The Flesh Made Mind:

Language and Embodiment in

Late Middle English Literature

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

My dissertation compares contemporary cognitive models of self, that posit an interconnection between body and mind, with Pre-Modern conceptions of an embodied self as represented in late fourteenth and early fifteenth century Middle English poetry. The medieval authors that I focus on are Geoffrey Chaucer, the *Gawain*-poet, and James I of Scotland.

My dissertation asserts several close affinities between late medieval conceptions of self and contemporary models of embodied consciousness proposed by cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Such models challenge models of consciousness that posit an objective mind (i.e., distinct from the body) that perceives before sensation. Chaucer, the *Gawain*-poet, and James I each engage with their poetic interests through models of an embodied self. While Chaucer uses architectural space to map the processes of memory, intellect, and perception as embodied experience, the *Gawain*-poet employs several schemas, cognitive metaphors, and structured movement to demonstrate the embodied underpinnings of experience. And, after living through his childhood as a political prisoner, James I depicts consolation through cognitive metaphors built upon embodied experience. In sum, my dissertation engages present models of embodied consciousness from cognitive psychology and neuroscience to examine late medieval models of mind and body.

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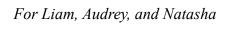
For Liam, Audrey, and Natasha

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Introduction

This dissertation hypothesizes that late medieval conceptions of an embodied self share close affinities to theories of consciousness proposed by contemporary cognitive science, and that recognizing these affinities provides new ways to analyze both literary and linguistic representations of embodiment in late Middle English literature. Alongside significant advancements in medical imaging, neuroscience, and linguistics during the second half of the twentieth century several models of the mind/body/brain have emerged. From philosophy to cognitive psychology, and from neuroscience to theoretical quantum biophysics, new models of consciousness are re-evaluating how we think about the self. Consideration of all recent models of self would quickly become a list too unwieldy for discussion. There are, despite the wide range of approaches, two primary modes of thinking, generally reducible to the debate between *internalism* and *externalism*. Broadly speaking, internalism understands consciousness, and, thus, perception, as a construction of mind only — the product of firing neurons. In this model, the functions of the body (including the brain) are understood as constraining higher level processes, even while those processes remain metaphysically and epistemologically independent of lower level processes.[1] Descartes' skepticism of sense and privilege of mental reflection as evidence for consciousness is often cited as a foundation for this model.[2] However often the internalist position has come under fire, it is not without supporters.[3] In its more recent form, computational

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[1] See Alva Noë, *Action in Perception.* 24.

[2] See, for example, Damasio, *Descartes' Error.*

[3] See Andrew Gluck, *Damasio's Error and Descartes' Truth* for a fruitful discussion of this conversation.

models of mind employ internalist elements by arguing that the event of consciousness occurs primarily (if not solely) in a brain state.[4]

The externalist position understands consciousness and the formation of self as the products of embodied participation in the world. In externalist models, perception and consciousness develop out of sensorimotor interaction with things rather than through mental projection onto materiality. Such interaction is, of course, in contrast to the Cartesian mental privilege underlying internalist models. We act and think the way we do because of the ways our bodies can act and think within the parameters of our world. I will outline several recent models of self developed by such scholars as Antonio Damasio, Sean Gallagher, Raymond Gibbs, and Alva Noë,[5] with attention to literary applications presented by Blakey Vermeule and Alan Richardson. A common thread which weaves throughout these models is the distinct primacy given to the body and its function in the production of consciousness.

This dissertation does not aim to debate the tenets of internalism or externalism. I have neither the expertise nor the space here to do so. Rather, this project seeks to elucidate conceptual affinities between recent, externalist models of embodiment with models of self from the late fourteenth century. Recent scholarship in medieval studies on cognition, memory, and embodiment has effectively expanded discussions regarding models of body, mind, and self

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[4] For examples of this broad discussion, see Jerry Fodor, *The Language of Thought, 1975*; Daniel Dennet, *Consciousness Explained,* 1991, *Darwin's Dangerous Idea,* 1996; David Marr, *Vision,* 1982.

[5] Antonio Damasio, *Self comes to Mind,* 2010; Alva Noë, *Perception in Action*, 2004; Nicholas Humphrey, *How to Solve the Mind-Body Problem,* 2000; Sean Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind,* 2005; Raymond Gibbs, *Embodiment and Cognitive Science,* 2006.

beyond texts specific to medical, theological, or psychological discussions from the period.[6] To

demonstrate the presence of such models in Middle English, I examine five texts which rely on

embodied concepts of mind, body, and the senses: *The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame,*

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, The Knight's Tale, and the *Kingis Quair.* My interest in these

texts rests within their varied synthesis of sense, reflection, and memory and how such syntheses

both demonstrate an embodied model of self and offer conceptually predictive ideas about

embodied consciousness as it has come back into vogue over the last several decades.

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[6] For example, Monica Green, "Women's Medical Practice and Health Care in Medieval Europe," 1989; Simon Kemp, *Medieval Psychology,* 1990, and *Cognitive Psychology in the Middle Ages,* 1996*;* Mary Carruthers, *Craft of Thought,* 1998, and *The Book of Memory,* 2011; Faith Wallis, *Medieval Medicine: A Reader,* 2010; C. Woolgar, *The Senses in Late Medieval England;* Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages,* 2011.

From Cosmos to Cogito: The Medieval Model of Mind and Body

To understand the model of mind and body during the late Middle Ages is to understand how sensation reaches beyond the limits of the body, how imagination fashions perception into form, how form coalesces with memory, and how memory, alive with sensation, renews an energetic cycle of embodied cognition. The model is grand. Its limits reach outward to the cosmological horizon and inward to the physiological and psychological fabric of the self. It takes account of astronomical and phenomenological, elemental and metaphysical influences that affect the human body, mind, and spirit. It seeks to encompass the vast range of human experience and unify each disparate part within a rational whole. Stephanie Volf asserts that the "sharp and antagonistic demarcation of body and soul into separate and unequal entities, one struggling to escape the subordinate nature, weight, temptations, and suffering of the other did not exist [within the medieval European paradigm] as we understand it today" (37). Rather, she explains how the medieval model considered body and soul as "two vestiges of one self, impinging upon each other, and ultimately responsible for each other's safe keeping and discipline" (Volf 43). Several studies have already discussed the extensive scope that models of mind and body achieved throughout the Middle Ages.[7] I will focus on three of these models — the cosmological/theological, medical, and psychological — to illustrate a general model of the embodied self common to the late Middle Ages.

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[7] For general discussions on this topic, see footnote 6 in the introduction for this dissertation; specifically, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 2008 and *The Craft of Thought,* 1998.

The danger in seeking to establish such a general model of medieval embodiment is in over-simplifying the myriad paradigmatic connections through which the age shaped its identification of self. To suggest that there was only *one* overarching model in the medieval period would be not only extremely naive, but would also only serve the presumptions, perceptions, and questions of the interested perspective. Perhaps such self-serving questions are somewhat inevitable, but, however narrowed my focus must be, I hope to connect several conceptual affinities which exist between medieval paradigms and those of early twenty-first century cognitive science and embodiment studies.

I have chosen to examine models from cosmology, medicine, and psychology because they demonstrate a holistic connection between body and environment even as they move inward and explore the cognitive operations of the mind. All three models weave into each other and reveal among medieval thinkers a common desire (verging on anxiety) to rectify and make sense of the often disparate world views that they inherited. According to *The Dream of Scipio* and Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy,* the shape of the medieval cosmos was spherical and included several layers to explain the connection between God's providence, the influence of the heavens, and events on Earth. Beyond specifying the basic relationship between the humours and the body by linking the humours to the four elements, medical models also connected the body to the stars, planets, and, indeed, the cosmos at large. Medical models understood the body as a unique combination of the elements — air, water, earth, and fire — which manifested in the body as four humours which regulated physical and mental health. Additionally, in brief, psychological models from the period present cognition and the mind, in part, as the products of embodied participation with environment. Together these models reveal the self as a *response* to and *active*

participant within the cosmos. Even with an awareness that these models are empirically inaccurate, it is important to remember that they shaped understandings of human existence in the West for more than fifteen hundred years.

C.S. Lewis describes the cosmological influence of the medieval model on understandings of self in *The Discarded Image*. He traces the model from the heterogenous collection of books, philosophies, and religious practices inherited from Judaic, pagan, Platonic, Aristotelian, Stoic, early Christian, and patristic sources (Lewis 11). These sources vary by genre, including chronicle, epic, sermon, vision, treatise, satire, and romance. As with any disparate data set, contradiction threatens the desire for unity. In fact, Lewis suggests that the desire for harmony may best describe the impetus behind the model. Lewis describes how contradiction, rather than inciting dismantling and rebuilding of the model, opens an opportunity for refinement and diversity. He writes,

> If … one has … a great reluctance flatly to disbelieve anything in a book, then
> here there is obviously both an urgent need and a glorious opportunity for sorting
> out and tidying up. All the apparent contradictions must be harmonised. A Model
> must be built which will get everything in without a clash; and it can do this only
> by becoming intricate, by mediating its unity through a great, and finely ordered,
> multiplicity. (Lewis 11)

And this practice of refinement, mediation, and harmony occurs again and again throughout medieval art.

To that end, the model sought to make sense of all aspects of human experience within its cosmology. The cosmological model understood the movements of astronomical bodies as the

movement of revolving celestial spheres, concentrically focused on the Earth. From the first, and most outer, moveable sphere, the *Primum mobile,* inward through the *Stellatum,* the sphere containing all stars, and the seven "planetary" spheres (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, the Moon) each sphere was understood to transmit or enforce an influence upon the spheres below it (Lewis 103). Understanding these influences continued to be the study of astrology, and, while its empirical claims have waned in the passing centuries, the model's conceptual suggestion of an interwoven relationship between the inner world of the self, its embodied experience, and things external to it remains pertinent. The connection between self and environment is important to my project because it demonstrates externalist concepts of consciousness. Contrary to later models of self and environment which developed out of advancements in astronomy and biology and switched the top-down lens of the universe to a bottom-up one (or from a devolutionary to evolutionary model), pre-modern models understood consciousness as a participatory product of existence.

Rather than projecting a fundamental obedience to "natural laws" onto matter and energy, as a post-Newtonian scientist might describe gravity, the medieval scientist (or natural philosopher) understood such forces as "sympathies, antipathies, and strivings inherent in matter itself" (Lewis 92). Indeed, as Lewis describes this understanding, "Everything has its right place, its home, the region that suits it, and, if not forcibly restrained, moves thither by a sort of homing instinct" (92). Chaucer references this model in *The House of Fame*:

Every kindly thing that is

Hath a kindly stede ther he

May best in hit conserved be;

Unto which place every thing

Through his kindly enclyning

Moveth for to come to. (*HoF*, II, 730)

Where Newtonian physics perceives a "law" of gravitation in every falling mass, Chaucer

observes the same phenomenon as the "kindly enclyning" of material bodies returning to the

"kindly stede" which best serves the conservation of their energy (Lewis 92). This model places

material bodies in relation one-to-another, as connected systems and demonstrates the

significance medieval thinkers placed on the influence of the cosmos.

Bonaventure's *The Mind's Road to God* (*Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum*) provides an

important example of the influence cosmology had on later medieval philosophy. This text held

such widespread influence after the mid-thirteenth century that George Boas, Bonaventure's

recent translator, compares its impact to that of Descartes' *Discourse on Method* (Boas,

"Introduction" ix). In *The Mind's Road to God*, Bonaventure connects the vastness of the cosmos

(and, indeed, Divinity) to the self by developing a metaphysics and epistemology around

corporeality and sensation. At the centre of cognition, Bonaventure understood perception, a

matter of inspection and of *seeing,* to be paramount for knowledge. As Boas explains:

Throughout the *Itinerarium* Saint Bonaventure emphasizes that knowledge in the

last analysis comes down to seeing, to contemplation, to a kind of experience in

which we know certain things to be true without further argument or

demonstration. On the lowest level, this occurs in sensory observation, on the

highest in the mystic vision. (*The Mind's Road to God,* "Introduction," xiv)

As Boas suggests, the connection between knowing and perception relies on experience —

"something we know to be true without further argument or demonstration." The senses — sight,

taste, hearing, smell, touch, and speech[8] — and how they interact with (and produce) cognition

played a prominent role in medieval debates on the self.

Pinning down a conceptual model of the senses in medieval society is difficult because,

while their number generally remained static, lists of the senses were frequently rearranged to

serve different purposes.[9] While inconsistent ordering may suggest that the senses were not as

static as we consider them today, the conceptual weight given to the senses in cognitive

awareness is important. Aquinas recognized the inherent physicality of all human experience

when he argued, following Aristotle, that humanity's intellectual principle and phenomenal life

are inseparably linked in the body: "[the] principle by which we primarily understand, whether it

be called the intellect or the intellectual soul, is the form of the body" (Kreeft I, 76, 1). In other

words, intellectual capacity functioned through the operations of the body as it was enlivened by

the soul.

Bonaventure supports a similar claim for the importance of corporeality by tracing

knowledge through the senses. He attributes a kind of enlivened cognition, or rhetorical vigour,

to all things perceivable and argues that this cognitive element enters the mind via the five senses

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[8] Speech holds a unique place in the medieval model of the senses because of its proximity to taste, hearing, and touch (Woolgar 7ff).

[9] Woolgar addresses Aquinas's varying lists which could exclude taste and smell while discussing the aesthetic senses; likewise, at one time he could place "hearing above touch, but reverse the order when elsewhere discussing the volume of information a sense might convey" (Woolgar 24). Inconsistent ordering of the senses suggests that their meanings were not as static as we consider the senses today. Woolgar explains how phenomenal sharing between senses could alter their meaning: "*Touch*, besides denoting the faculty of touch, might also mean 'to partake of food' or 'taste'" (7).

like passing through a door.[10] In this way, Bonaventure frames sensation within embodied

movement and experience and positions it as paramount to cognitive functions:

> There enter then through these doors, not only simple bodies, but also composite,
>
> mixed from these. But since by sense we perceive not only these particular
>
> sensibles, which are light, sound, odour, savour, and the four primary qualities
>
> which touch apprehends, but also the common sensibles, which are number,
>
> magnitude, figure, rest, and motion, and since everything which is moved is
>
> moved by something, and some are self-moved and remain at rest, as the animals,
>
> it follows that when through these fives senses we apprehend the motion of
>
> bodies, we are led to the cognition of spiritual movers, as through an effect we are
>
> led to a knowledge of its causes. (Bonaventure 15)

Bonaventure demonstrates an embodied and participatory model of self by arguing that, just as

we perceive through the doors of the senses, so does "the whole world […] enter into the human

soul" (17). An embodied model of self was not the sole product of medieval astrology and

theology, however: medicine and psychology also suggested embodied models for the operations

of the mind.

By the late Middle Ages the medical model of self represents an inertia of systems

thinking begun in Hippocrates' humoural theory, or humourism.[11] In the second century, Galen

(129-210 A.D.) expanded humourism through a greater attention to physiology. His work, mostly

derived from dissection of primates and pigs, theorized humoural production and how it affects

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[10] Bonaventure explains that "man, who is called a 'microcosm,' has five senses like five doors, through which enters into his soul the cognition of all that is in the sensible world" (Bonaventure 15).

[11] For a summary, see Wallis, *Medieval Medicine,* introduction and ch 1, Sweet 1-8.

the body, mood, and behaviour.[12] In particular, dissection allowed Galen to posit (correctly) that urine is a product of the kidneys and not the bladder and to locate cognitive faculties in the brain instead of in the heart (Saunders 12). His development of humoural theory with anatomy, through dissection and hypothesis, solidified its position within medical theory for the next millennium.

Humoural theory posits that each of the four elements fundamental to nature — air, fire, earth, and water — manifest in the body as four humours: blood from air (hot and moist); yellow bile from fire (hot and dry); black bile from earth (cold and dry); and phlegm from water (cold and moist). Each of the humours circulated throughout the body in unequal amounts, affecting the body's physical constitution. The particular humoural combination unique to each person depended upon the astrological alignment under which they were born. In addition, humoural balance was affected by environment, gender, age, physical and spiritual habits, and heredity. Because of this, the body's humoural balance changed as a person grew through the various stages of his or her life.

The dominant humour (or combination of humours) within each body placed that person into one of four basic complexions: sanguine (blood); choleric (yellow bile); melancholic (black bile); phlegmatic (phlegm). Each of these complexions predisposed a person toward specific personality traits. An excess of sanguinity made a person valorous, lecherous, and jovial. The choleric would be irritable, deceitful, given to anger, small, and slender. Melancholics were inclined to be miserly, envious, treacherous, depressive, and cowardly, while phlegmatics tended to be slow, obese, and mucous-y. In addition to a general personality, each humour and its

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[12] Because Roman law prohibited human dissection, Galen analogized human anatomy from his primate and porcine dissections. See Ghosh 153-169 for a general summary.

accompanying traits increased in prominence as the seasons changed: sanguine waxed in spring, choler in summer, phlegm in autumn, and melancholic in winter. In this model, personality, psychology, and mind become conditional on the myriad external, pre-reflective factors which affect the body's humoural balance. It presents a self that is contingent upon and somewhat determined by the body's participation within its environment.

By positing an inner-outer connection between self and nature, a continuum became necessary to explain the complex and fluid relationship between mind and body. Humourism posits physical and mental health as contingent on balancing each humour within its natural limits, though few ever enjoyed a perfect balance.[13] Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636), one of the early Latin encyclopedists, provides a useful compendium of Classical medical curriculum (*Etymologiae,* Wallis 5). In the *Etymologiae,* Isidore describes health as "an integrity of the body and a harmonious proportion in its nature as regarding the hot and moist qualities embodied in the blood" (qtd. in Wallis 6). Furthermore, he explains how "healthy people are maintained by [the humours] and the ill suffer from them" (*Etymologiae,* Wallis 7). By contrast, "When any of the humours increase beyond the limits set by nature, they cause illnesses" (*Etymologiae,* Wallis 7); indeed, illness from an imbalance could be brought on by changes in the season or weather, diet, or too much or too little sexual activity. As such, the natural limit of each humour was controlled by adjustments in diet, exercise, sexual activity, blood-letting and purging, and awaiting seasonal change.[14]

Beyond physical and mental health, temperament and complexion were likewise understood to be affected by humoural (and by extension, environmental) change. This is most

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[13] Volf notes that Christ and Mary enjoyed balanced humours (65).

[14] See Wallis 23-25, 34-37, 77-79 for relevant textual examples of these practices.

clearly described in complexion theory and physiognomy.[15] Recognizing the contingent nature of the body and its environment, Volf explains how

> Both complexion theory and physiognomy advance a congruency between the
>
> universe and the individual, between spirit and matter, and between behaviours
>
> and anatomy. Both disciplines also define and categorize into types interior states
>
> of being and then connect them to particular features of physical appearance and
>
> behaviour. (56)

The sixth century medical text *The Wisdom of the Art of Medicine* (*Sapientia artis medicinae*) provides another example. It describes complexion and human behaviour as contingent effects of several environmental factors, including the four winds of the Earth, the four corners of heaven, the four seasons, and the four humours. It explains how the fumes of red bile — which are "hot and sharp" — rise to the brain causing excess heat, leading to earaches and migraines. It also posits the choleric humour as the cause for "a round and robust face, bulging eyes, and rough throat" (*Sapientia artis medicinae,* Wallis 18). It goes on to describe how "[Choleric people] suffer from bitterness in the gullet," how "they are hot-tempered and changeable," yet some are "taciturn and … reserved" (Wallis 18). Such people are said to sleep on their right side, and yet "suffer from insomnia and have illusions because of the heat of their body" (Wallis 18). For the choleric, health is restored by cold water to balance their excess dry heat. In like fashion, those people in whom black bile dominates can expect to have a "long face," "prominent eyebrows [which] make their eyes dark," and "prone to be solemn and inclined to sleep" (Wallis 18). Indeed, they are "melancholic and suffer from … many bodily diseases" (Wallis 18). As in the

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[15] Martin Porter and Irven Resnick write on physiognomy or complexion theory, fields inherently concerned with body/soul unity, upon which the foundations of medieval medicine lie. See Porter ch. 1 and 2, Irven M. Resnick 217-40.

connection between physical and mental health, temperament and complexion were not separable aspects of experience but contingent facets of an embodied model of self.

Chaucer's Pardoner provides a useful example of how humoural medicine was understood as affecting the body, complexion, and the self. Chaucer's Pardoner receives regular critical attention because of his phlegmatic complexion. Elspeth Whitney notes a multiplicity of interpretations derived from the description of the Pardoner — "I trowe he were a gelding or a mare" (*Canterbury Tales,* I 691)[16] — which range from a "'normal' male, … hermaphrodite, … an oversexed womanizer, a 'drag queen,' … and, most resonantly, a homosexual" (Whitney 358).[17] Such identifications privilege categories that were not relevant to a medieval audience. Whitney explains how

> Complexion theory defined a male body as much in terms of its constitutional
>
> makeup as by its anatomy, as when medieval writers conflated the possession of
>
> complexionally 'weak' testicles with the condition of being a eunuch. (359)

And so, the Pardoner's yellow hair, staring eyes, soft voice, and clean face[18] indicate a cold and moist (i.e., phlegmatic) complexion. Whitney argues the Pardoner's description exemplifies Chaucer's awareness of humoural theory and is representative of an audience who would have associated "male phlegmatics with sexual dysfunction … and with identifiable physical characteristics marked as effeminate, including soft flesh; lank, light-coloured hair; [and] the inability to grow a beard" (Whitney 360).

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[16] All citations from *Canterbury Tales* (*CT*) are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edition. Boston, 1987 (unless otherwise stated).

[17] See Whitney, 358, note 3.

[18] The relevant lines are: "This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex / But smothe it heeng as dooth a strike of flex" (*CT,* I 675-6); "Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare" (I. 684); and, "A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot. / No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have; / As smothe it was as it were late shave" (I. 688-90).

The Pardoner's phlegmatic complexion goes beyond explaining his physical and sexual traits; it also explains his behaviour and willingness to take advantage of others through his religious role. Whitney suggests that the Pardoner's corruption — expressed clearly in his assertion: "For myn entente is nat but for to wynne, / And nothyng for correccioun of synne" (*CT* VI 403-4) — need not be separated from his body and sexuality; rather, he argues, "understanding the Pardoner as a phlegmatic reveals the corrupting influences of excess phlegm — the cold, moist humour — on his body as an integral part of the corruption of his soul" (362). Thus, the Pardoner's disposition toward knavishness finds another explanation in humoural theory. In doing so, Chaucer allows his audience to anchor the Pardoner's duplicity within the embodied model of self familiar to fourteenth-century England.

The addition of soul added complexity to the psychological spectrum of the body and mind because of its effect on emotions and thinking. Three theories held sway until advancements in surgery, autopsy, and anatomy developed in the thirteenth century.[19] Aristotle located soul, and its intellective quality, within the heart as the center of sense and cognition, an idea that persisted well beyond the Middle Ages. Galen associated sense and cognition with various sections of the brain, liver, and bowels. Neoplatonism placed the immortal and rational part of the soul in the head, separating it from the appetites and emotions which rested below the neck. Even so, Augustine maintained that emotions share in the evaluative and affective aspects of cognition and embodiment by placing "the will as a faculty of the 'superior part of the soul' and emotions as 'movements of the lower parts' (Saunders 12).[20] Without further anatomical and psychological

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[19] At the Council of Tours in 1163, Pope Alexander III's pronouncement limiting clerical involvement in the studies of physical nature was later misinterpreted as an outright ban preventing practicing surgery or studying anatomy. For a useful summary see, again, Ghosh 153-169.

[20] For a further discussion, see Knuuttila 158, 168.

evidence debate on the nature of the mind and its relation to the body continued into the late Middle Ages.

Throughout the thirteenth century, increased access to Arabic medical texts and new mandates requiring practicing physicians and surgeons to participate in human dissection[21] brought new interest to brain anatomy and faculty psychology. New translations of Aristotle, Avicenna, and Averroes and greater access to the work of Galen, Boethius, Nemesius, and Augustine significantly impacted later psychological models. The influence of Arabic medicine provided a more detailed, and somewhat less than mystical, account of cognition for thirteenth century scholars.[22] In particular, Aristotle's organ-centered model of soul/mind presented in *De Anima* — that posited important cognitive processes (common sense, imagination, and memory) occurred within specific physical organs — was reworked to account for new physiological and psychological theories which positioned cognition among three ventricles of the brain.

The ventricular theory of brain physiology was inseparable from the concept of spirit, which carried several semantic meanings throughout the Middle Ages. "Spirit" functioned as another word for soul, as a reference to a medium between body and soul, or, simply, it could mean the breath. In addition to these, medieval physiology used "spirit" to describe a naturally occurring substance which was extracted from the liver; thus, it is called the "natural spirit" (Kemp, *Cognitive Psychology in the Middle Ages* 45-46). Galen describes the physiology of spirit in his text *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body.* Kemp summarizes Galen's description, explaining how the natural spirit, once extracted from the liver, becomes mixed with

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[21] In the "Edict of Salerno," Frederick II (1194-1250) issued a decree mandating medical schools to dissect at least one human cadaver every five years and making participation compulsory for anyone practicing medicine or surgery.

[22] See Kemp, *Cognitive Psychology in the Middle Ages,* 13-28.

the blood and transported around the body: "Some goes to the heart, where it is refined to produce 'vital' spirit. Some of the vital spirit, in turn, is further refined to produce 'animal' spirit" (Kemp, *Cognitive Psychology in the Middle Ages* 46). Once refined, the animal spirit transferred to the brain's ventricles as well as throughout the sensory and motor nerves. Galen observed three ventricles in the brain, and posited that the sensory nerves connected to the front ventricle, while the motor nerves connected to the rear ventricle. After the fourth century A.D., Galen's model became widespread as Nemesius, Augustine, and Avicenna each repeated or expanded his theory. The inseparability of the natural spirit from brain function is significant because it presents a model of perception that is contingent upon the body's pre-reflective responses to external stimuli alongside cognitive operation.

Throughout the Middle Ages, debate on sensation and perception circulated primarily around the sense of vision and the nature of light. Kemp explains this tendency to ignore the other senses as a "conviction that the general principles applying to vision should also hold true for the other senses" (*Medieval Psychology,* 45). Several studies already cover the philosophical origins of this discussion, which finds its source in Aristotelian and Platonic understandings of the relationship between the body and soul.[23] I will not repeat this debate here. More relevant to late medieval understandings of perception is the connection between the physical senses and the inner senses.

By the end of the thirteenth century, medieval psychology understood perception and cognition as mediated functions between the senses, the brain's physiological mechanisms (located in the ventricles), and the rational soul/mind. Just as each of the physical senses are

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[23] For a useful summary, see Kemp ch. 2, Carruthers ch. 1; Akbari ch. 2, 7, 8.

connected to specific organs, so, too, are they brought together by the inner senses in the ventricles of the brain, where cognitive processes were understood to occur. Saunders summarizes this connection, explaining that "Thoughts were dependent on 'forms,' *imagines, simulacra,* or *phantasmata* (Aristotle also uses *eikón* [copy]) — sense impressions involving perception and response, put together by the inner senses and passing through imagination, cognition, and memory" (13). While there were several variations on the number and layout of the inner senses,[24] Avicenna's account in *Liber de Anima* was most influential. Translated in the twelfth century, the *De Anima* describes five faculties involved in cognition: the front ventricle contained the *sensus communis* (where incoming sensory impressions were processed) and the *imaginatio* (a temporary memory which retained forms of processed impressions). The front of the middle ventricle housed the cogitative faculty (*imaginativa* or *cogitativa*) which could create new visual images from the forms contained in the imagination. The rear of the middle ventricle held the estimative faculty or instinct (*estimativa*). It perceives the non-sensible intentions of the objects with which we interact and evaluates "imagined or perceived forms for whether they indicate a threat or an aid to the self preservation of the organism" (Kemp, *Medieval Psychology* 58).

The positioning of the estimative faculty within the second ventricle is significant because of the conceptual link suggested between cognition and instinct. Importantly for an understanding of this link, Kemp notes that

> in postulating the existence of this faculty, medieval writers clearly recognized
>
> that the potential for harm or good was not explicit in the perception itself. Instead

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[24] For more information on this, see Kemp, *Cognitive Psychology in the Middle Ages,* 45-59.

the perception had to be interpreted in terms of previously experienced or innate

knowledge. (*Medieval Psychology* 58)

While it was understood that *human* instinct was in part mediated by the rational soul, it is the

interpretive function of the estimative faculty, connected as it was to previous or "innate"

knowledge, that grants the instinctive or pre-reflective quality to the operations of the second

ventricle. The faculty of estimation, then, is a pivotal link between the soft cognition recognized

in *instinct* and the hard cognition recognized in conscious thought.

Finally, in the rear ventricle was the *memorialis* (or memory): the long-term memory

warehouse, where *phantasmata* were stored. In *The Book of Memory,* Mary Carruthers describes

the embodied nature of the entire sensory-to-memory process. She explains how medieval

psychology framed "the whole sensing process, from initial reception by a sense-organ to

awareness of, response to, and memory of it [as] somatic or bodily in nature" and not the product

of a mental operation only (Carruthers, *Book of Memory* 58). Indeed, the images and forms

created in perception become emotionally charged as they pass through the cognitive and

estimative faculties before settling into mnemonic space: Carruthers explains that,

> Since our knowledge comes to us through our senses, every image impressed in
>
> our memories has been filtered and mediated through our senses — it is not
>
> merely "objective." Our senses produce affects in us, changes such as emotions,
>
> and those effects include memories themselves. (*Book of Memory* 65)

This connection between sensation, emotion, and memory was due in part to the assumption

(made by Aristotelians in particular) that everything, even thoughts, memory, and knowledge,

has an "immediate, proximate material cause" (Carruthers, *Book of Memory* 58). Saunders explains this interconnection, writing that:

> The emotions necessarily have a cognitive as well as an affective aspect: they are felt in the body through the movement of the spirits, but require the process of *phantasmata,* sensory images put together in the brain; they influence and are affected by cognition. Soul, mind, intellect, thought, emotion, affect, sense, and body were all intimately connected; emotions both shaped the understanding and were visibly written on the body. ("Affective Reading" 14)

Carruthers explains the process necessary for the production of mental phantasms as a physical one, writing: "Our memories store likenesses of things as they were *when they appeared to and affected us*. This […] requires that all memory-images have some experiential and affective quality, which each phantasm acquires in the process of being made in the brain" (*The Book of Memory* 65). In this model, then, memory, sensation, and emotion share in the cognitive and affective qualities of making a *self* by participating physiologically with material causes even as that participation informs imagination and consciousness.

Each of the above models point to a self that is contingent upon sensation, participation, imagination, and mental reflection, while positing a distinct purpose for the body in the production and operations of consciousness. Since this project seeks to elucidate conceptual affinities between pre-modern models of consciousness and contemporary ones, I will proceed to consider several models of self and consciousness from the last three decades or so.

Throughout his work over the last two decades, Antonio Damasio has developed a model of self that recognizes a necessary conflation of physiology and consciousness.[25] Alongside advancements in brain and body imaging technology, Damasio and others in the field have challenged dualisms of mind and body commonly put forward by post-Cartesian dualist thinkers. To this end, he acknowledges two principal sources for the "self": biology and introspection. The biological source identifies what the immune system accepts as belonging to the body (Damasio, "The Person Within" 227). This is the embodied, pre-cognitive acceptance of what conforms organically to oneself. In Damasio's perspective this meaning offers a "refreshingly precise" ("The Person Within" 227) account of the self, in part because it benefits from several empirically refined points of inference: biology, medicine, and neuroscience among others. He connects the emergence of consciousness with the process of "life regulation" or *homeostasis* (Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind* 25) which he identifies with an inherent and meaningful biological value. At its foundation, homeostasis exemplifies an organism's basic participation with its environment and begins the production of primordial (or elementary) feelings, such as awareness of danger, avoidance, need for sustenance, etc. Even single-celled organisms demonstrate these basic responses. In this model, the process of homeostasis, the life-drive toward regulation, produces the *protoself.* It is coeval with the elementary feelings.

The second meaning, *introspection*, is more difficult to pin down. Damasio suggests that the introspective self is found in "the sense of one's own being," or "the sum total of qualities

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25 See Damasio, A.R., "The Person Within," 227.

that distinguish the mind of one person from that of another" ("The Person Within" 227). He explains how the nature of introspection, relying as it does on perspective and identity, demonstrates how "the mental self is not a thing but a process, one that produces phenomena ranging from the very simple (the automatic sense that I exist separately from other entities) to the very complex (my identity, complete with a variety of biographical details)" ("The Person Within" 227). Damasio's model blends both of these meanings.

He suggests that higher levels of consciousness layer on two more *selfs* to the *protoself:* the *core self* and the *autobiographical self.* The core self expands on biological responses to environment by adding the element of choice. Damasio explains that "the core self unfolds in a sequence of images that describe an object engaging the protoself and modifying that protoself, including its primordial feelings" (*Self Comes to Mind* 23). The combination of protoself and core self constitute the concept of a "material me" (Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind* 23) acted upon and yet acting upon the environment around myself. The autobiographical self extends the participatory *proto-* and *core-* selves by the inclusion of "biographical knowledge pertaining to the past as well as the anticipated future" (Damasio, *Self Comes to Mind* 23). It is, as Damasio argues, the aggregate of multiple core self images pulsating through time. This whole process "is expressed" he suggests, "as simply as in the release of chemical molecules related to reward and punishment, or as elaborately as in our social emotions and in sophisticated reasoning" (*Self Comes to Mind* 25). He sees biology inflecting, guiding, nearly every operation of the brain and of consciousness. Such a model does not downgrade conscious activity but upgrades non-conscious processes of homeostasis to a systems level. As such, these processes are both scalable and repeatable at all levels.

Damasio describes the fundamental neuro-pragmatism of having an embodied sense of

self. In sum, it provides a reference point for the other contents of the mind, "such as

representations of the objects with which organisms interact, and of the events in which

organisms participate" (Damasio, "The Person Within" 227). Indeed, having a sense of self, a

"protagonist" that is consistent in my mind, is necessary for understanding the various objects

and events that inhabit my "mental universe" (Damasio, "The Person Within" 227). He continues

to explain how

> the simplest level of self allows us to manufacture the idea that objects and events
>
> are perceived from a singular perspective, that of the organism symbolized by the
>
> self. At a more complex level, we can generate the idea that the mental processes
>
> that occur in this organism are our own property. Finally, with the assistance of
>
> past memories of objects and events, we can piece together an autobiography and
>
> reconstruct our identity and personhood incessantly. ("The Person Within" 227)

Damasio suggests that the neural basis for these "self-involving processes" ("The Person Within"

227) — that is, the everyday embodied interactions with objects and events which the mind must

make sense of and which make sense of the mind — is found clearly in our own bodies,

"because the body as a whole is the 'thing-process' that is symbolized as the mental self" (227).

Reflection is possible only by symbolizing the mental self through participation with the world.

Damasio points out two important reasons why the body is well suited as a map to

signifying the self in the mind. First is a consistent biology: "the relative invariance of the body

— the design and operations of one's body remain largely the same throughout one's

lifetime" ("The Person Within" 227). The second reason comes from the continuity, that is, "the

brain's representation of the structure and operations of the body" (Damasio, "The Person Within" 227) provides. This is significant because of how the body remains the "object" of the body-sensing brain throughout our daily interactions.[26] Furthermore, the body's continuity and the brain's representation of it allows for the mapping of emotional responses. In another place, he explains emotional responses as the brain's "mode of reaction … that [is] prepared by evolution to respond to certain classes of objects and events with certain repertoires of action" (Damasio, "Fundamental feelings" 781). Thus, given appropriate preparation, participation with things and events incites the brain to respond with specific emotional states, such as the *freeze* or *fight-or-flight* responses to danger. However embodied emotional responses are, they remain different from the feelings of the mind. While emotions are directly linked to the body, feelings are "the mental representation of the physiological changes that characterize emotions" (Damasio, "Fundamental feelings" 781). Because feelings deal with *representations* of embodied states, they remain the mind's private purview.

However tightly the mind holds on to feelings, the body remains the fundamental map for specific parts of the brain to represent an organism's structure and state. Damasio explains that while "some parts of the brain are free to roam over the world and to map whatever sound, shape, taste or smell or texture that the organism's design enables them to map, other brain parts — those that represent the organism's own structure and internal state — are not free to roam at

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[26] Damasio illustrates this point with a quick experiment based on visual perception. He instructs the reader to "look up from the page and observe intently whatever is in front of you for a few seconds; then look again at the page." He goes on to explain that how "many neural stations of your visual system, from the retinas to the cerebral cortex, shifted rapidly from making neural mappings of the page, to mapping the room in front of you. But when you returned to the page these components resumed mapping the page again. In quick succession, the same visual brain regions constructed entirely different neural maps by virtue of the different sensory inputs that you gathered, resulting in different mental images. However, while your visual brain changed obligingly, several regions in your 'body-sensing' brain, which has the job of mapping varied aspects of your body, did not change at all in terms of the kind of object that they represent" ("The Person Within" 227).

all; they can map nothing but the body, and are the body's captive audience" ("The Person

Within" 227). Damasio hypothesizes that this continuous sense of embodiment anchors the

mental self.

In *How the Body Shapes the Mind,* Sean Gallagher argues for a similar model, one which

understands *body image* and *body schema* as constituting anchors for the self. He begins by

clarifying both concepts with some specificity before discussing how proprioception, movement,

and gesture function to form consciousness. *Body image,* he suggests, refers to how the body

appears in our perceptual field — the conscious perception of one's body, while *body schema*

identifies embodied processes which shape perception. This distinction allows Gallagher to

differentiate between the "system of perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs" (Gallagher 24) that we

are conscious of from the "system of sensorimotor capacities that function without

awareness" (24). With this distinction in hand, Gallagher suggests that the body's ability to

respond to external stimuli in a "close to automatic" (26) way is a pre-noetic[27] function of

consciousness unrelated to mind.

Gallagher considers the processes involved in reaching for a glass of water to exemplify

the pre-noetic function of the body. He points out how body schema respond to objects in a

"close to automatic" manner, which, he asserts, is not simply a function of reflex (Gallagher 26):

> If I reach for a glass of water with the intention of drinking from it, my hand,
>
> completely outside of my awareness, shapes itself in a precise way for picking up
>
> the glass. It takes on a certain form in conformity with my intention. … although
>
> a body schema is not itself a form of consciousness, or in any way a cognitive

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[27] *Pre-noetic* refers to the pre-cognitive functioning that occurs in the body before consciousness, including
sensation, digestion, and operations of the sympathetic nervous system.

operation, it can enter into and support (or in some cases, undermine) intentional

activity, including cognition. (Gallagher 26)

Along this reasoning, Gallagher understands body schema as operating in pre-noetic ways. The

reached-for glass informs the function of the body by its very shape, presumed weight, and

movement. The body, through several unconscious decisions, decides how to grasp the glass

even without rational, conscious thought. Yet even instrumental movements must be practiced

and learned; schema need recurring participation and practice to be mastered by the body before

becoming unintentional and automatic. At some earlier time, reaching for and grasping the glass

demanded cognitive awareness. Only after the shape of the glass and the kinesthetic movement

of grasping it has been intuitively mastered does our embodied response to our intention become

"close to automatic."

Gallagher wants strongly to deny any suggestion of an innate body image.[28] Merleau-

Ponty's phenomenology provides some support for Gallagher. His assertion that having a body is

necessary to identify as "me" portrays an embodied model of self: "far from my body's being for

me no more than a fragment of space, there would be no space at all for me if I had no

body" (Gallagher 59). He looks to the deafferentation case of Ian Waterman — who, after losing

his proprioceptive awareness, re-learned how to use his body through conscious awareness,

without proprioception (Gallagher 41) — to bolster his argument. Waterman's rehabilitation

demonstrates the effect of subtracting the body's learned "automaticity" acquired in infancy. He

suggests that the body image necessary for proprioceptive awareness forms while infants learn

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[28] Gallagher sees proprioceptive awareness as "a tacit, pre-reflective awareness that constitutes the very beginning of a primitive body image. It is in the intermodal intersubjective interaction between proprioception and the vision of the other's face that one's body image originates. The body image, then, is *not* innate, although the capacity to develop a body image can be exercised from birth" (73).

proprioception of their own bodies through interaction with others. Moreover, Gallagher argues that "whenever consciousness begins, it will already be informed by embodiment and the processes that involve motor schemas and proprioception" (79). We learn who we are by participating with other things and other people, all of which is possible because of our body's proprioceptive ability to interact effectively without constant reflection.

Building on the work of Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (*The Embodied Mind,* 1991), Alva Noë argues that participation with things produces consciousness. In *Action in Perception,* Noë outlines an *enactive* approach to perception, which understands consciousness as a foreground to the body's "active life" (222). He argues for the primacy of sensorimotor knowledge in perception by explaining how "brain, body, and world work together to make consciousness happen" (Noë 227). Following on Thompson and Varela's 2001 article, "Radical embodiment: Neural dynamics and consciousness," Noë explains that "the enactive approach seeks to explain the quality of perceptual consciousness not as a neural function caused by and realized in the brain, but rather in terms of patterns and structures of skillful activity" (Noë 227). He develops an externalist line of reasoning that situates perception as a function of the body rather than the mind in order to argue that "we are beings whose minds are shaped by a complicated hierarchy of practical skills. Our consciousness frequently does not extend to what is going on in our bodies; our consciousness is enacted by what we do with our bodies" (Noë 31). Or, put another way, our "perceptual contact with the world consists, in large part, in our access to the world thanks to our possession of sensorimotor knowledge" (Noë 99). He asserts, therefore, that "to perceive like us … you must have a body like ours" (25).

Noë identifies a recurring assertion from phenomenology — that perception occurs through

a series of mental items or sense data — as a fundamental challenge to consciousness studies

(79). In Noë's *enactive* model, perception is more than just reflecting on sense data and noetic

images of mind: perception is sensation that is understood. He likens this kind of understanding

to touch: as sensation reaching out into the world, acting through "the possession and exercise of

… practical knowledge" (Noë 33). He argues that, in practice, we do not receive the visual world

all at once "as in a picture," but rather "we must reach out and grasp the detail by movements of

our eyes and head" (75). We understand size, shape, volume, and distance because we possess

sensorimotor knowledge. By acting upon and being acted upon by the world — through

interaction and participation — we learn how things are. We find out about a thing from how it

looks, sounds, and appears (Noë 81). In this way, Noë challenges theories of perception which

assert any kind of "hard-wired" functions in the brain, whether they relate to language — such as

Chomsky's theory of Universal Grammar in which language and its function for perception is

understood as the product of a mental grammar, genetically sewn into the function of the brain.[29]

Noë's *enactive* model pushes the production of perception (at least) one step farther out of a

Cartesian mental loop.

Alongside Raymond Gibbs, Gallagher and Noë both contribute to an *ecological* model of

self by situating the body's perceptive role as primary, instinctive, and contingent. Gallagher

"contends that the body is proprioceptively co-perceived in every objective perception" (137).

Indeed, since body schema is unconscious and pre-noetic, the body has a constraining function

on perception and conscious experience while the mind needs an "egocentric framework that is

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[29] See Chomsky *Syntactic Structures*, 1957; *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, 1969; *Reflections on Language*, 1975.

defined spatio-temporally" in order to act (Gallagher 137). Gallagher acknowledges the body's pre-noetic role, which makes perception possible, even while it constrains and shapes consciousness in particular ways:

> If the body itself is doing the perceiving, then such pre-noetic operations provide specific conditions that shape perceptual consciousness. The body and its natural environment work together to deliver an already formed meaning to consciousness. (Gallagher 139)

More than an egocentric framework, in Gallagher's model, the body, participating with its environment, frames consciousness for the mind. He explains how the body frames interaction with objects:

> The floor affords walking, the chair affords sitting, the mountain affords climbing, and so forth, only in conjunction with the possibilities of particular postural models. All such features afforded by the environment, and evidence in the implicit structure of perceptual meaning, are predicated on the pre-noetic functioning of body schemas. (Gallagher 141)

By positioning mental awareness after embodied perception, Gallagher supports a model of self that is *ecological.* As in Gibbs' model, which understands perception as more than just "mapping stimulation [onto] brain states" but as a contingent interaction with environment (Gibbs 47), Gallagher asserts that "the loop [of human consciousness] extends through and is limited by our bodily capabilities, into the surrounding environment … and feeds back through our conscious experience into the decisions we make" (242).

Building on Thomspon and Varela's work (*Radical Embodiment: Neural dynamics and Consciousness* 2001), Noë supports the notion that consciousness happens when the brain, body, and world interact together (227). Noë exchanges the Aristotelian perception-by-mental-imaging framework for a participatory model rooted in direct, sensorimotor contingencies (105). He begins by asserting that "what is encountered (or "given") in perception is not sensational qualities or sense data, but rather the world" (Noë 85). We encounter shape by interacting with "the way an object itself guides or impedes [our] movements" (98), in large part, due to our possession of sensorimotor knowledge: "to perceive," then, "is to perceive structure in sensorimotor contingencies" (105). In this way, Noë adapts Gibson's theory of *affordances*[30] which asserts how things provide, offer, and afford opportunities of interaction (such as hide behind, climb upon, sit under, pick up, etc.). While this may appear to come close to recalling a kind of *prepositional* interaction, found in grammar-based theories of perception (such as Chomsky's Universal Grammar), I see Noë's adaptation as pushing grammar further into the contingent realm of physiological experience. Perception, here, is learning "how the environment structures one's possibility of movement and action afforded by that movement" (Noë 105). In this model, prepositions *express* the sensorimotor knowledge which the body *enacts*; or, put another way, grammar remains the *reflective* function of embodied perception.

Each of these models confirm Blakey Vermeule's assertion that the new unconscious is "aggressively antipsychoanalytic" (463). Contrary to the "hot and wet"[31] models of mind

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[30] See Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception,* 1979.

[31] Vermeule notes John Kihlstrom's comparison of psychoanalytic and cognitive models of mind. Kihlstrom, the psychologist who first described the cognitive unconscious, called the psychoanalytic unconscious "hot and wet; it seethed with lust and anger; it was hallucinatory, primitive, and irrational. The unconscious of contemporary psychology is kinder and gentler than that and more reality bound and rational, even if it is not entirely cold and dry" (789).

common to psychoanalysis, in which the unconscious narratives of the mind are drawn out, perceived, and made accessible to therapeutic process, Vermeule explains how models of the cognitive unconscious privilege "all the mental processes that are not experienced by a person but that give rise to a person's thoughts, choices, emotions and behaviour" (463). Her main point revolves around the *non-experiential* aspect of the unconscious: "The key here … is these mental processes are 'not experienced' by us — and because they are not, they cannot be seen directly" (463). As the models examined here suggest, the unconscious mind sits much deeper within the realm of *automatic processing* than previously imagined. The sheer volume of cognitive processes — Stuart Hameroff extrapolates human brain operations to 10^{27} per second (33) — demand a "specialized, optimized circuitry of instinct" (Eagleman 88) even if such efficiency costs a reduction in conscious access. Vermeule explains the cognitive/conscious divide, writing that

> No amount of introspecting will show us the parts of our visual system that, say, help us detect edges or the sizes of objects at a distance. But the same principle applies to most so-called higher-order mental processes as well, processes that we would almost surely take to be integral to who we are. It isn't just that consciousness is a poor and uncertain guide to the automatic brain — it is rather that consciousness has little actual contact with non-conscious brain processes. Consciousness … is its own space. Consciousness tells stories, giving shape and order to our experience. (469)

Cognitivists across disciplines acknowledge the utility of pattern identification, and the projection of those patterns onto the world, as a means for understanding. Vermeule links this

acknowledgement to David Hume's argument that the "effort of human reason," always on, always ready to interpret,

> is to reduce the principles, productive of natural phenomena, to a greater
>
> simplicity, and to resolve the many particular effects into a few general causes, by
>
> means of reasoning from analogy, experience, and observation. But as to the
>
> causes of these general causes, we should in vain attempt their discovery, nor
>
> shall we ever be able to satisfy ourselves, by any particular explication of them.
>
> These ultimate springs and principles are totally shut up from human curiosity and
>
> enquiry. (32)

If human understanding is fundamentally anchored in narrative interpretation and yet remains severed from the brain's unconscious *automatic* processing, the important (and difficult) task is to avoid attributing phenomenological patterns to an inherently non-phenomenological state (Vermeule 471); to acknowledge the pre-noetic as constructive, contingent, and yet elusive.

What does the "new unconscious" mean to literary interpretation, generally, and medieval literature, specifically? Vermeule suggests that the new unconscious means abandoning notions of a literate, speaking unconscious, and accepts a general uncertainty about "how the hidden brain gives rise to the rich phenomenology of consciousness" (471). However impossible she finds a literate unconscious, Vermeule also seeks to understand the unconscious, if only catching it by slant. The unconscious requires a bit of hunting for:

> [It] makes patterns but it also leaves noticeable gaps. Consciousness confabulates
>
> — it tells stories. To look for the unconscious is to try to understand what those
>
> patterns are and why they take shape. (Vermeule 471)

Vermeule provides some convincing examples of this kind of analysis. She considers Eagleman's

flash lag effect, the hindsight bias (or the "I knew it all along" effect), and demonstrates value in

recognizing the presence of automaticity in literature.[32] In particular, she reads the conjunction,

"Than" (*CT* l. 12), in the opening stanza of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*[33] as evidence of an

automatic embodied response to spring in the pilgrims. She writes:

> In the opening lines of *The Canterbury Tales,* spring comes, nature goes into
>
> overdrive, and small birds start to sing. Lust runs through their veins like electric
>
> sap. … The people long to go on pilgrimages to seek the holy blissful martyr who
>
> had helped them when they were sick. The joke rests in that tiny conjunction
>
> "then." The people are just like the birds, only they don't know it. The season is
>
> the reason. Religious desire is bird lust served up with a giant helping of theology.
>
> (Vermeule 477).

The tongue and cheek nature of Chaucer's joke is, perhaps, difficult to swallow. Even if there is

truth in Chaucer's shrewd observation, religious devotion, or seeking the ineffable, remains one

of humanity's persistent pursuits. Vermeule admits the temptation to read this merely as satire,

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[32] In "The Automaticity of Social Life," John A. Bargh and Erin L. Williams describe *automaticity* in reference "to control of one's internal psychological processes by external stimuli and events in one's immediate environment, often without knowledge or awareness of such control; automatic phenomena are usually contrasted with those processes that are consciously or intentionally put into operation" (1-4).

[33] Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veine in swich licour
Of which vertu engendred is the flour,
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,
And smale foweles maken melodye,
That slepen al the nyght with open ye,
(So priketh hem nature in hir corages),
Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages …. (*Canterbury Tales,* my emphasis, 1-9,12)

allowing Chaucer to "rub our noses in our animal nature" (478), but she pushes further, viewing satire as a defense against Chaucer's deeper "questions about how much free will we have, how much of our behaviour is determined by our circumstances, and whether character is fixed or malleable" (478). Her analysis peers, if by slant, at the connection between embodied experience and its imagined, phenomenological representation. In short, embodied models of mind gain importance for literary interpretation through the connections they can make between imagination and experience.

Alongside Vermeule's analysis, Alan Richardson argues that it was the imagistic Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century who last attempted to understand the "synthetic and magical power" of imagination ("Imagination: Literary and Cognitive Intersections" 228). Richardson sees Coleridge and Shelley as among the last proponents of *imagining* as a practice of more than fantastic speculation ("Imagination: Literary and Cognitive Intersections," 228-230). Certainly, Coleridge, Shelley, and Wordsworth had great imaginations, but the practice of mental imaging as a model for perception was soon replaced by more reductive ones, and left bobbing behind in the wake of nineteenth-century empiricism and twentieth-century information processing.[34]

Richardson points to cognitive linguistics and to work on conceptual blending and metaphor[35] as an "unexpected" (228) rehabilitation for imagination studies. In addition to the activities of *mental imaging* and *conceptual blending,* he points out that mind and brain research now counts imagination as part of the brain's "default mode network" which relates imagination to the embodied processes involved in memory, expectation, and even navigation (Richardson

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[34] For a historical account of the development of imagination, see Eva T. H. Brann, *The World of the Imagination: Sum and Substance.* Rowman and Littlefield, 1991.

[35] Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities;* see also Raymond Gibbs, *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language, and Understanding*; and, Mark Turner, *The Literary Mind*.

226). By way of explanation (and relevance to literature), Richardson connects these processes to the *narrative* function of imagining — not unlike the implicit narrative presence in Damasio's *autobiographical* model of self — calling it a "common thread among various default mode activities" (231). The reasonable end of this model reveals its literary application quite plainly: namely, that the research associated with metaphorical and conceptual blending theories suggests that "the human mind could well be called a fundamentally 'poetic' or 'literary' mind" (Richardson 231).

Working from an awareness of the conceptual affinities that exist between medieval and contemporary models of embodiment, consciousness, and the self, I turn to examine my six object texts to demonstrate the presence of such models throughout late fourteenth century Middle English literature. I will begin by examining two of Chaucer's dream poems — *The Book of the Duchess* and *The House of Fame.* As a narrative frame, dream vision provides Chaucer a way to explore how phenomenal experiences construct and yet veil the cognitive processes of the mind, allowing him to examine the relationship between body, mind, and soul. Next, I move on to focus on the Gawain poet's *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* to examine its underlying embodied schema, texture, structures, and cognitive metaphors. Finally, I consider Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and the *Kingis Quair* by James I as examples of late medieval prison literature and how that genre uniquely displays embodiment through consolation.

This chapter examines two of Chaucer's dream vision poems: *The Book of the Duchess* and *The House of Fame*. As a narrative frame, dream vision provides Chaucer a route through which to explore how phenomenal experiences construct and yet veil the cognitive processes of the mind, allowing him to examine the relationship between body, mind, and soul — the substantive parts for medieval models of self. Of particular interest to Chaucer is the arbitrary nature of perception and its effects on interpretation and remembrance.

In *Book of the Duchess,* Chaucer centers his attention on the interpretative perspective of the poem's narrator. Although the narrator demonstrates a high level of interpretative proficiency to diagnose the Black Knight's humoural and emotional states (i.e.,, melancholic imbalance and deep sadness), the narrator remains unable effectively to connect them. He fails to interpret the Knight's grief because he fails to see the interconnected relationship between his body and mind, between desire and memory. For Chaucer, the narrator's failure to interpret correctly represents his larger concern about how best to inspire intended interpretations in his readers.

In *House of Fame,* Chaucer widens his focus from interpreting a singular expression of emotion to consider the impact of perception, intellect, and memory (and their capricious natures) on poetic interpretation and an artist's reputation. Throughout the poem, Chaucer explores the relationship between interpretation and the pre-reflective functions of the body; while demonstrating his awareness of contemporary theories of the mind, Chaucer unfolds a model of cognition and interpretation that begins in a mnemonic space and moves outward to the pre-reflective, embodied sources of perception. He uses three architectural spaces to explore the

capricious root of interpretation: a Venerian temple, Fame's castle, and the House of Rumour.

Each space develops a psychological schema analogous to the three ventricles of the brain:

memory, intellect, and sense perception. The unfinished ending of the poem suggests that

Chaucer sees little hope of escaping the arbitrary nature of the body's pre-noetic, interpretative

function.

Through an emphasis on perception as the primary mode of experience and through the

manipulation of space and movement, images and sounds, and interpretation and language,

Chaucer demonstrates the embodied model of cognition understood within late fourteenth-

century psychology. This model stands in contrast to later (post-)Cartesian models which posit

that interpretation begins in an interior, cognitive space and emanates outward to an awareness of

the body. By examining reading as a fundamentally embodied practice, Chaucer reveals the

inalienable residence of the body by situating it and its pre-reflective functions as the source for

consciousness and for interpretation.

The Book of the Duchess

Chaucer's interest in reading and its relation to interpretation is a familiar topic in his

shorter poetry. Reading is the beginning, the gateway, to each of Chaucer's dream poems. The

bookish, sleep-deprived narrators in *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* each turn to

reading to help them pass the threshold of consciousness. Reading is an act that intertwines states

of consciousness, imagination, memory, and the body. Chaucer develops this idea in *Book of the*

Duchess through the multivalence of the word "rede." In "Writing Dreams to Good: Reading as

Writing and Writing as Reading in Chaucer's Dream Visions," T.S. Miller notes how Chaucer draws on multiple meanings of the word "rede" — of advice, interpretation, and giving account — throughout these poems which, he suggests, invites "the reader [to] participate in a more active process than reading alone" (528). Indeed, it is in dreams that Chaucer's narrators participate in their object texts, and for Chaucer, as Miller notes, "the engagement with the texts occurs in producing texts of one's own, texts that in turn implicitly advise — "rede" — his readers to do the same" (528). By drawing attention to the embodied nature of reading for a medieval audience, Chaucer demonstrates reading as an participatory activity that connects reader, text, memory, and perception.

The engagement between reader and text raises one of the problems at the forefront of Miller's work. He explains that while Chaucer is "eager to produce re-readings in his own writing, at other times Chaucer remains decidedly ambivalent about the whole business" (Miller 529). Chaucer's concerns for fame and reputation struggle against his awareness that others will re-read and re-interpret his poetry, just as he has done to previous poets, and that such readings will be out of his control. He is aware that his authorial intentions could be, and probably will be, lost. If the narrator in the *Book of the Duchess* maintains a light-hearted challenge to his readers — "Y trowe no man had the wyt / To konne wel my sweven rede" (*BoD* 278-9), the narrator in the *House of Fame* is anxious and threatening:

And whoso thorgh presumpcion,

Or hate, or skorn, or thorgh envye,

Dispit, or jape, or vilanye,

Mysdeme hyt, pray I Jesus God …

That every harm that any man

Hath had syth the world began

Befalle hym therof or he sterve. (*HoF* I.94-101)

Miller argues that Chaucer's dream visions dramatize the *failures* of reading (529) by maintaining "that some transactional process of rereading remains the only way to derive meaning from texts" (529). Miller has developed this position from Jill Mann's assertion that Chaucer's poetry recognizes the "dialogic creation of meaning" (19).[36] Miller's analysis provides insight into Chaucer's awareness of good *rede–ing* as a process of rereading, interpretation, and writing, but without an understanding of how the body participates in the process of reading, Miller's argument is less enticing. For Chaucer, the failure of reading represents a concern that pervades much of his entire corpus: that is, the *auctor's* struggle to elicit an intended meaning in his readers and how to manage (mis)interpretation into posterity — a concern that comes up again in *House of Fame*.

Chaucer's interest in reading and interpretation extends beyond the problems of hermeneutic discourse. He uses the psychosomatic experiences inherent in dreaming to explore the relationship not only between author and reader, but also between the body, mind, and interpretation. Robert Edwards argues that "Chaucer's narrative art begins in the imagination and retains its locus there. The aesthetic problem he faces — this is the critical project of the early narratives — is to find a means of externalizing interior experience, of transferring what exists within consciousness to an intelligible form that has a social and moral existence and is thus an object of knowledge" (Edwards 68). Edwards argues that interpretation occurs first within the

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[36] Jill Mann, "Chaucer and Atheism," 5-19.

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imagination and must be *brought out* — made external — in order to be made intelligible. But the *mental* activity of rereading is not what bothers Chaucer, but, rather, how medieval models of cognitive functioning understood the interpretative process as beginning in the pre-reflective, embodied space of perception (in the *sensus communis*) *before* it could be influenced by conscious reflection. The perceived whimsy of the body and perception was cause for concern in the process of interpretation.

Instead of interpreting Chaucer's poems as dramatic failures of *rereading*, I argue that Chaucer asserts the body's influence on cognition while exploring the interpretative limits of dualist approaches that privilege either the body or the mind. Miller points out how Chaucer uses several meanings of the word "rede" in *Book of the Duchess*. I do not wish to treat them all, but I do want to explore two important functions of reading in particular. The first function is how reading serves as a method for diagnosis — that is, reading as a way of interpreting the body and its symptoms. Second, reading functions as a kind of medicine. The Dreamer attempts to read (and interpret) the Black Knight's tales in order to help the knight heal. However genuine the Dreamer's attempts are, his inability to correctly "rede" or interpret the Black Knight's grief ends in frustration and further sadness. Chaucer uses both functions of reading to examine the interpretative possibilities (or lack thereof) when emotional conditions are determined apart from physical ones or when the body is treated as separate from psychology.

At the poem's beginning, reading functions medicinally and is used to treat the narrator's symptoms from a "Defaute of slep" (*BoD* 5) in order to help "drive the night away" (49). He explains how insomnia has robbed him of his confident vigour — the "spirit of quyknesse" — and replaced it with "fantasies" (*BoD* 28) in his head:

Defaute of slep and hevynesse

Hath sleyn my spirit of quyknesse

That I have lost al lustyhede.

Suche fantasies ben in myn hede

So I not what is best to doo (*BoD* 25-29).

While he does not know the best treatment, he is able to interpret his symptoms with enough

success to provide an effective treatment: "a book … To rede and drive the night away" (47,49).

The prescription works well enough and causes the narrator to fall asleep.

Reading brings temporary relief but it does not immediately help him understand his

malady. He remains unable to diagnose, that is interpret, his condition. He classifies it as an

illness and yet seems aware that it has a spiritual or psychological root:

I holde hit be a sicknesse

That I have suffred this eight yeer;

And yet my boote is never the ner,

For ther is phisicien but oon

That may me hele; but that is don.

Passe we over untill eft. (*BoD* 36-39)

The ambiguity of his affliction allows room for physical, spiritual, or erotic causes. The "oon"

physician can be interpreted as Christ (the Great Healer), or the god of Love, or Nature. The

connection between the body and the imagination in medieval psychology makes the narrator's

"sorwful ymagynacioun" (*BoD* 14) and the emotional symptoms of "melancholy / And

drede" (23-24) physiological concerns. The narrator does not return, as promised, to explain his

illness. Whichever way his condition is read, and however ambiguous its cause, the narrator's description points to Chaucer's knowledge of humoural medicine and his understanding of an embodied model of the mind. In addition to presenting a strong understanding of humoural medicine, Chaucer also examines how that system can become ineffective if applied on its own — such as the dream-narrator's application of humoural theory on the Black Knight's grief — as an interpretive method for understanding the relationship between the mind and body.

Inside the dream, Chaucer further displays his knowledge of humoural medicine. After the Dreamer discovers and then leaves the hunting party, he wanders "Doun the woode" (*BoD* 443-444a), "so at the laste / I was war of a man in blak" (*BoD* 444b-445) — who serves as the Dreamer's patient for the remainder of the poem. The Dreamer notices first that the Knight is pale and lacks any colour, marveling that the Knight is not actually dead:

> … for, by my trowthe,

> Hit was gret wonder that Nature

> Myght suffre any creature

> To have such sorwe and be not ded.

> Ful pitous pale and nothyng red. (*BoD* 466-470)

The Dreamer's keen perception and quick identification of the Knight's complexion, alongside the implicit suggestion that the Knight's paleness is due to a lack of something "red" (i.e.,, blood, sanguine humour) in it, demonstrates Chaucer's familiarity with humoural medicine.

But more than this, the Dreamer's quick interpretative ability begins to highlight Chaucer's interest in demonstrating the limitations of interpretative techniques that attempt to simply read the physical and emotional as distinct and unconnected planes. After perceiving (and

beginning to interpret) the Knight's physical condition, the Dreamer observes the Knight's rhyme of "ten vers or twelve" (*BoD* 463) and repeats the song's content:

He sayd a lay, a maner song,

Withoute noote, withoute song;

And was thys, *for ful wel I kan*

Reherse hyt; ryght thus hyt began:

"… Now that I see my lady bryght,

Which I have loved with al my myght,

Is fro me ded and ys agoon.

   "Allas, deth, what ayleth the,

That thou noldest have taken me,

When thou toke my lady swete …." (emphasis added, *BoD* 471-474; 477-483)

Although the Knight's loss is clearly registered in his lay, the dream-narrator appears unable to account for that loss as an explanatory cause for the Knight's physical symptoms. Apparently, he either overlooks the Knight's explanation that his lady is "ded" (479) or assumes that this must refer, metaphorically, to something else.[37]

Instead of inquiring about that death, the dream-narrator returns to a medical diagnosis of the Knight's physical symptoms, hoping to understand more of his condition. The Knight exhibits symptoms commonly associated in the Middle Ages with humoural imbalance:

Whan he had mad thus his complaynte,

Hys sorwful hert gan faste faynte

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[37] See, also, McNamara, "Wearing Your Heart on Your Face," pp. 260-265.

And his spirites wexen dede;

The blood was fled for pure drede

Doun to hys herte, to make him warm —

For wel hyt feled the herte had harm —

To wite eke why hyt was adrad

By kynde, and for to make hyt glad,

For hit ys membre principal

Of the body; and that made al

Hys hewe chaunge and wexe grene

And pale, for ther noo blood ys sene

In no maner lym of hys. (*BoD* 487-499)

Although the Knight's pale, greenish colour is the only symptom *evident* to the Dreamer, he skillfully interprets the Knight's other physical symptoms. He describes how the Knight's blood has "fled" to his heart in order "to make him warm" and restore balance. However keen the Dreamer's ability to interpret the Knight's physical symptoms is, the curious point in this scene and the rest of the poem is the way he remains unable to connect those symptoms to the Knight's grief or to understand the Knight's loss. In this way, Chaucer examines the interpretative problems that arise when emotional trauma is perceived through a medical lens alone, without understanding the connection between that trauma and the body's reaction to it.

At several points Chaucer pushes the Dreamer into a binary, dichotomous mode of interpretation where he perceives only the bare meaning of language instead of its underlying metaphorical intentions. The Dreamer's intentions are well and good enough. After diagnosing

the Knight's condition, he seeks to establish a story or narrative through which to better understand the Knight's sorrow: "Anon ryght I gan fynde a tale / To hym, to loke wher I myght ought / Have more knowynge of hys thought" (536-538) — and to help make the Knight "hool" (553) again. The Dreamer suggests to the Knight that, "yif that yee / Wolde ought discure me your woo, / I wolde, as wys God helpe me soo, Amende hyt, yif I can or may" (548-551). As the Dreamer asks the Knight to "discure" (549), that is *reveal* or *describe,* his woe, the Knight begins with the story of his chess game with Fortune. But the Dreamer fails to understand the significance of the Knight's lost queen — his "fers" (*BoD* 681) — in the tale as the loss of the Knight's lover. Instead of identifying this loss as a cause for the Knight's humoural imbalance, the Dreamer interprets the Knight's *fers* as synonymous with several other notorious "lost" queens: Medea, Phyllis, Dido, Echo, Delilah.[38] The Knight patiently explains that the Dreamer knows not what he intends — "Thou wost ful lytel what thou menest; / I have lost more than thow wenest" (*BoD* 743-44) — and so, once again, the Dreamer asks the Knight to "telle me al hooly / In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore / That ye have thus youre blysse lore" (746-48). However good his intentions are, the Dreamer fails to comprehend the Knight's metaphor for death. Indeed, the Knight's grief is his own and cannot be mended by another: "No man may my sorwe glade" (*BoD* 563).

The Dreamer's inability to connect the Knight's emotional and physical states symbolizes a failure of reading but not, perhaps, in the way that T. S. Miller suggests. The trouble lies in the overlapping planes of interpretation involved in the Dreamer's reading of the Knight's physical and emotional states. The remaining interactions between the two border on the comical and the

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[38] See *Book of the Duchess,* 725-741.

obtuse as the Dreamer fails repeatedly to understand the Knight's explanations of his grief. This cycle essentially repeats two more times: the Knight tries to relay the loss of his beloved through metaphor, and the Dreamer does not comprehend the loss. What prevents the Dreamer from understanding, for instance, that when the Black Knight describes losing his "fers" (i.e.,, a Queen piece, 654) to Fortune in a game of chess, he did not really lose a chess piece, but he lost his wife? Not until the Dreamer's dim emotional comprehension forces the Black Knight to blurt out, "She ys ded!" (1309) does he finally understand what the Knight has been on about. While Miller's suggestion that the Knight suffers from a failure of "rede" —that is, a remedy — is apt, the Dreamer's inability to *rede* the Black Knight's emotion ultimately pushes the Black Knight to express his loss and grief out of frustration.

The Dreamer is an adept reader — he provides an accurate diagnosis for the Knight's physical imbalance while recognizing his poignant emotional state — but he fails to connect these planes in an appropriate manner; he fails to interpret correctly, that is, as the Knight intends to be understood. Chaucer draws attention to the Dreamer's failure in order to identify the interpretative disjunct that occurs when body and mind are considered on separate planes. Managing interpretation becomes a concern not only of tradition and reading, but also of psychology and medicine, as it relies upon the connection between perception and cognition.

The House of Fame

In the *Proem* to *Book I* of the *House of Fame,* Chaucer points to central problems of dream interpretation in the Middle Ages — namely, classification and definition — before

introducing the embodied source for dream states generally. The Dreamer is well read in dream theory and the various forms in which dreams appear. In fact, he seems over-informed of the various types, and laments sorting out their differences:

> For hyt is wonder, by the roode,
>
> To my wyt, what causeth swevenes
>
> Eyther on morwes or on evenes,
>
> And why th'effect folweth of somme
>
> And of somme hit shal never come;
>
> Why that is an avision
>
> Why this a revelacion,
>
> Why this a drem, why that a sweven,
>
> And noght to every man lyche even;
>
> Why this a fantome, why these oracles. (*HoF* I.2-11).

His list of dream types is up-to-date, covering material from Artemidorus to Macrobius,[39] but the myriad possibilities for classification nearly overwhelms Chaucer's narrator. The danger in this list is not only in its span, but also in the prophetic (and interpretative) nature of some dreams. This danger evokes the narrator's generalized prayer to God: "Turne us every drem to goode!" (*HoF* I.58).

The litany of terms demonstrates Chaucer's knowledge while allowing him to introduce his concerns regarding perception, reading, interpretation and reputation. The Dreamer complains that the causes of each type of dream seem rather arbitrary and difficult to discern:

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[39] See Lynch, *Dream Visions and Other Poems,* footnote 1, pp. 43, and Flyer, *Explanatory Notes: The House of Fame: Book I* in Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, pp 978.

"Why that a sweven, / Why this a fantome, why these oracles" (*HoF* I.10-11). Of particular

interest is the word *fantome*, which, in this context, the *Middle English Dictionary* defines as

"that which deludes the senses or imagination; illusion (as of dream or hallucination)."[40] In his

treatise *On Dreams,* Aristotle explains that even in sleep the soul continues to make assertions of

sense-perception, such as the awareness of a brown horse or a white flower, and argues that "the

objects of sense-perception corresponding to each sensory organ produce sense-perception in us,

and the affection due to their operation is present in the organs of sense not only when the

perceptions are actualized, but even when they have departed "as in sleep" (620). Moreover, he

asserts that even illusory phantoms require an embodied nature, explaining that, "to see wrongly

or to hear wrongly can happen only to one who sees or hears something real" (Aristotle 619).

Although Delany connects *phantom/fantome* to Aristotelian cognitive theory, explaining that "as

a psychological term, *phantom* denotes a mental process, or the product of a mental

process" (62), she is careful to include the definitions of Cicero and Augustine — as an

apparition and a dangerous mental error — to point out the later medieval belief that phantoms

are deceptive and "inaccurately mirror the phenomenal world" (62). William Quinn makes an

Aristotelian link between *phantom, phantasm,* and *fantasy*,[41] explaining the latter as the "faculty

of … human imagination that 'serves as intermediary between perception and

understanding'" ("Chaucer's Recital Presence" 172). Both positions look to medical models and

affective phenomena — elements, humours, and environmental factors — as origins for

phantoms and their representations in dreams.

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[40] "Fantome." Def. 1. *Middle English Dictionary.*

[41] Quinn explains that "In a variety of interpretive contexts, the term phantom or phantasm may also signify 'a mental process' or 'product,' 'illusory phenomena' or 'a lie.' All dream images are merely fantasies, of course" ("Chaucer's Recital Presence" 172).

The important point is that Chaucer begins developing the connection between mental

states and embodied perception throughout his discussion of dream states. Even though the

Dreamer admits uncertainty about the classifications of *swevens* and *drems, fantoms* and *visions*

— "… hir signifiaunce / The gendres, neither the distaunce / Of tymes of hem, ne the causes, /

Or why this more than that cause is" (*HoF* I.17-20) — he is aware of the several ways in which

physiology affects the production of dreams. He suggests that "folkes complexiouns," that is,

their physical constitution, "Make hem dreme of reflexiouns" (*HoF* I.21-22), or that "febleness

of hir brayn," caused "By abstinence, or by seknesse, / Prison, stewe, or greet distresse" (23-25)

can contribute to dream states. Additionally, he provides a long list of possible sources:

> That som man is to curious
>
> In studye, or melancolyous, …
>
> Or elles that devocioun
>
> Of somme and contemplacion
>
> Causeth suche dremes ofte;
>
> Or that the cruel lyf unsofte …
>
> That hopen over-muche or dreden,
>
> That purely her impressions
>
> Causeth hem avisions;
>
> Or yf spirites have the myght
>
> To make folk to dreme a-nyght,
>
> Or yf the soule, of propre kynde
>
> … that hyt warneth alle and some

Of everych of her aventures

Be avisions or be figures,

But that oure flessh ne hath no myght

To understonde hyt aryght,

For hyt is warned too derkly—

But why the cause is, nought wot I. (*HoF* I.29-52)

His knowledge comes from personal experience. His discussion of being "too curious" and

"melancolious" (*HoF* I.29-30) shows both a predisposition toward melancholy and an awareness

of a humoral imbalance likely caused by too much study and by the seasonal effects of winter.

His dream occurs on the "tenthe day…of Decembre" (*HoF* I.63). Being both cold and dry, winter

produced an excess of black bile in the body and tipped the constitution toward melancholy,

itself characterized by depression, sadness, and anger.[42]

Although the Dreamer remains unsure about how dreams coalesce in experience, Chaucer

is informed about the distinctions between dreams, their environmental and humoural causes,

and their connection to perception and cognitive function. Not only does the *proem* to *Book I*

demonstrate Chaucer's extensive knowledge of the varied forms of dreams and visions, but also

his reference to "folkys complexions" (*HoF I.*21) that "Make hem dreme of reflexions" (21)

displays his working knowledge of humoural theory from medieval medicine. Complexion

referred both to a person's "constitution or nature resulting from the blending of the four

'primary qualities'" and to the balance of the four humours within the parts of the body.[43]

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[42] For more on the nature of the humours and their seasonal influence, see Wallis, *Medieval Medicine: A Reader,* 18-19.

[43] "Complexioun." Def. 1. *Middle English Dictionary*, n.d. Web. 23 May, 2013.

Chaucer also mentions several known prescriptions or conditions that would alter the body's humoural balance, and therefore one's dreams, in the examples that follow line twenty-one: "gret feblenesse of her brayn, / By abstinence or by seknesse, / Prison-stewe or gret distresse, / … dysordynaunce / … [or] naturel acustumaunce" (*HoF* I.24-8). Each of these illnesses or circumstances affects the body's balance in one way or another: feebleness (physical infirmity or spiritual weakness), abstinence from food, sleep, or sex, imprisonment, and disruption of routine. Chaucer uses the confusion of his narrator to show off his knowledge of dream theory and humoural medicine. His later expansion of this material in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (*CT* VII. 2923-39) demonstrates Chaucer's growing competence with medical models contemporary to the fourteenth century. His awareness of these models should encourage closer readings of his dream poems and the embodied subjectivity they present.

In the *Invocation,* the narrator shifts attention from the physiological causes of dreams in the *proem* to his concerns regarding his own dream-poem. The narrator fears readers who will misjudge or condemn — "mysdemen" (*HoF* I.92) — his work because of "malicious entencion" (93) and threatens anyone who "thorgh presumpcion / Or hate, or scorne, or thorgh envye, / Dispit, or jape, or vilanye, / Mysdeme hyt [i.e., his dream]" (94-97). He curses: "Jesus God … That every harm that any man / Hath had syth the world began, / Befalle him therof or he sterve" (*HoF* I.97, 99-101). Whatever danger this perceived threat holds for the Dreamer's future reputation, the trope highlights Chaucer's deeper awareness of the physiological issues affecting interpretation. He wrestles with the difficulty of trying to secure his cultural reputation in posterity because he understands that physiology and pre-reflective processes that are beyond his control (i.e.,, the awareness that readers have bodies) effect interpretation and judgement (as

cognitive states). In so doing, Chaucer shifts attention toward one of his the central concerns of

the poem: to explore the physiological sources of thoughts, interpretation, and fame. To do this,

Chaucer develops an architectural schema to explore a model of embodied cognition. By the end

of the poem, Chaucer asserts a model of cognition that, like dream states, occurs not as a series

of isolated mental events, but as a process that is dependent on physiology, perception,

imagination, and memory.

Chaucer employs three architectural spaces throughout the *House of Fame* — the Temple

of Venus, Fame's castle, and Daedalus' Labyrinth — to symbolize the tripartite, ventricular

model of perception, cognition, and memory theorized during the late medieval period. Medieval

theories of cerebral physiology were, of course, far removed from the kind of medical knowledge

possible today. Indeed, cognition, in medieval psychology, was accounted for by the inner

senses, themselves governed by a number of faculties. In a number of studies (1990, 1993,

1996), Simon Kemp outlines how the inner senses were believed to operate in medieval medical

theory. He explains that although some fairly complex descriptions of brain anatomy were

inherited from Galen and Nemesius, later medieval thinkers tended to simplify these accounts

into a linear arrangement (*Medieval Psychology* 54), so that by the late thirteenth century,

Lanfranc (*c.* 1295 A.D.) in his *Science of Cirurgie* describes three successive, linearly arranged

ventricles within the brain.[44] The front ventricle was responsible for receiving and processing

incoming sense data, before transmission to the middle ventricle for evaluation and classification

(the intellect), and then to the rear ventricle for storage (memory). Avicenna asserts that there are

five faculties at work in the brain: first, the faculty called the *sensus communis* is located at the

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[44] Lanfranc*, Science of Cirurgie,* 113-114.

fore of the front ventricle and performs initial perception functions quickly, without, as Kemp explains, necessarily retaining sensations that are removed from stimuli or are deemed irrelevant (*Medieval Psychology* 55). A longer lasting record of sensation occurs only when, as in a common medieval analogy, it can be written in the wax of the imagination, the second faculty located at the rear of the front ventricle (Kemp, *Medieval Psychology* 55). From the imagination, sensations are sent to the *intellect* or *cogitation* faculty in the second ventricle for evaluation and classification before traveling to the last ventricle to be stored and recalled by the faculty of memory. Even though this model is "grossly inaccurate" (Kemp, *Medieval Psychology* 54) according to contemporary knowledge, Kemp reminds us that it makes "good psychological, if not physiological, sense"(54) because the "medieval arrangement preserves the order in which … incoming information was believed to be processed" (54). For the present study, note that each faculty varies in its degree of conscious awareness, and that the body's perception of sense data is received passively through the *sensus communis* before the *intellect* or *memory* has conscious awareness of phenomenal experience.[45]

Throughout each architectural space in the *House of Fame*, Chaucer develops a model of mind that is fed and directed by the sensory operations of the body. He illustrates a model of an embodied mind — a model in which embodied experience shapes perception, consciousness and interpretation, rejecting a model of consciousness that occurs solely in the brain, autonomous from the body. As the poem progresses, each architectural space explores the operations of cognition as they are formed by the affective phenomena of the Dreamer's experience. In doing

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[45] For further reading on psychology in the Middle Ages, see Henley and Thorne, "The Lost Millennium: Psychology during the Middle Ages," *Connections in the History and Systems of Psychology* (2005), Hergenhahn, B. R., *An Introduction to the History of Psychology* (2001), Grant, *The Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages* (1996), and Watson & Evans, *The Great Psychologists* (1991)

so, Chaucer illustrates a model of the mind that is both distinctly medieval yet conceptually predictive. He achieves this balance by pointing out the interpretative functions of the body that occur before conscious cognition, while drawing on Galenic physiology and Avicenna's ventricular account of the brain's structure (Kemp, *Medieval Psychology,* 53-5). Chaucer traces his model of an embodied mind back-to-front from the interior, mnemonic space of rehearsal (in the Temple of Venus), through the seat of intellectual evaluation (in Fame's castle), to the initial, pre-reflective sources of phenomenal interaction and experience in Daedalus' Labyrinth at the end of the poem. The structure of the poem is analogous to the Dreamer's perceptive, interpretative, and mnemonic functions.

> The Dreamer wakes
>
> Withyn a temple ymad of glas,
>
> In which ther were moo ymages
>
> Of gold, stondynge in sondry stages,
>
> And moo ryche tabernacles,
>
> … pynacles,
>
> … portreytures,
>
> … And queynte maner of figures
>
> … then I saugh ever. (*HoF* I.120-7)

With its variety of images, statues, and figures, the Venerian temple (*HoF I.*130) serves the Dreamer as a mnemonic space in which he can recall his own accumulated readings and interpretations of European and British cultural identity reaching back to Troy and the escape of Aeneas. Inside the temple*,* reading becomes a fully embodied act that conflates the experience of

reading words with perceiving images, hearing sounds, and negotiating space and movement. The "temple y-mad of glas" (*HoF I.*120) threatens to overwhelm the Dreamer with "moo ymages / Of gold" (119-20), tabernacles, "pynacles" (124), and "portreytures" (125) than he has ever before seen. But through the portrait of Venus, "Naked fletynge in a see" (*HoF* I.133), the Dreamer is able to locate himself within her temple as he reads the various texts and images to produce his own interpretation:

> For certeynly, I nyste never
>
> Wher that I was, but wel wyste I
>
> Hyt was of Venus redely,
>
> The temple; for in portreyture
>
> I sawgh anoon-ryght hir figure
>
> Naked fletynge in a see,
>
> And also on hir hed, pardee,
>
> Hir rose garlond whit and red,
>
> And hir comb to kembe hir hed,
>
> Hir dowves, and daun Cupido
>
> Hir blynde sone, and Volcano,
>
> That in his face was ful broun. (128-139)

The Dreamer's suggestion that there were more images in the temple "then [he] saugh ever" (*HoF* I.127), suggests that these images are not his memories alone but an accretion of mnemonic material adopted from a mass of historical readings and interpretations beyond himself.

As the Dreamer "romed up and doun" (*HoF* I.140) the temple, Chaucer explores the multifaceted processes of embodied reading through the table of brass and the subsequent images that the Dreamer conjures up, adapts, and interacts with as a mode of mnemonic rehearsal. After seeing the fresco of Venus "fletynge in a see" (*HoF* I.133), he finds the first lines of the *Aeneid* "writen on a table of bras" (143), which he reads aloud:

"I wol now synge, yif I kan,

The armes and also the man

That first cam, thurgh his destinee,

Fugityf of Troy contree,

In Itayle, with ful moche pyne

Unto the strondes of Lavyne." (*HoF* I.143-148)

That the Dreamer is roaming "up and doun" (140) the temple before perceiving the table of brass illustrates that the Dreamer's cognitive perception is intricately tied to his embodied experience. Within the mental space of the temple, the Dreamer's accumulated cultural and phenomenal experiences manifest as vernacular translations and theatrical frescoes depicting his cultural memory. The temple's mnemonic cues guide his body through the images he perceives pre-reflectively, so that he quickly asserts how "wel wyste I / Hyt was of Venus redely" (*HoF* I. 129-30). Indeed, the Dreamer's response appears to occur before cognitive reception of his body's phenomenal experience. That he begins to perform such rehearsals immediately after viewing the temple's statues and frescoes or reading the opening lines of the *Aeneid* points to Chaucer's awareness that the relationship between cultural semiotics and individual consciousness goes deeper than conscious, noetic reflection.

After reading the *Aeneid's* familiar opening, the Dreamer continues to tell the story

"anoon" (149). The process begins conventionally through sight and language but changes to

include several other embodied experiences in the process of interpretation. As the Dreamer

reads the opening of the tale, he perceives the temple primarily from visual cues: "First saw I the

destructcion / Of Troye" (*HoF* 1.151-2). Yet even as he reads, his experience of the story changes

to an engraved surface:

> And aftir this was *grave*, allas,
>
> How Ilyon assayled was
>
> And wonne, and kyng Priam yslayn,
>
> And Polytes his sone, certayn,
>
> Dispitously of daun Pirrus. (my emphasis, *HoF* 1.152; 157-161)

No longer does he read the tale before him but describes his experience in images more akin to

frescoes than to written words; indeed, if the opening is "writen in bras," the following story

images appear engraved ("grave," 157) to the Dreamer. In the end, the text becomes "peynted on

the wal" (*HoF* I.211).

For Chaucer's Dreamer, the process of reading reaches a deeper physical experience in

the body than just the perception of words or abstract interpretation. Contrary to the mind-

focused efforts of the *Book of the Duchess* narrator, within the temple reading is an embodied

experience. By re-working the textual image of the brass table into a visual one, Chaucer

conflates phenomenal experience with mental activity. Robert Allen argues that Chaucer

develops the Dreamer's experience such that the "imagination is correspondingly stirred so that

he participates with his feelings and all his sense in what seems to be actuality" ("A Recurring

Motif in Chaucer's 'House of Fame'" 397). As the Dreamer imaginatively transforms the textual

signs of the brass table into embodied experiences with which he can interact, Chaucer lays the

psychological groundwork to suggest a direct and interconnected relationship between

phenomenal experience and mental states, and that dividing one from the other (or discussing

them as autonomous functions) is very difficult, if not all together impossible.

The Temple of Venus demonstrates Chaucer using architectural space analogously as a

model of the memory. By having his narrator fall asleep as he is "wont to done" (*HoF* I.113) and

awake within the temple made of glass, Chaucer presents the space inside the temple as a

representation of the mind of the Dreamer. Inside the temple, visual sensations exceed all other

phenomenal experience. Linked to the verb "to see" are architectural cues that indicate

processional movement. From the narrator's initial perception of the image of Venus through to

the text/frescoes of the *Aeneid,* variations of the verb "to see" occur fourteen times before he

exits the temple. Chaucer's focus on sight throughout the temple exemplifies Linda Tarte

Holley's assertion that "Chaucer's was an age of vision" (26). Until Roger Bacon, whose work

established modern optics, optical theory was dominated by the debate between extramission and

intromission, itself dating back to differences between Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of

sight (Kemp, *Medieval Psychology,* 36-40). Extramission explains sight as the product of animal

spirits or rays of light that are physically emitted from the eye: first emitting, and then receiving

packets of light to form sense data — something like optical SONAR. Conversely, intromission

explains sight as the passive reception of external forms or patterns of light on the eye that

radiate from external objects. In *HoF,* Chaucer seems to fall into the intromission camp, since the

Dreamer's perception is frequently portrayed as passive reception: "First sawgh I…" (151);

"And next that sawgh I…" (162); "Ther saugh I…" (209); etc. This makes sense when understood alongside the processional cues of architectural space where images, pillars, and aisles are all designed to guide procession passively. The temple operates as a mnemonic space, like the third ventricle, in which the Dreamer rehearses his cultural inheritance by replaying previous phenomenal experiences, images, and ideas through imaginative analogies, such as the conflation of text, image, and architectural cues.

The Dreamer first experiences Dido's story as engraved text — "Ther sawgh I grave how Eneas / Tolde Dido every caas / That hym was tyd upon the see" (*HoF* I.253-5) — but as he moves through this space his experience alters. The Dreamer's experience of Dido's story changes from text to image to drama as her story does not stay *wryten* but is enacted during an extended soliloquy (300-61). She speaks of Aeneas' betrayal and her anguish:

"O wel-away that I was born!

For thorgh yow is my name lorn,

And alle myn actes red and songe

Over al thys lond, on every tonge.

O wikke Fame! – for ther nys

Nothing so swift, lo, as she is!

O, soth ys, every thing ys wyst

Though it be kevered with the myst.

Eke, though I myghte duren ever,

That I have don rekever I never,

That I ne shal be seyd, allas,

Yshamed be thourgh Eneas,

And that I shal thus juged be:" (*HoF* I.345-357)

The Dreamer's experience shifts from the static, sign-based representation of engravings to a

fully audible, dramatic presentation of Dido's plight. The temple's depiction of scenes from the

Aeneid prompts the Dreamer's imagination and memory to re-produce an embodied experience

of the story's events that conforms to his interests in reading, in unfaithful lovers, and his abiding

concern for his reputation in posterity. The static engravings of the "table of bras" are gone,

replaced with an unfolding scene as if acted out on a stage in front of the Dreamer. Dido's

concerns reflect the Dreamer's waking-life anxieties over the interpretation of his work and his

reputation in posterity (*HoF* I.81-106).

The Dreamer is able to create an appropriate story and space to engage with his questions

about memory and fame. However suitable for this purpose, the space remains a construct, and

so requires his body to produce the necessary embodied experiences to facilitate cognitive

participation. As seen in the dramatic presentation of Dido's plight, the Dreamer's body

reproduces sensory perceptions of a fully-embodied experience when the necessary sensory input

is missing. The engravings within the temple do more than speak. The first embodied product is

sound; the second is movement. Once Dido finishes her soliloquy, the Dreamer describes the

scene in live action with clear points of movement and staging:

And whan she wiste sothly he

Was forth unto his shippes goon,

She into hir chambre wente anoon,

And called on hir suster Anne

And gan hir to compleyne thanne,

And seyde that she cause was

That she first loved him, allas,

And thus counseylled hir thertoo. (*HoF* I.364-371)

But, here, the stage is silent: the Dreamer describes Dido's movement into her chamber where we see, but do not hear, her complaint to her sister, Anne. The change in sensory production — from fully voiced soliloquy to mute visual images — is linked to the Dreamer's attention. His interest in Dido's story is in a tale centered around an ill-treated and defamed lover. Dido's reputation, regardless of Aeneas' poor behaviour toward her, remained low even into Dante's portrayal of her in *Inferno*.[46]

Once his mnemonic need is met, the Dreamer's imagination returns to words, authorship, and the engraved images of the glass temple, perceiving the remainder of the story through static engravings rather than enlivened drama. The Dreamer's production of embodied sensations shifts as Dido's story moves away from his primary concerns around interpretation and reputation and toward suicide and death. The Dreamer passes over Dido's suicide in two lines — "She rof hirselfe to the herte / And deyde thorgh the wounde smerte" (*HoF* I.373-4) — before he turns back to the words of other authors:

And al the maner how she deyde,

And alle the wordes that she seyde,

Whoso to knowe it hath purpos,

Reed Virgile in Eneydos,

---

[46] In Dante's *Inferno,* Dido is found in the second circle of Hell (Canto V, 70-80).

Or the Epistle of Ovyde

What that she wrot or that she dyde;

And nere hyt to long to endyte,

Be God, I wolde hyt here write. …

Which whoso willeth for to knowe,

He moste rede many a rowe

On Virgile or on Claudian,

Or Daunte, that hit telle can. (*HoF* I.375-82; 447-450)

The temple's remaining scenes — Aeneas' journey to hell, his arrival in Italy, and his victory

over Turnus — are once again engraved rather than voiced or acted scenes:

Thoo *sawgh I* grave, how to Itayle

Daun Eneas is goo to sayle; …

And also *sawgh I* how Sybile

And Eneas, besyde an yle,

To helle wente …

Tho *saugh I* grave al the aryvayle

That Eneas had in Itayle. (emphasis added, *HoF* I.429; 433-4; 439-41; 451-2)

As the Temple's frescoes shift away from the Dreamer's primary interest in interpretation and

reputation, his mental representation changes from fully embodied interactions back to visual-

focused representations.

Medieval accounts of sight understood a causal, materialist relation between eye and

thing, observer and observed. Chaucer's emphasis on the Dreamer's vision and the temple's

architectural space illustrates an embodied link between the temple and the Dreamer's mind —

that on one level, the dream of the temple symbolizes the Dreamer's own mnemonic processes. If

the temple of Venus depicts the interior mental space of the Dreamer, wandering "up and

doun" (*HoF* I.140) its images, imagining their theatrical presentations, his presence *as being in* a

larger, interconnected body is made explicit once he exits the temple. Outside, the Dreamer

enters into a sandscape: "Then sawgh I but a large feld, / As fer as that I myghte see, / Withouten

toun, or hous, or tree …" (*HoF* I.482-4) as barren as Dido's Libyan desert:

> As smal as man may se yet lye
>
> In the desert of Lybye.
>
> Ne no maner creature
>
> That ys yformed be Nature
>
> Ne sawgh I, me to rede or wisse. (*HoF* I.486-91)

Here, at the end of this description, reading and knowing are equated with sight, and without

another memory or person to direct his path, the Dreamer is moved to prayer and cries, "O Crist

… that art in blysse, / Fro fantome and illusion / Me save!" (*HoF* I.492-5). The isolation of the

temple within a vast desert suggests that the temple represents one of the Dreamer's mnemonic

catalogs influenced by and yet separated from the phenomenal world. Looking back on the

temple, its space is meta-cognitive and reveals itself as the Dreamer's mnemonic faculty, the

cognitive function furthest from embodied experience and located at the back of the brain.

As the Dreamer ventures from the temple toward Fame's castle in *Book II*, Chaucer also leads his

readers through the faculty model of the brain from back-to-front.

In the *Invocation* to *Book II,* the Dreamer's apostrophe to his cognitive processes — "O Thought, that wrot al that I mette" (*HoF* II.523) — might direct interpretation of his experience toward a disembodied model of his mental state, suggesting that his dreams are merely the product of "the tresorye" (524) of his "brayn" (524), and that to "tellen al [his] drem aryght" (527), Chaucer's Dreamer must look to the "engyn" of his disembodied mind rather than the experiences of his body. But as in *Book I* of *House of Fame,* the Dreamer's physiological experience in his dream reflects Chaucer's interest in and knowledge of medieval faculty psychology.[47] The apostrophe to "Thought" follows Dante's call to "mente" (*Inferno* 2.7-9) or memory, which was located in a physical part of the brain — often called the treasury.

In the second part of *House of Fame,* the Dreamer's attention to natural philosophy, a pursuit with demonstrated susceptibility toward melancholy and academic introversion, has potential to push Chaucer's exploration of mind and body toward a mind-centered model of cognition. In the clutches of the golden Eagle, the Dreamer's journey to Fame's house becomes an extended dialogue concerning the process of remembrance, re-reading and interpretation. He cannot escape his preoccupation with fame in posterity. A brief overview of the Dreamer's imaginative processes throughout the journey will reveal an underlying model of cognitive perception through embodied sensation.

Sent by Jupiter to bring "som disport and game" (*HoF* II.664) to the Dreamer, the Eagle makes a point of the Dreamer's devotion to Cupid, but also of his typical behaviour of turning to books and study instead of seeking "tidings" for the Dreamer. For that is what the Dreamer apparently desires most: that is, *news* — of lovers, of "jolytee and fare" (*HoF* II.682), of

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[47] See pp. 13-17 in this dissertation for an account of this model, especially with reference to Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* and Kemp, *Cognitive Psychology in the Middle Ages.*

"discordes" and "jelousies" (685), of "murmures" and "feyned reparacions" (686, 688). And so, to Fame's castle they will go.

On the way, the Eagle's explanations on natural philosophy shifts attention toward an embodied model for the perception of sound and the nature of language itself. The Eagle's summary of Aristotelian physics illustrates how every bit of language is conducted to Fame's castle through the air:

> "… for yf that thow
>
> Throwe on water now a stoon,
>
> Wel wost thou hyt wol make anoon
>
> A litel roundell as a sercle,
>
> Paraunter brod as a covercle;
>
> And ryght anoon thow shalt see wel
>
> That whel wol cause another whel,
>
> And that the thridde, and so forth, brother,
>
> Every sercle causynge other,
>
> Wydder than hymselve was;
>
> And thus fro roundel to compas,
>
> Ech aboute other goynge,
>
> Causeth of othres sterynge,
>
> And multiplyinge ever moo,
>
> Til that hyt be so fer ygoo
>
> That hyt at bothe brynkes bee." (*HoF* II.788b-803)

As with waves seen through water, so, too, do the waves of sound travel through the air, bumping

and influencing each other through intersecting ripples:

> And ryght thus every word, ywys
>
> That lowd or pryvee spoken ys
>
> Moveth first an ayr aboute,
>
> And of thys movynge, out of doute,
>
> Another ayr anoon ys meved; …
>
> Til hyt be atte Hous of Fame." (*HoF* II.809-813, 821)

The Eagle describes the physical nature of sound and, thereby, the source of the *tidings* sought by

the Dreamer.

The Dreamer quickly learns that the words moving through the air are not just ephemeral

sounds; they are embodied word-phantoms. At the end of *Book II*, as the Eagle leaves the

Dreamer a spear's throw from Fame's castle, they share a brief discourse on the nature of the

great noise and the strange, embodied text-voices emitting from the castle. The Dreamer asks if

these people are real, wondering

> "Yf thys noyse that I here
>
> Be, as I have herd the tellen,
>
> Of folk that doun in erthe duellen
>
> And cometh here in the same wyse
>
> As I the herde or this devyse;
>
> And that there lives body nys
>
> In al that hous that yonder ys

That maketh al this loude fare." (*HoF* II.1058-65)

Because they are voices, the Dreamer speculates that there are, in fact, no bodies dwelling in

Fame's castle; but, as the Eagle explains,

"Whan any speche ycomen ys

Up to the paleys, anon-ryght

Hyt wexen lyk the same wight,

Which that the word in erthe spake." (*HoF* II.1074-77)

Beyond the audible sound, the Eagle explains that the voices actually do have bodies, clothed in

"red and blak" (*HoF* II.1078) and that they have gender:

"And hath so verray hys lyknesse

That spak the word, that thou wilt gesse

That it the same body be,

Man or woman, he or she." (*HoF* II.1079-82)

As the Dreamer moves nearer the castle grounds, the voices do take on an embodied form. He

describes the text-voice-bodies as taking up physical space — "Stonden in a large space" (*HoF*

III.1238) — and wearing coats-of-arms.[48] While we are never sure what kind of beings exist in

the house of Fame — presented as both textual and physical, conflations of words, voices, and

bodies — Chaucer is careful to draw attention to the inalienable experience of the body.

As pneumatic, aural, and physical representations of their human counterparts on earth,

the embodied phantoms breach several phenomenal layers at once. Quinn argues that "Chaucer

does not conceive of these voices as resurrected corpses per se; rather, they are envisioned

---

[48] The lines read, "every man / Of hem, as y yow tellen can, / Had on him trowen a vesture / Which that men clepe a cote-armure" (*HoF* II.1323-6), and describe the pursuivants and heralds of the castle.

precisely as somatomorphic souls—that is, *phantasms* of not yet resurrected

persons" ("Chaucer's Recital Presence" 183). He envisions a material source for Chaucer's

phantoms by comparing Dante's notion that "individual souls remain identifiable in the

afterlife" (Quinn, "Chaucer's Recital Presence," 184) with the phantoms in Fame's house as

representing the "verray … lyknesse" (*HoF* II.1079) of each speaker on Earth ("Chaucer's

Recital Presence" 184). The phantom word-bodies link sense-perception and cognition through

the narrator's simultaneous experience of hearing and reading their bodies and voices. While the

strangeness of the textual, aural, and physical presentation of these people reveals some

unsettling problems for the Dreamer about memory retention and retrieval — which range from

epistemic concerns such as in what manner people are remembered, or the nature and effect of

memory loss, to the existential concern of what will happen to the self in the process of future

interpretation — they also represent what Carruthers calls a "hermeneutical dialogue" (*The Book

of Memory* 211). In the mnemonic culture of the Middle Ages, reading engages two (or more)

minds in a "continuing dialogue" of memory: "Medieval reading is conceived to be not a

'hermeneutical circle' … but more like a 'hermeneutical dialogue' between two

memories" (Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 211). Carruthers demonstrates how the act of

reading is "an emotional process that causes change in the body" (*The Book of Memory* 211) by

pointing out that reading involves mnemonic processing, and that mnemonic phantasms were

understood both as a likeness (*simulacrum*) of a percept and as a gut-level response to it

(*intentio*). This occurs in the mnemonic act of the reader "'breaking up' or 'shattering' each

single word as he recreates the scene in his memory," allowing him to "re-hear, re-see, re-feel,

experience and re-experience" (Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 211) the events of the text in an

embodied way. Reading reconstructs the events of a text in the mind by re-inscribing the body with the phenomenal experiences that first inspired the text. Memories are experienced as an embodied interaction and not a disembodied exchange.

On this topic, Carruthers' work on memory and mnemonics is particularly apt. She explains how medieval inheritors of Aristotle understood knowledge as directly linked to perception.[49] Carruthers pins the centrality of embodiment in mnemonic theory and technique to the influence of the *De Anima* because it describes memory as a phantasm that appears in the mind after inscription on the body and as "the final product of the entire process of sense perception" (*The Book of Memory* 19). The process of phantom-making, on the body and in the mind, is a process of storing "likenesses of things as they were *when they appeared to and affected us*" (emphasis added, Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* 65). Chaucer's phantoms link the narrator's waking experience, his mnemonic practice, and his dream vision through an embodied subjectivity. For Chaucer, this model holds potential to extend his voice beyond the limitations of his text and to reach other minds through embodied reading and mnemonic recall.

In the *Invocation* to *Book III,* Chaucer draws attention to his concerns about interpretation and textual transmission as problems of cognition and memory. Before beginning the final section of the dream, the Dreamer prays to Apollo for help and guidance:

O God of science and of lyght,

Appollo, thurgh thy gret myght

This lytel laste bok thou gye!

… make hyt sumwhat agreable

---

[49] See Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory,* pp. 20, 211, 279-80.

Though som vers fayle in a sillable." (*HoF* III.1091-3; 1097)

Chaucer may be anticipating the unfinished ending of the poem in this prayer, acknowledging the failed syllables of the missing concluding lines. Of special note is his request "to shewe now / That in myn hed ymarked ys" (*HoF* III.1102-4), which is important because the Dreamer links the expression of his mental state to the experience of his body a few lines later: "Now entre in my brest anoon!" (1109). Although the *Invocation* begins by pointing outward, toward Apollo, Chaucer centers the Dreamer's experience within the body.

If, at the beginning of *House of Fame,* the Temple of Venus represents the inner faculty of the Dreamer's memory, in *Book III,* Fame's castle represents the second ventricle, the *intellect.* Chaucer uses the foundation of Fame's castle and its shifting interior spaces to show the connection between the Dreamer's body and cognitive functions. Placing experience before thought illustrates how the Dreamer's cognitive awareness is dependent on his body's perception. When the narrator arrives at the house of Fame he notices that it "stood upon so hygh a roche" (1116), and wonders of "What maner stoon this roche was" (*HoF* III.1123). He discovers that the castle's foundation is not made of "stel," but is made of "yse" (*HoF* III.1130), and that the ice is engraved with "famous folkes names" (1137), which suggests that the foundation of Fame's castle (and her decrees) are constructed with the bricks and mortar of cultural accumulation and mnemonic preservation. Of particular interest is that some of the names lower down have begun melting in the sun, while the names higher up in the shadow of the castle remain whole. The Dreamer's explanation of how certain names remain "As fresshe as men had writen hem there / The selve day ryght" (*HoF* III.1156-7) is because they are located on the North side of the hill out of the sun's heat and were "conserved with the shade / Of a castel that

stood on high" (1160, 62). Such names, of the "folk that hadden grete fames / Of olde

tyme" (*HoF* III.1155-6), are preserved by their proximity to Fame's shadow. The arbitrariness of

this fortunate position anticipates the arbitrary nature with which Fame appears to make her

judgments.

Within the castle Chaucer plays with shifting physical spaces and the confusion that results

from changes in perception. Shifting between textual constructs and architectural structures

symbolizes the kind of rhetorical distortion inherent to the operations of interpretation and

cognition. As the Dreamer walks up to the castle, he describes its walls being made of

"berile" (*HoF* III.1288) and that they "shoone ful lyghter than a glas" (1289). Their refractions

cause things to appear "wel more than hit was" (*HoF* III.1290).

As the Dreamer moves through the castle, he proceeds past several groups of people on his

way toward a throne. Throughout this procession Chaucer retreats from using any verbs that

would indicate the Dreamer's movement. The Dreamer indicates motion through the front gate

— "in I wente and that anoon" (*HoF* III.1307) — but as he proceeds to Fame's throne, his

movement is generated through sight and sound rather than direction. Variations on these verbs

are provided to establish positioning. He hears the crowd "crying" (*HoF* III.1308), "A larges,

larges, hold up wel! / God save the lady of this pel" (1309-10). Next, he perceives the heralds

and their assistants — "Tho atte laste espyed I / That pursevauntes and heraudes" (*HoF* III.

1320-1). Finally, the Dreamer explains how he sees Fame on her throne:

> But al on hye, above a dees, /
>
> Sittet in a see imperiall, /
>
> That mad was of a rubee all,

Which that a carbuncle ys ycalled,

Y saugh, perpetually ystalled,

A femynyne creature. (*HoF* III.1360-65)

In a moment of lucid awareness, the Dreamer reflects on this experience and suggests that such distortion is, evidently, natural to Fame's operation: "To semen every thing ywis, / As kynde thyng of Fames is" (*HoF* III.1291-2). Inside the gate, the Dreamer sees Fame appear small, but, as the Dreamer's attention focuses on her, her stature grows. At first, she appears to the narrator: "Y saugh, perpectually ystalled, / A femynyne creature / That never formed by nature / Nas such another thing yseye" (*HoF* III.1364-7). Her stature appears to be "so lyte / That the lengthe of a cubite / Was lengere than she semed be" (*HoF* III.1369-71), but then suddenly stretches so "That with hir feet she erthe reighte, / And with hir hed she touched hevene" (1374-5). As the Dreamer's attention narrows, his perception increases resolution, drawing a new image of her appearance. His cognitive (i.e.,, *intellectual*) image of her changes to reflect the new image in his imagination (i.e.,, the *imaginativa*). As his attention focuses further, the Dreamer becomes aware of the paradoxical image of Fame as covered with eyes as thick as a bird's feathers and with ears as numerous as the hairs of an animal. To trace the analogy being constructed alongside the medieval psychological schema, one can understand Fame and her castle representing the brain's second faculty, i.e., the intellect, and the Dreamer's image of her representing the relationship between perception and cognitive functioning.

Chaucer's deictic imaging continues as the Dreamer perceives and moves past a set of metal pillars, each associated with one or more famous poets. The Dreamer describes five pillars — one of iron and lead with a statue of Josephus; several iron pillars standing together, painted

in Tiger's blood, with statues of poets who wrote of the Trojan war; one of tin for Virgil; another

pillar made of copper for Ovid; one of iron for Lucan; and, finally, a pillar of sulfur for Claudian,

who appears mad. Once again, the Dreamer's procession is produced not through verbs of

movement but verbs of perception. In order to draw attention to his perception, he begins by

describing his awareness as a product of vision, "Tho was I *war*, loo atte laste / As I myn *eyen*

gan up caste" (emphasis added, *HoF* III.1407-8), before relating his experience of the many

pillars:

> Tho saugh I stonde on eyther syde,
>
> Streight doun to the dores wide
>
> Fro the dees, many a peler
>
> Of metal that shoon not ful cler; …
>
> Alderfirst, loo, ther I sigh,
>
> Upon a piler stonde on high …
>
> Ther saugh I stonden, out of drede,
>
> Upon an yren piler strong
>
> That peynted was al endelong
>
> With tigres blod in every place,
>
> The Tholosan that highte Stace, …
>
> And by him stood, withouten les,
>
> Ful wonder hy on a piler
>
> Of yren, he, the gret Omer, …
>
> Tho saugh I stonde on a piler

That was of tynned yren clere

That Latyn poete Virgile …

And next hym on a piler was,

Of coper, Venus clerk Ovide, …

Thoo saugh I on a piler by,

Of yren wrought ful sternely,

The grete poete daun Lucan, …

And next him on a piler stood

Of soulfre, lyk as he were wood,

Daun Claudian, the sothe to telle

That bar up al the fame of helle. (*HoF* III.1419-22; 1429-30; 1456-60; 1464-66;

1481-83; 1486-87; 1497-99;1507-10)

The repeated phrase "Tho saugh I" creates movement by cycling through the series of deictic

positions without actually describing physical change. Changing deictic positions *moves* the

Dreamer, and the reader follows. The significance of this mode of movement is that it

demonstrates how embodied experience remains inherent to interpretation: position affects

perception, which affects interpretation. In this way, Chaucer creates movement without verbal

descriptions of physical transitions, illustrating a model of motion as pre-noetic interpretative

experience.

As the deictic positioning brings the Dreamer nearer Fame's throne, his attention is drawn

away from the pillars of poetic tradition by a quickly approaching noise that sounds at first like a

swarm of bees:

I herde a noyse aprochen blyve,

That ferde as been don in an hive,

Ayen her tyme of out-fleynge;

Ryght such a maner murmurynge,

For al the world, hyt semed me (*HoF* III.1521-25).

The buzz comes from "A right great company" entering into the hall. Once again, the Dreamer's

immediate perception, his *first impression,* moves his conscious awareness and produces an

interpretation, demonstrating the centrality of the body's perception in the faculty functions of

the mind.

Chaucer unfolds the medieval model of consciousness that begins in an embodied, pre-

reflective space and moves toward the brain, signaling the importance of the body in cognition.

In the schema of the Dreamer's cognitive processes, Fame's castle and her throne room represent

the functions of the *intellect,* the second faculty of cognition. Of the eight groups of people

seeking either to attain or avoid renown from Fame, she grants what is asked of her only half of

the time, and she grants the opposite of what the other four groups desire: "somme of hem

[Fame] graunted sone, / And somme she werned wel and faire, / And some she graunted the

contraire / Of her axyng outterly" (*HoF* III.1538-41). As to why she behaves this way, the

Dreamer cannot guess, "What hir cause was, y nyste" (*HoF* III.1543). Fame acknowledges that

her judgements hardly exceed personal preference and operate outside of sound judicial process.

When asked by the first group why she has denied their request, she reasons "For me lyst hyt

noght" (*HoF* III.1564). Furthermore, near the end of the parade, Fame confesses that "Al be ther

in me no justice" (*HoF* III.1820). She has no interest in justice or fairness. Her choices are not

reasoned but arbitrary, and demonstrate the embodied, pre-reflective consciousness of phenomenal experience.

Given the psychological schema that is at work in *House of Fame*, Fame functions as a *reflective* consciousness — that is, she only evaluates the data that is sent to her. She does not make up new data to evaluate. The arbitrary nature with which she makes pronouncements suggests that, like the faculty of the *intellect* in medieval psychology, her judgments rely on a data set that has already been filtered, organized, and interpreted. The point of concern, then, is that Fame operates without a full data set: that is, she can only judge the fame of those *tidings* who successfully pass through the filter of Daedalus' Labyrinth (the *House of Rumour*) at the end of the poem, itself the source of the embodied-text-voices in Fame's castle. Her cognitive processes, her judgements, are estimative in that they are based on an arbitrary set of pre-filtered information rather than on direct experience. Fame can only respond to, or judge, the data that is sent to her. The system through which Fame receives data is arbitrary, and she follows suit.

For the Dreamer, after trying to comprehend the strange embodied-text-voices, the melting sub-structure of Fame's castle, and the capricious nature of her judgements, the whole system appears rather confusing and arbitrary; however, the inclusion of "Domus Dedaly" (*HoF* III.1920) at the end of the poem restructures the order of operations throughout the entire dream sequence. As with the other architectural structures, the *House of Rumour* is deeply symbolic and gives perspective on the poem's whole progression. Although the Dreamer's movement proceeds outward from the temple of Venus, the movement of the sought-for "tydynges" (*HoF* III.1957) and "jangles" (1960), like bits of sense data and perceived images, proceeds in the opposite direction: they enter the *House of Rumour,* are filtered so that only some proceed to Fame's

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castle, and then they come to rest in a memory temple. Within the psychological schema

presented in this section, the *House of Rumour* functions as the *sensus communis,* the first faculty

of the mind that receives and sorts out incoming sense data. Recall that in the medieval model its

operations are pre-reflective, occurring before conscious awareness, but, as with any non-

rational, pre-conscious operation, such things appear wild, potentially inchoate, and arbitrary.

That is the medieval model of an embodied mind: it first receives, categorizes, and interprets

sense data through the body before creating images with which to think, logic to sort those

images, and mnemonic placement for speedy recall. Instead of suggesting a model of cognition

as emanating from an interior mental space outward, in this model the mind is not simply located

in the brain but begins at the extremities of bodily perception and proceeds inward.

As the Dreamer proceeds to the edge of his consciousness, he meets a new "Frend" (*HoF*

III.1871), who guides him out of Fame's castle, and they move to "An hous, that Domus

Dedaly, / That Laboryntus cleped ys" (1920-1). The house appears to spin at great speed,

swirling before the Dreamer's eyes and produces an immense noise:

And ever mo, as swyft as thought,

This queynte house aboute wente,

That never mo hyt stille stente

And therout com so gret a noyse

That, had hyt stonden upon Oyse,

Men myghte hyt han herd esely

To Rome, y trowe sikerly.

And the noyse which that I herde

> For al the world ryght so hyt ferde
>
> As dooth the rowtynge of the ston
>
> That from th'engyn ys leten gon. (*HoF* III.1924-34)

The impact on the Dreamer is significant but its structure relies on little more than "twigges" (*HoF* III.1936) that might form a bird's cage.[50] Because of the swirling wind, its construction of twigs, and its "thousand holes,"[51] the house constantly squeaks and creaks: "for the swough and for the twigges, / This hous was also ful of gygges / And also ful eek of chirkynges" (*HoF* III.1941-3). It is porous and allows most anything to enter its interior space, so that it fills with all sorts of "tydynges" (*HoF* III.1957) and "jangles" (1960).

Even though the *House of Rumour* is perforated with holes, the Dreamer cannot enter without the help of a guide. Conveniently, the Eagle from *Book II* returns to help.[52] Inside the structure is a "congregacioun" (*HoF* III.2034) of whispers and rumours, who symbolize the embodied production of consciousness in the *sensus communis,* the first faculty of the mind in medieval psychology. The space inside the *House of Rumour* is quasi-rational, and borders on the irrational where true and false emulsify. As unique phenomena, the incoming "tydynges" present

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[50] The longer description — "And al thys hous of which y rede / Was mad of twigges, falwe, rede, / And grene eke, and somme weren white, / Swiche as men to these cages thwite" (*HoF* III.1935-38) — demonstrates the seemingly arbitrary nature of the building's construction.

[51] And eke this hous hath of entrees
As fele as of leves ben in trees
In somer whan they grene been;
And on the roof men may yet seen
A thousand holes, and wel moo,
To leten wel the soun out goo. (*HoF* III.1945-50)

[52] Speaking to the Dreamer, the Eagle explains:
"But certeyn, oon thing I thee telle:
That but I bringe the therinne,
Ne shalt thou never kunne gynne
To come into hyt, out of doute,
So faste hit whirleth, lo, aboute." (*HoF* III.2003-6)

themselves as perceived sense data; their source is arbitrary and known only through the nerve-like pathway that they make through the embodied-text-voices:

> Whan oon had herd a thing, ywis,
>
> He com forth ryght to another wight
>
> And gan him tellen anon-ryght
>
> The same that to him was told
>
> Or hyt a forlong way was old,
>
> But gan somwhat for to eche
>
> To this tydyng in this speche
>
> More than it ever was. (*HoF* III.2060-67)

Chaucer suggests an interpretative function at work even at this early stage of mind, in that as each byte moves along the "forlong way," it increases, becomes "More than it ever was" and spreads "As fyr ys wont to quyke and goo / From a sparke spronge amys" (*HoF* III.2078-9). The journey amplifies the fledging "tydynges" in significance (meaning) and in resolution (importance). But this, too, is confused when he sees a "lesyng and a sad soth" (*HoF* III.2089) collide trying to escape through a window:

> And, when they metten in that place,
>
> They were achekked bothe two,
>
> And neyther of hem moste out goo
>
> For other, so they gonne crowde
>
> Til eche of hem gan crien lowde,
>
> "Lat me go first!" "Nay, but let me!

And here I wol ensuren the,

With the nones that thou wolt do so,

That I shal never fro the go

But be thyn owne sworen brother!" (*HoF* III.2092-2101)

Rather than take turns exiting the window, their solution conflates their meanings into one. The joining of these tidings displays an arbitrary pseudo-interpretative moment, and the Dreamer perceives the event as he sees "fals and soth compouned" (*HoF* III.2108) in the attempt to leave the swirling structure.

The House of Rumour represents the *sensus communis,* a space prior to rational consciousness, in which perception of sense data — sights and sounds — are first sorted, either amalgamated with other bits or rejected outright. Inside the *House of Rumour*, disparate bits of sense data jostle around until some of them join together, each conflation amplifying the pieces involved to the level of sign, which is expressed as an embodied-text-voice. The activity of conflation generates enough creative energy to make these text-voices fly "streght to Fame / And she gan yeven ech hys name / After hir disposicioun" (*HoF* III.2111-13). This space illustrates an early interpretative moment, even a pre-reflective one, in the medieval schema of the mind and body. And yet, however straight the way to Fame is, the sorting process within the *House of Rumour* operates without measurable quality control, showing the non-conscious yet interpretative nature of pre-reflective perception.

When the Eagle drops the Dreamer through a window of this "Laboryntus" (*HoF* III. 1921), the Dreamer becomes focused on the myriad tidings all about him. He finds what he came for — "a tydynge for to here" (*HoF* III.2134) — but leaves with his earlier questions about the

causes of mental states and dreams unanswered. The reader is left to ask: where do the tidings that enter the *House of Rumour* come from? What power is at work to attract and direct the attention of the Dreamer? What guides his focus, his perception? What organizes his perception into images, signs, thoughts, and memories? Evidently, Chaucer cannot say exactly, though he is willing to point beyond rational description, to a man of great authority. This man's sudden presence certainly draws attention, as those nearby chaotically scramble over one another to see him:

> For I saugh rennynge every wight
>
> As faste as that they hadden myght, …
>
> And whan they were alle on an hepe,
>
> Tho behynde begunne up lepe,
>
> And clamben up on other faste, …
>
> And troden fast on other heles,
>
> And stampen, as men doon aftir eles. (*HoF* III.2145-6, 2149-54)

But who this is remains one of the poem's greatest interpretative challenges: a man whom the Dreamer cannot define — "Which that y [nevene] nat ne kan" (*HoF* III.2156) — but who *appears* to hold authority: "But he seme for to be / A man of gret auctorite" (*HoF* III.2157-8).

Even in this space of raw, chaotic experience, the Dreamer cannot escape interpretation: he must consider the image of the man and determine what he represents from that perception. Here, beyond the threshold of mnemonic recall or intellectual calculations, the Dreamer experiences the messy blend of perception, sense data, and pre-reflective cognition. Throughout the poem's complex analogy that reflects faculty psychology in three architectural spaces,

Chaucer demonstrates the inalienable primacy of the body in the formation of consciousness. At

the end of *House of Fame,* the Dreamer is left to intuit that the "auctoritee" (*HoF* III.2158)

before him is on some level his own embodied experience and the cognitive powers of the body.

Cognitive Schemas and Conceptual Metaphors in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*SGGK*),[53] the *Gawain*-poet explores and

demonstrates a model of embodied cognition through his meter, form, structure, schemas,

generic conventions, emblems, and aesthetic description. He relies throughout on the embodied

and cognitive processes of his audience to draw correctly from the accretion of cultural memory

accumulated in England by the late fourteenth century, not for the achievement of a perfect

interpretation of his poem, but rather to make his concerns about chivalry, religious devotion,

personal sacrifice, honour, integrity, hospitality, and courtly love broadly appealing. My analysis

of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* reveals the *Gawain*-poet's awareness and development of

the medieval model of mind and body described in chapter one. While he was probably not a

first-hand student of medicine or psychology, he nonetheless shows remarkable acuity in his

style and structure and in his use of cognitive schema and mnemonic tropes that attest to his

awareness of a mind/body model that conflates mental volition and phenomenal experience. My

intention is to deepen the understanding of how the *Gawain*-poet's poetry works in the way it

does. The *Gawain*-poet demonstrates a model of embodied cognition through several cognitive

schemas that function to formalize a shared cultural memory, employ the poem's structure to

show movement, and develop the poem's emblems and sensory tenor.

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[53] All citations of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* taken from Tolkien and Gordon, editors, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* 2nd edition. Clarendon Press, 1968, unless otherwise stated.

In *Cognitive Poetics,* Peter Stockwell describes schemas as the progeny of several layers of experiential and conceptual categorization. From phenomenal experience to low level categorization, basic categories combine to form compound categories, in turn combining to form conceptual or cognitive models which make up the basis for body schemas (Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics* 31). Lesley Jeffries and Dan McIntyre understand a schema to be "an element of background knowledge about a particular aspect of the world" (*Stylistics* 127), pointing out that schemas are formed for people, objects, situations, and events (127-8). Stockwell explains the production of cognitive models as a process of categorizing schema on individual, social, and cultural planes: "Cognitive models consist of relations between categories, set up socially, culturally, and on the basis of individual experience, as our means of understanding and negotiating the world and our lives through it" (*Cognitive Poetics,* 33). As they become shared between people and begin to accumulate a wider social currency, cognitive models become *cultural models* (33). Finally, as models of shared memories and experience, cultural models allow for the creation of social identities.

Literary schemas develop in a similar manner: they evolve through accretion (adding new facts to a schema), tuning (modifying facts within the schema), and restructuring (creating new schemas). And, because they are dynamic, literary schemas can participate in preserving, reinforcing, disrupting, refreshing, and re-inventing cultural schemas. In a literary context, schema theory points to three interrelated fields in which schemas operate: world schemas, text schemas, and language schemas. "World schemas," Stockwell explains, "cover those schemas…

that are to do with content; text schemas represent our expectations of the way that world schemas appear to us in terms of their sequencing and structural organization; language schemas contain our idea of the appropriate forms of linguistic patterning and style in which we expect a subject to appear" (*Cognitive Poetics*, 80). Moreover, "[t]aking the last two together, disruptions in our expectations of textual structure or stylistic structure constitute discourse deviation, which offers the possibility for schema refreshment" (*Cognitive Poetics*, 80). Through accretive layering, literary schemas can be used to direct synecdochically the attention of readers.

In what may seem a short space, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight's* few opening and closing stanzas perform several important cognitive functions. Framing the main adventure are two bookends that trace the history of Britain from the Fall of Troy to Arthur's court (*SGGK* 1-59) and return to that origin by referencing "Brutus bokez" (2523) near the end of the poem. When they are not skipped entirely, the opening stanzas are often read simply as a relatively unimportant context piece, a history too well known to have any real poetic value. Given a fair analysis, these bookends actually perform three important, preliminary cognitive functions before the main story begins.

First, the opening describes a familiar world schema, Britain's Arthurian past, in which to place the events of Gawain's main adventure, setting expectations both for genre and content. The second and third cognitive functions occur simultaneously: while the first two stanzas introduce a shift in the possibilities of the established world schema through a schematic accretion of words related to wonder and marvel, the poet's alliterative choices reinforce a language schema that prepares the reader to participate in the poet's discourse deviation from conventional narratives associated with Gawain. While the opening stanzas of the poem

introduce the text world and schemas at play within the poem and anticipate the poem's texture, in the final nine lines the *Gawain*-poet reiterates the poem's initial world schema in juxtaposition to the image of courtly love, hospitality, and "troth" presented in his Gawain. I provide the relevant text in full as reference for my analysis:

> Siþen þe sege and þe assaut watz sesed at Troye,
>
> Þe borȝ brittened and brent to brondez and askez,
>
> Þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wroȝt
>
> Watz tried for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe.
>
> Hit watz Ennias þe athel and his highe kynde,
>
> Þat siþen depreced prouinces, and patrounes bicome
>
> Welneȝe of al þe wele in þe west iles.
>
> Fro riche Romulus to Rome ricchis hym swyþe,
>
> With gret bobbaunce þat burȝe he biges vpon fyrst,
>
> And neuenes hit his aune nome, as hit now hat;
>
> Ticius to Tuskan and teldes bigynnes,
>
> Langaberde in Lumbardie lyftes vp homes,
>
> And fer ouer þe French flod, Felix Brutus
>
> On mony bonkkes ful brode Bretayn he settez
>
>> wyth wynne,
>
>> Where werre and wrake and wonder
>
>> Bi syþez hatz wont þerinne,
>
>> And oft boþe blysse and blunder

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Ful skete hatz skyfted synne.

Ande quen þis Bretayn watz bigges bi þis burn rych,

Bolde bredden þerinne, baret þat lofden,

In mony turned tyme tene þat wroȝten.

Mo ferlyes on þis folde han fallen here oft

Þen in any oþer þat I wot, syn þat ilk tyme.

Bot of alle þat here bult, of Bretaygne kynges

Ay watz Arthur þe hendest, as I haf herde telle.

Forþi an aunter in erde I attle to schawe,

Þat a selly in siȝt summe men hit holden,

And an outtrage awenture of Arthurez wonderez.

If ȝe wyl lysten þis laye bot on littel quile,

I schal telle hit as-tit, as I in toun herde,

     with tonge,

   As hit is stad and stoken

   In stori stif and stronge,

   With lel letteres loken,

   In londe so hatz ben longe.   (1-35)

…

Þus in Arthurus day þis aunter bitidde,

Þe Brutus bokez þerof beres wyttenesse;

Syþen Brutus, þe bolde burne, boȝed hider fyrst,

After þe segge and þe asaute watz sesed at Troye,

       Iwysse,

     Mony aunterez here-biforne

     Haf fallen suche er þis.

     Now þat bere þe croun of þorne,

     He bryng vus to his blysse! Amen.   (2522-30)

By the end of the fourteenth century, tracing Britain's founding through Brutus, Aeneas, and the Fall of Troy was not new but a re-telling of commonly known and admired twelfth-century sources — Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1135), Wace's *Le Roman de Brut* (c. 1160), and Layamon's *Brut* (c. 1190). Importantly for my analysis, the story is a shared cultural memory that shaped the identity of British history for several centuries and was an immediately recognizable world schema for medieval readers. Utilizing Anthony D. Smith's concept of *ethnie* — "a community of memory that transmits myths, symbols, and customs across generations" (*The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 13-15), Randy Schiff discusses the *Gawain*-poet's use of Trojanness as "a particularly clear example of such discursive community" (82). He claims that "the dream of a lost Trojan homeland is central to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight's* ethno-symbolic structure" (83), even while the poet "weaves Trojanness into a story of degeneration" (83), fading from a militarist empire to a "frivolous Camelot" (83). Schiff's further agenda is even less complimentary: namely, his disappointment with Gawain's behaviour as exemplified in his description of Gawain's only success as "founding a fashion accessory that may not outlive Camelot's current season" (Schiff 83). As I intend to show, the benefits of Gawain's achievements extend beyond sartorial concerns.

Smith's concept of *ethnie* and Schiff's connection between *ethnie* and the poem's opening

stanzas creates favourable ground for analysis. As a product of memory and discourse, *"ethnie*

fundamentally relies on poets and writers of history to consolidate living … ethnic

traditions" (Schiff 85, citing Smith 25). In cognitive terms, poem's opening functions as a

schema, linking localized identity and experience to a larger narrative. The *Gawain*-poet

rehearses Britain's Trojan connection in order to provide a common world schema in which other

readers could easily participate. In addition to the twelfth-century sources, the two contemporary

poems *Winner and Waster* and the alliterative *Morte Arthure* both include Trojan links in their

narratives surrounding British identity. Readerly-participation occurs almost without effort as

world schemas operate on first-order information; that is, information which reinforces broad

cultural schemas by rehearsing commonly held cognitive models associated with Arthurian

narratives. Theodore Silverstein asserts two material sources employed by the *Gawain*-poet: first,

the known conventions from troubadour poetry, providing categories for the several "matters" of

romance, support the reader "to deal with the matter of Britain seen, by grace of the well-known

Brut books, as an aspect of the larger matter of Troy" (191); second, the rhetorical practices of

romance writers "whose craft was conceived as adding a poetic *sensus* to the fixed *materia* of

their inherited subjects" (Silverstein 191). This dependence on and adaptation of pre-existing

knowledge help the *Gawain*-poet to establish a world schema in which his reader could easily

participate.

The speed with which the *Gawain*-poet moves through the genealogy in the first stanza

suggests that it was well known and easily recollected by a medieval audience. Less obvious is

the reason for its inclusion in a narrative about Gawain. Certainly the second stanza brings us to

expect an "outtrage awenture of Arthurez wonderez" (*SGGK* 28), but, as Silverstein notes, the

opening stanzas of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are found in no other Gawain story (190).[54]

Indeed, few scholars find it necessary to treat the opening stanzas as anything more than

historical inertia for an Arthurian romance; it is, after all, difficult to point to a greater purpose

for including these stanzas apart from the apparent connection to the Brut books at the end of the

poem. While the reference to the Brut books certainly lends schematic support to the incidents of

the poem, Silverstein points out that they "contain no incidents" of the sort outlined in *Sir

Gawain and the Green Knight* and that "probably some of *Gawain's* audience knew it" (192).[55]

In addition to the rarity of the opening stanza's material are the apparent problems in its

genealogy. Of the six men — *Þe tulk, Ennias, Romulus, Ticius, Langaberde,* and *Brutus* — none

escape from some sort of ambiguity, moral difficulty, error, or impertinence. "Þe tulk" (3) is

sufficiently vague, and has received support as a reference either to Antenor or to Aeneas.[56] In

the context of the following two lines, "Þe tulk þat þe trammes of tresoun þer wroȝt / Watz tried

for his tricherie, þe trewest on erthe. / Hit watz Ennias þe athel and his highe kynde" (3-5),

accepting the reading of Madden, Tolkien, and Gordon to equate Aeneas with *Þe tulk* is

preferable. Evidently Tolkien and Gordon foresaw the moral difficulty in such a reading and

explain that Aeneas' treachery "did not embarrass writers in English who wished to trace the

descent of the Britons from [Aeneas], through Brutus" (*SGGK,* 70). Thus, the lineage from Troy

to Camelot through Aeneas, Romulus, Brutus, and Arthur is, here, acceptable. Perhaps it is just

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[54] Silverstein remarks that, "Had the poet struck his harp and started with stanza 3: "þis kyng lay at Camylot vpon Krystmasse," his audience would at once have understood him: that too was a conventional opening of an Arthurian adventure and its seven straight words would have keyed a particular expectation" (191).

[55] See, also, Moll, *Before Malory,* pp. 140-156, "Frustrated Readers," and Putter, "Finding Time for Romance."

[56] See Tolkien and Gordon, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* 70.

all in the family, then, but there remain more questions about what *ethnie* and this genealogy

contribute to the poem's initial schemas and interpretation, and what effects those schemas

produce in the reader.

As the *Gawain*-poet recounts the Fall of Troy and the founding of Rome, Tuscany,

Lombardy, Britain, and Arthur's court, he generates the audience's expectation of *wonder* and

suggests how it will affect the coming story. In order to achieve a textual depth for wonder in the

opening stanzas of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* the *Gawain*-poet chooses alliteration to

evoke multiple text worlds and make shifting between genres — historical legend and fairy-tale

— both possible and expected. The *Gawain*-poet employs several schemas related to wonder to

introduce two important conceptual metaphors at play in the poem: LIFE IS A GAME; and, TIME/

LIFE IS CYCLICAL. In the first stanza, as described through the conquests of Aeneas, Romulus,

Ticius, Langaberde and Brutus, violence and war are framed as wonderful. In the second stanza's

description of Britain and Arthur's reign, wonder shifts and becomes marvellous, strange, and

indicates the presence of *faerie* or the otherworld.

The opening stanza's transition from "history" to *faerie* relies on the poet's development

of *texture.* Stockwell describes texture, somewhat obliquely, as "the experiential quality of

textuality" (*Texture,* 14). Textuality, he explains, includes the "aesthetic senses of value,

attraction, utility and their opposites," the movement "from feeling to meaning" (Stockwell,

Texture, 14), and the "outcome of the workings of shared cognitive mechanics" (1). The

alliteration in the opening four lines of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* highlights the events of

Troy's downfall, drawing our attention to the historical details. The softer *s* and *b* sounds of the

first and second lines — "S̲iþen þe s̲ege and þe as̲s̲aut watz s̲es̲ed at Troye, / Þe b̲orӡ b̲rittened

and b̲rent to b̲rondez and askez" — emphasize the tragedy and sad wonder of the collapse of a

civilization, while the hard dental *t* of the third and fourth lines — "Þe t̲ulk þat þe t̲rammes of

t̲resoun þer wroȝt / Watz t̲ried for his t̲richerie, þe t̲rewest on er̲the" — directs our attention and

memories to several words that will be important for Gawain's story: *tulk* (hero)*, trammes* (plot)*,*

tresoun (treason, deceit)*, tried* (judicially tried)*, tricherie* (treachery)*, trewest* (truest, faithful)*.*

The poet ably summarizes nearly two thousand years of history in the remaining lines of the first

stanza, while the alliteration in the bob and wheel draw special attention to the violence and

marvel of Britain's legendary past, where Brutus' settling of the land set a precedent for "werre,"

"wrake" and "wonder."

Throughout the opening stanza, the *Gawain*-poet employs several schemas related to

"wonder" and "marvel" to engage the reader in multiple text worlds. In "Time and Tempo in *Sir*

Gawain and the Green Knight," Ian Bishop sees the poem's opening as the slamming "shut of a

volume of history: the history of a distant era that ended in disaster, with Troy 'brittened and

brent to brondes and askes'" (611), and Christine Chism notes how its beginning looks back to

"halting march of violence, treachery, and ancient glory" (68). Ioana Bolintineau points out that

the narrator's promised marvel in the prologue — "an outtrage awenture" (29) — serves as a

model for the Green Knight's own marvel that he reveals to Gawain at the end of the story,

namely that Morgan Le Fay contrived the entire plot to challenge Arthur and extend her enmity

toward Guinevere: "Ho wayned me þis wonder your wyttez to reue, / For to haf greued Gaynour

and gart hir to dyȝe" (2459-60). She argues that against the "ominous background" of Britain's

legendary history, the narrator's marvel "gains not just in glamour and authority, but in

significance" (Bolintineau 175). Bolintineau draws on Caroline Walker Bynum's work in

Metamorphosis and Identity to support this claim, explaining that "in medieval narratives, wonders are all the more striking and powerful, all the more inspiring of awe and dread, when they 'are recounted in conjunction with troubled and human events such as war, crime, or corruption'" (Bolintineau 175, citing Bynum 71). Moreover, Bynum explains that,

> If, to theologians, chroniclers, and preachers, the wonderful was indeed often the strange, the rare, and the inexplicable, it was never the *merely* strange or the *simply* inexplicable. It was a strange that mattered, that pointed beyond itself to meaning. (Bynum, 71-2)

By connecting the world of human experience to historic and promised marvels, the poet invites his reader to participate in an "awenture" of familiar cultural memories about Britain and Arthurian legend, while preparing readers for reflection on broader concerns about chastity, love and courtly conduct.

In the opening stanza, the *Gawain*-poet develops a text world around violence, treachery, and imperialism, but it does not come to fruition, at least not in any conventional manner. Rather, as he develops the second stanza, he chooses alliteration that expands the first stanza's connection of wonder and violence with a sense of wonder related to adventure, strangeness, and marvel. Each of the chosen words shifts the reader's awareness from history and legend toward romance, *faerie*, and a world that explores well-rehearsed (and mnemonically more inert) stories and symbols in a cognitively novel manner. While Britain's legendary past and its reliance on violence in conflict and expansion is outlined in the first stanza, the second stanza includes a subtle cognitive shift as the poet extends the semantic range of "wonder" from awe and dread to include the marvellous and the strange. At the end of the first stanza, the poet links "wonder"

with "werre" and "wrake" through alliteration (line 16). In the following stanza, the poet

introduces four different words connected to wonder — "ferlyes" (23); "aunter" (27);

"selly" (28), and "outtrage" (29) — before returning to "Arthurez wonderez" (29) just before the

bob and wheel. "Arthurez wonderez" do recall Brutus' "werre and wrake and wonder," but the

intervening alterations have extended what can be counted as a wonder. For "ferlyes," Tolkien

and Gordon supply, "a marvel, wonder" (*SGGK,* 180) but also suggest an Old English root

feorlic, meaning far off, alien, or strange (Clark Hall, *Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary,* 116).

"Aunter" is an adoption from *auenture*, "adventure, strange event" (*SGGK* 163). "Selly"

modifies the earlier meaning of wonder to include a sense of marvelousness, excellence and,

again from Old English *seldlic,* rare, strange, wondrous (Clark Hall, 302). Tolkien and Gordon

gloss "outtrage" as "exceedingly strange" (*SGGK* 203). Each of these words amends the poet's

use of *wonderez* when he returns to it at line twenty-nine: where his initial use conveyed an

historical and political sense as a formative event in the founding of nations, his later use —

"Arthurez wonderez" (*SGGK* 29) — includes the former sense while extending its meaning to

include marvel, strangeness, adventure, and spectacle. Through a series of alliterations connected

to wonder the poet joins text worlds, conflates cognitive models and prepares the reader's

attention for the ways in which the poem will employ and extend Arthurian romance, and

Gawain-related conventions.

Yet even while the *Gawain*-poet shifts attention away from generic conventions, he

situates "þis laye" within its oral and literary tradition by reminding his audience that he will

"telle hit as-tit, as I in toun herde, / with tonge, / As hit is stad and stoken / In stori stif and

stronge, / With lel letteres loken" (30-1) and returns to this frame at the end of the poem: "Þus in

Arthurus day þis aunter bitidde, / Þe Brutus bokez þerof beres wyttenesse" (*SGGK* 2522-3). His purpose in doing so seems twofold. First, the encircling frame situates Gawain's adventure within a believable history while cognitively separating the main story as a kind of safe ground in which to develop its allegorical nuances. Second, the frame, as a space for novel, unconventional expression, allows the poet to develop intricacy and, with it, cognitive models that express a wider understanding of the self.

Structure and Movement

There are two adventures intricately interwoven throughout *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:* the first, told in fitts one and four, follows the Green Knight's exchange-of-blows challenge at Arthur's court and the requital beheading match outside the Green Chapel a year later. Described through fitts two and three, the second adventure outlines the test of Gawain's conduct both in chastity and in hospitality toward a host. One of the *Gawain*-poet's great achievements in crafting these adventures is the intricacy with which he interlaces the individual elements of each adventure-line together. J.R.R. Tolkien and E.V. Gordon note how

> the three blows of the return match to the three mornings of the temptation, the
> 'nirt in þe nek' to the failure to fulfill the contract of exchange, even the green and
> gold of the girdle gleaming in the castle bedroom, where Gawain had no cause to
> associate it with his mysterious adversary at Camelot (and where only an
> unusually alert reader is likely at once to recall where he last met those colours)

— is almost equal to the interlocking of the pentangle itself, 'vchone halched in

oþer, þat non ende hade' (657)" (*SGGK*, xiv-xv).

This intricacy creates beauty, as many scholars after Tolkien and Gordon have reiterated. What

has received less attention are the poem's cognitive underpinnings and how they work to produce

what many readers identify as a quintessential Middle English romance. The poem's intricacy

extends beyond its structure to include aesthetic details, emblems, poetic form that expand upon

generic conventions of romance. In large part, this intricacy owes its depth to the *Gawain*-poet's

careful attention to narrative structure.

In his work on the *Gawain*-poet, A.C. Spearing follows Tolkien and Gordon's earlier

criticism by pointing to the poem's structural composition and how the elements of the plot are

not "linked consecutively, but inserted one into another" (*The Gawain-Poet,* 181) as

demonstration of the poem's beauty. He differs from Tolkien and Gordon, however, in calling the

poem's intricacies and their effects "'pure' narratives; works which are narratives and nothing

else, in which the burden of interpretation, of finding meaning and coherence in the events

narrated, is thrown entirely upon the audience" (Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet,* 172). But in his

generosity to the reader, does Spearing look past the poet's employment of specific cognitive

patterning to achieve meaning in his poem? Not entirely. Spearing also praises the poem's

narrative *shape* as a means for cognitive intention:

> The poet has often been praised for the skill with which he links these elements
>
> together, but he has not perhaps been sufficiently praised for the way in which he
>
> makes this linkage itself convey the meaning of his poem. … the story is so
>
> arranged that it *is* the poem's meaning; or, to put it differently, meaning is not only

defined by style, analysis of motive, characterization, and so on, but is enacted by

the shape of the narrative itself. (*The Gawain-Poet,* 181)

For his purposes, Spearing is on the right track, and his suggestion that structure enacts meaning

for the reader is insightful. But his denial of a sequential pattern in the structure of the poem

limits his reading's potential for mnemonic recollection.

The structure of Gawain's adventures engages two schemas related to time. First,

Gawain's adventure functions historically as a sequential expansion of events from the fall of

Troy, Rome, the founding of Britain, to King Arthur's court. Second, as a meditation on the

interrelationship between mind, body, and spirit, Gawain's journey also represents a *concentric*

movement, welding Gawain's physical and spiritual trials into the poet's wider concerns

regarding chastity, hospitality, and courtly love. Again, Tolkien and Gordon's summary is best:

The outcome of the beheading match, and so the life of Gawain, is made to

depend — though Gawain does not know it — on his conduct at the castle; and

the temptation, primarily a test of chastity and of honourable behaviour towards a

host, becomes through the additional device of the 'exchange of winnings' yet

another trial both of courage and of truth to the pledged word. (*SGGK,* xiv)

Tolkien and Gordon do well to point out that part of the poem's beauty depends on its structural

ingenuity, but their emphasis looks past how the poem's ingenuity works on the reader.

The following sections examine the embodied schemas, metaphors, and movement

mnemonics underlying the *Gawain*-poet's descriptive techniques. First, I analyze how the

Gawain-poet introduces and develops the cognitive metaphor LIFE IS A GAME during the Green

Knight's challenge to Arthur's court. Second, I discuss the poet's technique of blending

description and its effect on perception and mnemonic cues. Third, I attend to the image of the pentangle and its significance for an embodied model of existence. Finally, I discuss processional and concentric movement, as an example of the mnemonic tool *ductus,* that the poet employs to focus on Gawain's perception throughout his journey, the exchange of winnings game, and the resolution of the Green Knight's game.

<center>*Description and Cognitive Metaphor*</center>

The *Gawain*-poet dances within the semantic range for wonder that he creates early on through war, imperialism, and national identity on the one hand and fantasy, faerie, and the marvellous on the other. In *An Introduction to the Gawain-poet,* Ad Putter notes how the *Gawain*-poet's invocation of Gawain's adventure as "'an outtrage of Arthurex wonderez' motivates the reader to compare the story against the background of Arthurian romance" (Putter 40) in order to elucidate his innovations of perception and cognition through the tale. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* the subtle blending of the marvellous and the verisimilar contrasts the *Gawain*-poet's other poems. Unlike the dream sequence in *Pearl,* set off with a clear description of the narrator falling asleep — "I felle vpon þat floury flaȝt, / Suche odour to my herneȝ schot; / I slode vpon a slepyng-slaȝte, / On þat precios perle wythouten spot" (57-60)[57] — the marvels of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are closely tied to conscious experience so that they are nearly indistinguishable from reality. Indeed, the poem's "curious blend of realism and moral seriousness on the one hand, and marvel and fantasy on the other" (Putter 38) encourages

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[57] All citations of *Pearl* taken from Gordon, E.V., ed. *Pearl*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, unless otherwise stated.

consideration of the underlying techniques used to achieve it. Stockwell also identifies such blending, pointing out that the "patterning and symbolism throughout the poem encourage a reader to regard the genre as a fairy-tale, like a moral fable" (*Cognitive Poetics,* 130).

Putter suggests that an effect of the repeated transitions between "reality" and "fantasy" is "to produce moments where it becomes nearly impossible to decide in which of the two worlds we might be" (55). While Putter's observation is correct, the technique is not only intended to cause instability; rather, it serves the interconnected model of perception, cognition, and memory from medieval psychology which posited several underlying and interconnected cognitive operations within the brain's ventricular system. Although the number of faculties of the brain (also referred to as the inner senses) varied from three to six in medieval psychology, belief in a tripartite ventricular structure of the brain was commonplace. There was general agreement that the first ventricle contained the *sensus communis,* which consolidated data from the five external senses, and an imaginative capacity, *fantasia* or *imaginativa,* for relating both perceived and remembered images. Abstract cognitive functions occurred in the second ventricle, while the third ventricle contained memory. This model, based on Aristotelian theory and Galenic physiology, held that cognitive processes — the common sense, imagination, and memory — occurred within physical organs just as respiration occurs in the lungs or circulation in the heart and vascular system.

The *Gawain*-poet depends on this model of cognition, even exemplifies it, during the descriptive section of the Green Knight's appearance at Camelot.[58] Throughout these scenes, the

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[58] Theodore Silverstein remarks that, in addition to the *Gawain*-poet's employment of Celtic and French source material, "his own creativity has been allowed such intrusions of matter as the historical introduction and conclusion … the allegorical commentary on the pentangle, the two stanzas on the changing seasons which serve as a bridge between the first and second divisions of the poem, and such set descriptive pieces as the accounts of Bertilak's castle and the winter weather and landscape of the hero's quest" ("*Sir Gawain,* Dear Brutus, and Britain's Fortunate Founding" 190). I would add the description of the Green Knight to Silverstein's list.

Gawain-poet exploits the connection between perception, imagination, and memory common in medieval psychology to represent a world in which LIFE, and several of its subsidiary parts, are understood as GAME. Stockwell identifies the cognitive metaphor LIFE IS A GAME as a main structuring element of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*Cognitive Poetics*, 128). The poet develops this metaphor through four subsidiary metaphors related to specific aspects of courtly life that contribute to the central metaphor. First is the Green Knight's beheading challenge that makes Gawain's adventure necessary. The second and third occur simultaneously during Bertilak's exchange of winnings game. The second describes the HUNT AS A GAME throughout the three days of Bertilak's hunting expeditions, while the third describes how LOVE IS A GAME during the hospitality test between Gawain and Lady Bertilak. The fourth, as seen in Gawain's perceived moral failing, makes the comparison that REDEMPTION IS A GAME. To examine the medieval notion of "game" as it relates to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* I will deal first with the HUNT AS A GAME metaphor before moving onto a discussion of the pentangle and its meanings connected to perception, and finally to the two remaining subsidiary metaphors, LOVE IS A GAME and REDEMPTION IS A GAME.

I begin by examining the HUNT AS A GAME metaphor and its importance to understanding the other *game* metaphors. Important is understanding the semantic differences between "sport" and "game" in Gawain's context. In "The Game of the Courtly Hunt," Ryan Judkins examines the late medieval usage of "sport" and "game." The concept of game is vitally important to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and to understanding the cognitive implications of the Green Knight's presence and challenge. Judkins points out that, in medieval usage, "'sport' and 'game' were close to synonymous" (74) but that "game" specifically referred to hunting, while "sport"

referred more generally to entertainment (74-75). His analysis of the *par-force* hunt in manuals, such as the *Master of Game,* the *Tretyse off Huntyng,* and the *Book of St. Albans*, explains how

> Contrary to the modern usage, "sport" seems to have had no suggestion of
> "contest," though "game" did. For medieval hunters, the hunt was a
> "game" (entertaining pursuit, activity, contest); the prey was "game" (object of a
> hunt); and the entertainment derived from the hunt was "game" (entertainment,
> delight). (Judkins 74)

"Game" implied greater immediate risk, higher stakes, and demanded more physical exertion than sport, which tended to focus on independent talents (Judkins, 75). Judkins points out that, "In order to have the greatest game, the contest with the most risks, the manuals argue that one should go to great lengths to find the hart most able to evade the hunters and escape, and give that hart the opportunity to do so" (77). There were professional hunters who employed more efficient methods of capturing desirable animals. Evidently, such methods were seen as ignoble for the aristocracy who wanted "game" — the hunt, prey, delight — and not just a meal. This kind of "game," organized for maximum risk and exertion, was a purely aristocratic event. Its relationship to the gathering of food was of less importance.

The HUNT AS A GAME metaphor is central to the Green Knight's challenge and allows the *Gawain*-poet's engagement with the LIFE IS A GAME metaphor. The Green Knight's large size and equally huge weapon — he is "enker-grene" (*SGGK* 150), rides a "grene hors gret and þikke" (175), and has a "hoge" axe (208) — intimidate the merry-makers attending Arthur's Christmas feast and quickly set a threatened sense to the courtiers' perception. The narrator describes them as "stowned" (301) at first sight, and yet further stilled after the Green Knight's challenge: "If he hem stowned vpon fyrst, stiller were þanne/ Alle þe heredmen in halle, þe hyȝ

and þe loȝe" (301-2). The Green Knight is threatening; his challenge is threatening. But such posturing is necessary to raise the risk and reward of his challenge, which is critical to the success of his "Crystemas gomen" (*SGGK* 283). He must establish that the game will be entertaining on some level, posture himself as a suitable and attractive "game" for the test, and demonstrate sufficient danger to those involved. Evidently, he succeeds, for Arthur's blood rushes to his face, "schot for scham" (*SGGK* 317), he becomes "wroth as wynde" (319) as "did all þat þer were" (321). The Green Knight ensures the entertainment value of his challenge by proposing that he receive the first blow. Yet, while it is intuitively expected that he will not live to supply the return blow, the marvel of his appearance — both in timing, as his arrival seems to come in response to Arthur's demand for a marvel (*SGGK* 91b-97), and through his physical presence, strange and threatening — suggests he may not be easily felled.

These perceptions add to the Green Knight's suitability as prey in terms of the hunt. His challenge clearly puts himself at a disadvantage, yet his arrogance casts doubt on any idea of an easy win. He does state the rules of play, but the sheer folly of such a contest suggests either that he is a fool (which is clearly not the case) or has withheld information pertinent to successfully winning. Doing so creates the requisite danger for whomever accepts his challenge. Once the game is clear — "If any so hardy in þis hous holdez hymseluen, / … Þat dar stifly strike a strok for an oþer, / I schal gif hym of my gyft þys giserne ryche (*SGGK* 285, 287-8) — his perceptible prowess increases both the risk of loss and potential renown.

Neither Arthur, Gawain, nor anyone else present at the Christmas feast can understand what a search for and discovery of the Green Knight will entail, but that is part of the risk. That Arthur accepts the Green Knight's challenge demonstrates the importance of the game. Both in

terms of risk and reward, it is fit for a king. On the surface, it is tempting to think that the risk is

death and the reward of survival. But loss of life is not the intended risk of the challenge, it is

rather a danger involved in playing the game. The chief risk is deeper, both more personal and

sociological, and draws from the *Gawain*-poet's interest in redefining knighthood and courtly

love. In an interview concerning his translation of *SGGK,* Tolkien describes how the poet's "care

in formal construction serves also to make the tale a better vehicle of the 'moral' which the

author has imposed on his antique material" ("Introduction," *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,*

3).[59] The *Gawain*-poet has, according to Tolkien and Gordon, "re-drawn according to his own

faith his ideal of knighthood, making it a Christian knighthood" (3), and attempts "to preserve

the graces of 'chivalry' and the courtesies, while wedding them, or by wedding them, to

Christian morals, to marital fidelity, and indeed married love" (5). Of the poem's intent, T.A.

Shippey argues that "it is designed to lead the knight up to a moral crux, a clash of values, in

which he is obliged to abandon either his social courtesy or his individual honour — choosing

the former" (246–47). Lawrence Warner's recent reading argues that Gawain's temptation at

Hautdesert should be interpreted instead through the "Imperious Host" motif, whereby the host

> will assault or even kill any guest who does not follow to the letter his commands,
>
> however contrary to Christian norms, and the benevolent host offers his wife to
>
> his guest as a sign of respect and good will. … while sex with the lady would in
>
> most circumstances be a grave violation, as the theologians, anthropologists, and
>
> indeed he himself would agree, it is equally possible that in the moral world of

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[59] Tolkien's comments are taken from a radio talk he gave after a 1953 broadcast of his translation.

Hautdesert any refusal of her offers, no matter how gracious, might be *lodly*,

horrible. ("Mary, Unmindful of Her Knight" 266)

Success requires that Gawain must negotiate a point beyond the requirements of courtly love, hospitality laws, and preservation of his chastity. Within the conventions of courtly love, there are no good choices for Gawain. And this is exactly what the poet seeks to demonstrate.

Warner's reading reinforces my point that the risk of the Green Knight's challenge involves more than the fear of loss of life. Yes, the game's immediate demand is the wager of one's body and soul, an agreement to exchange potentially fatal blows, but the deeper risk is in the failure (and subsequent loss) of identity. This is established during the Green Knight's charring speech to Arthur's court which brings into question the status of courtly ideals:

'What, is þis Arþures hous,' quoþ þe haþel þenne,

'þat al þe rous rennes of þurȝ ryalmes so many?

Where is now your sourquydrye and your conquestes,

Your gryndellayk and your greme, and your grete wordes?

Now is þe reuel and þe renoun of þe Rounde Table

Ouerwalt wyth a worde of on wyȝes speche,

For al dares fore drede withoute dynt schewed!' (*SGGK* 309-15)

Evidently, the Green Knight holds to a sense of nobility that places martial talent and confidence in one's identity at the fore, regardless of the "worde of on wyȝes speche," and Arthur's reeling shame signals that there is a ring of truth in the Green Knight's rebuke. But the Green Knight's "gomen" is not just another wonder to satisfy Arthur's curiosity and desire for entertainment. The relevance of the Green Knight's appearance, presence, and verbal challenge depend upon the

conceptual metaphor that LIFE IS A GAME through which the *Gawain*-poet can execute a stress

test, or compatibility trial, designed to determine how thoroughly (if at all) the strictures of

courtly love and the tenets of chastity can be blended.

The physical descriptions which follow each of the Green Knight's fantastic traits blend

expected norms and wondrous rapture to create an impression of the Green Knight as suitable

game. The *Gawain*-poet achieves this blend by guiding attention toward the Green Knight's

exceptional qualities before shifting attention back to his more conventional features, and then

repeating the cycle. This technique creates an awareness of two seamlessly interconnected

worlds — that of Arthurian romance and of fourteenth century courtly life — each continually

feeding into the other. But however smooth each transition might feel, the connection between

both worlds is not seamless; there is a joining tissue, a necessary bridge between image and

memory, to feed perception into cognition. That bridge is the body, the first site of perception and

imagination, and its ability to interact with images.

In the initial appearance of the Green Knight, the *Gawain*-poet's description slides

between examples of "fayryȝe" (*SGGK* 240) and verisimilar perception. The Green Knight's

entry into Camelot's Christmas festivities takes only one line — "Þer hales in at þe halle dor an

aghlich mayster" (*SGGK* 136) — but his description rolls on for more than a hundred lines

before the poet turns back to the larger scene and Arthur's greeting, "Wyȝe, welcum iwys to þis

place" (*SGGK* 252). Throughout, the *Gawain*-poet describes the Green Knight, the horse he rides

on, and his fearsome axe. He begins each section of description with modifiers that suggest

marvel: the Green Knight is "aghlich" (*SGGK* 136), "Half etayn" (140), and "enker-

grene" (150). His horse is also green, "gret and þikke" (175), and his axe is "hoge and

105

vnmete" (208). Each adjective steers expectation toward wonder and an other-worldly origin of the Green Knight. Indeed, the Christmas folk in Arthur's hall come to equate the Green Knight with "fantoum and fayryʒe" (*SGGK* 240).

The Green Knight is a large man in peak physical condition, and he is very strange: he is *green,* huge and carries a magical power that allows him to speak through his own severed head. But in order to make the existence of such an outrageous Knight real *and* persuasive, the *Gawain*-poet uses an arming *topos* to normalize the Green Knight's excessive presence. Indeed, after establishing the Green Knight's verdant hue and size, the poet's description of the Green Knight's "bak," "brest," "bodi," "wombe," and "wast"[60] does little to extend his stature as an outsider to courtly life. In addition to satisfying Arthur's demand for "wonderez" (29), the Green Knight's "fayryʒe" (*SGGK* 240) traits and his physical features repeatedly reach for ideal and unequaled forms — everything about him appears larger, *streʒt*-er, and *bryʒt*-er, than those around him:

> A stryte cote ful streʒt, þat stek on his sides,
>
> A mere mantile abof, mensked withinne
>
> With pelue pured apert, þe pane ful clene
>
> With blyþe blaunner ful bryʒt, …
>
> Heme wel-haled hose of þat same,
>
> Þat spenet on his sparlyr, and clene spures vnder
>
> Of bryʒt golde, vpon silk bordes barred ful ryche,
>
> And scholes vnder schankes þere þe schalk rides. (*SGGK* 152-60ff)

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[60] These lines read: "For of bak and of brest al were his bodi sturne, / Both his wombe and his wast were worthy smale, / And all his fetures folʒande, in forme þat he hade, / ful clene" (*SGGK* 142-146).

As the guests first perceive the Green Knight, the *Gawain*-poet uses an image of fullness to describe several pieces of the Green Knight's armour: "cote ful streȝt" (*SGGK* 152), a "mantile … ful clene, / With blyþe blaunner ful bryȝt" (154-5), and "spures … ful ryche" (159). This cognitive metaphor, that FULLNESS IS RICHNESS or PLENTY, indicates capacity, a maximum state — the Green Knight is, in several ways, the fullest embodiment of a knight.

But apart from these descriptions, the rest of his *blazon* normalizes rather than exaggerates his presence. Putter points out that what makes the Green Knight so odd is that,

> in almost any other respect, this green knight is entirely normal. The clothes he wears — and the *Gawain*-poet describes them appreciatively and precisely — are simply those befitting a fashionable courtier. Descriptions of Gawain later in the poem show him dressed in very similar garb. (57)

After each marvelous trait, the lengthy descriptions of his more "normal" qualities serve to mitigate the perception of the Green Knight's "selly" (*SGGK* 28) nature. For example, after describing the Green Knight as an "aglich mayster" (*SGGK* 136), the poet explains that,

> On þe most on þe molde on mesure hyghe;
>
> Fro þe swyre to þe swange so sware and so þik,
>
> And his lyndes and his lymes so longe and so grete (137-9).

No one from Camelot is as large as the Green Knight but the extending modifier "so" ("…so sware and so þik … so longe and so grete") creates the suggestion that the Green Knight is from beyond this world. But the alliterating *m, sw,* and *l* words — *molde, mesure, swyre, swange, sware, lyndes, lymes,* and *longe* — point readers to easily recognizable root words from Old French, Anglo-Saxon, and Norse. The Green Knight is certainly strange, but his roots are local.

Additionally, the physical descriptions that follow the Green Knight's "selly" qualities rely on conventional images of knightly armour. Apart from the initial marvels that evoke strangeness and the richness of his armour, his *blazon* challenges rather than affirms expectations of an other-worldly origin. The description of the Green Knight as "Half etayn" (*SGGK* 140) furthers his image as very large, even gigantic, but the description following the image might apply to any number of great knights:

Bot mon most I algate mynn hym to bene,

And þat þe myriest in his muckel þat myȝt ride;

For of bak and of brest al were his bodi sturne,

Both his wombe and his wast were worthily smale,

And all his fetures folȝande, in form þat he hade,

ful clene. (*SGGK* 141-146)

The Green Knight's remaining description adheres to conventions for several Arthurian knights but most importantly to those in Gawain's *blazon* a few stanzas later. The descriptions of the Green Knight and Gawain both follow a similar arming *topos*, detailing one section of armor after another in a series of readily recognizable images.

Comparing the *blazons* of Gawain and the Green Knight reveals descriptions that blend rather than define the presence of each knight. In his article "Armour II," Derek Brewer discusses the long literary history of such arming *topoi* from early evidence in the Babylonian epic *Gilgamesh* to the definite beginnings in the arming sequences of Homer's *Iliad*. He identifies a pattern of description which names, in order, a hero's greaves, corselet, sword, shield,

helmet, and spear ("Armour II" 175-6). On the morning of his departure, Gawain's *blazon* describes his armour, thus:

> Fyrst a tulé tapit ty3t ouer þe flet,
>
> And miche watz þe gyld gere þat glent þeralofte;
>
> Þe stif mon steppez þeron, and þe stel hondelez,
>
> Dubbed in a dublet of a dere tars,
>
> And syþen a crafty capados, closed aloft,
>
> Þat wyth a bry3t blaunner was bounded withinne. (*SGGK* 566-73ff)

As formal description of armour, this *blazon* exemplifies elements typical of arming *topoi* found in epic and heroic literature well into the sixteenth century (Brewer 176). The difference between the two knights' descriptions is the lack of accompanying superlatives. For example, the poet focuses on Gawain's armour in appropriate succession — *tulé tapit, dublet, capados,* and *blaunner* — without mention of how "stre3t," "clene," "bry3t," or "ryche" each of these pieces is perceived. They just are. The lack of superlatives emphasizes Gawain's armour as things in addition to his person, not of his being. For the Green Knight, however, the poet's focus on his physicality, the psychological impact his presence produces, and the guests' interpretation of it heighten awareness of the Knight's suitability for his proposed "Crystemas gomen" (*SGGK* 283).

As conventional *blazon,* these passages might describe any number of knights preparing for battle or adventure. But the *Gawain*-poet's attention to vocabulary and movement — between the fantastic and the conventional in these sections — generate the sense of the Green Knight as both quite different from and yet very much like the other knights of Arthur's court. The effect of this technique is to encourage mnemonic assimilation of the strange images by linking them with

familiar ones — i.e., the "aglich mayster," whose presence is dangerous and threatening, remains, nonetheless, a knight much like Gawain. It is curious that a passage intended to explicate the Green Knight's distinct marvels also reveals his commonality, as if he, too, might sit down at Arthur's Table in merriment alongside the other knights.

Such shifting serves to normalize the Green Knight's fantastic qualities, rather than exaggerate them, which I see the *Gawain*-poet doing for two reasons. The first is to establish that the Green Knight and his challenge pose a *real* threat with *real* consequences. The second is to reinforce that all of Gawain's tests fall into the metaphor, LIFE AS A GAME. As Judkins notes, without risk and the reward of renown, there is no *game*. Indeed, the greatest game demanded great risk and expenditure of effort (77), and on that level the Green Knight's challenge to Arthur's court, the exchange of winnings game, and the final axe blow at the Green Chapel fulfill the expectations for his "Crystemas gomen" (*SGGK* 283).

The Pentangle: Concentricity, Ductus, and Moving Inward

Beyond the *blazons* and blended schemas that incite mnemonic recall, the *Gawain*-poet develops an interconnected model of mind and body in the image of the pentangle to situate Gawain's perceptions and experience as phenomenologically rooted. The richness of the image covers a broad swathe of cultural resonances that have been covered by several scholars. For the present purpose, I follow Brewer's suggestion that "the description of the pentangle may well be described as the core of the assumptions implicit and explicit in the poem, which the story and

style exemplify" ("Armour II" 178). However usefully broad his suggestion is, exactly which

implicit and explicit assumptions the pentangle represents remains a point of conversation.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* Gawain's emblem, the pentangle, signals a

divergent script or track[61] from conventional Gawain romance scripts.[62] Here, the *Gawain*-poet

focuses attention on five interconnected layers of identity commonly understood in the late

fourteenth century: the five wits, the five senses, the five wounds (of Christ), the five Joys (of

Mary), and the five social virtues. Each group is represented by a side of the pentangle, and its

interlocking, unending continuity combines to represent the perfection of Gawain's unerring

reputation. But beyond this, examining Gawain's emblem reveals a nuanced cognitive schema

through which the *Gawain*-poet directs attention: first, to Gawain's suitability as a participant in

the Green Knight's *game*; and, second, as a gloss of the medieval psychological schema which

understood the nature of body, mind, and soul as fundamentally interconnected.

The Pentangle connects Gawain to several widely accepted cultural models. As "a syngne

þat Salamon set sumquyle / In bytoknyng of trawþe" (*SGGK* 624-5), it recalls the wisdom and

wealth of the Old Testament king to protect Gawain's *trawþe*; and as an "endeles knot" (*SGGK*

630), its image is one of unity, perfection, divinity. Its use is unique to the *Gawain*-poet and

points to a shift in its associated meanings. Once a Pythagorean symbol of health and a sign of

perfection for neo-Platonists and Gnostics, the pentangle became associated in the Middle Ages

with use as a magic charm to control demons before being appropriated by Christianity as a

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[61] I will be utilizing Peter Stockwell's description of "script," and "track" from *Cognitive Poetics* (2002): "the conceptual structure drawn from memory to assist in understanding utterances is a schema that was first called a script" (77); as scripts offer a prototypical experience, tracks are the differing variations that that script may take.

[62] Tolkien reiterates Madden's (1839) editorial observation that Gawain's arms are described nowhere else with this device (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* note on line 620, 92-3).

symbol referring sometimes to the five letters of the name of Jesus or his five wounds (Tolkien and Gordon, *SGGK* 93). Evidently, the pentangle held enough cultural weight to justify the poet's generalization of its ubiquity in England: "Englych hit callen / Oueral, as I here, þe endeles knot" (*SGGK* 629-30). The poet's confidence in his audience's comprehension of the pentangle's various meanings also warranted its use as a common reference schema, even if its only attestation outside of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is mathematical.[63]

The pentangle's "fyue wyttez" (*SGGK* 640) and the "fyue fyngres" (641) connect to the medieval schema of an embodied soul where the inner "wits"[64] — perception, imagination, cognition, intellect, and memory — cooperate with the five senses of the body: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. In his study on the senses in the Middle Ages, C.M. Woolgar notes that, in turn, the "senses both operated as receptors of information and gave out tangible and intangible information about the individual, which was capable of changing the character of the perceiver and the perceived" (13). This back-and-forth action and inaction, agency and passivity, influencing the environment while always being affected by it illustrates a recurring conceptual metaphor of the period: that existence is a balance of external, environmental agents (spatial, cosmological, astronomical, humoral, seasonal, etc.) operating within one's body in relation to one's soul.

The model proposed in the intersection between Gawain's senses and wits draws on an embodied understanding of intellect as the enlivening function of the body that emerged out of the twelfth century recovery of Aristotelian texts. One of Aristotle's greatest medieval

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[63] Tolkien and Gordon note that until 1646 the only other English reference to the pentangle was by Thomas Bradwardine (archbishop of Canterbury 1349) in his work, *Geometria Speculativa.*

[64] See Whiteford, "Rereading Gawain's five wits," pp. 225ff.

proponents, Thomas Aquinas, argues for an embodied source of intellect in his assertion of the body's functional role in cognition: "We must assert that the intellect which is the principle of intellectual operation is the form of the human body" (Kreeft 253). It may be tempting, as Rowan Williams points out, to read Aquinas' assertion primarily as an operation of intellect, that the body is relegated to an ancillary role by the mind, in an "impenitently Hellenic system" (*The Wound of Knowledge* 133). Any fear of Neoplatonic dichotomies need not draw concern here. Instead, Williams points to the nuance in Aquinas' understanding of *intellectus,* explaining that

> *intellectus* for Aquinas is a rich and comprehensive term that is totally
> misrepresented if understood as referring to the discursive intellect. Its central
> meaning seems to be that it designates the human subject as receptive and
> responsive. Receptive to the impressions of "intelligible form," discernible order
> and structure, in the realities it encounters, and responsive in its engagement with
> objects, working on them and willing things about them. (*The Wound of*
> *Knowledge* 133)

As an interaction with and response to, encountered reality, intellect results from the intersection of sense (the "fyngres") and thought (the "wyttez"). To rephrase Aquinas, the form of the body — its aliveness, its sensory interactions, its receptivity — is the principle of intellectual operation, the animating function of the human mind.

Being both "fautlez in his fyue wyttez" and never failing in his "fyve fyngres" (*SGGK* 640-1), Gawain embodies an ideal of spiritual and physical experience. And instead of having Gawain trusting solely in his martial or courtly prowess, the *Gawain*-poet expands romance traditions by focusing Gawain's "afyaunce" (642), or *trust*, in the wounds of Christ and the Joys

of Mary. The "fyue woundez" of Christ balance Gawain's innocence by recalling, "as the crede tellez" (*SGGK* 643), that Christ bore the pains of humanity. Conjoined with the "fyue joyez" (646) of Mary — the Annunciation, Nativity, Resurrection, Ascension, and Assumption — and the "fyue woundez" of Christ, the "wyttez" and "fyngres" form Gawain's embodied and spiritual components of response during moral testing. The pentangle's final point illustrates Gawain's keen sense of social responsibility:

> fraunchyse and felaȝschyp forbe al þyng,
>
> His clannes and his cortaysye croked were neuer,
>
> And pité, þat passez alle poyntez, þyse pure fyue
>
> Were harder happed on þat haþel þen on any oþer." (*SGGK* 652-655)

Although each of the pentangle's points provide myriad paths for analysis, how they intersect illustrates a central aspect of embodiment in the period's theological model of the self: namely, that the soul is the form of the body, and that it is through the body that the mind perceives.

Continuing this discussion, I turn to the *Gawain*-poet's use of *ductus*, the attentive movement through pyshical, literary, or mnemonic space. Movement schemas held an important place in medieval mnemonics. In *The Craft of Thought,* Mary Carruthers examines one of the central practices in mnemonic recall: the practice of *ductus*. First defined by Consultus Fortunatianus, most likely a contemporary of Augustine, *ductus* is "the movement within and through a work's various parts" (*Craft of Thought* 77). Typically understood as type of way-finding, Carruthers explains how *ductus* could also be called the "flow" of a composition (*Craft of Thought* 77), or "the way that a composition guides a person to its various goals" (78), identified as a work's *skopos,* signaled as the target of an archer (79). As a process of movement

and attention, *ductus* directs perception and cognition through sequences of images and mnemonic cues, and is similar to the processional cues of *disegno,* the medieval architectural concept that guides attention and movement through space. Carruthers explains the physical nature of this method and how it can be used for recall:

> the rhetorical concept of *ductus* emphasizes way-finding by organizing the
> structure of any composition as a journey through a linked series of stages, each
> of which has its own characteristic flow (its "mode" or "colour"), but which also
> moves the whole composition along. … For a person following the *ductus,* the
> "colours" act as stages of the way or ways through to the *skopos* or destination.
> Every composition, visual or aural, needs to be experienced as a journey, in and
> through whose paths one must constantly *move.* (*Craft of Thought* 80-81)

Between *ductus,* the way, and *skopos,* the goal, is *modus:* that is, the individual movements or parts within the whole composition (Carruthers, *Craft of Thought,* 79). Because one must proceed through space, its mnemonic cues, and its texture before arriving at the destination, this mnemonic device is created by the physical limitations of space, movement, and procession. For example, one cannot both enter the narthex of a cathedral while simultaneously walking through its transept; rather, movement and its processional nature create a tableau of perspective that informs mnemonic recall.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* during Gawain's journey through the *Wirral* (*SGGK* 691-752), the *Gawain*-poet uses a way-finding *ductus* to establish Gawain's experience as a deictic centre from which the following events of the exchange of winnings game can be interpreted. He does this in several ways. First, Gawain's procession through familiar and

unknown lands reinforces his solitude and isolates his experience as narrative perspective. Second, as a series of processional cues, Gawain's experiences are the *modus* of his journey, directing him to an, as yet, unknown *skopos,* or goal. This processional movement reveals an interconnected model of mind, body, and soul as Gawain's experience becomes increasingly concentric, especially in his focus, near exhaustion, on introspection and prayer. The wilderness journey begins a concentric focusing that continues throughout the Exchange of Winnings game and Gawain's test with Lady Bertilak.

Gawain's search for the Green Chapel leads him through a series of isolating spaces that establish his solitude and focus attention on his experience. Because the Green Knight withholds the location of the Green Chapel, Gawain must ride as a "knyȝt erraunt" (*SGGK* 810) and without direction. However unfortunate this is for Gawain, his errancy allows for a sequential movement, a procession, through a series of *modi* to an unknown goal, or *skopos*:

> Now ridez þis renk þurȝ þe ryalme of Logres,
>
> Sir Gauan, on Godez halue, þaȝ hym no gomen þoȝt.
>
> Oft leudlez alone he lenges on nyȝtez
>
> Þer he fonde noȝt hym byfore þe fare þat he lyked.
>
> Hade he no fere bot his fole bi frythez and dounez,
>
> Ne no gome bot God bi gate wyth to karp,
>
> Til þat he neȝed ful neghe into þe Norþe Walez.
>
> Alle þe iles of Anglesay on lyft half he haldez,
>
> And farez ouer þe fordez by þe forlondez,
>
> Ouer at þe Holy Hede, til he hade eft bonk

In þe wyldreness of Wyrale … (*SGGK* 691-701ff).

The *ductus* is clear: Gawain travels through a series of inhospitable lands. But what is the point? Sarah Stanbury notes Alain Renoir's discussion of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in which these episodes pinpoint "the poem's psychological and sensory realism," because "the world described is concentrated through a single lens, Gawain's eyes and sense, at first appearing as an unmediated record of actual experience" (*Seeing the Gawain-Poet* 105). The quick staccato episodes of Gawain's journey demonstrate his movement away from community and the perceptions of others. Indeed, all the reader is left to go on by the time Gawain reaches Haudesert is Gawain's perceptive experience.

This movement does two things in preparation for Gawain's test. It is a movement from the world of reality to that of *faerie*, which provides a suitably unknown and dangerous place for the Green Knight's *gomen*. But it is also a movement inward, focusing attention on Gawain's perception and emotional state through trial.

The *Gawain*-poet creates a dependence on Gawain's experience by fluctuating between the text worlds of fantasy and reality. His journey through the "ryalme of Logres" (*SGGK* 691) fits with romance conventions of other journeys through perilous realms,[65] and he embarks alone. Already in setting the scene, the *Gawain*-poet directs attention to Gawain's solitude, his physical hardship, and psychological interior, in that order. In doing so, he brings Gawain's perception and emotions — his embodied self — to the fore. The pseudo-comic lines that name Gawain's horse as his only companion illustrate his loneliness — "Hade he no fere bot his fole bi frythez and dounez, / Ne no gome bot God bi gate wyth to karp" (*SGGK* 695-6) — and direct

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[65] Such as *Sir Orfeo* and *Libaeus Desconus*.

attention to his experience alone by establishing a narrative dependence on his perception. This experience is his own.

Although the *Gawain*-poet does take care in making his version of *Logres* a perilous realm, it turns out to be just south of "Norþe Walez," on the way past "þe iles of Anglesay," and to "þe wyldreness of Wyrale" (*SGGK* 697-8, 701), a route that matches common itineraries for travel from south England to Cheshire (Bennett, "Courtly Literature and North-West England in the Later Middle Ages" 76). Gawain's journey through charted lands finds him little company, however, and his search for the Green Chapel is unfruitful initially. When he does find people to speak with — "frekez þat he met" (*SGGK* 703) — their response, stressed strongly in the negative — "al nykked hym with nay" (706) — reinforces his isolation. As Gawain turns to "gates straunge" (*SGGK* 709), the stanza's wheel pauses to note his wavering "cher" (711), and the attention on Gawain's fluctuating mental health intensifies awareness of his solitude:

> Þe knyȝt tok gates straunge
>
> In mony a bonk vnbene,
>
> His cher ful oft con chaunge
>
> Þat chapel er he myȝt sene. (*SGGK* 709-12)

Immediately after the short touch-down in community, Gawain re-enters "contrayez straunge" (*SGGK* 713) that contain "So mony meruayl[s]" the poet cannot relate them all: "Hit were to tore for to tell of þe tenþe dole" (718, 719). The earlier alliterative stress on negativity shifts to wonders of warring with "wormez," "wolues," and "wodwos" (*SGGK* 720-1), and then to fighting with "bullez," "berez," "borez," and "etaynez" (722-3). Some of these are real creatures. Others, like the "wormez," "wodwos" and "etaynez," exist in the borders of faërie. The

poet follows the same method as the earlier descriptions of the Green Knight where fantasy and

reality blend to create instability and liminality. The importance of these blends, however, is not

their status as real or mythical but as perceptional cues, as a technical method of isolating

Gawain's experience: to show that the narrative's perception is solely his. There is no one else

but him to witness these things.

The poet solidifies Gawain's perspective by focusing on the physical hardships that he

must endure and directs attention to Gawain's concentric movement inward. Fighting swarms of

monsters is certainly a test of Gawain's mettle, but his faith and duty to God keep him from

failure and death: "Nade he ben duȝty, and Dryȝtyn had serued, / Douteles he hade ben ded and

dreped ful ofte" (*SGGK* 724-5). The external threats from bulls, bears, and boars are overcome

by strength of arms and enduring faith, but it is the cold, an enemy not easily overcome in

December, that Gawain nearly succumbs to:

> For werre wrathed hym not so much þat wynter nas wors,
>
> When þe colde cler water fro þe cloudez schadde,
>
> And frez er hit falle myȝt to þe fale erþe;
>
> Ner slayn wyth þe slete he sleped in his yrnes
>
> Mo nyȝtez þen innoghe in naked rokkez,
>
> Þer as claterance fro þe crest þe colde borne rennez,
>
> And henged heȝe ouer his hede in hard iisse-ikkles.
>
> Þus in peryl and payne and plytes ful harde
>
> Bi contray caryez þis knyȝt, tyl Krystmasse euen,
>
>   al one. (*SGGK* 726-35)

The alliteration stresses a hyper-awareness of Gawain's physical calamity and the "matter-of-fact recognition of the damp and cold [that] replaces what is initially a mythic framework" (Stanbury, *Seeing the Gawain-Poet,*106) and brings his experience to the fore. Indeed, as Stanbury points out,

> the description details only those natural properties that Gawain can sense, it
>
> centers him in the frame, suggesting an equivalent linear construction of text and
>
> experience. That is, the description fragments experience into discrete shots in
>
> which the world presented matches the processes of perception; what we can
>
> know, the poem seems to say, is at each moment partial, subject to our own
>
> sensory processes. (*Seeing the Gawain-Poet* 107)

Cold, wet, and suffering from hypothermic convulsions, Gawain is desperate for "sum wone" (*SGGK* 739) in which to find rest and community. His unsuccessful search turns his attention inward as he makes his plea to God and to Mary for "sum herber þer heʒly [he] myʒt her masse" (*SGGK* 755). The abrupt resolution of his hardship — only nine lines later Gawain sees "a won in a mote" (*SGGK* 764) — could call into question the realness of his experience. Is his perception trustworthy as he swoons into hypothermia? The sudden convenience of finding refuge, immediately after Gawain says "Cros Kryst me spede!" (*SGGK* 762), may be cause for critical concern — it is just too easy. But as a movement into awareness and exploring the embodied limits of Gawain's intersecting pentangle (remember that the pentangle symbolizes physical and spiritual characteristics), his movement into supplication can be read as a threshold through which he steps into a deeper, embodied, dream-like, cognitive space. A place where need and desire meet, where Gawain's *trawthe* will be tested.

As Gawain becomes aware of the castle in the wood, the visual shifts in his perception of it form a processional mnemonic. At first, he is only aware of a dwelling up ahead in a glade surrounded by a moat: "he watz war in þe wod of a won in a mote / Abof a launde, on a lawe, loken vnder boȝez / Of mony borelych bole about bi þe diches" (*SGGK* 764-6). He quickly perceives that it is a beautiful castle, "þe comlokest þat euer knyȝt aȝte" (*SGGK* 767), and, once he rides the two miles distance to its gate, he confirms his first impression:

Þe burne bode on blonk, þat on bonk houed

Of þe depe double dich þat drof to þe place;

Þe walle wod in þe water wonderly depe,

Ande eft a ful huge heȝt hit haled vpon lofte

Of harde hewen ston vp to þe tablez,

Enbaned vnder þe abataylment in þe beset lawe;

And syþen garytez ful gaye gered bitwene,

Wyth mony luflych loupe þat louked fule clene:

A better barbican þat burne blusched vpon neuer.

And innermore he behelde þat halle ful hyȝe,

Towres telded bytwene, trochet ful þik,

Fayre fylyolez þat fyȝed, and ferlyly long,

With coruon coprounces craftyly sleȝe.

Chalkwhyt chymnees þer ches he innoȝe

Vpon bastel rouez, þat blenked ful quyte;

So mony pynakle payntet watz poudred ayquere,

Among þe castel carnelez clambre so þik,

Þat pared out of papure purely hit semed. (*SGGK* 784-802)

As he moves toward the castle, the images of his perception increase in resolution, so that he,

once at its gate, can provide an architecturally detailed description. While the movement in this

passage never really stops, it is also never mentioned. There are no verbs indicating movement,

and yet one is keenly aware of Gawain's continuous procession toward the castle. He identifies

the "double dich" (*SGGK* 786) and the high walls plunging into the moat as he rides to the front

of the castle. Then, Gawain's perception informs the narrative description of the castle's splendid

details: *Enbaned* embattlements, shuttered *loupe* windows, *towres* with *coruon coprounces,* and

Chalkwhyt chymnees surrounded by *pynakles*.

In order to create the sensation of movement, the *Gawain*-poet breaks Gawain's

perception into small fragments and, as the resolution of the objects before him increases, uses

the architectural details of the castle to demonstrate how Gawain's perception defines his

movement. Stanbury notes the episodic nature of Gawain's movement, pointing out how each

shift is created through changes in perception:

> The descriptions of the castle, of Gawain's ride across the Wirral to the bank at the
>
> head of the drawbridge, and then of his entrance and welcome within, are part of a
>
> linear narrative constructed episodically, one in which each part involves complex
>
> ocular shifts. (*Seeing the Gawain-Poet* 107)

His awareness is divided into a series of staccato images derived from his perception. By

increasing the resolution and detail of description, the separate images of Gawain's perception

create the sensation of movement without the need to actually describe his movement — similar

to Chaucer's narrator among the pillars of Fame's Castle (*HoF* III.1429-1512). Each line is its own *modus,* a part of the scene's larger *ductus,* or path, toward its *skopos:* Gawain's arrival, entrance, and welcome in Bertilak's castle.

For Gawain, the effect of this movement has a pronounced effect on mnemonic recall. Remember that the medieval model of cognition requires an image with which to think regardless of whether the image is formed by direct perception or by recalling past images. In Gawain's case both direct perception and mnemonic recall occur together. He perceives the castle before him and it causes a mnemonic comparison between its appearance and the paper castles used to decorate food during the period.[66] Here, memory arises from movement and perception; it is an embodied cognitive response.

The embodied nature of Gawain's cognitive experience continues inside the castle. The interactions between Gawain and the Lady during the three-day exchange of winnings game demonstrate further the sensory roots of cognition. On the first morning of the game as the Lady enters Gawain's bedroom, he initially hides his awareness of her presence, pretending to be asleep. Her stealthy entrance into Gawain's bedroom marks another narrative threshold,[67] this time to what has become known as the poem's moral crux in Gawain's test of *trawthe.*[68] As in Gawain's procession to the gates of Hautdesert, Stanbury points out that the bedchamber scenes supply their own series of "shifts in ocular points of view" which provide a sequence of

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[66] Putter points to the *Gawain*-poet's own description of these decorations in *Cleanness* during Belshazzar's feast: "Burnes berande þe bredes vpon brode skeles, / Þat were of sylveren syȝt, and seves þerwyth; Lyfte logges þerouer and on lofte coruen / Pared out of paper and poynted of golde …" (1405-8) (*Intro to the Gawain-Poet,* 55).

[67] Stanbury offers that "*Gawain* is a poem of entrances, some with noisy fanfare, some stealthy, but each entrance initiating an important new element of the narrative. We could even suggest that enclosures, so important to the spatial rhetoric of the other Cotton Nero texts, are realized in *Gawain* chiefly through the image of the threshold, vestibular spaces that, in the crossing, mark textual transitions as well" (*Seeing the Gawain-Poet,* 107).

[68] See T.A. Shippey, "The Uses of Chivalry," 246-7.

"liminalized episodes … punctuated so as to dramatize processes of psychic or moral

change" (*Seeing the Gawain-Poet* 108).

Inside the bedchamber, the linguistic interactions between Gawain and the Lady highlight

their experience as rooted in embodied schemas:

And as in slomeryng he slode, sleȝly he herde

A littel dyn at his dor, and dernly vpon;

And he heuez vp his hed out of þe cloþes,

A corner of þe cortyn he caȝt vp a lyttel,

And waytez warly þiderwarde quat hit be myȝt.

Hit watz þe ladi, loflyest to beholde,

Þat droȝ þe dor after hir ful dernly and stylle,

And boȝed towarde þe bed; and þe burne schamed,

And layde hym doun lystyly, and let as he slepte. (*SGGK* 1182-90)

In order to discover her motives, Gawain decides it is better for himself "'To *aspye* wyth my

spelle in space quat ho wolde'" (emphasis added, *SGGK,*1199) than hide under the covers; and

so, he rouses himself for conversation. The connection between these two words, *aspyen* and

spellen, illustrate an interaction between experience and consciousness. *Aspyen* (or *espien*)

describes an intention of spying, discovering by stealth or detection with the mind,[69] while

Gawain's use of his *spelle,* derived from Anglo-Saxon *spellian,* "to speak, discourse, talk,"[70] is

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[69] "Aspien." Def. 1. *Middle English Dictionary,* quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary accessed 27 Feb, 2013.

[70] All Anglo-Saxon definitions taken from Clark Hall, John, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary.*

suggestive of a sensory act through which he will discover her intent.[71] Although speech is no

longer considered one of the senses, some medieval models placed it in proximity to taste and

touch. Woolgar notes that the Anglo-Norman "*parler*, 'to speak,' was sometimes enumerated

among the senses" (6). As an act both of mind and of perception, Gawain's covert discourse

demonstrates how cognitive action and sensory awareness were believed to participate,

conflating mental volition and phenomenal experience.

Gawain's "fyue fyngres" are joined to his "fyue wits." While this joining points at the

embodied model I am examining, Gawain's choice on the final day of the exchange of winnings

illustrates the model's level of complexity for interconnection. Several scholars have examined

the decision facing Gawain in his bedchamber, that he must choose to either succumb to the

Lady's seduction or refuse her outright. For example, A.C. Spearing asserts that Gawain's

dilemma is "undeniable," explaining that "he must either accept her love (thereby breaking the

pentangle at the point of *clannesse*) or refuse it *lodly*, offensively (thereby breaking it at the point

of *cortaysye*)" (*The Gawain-Poet* 205). Gawain's challenge lies in balancing the connection

between sensation (the *fyngres*) and cognition (the *wits*).

And who will help Gawain? Mary comes up as an obvious choice at the crux of his

decision, but Lawrence Warner challenges readings of Gawain's choice to deny Lady Bertilak

which rely on the Virgin's intervention to save him. The difficulty with the Mary reading is that

there simply is no choice for Gawain to make nor a legitimate moral dilemma; he needs only to

be rescued. Warner suggests that reading Gawain's action this way stems from a few editorial

choices made in a small section of text identified as Gawain's "moral crux":

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[71] "Spellen." Def. 1. *Middle English Dictionary*, quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary
accessed 27 Feb. 2013.

>Þay lanced wordes gode,
>
>Much wele þen watz þerinne;
>
>Gret perile bitwene hem stod,
>
>Nif *Maré* of hir kny3t mynne.
>
>For þat prynces of pris depresed hym so þikke,
>
>Nurned hym so ne3e þe þred, þat nede hym bihoved
>
>Oþer lach þer hir luf, oþer lodly refuse. (emphasis added, *SGGK* 1766-72)

He suggests that there are three editorial errors in the above quoted passage, asserting that "whatever line 1772 might say, no one really believes that Gawain seriously considers accepting the lady's love" (264). He argues that it should instead read as follows:

>Gret perile bitwene hem stod,
>
>Nif **mare** of hir kny3t **[he]** mynne.
>
>For þat **prynce** of pris depresed hym so þikke,
>
>Nurned hym so ne3e þe þred, þat nede hym bihoved
>
>Oþer lach þer hir luf, **[or]** oþer lodly refuse. (*SGGK* 1768-72)

Note the changes for "Maré," "prynces," and the additions of "he" at line 1767 and "or" in line 1772. Warner argues that reading "mare" as "Maré" shifts the dilemma completely so that "the action that matters is not Gawain's at all, but hers" (264). These emendations change the context of Gawain's crux dramatically from the safe protection of Mary to a very real dilemma in which he must choose between the hospitality taboo of sleeping with his host's wife and the very real possibility that refusing the lady's advances could be equally *lodly.*

Warner's argument offers a convincing reading for what several scholars see as the pinnacle of Gawain's temptation and the centre of the tale. His reading re-situates Gawain as an agent, and it makes Gawain's choices legitimately his own. But in doing so, he removes Mary's presence from the scene altogether which pushes the pentangle and its symbol of Gawain's *trawthe* — the five *wits, fyngres, woundez, joyez,* and social virtues — to the periphery. Warner's suggestions become difficult to balance against the *Gawain*-poet's investment in the Pentangle's symbolism and its layers of interconnection. Indeed, Mary's intervention in Gawain's journey demands closer analysis given the pivotal connection that the *Gawain*-poet makes between Gawain's experience, the pentangle, and Mary.

Gawain's desire for and acceptance of the green girdle comes out of a cerebral self-preservation instead of the social virtues that he is known for. Gawain maintains his courtly position when he rejects the Lady's first gift, a rich gold ring, claiming that "'I wil no giftez, for Gode, my gay, at þis tyme; / I haf none yow to norne, ne noȝt wyl I take'" (*SGGK* 1822-3); but then, given the promise of physical protection in the green girdle, Gawain accepts the offered gift. To be clear, Gawain has little need for jewelry on a journey toward his own mortality, and the green girdle's extreme practicality can be justified in terms of sheer survival. The girdle offers supernatural protection against bodily harm from any foe:

> "For quat gome so is gorde with þis grene lace,
>
> While he hit hade hemely halched about,
>
> Þer is no haþel vnder heuen to hewe hym þat myȝt,
>
> For he myȝt not be slayn for slyȝt vpon erþe." (*SGGK* 1851-54)

However justified Gawain's choice may seem, accepting the green girdle breaks the interconnected symbolism of the pentangle. Stanbury argues that the green girdle emerges to fill the space left by the pentangle's disappearance after Gawain's initial arming scene,[72] suggesting that the girdle represents a new paradigm for courtly love and the behaviour of knights. He chooses to replace his dependence on the Pentangle's rigid, though interconnected, angles for freedom and personal expression.

However powerful the girdle promises to be, it offers a disembodied and disconnected protection. For that is Gawain's failing: he trusts in a talisman instead of his *trawthe*. There are several readings of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* that focus on Gawain's moral crux as a choice between social courtesy or individual honour.[73] That choice is certainly present, but it is not the only one. Accepting the girdle is also a choice toward a more singular understanding of the self and away from the holistic awareness represented in the pentangle. Helen Cooper explains that part of the problem in accepting any talisman of invulnerability is that "there is nothing heroic about being incapable of injury, no courage where there is no reason for fear" ("The Supernatural" 290). With its "fyue poyntez/ And vche lyne vmbelappez and loukez in oþer" (*SGGK* 99-100), the pentangle's form is a reminder that Gawain's strength comes out of his awareness and interconnection between body, mind, and soul, and that, with the removal of even one angle, the pentangle loses its integrity.

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[72] Stanbury argues that the "girdle in effect offers a paradigm of a process repeated on many levels of the narrative. Unlike the pentangle, which disappears after the first arming, the girdle remains highly visible; it is the last garment Gawain puts on after arming to ride to the Green Chapel, the blazon clearly apparent to the Green Knight after his blow, a sign that Gawain explains he will frequently see on his ride back to Camelot, and the noted baldric that Gawain displays and the court adopts at the end of the story" (*Seeing the Gawain-Poet* 111). See, also, Shippey, "The Uses of Chivalry," 246-7.

[73] See Warner "Mary, Unmindful of Her Knight," footnote 1.

Indeed, the girdle subtracts Gawain's body from the equation that is meant to test his

trawthe,[74] allowing him to avoid his mortality. However secure the promise of invulnerability

initially makes him feel, Gawain loses courage and confidence during the final game at the

Green Chapel. He knows his own body and its limits but he cannot really know the power of the

Girdle. Under threat of the Green Knight's axe, Gawain does not trust the Girdle:

> Then þe gome in þe grene grayþed hym swyþe,
>
> Gederez vp hys grymme tole Gawayn to smyte;
>
> With all þe bur in his body he ber hit on lofte,
>
> Munt as maȝtyly as marre hym he wolde;
>
> Hade hit dryuen adoun as dreȝ as he atled,
>
> þer hade ben ded of his dynt þat doȝty watz euer.
>
> Bot Gawayn on þat giserne lyfte hum bysyde,
>
> As his com glydande adoun on glode hym to schende. (*SGGK* 2259-66)

Gawain flinches, and the Girdle's promise of invulnerability, untested as it is, actually increases

his fear. Perhaps the Lady tricked him and the girdle is nothing more than a trinket of affection.

Regardless of what he *thinks*, his instinct reveals his smarts.

Gawain's response is about more than just the danger of a powerless or inadequate

talisman. After the Green Knight's chastising — "'Þou art not Gawayn, … Such cowardice of þat

knyȝt cowþe I neuer here'" (*SGGK* 2270, 2273) — Gawain renews his resolve by returning to an

awareness of his body's mortality: "'I shunt onez, / And so wyl I no more; / Bot þaȝ my hede fall

on þe stonez, / I con not hit restore'" (2280-2). Awareness of his body gives him courage that

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[74] The connection between Gawain and the pentangle is established during his arming scene where it is called "a syngne þat Salamon set sumquyle / In bytoknyng of trawþe" (*SGGK* 625-6).

suggests Gawain cannot live out a belief which separates his psychological well-being from his

physical well-being. This becomes clearer after the Green Knight explains his elaborate game

and the poet describes Gawain's embodied response: "So agreued for greme he gryed withinne; /

Alle þe blode of his brest blende in his face, / Þat al he schrank for schome þat þe shalk

talked" (*SGGK* 2370-72). Gawain's reaction is not transcendent or spiritual, but visceral and

embodied. His body shudders[75] with mortification and he is *agreued*[76] as a result. His feeling is

too much. The image of blood blending in his face — *blende,* "streamed together" (*SGGK* 167)

— illustrates the poet's awareness of embodied reactions. His verbal expression, that he is

"Corsed worth cowarddyse and couetyse boþe!" (*SGGK* 2374), comes after his body has already

cowed under the weight of his shame.

Evidently, Gawain's awareness of these emotions is part of the reward for participating in

the Green Knight's *Crystemas gomen*. The multi-layered test is a mirror for Gawain, revealing

and reflecting his emotions of fear and shame. As the poet describes Gawain's grief in embodied

ways, so too does he describe Gawain's emotional state. The image of Gawain shrinking under

the burden of shame is a powerful one, and the order of his experience is important. Notice in the

passage (*SGGK* 2370-72) that he shudders first, then blood rushes to his face, and, finally, he

feels shame. His body experiences shame before his mind is aware of it.

The *Gawain*-poet demonstrates the primacy of Gawain's body in the shaping of his mind

and faith. Although the *Gawain*-poet likely did not have direct knowledge of medicine or

psychology, he constructs a model of self that conflates mental volition and phenomenal

experience throughout *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* Gawain gains conscious awareness of

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[75] Tolkien and Gordon gloss *gryed* as "shuddered" (*SGGK* 186).

[76] That is, *agreued:* "weighed down, overcome (with)" (glossary note, *SGGK* 161).

his emotions only after his body has already begun to process his experience. His physical response illustrates a model of consciousness in which emotional experience and cognitive awareness are revealed as embodied processes. A strict division between mind and body simply does not exist for the knight. It is not the girdle that Gawain comes to trust but the points of the pentangle — his own senses, wits, and beliefs. The girdle is external to him, and it lets him down because he cannot trust it. The pentangle *is* him: a symbol of the integrated consciousness resident in his body — a seamless unity that is subject only to the death of the body, which Gawain fears above all else: a mortal, human fear. His body knows better, though; it trusts itself, and cringes at the Green Knight's blow. In that moment, Gawain's mind must acknowledge the inalienable primacy of his body: senses, wits, feelings, and all. It is an existential test that is, as it were, pass/fail. The game passes with participation in the materiality of existence; it fails with death. Gawain must face death, the very human fear of mortality. He must be afraid in order to be a hero. This is the game and the stake that matters.

"Who let these whores from the theater come to the bedside of this sick man? …
They cannot offer medicine for his sorrows; they will nourish him only with their
sweet poison. They kill the fruitful harvest of reason with the sterile thorns of the
passions; they do not liberate the minds of men from disease; but merely
accustom them to it."

–Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*[77]

These are Lady Philosophy's first words to Boethius as she drives away the Muses of
poetry — the "whores" poisoning his mind with the "thorns" of passion. Such is the beginning of
Boethius' journey toward a consolation which he finds ultimately through rationalization and
introspection and not through acknowledgement of the body. The rational approach through
which Lady Philosophy guides Boethius illustrates the mind-centered (Neoplatonic and Stoic)
nature of his experience. In the final poem of the *Consolation,* Boethius issues a like injunction
to humanity to keep its gaze heavenward toward the sublime and away from the "folly" that
binds one to the earth.[78] Evidently, this is exactly what Boethius needed: a strong hand back to a
Neoplatonic perspective on the body and its desires through the straight lines of deductive
thought.

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[77] All citations of Boethius are taken from *The Consolation of Philosophy: A Norton Critical Edition,* edited by
Richard H. Green, trans., Douglas C. Langston. Norton & Co., 2010.

[78] He explains in the second half of *Poem 5, Book 5*: "The human race alone lifts its head to heaven and stands erect,
despising the earth. Man's figure teaches, unless folly has bound you to the earth, that you who look upward with
your head held high should also raise your soul to sublime things, lest while your body is raised above the earth,
your mind should sink to the ground under its burden" (*Consolation* 89).

I do not intend to outline the history of prison literature from Boethius through to the fifteenth century; others have done such work.[79] My purpose in this chapter is to identify some of the impacts that courtly love, with its focus on sensation and desire, and embodied psychological models had on the presentation of self and the nature of consolation in late Middle English prison literature. I will examine Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and James I of Scotland's *Kingis Quair* to consider not only how the nature and scope of Boethius' influence was adapted by later authors when presenting the self, but also to identify the influence that late fourteenth century culture, inflected as it was with new models of medicine and psychology, had on the conceptions of self within these poems. Among the changes within culture and philosophy between the fifth and fifteenth centuries, my interest in these texts revolves around the inclusions and manoeuvring that each author makes for the presence of Courtly Love, with its devotion to the body, desire, and other "thorns of passion" alongside inherited Neoplatonic dualisms. Each author adapts that inheritance to fit within late-fourteenth (and early fifteenth) century models of mind and body.

This chapter examines consolation as a product of affect, desire, and embodiment. I discuss the processes through which consolation is sought and the shift from the mind-centered model of the Boethian tradition to the body-centered focus in late Middle English prison literature — tales often categorized within the romance genre. While Boethius makes a stoic appeal to Lady Philosophy, seeking to transcend the limits of his body and imprisonment through reasoning, I examine how Chaucer and James I re-negotiate the relationship between the self and the phenomenal world. Both authors reframe the self within the contingent, embodied, and material terms of desire and expectation. Instead of seeing the body as a trap for the soul

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[79] For a detailed survey, see Joanna Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography,* Oxford UP, 2004.

hindering its spiritual freedom, these texts see the body as the site through which consolation is sought. I emphasize how each of these texts reaches beyond the confines of mind/body dualism toward a model of the self that is contingent, dependent, and participatory in material experience. I discuss how vision, disease, and self-inflicted suffering form a complex model of consolation in which the fulfillment of desire is deferred just beyond the horizon of conscious perception, thus demonstrating a model of self which places the body at the centre of experience.

The Knight's Tale

In *The Knight's Tale* (*KnT*)*,* Chaucer adapts the Boethian model of consolation, in which the body remains only a site of discipline, trauma, pain, and suffering for the mind's pursuits, and presents a model of consolation that is rooted not only in sensation and materiality, but also includes desire among its integral parts. Chaucer's perspective is inflected with the complex apparatus of Courtly Love, with its embodied awareness and acceptance of desire. This apparatus understands the body not only as a source of expectation, suffering, and pain, but also as a source of sensation, satisfaction, and consolation. Palamon and Arcite, wounded in their gaze upon Emily, both exemplify how expectation is experienced as trauma on the body and yet has a consolatory effect. Chaucer saw that the body cannot simply be bypassed and places it at the centre of the two knights' consolation. Once wounded by erotic desire, the two knights remain in an expectant state throughout most of the poem. This deferral of satisfaction, usually held at the limits of sensation, has a grounding, disciplinary function on the body as a site of trauma, pain, and suffering. But, as the vehicle of experience and conduit through which desire is both created

and fulfilled, the body also functions as the avenue for physical and emotional consolation.

Throughout the *KnT,* Chaucer explores consolation as a product of participation in the physical

and emotional traumas experienced in the expectation of sensation and the deferral of physical

desire.

This kind of embodied participation in trauma develops out of medieval debate poetry

which frequently posited combative contests between body and mind, and understood discipline,

pain, and suffering as valid tools in the pursuit of consolation. In *Body Against Soul: Gender and*

Sowlehele in Middle English Allegory, Masha Raskolnikov examines dualist conceptions of self

in medieval debate poems from early Latin sources, through Boethius, to several Anglo-Norman

and Middle English poems including William Langland's *Piers Plowman*.[80] While early Latin

and Boethian sources focused on escaping the material bonds of the body, advancements in

medicine and psychology during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries challenged the *body as*

prison schema.[81] By the late twelfth century, body and soul began to be understood as a

functioning unit and previous Neoplatonic endeavors to cast off the trappings of the flesh were

either changed or abandoned to recognize that mental and spiritual experiences are channeled

through embodied perception.

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[80] Raskolnikov's study focuses on "Visio Philiberti," "Als I lay," and "In a Thestri Stude" before considering William Langland's *Piers Plowman* as an extended debate between body and soul. In her reading of *Piers,* she points out how Langland gradually removes female personifications from Will's journey to reveal the utter solitude of a divided self:

> *Piers Plowman* sets up a system in which the question of the Will is centered on a male narrator and his masculine alter egos. And yet, the poem is not only or merely exclusionary. Rather, it seems to struggle with its own desire to exclude the feminine.... Undermining that tradition with the apparent goal of moving toward a better and more reasonable way to live and love, *Piers Plowman* proceeds from that inaugurating moment to offer us an alternative to the conventional tutelary dialogue. In its stead, the poem offers its readers the silence of the soul in communion with itself, a silence broken only by the monologue of man communing with his own male self. (196)

[81] This change was facilitated prominently by the translation of Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* in the twelfth century in addition to new translations of Galen, Hippocrates, and Aristotle into Latin.

Despite these advances in medical and psychological modeling, Raskolnikov notes the difficulty that debate poets had in explaining the relationship between body, mind, and soul. Central to this problem is the connection between physical sensation and cognition:

> Granting the body speech gives the philosophical thinker behind the poem a fair amount of pause: If the body is capable of consciousness, whatever is the soul for? Then again, who is it that generates the voice, that essential feature of the allegorical scene? Is it the (corporeal) vocal cords or the (incorporeal) soul? How can the self be divided in half if something as simple as speech is so intimately implicated in both the physical and the spiritual? (Raskolnikov 199)

To get around the problem, debate poets employed a wide array of allegories. They approached the self by categorizing its experience into various personifications.[82] Raskolnikov acknowledges how allegorical personifications do "participate in … anatomizing the self" (6) and even "come together [in] a kind of violence done to both" (4). However divisive this practice was on the self for *analysis,* its embodied, interconnected composition was not in question. Raskolnikov argues that the debate poets "subdivide[d] the self in order to better understand it" (125). They became aware, echoing Aristotle, that the "body has to be something other than a prison for the soul in order for the two to ever have functioned as one" (Raskolnikov 198).[83] In recognition of that awareness, debate poets acknowledged that the body "had to be loved as well as disciplined" (Raskolnikov 198). On this point Raskolnikov examines the term *sowlehele,* or "soul healing," as the intent behind debate poems. She explains that,

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[82] Such as Langland's extensive list of personifications in *Piers Plowman*, including Lady Mede, Conscience, Reason, False, Will, etc.

[83] Aristotle argued that the soul is "the first grade of actuality of a natural body having life potentially in it" (*De Anima,* 412a 28-29). This means that the soul is defined from the function or potential function of the body.

Insofar as Body and Soul are posited as separate from one another in order to enable *any* Body/Soul debate, their dialogue tells a story of a complicated love and partnership between two entities that are fundamentally one, who love and hate themselves by loving and hating each other. (Raskolnikov 124)

In this way, Raskolnikov shows how consolation shifted from a model in which the soul must escape the body and material attachments (as in *The Consolation of Philosophy*) to a model in which the mind and body discipline each other in a collaborative, participatory pursuit toward consolation.

In the *Knight's Tale,* the narrator asks his fellow pilgrims which lover — Palamon or Arcite, is in the worse situation:

Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamoun?

That oon may seen his lady day by day,

But in prisoun moot he dwelle alway;

That oother wher him list may ride or go,

But seen his lady shal he neveremo. (*KnT,* I.1348-52)[84]

The equivocal nature of this question introduces the tale's central plot device and is a version of the body/soul debate poems that Raskolnikov describes. The question asks which aspect of conscious experience is more consoling for a lover: visual (embodied) perception *or* re-imagined memories. Palamon may continue to perceive Emily through his physical eyes, though he will never be with her, while Arcite may never look on her again, though he is free to walk the world. The dilemma, of course, is that neither situation is fully consolatory. And while the debate will

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[84] All references to the *Knight's Tale* are from *The Canterbury Tales,* edited by Jill Mann. Penguin Books, 2005.

not be settled here, it is important to note how both circumstances place a consolatory function on perception as the link to satisfying (or not) the knights' desires.

Few of Chaucer's other tales place desire in such a central position. In *Desire in the Canterbury Tales*, Elizabeth Scala describes the *Knight's Tale* as an "elegant meditation on erotic and worldly desire" (44) even while acknowledging that at the end of the tale "desire remains inherently unsatisfied and unsatisfiable" (55). It is, rather, the chase, the pursuit, of desire that frames the knights' experience, as Ruth Parkin-Gounelas points out: "In lacking the satisfying object, desire endlessly pursues a phantom satisfaction deriving *jouissance* only from the pursuit" (83). As the knights gaze down from their prison tower, Emily functions as a mirror. She reflects their projections (and expectations) of an ideal woman and serves to affirm their status "as one worthy to be loved by her" (Scala 50). As an object of desire, Chaucer's "Emelye" is barely more than a picture or an ideal image.

After Palamon's initial "wounding," his embodied state changes and confuses his perception of Emily. The narrator compares Palamon's experience to being stabbed in the heart. Arcite notices his cousin's ailment and describes him as pale and death-like:

> … he bleinte and cride 'A!'
>
> As thogh he stongen were unto the herte.
>
> And with that cry Arcite anoon up sterte
>
> And seide, 'Cosin min, what eileth thee,
>
> That art so pale and deedly on to see? (*KnT,* I.1078-82)

As Palamon looks upon Emily, he wonders if she is a "'womman or goddesse'" (*KnT,* I.1101), but, before any doubt can be cast on the latter, his projection affirms that "'Venus is it soothly, as

I gesse'" (1102). Doing so has two effects. First, elevating Emily to the status of a goddess

elevates Palamon's own self-worth to one worthy to be loved by a goddess. Second, it offers

hope for freedom from prison. He prays to her:

> 'Venus, if it be thy wil
>
> Yow in this gardin thus to transfigure
>
> Bifore me, sorweful wrecched creature,
>
> Out of this prisoun help that we may scape.' (*KnT,* I.1103-7)

Palamon's projection of Emily as a goddess supplies a brief moment of consolation, even if it is

delusional, in a hope of freedom and a sense of worthiness. The moment passes quickly when the

"sighte" of Emily "hurte[s]" Arcite and "sleeth [him] sodeynly" (*KnT,* I.1114, 1118). In response,

he challenges Palamon's claim to love her and describes his love for Emily "as to a

creature" (*KnT,* I.1159), which is to say as for a mortal woman, and not with the "affeccioun of

holinesse" (1158) as for a goddess. Furthermore, this wounding demonstrates Arcite's need for

masculine competition as part of his path to consolation and allows him to steal power and

identity from Palamon.

Arcite's experience effects him in a different way. Instead of conjuring the hope of rescue,

it sobers his perspective and steels his resolve. Arcite seeks consolation through the affections

and attachments of Courtly Love. He projects his own affections and attachments onto Emily as

she gathers flowers in the garden:

> 'The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeinly
>
> Of hire that rometh in the yonder place,
>
> And but I have hir mercy and hir grace,

That I may seen hire at the leeste weye,

I nam but deed; ther is namoore to seye.' (*KnT,* I.1118-22)

The sight of Emily, freely walking in the garden, not only ignites Arcite's desires, it also draws his awareness to his present situation, without hope of ransom, "dampned to prisoun / Perpetuelly" (1175-6). Where Palamon projects a potential hope for divine rescue, Arcite acknowledges that they "strive as dide the houndes for the boon: / They foghte al day, and yet hir part was noon" (1177-8). Arcite's consolation will not be found in freedom from prison, for that is not his "boon"; he seeks a Courtly Love, "*par amour*" (1155). The reversed desires and expectations of both knights add to the poem's extended irony.

For whatever reasons they love Emily, Palamon and Arcite feel desire first through their bodies and then through their minds. While the fleeting gaze at their beloved grants an immediate, if brief, moment of consolation, both knights experience their desire as pain. Palamon loves her as a goddess and hopes for rescue; Arcite loves her as a lady of court and finds consolation in the very vision of her.

Perotheus' arrival and rescue of Arcite at the end of *Part I* defers whatever consolation both knights had found gazing on Emily from the tower window. The brevity and, then, deferral of consolation produces the desire and expectation for future satisfaction and fulfillment. As Arcite is to be exiled from Theseus' kingdom, removing him from any chance to see Emily, and Palamon remains locked in the tower, each knight receives a fate opposite to their desire and displaces consolation to a later time.

Arcite's release and agreement with Theseus to leave the kingdom introduces deferral of desire as a mode of discipline. While the effects of deferral are present for both knights, Arcite

seems to bear it the worst of the two. In the prison tower, Arcite found consolation through the vision of his beloved; exiled from that vision, fulfillment of his desire and its consolatory effect is deferred:

> 'Allas that evere knew I Perotheus!
>
> For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,
>
> Yfetered in his prisoun everemo;
>
> Thann hadde I been in blisse and nat in wo,
>
> Oonly the sight of hire whom that I serve,
>
> Thogh that I nevere hir grace may deserve,
>
> Wolde have suffised right inogh for me.' (*KnT,* I.1223-33)

Rather than an opportunity for liberation, Arcite's exile from Theseus' kingdom inflicts further suffering as it removes both sources of his consolation: Emily and the opportunity for lordship and competition. Denied his vision of Emily, Arcite experiences new trauma in his body and mind. He suffers a "greet a sorwe" for "The deeth he feeleth thurgh his herte smite" (*KnT,* I. 1219-20). The narrator describes how Arcite "wepeth, waileth, cryeth pitously" (1221), "To sleen himself he waiteth prively" (1222). His embodied reaction makes evident the consolatory effect that his vision of Emily had in satisfying his desires, but it also demonstrates how closely linked competition and consolation are for Arcite: he even seeks to compete violently with himself in the absence of another. Deferring fulfillment creates expectation, and expectation inflicts suffering, even threatening death, on Arcite's body by projecting consolation to the edge of his experience.

Palamon and Arcite's experiences of deferred desire are not novel but follow rather conventional romance tropes that revolve around the suffering gaze, psychological and physical trauma, and lovesickness. In "Affective Reading: Chaucer, Women, and Romance," Corinne Saunders points out how Chaucer's portrayal of lovesickness relies on extramission theories of vision and phenomenal experience, suggesting that love does, in fact, "strik[e] through the eyes to wound the heart" (20). Palamon is struck when he sees Emily gathering flowers in the garden — "He caste his eye upon Emelya, / And therwithal he bleinte and cride 'A!' / As thogh he stongen were unto the herte" (*KnT*, I.1075-1079) — and Arcite suffers a similar blow when he looks to see she who wounded his cousin:

> And with that word Arcite gan espye
>
> Wheras this lady romed to and fro,
>
> And with that sighte hir beautee hurte him so,
>
> That as Palamon was wounded soore,
>
> Arcite is hurt as muche as he or moore. (1113-16)

Palamon and Arcite both experience the "deathly affects of love" (Saunders 20) through their eyes. Love, vision, desire, and trauma coalesce in Palamon and Arcite's embodied reactions to lovesickness.

Palamon and Arcite's "wounding" scenes in the prison tower demonstrate an erotic pathology being transmitted through visual perception. In "The Pestilential Gaze: From Epidemiology to Erotomania in the Knight's Tale," Jamie Fumo examines the pathological nature of Emily's vision. She asserts that "Chaucer not only darkens the thematic and metaphysical hues of the *Teseida,* he endows the narrative with a new unity based in the

pathologization of love in the realm of human action" (Fumo 86). She draws this connection out

of the metonymic relationship developed between Emily and death (or pestilence) which is

amplified, she argues, from "Boccaccio's conventional account of amorous glances stolen and

exchanged into a drama enacted almost exclusively on the level of visual encounter, one in

which looks have the power to sever or unite, preserve or extinguish, occlude or enlighten" (86).

A.C. Spearing observes that "the sexes are separated by a visible space bridged only by

sight" (*The Medieval Poet as Voyeur* 164), and yet the knights' bodies feel the trauma of that

separation.

Fumo argues that Emily's "infectious beauty" (88) and the "medical specificity" of Arcite's

death injury represents an intellectual tradition that ties "visual contact, bodily disorder, and

erotic desire" (88). Shee develops the connection between perception and disease by considering

legendary Theban associations of *lookyng* (i.e., one's gaze) with self-destruction, contagion, and

plague traced through Boccaccio's *Teseida* to Ovid and Seneca. The very vision of Emily

"carries a pestilential force" (Fumo 88) and links her with Saturn, whose "lookyng is the fader of

pestilence" (*KnT,* III.2469). Fumo argues that,

> In this fatalistic context governed by Saturn, the networks of vision that so
>
> intricately bind the lovers of the tale to one another, and Theseus's subjects to the
>
> order of creation, constitute not so much a 'faire cheyne' (I.2988) by which
>
> worldly preoccupations can be surpassed but a fetter that constrains all mortals
>
> within a prison of woe. (93)

Lookyng thus connects subjects visually, but it also "has the capacity to undermine bodily order

in dramatic ways" (Fumo 93). Additionally, Fumo points to Saturn's "yoking of 'lookyng' and

'pestilence'" as "an endemic discourse within the tale's sensory world" (94). Chivalric love

converges with trauma as vision, desire, and disease are causally linked: vision creates desire,

and desire catalyzes pathology/suffering.

Fumo's observations regarding the destructive power of Emily's gaze and its effects in

Arcite's body illustrate the connection between Arcite's vision, his lovesickness, and his fatal

accident and death. Fumo examines the correlation by explaining how

> Arcite on his horse *looks upward upon* Emily, who in turn casts a "freendlich ye"
>
> toward him (*KnT*, III.2679–80). At this precise moment, a fury sent from
>
> underground by Pluto upon Saturn's command causes Arcite to fall and receive
>
> his fatal injury. The impression created is that the destructive power of Emily's
>
> look and its effects within Arcite do not merely coincide with but actually
>
> precipitate the cosmic calamity by which the hierarchy of soul and body, rider and
>
> horse, is deranged. (96)

Moreover, Fumo points to Edward C. Schweitzer's insight in "Fate and Freedom in *The Knight's*

Tale" that "a physiological and moral link" (quoted in Fumo 96) exists between Arcite's

experience of love-as-death and his experience of death-as-love. Fumo explains: "Emily's gaze

so long a source of sustenance that nonetheless enfeebles Arcite with desire, is ultimately

identified with the Saturnine force of calamity that unmoors his bodily constitution" (96). From

Arcite's first wounding by the sight of Emily, to his experience in love and the link between her

lookyng and his fatal wound — interconnected in the visual "etiologies" (Fumo 98) identified

with Emily's gaze — Chaucer's adaptation of Emily from Boccaccio's Emilia makes her

presence a source of trauma (Fumo 107). For Arcite, the vision of Emily and the gaze of Emily coalesce in a mixture of consolation and calamity.

In "Sentence and Solaas: Proverbs and Consolation in the 'Knight's Tale,'" Thomas Luxon argues that the narrator elides the "particularity" of Palamon's and Arcite's suffering and pain in order to illustrate the necessity for a lived wisdom that has been "hard-won" (109) through personal struggle and pain. He demonstrates this through the narrator's uncomfortable treatment of Palamon and Arcite's emotional and physical hardships. The most prominent examples of this occur as the narrator describes the knights' pain, suffering, or emotional trauma and then quickly pulls back from those experiences so as to defer and assuage their impact. But even as he tries to elide the particularity of the knights' suffering, their pain refuses to be dismissed because it is written into their bodies, which form a central place in the Knight's Tale's narrative. For example, the narrator passes over Arcite's "yeer or two" of pain (*KnT,* II.1380-82) and Palamon's "seven yeer" of "wo" (1452-3) in a hasty few lines. Throughout Palamon and Arcite's experience of trauma and deferred satisfaction, Chaucer examines suffering as a participatory act necessary to the pursuit of consolation.

The scene in which Palamon and Arcite meet in the forest grove outside of Athens provides a good example of how the narrator avoids the emotional demands of the knights' suffering by using conventional and clichéd proverbs.[85] In typical spring fashion, Arcite's trip to the grove at dawn "to doon his obervaunce to May" (*KnT,* II.1500) is filled with a the sounds of a "bisy larke" (1491) signaling the new day, a sunrise so "brighte / That al the orient laugheth of the lighte" (1493-94), and "silver dropes hanginge on the leves" (1496). Palamon, on the other

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[85] This often takes the form of "For sooth be told…" or the like.

hand, "Was in a bussh, that no man mighte him se, / For soore afered of his deeth was he" (*KnT,* II.1517-18). Almost in comic spite of Palamon's experience, the narrator covers up Palamon's fear with the proverb, "sooth is seid, … / That 'feeld hath eyen and the wode hath eres'" (*KnT,* II. 1521-22). As Arcite's spring-time observances and song of desire for Emily[86] incite Palamon to anger, the narrator describes Palamon's embodied reaction as a cold sword through his heart: "This Palamoun, that thoughte that thurgh his herte / He felte a cold swerd sodeinliche glide, / For ire he quook; no lenger wolde he bide" (*KnT,* II.1574-76). His body convulses with anger because he understands Arcite's actions as a betrayal. He calls him a "false traitour" (*KnT,* II. 1580) for having "bijaped" (1585) Theseus and (in his mind) behaving as a voyeur toward Emily. Arcite defies the bond between them, saying "I diffye the seuretee and the bond / Which that thow seyst that I have madd to thee" (*KnT,* II.1604-5). They agree to meet again the next day to resolve their conflict in battle.

Uncomfortable with this confrontation, the narrator pulls back from emotional impact of the scene by appealing to Cupid and interjecting a proverb: "Ful sooth is seid that love ne lordshipe / Wol noght, his thankes, have no felaweshipe" (*KnT,* II.1625-26). Trite as it is, instead of easing tension, the narrator's proverb serves only to bridge one descriptive stanza before the next-day's battle. No proverb will console the emotional and physical impact created by Arcite's position, which is that his desire commands its own allegiances in spite of familial bonds and that within the framework of courtly love he must battle Palamon in order to prove himself worthy to continue pursuing the consolation he desires. Indeed, words fall short. The proverb, meant to interject wisdom, fails to console.

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[86] "Love hath his firy dart so brenningly / Ystrike thurgh my trewe careful herte, / That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte. / Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye!" (*KnT, II.*1564-67).

Whatever understanding can be gleaned from this situation instead comes through the description of the knights' physical nature. When Palamon and Arcite return to the forest grove next day, "Both suffisaunt and mete to darreine / The bataille" (*KnT,* II.1631-32), it is the knights' changing complexion that the narrator describes first:

> To chaungen gan the colour in hir face,
>
> Right as the hunters in the regne of Trace,
>
> That stondeth at the gappe with a spere, …
>
> And thinketh, 'Here comth my mortal enemy!
>
> Withoute faille he moot be deed, or I; …
>
> So ferden they in chaunging of hir hewe. (*KnT,* II.1637-47)

As the narrator points to the knights' changing complexion, like that of a Thracian hunter, he assumes the actual physical changes in their bodies are somewhat obvious to his audience — i.e., a sanguine flush in preparation for battle.

The communal arming that follows counteracts the narrator's previous proverb that love and lordship can have no fellowship. As Palamon and Arcite proceed to arm each other, it is not the narrator's proverbs that clarify the emotional tension, but rather the knights' embodied practice of arming themselves before battle: "But streight, withouten word or rehersinge, / Everich of hem heelp for to armen other, / As frendly as he were his owene brother" (*KnT,* II. 1650-52). Helping someone put on armor requires very close proximity and the intimacy of this act is not lost in the scene. The description of the knights as *brothers* points to the intimacy involved and the irony of the scene. This proximity and intimacy contributes to the scene's

tension through an awareness of the time required to complete this act for both men. They would

be assisting each other for half an hour or more before they would be ready for battle.

With the arming complete, the narrator quickly passes through the start of the battle,

describing Palamon as a "wood leoun" (*KnT,* II.1656), Arcite as a "cruel tigre" (1657), and their

fighting as "wilde bores" (1658). Leaving the knights "Up to the anclee foghte they in hir

blood" (*KnT,* II.1660), the narrator turns to discuss the nature of destiny by way of introducing

Theseus' entrance into the scene.[87] In doing so, the narrator redirects the reader's attention away

from Palamon and Arcite's suffering to more esoteric concerns about the guiding forces behind

human "appetites" (*KnT,* II.1670), such as "werre, or pees, or hate, or love" (1671). He concludes

this vast conversation before it really begins by cutting it off, again, with an overly simplistic

solution: "Al is this ruled by the sighte above" (*KnT,* II.1672). His appeal to a high-level

conceptual explanation effectively allows him to evade the reality of Palamon and Arcite's

experience. And so, when Theseus arrives at the forest battle, his attempt to relieve the emotional

tension between Palamon and Arcite is just as impotent and awkward as the narrator's attempt

because he fails to acknowledge the consolatory pursuit involved in the courtly pursuit of love:

consolation in courtly love, as framed by the narrator, demands sacrifice, even to death. When

faced with the knights' physical and emotional combativeness, Theseus offers the painfully

obvious point that Emily can only marry one of the knights: "'Ye woot yourself she may nat

wedden two / Atones, thogh ye fighten everemo'" (*KnT,* II.1835-36). Luxon takes offense at this.

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[87] This introduction follows as:
>   The destinee, ministre general,
>   That executeth in the world overal
>   The purveiaunce that God hath sein biforn,
>   So strong it is, that thogh the world has sworn
>   The contrarye of a thing by ye or nay,
>   Yet sometime it shal fallen on a day
>   That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeer. (*KnT,* II.1663-69)

He interprets the narrator's use of proverbs as an attempt to reframe a "sad event or painful emotion [as] really just another example of common experience" (Luxon 100), which reinforces his argument that the narrator's "[p]roverbs do not console; they trivialize our pain" (101). Ironically, the description of donning their armour reveals their shared vulnerabilities instead of proving their strength.

The narrator expounds a plethora of possible candidates as causes for strife, loss, pain, and suffering: chance, free will, desire, habit, Fortune, Saturn, God's hand, etc. But for all of the options, the narrator never categorizes them nor does he attempt to suggest that one carries more responsibility than the others; he just bounces between them. Luxon suggests that the narrator multiplies possible sources in order to escape from having to commit to any one cause outside of "asserting the hand of God at work in all these 'aventures'" (96). However well-intentioned, the narrator's appeal to Providence does not satisfy the reader, even if, as Luxon suggests, "[his] assertion of the wise oversight of … God is perfectly consistent with Lady Philosophy's teaching in *The Consolation of Philosophy*" (Luxon 97). Luxon argues that we should understand the varied "causes" of destiny, free will, chance, and fate not as Providential interference but as a "problem of pain" (97), which, he asserts, the narrator consistently pulls back from. Pretending that the body is not tied to consolation does not reconcile the narrator's problems. In fact, Luxon sees such elisions as "cracks in the 'noble edifice' or the 'noble fabric' of the 'pattern of order' in the poem, and in the noble stance which claims to have 'faith in the ultimate order of all things'" (99). He argues that the "narrator's attempts to pass 'lightly' over his characters' pain betray the existence of the cracks he tries to ignore" (Luxon 100). And this is Chaucer's point: consolation is not removed from embodied experience.

Try as the narrator does to avoid the particularity of the knights' suffering, his attention returns to the knights' bodies as they confront pain in the pursuit of consolation. One example occurs in the narrator's detailed, even medical, description of Arcite's fatal wound. We are told of his swelling chest ("Swelleth the brest of Arcite" [*KnT,* III.2743]), "clothered blood" (2745), treatments of "veine-blood" and "ventusinge" (2747)[88], "vomyt" and "laxatif" (2756), and "venim" and "corrupcioun" (2754). The detail of this quasi-clinical description, Luxon argues, serves to remove readers from the "particularity" (98) of Arcite's grief rather than connecting us to his suffering. Arcite presents as a "textbook case" exciting little more pity than a educational "case study" (Luxon 98). The diagnostic description leads into the pithy, and emotionless, one-line summary of Arcite's condition: "This al and som: that Arcite moot die" (*KnT,* III.2761).

Arcite's pursuit of desire ends with a description of his death that demonstrates the connection between his mind and body. From his first vision of Emily, his life proceeds as a blend of suffering and brief moments of consolation, and in his final speech to Emily, Arcite describes his physical trauma as only one part of his emotional and psychological pain. Drawing out the connection between his body and mind, Arcite explains that, "Nat may the woful spirit in min herte / Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte" (*KnT,* III.2765-66), before offering his "goost" (2768) to Emily and declaring her his "hertes queene" (2775) and his "hertes lady" (2776). These declarations clearly demonstrate the narrator nodding toward the romance conventions of the wounded lover, but it is the narrator's description of Arcite's body as he dies that connects body to mind.

For from his feet up to his brest was come

_____

[88] That is, "veine-blood" was the practice of blood-letting and "ventusinge" was the practice of cupping the body to promote movement of blood.

The coold of deeth, that hadde him overcome.

And yet mooreover, for in his armes two

The vital strenthe is lost and al ago. (*KnT,* III.2799-2802)

The narrator's succinct account functions as a mini-*blazon,* moving from Arcite's feet to his chest

and providing a full picture of his body losing life. The description begins like the earlier,

medical account of Arcite's fatal wound, but here the narrator expands the relationship between

mind and body to include a connection between intellect and affect.

After framing Arcite's death as a specifically embodied event, the narrator connects

Arcite's mind and body by joining his cognitive functioning to his heart as a site of affect and

sorrow. This connection relies on Arcite's final vision of Emily. In this way, Chaucer illustrates a

model of the self in which the body is a conduit of consolation, a filter through which experience

must pass.

Oonly the intellect, without moore,

That dwelled in his herte sik and soore,

Gan faillen whan the herte felte deeth.

Dusked his eyen two and failled breeth,

But on his lady yet caste he his eye;

His laste word was 'Mercy, Emelye!' (*KnT,* III.2803-2808)

The conceptual link between Arcite's heart and his capacity for sorrow, affect, and intellect

demonstrates Chaucer's awareness of a psychological model that connects body and mind. It

exempifies Corinne Saunders' argument that Chaucer drew on "medical ideas about the influence

of affect on the brain" ("Affective Reading" 21) available to him in texts like Bartholomaeus

Anglicus's *De proprietatibus rerum*. Furthermore, it aligns embodied suffering with the lover's pursuit of consolation through the fulfillment of desire.

In the *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer understands vision (and embodied sensation) as a source of suffering, but also of consolation. He shows it to be a source of consolation by framing the last moment of Arcite's life as the experience that drives the momentum of the entire tale: his vision of Emily. The very thing that sets Arcite upon the path to his death is the same thing that brings him consolation. His experience illustrates the lived wisdom that Luxon calls "hard-won" (109) because it is learned through struggle. From his angle, inflicting suffering on the body looks somewhat rational and functions as a form of discipline to steel the mind in its pursuit of consolation. But it also goes the other way. Whatever consolation Arcite finds in his struggle cannot be unwound from his body, which suggests the (potentially) uncomfortable conclusion that consolation is found through suffering, even unto death.

In the *Kingis Quair* (*KQ*)*,* James I of Scotland finds consolation by constructing a new

subjectivity for himself as the destined monarch of Scotland. To succeed in this agenda, the poem

offers an intricate conceptual model of the self. James shapes this model in three significant

sections of the poem: his initial awareness of existence as contingent upon a larger cosmology;

his perception of and blossoming love for the woman he sees outside his prison window; and the

dream vision in which he finds consolation by submitting his body, his will, and his future to

Fortune's cycles of fate. Each of these pieces focuses attention on James' embodied experience,

presenting the self as a fusion of external forces, embodied perception, and enacted intention.

James uses this model to create a new identity as a monarch by connecting his imprisonment and

subjectivity to cosmological order, by re-joining romantic desire with virtuous, embodied

materiality, and by reframing his eventual release as a determined acceptance of a destined fate.

As the poem opens and closes with the same Ptolemaic image — "Heigh in the hevynnis

figure circulere" (*KQ* 1)[89] — the circular heavens frame the poem and introduce a reality

contingent upon external cosmological forces and contextualize the grand scale for James'

purpose: to shape his new subjectivity as a monarch. The frame invites reflection on the cycles of

existence which James accepts by considering the example of Boethius. Like Chaucer and

Gower before him, James acknowledges his place within the Boethian philosophical and literary

tradition. For example, James' tired narrator reads Chaucer's *Boece,* a translation of Boethius'

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[89] All references to the *Kingis Quair* are taken from *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems,* edited by Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn, Medieval Institute Publications (TEAMS), 2005.

Consolation of Philosophy,[90] in the hope of falling asleep. In his reading, James recalls Boethius as "that noble senatoure / Of Rome, quhilom that was the warldis floure, / And from estate by Fortunes quhile / Forjugit was to povert in exile" (*KQ* 18-21). Contrary to that tradition, however, which seeks consolation by transcending Fortune's cycles, James finds consolation through embodied action within them.

In the *Quair,* James adapts the Boethian *contemptus mundi* model of consolation, in which the mind finds solace by transcending material existence. Far from rejecting the muses of poetry whom Lady Philosophy spurns in the *Consolation,*[91] James prays for the blessings of Venus, seeks the advice of Minerva, and willfully climbs upon Fortune's wheel in an effort to find consolation and reinvent his subjectivity. James finds consolation not in a stoic philosophy that privileges the mind as an escape vector from material existence, but in shaping his subjectivity around his experiences of prison, love, and fate as an active participant. Throughout the *Quair,* James examines movement, visual perception, and desire in order to assert the importance of embodied action as a participatory gesture toward consolation. In the process, James demonstrates the self as an amalgamation of several pre-reflective layers of embodied experience in order to illustrate his ascendency to the Scottish throne as the destined outcome of both cosmological influences and his own personal intentions.

Part of James' amalgamated self is an awareness of and participation in the uncontrollable cycles of fate. In "Prisoners of Reflection: The Fifteenth-Century Poetry of Exile and Imprisonment," Robert Epstein argues that James' poetry of imprisonment "articulates a sense of

---

[90] "[I] toke a boke to rede apon a quhile, / Of quhich the name is clepit properly / Boece, eftir him that was the compiloure" (*KQ* 14-16).

[91] See this chapter's epigraph for Lady Philosophy's rebuke to the Muses.

subjectivity that is new to English poetry, in that it is contingent on the uncontrollable, external

forces of existence" (160). He supports A. C. Spearing's suggestion that in prison literature the

self "recognizes a 'radical instability, the subject's capacity to differ from itself'" (Epstein 160)

even seeing itself as "divided, … fragmented, alienated from itself and from the way others

perceive it" (Spearing, "Prison, Writing, Absence," 84). However supportive Epstein remains of

Spearing's position, he adapts Spearing's focus by arguing that James' sense of self is not

destabilized or decentered by his incarceration. Although James does experience division,

fragmentation, and alienation as a result of his captivity and imprisonment, it is not framed as the

result of a self torn apart by internal existential crises. "Rather," Epstein writes, "these poets

inherit a medieval poetic tradition in which conventions of imprisonment are constitutive to

subjectivity, and in which their sense of self is only further confirmed by their aristocratic

status" (162). Indeed, James climbs onto Fortune's wheel not because he has nagging doubts

about the relation of his self to himself, but to position himself as participant in a fated romance

and political career.

Similarities between Chaucer's Palamon, Troilus and the narrator of the *Quair*

demonstrate James' use of traditional romance conventions while pointing to a "singular aptness"

of his lived experience as a prisoner (Epstein 163). Just as Palamon doubts his vision of Emily as

an earthly or heavenly creature, so, too, does James question whether the woman he sees from

his window is human or divine (Epstein 163) — "A, suete, ar ye a wardly creature, / Or hevinly

thing in liknesse of nature?" (*KQ* 293-94). Epstein notes that James "repeatedly juxtaposes

passages of detailed autobiography with passages of patently conventional fiction" (163). From

the two stanza summary of his capture, imprisonment, and release, to narrating his sea voyage as an extended metaphor for the "inconstancy of youth" (164), Epstein argues that James

> builds his poetic subjectivity from both empirical and traditional sources. Just as
>
> clearly, the experience of exile and imprisonment, far from decentering James'
>
> sense of self, fixes it, putting it almost beyond metaphorical significance. (165)

He shapes his subjectivity around what he identifies as contingent forces of existence — Jupiter, Venus, Minerva, and Fortune — in order to bolster support for his destiny as Scotland's king. James explains early on how Jupiter concedes his freedom only after eighteen odd years of exile before allowing him to return home: "Nere by the space of yeris twise nyne; / Til Iupiter his merci list aduert, / And send confort in relesche of my smert" (*KQ* 173-75). But as a poem of reflection, most likely written immediately after his release,[92] Epstein argues that James presents love and desire not as "a bitter and capricious complication of his physical confinement and his philosophical distress, but instead a prelude to deliverance" (165). Indeed, in the *Quair,* "desire … does not war with fate" (Epstein 166).

As a retelling of his life, James writes the *Quair* as a freed prisoner and, more than that, as a destined monarch. In *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography,* Joanna Summers argues that the *Quair* sculpts James' literary identity out of the actualities of his situation in order to re-frame his incarceration within an ideal subjectivity as a future monarch. Summers writes of the *Quair* that it

> turns James' imprisonment to his advantage, claiming for him the reason and self-
>
> governance so important in a ruler, implying that these qualities were retained and

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[92] In their introduction to the *Kingis Quair,* Mooney and Arn suggest a date of composition after James' release by the English late in 1423 but before the spring of 1424 when he left England (d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/mooney-and-arn-kingis-quair-and-other-prison-poems-kingis-quair-introduction).

even fostered by his imprisonment, and obliquely suggesting that his marriage and

release are the very reward and affirmation of these qualities. (65)

She insists that, while the *Quair* should not be read to literally correspond to the details of

James' and Joan Beaufort's courtship, it does relate to his life. In particular, Summers sees the

nautical metaphor for James' youth, "the schip that sailith stereles" (*KQ* 101), as a transmutation

from lived experience and an "invitation to read the text as autobiography" (67). She identifies

the poet's retrospective musings near the beginning of the poem[93] as constructed artifice,

intended "to reflect the progression of actual thought, and deliberately impart an

autobiographical self-consciousness" (Summers 67). The poem's various parts — remembrance

of youth, dream vision, self-reflection, and action — revolve around a self presenting itself.

Summers argues that the *Quair* be read as a "conscious" and *deliberate* autobiographical

construct — an argument I find persuasive.

James is certainly not just connecting to the *Boethian* tradition but expanding upon it. In

"The Open Sentence: Memory, Identity and Translation in the *Kingis Quair,*" Elizabeth Elliot

argues that the difficulties of reading the *Quair* as chronicle and/or autobiography may be

resolved by considering it from within the medieval mnemonic tradition. With reference to Mary

Carruthers's work, Elliot explains the active role of the medieval reader:

Rather than adopting the "objective" stance which continues to underwrite much

modern scholarship, the medieval scholar makes his reading a part of himself,

adding it to the memory that mediates his experience of the present time. In this

context, the primary object of literary study was not the text as an entity with its

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[93] For example, Summers points to the narrator's wandering "thoughtis rolling to and fro" (*KQ* 64) and his tendency
to "ovr-hayle" (68) "all [his] aventure (69).

> own intrinsic meaning, but the ways in which the text might contribute to a
>
> subject's ethical behaviour on a specific present occasion. (27)

The narrator's connection to Boethius' *Consolation* enacts this method of reading by

demonstrating how "mater new[e]" is used to touch on the poet's own past rather than on his

literary tradition (Elliot 29).

But the *Quair* does not just reiterate the life story of James I. It engages in the formation

of an "alternative" subjectivity by adapting Boethian stoicism and *contemptus mundi* philosophy

(Summers 69) through a reasoned and willful acceptance and cooperation with Venus, Minerva,

and Fortune. For James one of the *Consolation'*s greatest values is its autobiographical element,

demonstrated by the narrator's references to Boethius' life as "compiloure" (*KQ* 16), "noble

senatoure" (18), and "worthy lord and clerk" (22). Rather than challenging Fortune's

capriciousness, James seeks her aid and, by the end of the poem, even thanks her "exiltree / and

quhele, that thus so wele has quhirlit me!" (*KQ* 1322-3). Summers explains how Boethius'

influence is not simply repeated by James but is realigned into an alternate subjectivity:

> The influence of the *Consolation* … is not to be sought in a reiteration of
>
> Boethian philosophy, but rather in Boethius's self-portrayal as successfully
>
> reaching an understanding of his personal adversity and creating of himself a
>
> literary exemplar. For James redeploys the imprisoned situation and the self-won
>
> reason of the Boethian-figure for his own self-presentation. (70)

James is drawn to the autobiographical nature of the *Consolation* as an interpretative framework

for his own life.

Instead of finding consolation in the tenets of an anti-material philosophy, he shapes his subjectivity by challenging the model that Boethius provides. In "Chaucerian Prisoners: The Context of *The Kingis Quair,*" Julia Boffey examines the model of imprisonment in fifteenth-century verse. Derived significantly from Chaucerian sources, she entertains the "tantalizing ambiguity" (Boffey 84) that Chaucer's influence on later literary incidents of imprisonment was so great that subsequent authors were in a sense imprisoned in his models and struggled to come to terms with the "anxiety of influence" pointed out by A.C. Spearing (quoted by Boffey 84).[94] Boffey points out how Chaucer combines both literal and metaphorical significance to Palamon's and Arcite's prison. She explains how their prison "becomes an image firstly for the confinement to which love subjects them, and secondly for the constriction which results from their subjection to the whims of hostile pagan gods" (85). Of interest to my project, then, is the way in which James uses and yet reverses the pattern that Chaucer continued from the Boethian tradition. In the re-telling of his own story, James reverses the pattern Boethius lived through from comfortable happiness, to imprisonment, and, finally, execution. James' experience is opposite to Boethius, "leading from ungoverned youth, through a miserable period of incarceration, to settled happiness" (Boffey 91).

Summers sees the *Quair's* "revisionist and positive emphasis upon earthly felicity" (71) as undermining the stoicism inherited from the *Consolation.* She demonstrates that the *Quair* does not just "incorporate autobiographical data … concerns at the outset," it "specifically delineates James' understanding of his past in a way that suggests he will be a better 'servant' of the material world" (71). While Boethius identifies the muses with youthful glory and the victory

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[94] Spearing, A.C. *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP. 1985.

of irrational emotions over procedural reasoning, James "in *maturity* prays to them for

aid" (Summers 71). James calls out to "Cleo, and to yow, Polymye" (*KQ* 128), the goddesses

whom Lady Philosophy banishes from Boethius' bedside as a way of showing his service to the

world Boethius denied. Summers explains that James' attitude to Fortune is, in fact, "the obverse

of Boethius's" (71): for James, Fortune 'was first [his] fo / And eft [his] frende' (*KQ* 66-67)."

As a central pattern of the poem, circularity joins the expansive reaches of the cosmos to

the material mutability of human existence. The opening line, "Heigh in the hevynnis figure

circulere" (*KQ* 1), illustrates the poem's parameters as it measures the bounds of the Ptolemaic

system, with its concentric spheres, circling from the heights of heaven down to the confines of a

solitary prison tower. James imbues significance to his prison (and himself) by placing it within

the grand scheme of divine intention and virtuous love. Elliot notes the relevance of the spherical

imagery invoked in the first line, developed in Fortune's wheel, and affirmed at the poem's end.

Spheres and circles were believed "to reflect the eternal being of God in their

endlessness" (Elliot 25). In a similar manner, Summers argues against reading the *Quair's*

opening frame as an example of inspiration from Boethian philosophy. Rather, she sees James

deriving inspiration "from the model and reputation of the Boethian persona" (Summers 71) and

by way of implying "affinities between himself and Boethius, allowing for himself a favourable

self-presentation as self-governed and mature" (71).

Although the *Quair's* beginning opens the entire cosmos as its frame, James quickly

focuses its spheres on the cloistered, self-absorbing isolation of his incarceration. By invoking

the spheres and placing himself at their centre, James points to a life guided by several layers of

cosmic intervention. As the lens narrows it illuminates how concentrically restricted James'

movement (and thus his freedom) actually is. In this position, he sees himself unmoved at the interstellar centre of the cosmos, suffering "allone amang the figuris nyne" (*KQ* 194). Mooney and Arn note that the *figuris nyne* also represent the Arabic numerals one through nine, of which James is the zero, the non-number, or cipher, "standing alone surrounded by others of more consequence" (*KQ*, note on line 194). The image keeps James in an immovable centre. He names himself unmovable wretch, "Ane wofull wrecche that to no wight may spede, / And yit of every lyvis help hath nede" (*KQ* 195-96), which he lives out in grief. "Bewailing in [his] chamber thus allone" (204), James remains fixed in the pre-somatic mind scape that Hodapp identifies. Without movement, without motion, his mind replays a cycle of despair that casts "all joye and remedye" (*KQ* 205) from the realm of possibility. He is stuck.

At this zero-point, James shares a similar space with Boethius. Both men are trapped in cycles of political posturing outside their control. But where Boethius seeks to escape Fortune's wheel and the cycles of material existence, James climbs upon her wheel willfully and embraces its material circularity. For James the cosmological frame is an invitation to participate in the creation of his own subjectivity rather than something he must transcend. It is within the confines of his prison (and his poem), then, that James must create space to participate in the cycles of material existence. He does this in the liminal space provided by dream vision and the intra-connected, cosmological framework of his poetic vision.

The poem's first-person narration begins with a conventionally Chaucerian sleepless narrator, "in bed allone waking" (*KQ* 8). After lying for some time thinking "of many diverse thing, / Of this and that, can I noght say quharfore" (*KQ* 10-11), James begins reading Chaucer's *Boece* in hopes of falling asleep. Like Chaucer's dream narrators, James' book choice is

significant. As he picks up Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* — "[I]

toke a boke to rede apon a quhile, / Of quhich the name is clepit properly / *Boece,* eftir him that

was the compiloure" (*KQ* 14-16) — James begins constructing a literary subjectivity that

positions himself within a tradition of medieval prison poets and within his own contemporary

literary tradition, following the examples of Chaucer and Gower to whom he refers at the poem's

end.[95]

Having lain too long in bed "Forwakit and forwalowit" (*KQ* 71), musing on his

"distresse" and "aventure" (*KQ* 68), the clear ringing of the matins bell draws James' attention to

his weariness. The speaking bell, often a signifier of clear, conscious awareness, here invokes the

liminal space between waking and sleeping. It invites James to tell his story:

> And sone I heard the bell to matyns ryng
>
> And up I rase, no langer wald I lye.
>
> Bot now (how trowe ye?) suich a fantasye
>
> Fell me to mynd that ay me thoght the bell
>
> Said to me, "Tell on, man, quhat thee befell." (*KQ* 77)

The bell leaves a confused "impressioun" (*KQ* 81) on James. At first, its invitation distracts his

attention and initiates an interior dialogue regarding his imagination and whether or not what he

heard actually happened:

> "Quhat may this be?
>
> This is myn awin ymagynacioun,
>
> It is no lyf that spekis unto me,

---

[95] See line *KQ* 1373ff: "Unto the impuis of my maisteris dere, / Gowere and Chaucere, that on the steppis satt / Of rethorike quhill thai were lyvand here, / Superlative as poetis luareate…."

It is a bell; or that impressioun

Of my thought causith this illusioun

That dooth me think so nycely in this wise." (*KQ* 78-83)

As symbolic of his position — passive recipient of external forces — the impressions of his thoughts cause the illusion of his experience. As with his physical limitations, he is, so to speak, stuck in his head.

The speaking bell establishes a quasi-surrealist setting for James' dream vision and subsequent participation in shaping his subjectivity. In "The Real and the Surreal in Medieval Dream Vision: The Case of James I's Kingis Quair," William Hodapp points out how James creates a world, "a dream of movement and dialogue" (55), into which the narrator can escape the confines and mundane reality of his prison tower. Hodapp recognizes that surrealism is not a medieval category of thought. Instead, he points to the medieval concept of *verisimilitudo,* meaning "true likeness" and borrowed from classical rhetoric, as a foreshadow for the concept of surrealism. "*Verisimilitudo,*" he explains, "encapsulates the idea that setting, character, emotion, thought, and action presented in a literary text should be 'lifelike,' that is, somehow mirror what is 'probable' or 'likely' in everyday experience" (58). The most obvious medieval examples, he suggests, are found in dream vision and allegory.

The surrealist experience with the bell is enough to set James' imagination in motion and begin re-framing his subjectivity. "Determyt furth therwith" (*KQ* 85), James proceeds to tell the tale of his youth and captivity. Through stanzas fourteen to nineteen, the stanzas that form the invocation, he introduces several images that rely on the importance of movement to describe his subjectivity. James compares his "sely youth" with a bird untrained to fly and leaving its nest:

"Thou sely youth, … / Like to the bird that fed is on the nest /And can noght flee" (*KQ* 93a, 94-95a). At a cognitive level, this image compares immaturity to embodied constraint. It also reminds the reader that James was denied the nurturing environment of his family during the formative years of his adolescence.

James frames his incarceration within a Spring of "vertu" (*KQ* 134) and a "gardyn fair" (212), which are visible from his prison tower. In the middle of these bookends, James describes his capture at sea and incarceration at a time during which movement was determined for him. He begins by suggesting that the cause of his "aventure" (*KQ* 154) is unclear, writing: "Were it causit throu hevinly influence / Of Goddis will or othir casualtee / Can I noght say" (*KQ* 150-52). James leaves open the possibility of a heavenly influencer as a direct cause of his plight. He names Fortune as the guiding force of the adventure: "Fortune it schupe non othir wayis to be" (*KQ* 168). She is, simply, his "fo" (*KQ* 56).

In the invocation, the a sailing metaphor draws out a comparison between movement and consolation: "Ryght as the schip that sailith stereles / Upon the rok most to harmes hye" (*KQ* 101-2). The importance of the wayward ship is twofold: first, the image touches on his past, recalling his capture at sea while voyaging to France as a youth, and it situates his experience within the poem's larger framework — his fate within the cycles of Fortune. Second, it illustrates the intra-dependent nature of his existence. The rudderless ship, tossed and turned by wind and wave, succeeds in relating James' passive position in his capture. The alliterating "s" sounds — *schip … sailith stereles* — focus attention on James' sense that movement is dangerous. Without a guide, James cannot confidently choose a direction of travel. Fear of the "the rok most to harmes hye" prevent trust in movement. Here, direction becomes dangerous. Set against the

"rody sterres twynklyng as the fyre" (*KQ* 2), the prisoner narrator rests alone, bound in the centre

of the spheres, moved only by the forces of external influence.

The rudderless ship metaphor points to the fear and distress of navigating a life without

much control. The LIFE IS A SEA JOURNEY metaphor rests upon a correlation between James'

passive body and his intention. He needs to change the metaphor and find a suitable guide or

direction through which he can move with confidence. While James' sea voyage, capture, and

imprisonment demonstrate an unguided journey — a series of movements without purposeful

direction — it is his utter lack of participatory agency as a prisoner, captive in a cell, that reveals

the *Quair'*s subordinate metaphor around participation and consolation. Just as the sea journey

metaphor reveals the external influences which hinder his freedom, so too does it point to a

model of consolation rooted in embodied movement, participation, and intention.

In contrast to Boethius, who favours Lady Philosophy over the other Muses, James

invokes the help of Calliope, the wind of Mary, and several muses to give movement to his

intention. He writes,

> O empti saile, quhare is the wynd suld blowe
>
> Me to the port, quhar gynneth all my game?
>
> Help, Calyope, and wynd, in Marye name! …
>
> At my begynning first I clepe and call
>
> To yow, Cleo, and to yow, Polymye,
>
> With Thesiphone, goddis and sistris all. (*KQ* 117-119,127-29)

Pertinent to the metaphor's embodied underpinning is the connection James makes between his

"wit" (*KQ* 125) and his boat's sail which he opens to an impotent wind. The image of the feeble

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boat without wind points to James' crisis of identity and the hurdle of self-doubt which he must

overcome. His "doutfull hert" (*KQ* 113), "feble bote" (114), and "empti saile" (117) hinder any

forward progression, while the "lak of wynd" (*KQ* 122) signifies both a reluctance or obstruction

for movement and an absence of inspiration. He cites this calm as a hindrance to telling his story;

to do that, he needs to generate some inertia.

The significance of James' use of his *wits* lies in their connection to physical movement

and action. He shifts away from the confusion and self-doubt that he experienced with the

ringing matins-bell by placing his wits in an active role. He hoists the sail of his wit — "My wit,

unto the saile that now I wynd / To seke connying" (*KQ* 125-26) — to begin telling his story and

explains how his wits will be his guide:

> In this processe my wilsum wittis gye,
>
> And with your bryght lanternis wele convoye
>
> My pen, to write my turment and my joye. (*KQ* 131-33)

The connection he draws out between his wits and embodied action is important. Medieval

psychology describes the wits as cognitive functions of experience and expression. In his work

on this subject, Simon Kemp outlines five basic categories of the wits: perception, imagination,

cognition, intellect, and memory.[96] Although this structure was compressed or expanded in some

schemes,[97] these five wits provide a model common to European medieval psychology. Central

in this model is its physical root which occurs first in perception and the imagination, before

being processed by the intellect, and stored in memory. By describing his wits as his "wilsum …

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[96] See Kemp, *Cognitive Psychology in the Middle Ages,* ch. 4: "The Inner Senses."

[97] Kemp points out differences in versions of the theory from Augustine, Nemesius, Bartholomaeus, Avicenna, and Roger Bacon (among others). See Kemp, *Cognitive Psychology in the Middle Ages,* 51-60.

gye" ("willful guide"), James points to the embodied underpinnings of his experience and intentions. The significance of this image lies in its connection between movement, freedom, expression of his subjectivity and consolation.

During his sea journey movement and direction carry a passive and negative tone. He is *taken* and *led* away as a political hostage: "Of inymyis takin and led away / We weren all, and broght in thair contree" (*KQ* 166-67). As a prisoner "in strayte ward and in strong prisoun" (*KQ* 169), any forward movement that James pursues carries the weight of sorrowful abandon: "So ferforth of my lyf the hevy lyne, / Without confort, in sorowe abandoun" (*KQ* 171). From within this space of embodied restriction, James makes his complaint to Fortune "in [his] chamber thus alone" (*KQ* 204). Hodapp argues that this complaint reveals a "pre-somatic state of mind" (66) — a space in which only thought is possible. James certainly sees freedom. He perceives freedom in nature — "The bird, the beste, the fisch eke in the see, / They lyve in fredome, everich in his kynd" (*KQ* 183-84) — but he cannot see it for himself: "And I a man, and lakkith libertee!" (*KQ* 185). His physical prison parallels his mental prison. The lack of movement draws his attention inward.

Yet James does find moments of consolation. He finds release from the monotony of his prison in early morning exercise. Movement brings him out of despair; it draws him out of his mental prison: "My custom was on mornis for to ryse / Airly as day - O happy exercise, / By thee come I to joye out of turment!" (*KQ* 200-202). The motion of his body recalls a sense of freedom in which he finds consolatory respite. But whatever improving effect the early morning air has on James' mood, the exercise is mere distraction. At this point, Fortune remains his "fo" (*KQ*

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56). A more effective change to James' fortune comes not just through movement, but through active perception. He explains how his embodied movement brings him from despair to mirth:

> Fortirit of my thoght and wo begone,
>
> And to the wyndow gan I walk in hye
>
> To se the warld and folk that went forby;
>
> As for the tyme, though I for mirthis fude
>
> Myght have no more, to luke it did me gude. (*KQ* 207-10)

Not until he moves to his window and looks upon the world outside does he find a sustaining consolation. James' movement and perception catalyze a change in his mood by expanding his perceptive realm.

Moving to his tower window to peer into the garden below, James returns to the images of Spring and nature as he deepens the metaphor between movement and consolation. His experience of the "suete nyghtingale" (*KQ* 226), singing its song "loud and clere" (*KQ* 227), extends his frustration as a captive. It sings of the bliss of Spring lovers and of washing away winter's melancholy:

> "Worschippe, ye that loveris bene, this May,
>
> For of your blisse the kalendis ar begonne,
>
> And sing with us, 'Away, winter, away!
>
> Cum, somer, cum, the suete sesoun and sonne!'
>
> Awake, for schame! that have your hevynnis wonne,
>
> And amorously lift up your hedis all:
>
> Thank Lufe that list you to his merci call." (*KQ* 232-38)

James' ability to interpret the nightingale's song extends the pseudo-surrealist context established in his interaction with the speaking matins-bell. Although the bird sings of auspicious portents — new lovers, seasonal shifts, and changes in circumstance — its freedom to hop "beugh to beugh" (*KQ* 242) and enjoy the sweet season and warm Sun reminds James of his incarceration. The birds' free movement paints James' image of imprisonment in a negative light. The experience not only reiterates his current situation as a prisoner, but it also re-frames his incarceration as an absence of love.

Juxtaposed against the birds' "freschly … kynd" and "fetheris new … in the sonne" (*KQ* 243, 244), James ruminates on his present state, culminating in his awareness that he remains a "thrall and birdis gone at large" (263). After expressing this frustration, James' doubt directs him to pray for his freedom:

> "Can I noght elles fynd, bot gif that he
>
> Be lord, and as a god may lyve and regne
>
> To bynd and louse and maken thrallis free,
>
> Than wold I pray his blisfull grace benigne
>
> To hable me unto his service digne,
>
> And evermore for to be one of tho
>
> Him trewly for to serve in wele and wo." (*KQ* 276-73)

Presently, James does not realize the answer to his prayer will manifest within a courtly love framework, nor that he will trade his impoverished, incarcerated thralldom for the thralldom of a Lover to his beloved.

Rhetorically, James, the author, who writes from a place of reflection, is well aware of how his eventual marriage to Joan Beaufort shifts his fortune and catalyzes his release. Within the poem, however, the narrator finishes his prayer and looks again into the garden; he sees a beautiful woman with whom he falls in love:

> And therwith kest I doun myn eye ageyne,
>
> Quhare as I sawe, walking under the tour,
>
> Full secretly new cummyn hir to pleyne
>
> The fairest or the freschest yong floure
>
> That ever I sawe, me thoght, before that houre. (*KQ* 274-78)

External sensation drives James' awareness back to his body which reacts with the embodied condition common to courtly lovers. He frames desire as a function of the body. Of note here is how the symptoms of desire, or the affections of James' body, occur prior to cognitive reflection. He describes the felt change as a sudden weakness brought on by humoral imbalance — "For quhich sodayn abate anon astert / The blude of all my body to my hert" (*KQ* 279-80) — before explaining how his body overwhelms his mind: "my wittis all / Were so overcom with pleasance and delyte" (*KQ* 282-83). In this way, James shares his embodied reaction with Palamon and Arcite. Like the cousin knights who are confused when they first see Emily in *KnT*,[98] James' perception of Joan causes confusion, wondering if the woman he sees is a goddess or a woman: "A, suete, ar ye a wardly creature / Or heavinly thing in liknesse of nature?" (*KQ* 293-94). This confusion is significant because it creates a space for James to shift his perspective on his captivity by focusing his attention on his body's desire rather than its immobility and restriction.

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[98] See *Knight's Tale,* I.1077-1122.

In the *Quair*, James does not shun his body's desires and reactions as Boethius does. Instead, James places them at the centre of his experience, as he is moved into love. He positions his mind as a contingent function of his body and the experiences of his body as contingent on perception and pre-reflective, embodied cognition. Immediately following his moaning prayer, "bewailling [his] infortune and [his] chance" (*KQ* 310), questioning if the woman before him is a goddess or a mortal, James experiences an embodied change. He describes the process as "fallying into Lufis dance" (*KQ* 312). The verb is important. It demonstrates that movement is the initiator of change, and that that change is connected to his embodied desires and reactions. He describes being changed into "another kind" following an outward-in movement: "That sodeynly my wit, my contenance, / My hert, my will, my nature, and my mynd, / Was changit clene ryght in anothir kynd" (*KQ* 313-315). Change begins in his perception and his experience, moving through the body before changing the mind. It happens quickly and highlights the need for a physical catalyst to effect a mental shift.

Immediately following this change, James describes the woman he sees. Doing so takes up the better part of six stanzas before concluding with a prayer to Venus. He describes a woman with "golden hair and rych atyre" (*KQ* 317). She is adorned with "perlis quhite", with "mony ane emeraut and fair saphire," and a "chaplet fresch of hewe, / Of plumys partit rede and quhite and blewe" (*KQ* 318, 320-22). She wears a "fyne amaille" (fine enamel) (330), "A gudely cheyne of smale orfeverye" ("a goodly chain of fine gold work") (*KQ* 331) from which hung a heart-shaped ruby: "Quhareby there hang a ruby, without faille, / Lyke to ane hert schapin verily" (322-23). His description concludes by noting the woman's youth, beauty, humility, and virtue alongside her apparent "Wisdom, largess, estate, and connying sure" (*KQ* 347).

This description serves two purposes. First, it demonstrates that James' perception has, in fact, changed. No longer is he bound to the experiences of his thoughts. His gaze reaches beyond the prison's window and allows his physical experience to guide him once again. The second purpose is tied to the first, though it is more rhetorical. James' description of the woman establishes a courtly context within which the woman belongs. In so doing, he demonstrates her fitness and suitability as a queen. From what we know of James' eventual release and return to the Scottish throne, the insinuation here is also that she is fit to be *his* queen.

James' embodied reaction to the woman in the garden sets in motion a cognitive shift toward consolation. At the centre of this change is his status as a captive or, in his words, a "thrall" (*KQ* 285). James only uses this word three times in the *Quair,* all of which occur between stanzas thirty-eight and forty-one, just before and just after he falls in love.[99] The curious thing about James' experience as a prisoner is that he does not blame or divert attention to lower, earthly authorities for his position. Instead, he turns his attention to higher, more pervasive powers: Venus and Nature. His description of being thrall begins in mournful despondency — seen in his reflection on incarceration while the birds go free[100] — and ends in

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[99] See lines 263, 269, and 285 of the *Quair*: "That I am thrall and birdis gone at large" (263); "To bynd and louse and maken thrallis free" (269); and, "That sudaynly my hert became hir thrall" (285).

[100] Pondering the decisions of Love, James prays,
> "… quhat may this be,
> That Lufe is of so noble myght and kynde,
> Lufing his folk? And suich prosperitee,
> Is it of him, as we in bukis fynd?
> May he oure hertes setten and unbynd?
> Hath he upon oure hertis suich maistrye?
> Or all this is bot feynyt fantasye?
> For gif he be of so grete excellence
> That he of every wight hath cure and charge,
> Quhat have I gilt to him or doon offense
> That I am thrall and birdis gone at large,
> Sen him to serve he myght set my corage?" (*KQ* 254-64)

the willful release of his personal freedom: "Onely throu latting of my eyen fall, / That sudaynly my hert became hir thrall / Forever, of free wyll" (*KQ* 284-86). Following his description of the woman, James prays to Venus to move him into Love's jurisdiction as a way of exchanging thralldoms: "O Venus clere, of goddis stellifyit, / … / That me ressavit have in suich wise, / To lyve under your law and do servise" (*KQ* 358, 361-62). The extent to which James accepts this position is shown in his jealousy of the woman's "lytill hound" (*KQ* 368). After seeing the woman's dog playing on the ground, James expresses that he wishes to exchange places with it:

> And eft myn eye full pitously adoun
>
> I kest, behalding unto hir lytill hound
>
> That with his bellis playit on the ground:
>
> Than wold I say and sigh therwith a lyte,
>
> "A, wele were him that now were in thy plyte!" (*KQ* 367-71)

Hodapp points out that as James projects himself onto the woman's dog, he enters a second level of "thralldom" as a prisoner of Love (66). Again, James shifts his perspective on freedom by exchanging thralldoms. By becoming thrall to the woman in the garden he denies the previous claim on his freedom.

As James considers the benefits of canine life, the now-silent nightingale triggers his sadness and returns his focus to nature's inherent freedoms. He projects sorrow onto the nightingale's silence and begs it to sing for him in hope that its song will sing for him as well:

> O lytill wreech, allace, maist thou noght se
>
> Quho commyth yond? Is it now tyme to wring?
>
> Quhat sory thoght is fallin upon thee?

Opyn thy trote; hastow no les to sing? …

Now, suete bird, say ones to me 'pepe.'

I dee for wo, me think thou gynnis slepe. (*KQ* 393-96, 398-99)

The bird's silence evokes deeper introspection in James. Having remained a political prisoner for eighteen years, the nightingale's silence reflects the extent to which James remains voiceless. It becomes a mirror for James' frustration, jealousy, melancholy, sluggishness, and shame, which he demonstrates in a rebuke to the bird. He writes:

Hastow no mynde of lufe? Quhare is thy make?

Or artow seke, or must with jelousye?

Or is he dede, or hath he thee forsake?

Quhat is the cause of thy melancolye

That thou no more list maken melodye?

Sluggart, for schame! Lo here thy goldin hour

That worth were hale all thy lyvis laboure! (*KQ* 400-406).

The experience focuses James' attention on the urgency of his feelings as he chastises the bird: "Here is the tyme to syng or ellis never" (*KQ* 413). His interpretation of the bird's silence signals the necessity for his own action.

As if in support of James' lamentation, the nightingale sings forth. He interprets the bird's song as a prayer in his favour, the sound of which elevates his spirit and moves his "wittis boundin all to fest" ("bound all to celebration," my translation, *KQ* 427). The nightingale's melody moves other birds to join in. Together they sing to May of their playful service, freedoms

and worship of the changing season. James hopes the song will draw attention from the woman below:

> With full mony uncouth suete note and schill,
>
> And therwithall that fair upward hir eye
>
> Wold cast amang, as it was Goddis will,
>
> Quhare I myght se…. (*KQ* 457-60)

But however beautifully the birds sang, the woman turns away after her walk through the garden, returning James to isolation. It is enough for James to dip back into depression and compare himself with Tantalus.[101]

The image of Tantalus serves to summarize the *Quair* up to this point. Tantalus was punished by having to stand in water surrounded by the low hanging branches of a fruit tree. Whenever he reached for fruit, the branch would move and escape his grasp. Whenever he bowed down to drink, the water receded before him. Thus, he remained ever tormented by the gifts of the earth, his desires never satiated. James, similarly, has remained passive and unable to achieve his desires throughout his maturing years. He remains unable to act for himself or to connect to another in a loving way, and his voice remains unheard. His one action that does succeed serves only to surrender himself as thrall to an unrequited love. When he seeks freedom, love or consolation, each eludes him. Now, doubly confined by jailer and by love, sorrow overwhelms James and he falls asleep.

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[101] "As Tantalas I travaile ay butles
  That ever ylike hailith at the well
  Water to draw with buket botemles
  And may noght spede, quhois penance is an hell." (*KQ* 484-887)

The dream sequence, placed at the centre of the *Quair's* narrative, recounts James'

interactions with Venus, Minerva, and Fortune, and tells the story of how he ultimately accepts

his "fate." His dream suggests a bold acquiescence to the cycles of Fortune, where, rather than

bemoaning her wheel, the narrator willingly climbs upon it and observes the goddess' advice to

"'hald thy grippis'" (*KQ* 1194). Although his act is submissive, it also demonstrates a

participatory subjectivity that James, the free man, author, and future monarch, develops through

the rest of the poem.

Hodapp sees the dream sequence as forming a space of release in which James

participates in the "liminal experience of action and dialogue" (66). He claims that alongside his

real-life incarceration the narrator's dream vision creates a "pre-somatic state of mind" (Hodapp

66). Hodapp describes it as a "spiritual adventure," juxtaposing the narrator's "rational, waking

life with his irrational dream life in an effort to examine issues of thralldom, liberty, and

love" (69). He sees the narrator's integration of the "irrational, interior dream" world with his

"exterior waking experience" as transformational (Hodapp 70). He describes it as proto-surreal,

suggesting that "the surrealist project has a neo-medieval element in its effort to develop what

seems to be a pre-Enlightenment aspect of culture where the irrational and the rational might

join" (Hodapp 71). The idea that medieval dream vision affords an inner-body/outer-body

experience is certainly apparent: Chaucer, Gower, and Langland (among others) use the genre to

explore transformations of mind, body, and soul.

James enters dream space as a wave of light passes over him and temporarily blinds his

sight.[102] In Dantean fashion, a voice assures James to "be noght affrayde" (*KQ* 518) before

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[102] "Me thought that thus all sodeynly a lyght / In at the wyndow come quhare that I lent, / Of quhich the chamber wyndow schone full bryght, / And all my body so it hath overwent / That of my sicht the vertew hale iblent" (*KQ* 512-16).

bringing him into the heavens on "a cloude of cristall" (525). James ascends upwards "fro spere to spere / Through air and water and the hote fyre" (*KQ* 526-27) to arrive in the "glade empire / Of blisfull Venus" (530-31). His procession through the elements and into heavenly spheres directs attention back to the heavenly frame[103] in which James sets his narrative.

At the poem's beginning, the spherical frame served to focus attention on a single point; its lens pinpointing a single space — James, the destined king of Scotland, imprisoned in a tower and alone. But then, the dream opens a new mnemonic space – a court of Lovers whose lives ended in the service of Venus – for James to re-frame his subjectivity. As he ascends through the spheres "unto the circle clere / Of Signifer, quhare fair, bryght, and schire / The signis schone" (*KQ* 528-30), the lens of fate moves our attention from the past into his future. He sees "mony a mylioun" "Loveris that endit thair lyfis space / In lovis service" (*KQ* 543, 542-3). Unlike Chaucer or Gower, who might take the time to elaborate on who these people were, James pulls back from identification. More important to him is that these "agit folk" (*KQ* 578) represent the "hiest stage and gree" ("highest level and degree") (*KQ* 577) of those who truly served love. Symbolically, James goes beyond even these servants of Love and positions himself as a participant in Venus' sphere.

After passing through several concentric rings of Love's servants, James arrives before Venus. He addresses her as "Hye quene of lufe, sterr of benevolence" and "Pitouse princes and planet merciable" (*KQ* 687-88). There are two layers within the titles he gives to Venus. The first layer points to her cultural influence (as queen and princess) while the second points to her cosmological influence (as planet). Together, both labels illustrate James' desire to see nobility

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[103] "Heigh in the hevynnis figure circulere" (*KQ* 1).

and divinity represented in a single person: an image he pursues throughout the rest of the poem. Furthermore, James' visit to Venus (and then to Minerva and Fortune) reveals his presumption that only the highest, celestial beings are capable of hearing his complaint and aiding his journey. As both prince and poet, his subjectivity demands the highest, most influential court and advisors. Significantly, he seeks only that which shares in the influence and majesty of a monarch.

In addition to projecting his desires onto Venus, James' complaint demonstrates his desire for connection. In his prayer, James asks Venus to transport his heart (his desire and love) to the woman in the garden. To do this, he invites her to use the piercing streams of her vision. He prays:

> "And with the stremes of your percying lyght
>
> Convoy my hert that is so wo begone
>
> Ageyne unto that suete, hevinly sight
>
> That I within the wallis cald as stone
>
> So suetly saw on morow walk and gone,
>
> Law in the gardyn ryght tofore myn eye." (*KQ* 715-20)

His prayer to "convoy" his heart depends on the theory of material transference through vision called extramission, a connection through the physicality of sight. Extramission is the medieval theory of vision which posits that we visually perceive by projecting beams of light from the eye onto the object of vision.[104] Data is then sent back to the body via the projected beams. The theory associates vision with the sense of touch (the beams of sight actually touch what we see)

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[104] See Kemp, *Medieval Psychology*, 36-40.

and points to what consolation looks like for James: a physical connection through virtuous love. Within James' request, then, is the presumption that his heart — his desire — is a material thing which can affect another person. James asks, then, not only to *see* the woman in the garden, but also to physically connect with her.

Rather than trying to escape the material realm, James seeks to participate within it. This is an important piece for him as he constructs a new subjectivity as a political prisoner. To that end, Venus supports James, enlisting him to chastise his captors *on the ground* for their negligence and disdain of her laws. She says to James,

> "Quhen thou descendis doun to ground ageyne,
>
> Say to the men that there bene resident
>
> How long think thay to stand in my disdeyne
>
> That in my lawis bene so negligent
>
> From day to day, and list tham noght repent
>
> Bot breken louse and walken at thair large?" (*KQ* 799-804)

Effectively siding with James' political future, Venus entrusts him with being her messenger. She gives power and blessing to James because of his loyalty. She encourages him to persevere in her service: "contynew in my servise, / Worschip my law and my name magnifye" (*KQ* 855-56). For his merit, Venus promises to save his soul and share space with him:

> "And I your confort here sall multiplye
>
> And for your meryt here, perpetualye
>
> Ressave I sall your saulis, of my grace,
>
> To lyve with me as goddis in this place." (*KQ* 858-61)

While her blessing illustrates political support for James, it also provides yet another circular

model in which he is a passive recipient, orbiting endlessly in Venus' grace. He has not yet

become an active participant. In this space, consolation rests upon his willingness to submit to

and to serve the vision of another being setting the foundation for his conversation with Minerva.

Neither Philosophy nor Reason guides James through the rest of his dream. Instead,

Venus sends him to Minerva with "Gude Hope" (*KQ* 740). Hope, and its correlation to faith,

symbolizes James' need for trust in a larger, contingent system of forces not directly within his

control. Together, James and Good Hope find Minerva, the "pacient goddesse" (*KQ* 877). Her

advice revolves around the inward balance of intentions in love and serves to reinforce the

commitment James made with Venus to practice a reasoned, virtuous love. She acknowledges

James' "request to procure … / … sum confort at [her] hond" (*KQ* 887) before challenging his

intention. Central to her challenge is that James share openly of his desires. Minerva acts as a

check-point, a safe-guard, through which James must present the worth of his intentions. She

identifies the threat of lust and treachery as the paramount "ypocrisye" (*KQ* 938) of ill-

intentioned lovers, comparing such behaviour to the deceptive whistles of a bird-catcher and the

"false theif" (*KQ* 944). She calls James to ground his heart in "Goddis law" (*KQ* 961) and then to

open its contents to her:

> "Bot gif the hert be groundit ferm and stable
>
> In Goddis law, they purpose to atteyne …
>
> Opyn thy heart, therfore, and lat me se
>
> Gif thy remede be pertynent to me." (*KQ* 960-61, 965-66)

Minerva's call to *open your heart* encourages James to delve deeper into his intentions. James expresses a desire for his "wittis" (*KQ* 986) to contain more joy. She acknowledges his desire but advises him to find a healthy root for it: "'Desire?' quod sche. 'I nyl it noght deny / So thou it ground and set in Cristin wise, / And therfor, son opyn thy hert playnly'" (*KQ* 988-90).

As James looks deeper into his intentions, he reveals a desire to protect his beloved's reputation: "For my grete lufe and treuth to stond in grace, / Hir worschip sauf, lo, here the blisful cace" (*KQ* 998-99). The reader is left to speculate why his beloved's reputation needs saving or how he would do so from prison. Perhaps James is projecting his own ignoble state — isolated from significant political and romantic purpose — onto his beloved, thinking that his love will tarnish her status, rank, and character. Perhaps he is looking ahead to the political effects a marriage to her will cause. However we interpret James' intention, his appeal to Minerva demonstrates a willingness to adhere to the political and romantic customs of the world instead of trying to escape or dominate them. He demonstrates willingness to participate in rather than transcend desire.

Appeased by James' vulnerability, Minerva prays that Fortune favour him[105] and recognizes the contingent reality in which he exists. She cites Ecclesiastes as advice for James while enduring the hardships of his life:

'All thing has tyme,' thus sais Ecclesiaste,

'And wele is him that his tyme wil abit.

---

[105] "New wele!" quod she. "And sen that it is so,
That in vertew thy lufe is set with treuth,
To helpen thee I will be one of tho
From hensforth, and hertly without sleuth,
Of thy distresse and excesse to have reuth
That has thy hert I will pray full fair
That fortune be no more therto contrair." (*KQ* 1002-8)

> Abyde thy tyme, for he that can bot haste
>
> Can noght of hap, the wise man it writ;
>
> And oft gud fortune flourith with gude wit:
>
> Quharefore, gif thou will be wele fortunyt,
>
> Lat wisedom ay to thy will by iunyt.' (*KQ* 925-31)

Her message to James is clear: abide your time; unite your free will to wisdom. The model of consolation, here, is one of honesty, fortitude, and participation within a larger cosmic cycle. It recalls some of Boethius' lessons from the *Consolation,* and is an important message for James. Summers argues that, throughout the poem's dénouement, "James portrays himself as having understood … that true liberty … consists in the alignment of free will and reason" (72). Summers explains that through the "catalyst" of falling in love, James is led to maturity because, in the *Quair,* "true freedom [exists] in the use of free will to adhere to virtuous Christian love as opposed to irrational desire" (72). Implicit in James' promise to Minerva of "reasoned conduct in love" (Summers 72) is an awareness that true freedom is found in the expression of virtuous love.

But unlike Boethius, who finds escape by uniting his mind to wisdom, James' path is not to escape desire. Minerva explains to James that if he will follow a virtuous and reasoned love, "she will not deny 'Desire' (*KQ* 988) as long as it is 'set in Cristin wise' (989)" (Summers 73). It is through falling in love and sitting in patience and vulnerability that James expresses his desire for participatory action. What imprisons James, then, is not just a run of bad fortune but his own unwillingness to participate in that contingent existence ordered by virtuous desire. Indeed, James must seek liberty (and consolation) by submitting to and participating in Fortune's path.

This path is pointed to early on in the poem when James reflects on the creatures of the earth who live in freedom while he lacks liberty: "The bird, the best, the fisch eke in the see / lyve in fredome, euerich in his kynd. / And I a man, and lakkith libertee" (*KQ* 183-85). Summers points out that it is the nature of birds and beasts, who are without free will or reason, to "have only to praise and thank Nature" (72), their "gouernoure" and "quene" (*KQ* 455). Inside this world consolation appears simple, requiring only obedience and gratitude. But free will and Fortune complicate this simplicity. Minerva reminds James that he, as with all other creatures, is subject to Fortune's determinations of *well and woe,* but that in contrast to the birds and beasts human nature involves some degree of "self-rule" (Summers 72). She explains that

> "all ye creaturis
>
> Quhich under us beneth have your duellying, …
>
> Onely to hir that has the cuttis two
>
> In hand, bothe of your wele and of your wo." (*KQ* 1009-10, 1014-15)

The woman who holds the "cuttis two," a reference to the "either-or" fickleness of only using two sticks to draw lots, is Fortune. Minerva's speech brings to bear the inevitability and uncontrollability of fate on James' reflections on freedom and self-rule. For James, his incarceration amplifies the disparity he perceives between his desire for self-rule and his awareness that he remains only a passive participant. For James, it is not enough to *be* in a position of obedience and gratitude; to practice free will, he must *choose* to do so.

Minerva elaborates on the relationship between Nature and Fortune in the final section of her conversation with James. She lays out two possible positions regarding the nature of chance and fate. The first reminds James of his place within the poem's frame, the concentric

cosmological spheres of influence: "sum clerkis trete / That all your chance causit is tofore / Heigh in the hevin" (*KQ* 1016-18). Here, fate is a product of the diverse intra-connections of a contingent reality. It is deterministic, seeing individual actions and events as predetermined outcomes of celestial forces. The second position holds that individual action determines one's fate. Minerva explains that

> '… man
>
>> Has in himself the chose and libertee
>>
>> To cause his awin fortune, how or quhan
>>
>> That him best lest, and no necessitee
>>
>> Was in the hevin at his nativitee.' (*KQ* 1023-27)

This is a bottom-up model in which fate is not the effect of contingent, cosmological forces but the outworking of individual action. Free will and agency press fate to the horizon of the cosmos. Sense of purpose and meaning resolves out of a communal "happening" rather than pre-determinate causes: "othir clerkis halden that … thingis happin in commune / Efter purpose, so cleping thame 'Fortune'" (*KQ* 1028-29).

Minerva does not take sides in this debate. Instead, she points James to the top of the cosmological chain, the Prime Mover, "God, … the First Cause onely / Of everything" (*KQ* 1034-35). Existing outside of time, God perceives the vicissitudes of Fortune as the outcomes of others' causes: "He foreknawing is of all" (*KQ* 1036). Minerva's advice to seek a power outside of time is sound, but as if to admit the difficulty of this path she recalls James' attention to Venus' compassion and advises him to pray to Fortune instead:

> 'Bot for the sake and at the reverence

Of Venus clere, as I thee said tofore, …

Pray Fortune help, for mich unlikly thing

Full oft about sche sodeynly dooth bring.' (*KQ* 1049-50)

She ends their conversation by positioning consolation within the corporeal realm. It becomes

linked to submission and participation in Fortune's path rather than in an intellectual escape.

Immediately following their conversation, James does not ascend farther in to the heights

of the heavens, but rather he descends to "a lusty plane" (*KQ* 1058) back on earth.[106] Sensation

grounds James, once again, on a material plane. A diverse ecology fills James with "plesant" (*KQ*

1059) feelings. The flowers are gay, the river flows in blended harmonies, fish leap from the

water, scales glittering bright, and the road before him is lined with fruit bearing trees, all ripe for

picking (*KQ* 1065-71).

After landing, James perceives in his mind a diverse bestiary from "lyoun king and his

fere lyonesse" (*KQ* 1079), to the "camel full of hare" (*KQ* 1099) with several animals in

between. His vision is significant because it is a projection of his mind: "And also, as it come

unto my mynd, / Of bestis sawe I mony diverse kynd" (*KQ* 1077-78). His perception comes from

within a mnemonic space and draws on details of a curated list. He does not describe himself

among the animals. In so doing, he sets himself apart from, outside of, and above, the lion king

and his varied subjects. The list serves to place James on top of the hierarchy of animals. It is as

much a commentary on James' *rightful* kingly position as it is a description of natural hierarchies

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[106] … And ryght anon
I tuke my leve als straught as ony lyne:
Within a beme that fro the contree dyvine
Sche, percyng throw the firmament, extendit,
To ground ageyne my spirit is descendit. (*KQ* 1053-57)

in the food chain. In addition to what it reveals about James' projections, the bestiary also leads

into Fortune's dwelling and serves to reinforce her association with the natural cycles of life.

Among the flowers, fish, and fauna is where Fortune presides. James finds her next to a

curving wall, hovering over the ground, in front of a "compas round, / A quhele" (*KQ* 1111-12),

on which he sees many people clambering. Under the wheel is an "ugly pit, depe as ony

helle" (*KQ* 1129). James feels fear as he perceives "that ilk quhele that sloppar was to hold" (*KQ*

1136) and how those who lose their footing "were overthrawe in twinkling of an eye" (1141) and

"Com no more up agane" (1132): "… astonait of that ferefull syght, / I ne wist quhat to done, so

was I fricht" (1133-34). His fear comes from Fortune's fickleness, which is symbolized in her

surcoat that shines in many "diverse hewis" (*KQ* 1115). Additionally, James notices her sudden

mood change: "Louring sche was, and thus sone it wold slake / And sodeynly a maner smylyng

make / And sche were glad" (*KQ* 1124-26). And finally, he notices how unsteadily Fortune

rotates her wheel, "So tolter quhilum did sche it [the wheel] to wrye" (*KQ* 1145), and interprets

her behaviour as an attempt to diminish climbers' courage: "Therefor, to clymbe thair corage was

no more" (1148).

Each of these observations leads into the moment Fortune directs everyone's attention

toward James. In an open display of power, Fortune calls on James by name before everyone

present — "at the last, in presence of thame all / That stude about, sche clepit me be name" (*KQ*

1156-57). Everyone present are either waiting for, clambering on, or falling off of Fortune's

wheel (i.e., everyone who seeks exactly what James seeks: self-rule). Her call evokes shame in

James and brings him to his knees. She teases him, questions who sent him, as if he can not (or

will not) seek her for himself, and asks if he wants her to grant his desire: "wold thou that I

ordeyne / To bringen thee unto thy hertis desire?" (*KQ* 1170-71). It is rather conventional as a temptation scene in that it attempts to redirect power away from the true source and achieve some kind of mastery.

But Fortune's offer is impotent. It is not her power but the wheel's that brings change. She is, along with everyone else, bound to its rotations and endless cycling. Implicit in this image is an awareness that the continuation of life is contingent on a geometric force more irrational and pre-cognitive than the physical body: the spinning of a wheel. As temporary and ephemeral as it promises to be, consolation may be found by climbing on Fortune's wheel: "And therwithall unto the quhele in hye / Sche hath me led, and bad me lere to clymbe, / Upon the quhich I steppit sudaynly" (*KQ* 1191-93). Fortune's only advice for him is to "hald thy grippis" (*KQ* 1194). At the end of his path (and at the end of his dream vision), James finds consolation in the physical act of climbing and an intention to participate. The conceptual metaphor in view, now, revolves around several cognitive metaphors: CONSOLATION IS EMBODIED, … IS ACTION, … IS PARTICIPATION.

James breaks the Boethian pattern by positioning his subjectivity within the operations of Fortune's wheel instead of trying to escape it. Where Boethius sought to escape his physical prison through mental activity, James' willingness to mount Fortune's wheel demonstrates that he does not see freedom and incarceration simply as a state of mind — something to be thought through — but as a real physical state that hinders his desires by hindering his body. Boffey sees James' step onto Fortune's wheel as an important structural and intellectual focus of the *Quair.* She contends that "subjection becomes a form of liberation" (Boffey 95) for James instead of becoming an existential barrier. Elliot supports her reading by suggesting that the poet's

conclusive affirmation — of the "fatall influence" written "Hich in the hevynnis figure circulere" (*KQ* 1366, 1372) — acknowledges his place within God's providence as a participant instead of a victim (Elliot 25-6). She explains that James' final action of "climbing on Fortune's wheel, despite his knowledge of its unstable nature, does not represent a proof of his moral decay or interest in worldly things, but rather a willingness to pursue his worldly duties as a potentate despite the threat of personal loss" (Elliot 37). By climbing on to Fortune's wheel James acknowledges that his existence is contingent upon several intra-connected layers: cosmology, desire, love, virtue, vice, politics, fate, and action. James does not seek escape from Fortune's system but finds consolation by framing his destiny within it.

After waking from his dream, James' perspective changes. The turtledove's arrival marks the first sign of James' changing fortunes and is signaled as auspicious. The dove's call to "Awak, awake!" (1247), its "newis glad" (*KQ* 1248-52) and bouquet of "joroflis" (gillyflowers/ carnations) (1241) bear tidings of "confort" (1249) and offer new hope that James' commitment to virtuous love is about to be rewarded. By re-inscribing his beloved's message into his poem, James becomes both "recipient and scribe" (Quinn 209) of the good news regarding his release and marriage. He explains how the "First takyn" ("First token") (*KQ* 1260) of reciprocated love begins to remove the pain of his incarceration: "truely efter, day be day, / That all my wittis maistrit had tofore, / Quhich hensferth the paynis did away" (1261-63). Time moves quickly now. Within the space of a few lines, James reflects from a place of "larges" (1266) and "blisse" (1267):

And schortly, so wele Fortune has hir bore

To quikin truely day by day my lore,

To my larges that I am cumin agayne

To blisse with hir that is my sovirane. (*KQ* 1264-67)

Evidently, alongside such auspicious tidings, James returned to compose a happier ending to his *Quair*. In the remaining stanzas of the poem James writes from a place of reflection rather than from present experience.

The shift in perspective and a change in scribal hands after stanza 177 both provide evidence for separating the poem into two parts: an A-*Quair* and a B-*Quair*. In "Red Lining and Blue Penciling 'The Kingis Quiar,'" William Quinn offers an insightful reading of these distinctive "stints" of authorship. He explains how each part was probably written at different points in James' imprisonment, release, marriage, and anniversary (Quinn 191ff). Of interest to my project is Quinn's argument that James added the B-*Quair*, in part, as an expression of his own consolation after his fortunes had turned round. Quinn points to the conjunctive "Bot" at line 1268 as an "obvious seam in the poem's patchwork" (210).[107] That James provides an "ansuere" to the question "Quhat nedis me apoun so litill evyn / To writt all this?" (*KQ* 1269-70) suggests that a version of the *Quair* was in circulation before the B-*Quair* was added. Quinn sees James' answer to having "written so much about so little" (Quinn 210) as an "everyman" justification: "James claims that every individual 'quho that from hell war croppin onys in hevin" is entitled to write a personal *Commedia*, since "every wicht his awin suete or sore / Has maist in mynde" (*KQ* 1273-74) (Quinn 210). "What is remarkable about the *Quair*," explains Quinn,

is not the author's ability to compile a sequence of compositions but the artistry

which he reconstructed the final unified poem. James' closing thanks translates all

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[107] "Bot for als moche as sum micht think or seyne: / Quhat nedis me apoun so litill evyn / To writt all this? I ansuere thus ageyne" (1268-70).

his past sufferings into one happy memory now, a youthful love that still "flourith

ay newe" (*KQ* 1351) in the imagination. (211)

James' poetic means work toward his own consolatory end, one which revolves around

developing his subjectivity as a lover and a monarch. Indeed, it is active participation in his

consolation which "helped James 'thus to wyn his hertis souereyne' (*KQ* 1279) who in turn

'hertly' defended James' life (1308-9)" (Quinn 210). Writing from a later date, then, James writes

his own consolatory ending by reflecting on his good fortune as lover and emancipated king.

Significantly, James portrays the rewards of self-discipline and virtuous love within the

language of marriage. Summers argues that the *Quair* frames James' subjectivity within a

"pedagogical framework of love" (65) and notes James' vow-like descriptions near the end of the

poem: "for euir sett abufe / In perfyte ioy (that neuir may remufe / Bot onely deth)" (*KQ* 1313–

15); and, "In lufis yok that esy is and sure . . . / Sche hath me tak" (1346–8) (Summers 73). From

his description, Summers argues that the *Quair* presents James' maturation through the double

lens of virtuous love and reasoned self-governance. It constructs his subjectivity within "a

specifically Christianized rendering of the *Consolation's* philosophical scheme, and portrays

himself as bound to such a scheme through free choice" (Summers 73). This model of

subjectivity was extremely important as James was returning to Scotland because, as Summers

explains, his

imprisonment is portrayed in a manner that aids his self-presentation, allowing

him to fashion himself as an admirable Boethian exemplar, and as having reached

the epitome of self-rule, a quality contemporarily reiterated as of the utmost

importance in a king. (73)

Unlike Boethius, James shows little concern about the interventions of fate and Fortune as damaging his subjectivity. As both "poet and prince," Epstein argues that while James' identity is contingent upon Fortune's wheel, it is entered into "independently" (169) on his own terms:

> His self is not defined in relation to a royal patron, but is itself centralized and autonomous. Contingent it is on the fickle revolutions of Fortune, but not on the correlative self-formation of another individual. (Epstein 169)

Since his subjectivity is not dependent upon another princely patron, James solidifies his own subjectivity as contingent upon and yet "above" the forces of existence in his "envoy" by addressing a generalized reader. As Epstein suggests, "only God holds a position of superiority and 'power,' sitting above in regal 'magnificence'" (169-70):

> And thus endith the f[a]tall influence
>
> Causit from hevyn quhare powar is commytt
>
> Of gouirnance, by the magnificence
>
> Of him that hiest in the hevin sitt. (*KQ* 1366-69)

By acknowledging his existence as contingent upon other forces, James is able to shape his subjectivity around his imprisonment in ways that were not possible for Boethius or for other contemporary fifteenth-century poets (Epstein 170). James unifies his status as poet *and* prince by placing his subjectivity within an array of externalities. By poem's end, his subjectivity rests within the cycles of Fortune's wheel, between God and the creatures of the earth. For James, presenting himself as patient, virtuous, participatory, and politically self-governed is paramount to his subjectivity as a future king of Scotland.

In the *Quair,* James finds consolation by acknowledging the physical and material realities of his experience and by re-scribing his subjectivity as a participant in righteous governance and virtuous love. He adapts the model inherited from Boethius' *Consolation,* in which the mind finds consolation by transcending the material plane, by framing the *Quair* "Heigh in the hevynnis figure circulere" (*KQ* 1). In so doing, James point to a self that is contingent upon a cosmological frame. Within this frame, he presents the self as an amalgamation of several pre-cognitive layers of experience, such as cosmological influence, physical movement, and desire. Each layer serves to root James' subjectivity deeper within material existence rather than offer an escape from the cycles of the world. James turns away from disembodied philosophies and finds consolation by shaping his identity around action and participation.

Conclusion: The Flesh Made Mind

This project is, at its most fundamental level, an exploration and description of the

embodied mind in late fourteenth and early fifteenth century Middle English poetry. As I present

in my introduction, the desire in the Middle Ages to establish meaning out of the myriad,

disparate traditions that that age inherited pushed thinkers to collate concepts of the cosmos,

environment, body, mind, and spirit into cohesive models. I have examined three models — the

cosmological, medical, and psychological — as channels toward understanding the period's

notion of self as profoundly *externalist*.[108] Cosmology framed the self *within* the astrological

influences of the spheres. This model organizes matter (from planets to people) in co-dependent

relations, one-to-another, within an interconnected system. Medicine understood the body (and

its health) as a balance of the elements, humours, and seasons. Psychology established a model

of mind rooted in embodied (and often unconscious) experiences. Understood together, these

models form a basis for understanding the self and its representation in fourteenth century

Middle English poetry as embodied, contingent, and materially participative.

By linking movement, image, and sound with the cognitive processes of proprioception,

perception, interpretation, and memory, Chaucer explores the connection between reader and text

as an embodied function of consciousness in the *Book of the Duchess* and the *House of Fame*. By

drawing attention to the participatory nature of reading, Chaucer shows it to be an embodied

activity that connects reader and artist through the shared experience of perception, text, and

memory. In the *Book of the Duchess,* Chaucer's dream-narrator's inability to connect correctly

the Black Knight's cognitive condition to his physical state displays the urgency of

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[108] For an overview of internalist and externalist positions, see pp. 1-2.

acknowledging the interwoven nature of mind and body. If T.S. Miller is right, Chaucer equates

the failure to acknowledge a mind-body connection with a failure of reading (529). Despite the

Dreamer's limitations, Chaucer's attention to his interpretative proficiency and medical

knowledge of the Knight's condition points toward a model of self that seeks to understand

emotional acumen alongside cognitive ability.

In *House of Fame,* the Dreamer fears how readers will read, interpret and remember his

work. Chaucer explores interpretation as a function of the embodied, pre-reflective operations of

cognition that occur through the linear ventricles of the brain. He demonstrates his knowledge of

ventricular anatomy by developing three architectural spaces — the Venerian temple, Fame's

castle, and the House of Rumour — as illustrative examples of the memory, interpretative, and

perceptive faculties (in that order). Beginning in the memory faculty (the Venerian temple, the

store-house of images and texts), Chaucer then moves outward through the interpretative (and

arbitrary) faculty demonstrated by Fame's Castle, and, finally, to the pre-reflective, whirling,

embodied space of the House of Rumor. Each space develops a psychological schema analogous

to the three ventricles of the brain: memory, intellect, and perception (the *sensus communis*).

However complete this model may be, the poem's unfinished ending challenges easy

critical summation. The strange and sudden presence of the "man of gret auctorite" (HoF III.

2158) at the poem's end creates more questions than it answers, even challenging the nature of

the preceding mind/body model. His presence clearly attracts attention, causing those nearby to

trample and climb upon each other to catch a glimpse is the Dreamer's inability to define, to

categorize, to understand rationally who the man before him is that points his experience beyond

the mappable faculties of memory, cognition, and imagination. In this space beyond the threshold

of mnemonic and noetic faculties, the Dreamer intuits the authority he perceives as a projection of his body's pre-reflective cognitive powers participating on the threshold between self and environment.

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* the *Gawain*-poet's carefully structured narrative provides important commentary on the interaction of chivalry, religious devotion, and courtly love in the late fourteenth century. And while that commentary is valuable, the embodied manner through which it is developed holds my focus in this project. The *Gawain*-poet develops the cognitively constructive (and participatory) nature of Gawain's embodied experience through his attention to schema and texture, structure, conceptual metaphors, and emotional processing.

The poet uses several cognitive schemas and a careful development of texture in the poem's opening stanzas to create a text-world that conflates British *ethnie* (through a quasi-historical account of Arthur's court) with *wonder* and *faërie.* The conflation of the historical and marvelous invites his reader to participate alongside Gawain's "awenture" through familiar cultural memories, while making space to reflect on broader cultural concerns about chastity, love, and courtly conduct. While such tactics are quite common in Arthurian tales, this conflation also allows the poet to introduce two cognitive metaphors — LIFE IS A GAME and TIME/LIFE IS CYCLICAL — as important structural components to his story and to develop his commentary on the nature of self as contingent and participatory.

Understanding the comparison between LIFE and GAME metaphors requires the conceptual distinction between the semantics of "sport" and "game." While "sport" pointed generally to entertainment and frivolity, "game" held closer to contest, hunt, and risk. Such distinction becomes important to the *Gawain*-poet through the development of Gawain's several

trials as a test of survival, in body, mind, and faith. The five-pointed Pentangle emblazoned on Gawain's shield becomes the symbol of an interconnected body, mind, and faith. Its isolated use in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* serves to increase its importance as a defining emblem for the embodied model of self presented throughout the poem. Its points demonstrate the interconnection of Gawain's cognitive functions (the "fyue wyttez" [*SGGK* 640]), his senes (the "fyue fyngres" [641]), his faith (the "fyue woundez" of Christ [643] and the "fyue joyez" [646] of Mary), and his community ("fraunchyse and felaȝschyp" [652]). The pentangle's five points illustrate the intersectional and participatory nature of Gawain's mind, body, and spirit, and they point to the embodied nature of the period's theological model of self: that is, soul is the form of the body, and that it is through the body that the mind perceives.

The *Gawain*-poet develops a model of self that depends on the interconnection of Gawain's body, mind, and spirit. Indeed, clear divisions between body, mind, and spirit simply do not exist for Gawain. Throughout his physical, psychological, and spiritual trials, Gawain develops awareness of the significance of his courtly commitments, his devotion, and of his emotional responses only after his body processes his experiences. For example, after failing the Green Knight's *Crystemas gomen* at the Green Chapel, Gawain's shame response illustrates a model of self that understands emotional experience and cognitive awareness as arising up from embodied processes. As the *Gawain*-poet explores the impact of pre-noetic, embodied experience, he constructs a model of self that conflates mental volition and phenomenal experience.

My final chapter considers consolation as a product of affect, desire, and embodiment. I examine how the mind-centered model of the early Boethian tradition shifted to the more body-

centered model in Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* and *The Kingis Quair* of James I. I demonstrate how these texts expand mind/body dualism into a model of the self that is contingent, dependent, and materially participatory. I discuss how perception and suffering form a complex model of consolation in which the fulfillment of desire is often deferred beyond conscious awareness. In so doing, the focus of conscious experience remains within the purview of embodied experience. Both Chaucer and James I re-negotiate the neo-Platonism of Boethian stoicism in order to understand the psychological relationship between the mind and the phenomenal world. Palamon and Arcite's experience as prisoners is a journey toward consolation through romantic, that is, embodied, connection rather than Boethius' stoic escape from the confines of the material world. The prisoner of *The Quair,* likewise, finds consolation by accepting his materiality and a destiny within the cycles of Fortune rather than seeking to transcend material existence. Indeed, both Chaucer and James I frame the self as a contingent and material thing dancing between desire, expectation, and consolation; the body is always the site through which consolation is pursued and achieved.

In the *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer portrays embodied sensation, particularly vision, as a source of suffering, but also of consolation. He does this by framing Arcite's death within a final vision of Emily. Chaucer confirms how embodied perception drives the momentum of the entire tale: indeed, Arcite's path to consolation is also the path to his own death. His journey signals an important shift for what consolation means within fourteenth-century English prison poetry. Arcite's experience demonstrates the lived struggle and "hard-won" (Luxon 109) wisdom learned through participating in his own physicality and identity-forming masculine competition. Arcite's experience produces consolation but only through the embodied, enacted, and

participatory experience of his own mortality. Whether or not his consolation was *worth it* is not in question here: rather, it is meaningful to see and to know that his consolation was *felt*.

In the *Quair,* James presents consolation as an acknowledgement and acceptance of material subjectivity rather than as a product of spiritual transcendence. He does this through the cosmological bookends of the poem — "Heigh in the hevynnis figure circulere" (*KQ* 1) — and by framing his self as a contingent participant within material existence, including his subjective embodied experience of desire. Contrary to Boethius, James' experience is entrenched more deeply within the material cycles of the world rather than offering escape from them. By doing so, James is able to re-inscribe his subjectivity within a destiny of righteous governance and virtuous love, instead of forgotten imprisonment. James finds consolation by shaping his identity around acceptance of and participation in materiality rather than transcendence, and by the end of the poem, he places himself (and his subjectivity) willfully onto Fortune's wheel. In so doing, he acknowledges (and expresses) the contingent nature of his existence, its embodied subjectivity, and his own necessarily participatory nature. In order to qualify as both poet *and* prince, James willingly participates in Fortune's cycles to frame his imprisonment as a destined trial rather than political capture.

I emphasize how each of my texts reaches beyond the confines of a mind/body dualism common in other periods toward a model of the self as contingent, dependent, and participant in material experience. I discuss how language in these texts is intended to touch not only the minds of readers, but also their bodies as each symbol is re-imagined and experienced through the mnemonic cues, schema, and sensations conjured by the text.

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