Roman Empire

enabled Virgil to reconfigure Homeric motifs into a statement justifying Rome's

imperial dominance. This Virgilian notion of empire was reconfigured under Christian

auspices by Augustine and adapted to the narratives of the church fathers, who, in

advocating an ethos of *contemptus mundi*, regarded with suspicion the pursuit of

worldly glory and used metals as symbols of worldly temporality. This notion was

syncretized into the Anglo Saxon epic of *Beowulf*, where the suspicion of worldly glory

through battle reaches its fullest expression.

Patterns of commercial development, most notably the reintroduction of coinage

and currency into the western reaches of northern Europe, run contrary to the chivalric,

post tribal ethos depicted in the *Song of Roland*. However, coinage stands as an

essential unifying symbol to the Dantean conception of empire as expressed in the

debased commercial images of his *Inferno*. Influenced in part by Dante's underworld

sensibilities, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* re-examines the moral dimensions of his

culture's economic life in relation to the Christian ethos he articulated in his salvation

epic. Revisiting Virgilian notions of colonial exploitation, Spenser portrays a post-medieval epic sensibility that justifies his culture's superiority and uses chivalric topoi to stand for the maintenance of English national virtues against the threat of the Irish "other." And Milton's epic encroaches on the Industrial revolution and the proto-industrial practices of mining and metalworking that shaped the economic and environmental climate of his age. Whether through arms, armor, weapons, coinage, currency, or industry, metals and metalworking constitute the epic poet's comment on the economic practices and social realities of his world. In his depiction of proto-industry, Milton is the last of the epic poets to make purposeful use of this recurring motif.

Collectively, seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century efforts to recapture epic in the service of nationalistic agendas continued to gesture to the inherited traditions of the genre, serving visions of nascent statehood while pointing to the cultural weight of the traditional epic narrative. As outgrowths of both colonialist practice and industrial development, the place of epic was appropriated by newly available fields of inquiry which reconfigured epic notions in the early industrial world and no longer required pre-Miltonic motifs. More authentic forms of inquiry, leading to the works of Marx, Darwin, and Freud, attempted to chronicle the patterns of civil evolution and organization, cultural dominance, and human motivation. In this way epic motifs of metals and metalworking were demythologized as the economic and social systems that represented and shaped this motif were interrogated and reconfigured.

In the post-Miltonic world, nationalistic imperatives and neoclassical incentives helped to preserve the metalworking motifs in the recovered Germanic, Finnish, Nordic,

Pictish, and Celtic epics of the eighteenth century (which are, admittedly, colored

by these post-epic incentives as deployed in this study), true epic proceeded and

developed free from the influence of traditions that shaped the genre through Milton.

Likewise liberated from its service to epic precursors, the genre assumed new and

dominant forms: the ruminative self-reflection of Wordsworth, the exploratory inquiries

of Marx, Darwin, and Freud, the journey motif of Twain, the quest narrative of

Melville, and the all-inclusive imagery of Whitman collectively reflect epic aspirations

of one form or another.

Modern writers are unable to write epic. However, modern critics of Milton and

of the epic genre itself read the genre as reflective of the economic realities of the epic

poet. Long regarded as a repository for inherited motifs as dictated by ambition and

tradition, epic in this way also serves as a document which says as much about literary

history as about economic and social realities of the poet's own age.

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