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Rooting, Subverting and Reclaiming: An Analysis of Clemence of Barking's *Catherine of Alexandria* as a Pre-modern Gendered Text

by

Gina J. Froese

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For Marc and Arabel

Thus, as there are no grounds for establishing a discourse, but rather an arid millennial ground to break, what I say has at least two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project.

~ Helene Cixous, Laugh of the Medusa

Abstract

This thesis suggests a solution to the longstanding tension between feminist literary theory and medieval religious writing. I argue that by appropriately translating key concepts in feminist theory to account for the particularities of earlier periods of genre literature, we may reconsider settled assumptions about medieval religious writing. Using Clemence of Barking's twelfth century *Passio of Catherine of Alexandria* as a case in point, this study develops a feminist deconstructive and historical analytic method for comparing hagiographies written by men and women. I show how the female medieval author roots herself in a religious tradition, subverts traditional patriarchal characterization and reclaims the depictions of earlier source texts for a gender positive narrative. The thesis concludes that far from being tools of religious patriarchy, female authors in this genre made subtle alterations to hagiographic narrative in order to rearticulate theological arguments and undercut their misogynistic potential.

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Introduction

Feminist literary historians have for decades debated the reconstruction process of a gendered intellectual history or historical literary tradition. Many suggest that a historical gendered body of literature cannot follow the same paths that the dominant tradition has followed. They doubt the presence of a strong female literary tradition prior to the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, or believe that they are considerably lacking in substance and ability. Examples of feminist gendered writing, however, do exist even if they are present only in small pockets of history.

Looming regressive social and religious attitudes towards women also severely hindered any developments that might coax such a body of literature forward. This has restricted women to a position of consistently repeating the same theological arguments and philosophical positions. There is, however, a growing body of female authored texts being (re) discovered and brought forward for further consideration. In the last thirty years, especially, the standard of analysis for such texts has greatly evolved. Studies in Victorian literature, for example, has contributed to the development of theory and epistemology of feminist theory and historical literature in general.

These are newly developed or combined methods implemented to contextualize historical information around the author, the literature and their generic structures, the culture, and more specifically the texts. Such a process equips feminist theory to deconstruct and analyze prominent genres of literature within the community of texts from which they evolved. It provides feminist literary historians the space to comprehensively and comparatively evaluate any and all examples of gendered writing from a particular period as individual texts as well as part of a larger tradition.

This process in turn creates structured systems of critical analysis which can be attuned for further research in earlier literary contexts. The intent is to synthesize information on gendered intellectual history and writing so as to (re) construct the body of literature found so that eventually we may be able to relate them to the wider historical and literary context of the western canon. Comparative analysis of female authored texts in relation to similar male authored texts would allow theorists the opportunity to better contextualize and fully value gendered texts from within the tradition which they are derived. This process would determine how the two parts work in tandem throughout history to create the greater whole.

Feminist theory has recently turned its attention to medieval literature, but there is still so much to be done for gendered authors and in particular for female authors writing in the religious tradition. Over the last thirty years the list of female authors (re) discovered from this period has grown significantly. There is an undeniable presence of gendered medieval texts offering sophisticated philosophical and theological (re)interpretations within the religious literary

tradition. They provide positive gendered depictions for current theorists to consider against more current theoretical models.

The growing presence of historical female authors suggests that reconsiderations of such texts through modern critical analysis will alter the horizon of the Western canon, and make the necessary room for historical women in the current canon. The difficulties of reanimating such texts for the modern reader, however, suggest there are still gaps between current feminist considerations and medieval gendered texts that require further attention. This disconnection indicates the need for a link, preferably one that will translate modern concepts and methods for the use of particular historical concerns, themes, and structures faced in period genres.

This link should act as a guide to feminist critical considerations and help to further expand its purview of gendered literature, authorship, and writing. By making room for the various theological and religious themes, modes of argument, language, symbolism and other structural elements inherent to this body of literature feminist theory can more appropriately adapt current systems of analysis to the peculiarities of medieval genres. This is a pertinent factor to overcoming unintended misunderstandings or misrepresentations of the literature. Such a link would familiarize feminist theory with the philosophical and theological background that deeply informs such works and allow theoretical models, methods and considerations to develop organically in conjunction with the literature.

Nearly all medieval literature is infused with the religious element. Female authored texts from the middle ages are largely written by nuns, which makes the work produced during this period the rule to this principle rather than the exception.[1] The theological element within this body of literature is steeped in religious language, imagery, metaphor and symbolism. As such, it is the largest defining factor in the majority of women's pre-modern writing. This is a significant difference from late eighteenth and nineteenth century gendered writing where the majority of feminist historical literary analysis is still largely based.

This factor, however, need not stand in the way of legitimately linking feminist theoretical considerations and critical analysis to medieval gendered writing. In spite of the differences that appear to divide these two literary eras, there are strong indicators within the works of medieval female authored texts that suggest some considerable links are possible. Regardless of their field,

[1] A.J. Minnis is emphatic that "any theological attempt to exclude biblical exegesis from medieval literary critical history must be contest [as] no book was more assiduously studied than the Bible; no text received more careful exegesis" (Minnis, *Medieval Theory* 21). Northrop's Frye's significant body of work on the Bible and literature also supports this view.

their genre, their concerns, nearly every historical or pre-modern woman attempting to contribute to a body of literature felt the invasive pressure of the dominant patriarchal values exhibited in the culture around them.

Such authors were very aware of the pressures and dangers posed by their environment and the negative gendered depictions they contended with as a result. Certain measures were taken out of sheer necessity. In other words, if they wanted to participate in the dominant cultural literary context they would need to appear to be unthreatening to the dominant order. Many actively sought out ways to subvert and re-inscribe the narratives they found in various generic literary structures, but nearly always these tactics were at partially concealed. Though appearing subtle or insignificant on the surface such authors implemented palimpsestic tactics within the literary course of action best suited in their search for authority and legitimacy, and produced changes within the tradition specifically beneficial to women.

They do not root themselves within the tradition in order to (re)inscribe religious orthodoxy, but rather to gain the protection of orthodoxy so that they might freely reinterpret key religious themes. The use of religious symbols, images, tropes, archetypes, metaphors and arguments allow them to reclaim the definitions and parameters of gender for their own purposes. Such an author writes not only within a religious context as a religious woman, but she writes within a genre wholly unfamiliar to the modern reader. The medieval author, therefore, faces a triple disadvantage to her work as a religious, as a woman, and as an author writing within a genre structure foreign to the (post) modern reader.

Literary or inter-textual influences such works manifest from preceding texts are yet to be ascertained. This suggests that determining the full extent of their influence on later succeeding authors is, at this stage, a near impossible feat. This makes the task of analysis an extremely onerous and complex one as the number of texts each requiring such consideration through analysis and comparisons are fairly significant already. Add to this the texts we are only now (re) discovering and the task appears beyond measures. However, if we take into account the process of this feat, the task can be much more accessible.

Inter-disciplinary measures as well as cross sectional or comparative approaches to analysis of such texts are necessary to approximate the position of these texts within the history of their extended surroundings. This is an important step because we cannot fully comprehend the extent of the contribution such authors have truly made in the larger tradition if we cannot first accurately place them within the contexts from which they emerge. In conjunction with the literary contextualization is then the methodological (re)consideration. A first step of analysis and contextualization will, therefore, also begin with a deconstruction of structural positions and

theoretical models built around such genres and forms of writing. This will broaden the scope of current feminist analysis and allow for inclusive critical readings of earlier historical texts to be taken into account.

Another step is to provide analytical consideration of the historical and literary contexts of specific texts by tracing the lines of influence. This will done first backwards, connecting to originating sources in order to fully examine the changes gendered authors make to the narratives they inherit. This will clear the path to then trace the lines of influence forward to later authors and even to other genres in order to determine what affect or influence these gendered texts may have had on their successors. Such an approach will place pre-modern female authored texts in a better position to highlight the particular and peculiar affects of the female authored account.

The comparative approach is also significant to this body of literature because it necessitates an appreciation for analysis across periods in history, across culture, across literary bodies or genres, as well as across linguistic analysis. An interdisciplinary analysis between national literatures can trace influences across genres and linguistic lineages over extensive periods of time. This is also a necessary task for the full (re) construction of gendered medieval literature and writing. In many cases such narratives were reinterpreted and reconsidered by several, sometimes dozens of authors over a period of hundreds of years, translated into a variety of literary forms or structures, suggesting a vast number of possible connections, links and opportunities for points of influence.

Connected with the aspect of theory as well as historical textual contextualization, there are also questions regarding authorship. These issues of literary agency and authority as culminated in the use of the author's voice. This particular issue can become rather complex when we consider that the majority of female authors during this era were far from independent in the process of literary production. While some were completely illiterate and dependant on the help of scribes resolutely all men, many were placed under the direct eye and authority of male clerics to keep them from producing unorthodox texts.[2] In a time where the very definition of female authorship spouted fear of excommunication and even execution, few women actively braved the conditions necessary to become overtly subversive authors.

Some women, however, present interesting gendered historical juxtapositions as a result of their particular and elite circumstances. These women re-define the very definition of gender restrictions other pre-modern female authors were forced to endure. Such women were provided with safe spaces in which to think, to learn, and to create. They worked under the protective

[2]Catherine Mooney and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne are only two of many literary historians who have written significantly on this topic.

umbrella of powerful political elites who acted as patrons and protectors. Their patrons were nearly always entirely separate from church authority and keen to stand in as buffers between these authors and the traditional demands, expectations, or suspicions they might normally receive as women. Their patrons provided them with the degree of legitimacy and freedom necessary to interpret authoritative texts and in turn produce works that most other women in history could only ever have imagined.[3]

In spite of being cloistered or housed in religious communities, the sense or taste for independence achieved through such connections is clearly manifested in their work. They engage religious as well as political and historical literary elements. They often reinterpret orthodox narratives from a variety of sources into a variety of literary forms and reinterpret them from a gender positive position.[4] Consequently, they reclaim the original narratives from misogynistic or anti-female interpretations in order to secure gender positive depictions for their own literary purposes. The author roots herself in the tradition of the literature. She takes authority from the orthodoxy within tradition in order to support the function of her own authorship. She applies that authority to subvert religious strictures implementing theological discourse in order to disrupt normative gendered perceptions, reclaiming them from previous misogynistic interpretations.

The medieval female author, and especially the female hagiographer, like her predecessors, inherits the narratives and structures set by the literary traditions that produce the dominant literary conventions.[5] However, the manner in which she chooses to reinvent those conventions and structures under the auspices of her own vision allows her to (re)shape them according to a particularly gendered purpose. Every hagiographer roots themselves in the religious sources, their vision of the narrative they engage implicitly supported by a particular theological slant. The female hagiographer, like her predecessors and contemporaries follows the same genre structure and order of textual authority, but unlike her colleagues she implements her own vision of the account she engages. This is a vision specifically designed to define and address gendered concerns within the culture as well as the literary tradition.[6]

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[3] Examples of such relationships are scattered across the continent at various historical points. Women such as Hrostsvitha of Gandersheim in tenth century, Christine de Pizan in fourteenth century France, and Antonia Pulci in fifteenth century Florence family are all prominent examples of this sort of patron/author relationship.

[4] Patricia Demers suggests that even "women's interpretive work can be spoken of as a hermeneutic of being, in which knowing and doing are deeply and intricately related" (23).

[5] Lupton points to the "gleaning" of such texts as embedded in the typology, because this is where "the poet searches for what was said by previous writers in order to take it up as a legacy" (75-76).

[6] Jane Chance, and Electa Arenal with Stacey Schlau are some of the prominent scholars who have begun to explore this aspect of female authorship in medieval and renaissance culture.

Such an author is cautious not to use language or images that may be construed as threatening of religiously orthodox positions and the authorities supporting them. Yet in spite of this caution they resolutely invert and sometimes even replace negative gendered depictions in the transcription process of their work. They create a space for themselves as well for other women to access and directly possess a level of authority traditionally and sometimes strictly reserved for men.

The religious forum was more widely understood and more easily related to by the pre-modern reader, giving the historical audience an advantage over the (post) modern one. Yet, the techniques the author employs remain largely covert and palimpsestic in nature for both periods with good reason. With further examination the modern reader can see how literary elements can become powerful tools in the hands of an author acutely aware of the socially or religiously imposed limitations on her voice. The medieval female author implements these tools to define the relationship between substantive theological themes and gender. She then exemplifies these relationships throughout the rest of her work, but always with an eye to the possibility of political threat.

Clemence of Barking Abbey is one such author in this tradition of gendered/female authors. As a cloistered nun at Barking Abbey during the twelfth century she is a part of an elite religious community under the protection of the British monarchy. She is an ideal example of a medieval female author buffered from the normal religious constraints by a supportive political network. She covertly implements the authority behind the typologies and archetypes in Christian narratives in order to subvert and reclaim the narratives within them. She is able to showcase her own authority as an author as well as provide a model for other women to similarly attain and practice that authority.

Through palimpsestic techniques, Clemence remakes the archetype narrative of the Gospel Passion within the hagiographic narrative of St. Catherine of Alexandria. Showcasing reinterpretations of theological narratives in the accounts of martyred saints is a recognized maneuver by medieval authors to influence their communities without threatening religious authorities. Catherine expertly infuses the female subject in the account with more authority and power than that inscribed in the source narrative. She legitimizes her authority, strengthening her own as an author in the process and consequently providing a path for the medieval female reader to follow.

Clemence of Barking's twelfth century revision of St. Catherine of Alexandria's Passion is a gender positive re-interpretation of an eighth-century liturgical text. What appears at first glance to be an imitative rendition of an earlier source text is a re-consideration of divinity as a relational

being, and an exposition of divine authority in connection to gender. Clemence takes the structural elements within a hagiographic account and applies them to a theological argument for community as a reflection of divinity. She suggests that the inclusivity of relationships within community reflect the inclusivity of divinity and by extension its authority. Her concepts are revolutionary for gender inclusivity in religious communities and for medieval society in general. They suggest that divine authority applies to everyone including women.

Clemence recreates the landscape of St. Catherine's account and makes room for a theologically informed feminine position. Her position is informed by a theological and literary reading of her sources. An initial comparative reading of the Clemence account and her dominant source text, the long Latin Vulgate, may display few notable differences. The palimpsestic nature of Clemence's work, however, offers up a clue about the methods necessary for analysing such a text.

Her account of St. Catherine is not unlike the palimpsestic spaces found in the work of nineteenth-century female writing, and employs very similar techniques for a comparable end. The common ground between the literary methods applied by medieval women authoring hagiography and those applied by nineteenth-century women novelists suggests a trend in women's historical literature. This is the bridge between feminist theory and medieval gendered writing we are looking for because it offers a space in feminist critical theory for the reconsideration of pre-modern gendered writing.

The overlap between the two literary eras suggests that earlier forms of gendered literature may in fact exhibit feminist like qualities previously thought absent. It implies that further examination of feminist concerns and key concepts in the analysis of historical gendered writing within its current theoretical scope is necessary. Such an approach would translate foundational theoretical constructs in a period-sensitive manner for the benefit of achieving an inclusive, more comprehensive approach to gendered medieval religious literature.

Feminist critical perception necessarily encourages that the analysis of an author such as Clemence refrains from reading contemporary feminist concerns into works that precede modern feminist teleological constructions. The following chapter will therefore provide an assessment of the problematics within feminist theory as it applies to women's pre-modern writing, and to set the parameters needed to navigate through theoretical considerations of feminist theory. This section will highlight the gaps between feminist theoretical considerations and its views of historical gendered writing through discussions of women's writing, anxiety of authorship, and palimpsestic methods to the structure of writing found in the pre-modern period.

The next section will examine the concept of authority as an expression of power, and the exercise of that power on the gendered historical body as both a physical location and a textual one. The discussion will consider the relationship between palimpsestic literary bodies and the subversive potential in medieval gendered writing. The purpose here is to show how the gendered physical and literary body can be subversive even when it does not appear to be so. The goal is to redirect theoretical methods modeled for nineteenth-century female authors toward gendered medieval hagiography and show how hagiographical accounts become subversive narratives by the author's use of palimpsestic techniques.

The case study chapters will directly investigate these links in relation to Clemence of Barking's account of Saint Catherine of Alexandria. The aim is to examine the palimpsestic quality in Clemence's text along with her implementation of other key feminist concepts in direct comparison with her main source text, the Latin Vulgate. The feminist critical consideration of the liminal spaces within Clemence's depiction of Catherine will show how Clemence's rendition of the account differs in significant ways from the previous rendition found in the Vulgate account. These differences will highlight the subversive aspects of the Clemence text and exemplify how she discriminates details from the source account in order to fully appropriate the narrative for a gender sensitive audience/purpose. I will review these findings in the conclusion and further elucidate how I expect this study to affect future study in this field.

Chapter One: Feminist Theory and Medieval Gendered Literature

Feminist theory is shaped around the issue of hierarchical binary constructions, and relies heavily on deconstructive methods that question "common sense" assumptions rooted in language, literature, epistemology, and history (Belsey 37). In particular, the modus operandi of feminist critical literary theory is to question philosophical presuppositions and cultural constructions of gender in history and language. Such queries highlight the relationships between language, the gendered body, and the dynamics power between them. They display the effect gendered binaries have on these concepts and how they interact with one another.

This binary criticism illustrates how cultural gendered expressions exposit feminist concerns in the narratives and the images women create. They determine how historical gendered/female authors construct historical views of themselves, their gender, and the female body. This connection in turn delineates the dynamic relationship between these three interdependent and prominent feminist concerns within a gendered literature written directly by historical women.

The process of questioning how a gendered text is approached, therefore, is largely considered a two pronged binary issue. The binary is inherently read as a two sided term with the first part being a "self-sufficient and defined ...origin of the other," and the other an aberration or "corruption" of the first (Colebrook 54). Claire Colebrook's observation of "the ways in which a binary of supposedly two distinct terms is actually a single privileged term and its dependent, accidental and derivative other," is the fundamental concern at the heart of feminist theory and methodological applications (Colebrook 55). From it every other aspect of feminist critical enquiry develops.

The ability to question these binaries implies the ability to break down unfounded or assumed views around text production, authorship, and the use of language in literature. The process clarifies issues around the construction of gender, writing/authorship, and power within a variety of literary forms. The historical female voice, which has previously remained silent or misunderstood because it follows a different trajectory than the dominant tradition, can now be clarified and recovered. The task of deconstructing dominant narratives in order to reconstruct gendered traditions makes feminist critical theory a largely self-reflexive process centred on the acts of revision and appropriation. This process carries a subversive element within it, and

interestingly by remaking and reshaping images mined from earlier work, it similarly reflects the same literary process enacted by medieval gendered authors hundreds of years earlier.

I. The Use and Difficulties of Feminist Historicism

Based on Adrienne Rich's visionary call to "re-vise," feminist literary historians eschew any theoretical construction which is uncritical of dominant structural or historical methods (Rich 18). They would argue that such methods leave significant gaps in knowledge of female authorship, female intellectual development, and the gendered literary tradition. Material feminism is, therefore, necessarily critical of predecessors who are not wary of the destructive effects hindering the development of gendered literary bodies. They condemn the type of "easy eclecticism" that does not feel "compelled to confront the implications of [its] own assumptions and presuppositions," and inform significant biases in the standards applied to writing and authorship (Belsey 37).

This approach has proved immensely successful in deconstructing and analysing gendered depictions in the dominant literary tradition overall, and in some gendered writing as well. The range of methods developed in feminist critical analysis has worked tirelessly to untangle eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gendered texts from patriarchal presuppositions and theoretical models. This massive undertaking has produced an enormous influence on the evolution and understanding of historical gendered writing and literature generally.

Feminist theory has established itself as a legitimate theoretical model for reconstruction and analysis of historical gendered writing. It has excavated the literature, made it visible through publication, and accessible through translation. This model has established a foundation of tools to reconsider the works of female authors and to reassess their work as valued contributors to the canon. More importantly, this undertaking has provided a theoretical basis, a foundation of literary foremothers and a gendered epistemological system for others to build on, something no generation women has ever had.[7]

This process has developed two main areas of concern for feminist theorists dealing with historical literature. One side emphasizes the historical while the other remains largely focused on the linguistic. The binary emphasis on history and language, however, instead of widening the feminist view of historical literature with a combined effort has created a gap between the two

[7] See Gerda Lerner for more on this topic.

approaches. The gulf consequently creates a hierarchical binary construction of its own within the theory. Second wave feminist deconstructionism decries the historical emphasis and suggests that the simplicity of method used in the historical approach cannot consider the problematic in its entirety.[8]

Such criticism, though necessary, is captured by its achievements in linguistic analysis and cannot see past points of difference. Instead of viewing the potential in the historical approach this feminist form has decided to leave it behind altogether. This position has caused not only a rift between the two sides, but created a hierarchy which esteems the role of linguistic analysis and deconstructive methods more than the contextual analysis of feminist historicism.

Interestingly, both sides are agreed that in order to untangle gendered writing and depictions from patriarchal constructions feminist theory must leave behind the "male-centered, binary logic altogether" (Jones, *Writing the Body* 255). In order to reassess the imbalanced dynamic within the binary each side also agrees that gendered literature necessitates a systematic methodological approach that makes a female centered logic central to the theoretical model. Exactly how that inclusivity can be achieved however, is still under dispute.

Carolyn Heilbrun proposes that the "anxiety and ambivalence" feminists feel toward their "foremothers" suggests the root of this rift may be more directly an issue with the context of the modern reader than with the position of historical literary analysis or even with the historical author (Heilbrun 24). Most second wave feminist theoretical construction is built on the idea that female foremothers either did not exist or could not be valued for what they offered. This attitude is found as far back as Virginia Woolf and her assessment of some seventeenth century English female writers. Either they did not exist as she wanted them to, or she found them unrelatable, even hindering her work as a result of their views and methods (Woolf 48-49).

Heilbrun suggests this attitude is an understandable frustration that frames the reader's refusal or inability to accept the limitations of historical women and their literary voices. She asserts that this anxiety toward female predecessors, literary or not, is inevitable because either the foremothers were denied "full autonomy or else were too efficiently punished for having achieved it" (Heilbrun 24). The caution I take from Heilbrun is that readers must be aware of the manner in which they handle the works of historical gendered authors for whom they feel a connection and likewise with those they do not.

Heilbrun's assessment of the modern feminist reader suggests that feminism, like the dominant views it rejects inevitably finds the need to place every historical author and her work

[8] See Janet Todd, Elaine Showalter, and Toril Moi for further discussions here.

into a specified and easily recognizable binary categories. In this case, the binary is split between works of gendered authors identifiable as feminist and those which are not. The need to assume a theoretical position for a historical author without full consideration of the cultural, philosophical, linguistic, and literary contexts eliminates the space such texts require to speak with their own voices.

This is what third or fourth wave feminist theorists consider to be a lack of intersectionality.[9] Such a position negates the position that is viewed as the secondary or unfamiliar experience of one woman over the dominant or familiar experience of another. The impulse to categorize without full analysis can consequently degrade attempts to historicize and deconstruct historical gendered writing for which there is very little familiarity. When a feminist theorist comes across a female author working outside their own ontological constructions, the feminist theoretical presupposition can without intending to, assume a stance of dismissal. The presumption is that such women have "no way of knowing or representing themselves" when the exact opposite is in fact occurring (Jones 250).

Such a position often leads feminist critical theorists to fall back on their heels and ask "what...do you say about a conservative woman...once you've discovered her" (Bilston 283). We can imagine that very little of good can be said and even less can be made of her work. Such an orientation to historical female authors suggests that it is not necessarily the historical position or the texts themselves that are troubling for feminist critical analysis, but the limited and essentialist scope of a narrowly defined feminist experience. The historical literary depictions can be (re)viewed through the contextualization of history, genre, and language in relation to theological or religious themes. Such an approach will produce new methods with which to deal with difficult historical texts seemingly outside of the feminist purview so as to add to feminist theoretical developments rather than detract from them.

The historical/materialist position need not diminish or stall the imperative role of critical deconstructive analysis of pre-modern gendered texts. This aspect of feminist theory is a significant structural component in the construction of a new feminist epistemology, particularly because it provides valuable matrixes for analysis applicable to the gendered historical context in medieval literature. The historical view provides the bridges necessary for connecting current theoretical models in feminist deconstruction and pre-modern gendered writing and literature. Historical analysis outlines larger paradigmatic models of literary history that feminist deconstructive methods work with and outlines methodological goals needed to approach such texts constructively. The combination of strengths between both sides work in tandem to clarify

[9] See Heywood and Drake, and Gillis, Howie, and Munford for further discussion in this area.

moments of confusion and dysfunction that may resist acknowledging what is fully present, absent, or transformed within the literature.

Thus the act "of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes," though originally a cornerstone of feminist theory intended for the analysis of gendered images in male authored texts, is also a critical element for the re-evaluation of and re-construction of gendered images in female authored texts (Rich 18-19). As such, feminist critical theory can re-envision new methods for historical gendered texts even when they do not on the surface appear to comply with the traditionally feminist purview of the second wave. Instead the feminist position can be expanded for current fourth wave methods, leaving room for interpretation from generations to follow.

Adding a "gynocritical" method to previously unknown or unrecognized models of gendered writing expands the invisible or negligible spaces within the dominant theory, and moves it away from essentialist views on gendered historical texts (Showalter 185). This method substitutes a restrictive binary theoretical system with a wider more incorporative theoretical model whose purpose is to create a place for the historical gendered voice where previously there appeared to be none. This makes the historical mandate for furthering the position of women's historical writing necessary precisely because it creates a wider more incorporative view of women's intellectual history and women's literature. This model also benefits feminist epistemology in general as it widens the scope of feminist critical theory beyond the specific twentieth century context from which it evolved and makes it equally applicable for analysing pre-modern gendered texts.

As more female authored texts are increasingly uncovered and made available, the literary landscape previous theorists and historians have worked with is inevitably altered. Feminist theory needs to (re)consider these texts with the appropriate tools or risk attributing more to them than what they deserve, or alternately underestimating the depth of their work. The texts need to be broached with relevant and applicable methodologies considerate of their cultural and literary environment. Incorporating the historical position leaves room for theorists to reinterpret the aims and goals of the feminist critical purview according to the increasing number of information now available. This recasts the historical gendered literary tradition in an entirely new relationship with feminist deconstructive methods as all aspects of gendered literature and writing can then be thoroughly examined and assessed for its full contributions to the dominant tradition.

In this way Rich's vision continues to be relevant because it provides a wider teleological foundation for the re-configuration of historical texts as specifically gendered texts. Her ideation of a gendered historical literary body, therefore reminds feminist literary historians of the mandate required for hearing and transcribing voices that have been kept silent for centuries (Rich). It reminds the modern reader that a tripartite deconstructive, re-evaluative, and reconstructive path to

gendered literary history is meant to look more closely at the structural elements which both surround and make up a text. The call for a re-evaluation of these elements and the manner in which they are implemented, are critical for the assessment of the tradition as a whole.[10]

The historical perspective presents an invaluable structural function. It provides an edifice that shapes current views of women's historical gendered writing. The historical contextual method causes the deconstructive aspect of feminist critical theory to display its own invaluable function through the structural components present in the work. Though the structural aspects of deconstructive methods are largely concerned with issues around use of language, imagery, form and style they are still deeply connected to the historical/contextual considerations of pre-modern or medieval texts.[11] The deconstructive method assesses the role and function of each of these and other building blocks within the text by dismantling both historical and current views of the literature, ordering and organizing the elements thematically for a new portrait.

In essence, critical feminist deconstruction provides the engine to structure historicism's structure and vision of gendered writing and literature. Together they analyse, structure, and systematize all of the elements peculiar to the body of a particular genre of body of work. Within a historical comparative deconstructive method the two aspects of feminist critical theory can be reshaped to create a broadened theoretical model of analysis which moves away from previous gendered binary restrictions. The method is foundational for deconstructing the literary elements found in medieval gendered texts in a way that maintains their historical and cultural integrity while interpreting the gendered voices in order to clarify them for the modern reader. In the next section the discussion will examine the limitations of this binary construction in feminist deconstructionism and consider the implications of this limitation on pre-modern gendered writing.

II. Feminist Deconstructionism and the Gendered Binary

One of the founding authors of feminist critical deconstructionism, Hélène Cixous inspires the model for a new theoretical approach to female authorship and writing. In her description and assessment of gendered binary constructions Cixous depicts the archetypal nature of this construction and reveals how the binary construction of the sexes inherently places the female image in the weaker, less able position while the male remains always in the stronger, more dominant position. Cixous translates woman's inscribed location in the binary into a reflection of woman's place, in history, in literature, and in culture. She displays this archetypal relationship through classic dualistic constructions such as "activity/passivity," "sun/moon," "culture/nature,"

[10] Elaine Showalter's body of work is a prime example in this area of study.
[11] See Toril Moi, Janet Todd, and Showalter for further discussions here.

and “day/night” (Cixous 37). These are resplendent literary depictions we intuitively recognize because they are mythological archetypes deeply and culturally ingrained not only in the history of the literary tradition in the West, but within contemporary perceptions of gender, and interactions with language.

Through these images Cixous defines a view of woman as a creature caught not only within the dichotomies of language, history, and culture, but also within the inherent hierarchical structure of patriarchal power symbolized within these binaries constructions. Woman is always the secondary “metaphor,” wherever we look, in “myths, legends, books...everywhere (where) ordering intervenes, where a law organizes what is thinkable by oppositions” we find woman, always in the same place, the place of shadows and nothingness (Cixous 37). The picture fully expresses the dominant historical attitude toward the female form inscribed by the dominant views in literature, in philosophy, in history, and in religion right up until the middle of the twentieth century.

Woman, for Cixous, is kept under the watchful eye of the male gaze, and through the observation of the dominant gaze she becomes a secondary other. Less than fully human, she is a creature, an image made to embody this secondary position through her physicality, and her very existence. The image Cixous creates of woman is one where all her feminine attributes inhabit the space of darkness and passivity, suggesting the female form becomes what it inhabits. Woman, therefore, recedes from view, she is disconnected from the written word, she retreats from text, and disappears from history altogether. She can no longer exist because she “does not exist, she can-not be,” or be defined because she is “no-thing” (Cixous 39).

The disappearance of woman from history and literature, her exemption from the word, the canon, the traditions of the “masculine order,” means all of these things, all of these areas where narratives and power are created, are therefore “constructed on the premise of woman’s abasement” (Cixous 39). Woman loses her authority over the word through a disconnection from the pen, and her authority in the word through a disconnection with herself. If, as Carla Freccero suggests that, “to enter history, one must have access to discourse, whether that access takes the form of being written about or of writing,” then the lack of access to writing and inevitably to history means a sequestering of the female form from the essence of herself, her gendered body, and her gendered power (65). If she does not exist except as other in the mind of a male creator/author, then she cannot be created within the text except in the shadow of men. She will not exist as a full individual either in history, or in culture, or in literature.

Woman as a representation of something other than herself is then denied access to the word. She is negated by historical record, devalued not only because she is not permitted to “write

herself" into the text, but also because no one sees the value in writing about her in the way she experiences herself (Cixous 39). Elizabeth Clark suggests this is the conundrum in the linguistic turn which creates a dead end for feminist critical consideration of early historical gendered depictions. She indicates that feminist considerations need to be careful when reading women in historical texts, as chances are the woman is "not a woman—but a figural... [who] stands for something else" (Clark 25). The female image inscribed by the male pen is if not anything but "representation" of man's desires and perceptions (Clark 30).

Clark concludes that gendered representation must be explored in the "larger social-linguistic framework of the text," which is reasonable given her position as a classical historian (Clark 30). However, even if we do have direct access to female authored representations of gender, we cannot assume what meaning such depictions may suggest if we do not first consider how the historical framework of a text might define that representation. Woman, as literary depiction, cannot be gleaned from narratives alone, but must also be encountered as a trace effect within the larger community of texts from which the narratives are derived.[12]

To this end Clark appears to reiterate what Cixous has already expressed; still we must be careful not to misrepresent these positions. Clark is prominently concerned with gendered images depicted in a particular genre of male inscribed historical texts while Cixous considers the role and parameters of gendered writing from an overarching view of the literary tradition in the West. The two have very similar conclusions about the depictions of women in pre-modern texts. They each relegate all historical female constructs outside of the feminist critical purview. Clark is not directly concerned with the implications of this position on future analysis of gendered depictions in female authored texts, while Cixous is very candid in her disbelief of such authors and the validity of their work.

Cixous insists most assuredly that except for a few "rare exceptions...there have not yet been any writings that inscribe femininity" (Cixous, *Medusa* 878). She states rather strongly that the female model of writing she delineates in her work is strictly a futuristic model, something for future authors to consider and convey, and not something to apply to examples from the past (Cixous 878). Perhaps this is why Cixous is so adamant that woman can only regain her full existence if she is equally concerned with the recovery of her body. In the same way that Cixous iterates her concern for the recovery of the written word as a textual body, she also suggests that this is in keeping with the need for woman to reclaim her physicality through the experiences of

[12] This is what Frye, Bloom, and Kolodny would term the inter-textuality of literature.

her sexuality or jouissance.[13] The gendered awakening she is referring to, however, does not occur on a social systemic level until the social upheavals of 1968, a key historical moment in modern feminist far removed from the pre-modern periods.

If we are to ask then what happens when a historical female author is not interested in reviving her jouissance because she is writing prior to the modern feminist era and its concerns, we will already have the answer. Such an author cannot be feminist because she is writing outside the feminist critical purview.[14] Such an author, Cixous might have answered, has no interest in resolving her gendered concerns by reconnecting with her physical form and sexual nature, therefore there can be no feminist writing prior to the modern era and context. Some feminists would strongly argue against this conclusion and suggest that Cixous' work signals a tone of essentialism. Interestingly, the debate concludes for Cixous here in a fashion after Clark's who suggests the linguistic turn destroys the use of gendered literary depictions because they are historically male authored and therefore inscribed with meanings from the dominant view.[15]

In this light, perhaps it is Cixous' vision which is the more dangerous here because it denies the possibility of a female/gendered literary tradition already in existence without any analysis or direct consideration of the texts in question. Clark does suggest that the lack of female authors in the classical period is the greater reason for the limitation she faces. Hers is not a limitation based on theoretical construction per say, but from the missing presence of texts and general lack of sources.

Cixous on the other hand is determined to create a new tradition, a fresh start with no dependencies to the past and a solid foundation for women to build on. Her goal is admirable, but the implementation undercuts the strength of her vision. To deny the gendered tradition or the progression of its history is to place the modern reader in an unnecessary continued disconnection from the gendered word, the gendered text, its history, and tradition. Such a position encourages essentialist structural presuppositions on the concept of a gendered body historically, culturally, and literarily.

We cannot be certain if the limitation in Cixous' vision begins out of a frustration with the limited purview of historical gendered texts, or if she truly believes that a reconstruction of a historical gendered literature is impossible because of the depth of its entanglement with patriarchal intellectual history (Clark, *Women/Gender* 402). Regardless of her reasons, her

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[13] Ann Rosalind Jones' explication of jouissance provides a basic guide for this analysis, defined as "the direct re-experience of the physical pleasures of infancy and of later sexuality, repressed but not obliterated by the Law of the Father" (248).
[14] See Jones for further discussion.
[15] Clark's body of work delineates this argument for classical literature and gendered writing.

position becomes a fundamental touchstone of feminist scholarship that consequently echoes this same teleological sentiment. Since Cixous' seminal works, historical gendered writing and authorship, it has been implied, cannot reflect the feminist reconstructions of gender in historical female authored texts because such writing is profoundly affected by the patriarchal constructions of gender. The works from pre-modern literary periods are, therefore, presumed inseparable from the dominant view and treat as such.[16]

This position has left the field of historical literary analysis and gendered writing isolated and struggling with an inertia that does not seem to go away. The idea of a symbiotic relationship between the female body and female writing as an expression of the gendered body is a deeply central one in feminist critical theory, repeatedly reflected on and interpreted in the works of a number of other foundational feminist critical thinkers.[17] This issue is too great to simply be put aside, and neither can we continue to assume through implication that any form of gendered historical writing contains an inherently lesser value or displays a lesser contribution to the canon than its male counterparts. Such a position weakens feminist scholarly direction before it has even begun, but perhaps feminist consideration can be applied to the readjustment of its theoretical scope translated into an alternative format more appropriate for the peculiarities of pre-modern literature.

Critical deconstructive analysis of gendered historical literary bodies without the implementation of historical materialist methods loses sight of its rooted purpose to further the larger development of feminist scholarship.[18] As Elizabeth Clark proposed, the two sides are interdependent. However, if we hope to move beyond the binary which hinders the analysis and full consideration of such work we must further the connections between these gendered bodies. The position in this thesis, therefore, advocates for a re-vision of the relationship between the historical and deconstructive methods by seminally grafting the two together in order to create a multi-comparative approach. This will consider the historical, textual, as well as gendered aspects of the literature employed in a multi-comparative method.

I would agree with Cixous here that the moment necessitates an act of destruction meant "to break up [and] to destroy" previously held assumptions as a provisional way out of the binary construction, but not in the same manner as Cixous suggests (*Medusa* 875). The door leads provisionally back to historical concerns and because of this may appear to deconstructionists as

[16] See Toril Moi for further discussion.
[17] Clark suggests there is an "over concentration" of focus on the gendered body in historical and textual gendered analysis because of this (*Women/Gender* 407).
[18] This is a fundamental argument made by Northrop Frye during the earlier stages of development for the dominant canon. See *The Archetypes of Literature*, and Clark's discussion in chapter seven of *History, Theory, Text*.

another false start. However, by bringing the two sides together we may create and implement a multi-pillared analytic method to this body of writing away from the binary limitations of the Second Wave, and the exclusive modern focus of the Third Wave. This will broaden the structural constructions of feminist concepts and its defining parameters toward a Fourth Wave approach.

The principles behind Cixous' vision for the future of gendered writing will provide some light for the structural and deconstructive reconsideration proposed above. (Re) examining such texts without the strictures of previous binary constructions makes it entirely possible for feminist theory to further explore medieval gendered writing, and the gendered constructions within them without hindrances. This will inevitably uncover new opportunities for literary and theoretical developments within current models as our exposure to previously unknown or misunderstood texts increases. Reviewing and analysing pre-modern gendered texts from a critical, historical, linguistic, and comparative position will give such writings the space to speak with their own voices. This will inform the current feminist theoretical models as well as introduce new opportunities for further developments in the analysis of other historical genres were the gendered voice remains ambiguous.

Cixous reiterates her belief in the transformative nature of the destruction of the binary gendered paradox in history by suggesting that "if women were to set themselves to transform History...History's task would be to make woman, to produce her," and ultimately I would suggest to re-animate her (*Castration* 50). If we apply this mandate to historical literature as well we may find that it is possible to similarly re-animate gendered writing in History in spite of Cixous' misgivings. Like Rich's call to re-vision, Cixous' two pronged approach to "destroy" and "foresee," similarly calls for women's ability to (re)envision "the unforeseeable, to project" a new understanding of their future, and by extension to their past (*Medusa* 875). In light of the mandate set out in the spirit of the tradition laid out above, I will take the next two sections to re-evaluate some of the prominent theoretical tools at hand for this goal and re- model them for the needs of the author and the case study to follow.

III. Writing, Anxiety of Authorship, and the Palimpsestic

So far the search for a present historical female writing or écriture féminine has begun with the search for a gendered model of writing outside of the binary system. The next step is to consider how women have historically articulated their defining strength within those works even with a looming threat of silence at their heels. This is an important component within feminist critical considerations of women's medieval and early Renaissance literature because it is a sign of

the conditions under which the majority of women produced literature prior to the seventeenth century.[19]

Cixous suggests that a true expression of female writing or écriture féminine is a "step forward, [toward] an adventure, and [an] exploration of woman's power... her potency, her ever-dreaded strength" (*Castration* 52). But often times this strength is unseen or hidden, and therefore easily dismissed or ignored. The possible redefinition of gendered strength as it is exemplified in historical writing is a clue that points toward other prominent elements of concern in feminist theory. These elements are tools used to expand and redefine the issue of gendered historical writing. They permit the contextualization of historical writing within the traditions they evolve from, and allow the original themes and discussions to remain intact while being viewed in conjunction with feminist considerations.

Such an approach is careful not to disrupt or disturb the historical and literary integrity of the text. This process reconnects the historical work from an otherwise disconnected modern reader by permitting the reader to consider the work through concepts applied by a current feminist model. By translating feminist concepts into forms appropriate for a historical genre of writing the gendered author can speak with their voice while the reader refrains from misattributing faults or accomplishments the author could never have achieved during the period.

This "dreaded strength," is one of the elements Cixous uses to define gendered writing in her futuristic model of feminine literature, and is the first foundational tool to be considered here (*Castration* 52). Though not always directly visible, woman's strength remains ever present in history because it defies dominant repression. This strength is developed within history and literature, changing and adjusting its form and expression depending on the context and culture that surrounds it. Such transmutations suggest that any tools implemented for analysis will inherently need to self-consciously reflect those changes, and to be applied in a way that will make this strength and the corresponding forms of writing behind it more visible to the modern reader.

The main requirement for such an approach is to be cognizant of the changes within periods of gendered authorship as well as within the genres historical gendered authors engage with. The adjustments to theory can then more widely reflect the patterns and movements found in particular genres or bodies of writing. Ideally a theoretical tool such as this would be amended according to the historical and literary contexts that correspond to the author and her work. Placing the author and her work within the context of historical events, as well as in cultural and literary developments allows the reader to make space for such an author within the dominant feminist tradition and eventually assimilate her into the dominant canon.

[19] See Lerner for further discussion.

We must continue to move forward cautiously, however, as another tautological return to the same theoretical considerations of traditional gender binaries risks a return to the dominant perspective. This will inevitably produce yet another limited interpretation of the gendered depictions as male authored or male influenced portrayals and ignore the work and contribution of the female author. Such a misstep would redirect the analysis of gendered writing back to a focus of female depictions as "emblems" of a patriarchal "authority," and nullify the female author's views before they can be fully measured or correctly assessed (Thompson 141). The shuffle misplaces the gendered author's voice and instead refocuses on the "stories men like to tell about women reflected not so much [for] what women did [or what women were] as what men admired or abhorred" about them (Classen 39). Or alternately, they are unfairly compared to (post) modern expectations on female writing and found wanting.

Ann Rosalind Jones recognizes that by not questioning the terms of essentialist definitions of women and women's literature we keep them locked within the very same binary constructions we hope to move away from (Jones 255). She suggests instead that in order to keep from habitually circling back into this closed binary loop, we must focus on the "analysis of the power" dynamic between the genders and between the binaries (Jones, 256). This focus is largely on the construction of power and the relationship this power creates between the binaries present instead of on the binaries themselves.

The power dynamic between the gendered binary constructions defined in the multi-comparative model applied to the historical gendered text is another powerful tool in feminist literary analysis. It eases feminist critical deconstructive theory away from the binary loop and toward a new approach to women's writing and literature. Ultimately, this approach is meant to keep the definitions, concerns, and concepts of feminist theory broad enough to include all possible definitions of femininity without unnecessarily diluting its gendered mandate. This is done specifically so as to not exclude any form or function within the articulation of historical gendered depictions before they are fully investigated.

Therefore, the combination of a re-imagined feminine strength in history with a renewed focus on the dynamic power between gendered binaries provides a new distinction in feminist thought aimed at creating a multi-theoretical consideration of gendered historical literature. This re-formation of old elements refashions the relationships between them. The process distinguishes between the habit of stereotyping feminized authors within the "angels" or "monsters" dichotomy, and the systematic analysis of a text which fully considers the range of the gendered voice (Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman* 29). This approach attempts to establish a historical gendered point of view using the full force of deconstructive methods in partnership with feminist concepts (re) considered for the historical gendered literary voice.

The intent here is to consider how the pre-modern female author deals with gender, to look at how she actively or passively depicts gender within her work either directly through characterizations or indirectly through the structural elements of literature. It is important to consider how the author depicts herself as a woman and as an author, in particular to consider how she depicts her female subject as well as other women within the text. It is also important to consider how those depictions fair in comparison to the depictions of men, and finally how gender is specifically articulated and exemplified through religious themes, archetypes or tropes, language, imagery and so on.

Annette Kolodny suggests that the goal of deconstructive feminist theory is to assert the "equivalent right to liberate new meanings" out of old texts (*Dancing* 3). Like Elizabeth Clark's work, this is another powerful call to action for a more balanced approach to the literature whose primary concern is to search for the authenticity of the author's voice regardless of what direction a preliminary or initial finding may produce. Again however, we must remain aware of the theorist's focus. Kolodny's work, like Clark's concern for the missing presence of female authors in the classical period, showcases a concern for the missing presence of female authors in general (*Dancing* 1-5). Kolodny admits that she cannot see the presence of female authors from her position and instead offers a perspective for the analysis of gendered depictions in male authored texts. Again, we find the theorist's strong suggestions for positive movement forward foundational but misdirected by the limitation of its exposure to and recognition of the strong historical female authored texts we have access to today.

Kolodny works under the assumption that there are very few if any historical female authors to inscribe new meaning into gendered archetypes in historical literature (*A Map* 455). Taking on this same structural presupposition today in spite of the recovery of hundreds perhaps even thousands of texts from the classical, to medieval and renaissance periods merely confines theorists to very similar views and positions to ones inhabited prior to gaining this body of knowledge. Consequently, it also places similar unreasonable expectations onto historical narratives that will stereotype them, and force them to remain silent once again. Once an ideological limitation of feminist critical theory is placed on the gendered text the continued need to deconstruct gendered depictions from the dominant position in spite of the knowledge gained becomes merely a habit of comfort which reverts to previous common sense suppositions that no longer hold true.

We have already deciphered how the male gaze interprets gendered literary depictions throughout these periods, and found that this theoretical perspective is a virtual dead end to the female voice. We must ask why then is feminist theory reticent to (re) consider these authors from

a fresh point of view. One very strong possibility is that feminism and its foundational concerns are rooted in experience, culture and language evolved from a post-religious period.

This position disconnects feminist theory and its literary models from the milieu of religious culture largely prominent in the pre-modern eras. In order to analyse a literature or construct a theoretical framework for a literature that is deeply embedded within religious contexts, historical, linguistic, and other structural textual considerations in the feminist critical model need to be reinvigorated with an appreciation for what the historical religious context offers. This will directly broaden the definition of concepts and terms within the feminist model in order and appropriately adjust it to deal with historical literary contexts.

In order to bridge this disconnect we may consider the need to translate other fundamental elements within feminist theory that similarly apply to the work of historical gendered texts. This consideration re-routes the use and definition of power between the gender binaries. The context of material feminism reminds us that the concept of power we currently apply to the analysis of gendered writing is an entirely modern construction not directly identifiable in the pre-modern religious genres historical authors work in. The definition of power as a tool of feminist analysis translated or restructured and applied into a more recognizable form appropriate for the pre-modern context allows the concept of power as an analytical tool for gendered writing to better fit the historical destination while retaining the integrity of its original purpose.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar produce a similar translation for female novelists during the nineteenth-century. Their position leads them to reclaim the analogy of Virginia Wolf's room through the re-inscription of the "attic" as the Victorian place to inhabit gendered creativity (Gilbert and Gubar 29). Gilbert and Gubar recognize in this analogy both the possibility of a hidden gendered strength purposely kept secret, and the ability to combine it with a translated interpretation of the use of power through an understanding of Victorian authority.

The female novelists are afraid to represent themselves and their gendered literary interpretations, experiences, and depictions as directly oppositional to the dominant views of women and gender. They appear to suppress their female creativity by inverting their fear with authority and in turn re-inscribe the presence of female strength in the face of oppressive constrictions into an act of whispered sedition. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that such authors admit strength only in hushed and semi-hidden tones of quiet rebellion. Even as women are kept hidden in rooms to remain from being seen by the outside world, they are undermining the social and literary relationships which put them there in the first place.

The room, Gilbert and Gubar insist, is an analogy for the creative gendered voice, metaphorically locked or hidden behind social constrictions of gender and the female form

(*Madwoman* 57). This subversion no matter how seemingly hidden from the dominant view remains ever present to the properly conditioned eye. It is what gives the female author her strength to subvert power, invert tradition, and reclaim control of the narrative. She inhabits a place above all else in which female madness, as the inversion of male sanity, propagates ideas of female creativity, ingenuity, and intellectual rebellion. In these circumstances the presence of sedition in a gendered text is enough for a female author to reclaim her word, her body, and consequently her sanity.

If for various reasons and with varying pressures women have been kept from writing and refused other forms of legitimate written recognition, as Freccero, Rich, and Cixous have all noted above, then they have also been kept from their predecessors as Heilbrun has suggested (Freccero; Rich; Cixous). The disconnection from the gendered tradition as well as from the dominant one causes a deep "anxiety of influence" that, consequently, also makes them acutely aware of the precariousness of their positions as female authors and of what little authority they can possess because of it (Heilbrun; Bloom; Gilbert and Gubar). However, in spite of their awareness of the oppressive or restrictive measures around them they directly also resist these measures. Their resistance produces palimpsestic methods by which to experience, communicate, and reclaim the gendered experience. They re-inscribe the definition of power for their particular contexts and their particular use. This is beneficial to both themselves as authors as well as for other women, as they find hidden ways or subtle manners to convey their ideas to those who are most perceptive to them.

Such women take on the mantle of male authority by enacting the role of the author, a role which by and large is forbidden to them. Though society has measures in place to keep them from "taking up the pen" they override these impositions to claim the power of the word, wield its authority, and re-claim its power (Gilbert and Gubar 49). Gilbert and Gubar's concern with authority, therefore, is an ideal example of a key feminist concept translated for the appropriate application of a historical text. The overlapping similarities between nineteenth century female authorship and medieval/early Renaissance female authorship, therefore, display structural literary elements critical for the analysis of medieval female writing and authorship. The concern around female authors and how they take up the pen throughout history, inhabiting the "attic" in ways that resists being silenced, and how they in fact resist being usurped by patriarchal hegemony are all legitimate issues similarly applicable to the context of medieval gendered authors and hagiographic texts (Gilbert and Gubar 53).

These are women who, just like their nineteenth century counterparts, feel a sense of "dis-ease" with themselves enacting a male prescribed act stepping into a role of authority clearly not intended for them (Gilbert and Gubar 89). However, in spite of this authorial anxiety they still feel

pressed to write. They may feel uneasy about the role, but the role draws them to the pen for larger purposes. Gilbert and Gubar insist that all these women deal

> ... with central female experiences from a specifically female perspective. But [that the] distinctively feminine aspect of their art has been generally ignored by critics because the most successful women writers often seem to have channeled their female concerns into secret or at least obscure corners. In effect, such women have created submerged meanings hidden within or behind the more accessible, "public" content of their works, so that their literature could be read and appreciated even when its vital concern with female dispossession and (dis)ease was ignored... [these authors] produced literary works that are in some sense palimpsestic, works whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning. Thus these authors managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards. (72)

Their "(dis)ease" is a function of the foreignness of their relationship to authority and their role within it. But in spite of this sense of unease the author clearly conveys cognizance of their paradoxical position, making them in the end antithetical to the consequences of the relationship (Gilbert/Gubar 48). Their noted misgivings and hesitations become purposeful, they are merely noises made to distract from the real purpose of their work while they appropriate authority from their predecessors. The patterns are subtle, perhaps even undetectable to certain eyes, but it is their very presence which suggests a subversive act.

Judith Louder Newton thinks along very similar lines when she expresses belief in the female author's ability to "subvert masculine control and male domination in their novels by quietly giving emphasis to female capability, as if the pattern in the background of an embroidered piece had been subtly worked into relief" (Louder Newton 6). Such authors in effect subvert patriarchal authority by pretending to subscribe to the dominant view. From this position they re-define and translate the function of the male power they ascribe to from one of "control, dominance, and influence" to a gendered one of "ability, energy, and strength" (Louder Newton 7). The palimpsestic method is recognized as a space to employ subversive tactics which re-inscribe the meaning of power through their own experiences. They subtly undermine or even replace the relational connection between power and patriarchal authority, redirecting it in their own direction namely a gendered direction.

Like the limitation in Cixous' purview of historical women authors, Newton's admiration for these women is similarly short lived. Newton is concerned that in the end every strong and

rebellious heroine must be muted to the convention. The stories are read as strong gendered narratives, narratives of power and adventure, of moving to a new place, as Cixous has reminded us is what the epitome of feminine writing ought to be (*Castration*). Yet, in the end "it seems the work has had nothing to do with power at all," because in the end the requirement was that the heroine should "marry, and marriage meant the relinquishment of power as surely as it meant the purchase of wedding clothes" (Louder Newton 8).

Newton does not stop to consider what sort of marriage the author is outlining or whether the social norm or institution being outlined is a (re)inscription of previous historical parameters of gendered expectations. She does not ask what sort of binary issues the author is attempting to (re)address in her representation of the customary conclusion. She does not analyse how the author may be representing this binary throughout the work in various forms in order to highlight the ideal outcome at the end as a change or alteration to the previously proposed or depicted norms and expectations.

Nor does Newton consider what the dynamic of power may look like within the altered dynamic after the author has gone through the process of rewriting the narrative. Newton appears to read the texts linearly and infuses her conclusions with modern expectation, disappointment, and social constrictions into the institution marriage by reading the conclusion as a "radical curtailment" of the author's "rebellious strategies" (Lowder Newton 21). She does not take into account the conclusion as a part of a larger whole in which the author delineates the protagonist's adventure and repeated expressions of strength through a re-interpretation or adjusted vision of the definition of the customary conclusion.

Newton has reverted to the old binary, but perhaps Kolodny's insights will help to refocus our away from the binary she falls back into. Kolodny prompts the modern reader to go back to the relationship between power and authority. She suggests "that what is important about a fiction is not whether it ends in death or a marriage, but what the symbolic demands of that particular conventional ending imply about the values and belief of the world that engendered it" (*Dancing* 4). This is a reminder that the historical author nearly always works in conjunction with her cultural/literary context.

Kolodny's notion suggests that the author is perhaps constrained to work with the custom most accepted by her society. I would like to suggest that the author has already worked to invert the power dynamics within the gender binaries throughout the course of the text. She may not subvert the roles or power dynamics completely because she may not have the power to overthrow or destroy them singlehandedly, but she does invert them enough to reassemble an alternative dynamic between the intrinsic binaries she deals with. It would not be unreasonable to suggest

the ending inherently follows the pattern of palimpsisms laid out prior to it. Throughout the text the author provides examples of less than ideal representations of life choices for women, so that by presenting the absolute ideal possibility in the narrative conclusion she offsets social expectations for women by pushing forward the limit of previously set gendered expectations.

This is not a destruction of the binary, but an expansion within it to make space for a new gender positive position within a currently present socially inscribed institution. The author alters the dynamic of power within the binary by altering the ideal expectations for the institution or socially/culturally determined expectations. Such an act behaves like a source of pressure on the current accepted social norm, which pushes for the ideal as the new norm. The new standard enables the reader to understand her own plight. It gives her insight to the struggles of women in socially structured relationships such as marriage. But more importantly, the author's new standard offers a revised model for gendered roles and performance which benefits women directly.

This is a vision for a future in which the author's narrative outlines an ideal filled with the possibility of a reclaimed gendered authority. This is a utopian vision provided to the reader, which in the case of the Victorian novelists, is a vision in which women are as equally free and authoritative in relationship with men as men are allowed to be with women. Perhaps the binary cannot be completely eradicated, but as Ann Rosalind Jones has suggested, the power dynamic within the binary can be usurped, and re-distributed by developing "a point of view...from which phallogocentric concepts and controls can be seen through and taken apart, not only in theory, but also in practice" (248). The author's vision ensures a powerful image of gendered authority behind the subversion, not because they do not end a woman's story with fully traditional resolutions, but because they end it with idealized ones for women to internalize as new possibilities within gendered realities.

These nineteenth-century authors create a space for women to inhabit that is rooted in traditional gendered expectations created for women to find comfort, purpose, and legitimacy only to reinterpret the parameters around those expectations according to their own expectations. This is something not unlike the methods and purpose of medieval gendered authors who instead of using the institution of marriage to communicate an idealized gendered expectation implement the ideals of religion. In both eras such works produce a simple yet authoritative effect which clears a space made safe specifically for women to explore, to experience, to share, and to reclaim what that they see, experience, and understand within themselves and through their bodies. In the end they re-envision the resolution in a way that re-creates a new power dynamic within the old norms and expectations which proffer new ideals for women to reclaim and better their own narratives.

All of these women were, of course, expected "to write specifically for their own sex and within the tradition of a [diminished and secondary] female culture rather than within the great tradition" (Kolodny, *Map for Reading* 454). For this reason it seems improbable that they should get beyond the final demands of the conventions they worked with in the first place (454). However, perhaps such impatience is again indicative of the theorist's particular position and not the authors assumed limitations. The fact that such authors were able to create their own "misprision," with their own map of literary misunderstanding and their own community of texts to (mis)interpret suggests these are authors actively looking and able to accomplish much more than they had previously been given credit for (452).

Feminist scholars can now see more clearly than ever how women during the medieval and early Renaissance eras, like their nineteenth century counterparts, could develop their own utopian-type literature through (semi)concealed literary tactics designed to reveal, subvert, and reclaim the power in their to their narratives. They produce "speculative" sorts of myth "designed to contain a vision...for ideals" far beyond gender, and yet which simultaneously bear out of their gendered concerns (Frye, *Varieties of Literary Utopias* 323). We can see how very much like the weaving and unweaving of Penelope's loom women wrote "not to conceal, but to reveal, to engage, and to counter" whatever repressions and constrictions were enacted to silence them even while they appear to be doing the opposite (Heilbrun 103).

IV. Power, the Gendered Body, and Subversions

In the previous section I examined how gendered historical literary bodies are shaped by historical female authors and the tactics they employ to root themselves in authoritative texts as a pragmatic translation of power. I discussed how such authors subvert patriarchal authority within those texts through palimpsestic means and reclaim gendered narratives for their reader. I also took into consideration how such authors might employ feminist literary tools and concepts to alter and reassemble power dynamics in the gender binaries they explore in their work.

In this section I will present a discussion on the expression of power and its relationship to the gendered body. I will look at the relationships between the structural literary elements in historical female authored texts and the dynamics of power they are able to create by implementing these tools in their own fashion. These relationships will outline how the dynamics of power may normally function in relation to the body. This delineation will serve to differentiate between an account source, that is the preceding account used as a source of inspiration or direction by the female author and which upholds the patriarchal standard for the dominant view in the narrative, from the gendered text which proposes oppositional or subversive attitudes.

In *The Politics of Truth*, Foucault suggests that one of the first tasks of critique accomplished through acts of subversion is to discern between "mechanisms of coercion and elements of knowledge" (59). The relationship between the mechanisms of control and the elements of knowledge go hand in hand. When one side is affected the other side is similarly inversely affected so that the more control is in the hands of those wield dominant power, the lesser the knowledge they have of those over whom their power is exercised.

The manner in which control is established and power exercised is without question always a matter of concern over the body. The relationship between the body and society is a function of the control excised from society and exercised upon the body. This is what Foucault defines as a relationship of discipline to the soul that keeps the body regulated while on course, and punished when it moves outside acceptable boundaries set by power gained through the access of knowledge (*Discipline and Punish* 13-16).

The system of punishment is what interests here, because it speaks directly to the relationship between pre-modern women authors and pre-modern society. This system provides a context of the literature on the one hand, while on the other, it provides a context of the relationship between the pre-modern authors and modern society. The second relationship is just as important as the first because it indicates how the modern reader may interpret the work while contextualizing the author literarily as well as historically. It opens a path away from the binary loops we are so determined to avoid, if only because it makes the theorist and historian more aware of their own position of power over the historical author and her work.

Foucault's fundamental issue with the relationship between body and society is indeed a revealing moment for the reader. It suggests that often the modern eye has a difficult time accepting or believing that such a relationship can exist between itself and the historical author.

> But surely we can accept the general proposition that, in our societies, the systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain 'political economy' of the body... even if they do not make use of violent or bloody punishment, even when they use 'lenient' methods involving confinement or correction, [or removal, or abstinence] it is always the body that is at the issue—the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission. (*Discipline and Punish* 25)

This is a control and concern over the body that explains and justifies its centrality to feminist critical and historical considerations. This relationship between power and the gendered body is prevalent in society as well as history, and in text. It can, therefore, occur not just within or across cultures, but also across periods of history. The function of power maintains the gendered body as

a sexualized body removed from female ownership and its humanity under the dominant male gaze.

The function of dominant power historically keeps this body defined by functions secondary to the primary body. This keeps the gendered body materially based, originating in myths of submission, prevalently concerned with immediate and physical issues rather than with future ethereal issues.[20] As Cixous' work indicated in previous sections, this body is linked to hidden, darkened and unacknowledged moments of gender oppression in the West. It remains an example of the deeply ingrained relationships between societal norms, disciplinary measures, and forms of dominant power used to covertly and overtly discipline and regulate the female form both historically and textually.[21] Foucault's assessment of how the body is controlled therefore is pertinent and similarly reflective of the feminist considerations of woman as the secondary element within the gendered binary.

Foucault's work explains that as the level of control over the (gendered) body increases, the access that body has to knowledge decreases. The body is kept as much as possible from all sources of knowledge both internal and external to itself. The body is both kept from evolving by keeping it from accessing knowledge for its own benefit or betterment, as well as keeping the body mysterious to both itself and the dominant perspective by withholding or removing knowledge about the body. Everything that is done to the body through "power relations" is conducted in such a way as to maintain "an immediate hold upon it... [to] invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force to carry out tasks, to emit signs" (*Discipline* 25). In essence, everything is done to it except to allow it to change the perception of power and control over it, or as Cixous might suggest, everything is done to refrain the body from being taken out of the binary and humanize it.

Foucault's explanation implies that while power seeks to *do* something to the body, it also wants to exercise control *over* it by what it can refrain the body from doing. Thus power keeps the body from performing so as to restrain it from movements outside of acceptable structured parameters. Power, therefore, keeps the body along the sidelines, at a distance from the source of power so as to disable it from participating or engaging in actions that take it out of the boundaries it has been relegated to. This can be achieved in a number of ways as "subjection is not only obtained by the instruments of violence or ideology; it can also be direct, physical, pitting force against force," or it may be implemented without the use of violence "calculated, organized," or simple in method and subtle in form (*Discipline* 26).

[20] See Bloch and Lerner for further discussions on the history of women and the creation myth.
[21] Cixous makes a similar reference to woman's secondary position in different manners across her work.

For the body to learn about itself or to acknowledge its ability for strength would be to stultify the expression of the dominant power and fasten a sense of humanity to the body being disciplined or controlled. This would bring it closer to an access of knowledge and therefore a step closer to enabling it to power itself. Both power and knowledge are therefore each symptoms of the other, as each are "exercised rather than possessed" (*Discipline* 27). This suggests that "it is not the privilege [of power], acquired or preserved" from this exercise that controls the body, "but the overall effect of its strategic position" over the body (*Discipline* 27).

The use of hegemony over a body is therefore "not univocal" because it "defines innumerable points of confrontation, focuses of instability, each of which has its own risks of conflict, of struggles, and [the possibility] of an at least temporary inversion of the power relations" (*Discipline* 27). To assume univocal status is to force the body to abstain from language both spoken and written, thereby silencing the body eschewing it from human identity. At each of these points, however, the possibility for inverting or overthrowing dominant power can take hold and begin the process of subversion.

In this way, Foucault can conclude like Gilbert and Gubar's assessment of nineteenth century women's gendered literary inversions, or Cixous' assessment of women's modern linguistic inversions, or Rich's assessment of women's historical inversions, that the resulting outcome of these "points of confrontation" is that "power produces knowledge," and inversely knowledge produces power (*Discipline* 27). By acquiring access to knowledge previously withheld from the body, the body can invert the relationship between power and knowledge and alter the positions within the dynamic. Any knowledge of the gendered body attained, as a result, inherently encompasses the threat of agency derived from the inversion of power.

There can be no surprise then in pointing out that the liminal spaces within literature which conceal even the smallest inversions of authority provide an ideal space for the "point of confrontation" that can produce inversions of power (*Discipline* 27). The palimpsisms within the hidden spaces of gendered literary bodies provide room for gendered agency, knowledge, power, language and representation a point of collision. In the hands of the author who creates an intellectual upheaval within the text, the genre, or the tradition such a space also provides a "a point of confrontation" to subvert mechanisms of authority within a gendered text or literary body (*Discipline* 27).

Judith Butler suggests that the misprision of gender and the body in literature reflects the misprision of power within society, and points to the paradox within this connection. Thus,

> ...if I am someone who cannot be without doing, then the conditions of my doing are, in part, the conditions of my existence. If my doing is dependent on what is

> done to me or, rather, the ways in which I am done by norms, then the possibility of my persistence as an "I" depends upon my being able to do something with what is done with me. This does not mean that I can remake the world so that I become its maker. That godlike fantasy of godlike power only refuses the ways we are constituted, invariably and from the start, by what is before us and outside of us. My agency does not consist in denying this condition of my constitution. If I have any agency, it is opened up by the fact that I am constituted by a social world I never chose. That my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means only that paradox is the condition of its possibility. (*Undoing Gender* 3)

When power and knowledge collide in literary spaces created by a dissident hand, they subvert and alter the relationship within the binaries engaged. They invert the elements within the binary which inevitably changes the dynamic of power and alters the binary. The change creates an awareness which results in agency, and agency within the text occurs at the moment "the unreal lays claim to reality, or enters into its domain, something other than a simple assimilation into prevailing norms [which] can and does take place" (*Undoing Gender* 27).

The relationship, therefore, between the unreal and the real, as a symbiotic relationship like the one outlined by Cixous between the body and the word, or by Rich between the body and history, affects the expression of the body as it is reflected in the gendered text. This places pressure on the subject who collides and inverts the dynamic of power within the binaries and influences the reader to accept and internalize the altered power dynamic as a new gendered norm or expectation. The subject may not break completely free from the original binary construction. However, they do make room for an alternative to the previous more constrictive dynamic, consequently altering the text and the reader's reality.

When reality lays claim to the unreal there is a remote possibility that without our immediate realization, struggles against dominant power occur in places and through methods which we cannot initially intuit. When the body as a place of struggle in society and the body as a place of struggle in text overlap they collide to create a liminal space between words and actions. This is a place of resistance against the oppression of the gendered body as experienced both in history and in the text.

If then the body's connection to knowledge is a symptom of its new found access to power, the treatment of the gendered textual body and the gendered body's depiction within the text is reclamation of power over the historical body. The gendered body defined in the narrative becomes a representation of the physical gendered body in time, which inevitably is, as Freccero

suggests “a site of struggles for power” (*Gender Ideologies* 66). The author reads the “bodily metaphors...as ideologically symptomatic,” and in a turn of power re-writes those ideologies onto the literary representation of the body in the same way that “ideologies [are] mapped onto the [physical] body,” through the acts of appropriation and inscription (67).

This is why the act of literary appropriation, subversion, and reclamation is a significant act of agency on behalf of pre-modern women in history and in literature. The process of literary (re)appropriation reconstructs historical and cultural traditions. It dismantles original narratives and textual sources, and re-fashions them into something that appears similar to the original. The subversion is purposely fashioned with the appearance of imitation so as to not attract negative or dangerous attention by authorities.

The narratives are re-enacted and re-purposed through the re-interpretation of details directly oppositional to the vision of the previous author. This is what Nancy Walker characterizes as a “disobedient” reading by a “revisionist” author, or what Kolodny calls an act of “misprision” (*Disobedient Writer* 3; *Map for Rereading* 452). Each is excised by the revisionist/subversive author in order to produce readings which resist the incursion of power over the gendered body, alter their position in respect to that power and then re-write the narrative accordingly.

These texts are characterized by a simultaneously conscious and sub-conscious moment of self-reflection from its author. The acts of (re)appropriation, subversion and reclamation permit the author to systematically misread and reconstruct a new account from the old. They re-inscribe details necessary for communicating an alternative and gender focused message, while completely omitting others. This expands and undermines the orthodox position presented in the originating source and presents a vision of the gendered body which supports a positive female centered world view.

The palimpsestic moment is hidden under the act of imitation. Its purpose is to glean authority from the rooted tradition, and if the tradition cannot be uprooted, the author alters and reshapes it. That the text’s revelation is intended for a particular reader suggests the author’s carefully studied knowledge of self, environment, and history is intentional in its search to provide new meanings simultaneously hidden and revealed behind old texts, narratives, tropes, and archetypes. This is what Foucault calls a “critical attitude” in the literary tradition that has its origins in “the religious struggles and spiritual attitudes prevalent during the...Middle Ages” (*Politics of Truth* 69). This attitude and the literary measures it implements suggests a strong trend in gendered pre-modern writing that requires further investigation.

Next Steps

I have taken the opportunity through the discussion above to show how the critical attitude within feminist theory has had significant effect on the analysis of gendered depictions in literature. I have also given consideration to how we must equally apply that same critical attention to the gendered depictions composed by historical female authors and the tools implemented in order to relay subversive meanings within traditional forms of writing. Everything we have learned so far emphasizes the role of the gendered/female body in relationship to power, knowledge, language and history in a theoretical model. These relationships outline the pieces necessary to complete a larger view of medieval and early Renaissance female authored texts, and suggest methods for analysing such texts.

In the following chapter the discussion will outline the contextual issues around historical women authors and how to apply this method of analysis to Clemence of Barking's rendition of the Catherine account. Clemence of Barking displays both a bold method in her narrative revisions, while simultaneously revealing a palimpsestic layer within her work. On the surface the elements of orthodoxy and dissent appear to be in conflict with one another, however, the revelation of the author's anxiety juxtaposed next to the boldness of the hagiographic re-vision speaks to the author's purpose. In other words, she may present herself as though in a position to internalize and appropriate the originating texts, when in fact she acts to alter and subvert them.

I will go so far as to say that such an author acts against the traditional process of internalization and re-creation, moved instead toward a process of externalization and opposition. Thus she roots, subverts, and reclaims the gendered narrative for a gender sensitive audience. I will introduce Clemence and her work through a contextualization of her literature and history before moving on to a brief contextualization of the Vulgate author and his text. I will provide a measured consideration for the Vulgate text as well as other source texts Clemence interprets for the purpose of her work, and finally to provide an analytical comparison between the originating narratives and the female authored re-imagined texts.

This analysis will be broken down into three parts representing the three main structural areas of the Clemence text: the prologue, the history, and the account. The prologue section where the authors introduce their purpose and vision for the narrative will analyse and compare the two introductory descriptions for each account. The histories, where the authors provide an introduction and description of the saint and her foil, will analyse and compare how each author further reflects and reinforces the explication of their purpose through characterization.

The third section will analyse and compare how each author follows out their previously set purpose and vision, and how in particular the two envisioned narratives differ from each other philosophically and theologically. The reconsideration of what Margaret Ezell terms the

"inculcation of present day ideologies in our narratives of history," literature, and gendered writing, along with a comparative inter-textual and intra-textual approach will exemplify the methods employed in this case study (*Writing Women* 6). The purpose is to re-structure feminist methods in order to comprehensively analyse the account of St. Catherine making it accessible and more readily available to the modern reader.

Chapter 2: History, Context, and a Review of the Account

The previous chapter discussed how female authors are bound by a different relationship to the canon because of their disconnection to the written word, and therefore by a different relationship to the act of authorship than their male counterparts.[22] Inevitably, because such an author assumes the missing presence of female predecessors reflecting her own experiences as a woman, the female author is forced creates a different manner in which to acquire authority and re-create the literature within her own image. Her work, therefore, hints at an authorial anxiety that suggests a send of unease with this process of subverting and reclaiming. Though she follows and sometimes mimics the structure, form, and style her male predecessors also apply, we clearly find indications of protest against misogynistic views and corrections of such interpretations that place her at odds with the authority of her predecessors.

In spite of the anxiety offered at the beginning of the work, the text does not support any evidence of literary apprehension.[23] The author externalizes her predecessor's message and re-creates the text in her own image, thereby engendering the text as well as the subject. She makes a significant effort to re-produce a literary female sanctity that reflects a level of gendered agency we rarely see within the pages of such genres, and though partially hidden beneath the authority of the generic form, she makes no apologies for her gender positive point of view (Arenal and Schlau 25-26; Chance 19).

The female medieval religious author produces gendered literary images of women which possess stronger wills, greater moral acuity, greater intellectual ability, and a deeper more direct connection to the divine than the previous representations of the same female saints. She provides them with characteristics that are considered male or masculine without making apologies for their femininity. She does not sexualize the saint, reducing her to physical tropes. Nor does she display the saint as an emblem of clerical or even divine authority. Rather this is the sort of author who portrays her gendered subject as working under her own agency, her own ability, and her own motivations.

[22] Diane Watt also discusses this issue (9).
[23] I use the term in the same way that it is define and described by Bloom, and Gilbert and Gubar.

Many literary historians, however, overlook this aspect in women's medieval literature and are concerned instead with the overwhelming similarities between originating narratives and the re-envisioned texts (Robertson, *The Medieval Saints* 68). The overlaps appear to reinforce the view that such texts remain purely didactic in purpose and that they propagate the dominant and destructive patriarchal binaries and power structures. Such scholars might suggest that the role of authors within the hagiographic tradition, including women, is to simply mirror or regurgitate the concepts and ideologies found in the original documents (Thompson 13). This point of view is not surprising when we consider that the differences between the predecessors and the re-envisioned texts appear minute on the surface as to warrant almost no consideration at all.

For women during the Middle-Ages to take issue with interpretations of the Bible directly was a "dangerous" affair as the examples of persecuted, excommunicated, and even executed authors suggest (Thompson 27). The fluidity and dynamism of saints' narratives allowed female authors to directly participate within a literary/religious genre without threat or danger to themselves. This approach provides such authors with the opportunity to take on the mantle of religious or theological authority in a way that dominant power might not discern. In fact, a great number of women during this period wrote or dictated their works to scribes or editors, most often under heavy supervision. At times this could be done in partnership with a father, a son, or other male relative in the private sphere of the home, but often this role was relegated to a male cleric in a public position of authority, sometimes acting even as the author's personal confessor in the convent (Mooney 7).

Often the relationship between the author and her scribe was complex and was reflected in the textual voice. Invariably, the scribe would have some effect or influence on the work making it difficult for historians to excise each of the other voices present in the text from that of the authoress herself (Mooney 8). However, on occasion there is a woman who may be fortunate enough to have enough distance between themselves and the direct presence of male authority or supervision.

These are almost certainly women connected in some fashion to a political patron, most likely members of elite families encouraged to produce and share works directly proportional to their talent and ability. Those women who did manage such rare circumstances also managed remarkable examples of pre-modern women's literature. They produced texts and set standards for gendered medieval literature in a ways that are only recently being fully considered.

One such text is the account of St. Catherine as depicted by Clemence of Barking Abbey in the late twelfth century. Clemence is writing just outside of old London a little over a century after the Norman Conquest. Her account of St. Catherine is based on the Latin Vulgate, a

rendition written between the tenth and eleventh century during the monastic revival in Normandy (d'Ardenne and Dobson xv-xvii; MacBain, *The Life* xiii). Clemence's account is believed to have been rather popular, yet there are only three copies left of her rendition of the Catherine account, while hundreds of the Vulgate version remain intact (Watt 81).[24] Clemence follows the Vulgate account very closely in terms of structure and plot, but devises her own interpretation of the actors' motivations supporting her own theological assessments of the narrative, and provides a beautifully re-purposed adaptation of St. Catherine's story which supports her own philosophical, religious, and gendered ideals (Watt72).

In spite of what we have already discovered, however, Clemence herself is also an author we know very little about. Her religious house as well as its historical and political connections can perhaps reveal something about the author and the account she proffers. What we do know about Clemence as a historical person is only what she presents to her audience in her text: that she is named Clemence; that she authored the account of St. Catherine, and that she is a nun of Barking Abbey in the last half of the eleventh century. Others have also noted the linguistic and stylistic similarities between this text and the earlier account of St. Edward authored by an anonymous nun of Barking Abbey ten to twenty years earlier (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* xxiii; MacBain, *Anglo-Norman Women* 235). Some scholars indicate that Clemence may, in fact, be the author for both hagiographical accounts.

J. Wogan-Browne suggests the connections between the anonymous author of the Edward account and Clemence's Catherine account point to several overlaps between them, suggesting the two may be more closely connected than once thought (Wogan-Brown, *Women and Literature* 71). William MacBain puts forward the idea that linguistically the two texts are in fact very similar, and that there are also "remarkable similarities in style and in treatment of the respective Latin sources" (Anglo-Norman Women 235).[25] MacBain's research points to the distinct possibility that the two texts may even be authored by the same person, and though many agree with MacBain, there is an argument to be made for the connection between the texts, there is still some question as to the full weight of this connection.

Very similarly to the history and political state of Gandersheim Abbey in Saxony two hundred years earlier, Barking Abbey in the twelfth century was a bedrock of learning, social activity, and political connection for British noble women (Slocum, *Ritual and Ceremony* 96). The first documentations we find of its history go as far back as Bede's History of the English

[24] This is not counting excerpts and lines of direct or indirect influence on other later renditions. See MacBain for further discussion.
[25] See Wogan-Browne in *Women and Literature*, and MacBain in *Anglo-Norman Women* for further discussion.

People in the early part of the eighth century (Slocum 95). Bede's history points out that it was the son of a British chieftain, a minor monarch who founded the monastery at Chertsey for himself and the one at Barking for his sister during the later part of the sixth century (Page, *Victoria History* 115).

Barking is very likely one of the first monasteries, if not the first, founded in Britain, and one which retained close ties to British monarchy throughout its existence until its disbandment in 1540 (Page, *Victoria History* 116-117).[26] The abbesses at Barking were very often direct family relations of the British royal house, often hand-picked or selected by the monarch until the early thirteenth century. Such connections were secured through family bonds; it was most often wives, widows, sisters and daughters of kings selected for the Abbess' position. On occasion the position was also used as a reward to families in good standing with the monarchy, and in other cases awarded as reparation for a wrong suffered.[27]

The women at Barking did not maintain the same level of political independence as did the infamous community in Gandersheim two centuries earlier. They were, however, provided with a social, political and economic buffer that still allowed them to maintain a distinct level of independence particular only to houses directly associated with social and political elites (Wogan Browne, *Women and Anglo-Norman* 64-65). The Victoria History names Barking as one of the richest monasteries in Britain, and as such, the nuns at Barking were freer than even most female religious to pursue interests in cultural and literary explorations (118-120).

The women were involved in setting their own liturgy, suggesting some semblance of theological independence. They were directly involved in the education of their in-house sisters. They participated in policy development for the abbey, and contributed to the ecclesiastical and liturgical expansion of their religious community through letters to other monasteries and manuscripts kept in the Barking library (Slocum 96-98).

Barking's cultural influence, political prestige, and financial wealth are notable and significant by 1066, when a massive political upheaval saw the end of one dynasty and the beginning of another. When William the Conqueror took over Britain in that same year, Barking receives mention and a listing in the Doomsday Book because of its good standing and acknowledged notoriety for its good relations with the previous ruling order (Page, *Victoria History* 118-120). Barking Abbey found a great source of support in William the Conqueror, who

[26] Barking Abbey was eventually completely dissolved under Henry VIII, its possessions and artifacts removed or dispersed by 1540 (Page, *Victoria History* 120).
[27] Such was the case for Mary Beckett in 1173, the sister of the infamously murdered Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Beckett (Page, *Victoria History* 129).

as a religious man and as a politically astute patron was determined to continue financial and political backing for this well known monastery even under the upset of war. He reinvigorates Barking with his own management gradually shifting its maintenance to the care of a "new aristocracy," assuring its continuation in cultural and literary pursuits (Slocum 98).

Barking Abbey is used during this period for a number of interesting things, including aristocratic visits, gatherings and councils, as well as occasionally for the housing, or imprisoning of female relations of traitorous noblemen (Page, *Victoria History* 118-120). Barking's social standing and political juxtaposition is prominent and recognized by historians for its deep political affiliations. One of the most interesting and direct results of this close relationship was that Barking was in many ways organized more like a barony or a duchy of England than an actual monastery. This gave the religious members of the Barking house a level of influence, freedom, and ability rarely seen in British history (Page 118-120).

The abbess at its helm had responsibilities to participate financially in military excursions. Some historians even suggest that there was a period in which her physical presence on the battlefield was required as a show of fealty. Her presence was, of course, required at court on a more regular basis than her colleagues. The prominence of her standing, in the aristocratic community and influence of her position at court was displayed by the precedence shown to her over the other abbesses present at court (Page, *Victoria History* 119). Perhaps, as a direct result of this influence, or as a result of the political protection and social buffer Barking receives from the British court, the abbey becomes increasingly famous for its prominent role in the reinfusion of monasticism and monastic culture literature in Britain.

Learning and literature are prominent aspects in the life at Barking Abbey as the presence of its library is supposed to have implied. Latin is a key component to the education of the nuns at Barking. The women participate in and contribute to the translation of liturgical and historical texts producing a library considered extensive by the standards of most at the time. On occasion we are aware of nuns producing texts to be read aloud, plays to be acted out, or liturgical accounts to be shared with their immediate community as well as with royalty, and outside visitors alike (Cotton 477).

In the case of Clemence, however, we reach a standard of excellence in the reinterpretation of a religious narrative that is also significant to the development of the abbey's institutional identity. This account moves Barking's relationship to the development of English literature much further than anything we see prior.[28] Though not an abbess herself, Clemence of

[28] There is no one other person of note put forward from the House of Barking before Clemence except for the abbesses listed in the *Victoria History*. See Page for further discussion.

Barking (935-c.1095) is a precursor to the first female English and even British playwright, Katherine de Sutton (1358-1377) a later abbess of Barking. If Clemence is not the actual author of the anonymous account of Edward I, she most definitely inherits the text as a source of literary influence and direction for the account of St. Catherine. By Clemence's dates we can determine that she served under Mary Becket (1173-75), and Mary Plantagenet, the daughter of Henry II.[29]

William MacBain's historical analysis of Clemence as a part of hagiographical tradition in Britain reminds his readers that Clemence's rendition was only one of eight editions of the Catherine *passio* written in Old French before the sixteenth century (*The Life* xiii). Clemence's version of the account is according to Wogan-Browne "one of the earliest vernacular lives of the saints" (*Virgin Lives* xxiii). Such historically grounded assessments place Clemence at the very heart of early medieval literary development in England, and similarly emphasize her work as an early example of English women's writing.

Her work is widely recognized as being influenced by romantic court literature as well as spiritual liturgy.[30] Such observations widen Clemence's scope as a medieval British author. She is no longer simply a religious author producing for liturgical, theological, or even identity purposes, but is re-defined as a religious author with literary associations who is also connected to the literary context of her time.

Problematically, there is little if any indication if Clemence's work has had an impact on her successors. In her article, *Clemence of Barking's Life of St. Catherine*, Samantha Katz, explains that of all the later middle English Catherine hagiographers it appears that none copied Clemence's version of the Catherine account. To add further insult to injury, none seem to even "demonstrate a familiarity with its existence" (Katz 8). This leaves Clemence's vision of "female spirituality and wisdom an evolutionary dead end, preserved for posterity but with little impact on the greater development of the Catherine legend" (Katz 8).

Katz's line of enquiry suggests that the only possible line of influence Clemence could possibly have had would be found strictly within the Middle English literary tradition. We do not see any other in depth consideration of the linguistic or stylistic developments in hagiography across Europe. As we've seen with the transference of the Catherine account from Normandy to Britain, it was quite common for such texts to traverse national boundaries following linguistic traditions or cultural influence instead.

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[29] The exact dates for Mary Plantagenet's governance over Barking are unclear, however, there is some indication in the histories that she was either reappointed or her original appointment was reaffirmed once again in 1198 by her brother Richard I (Page, *Victoria History* 120).

[30] Batt, Watt, Walsh, MacDonald, as well as MacBain in *Women Hagiographers*, Wogan-Browne in *Saints' Lives* and Robertson in *Writing in the Textual Community*, all discuss this connection.

Such texts would eventually be assimilated into the new geographic location, culture and language through new vernacular translations or adaptations. Walsh is the only historian who mentions even in passing Clemence's connection to the Life of Catherine as told by Jacopo de Voragine in *The Golden Legend*, a later compilation of hundreds of hagiographic accounts (Walsh 14; de Voragine 708). This line of influence suggests there is more work to be done in this area before any final conclusions can be derived as to what lines of influence may have been incurred during the period.

There is also some discussion and speculation as to who Clemence's target audience would have been. Most agree that the main target would have largely been the women from the Barking community, though there is debate as to what the full range of her audience might have been. Some suggest Clemence had a much wider readership than the nuns at Barking. At the very least Clemence would have been aware of the connections of her immediate community to the outside world, especially in lieu of Barking's political standing.

Even if her work may not have been initially written or intended for outside consumption, there is some indication in the text that Clemence's version of the account still provided a level of commentary on the social and political goings on around her at the time. The references may be somewhat blurred through the distance of time. However, it would be naive to suggest that Catherine would not have been aware of these connections. Similarly, this reflects the possibility of having her work read by members of the nobility outside her immediate community, especially given the nature of the relationship between the abbey and the British Royal Court (MacBain, *Anglo-Norman* 249).

Only three surviving manuscripts from the period remain, one is perhaps as close to the original as we may come to, dedicated to Henry I's queen (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* xxiii-v). Interestingly, all three are differently bundled with other similar types of gendered hagiographic accounts. These were also read by female and male members of aristocratic households, and other religious communities connected to such families. This suggests Clemence's rendition of the Catherine Passio was read with the roles of women in religion as well as society in mind. This double bind would not be unusual especially in elite families during the middle ages who actively encouraged wives and mothers to carry the responsibility for religious and cultural instruction to young children, and any young ladies in their care.

One text in particular travelled outside the British realm and was later found in Paris (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* xxiii-iv). Clemence's dependence on French rather than English, and the strong possibility of a larger targeted audience suggests that perhaps her influence travelled further than Middle England. Such a line of enquiry points literary historians to redirect

their attention to a comparative literary approach in the future, one that moves away from the Middle English tradition to perhaps French, or even Italian tradition. This line of enquiry might further outline previously undetected or unnoticed connections between texts.

To remain singularly within the English tradition is to limit or pre-empt the possibility of an inter-textual relationship to the hagiographic traditions outside of Britain before any research to support such claims can be produced. That there is still so much more to learn about this text and even the author herself, indicates that perhaps Katz's assessment is a slightly premature conclusion. The development, or rather the analysis of the literature as a genre is still evolving. We have yet to consider every Catherine account in the light of gendered critical analysis, and more importantly, how medieval female authors actually contributed to the larger hagiographic tradition as a genre. Without a better indication of the larger picture, and even the more detailed literary or historical connections we cannot fully know at this point whether there may be links between texts that we have yet to discover.

Though it may seem odd for an English nun to transcribe a Latin text into French liturgy, Clemence's relationship to the Plantagenet dynasty along with the history of the convent's relationship to the British monarchy suggests neither her choice of language, nor the subject of her work, or her choice of saints is out of step with these relationships. English literary historians will note that with the arrival of the Normans in 1066, the French language "asserted itself as the language of the ruling elites" (Lusignan 19). French was the language of literature in Britain, at least in the predominantly political south, and during the eleventh and twelfth centuries it was used in legal as well as historical documents, for religious texts, liturgy, theological treatises, and courtly Romance (Lusignan 20).

The choice of highlighting the cult of Saint Catherine also appears purposeful within the socio-political milieu in which Clemence and Barking find themselves during this period. *Saint Catherine's Passio* was a very popular account amongst the French aristocracy, including William I. Catherine of Alexandria was adored as the patron Saint of learning, especially the learning of royal and elite women (Walsh 101). Though the history of the Catherine account is not as old as some, such as the Agnes narrative, surprisingly we know less about the origins of the Catherine account than we do about earlier narratives like the Agnes.

In fact, there is very little we know about the inception of the Catherine narrative except that the earliest known version of Catherine's Passio goes as far back as the Byzantine period. Some historians speculate this may be because the Catherine account was entirely fictional or perhaps based on the story of a classical philosopher named Hypatia. The earliest renditions of the Catherine account are found in the Menologion of Basil II sometime during the late tenth to the

early eleventh century. Any other details around the origin of the narrative are more often speculative in nature, and though in many cases still contested, hagiographers and historians agree there is very little to suggest the origins of this story go back any further than the eighth or ninth century (Jenkins and Lewis 7).

In England the cult of Saint Catherine becomes especially prominent under the tutelage and support of William I, after having spent some centuries being already popular in Normandy. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne suggests there is an earlier text pointing to a tenth century arrival on the island (*Virgin Lives* xxii). The Psalter from the Shaftesbury nunnery is an excellent example of this, but most will concede that the "cult's full development" began with the Normans' arrival in Britain in the middle of the eleventh century (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* xxiii). Jenkins and Lewis suggest there is a literary or narrative connection to the account of an anonymous woman provided by Eusebius in his *History of the Church* in the early part of the fourth century (8). But once again most literary historians consider the Menologian to be the extant source for the Catherine narrative eventually brought to England and used as the original source text for later accounts (Jenkins and Lewis 6).

William I and his son Henry I were known for actively encouraging the British inculcation of the Catherine Passio, and as Christine Walsh notes the account was "quietly" adopted into the "liturgical calendars of certain southern English monasteries" making it a key account for strategically affiliated religious houses (Walsh 101). By the twelfth century Catherine's popularity had expanded significantly across the island. We cannot know with full certainty exactly when St. Catherine's narrative and liturgy were assumed by Barking House in particular.

We can, however, with some confidence assert that the relationship between Barking and the monarchy during the twelfth century would have made St. Catherine's Passio a primary liturgical source for a community of nuns closely connected to the Norman Dynasty. To suggest that the appeal of Catherine's narrative to Clemence may have been largely political is not unsupported. However, to leap from this connection to the idea that she might consider the narrative a good place to infuse gender positive images with social, political and religious implications for the Abbey is a reasonable step. By extension such a text would also have had some effect on the Norman nobility and suggests that Clemence may have been somewhat aware of the immediate social or political implications of her work.

There are so many possible connections for Clemence's motivations that nearly every scholar commenting on her rendition of the Catherine narrative seems to carry a varying but complementary view of her purpose. Gorman suggests the work was created to establish and

further institutional identity, keeping in line with the general purpose of liturgy as a genre (Gorman 112). While Diane Watt insists that Clemence's purpose was primarily theological. As a Benedictine nun, Clemence shows a deep and vested interest in the issue of "salvation," within her work and was very likely guided by her theological considerations of the narrative in her endeavour (Watt 72).

Wogan-Browne also supports the emphasis on theology, and puts it best in saying that in Clemence's case, "the vernacular hagiography is more, not less, theologically aware than clerical Latin hagiography" (*Saints Lives* 245). This comment suggests Clemence's theological precedence within the text sets a standard even among her male religious peers. While on the gendered issue, the earlier Clemence scholar William MacBain, is willing to cautiously consider the possibility of a gendered component in Clemence's text (*Anglo-Norman Women* 242). Later scholars like Robertson seem to wholly embrace it calling Clemence's work "a 'feminist' interpretation of St. Paul's freedom of the spirit" (*Medieval Saints Lives* 67).

Maud Burnett McInerney furthers the discussion by noting that Clemence's primary concerns were entirely gendered, and perhaps because of this also largely political (*Eloquent Virgins* 181, 189). Wogan-Browne affirms the historical gendered component by reminding her readers that the cult, as it was practiced or read in Britain was "early associated with women" (*Virgin Lives* xxiii). However, it is Robertson who reminds us that a balanced approach is always suitable, and suggests it would be an error in "judgement" to ascribe "an exclusively feminist or exclusively monastic orientation" to the text (*Writing* 17-18). Instead, we are directed as modern readers to keep in mind that there is also a third component influencing her version of the account, the literary component.

One way to overcome any difficulties arising from these multifaceted concerns is to give consideration to the sources for Clemence's rendition of the St. Catherine's Passio. Though there is some indication to suggest that Clemence's text was influenced by a number of Catherine narratives, Clemence's main source is an anonymous Latin account believed to be written in Rouen in the middle of the eleventh century. The account is known to scholars as the long Vulgate, or Vulgata. MacBain also notes there is a Manchester fragment from the late eleventh or early twelfth century which appears in many cases similar enough to Clemence's text to have offered some influence or direction to Clemence in her work (*The Life* xiii-xiv). The unclear dates, however, suggest that once again we cannot be fully certain in which direction the line of influence is moving in.

The long *Vulgata* or Vulgate is the account medieval and historical literary scholars understand as the most used and widely dispersed account of the Catherine Passio across Western

Europe (MacBain, *The Life* xiv). The other primary source for Clemence's rendition otherwise referred to as a "nucleus" Passio is the Greek Menologian referred to earlier (Tordi 3). This is the account Bronzini identifies as a part of the "beta tradition," because it provides the essential outline to the Latin Vulgate which later expands and explains the main events as they occur in the Menologian text (Wilson Tordi 5).

St. Catherine of Alexandria, like many other female saints, was from royal lineage, the daughter of a king. She was orphaned at a young age, but educated before her parents' death and as a result able to care for herself and the community she governs. She converts to Christianity, and lives her life according the ideals of the religion she has adopted. There are of course, during her lifetime signs of political upheavals affecting the Christian community around her. One day, however, these upheavals are brought to a culmination that engages Clemence more directly.

She observes Christians becoming distraught over a new ordinance put in place by another local governor named Maxentius. This local ruler has decreed that all Christians are required to sacrifice animals in the pagan temples. This is particularly troubling to Christians because the decree is in direct conflict with their belief to only worship the one Triune God.

Catherine, inevitably, approaches Maxentius to protest the decree. This is an act of treachery that Maxentius cannot tolerate, but he is distracted by her beauty, and instead attempts to dissuade her from her position and her religion. First he relies on his own arguments, then on the help of fifty other philosophers. The philosophers are unhelpful to his cause as Catherine converts them as she does eventually his queen and his military captain/advisor as well.

One at a time they reveal their faith to Maxentius. Each is in turn executed for their betrayal. While Maxentius is under the guise of attempting to save Catherine from her inevitable demise, he continues to connive for her re-conversion. He offers her power, prestige, and ultimately marriage. She rejects all of these as well as Maxentius and in the end her own death is inescapable.

No sexual assaults are attempted on Catherine while she remains alive. She dies having maintained her virginity, and instead of blood flowing from her wounds the narrators declare that milk flows freely from her body when it is pierced. Angels are sent to spirit her body away to Mount Sinai, and her story is revered and admired as an example of Christian bravery, loyalty and faith in the face of torture and death (Einenkel; Wilson Tordi 3).

The Vulgate most certainly expands on each of the main plot points from the earlier Greek version, but also presents opportunities to emphasize Catherine's role and participation within her own story. The Vulgate, being the earlier and longer of two Latin versions, widely

reflects the entire account as a combination of the saint's Life and death. The other being a later abridged version of the original was written just before or near the same time Clemence is writing her own rendition. The Vulgate became the most widely used source for the Catherine account across Europe, while the abridged version appears to be a more widely circulated and read account because of its accessibility (d' Ardenne and Dobson xvi; Jenkins and Lewis 8).

Wilson Tordi connects the great popularity of the account with the emphasis the Vulgate places on Catherine as a strong female role mode (Tordi 5). Her oratorical skills are exceptional and exemplified in her discourses with Maxentius and the philosophers, though she is also represented as an icon of military strength. The Vulgate author is greatly concerned with connecting Catherine's portrayal with the idea of Christian warfare. Tordi suggest that the "military metaphors [are] used to depict an image of Christianity at war," and by extension to depict Catherine as a capable warrior fighting valiantly in the battle between good and evil (5-6).

Robertson similarly picks up on this point by suggesting that the Vulgate rendition of the account "personifies Catherine [in] a spiritually warlike frame of mind" (Robertson, *Medieval Saints* 66). He suggests that Catherine's "defiance" against corruption, injustice, and spiritual "evil" characterizes the spirit of Catherine (66). She is "young, physically frail, female and unarmed," all characteristics which we can easily imagine would have made her popular for both men and women (66-67).

In spite of such a seemingly positive gendered description, however, the Vulgate does not support a feminist interpretation of Catherine's *Passio*. This is in direct opposition to the Clemence rendition, which is rather positively disposed to the female lived experience which points to a strong relationship between gender and authority. We cannot know for certain at this stage if the original Vulgate was directly authored by a single person, or whether there were several authors contributing to the text over time. Similarly we cannot know whether perhaps the author of the prologue was a later editor to the original text, or whether the Vulgate prologue was a later addition to the original text or if it was the original to the rendition.

We have neither a name for the Vulgate author, nor any direct descriptions of the author. Though there is some indication that the account originated from a Norman monastery we can speculate that the author would most likely have been a monk. Other than the general era we have no other sense of who may have written this particular authoritative rendition of the martyrdom of Saint Catherine. If at some point the author of the prologue was a different author from the rest of text, we can surmise that did have authoritative access to the narrative either to make significant changes to the text or to author a completely new version of it. Perhaps this

author may even have made changes to the rest of the text that would follow the purpose and precepts of the prologue.

What we do know is that the differences in attitude between the narrative authored by Clemence and the one in the Vulgate indicate differences of attitude toward gender. Their theological positions highlight the attitude each author takes toward the relationship between gender and authority. They point to a fundamental philosophical difference between the two authors as stated in each of the prologues. Each author takes up their stance toward gender from the very beginning. They introduce their world view and particular approach toward their subject and each similarly follows the same attitude toward gender and authority throughout the entire account.

D'Ardenne and Dobson suggest that like her contemporary and fellow countryman, the author of the abridged Vulgate version, Clemence follows her source "more closely than usual" for the genre that she is ascribing to (xxxiv). However, if there is very little feminist or gender positive perspective in the source text we must consider how Clemence's rendition appears to have gained one in the translation. Unlike the Vulgate account, Clemence's version appears to act like a wider social commentary on the role of women in society, a fact that becomes increasingly clearer as the account progresses (d'Ardenne and Dobson xxxiv).

Before moving on the analysis we must note that there has been some argument over this point. William MacBain originally suggests that Clemence does "not follow her source exactly" (MacBain, *The Life* xiv). This is a small but crucial issue as it opens the possibility that Clemence's translation of the text from the Latin Vulgate may not purposefully infuse a gender positive point of view. In his earlier work, MacBain does not seem keen to acknowledge that the changes made by Clemence to the Vulgate rendition were anything more than a "digression" or some sort of "moral commentary of the details of the story as it unfolds" (*The Life* xiv). However, in a later essay MacBain concedes that "Clemence seems rather to emphasize the success of her female protagonist in a man's world," hinting that Clemence's work may include a much stronger and more positive gendered component to her text than the original Vulgate may have done (*Anglo-Norman Women* 242).

Though there may have been some questions around this issue earlier on, there seems to be very little recent argument against the gender component, and most in fact are keen to support it. I find that the literary and especially the gendered literary component is a particularly popular and engaging aspect of Clemence's text. Others are especially taken with the thematic considerations of the text. Barbara Zimbalist points to the fascinating connections with memory

through imitation and reflection that occurs throughout the text between Catherine, Christ and ultimately Clemence.[31]

The relationships between the authorial source (Christ), the subject (Catherine), and the author (Clemence) reflect the typological aspects traditionally found in hagiographical accounts, especially in the works produced by female religious authors. Inherently and simultaneously embedded within these relationships is the gendered aspect as well. Catherine's speeches and silences are also significant and noted not just for this relationship between the source of inspiration, the subject, and the author, but more directly for the direct positive gendered aspects found within such texts (Katz; Foster). On the whole it seems that the gender component is a rather large aspect of this literature. I will explore this and other comparable issues further in the following analysis.

[31] See Zimbalist for further discussion on this topic.

Chapter 3: The Prologues

The previous chapter noted the hagiographic genre as literary form recognized for its repetitive and imitative nature. One account can be appropriated and rewritten several, sometimes dozens or more times over. There are scribes editing as well as composers adjusting the accounts for varying purposes to varying degrees, each producing a different variation from the others. The genre is influenced by both religious as well as secular sources. Some more, others less, but the account always reflects the compiler/editor/author's theological perspective on the themes present or placed in the narrative engaged. In Clemence's account parallels have been made directly between her rendition of the Catherine narrative and contemporary romantic court literature, as well as to biblical texts, and previous account renditions previously mentioned.[32]

What strikes me as more intriguing than the direct literary connections is the presence of Clemence's "constant, critical dialogue" with dominant gendered depictions (Robertson, *Writing the Textual* 10). She repeatedly engages with her predecessors on a socio-political, a literary, and a theological level. Her struggle with social norms as they are expressed literarily, and especially theologically, is not only present in her work but largely at the forefront of the Catherine account.

This is an unusual feat for a medieval gendered author, as many of the women writing during this period were not educated in theological argumentation, themes, or discussions. They often expressed their ideas in generic spiritual images set to fervent ecstatic or apocalyptic mystical experience (Hollywood 168). Clemence, on the other hand is very logical and consequently rational in her method. This suggests a learned and systematic intent at work.

She combines structural forms and literary elements with strong theological themes, images, archetypes and arguments to convey her gender ideals in relationship to authority and authorship. The theological authority she conveys through her knowledge of the literature sets her in a position of authority. It enables her to overcome the gender tropes and stereotypes applied

[32] See Duncan Robertson, *Writing the Textual*, Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Literary Culture*, Aileen Macdonald, and Catherine Batt for further discussion.

within court literature as well as the previous Catherine accounts. She expertly reinterprets biblical scripture according to this vision and applies it generously to her work, often reproducing iterations or summaries of biblical texts.

The style she assimilates from courtly literature reinforces her legitimate outlet for her theological reinterpretations of church doctrine. MacDonald's assessment of the Catherine account suggests Clemence actively "subverts" the characterizations of women in medieval Romantic literature (155). While Burnett McInerney points out how the literary formations within Clemence's rendition of Catherine mounts a "direct assault on those contemporary social and political constructions that worked to silence women, from the traditionally exclusionary and masculine education system to the ideals of courtly love" (181).

Everything Clemence does in this account appears to embrace, enact, and supersede the gendered depictions and traditional religious teachings that might have influence on her work. Clemence's use of medieval romantic literary form in her structure both roots and subverts the tradition. This happens in conjunction with the use and reinterpretation of theological biblical narratives. These are all (re)interpreted or (re)inscribed for the purpose of both subverting and reclaiming significant gendered depictions within the account.

Though briefly touched upon in several cases, Clemence's theological position appears to go largely unnoticed. No one it seems is eager to take a deeper look at Clemence's theological position as it stands in relationship to her understanding of gender, biblical/divine authority, and her interpretation of the Vulgate text. Clemence's perspective on gender influences every aspect of the narrative and in turn dictates how she treats literary, historical, mythical, theological, political and social elements within her work. Her position is determined by her theological interpretation of Biblical texts, Christian myth, and medieval religious culture. These in turn shape the presentation of her theological arguments.

At the heart of the account Clemence is arguing for an interpretation of gender that reflects her understanding of God. God is for Clemence a divine figure who looms outside of the human experience, outside of human relationships, and yet a being who deeply reflects and enhances them through the nature of his character and his desire for relationship. This is particularly important when considering the in the case for the positive gendered connection to authority Clemence is making. For Clemence, women like men are fully included and fully embraced as members and partakers of this experience of relationship and community within themselves, with other, as well as with the divine. At its base this is a theological point of reference that not only shapes and defines the philosophical essence of relationship within

community but provides a theological space for the author to redefine these elements and the relationship between them according to her vision of gender.

This vision expands into a literary form that implements the redefinition of divinity, humanity, and gender. Clemence's inclusive understanding of divinity and community resonates deeply through her interpretation of humanity and relationship which extends into an inclusive engagement with the concepts of gender and authority. This is a significant philosophical difference from the Vulgate text. It differentiates Clemence's work from her predecessor and later reveals itself as the source for the larger or more apparent literary differences between them.

On the surface this appears to be largely a theological difference revealed within the literature. However, the differences in methods of approach to these topics shape and define the literary direction of each author. Each rendition of the Catherine Passio reflects its theological intent in the way they implement literary elements. In essence, each author uses the literary forms, functions, and structures in order to further shape and exemplify their ideological concerns. These methods in turn, reflect a persistent difference in attitude toward gender and authority in a literary manner. They are reflected in the way the author portrays the relationships between women and authority, between women and the divine, and between women and men.

This theological root is also the point of reference which directs the philosophical and literary stances taken by each author toward religious instruction, or more specifically how they envision their work being used by the reader. This religious root illuminates the thematic differences found of each rendition. It showcases particular thematic concerns over gender, authority, inclusivity, community, and the divine. How each author portrays or defines these themes also points to how they root themselves in the religious and literary traditions and consequently, how they implement that tradition to reveal and define the function of their work.

The theological concern for instruction is also significant here because it points to the author's particular thematic concerns and directs the reader to the purpose of their work. The accepted purpose of the hagiographic genre the authors engage in is generally understood by literary historians as a tool of religious indoctrination (Thompson 140). However, the difference in attitude toward instruction within an account presents an opportunity for the author to alter the literary direction of their work and widen the basic hagiographic function from one of indoctrination to include more specific political or other social concerns. There are two models of instruction represented by the two renditions of Catherine's account; one garners a theological mode of instruction while the other implements a doctrinal mode of instruction.

The theological mode of instruction sets out to explain a religious issue or concern philosophically and hopes to reveal larger principles at hand for religious adherents to grasp. It

provides a space for the reader take in the narrative and to apply it according to their judgement as circumstances dictate. This method leaves room for the reader to interpret or re-interpret authoritative texts according to the principles presented in the account.

This approach also suggests a proto-humanist position which takes the human element into consideration in the analysis and interpretation of a saint's narrative alongside the traditional or authoritative methods. The approach values the human experience along with the divine perspective and as such attempts to make room for in the narrative as it is explained through the eyes of the saint. As a result, it reinterprets original sources including biblical ones according to this view. It highlights its fundamental concern with the experience of the individual through the communal, shaping and reflecting it in conjunction with the characteristics of the divine rather than having the divine dictate the experience of the individual outwardly through dictum.

The doctrinal mode of instruction sets out to instruct religious adherents in specific rules of law or doctrine by setting out acceptable standards for religious precepts, rituals celebrated, or liturgies emphasized. While he former approach is concerned mostly with the larger overview and therefore with the overall influence and wider interpretation of a religious precept or principle, the latter is much more greatly concerned with correct observation of the doctrinal rule of law. The doctrinally based mode of instruction perceives the need to ensure that orthodoxy is made evident for the reader in order to be more clearly and easily followed.

Clemence's theological form is concerned more with the process of creating room for further and perhaps outside interpretations of a text by the reader through their own experiences. The Vulgate's doctrinal form instead cares to ensure a specific, and in particular, a regulated interpretation derived at from a legitimate source of authority. The difference may appear minute for the purpose of literary analysis, but whichever side of the theological fence the author begins with will dictate how the author (re)interprets authoritative texts within the tradition. Ultimately, this choice directs how each author views and depicts gender roles and performance, as well as how they portray the saint's interaction with divinity, and authority.

In the rendition written by the Vulgate author we find attempts made to induce a militaristic style discipline and mind set in the reader. The Vulgate author explains to his reader that it is his intent to produce battle ready soldiers for the war against spiritual and religious tepidity and indifference. From the very beginning we find strong language alluding to this initiative, he openly asks his readers "what else are we doing but promoting a certain warlike initiative whereby we may set on fire the unwarlike spirits of the hearers for the wars of the Lord" (*Vulgate* 249)? Regardless of whether it is physical, emotional, or spiritual, the Vulgate author is clear in his assertions. He wants nothing more from his readers than for them to "become more

ardent," and to be more willing "to endure [all] sufferings" as a direct result of the example he hopes to provide through the narrative of Catherine's martyrdom (249).

The Vulgate author's depiction of the reader he has in mind for this task is significant because it points to how the text will define and depict Divine throughout the account. The image of the divine ultimately shapes the account and reflects the type of action or reaction the author seeks from the reader, how he intends to entice the reader to his views of the divine, and to the image he wants the reader to internalize. We can see how the author views his task as drawing the line between God and men in order to direct men to God. The engendered connection to God himself reflects God in the language the author uses, reflecting God to men and men in God.

The author creates for his reader an image or view of God he believes is authoritatively truthful and doctrinally valid through the portrayal of the saint. The saint therefore behaves as an example to the reader who likewise mirrors the author's image of God. The author's depiction of the saint is therefore an exemplary one. This human construction acts as a metaphoric proxy for the reader to view God's image from a safe distance. Safe because in its orthodoxy it does not threaten or clash with other direct views of divinity implemented and enacted by church leaders or political authority.

Thus, the vulgate author's portrayal of divinity is the fundamental element at the base of all other images shaping the literary construction within the narrative. As we might surmise from the Vulgate author's early descriptions of the ideal Christian, these images are deeply militaristic. The picture he paints of what or who Divinity is, is derived from the contextual images of battle and war he puts into place through his earliest descriptions of the saint.

The descriptors he uses are inherently violent and aggressive in nature. They portray both the saint and divinity as otherworldly warlords who require Christian followers to prepare for physical hardships and brutal conflicts. The image suggests a hyper-masculine view of God who legitimizes violence. It attempts to shape the reader into an aggressive likeness of a vengeful, deeply angry, and male god.

The image denies and denigrates the view of a stereotypically gentler, feminized god. Readers are encouraged to go beyond a daily regimen of religious or spiritual engagement and into the realm of the zealous. The Vulgate author demands that his readers should spiritually be "set on fire," and suggests that the examples from this and other saints are intended to display an example of how individuals might be so dedicated to their cause as to give "their bodies over to the dire punishments of torture" (249). Everything one has is to be sacrificed to cause of this god.

As a result, the Vulgate author relegates the saint's behaviour to an unmatchable standard. She is a demi-god a celestial warrior, someone who lives outside the boundaries of nature and human laws. He calls her exemplary and "outstanding," and suggests it is not the only reason to "transcribe the courageous deeds of the saints," but to remind the "future generation" (249) of the lessons they are to keep in mind as well. He uses Catherine to inspire the desire for "memorable combat" so that like the saint each reader can also be "enabled to be victorious ... for the benefit of others" (249). The Vulgate author announces his rendition of the account a sacred manifestation of God that draws men to sacrificial battle both spiritually and physically.

The Vulgate author understands the account of Catherine as a depiction of divinity on earth and because of this he refuses to make distinctions in the account for the sake of the audience. From his perspective it is not the text that would need reinterpretation or adjustment according to the needs of people, but rather the people themselves who must adjust to the text as they would to God himself. He feels no compulsion to make the text "more pleasing to those who hear it," as Clemence might suggest (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* 3). Anyone who argues that narratives of martyrdom are no longer useful or necessary is for the Vulgate author simply unacceptable, and possibly even heretical.

The Vulgate author addresses this concern and responds directly to such criticism, quelling it by his own authority over the account. He suggests that men who read these accounts for exhortative reasons should recognize that to change the account is to change the doctrinal message within the meaning, and that to change the meaning in the message is to dilute the image of God and make it ineffective. He goes on to explain.

> ...to such a person, whoever he is, we give this answer: this maiden was not being assaulted by merely a single type of persecution. From the front, an external enemy pressed upon her; from the back, an internal and concealed one. For this second persecution must be understood to be greater and more harmful: not one which external harshness hurls, but which the opposition of the sins produces. (250)

He writes from the context of a pressing an immediate battle. The moment is set on the stage of a brutal spiritual war. The saint is engaged in several battles simultaneously in fact, each intended to showcase the importance of commitment in various areas of life. To explain or exemplify these battles is to remain true to the nature of the divine and by extension to remain true to God's purpose for mankind, so that he might help them to overcome evil in all its various forms.[33]

[33] The word 'mankind' is purposefully used in this context in its gender specific focus.

The author is therefore, very concerned with battles which are externally as well as internally derived. God's power comes from the inherent ability to overcome. This is a doctrinal fact the Vulgate author attempts to make clear for his reader again and again, so that they should be struck with the immediacy and direct link of this divine ability. According to the Vulgate author, men have the innate ability like God to overcome inner battles against evil should they choose to apply themselves to this victory. Outside forces are also viewed as conquerable but only as a result of having overcome first the internal battle. God in his nature of perfection does not struggle with internal battles, but humans do, and they must as a result act to overcome the internal struggles or find themselves externally defeated.

The reader is pressed to win the internal struggle with the self first so that they might prove victorious in whatever outward battle comes their way. However, for the Vulgate author this is not enough for the saint. She as a woman faces an extra step to conquer beyond even these two battles because she must overcome her inherent femininity before she can conquer her "concealed" internal battle of the "flesh" (250). The overall effect of the internal battle on Catherine as a woman is not lost in his argument. While the male reader need only to apply himself to this internal battle to overcome all, the female saint must change her entire gendered make-up, her very sense of self before she can be similarly victorious.

There is no female reader called to participate in this victory, there is only Catherine, depicted as the female example showing the Vulgate reader what a woman may have to do before she can be as similarly triumphant as a man. Catherine is actively placed outside the reader's call to action and spiritual engagement through the loss of feminized qualities in God, and the over emphasized masculinised characteristics of the Divine. Catherine is affirmed in the position of Other and placed outside the male sphere of authority through the repetitive reminder of the presence of her femininity as presented to the reader through her gendered body. She is summarily used as a tool of shame for reader. She is not an exemplification of what an equal might do in her place, but what someone from an inferior position must do in order to overcome and be made equal to her betters.

The author uses her account to beat his male audience back into the moral submission and religious discipline required of fervent soldiers of God. She is not an active part of the audience he addresses, she is outside it. She cannot partake of it because she remains a passive observer even within her own narrative. Unlike the reader Catherine is not a "bearded" man, making her an unlikely reflection of the Divine warrior Lord (250). He repeats defences of her ability to fight against her female nature, not because all women can ascribe to such power or ability, but because she in particular through her closeness to God has been enabled to. He exposes his adoration for her, and his simultaneous mistrust of her gender.

> ...this noble virgin warrior, surrounded by a twofold battle-line of attackers, steadfastly vanquished the furious rage of her persecutors, and also *manfully* conquered the massed armies of the sins. Therefore she, glorious in a twofold triumph, is advantageously displayed in order to instruct our minds; she who in a girl's body so vanquished *her sex* and *the world* also, that she both avoided the harmful delights of the *flesh* and, in her victorious passion overcame various kinds of torments. Therefore we will speak of her for edification. (250)

Unlike God or men, Catherine's nature is not something to be admired because it is the "disgrace and shame" of men to "hear the perseverance of the weaker sex... [and] girls of a tender age setting their course for the heavenly country" (249). Like the image of divinity her ability to overcome is what makes her worthy of example. By all rights the account is mis-numbered, the victories are threefold for Catherine and not twofold. The first and foremost battle she overcomes is the nature of her gender manifested through her "girl's body" as the outward manifestation of her "sex" (250). The second battle is translated from the Apostle Paul's meaning of the "flesh," which represents the outward sinful nature applicable to all of mankind, while the "world" can mean any outward battle or struggle fought with others or with circumstance (250; Galatians 5:19-21).

The author's "twofold" count, however, is purposeful and not mistaken (250). It suggests that like God, men do not need to overcome the internal concern of the "weaker" gender, and therefore the internal nature is not counted as a direct part of the struggles of mankind. This battle requires only the discipline of awareness so that they might reflect God in the inherent ability to overcome internal battles (249). The implication is clear that men are closer to God as a result of this ability. They stand in the spiritual and material world one step closer to divine authority than women because of this, and as a result they possess that authority inherently above woman should they choose to claim or implement it.

Catherine's body, the author repeatedly reminds his reader possesses the physicality of a "girl" (249). She is childlike in her gendered nature and in her mental age. These are defining aspects of the saint the Vulgate author sees as essential aspects to Catherine's identity (249). She cannot be anything else, not anything equivalent to men, if she cannot first overcome her inherent femaleness, her ever present physicality which presents itself as a childlike state. She must learn to act "manfully" toward the oppressive internal attack of sin (249). Then she may conquer that internal attack so that lastly she might be enabled to have victory over the "furious rage of her persecutor" (250).

Clearly, Catherine's inherent weakness is to be an unfortunate member of the fallen gender, a daughter of Eve, which places her in a position of inherent weakness both physically and

morally.[34] She must overcome this aspect of her being if she is to partake in the community, which is made in the image of men and ordered through the doctrinal presuppositions derived from the image of a masculinised God. She must, therefore, not only be manly, she must in essence become a man.

The result is that primarily and most apparently, Catherine remains a tool in the hands of the Vulgate author to shame his reader to bolder action. Secondarily, and perhaps a little less obviously is that gender remains a key factor in the definition of divinity and therefore a condition of defined and legitimate authority. Though Catherine is for the Vulgate author a worthy example of how one might overcome examples of corruption both from within and from without, as a woman she is ultimately not a source authority and can therefore not be ascribed with authority in and of herself. Catherine, as a reflection of man and not of God, is in the hands of the Vulgate author and his reader a symbol for the expression of human action and not a symbol for the authority of Divinity as ascribed through human autonomy and self governing discipline. As a representative depiction of women she is the exception to gendered exceptionalism, and not the rule.

When we look instead to Clemence's version of this narrative very quickly the main differences become self evident. Clemence's image and interpretation of the Divine is nearly opposite of the Vulgate's. Her contemplation of the spectrum of qualities she views as inherent in the definition of God move in the opposite direction of the warrior God the Vulgate author invokes. The Clemence rendition attempts first and foremost to prompt the exercise of "goodness" and "wisdom" in the daily life of her reader by extrapolating philosophical traits in the theological theme of the nature of divinity (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* 3).

Clemence's image of God strikes the reader as a God of community, and a God of gentleness. She portrays him with an almost mothering presence that carries a deep concern for the weak as well as the strong. She does not go so far as to directly feminize him or describe him directly in maternal terms. Instead she emphasizes his docile and inclusive qualities.

Structurally speaking Clemence uses the image of God in the same manner as the Vulgate author. God is the originating source of her subject, the referencing structure upon which to base every other literary pattern. Like the Vulgate author, Clemence refers to the image of the Divine as the defining image of humanity. She looks to it as a reference point to guide the arrangement of her theological discourse as well as for her depiction of Catherine.

[34] See Sarah Salih, *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography* for further discussion on this topic.

Clemence's definition of the image of God, however, changes from the original source image and in this way she changes the entire narrative rewriting it according to her assertions of God. The saint is merely a glass surface on which to reflect divinity so that the reader might see it and understand it in terms that are relatable to them. Clemence's image of the divine is one defined by community and inclusivity rather than by discipline, battle and conquest. Her image suggests that all human beings including the saint, the author, and the reader can all similarly reflect this image for the betterment of themselves as well as their community. The only one to stand above any other is God himself.

The Vulgate author creates the image of a God who acts through the harshness of battle, through the violence of rationalism which is tuned to hyper-normative masculine characteristics. This is the image of a God who affects the human experience through the force of power, a heavy power that moves linearly from the top down. The rigidity of this movement of power allows space only for those who can legitimately reflect that image because they are "made" in that image can therefore ascribe to that authority (Genesis 1:27).

This suggests that the Vulgate author ascribes to a highly patriarchal or male centered vision of the creation myth supported by the first account in Genesis. In the first Genesis account the text is clear that God "made man in his image," but qualifies this statement by later clarifying that "man" is the inclusive descriptor as "male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26-27). For the Vulgate author, however, the concern over with the image of humankind places men at the forefront, leaving the "female" image of God conveniently misplaced and no longer a part of "God's own image" (Genesis 1:26-27).

Divinity, therefore, affects the saint through violence to qualify her ability and purify her nature. The saint through the experience of that violence in turn affects the reader. The saint is perfected in her humanity through the violent ordeals which acts as mirror ready to reflect more directly the source of that image.

Clemence's image of the Divine is instead reflected through a different act of engagement. This is an act of creation rather than destruction, one born out of relationship and within community. This is an act that requires the willing participation of the self to build and move forward. Both the act and the image point to a female positive interpretation of the creation narrative as garnered from the second creation account in Genesis and supported by the philosophy of Trinitarian divinity in the Gospel of John (1:1-5).

Clemence's rendition is focused almost entirely on the image of a communal and Triune God as experienced through the concept of inclusivity in community (John 1:1). Clemence's rendition of the account of Catherine appears to follow the Pauline edict to not single out "male or

female," and because of this edict follows a course of action that reflects a blended approach to authority (Galatians 3:28). Anyone, therefore, who wants to participate or engage with the divine, has a role and a place to do so if they should so choose.

The difference between the Vulgate author's image of the Divine and the one Clemence portrays is not just in the content or shape of that image, but also in the manner the image travels between points. Clemence's view of Divinity is both personal and interpersonal. God's presence, found in his inherent desire for engagement with other, like his reflection is multi-faceted, it moves in multiple directions. It travels from within or amidst the Trinity, to the human experience within the self, with God and among people, to the community, and back to the Divine.

In the Vulgate rendition the image travels directly through the hierarchy of authority in one direction from God to the saint, to the author, and finally the reader. In Clemence's rendition the lines of movement are fluid, interdependent, and inter-dimensional. They move on multiple levels, through various points, and at various times recognizing several relationships and forms of interaction. They move within the community of the Divine, to the community of the Divine with the saint and the author, to the community of the author, the saint and the reader, to the community of the reader and the divine, and so on.

Clemence provides her reader with the theological structure of "God in Holy Trinity" (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* 3). His three dimensional, communal and inclusive characteristics are assumed through the definition of the image as she ascribes to it. She furthers the concept of the Divine as given through John 1, the Word, the Spirit, and God. All and one is the result of his inherent communal status.

An inherently inclusive and relationally oriented form of divinity is espoused. Clemence's portrayal of the Triune God follows the spirit and principle of her Gospel text extremely closely. Even when she expands the definition to include human community as expressed and defined by inclusivity, interaction, and authority it is only to closer reflect the pattern. The image of God she sets out is for the reader to understand, internalize, and reflect (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* 3).

This image of God does not just reflect, but also requires reflection in return. The constant state of relation and interrelation between points is not only the source of God's goodness and wisdom, but the source on which to shapes and defines the state of community, the state of relationship and interdependence, actions, and authority. This pattern then also becomes a mirror like reflection of the goodness and wisdom of God that Clemence assumes through the inclusive experience of Catherine within Divinity. In this way, Clemence repeatedly directs and redirects

her reader's attention to the saint's portrayal so that the reader might also begin the process of reflecting the image of inclusive community with God, with self, and with other.

Clemence expands the concept of the Trinity as divinity in community within the idea of both the many and the one. This makes the image of community both the source and reflection of the collective for the individual. The inclusivity of the Triune God is the defining element of divine goodness and wisdom Clemence puts forward. It suggests that the account is employed as a trope for the Passion of Christ, superimposed within it, and the reader's ability to engage with the narrative engages them with the Trinity as well. Unsurprisingly, her definition of the wisdom and goodness of God includes the wisdom and goodness within humanity, and as such proffers the notion of inclusivity (Ross 95-98).

In this way the concept of inclusivity becomes the dominant concern within the account not only because it becomes the dominant concept she espouses within her prologue and throughout the narrative, but because it displays her deep knowledge and intuitive grappling of theological concepts not usually considered available to medieval religious women. The trope is also analogous on several different levels that work in conjunction with New Testament images. Christ is a representation of God on earth. The saint is a reminder of Christ, who also died for the Church. Catherine as a woman, however, also represents the inclusive state of community which is represented as a gendered "body" (Romans 12:5). The body of believers or the "bride" of Christ stands as a metaphor for the faith community that is the Church (Revelation 9:7-9).

These images appear repeatedly, and Clemence covertly references them again and again. This shows depth of Clemence's theological understanding and places her outside the experience of the mystic, squarely in the realm of the theologian. She begins outside the mystical with the rational and moves deeper into the mystical. As her intellectual experience of divinity deepens in her reflection of Catherine's account, so too does her connection to concept of inclusivity and community. These images, however, are not images put into place to define gender roles, but placed to define the aspects of relationship within community.

Thus through the depth of her reasoning skills she moves from the theological toward the mystical. Perhaps it is for this reason that Clemence appears so concerned with expressing, defining and describing the characteristics of goodness and wisdom and connecting them with images of reflection and relationship. She points the reader toward the relational and interrelation movement of the defining characteristics of the divine by suggesting that, "all those who know and understand what is good have a duty to demonstrate it wisely, so that by the fruit of its goodness others may be encouraged to do good deeds" (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* 3).

The relational connection is like a ripple effect between actions, people, and God. When the saint reflects upon God's goodness she is encouraged to live and act through goodness and with wisdom. When Clemence as author reflects on the saint's narrative she is encouraged to do the same and in turn to encourage others in a similar fashion toward a similar end.

Through her example and explication of the saint to her readers she acts like a door, a passage way for goodness to be expressed and to move toward others. The text implies that the author's work coupled with the saint as inspiration and the Trinity as the source of the original Divine connection, the reader will be exhorted, encouraged to internalize these re-interpreted images. The author directs the reader to similarly reflect the on images and on the actions of their own lives as the movement of the ripple effect continues and gathers others to it.

Clemence's theological engagement, however, does end with the theological or the concept of inclusivity within community. She is similarly determined to include gendered aspects into her discussion of community, Divinity, goodness and wisdom, even if only by proxy. She proposes that everyone who wants to engage with these images is included in this philosophical and intellectual community.

God, Clemence declares cannot "conceal his goodness" from anyone (Wogan-Browne 3). He gladly and willingly shares his goodness within and amongst himself and then by extension with others who search for him. This goodness, Clemence concludes "suffices for everyone, [because] it alone is common to all" (Wogan-Browne 3). Divine goodness and wisdom is therefore shared with everyone, inclusive of everyone, and allows anyone who wants to engage and participate within it to relate, reflect, and engage with the Divine. The act of engagement by the individual includes them within the community of Divinity as his community, and encourages them become a part of his inclusivity through their own community with him and with others.

Clemence's explication of God and the divine nature implies an unflinching belief in a deity that is simultaneously fluid and in constant exchange, yet unchanging, who is all knowing, forever caring, and eternally in communion both within himself and with humanity. The Vulgate author focuses his prologue entirely on the fallen nature of human beings and therefore the need to cleanse the vileness of humanity with "fire" (249-250). Clemence is instead captured by the concept of the inherent nature of God as the source of goodness and wisdom that spreads to others like an experience of a reflection simultaneously viewed from within and from without.

The purpose is to teach her reader how to connect with the experience of God, how to connect with self, how to connect with other, and ultimately how to connect with Divinity as full community. This philosophical concept is an important one to consider because it is the basis for

the next point of difference between Clemence's rendition of St. Catherine and that of the Vulgate rendition. It will define for Clemence, the relationship between gender and authority.

So far both Clemence and the Vulgate author have presented two very different images of God. They have laid down the foundation on which to build their next and major respective arguments which will next explain how these representations of God will define their definition and use of authority. Clemence's image of God suggests an internalized locus of authority, while the Vulgate author's image suggests an externalized locus of authority.

Clemence's ideas are centered on the inclusiveness and generosity of God arising out his goodness and wisdom which in turn are derived from his state of eternal relationship. This definition is then extended to the concept of authority. From this position she makes two definitive statements about the characteristics of goodness/wisdom and authority.

First, the act of goodness/wisdom is an inherently inclusive act, made available to everyone by the source of authority; and, second, divine authority is embedded within the inherent nature of divinity as a result of divine goodness/wisdom. This concept is developed through the tradition of biblical images. Clemence roots herself within the tradition, and reinterprets it according to her own experience of the literature. Clemence then concludes that anyone who partakes in the divine acts of goodness and wisdom through their own acts of goodness and wisdom is by extension also partaking in the divine source of authority connected with those acts. This is not only the next logical step built on the foundation she has already laid out, but a subversive act that suggests anyone who partakes in the image of the divine also partakes of his authority.

The Vulgate author externalizes this authority through militaristic images, and displays it as something to be handed down in order to affect behaviour through its outward exercise. Clemence instead views divine authority as something all humanity is inherently included in and which can be partaken of anytime they choose to engage with its requirements. The difference in attitude toward the image of God, aside from determining where each author will place the locus of authority and how they express the movements of that authority, is also in how each reflects the relationship of gender to that authority. Where the Vulgate author assumes inherent authority through gender, Clemence describes a source of authority that does not recognize or differentiate between genders. Clemence's rendition recognizes a difference only though actions, through choices, and through choices.

The Vulgate author does not feel the need to explain his position as an author. His authority like the authority he depicts and reflects is final, linear, and rigid. His purpose and his response toward his readers, especially those who might question this authority are similarly rigid

and final. When he does remark on such a response he indicates use of the plural personal pronoun, the royal "we" reserved explicitly for people in position of great authority (250).

This is a strong indication that the Vulgate author views authority as a conveniently inclusive factor limited to the male sphere. Though his sense of authority remains somewhat rigid even within the male sphere, this authority completely excludes the female sphere. The Vulgate author displays this in part by not employing inclusive language, by not including women in his audience to partake of that authority, and in by similarly excluding the female saint from that authority.

The Vulgate author's language exemplifies the de-emphasising effect his position has on the relationship between women and authority throughout the narrative. While the relationship between the Vulgate author and authority is drawn closer the further he moves into the account, the distance between authority and women is further widened. Authority is kept within the male sphere, even as he explains the use of Catherine's death as a worthy illustration to learn from.

For the Vulgate author someone like Catherine, though clearly an excellent example of God's requirement of Christian faith and conduct remains an aberration of her sex. Catherine, as the subject, remains throughout the account a member of the "weaker sex" (249). As a result, the Vulgate author remains cautious not to allow praise of Catherine's actions to imply an insertion of authority within her body and consequently within her gender.

We can better understand the full meaning of this cautiousness when he describes the exceptionality of Catherine's perseverance by the example she proffers to "bearded men" (250). The Vulgate author is concerned that grown men, the true Christian symbols of strength, nobility, authority and therefore representations of divinity, cannot consider performing as Catherine does even "during peace time" (250). His use of Catherine's acts in life and in death are clearly nothing more than a tool to exemplify to men what men must themselves accomplish in her stead (250).

Catherine, therefore, is not someone fighting the battle of "fire and sword" who also happens to be a "girl of tender age," but instead a "girl of tender age" who happens to fight the battle against "fire and sword" (250). Through the use of gendered language and imagery, the Vulgate author shapes Catherine's narrative as a tool for "disgrace and shame" to be wielded against his male reader (250-51). By using such descriptors as "girl," and "weaker," and "tender" he not only emphasizes the Saint as Other but (re)enforces her gender as a position of inherent weakness (249-250).

Catherine is a recognized, named, and irrefutable member of the fallen and therefore secondary sex. The Vulgate author works by the presumption that his reader, or target audience as

male readers, will similarly recognize the moral implications of Catherine's gender and react accordingly. That is, that they might be shamed by Catherine's ability, and become more vigilant in their religious discipline (249).

Catherine's narrated actions in the Vulgate account are, therefore, not internalized examples of bold human actions or of great human faith overcoming adversity. Rather they are externalized gendered actions used simultaneously to illustrate the ability and authority of divine power through her, and to castigate the male reader because of her. He does include himself in the castigation with the inclusive plural pronoun "our" as a tactic of humility (249-250).

This statement only serves to impress upon the modern reader how the authority he claims for himself as a "bearded man" is ultimately held within the male sphere (250). The female protagonist within the account is kept outside this sphere as a passive observer even within her own narrative. The authority of Catherine's actions are not her own, but rather God's actions manifesting through her.

Clemence on the other hand belies this gendering process toward her subject, toward her audience, as well as toward herself. She begins her prologue by stating that God's goodness and wisdom are inclusive to all. She amplifies this statement by displaying how the inclusive nature of God's goodness, wisdom, and authority also includes herself as the author. She engages with the account as an experience in writing, then with the reader as a participating observer of the text, and finally her subject as the active illustration of the image and experience of the Divine.

Her language reflects this example of inclusivity. Only once does she include a gender specific pronoun. We might be forgiven for interpreting this one instance as a possible moment in which Clemence may have fallen into the bad habits of language. However, upon closer examination we see that the use of the third person masculine again produces a statement of inclusivity rather than exclusivity.

The statement that follows is, "blessed is ***he*** who turns to him (God) and bends ***his*** heart to this goodness" (Wogan-Browne, *Virgin Lives* 3). This is an example of the traditional pre-modern masculine inclusive that suggests a reference to all. This is a reference to the singular that might be of either gender, in the same way that the word 'mankind' generally served as a plural inclusive in the place of humankind prior to the twenty first century.

By itself this reference may be a weak example of Clemence's gender positive purpose in the account. However, if we consider the context further we see that like the Vulgate author Clemence includes herself in a reference to her audience by using plural inclusive pronouns such

as “we” and “us” (*Virgin Lives* 3). These two pronouns are particularly significant for three reasons.

Firstly, they confirm our suspicion that Clemence’s expected audience was wider than the cloister of female nuns within her abbey, in part because the masculine singular includes the female author. We have already established that the abbey was closely connected with court life in England, and that the likelihood of Clemence’s work being dispersed among English aristocracy would not have been unheard of in such a context. The language she uses in this context is used to address groups of men and women. It suggests Clemence may have even been aware that her work would be distributed and read in groups of mixed gender, which similarly supports the above interpretation of her use of the singular masculine pronoun as an inclusive.

Secondly, this language also shows that like the Vulgate author she shows herself to be following set structural parameters for hagiographic narratives and like the Vulgate author Clemence attempts to display her humility as an author to her reader. Such a display, however, does not simply place her in a submissive position of service to her reader, but simultaneously places her on the same level as them. This is an interesting point when we consider the majority of her audience would most likely have been members of the English royal court including many female members of the Barking community many of whom would very well have been members of the aristocracy and noble elite.

Without question Clemence places herself as a direct example to her readers, and in their service. She follows the precepts that she sets out for everyone else through the example of Catherine, and in this manner provides an example within the example. She outlines how to receive and accept the goodness and wisdom from God through the example of Catherine. The saint’s portrayal showcases the image and the authority of God, while Clemence’s action through the text place her in a position of authority over her readers as she instructs them to follow her as an immediate examples. She both claims and exercises the use of gender authority while espousing that others do the same.

Lastly, the significance of Clemence’s uses of the pronouns “we” and “us” in her prologue is twofold and extends to Clemence’s understanding or interpretation of authority (249-250). Firstly and very importantly, it directly affirms and exemplifies the inclusivity of her message that God’s goodness is given to everyone and is “common to all” (3). Secondarily, and perhaps more importantly it helps her to make the link between the enablement of goodness/ wisdom that God gives to all through the inclusiveness of all, with the inherent authority that is given with the ability to “perform” a task as God would perform it, through goodness and wisdom (3).

Within the ability to perform goodness and express wisdom is the mark of God's very authority because "in his grace he will allow us to perform this task and so follow his example here below that we shall see him face to face, where he reigns in majesty" (3). The connection between these two points is underscored in this passage. What in essence Clemence accomplishes through this statement is to show how authority is derived and produced with the enablement of performing a duty or a "gift" which exemplify goodness and wisdom.[35]

This implies, like the Pauline reference, that anyone who performs the duty of exemplifying goodness and wisdom is permitted to possess the authority of that goodness and wisdom. The characteristics of goodness/wisdom, like the acts of goodness/wisdom, are endowed with authority, so that the ability to perform a task along with the authority of that task. Therefore, if goodness and wisdom are inclusive and "common to all" so also is the authority and ability that comes with performance of the task (3).

Once this argument is made, Clemence then takes steps to make this argument concrete and applicable to herself as the author. In the next paragraph she connects the concept of free given authority that comes with taking up the "duty to demonstrate" goodness and wisdom by referencing herself (*Virgin Lives* 3). Clemence suggests it is not only because of God's inherent mercifulness and therefore goodness/wisdom that "he should assist [her] with this work," but also because he enables her with the authority to correct areas of the narrative that are "somewhat defective in places" (3). She assures her reader that this is not done "out of arrogance," but rather to reflect the admonishment of her "gift" to write (3). Through her particular gift of writing and interpreting, Clemence like anyone else who sets the example to do goodness and show wisdom is authorized to do through her ability to perform her task (3).

Clemence can, therefore, declare that her authority as an author, and by extension an interpreter of religious scripture, religious narratives, and theological concepts, is granted from the ultimate source of authority. Her authority as an author and an interpreter of texts is, as a result rightfully hers, even as a woman. She is given permission to set to the task that God requires not just of herself but of everyone. She views her work as being in service to God as well as in duty to others.

She sets the example by "interpreting" and "correcting" a religious text/narrative that exemplifies human ability, faith, and perseverance (*Virgin Lives* 3). By sharing this act with her reader her task is legitimized. Her reinterpretation of the text/narrative is a legitimately derived positive re-envisioning and re-interpretation of the source account. Catherine, as the original

[35] The "gift" is a Pauline reference to the concept of the "gift of the spirit," in which a believer is enabled metaphysically or spiritually to perform a task (I Corinthians 12).

reflection of God, now becomes a mirror for Clemence, which the author uses to reflect herself to others, thereby legitimating not only Catherine as a source of divine authority within the text, but herself as a reflection of that authority in her work for others, and all her female readers who follow in this path.

In this way, the prologue provides a philosophical dialogue prior to the account in order to frame the narrative in a way that exemplifies the author's theological presuppositions. Through the prologue Clemence recovers her own authority as a female author, and then extends that authority to community by inviting them to participate as readers through the account. She provides the St. Catherine's narrative as an analogy for attaining that authority in their lives.

The account itself becomes an example of the author's philosophical concern for community and gendered inclusion supported by a theological emphasis on the communal and inclusive nature of the divine. The recovery of the original gendered images in the rest of the account is in its very essence a re-inscription of several relationships occurring simultaneously. It represents the nature of the Triune god, the nature of religious community, and the nature of writing which connects the author/self, to her god/inspiration, and to her reader/audience.[36]

Catherine's pain, her trial, and her death are also typologically rooted in the passion of Christ, which in turn supports the theological construction of the Trinity she presents within the prologue. The positive gendered images displayed through Catherine's experiences become important not only for the gendered objectives Clemence is concerned with but for the wider philosophical and theological ones as well. The next chapter will delve deeper into each of the authors' tasks and purpose by showing how they each implement the theological constructions raised in the prologue to the rest of the account.

[36] See Zimbalist for further discussion on this topic.

Chapter 4: The Histories, The Account, and The Ending

We have seen this far that both Catherine accounts follow the genre structure of the hagiographical narrative. The prologues introduce the account as well as provide an indication of the authors' thematic concerns and theological presuppositions. The prologue then gives way to the "histories," and the histories provide descriptions of the main characters in the account.[37] Both authors use this intermediary section between the prologue and the account itself to further expand the theological point of view prescribed in the prologues. Both authors respectively apply their world view onto the protagonists of the account, interpreting Catherine as the subject of their work according to the purpose and precepts they set out in the prologues.

I. The Histories

For every strong saint or hero/ine who battles to overcome there is at least one (sometimes more than one) foil who opposes the saint directly or indirectly and provides them with that which the hero/ine will struggle against. Each author explains and describes this foil according to their view of authority and their vision for the power struggle that is set to occur between the heroine and the anti-hero. In the Catherine narrative this foil is an overlord or regional king who rules under the hand of the Emperor. Maxentius is introduced to the reader in both renditions of the Catherine narrative by applying a brief context to the character's history, and to give the reader an indication of what Maxentius' character is capable of. Both authors produce comparisons between Maxentius and the Emperor Constantine, and both, unsurprisingly find him wanting.

Constantine has "granted peace to the holy church" during his rule, but there are powerful men according to Clemence, and entire regions according to the Vulgate that are discontent with this political stance (*Virgin Lives* 4; Vulgate 250). The Vulgate portrays Maxentius appointed "as Augustus" or emperor by the Praetorian Guard, a politically influential and elite group of soldiers at the height of ancient Rome (250). Maxentius' nomination by the guards was a direct threat to Constantine's rule and as a result "civil war arose between" the two (250).

[37] The histories is just I term I use loosely here. The sections are not separate in any way, or titled in the account. The author's focus is merely momentarily directed onto the characters within the account before switching attention back to the plot movement.

In this case, Maxentius is portrayed by the Vulgate as a "private citizen," a man who is caught up in the heat of the political passions around him (250). He gets swept into something much bigger than he is capable of dealing with and it leaves him an outcast and a fugitive, though still a legitimate ruler in the furthest reaches of the empire. This suggests that even authority which is illegitimately taken is still a legitimately exercised authority to be obeyed.

Where the Vulgate views Maxentius as a man of anger who through the frustrations of failure takes his "fury" out against Christians, Clemence attributes a deeper sense of vileness to his character (*Vulgate* 251; *Virgin Lives* 4). In this account, Maxentius is not simply a man caught up in the fervor of political upheaval. Rather, he is a man controlled by the vileness of his thoughts, a man who succumbs through his actions what he has already put into place within his mind because he has chosen to follow it.

In the Clemence account Maxentius is the man who "wrongfully seized power," who is forced to "flee as far as Alexandria" as a result of the political unrest he causes (4). Consequently, he ends up as the driving force behind "much [of the] suffering for the Christians" over a ruling period of thirty five years (4). This observation suggests that illegitimate authority wrongfully gained though managed or wielded remains tainted, and will be unwisely or unjustly used. Clemence's interpretation of Maxentius character consistently reflects the theological stance outlined in her prologue. She continues to reference New Testament principles closely from a thorough reading of biblical texts, and examines Jesus' teachings on what defiles the human spirit relaying them in her assessment of Maxentius' character.

Clemence's attitude towards Maxentius closely parallels the gospel's words: "For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person" (Mark 7: 21-23). Clemence turns a theological eye to Maxentius' character and suggests the motivations for his actions run much deeper than what the outward reflection might at first suggest. She calls him a "wicked man" with "evil" thoughts who by direct extension of his evil thinking performs "evil deed" (Virgin Lives 4).

The account paints Maxentius as near to a wild creature as possible without completely taking away his humanity. He is virtually out of control and "unable to conceal his nature" and is beyond doubt literally "incapable of restraining himself" (*Virgin Lives* 4). His humanity, however, must remain fully intact otherwise she cannot place the full responsibilities of his actions squarely on his shoulders. She paints him, therefore, as a man of weak character pushed into unconscionable acts that are set into motion for reasons that are ultimately still in his power should he choose to change.

This degraded emotional and spiritual state spreads both from within and from without, implying some philosophical confluence with the Vulgate's perspective. It is reflected deeper within his psyche as it goes deeper into the "internal world he creates for himself," and then spreads to others around him either because they similarly internalize this world for themselves or because they bear the brunt of it (*Virgin Lives* 4). As a result, it is then, Maxentius and his internal world which set events within the account into motion. It is he who decides one day that all Christians should sacrifice to the pagan gods under the penalty of death, and it is as a result of this action that we are next introduced to Catherine.

In the same way that the two accounts continue their theological perspectives through the descriptions and introductions to Maxentius' character, so too we see Catherine's image similarly shaped and presented. The Vulgate author's focus is on establishing Catherine's status, and works to place her within Maxentius' world instead of the other way around. After a detailed description of Maxentius' expressions of power flaunted through his rich clothes, his sense of ceremony, the strength of his military might, and his political support, the Vulgate author's description of Catherine follows his original assessment of her as a lowly "girl" (*Vulgate* 251). Though it is clear that Catherine is descended from royalty, her own father a king, the Vulgate author presents her more like a "lost" and grieving daughter "deprived of the comfort of her parents" than as a woman of power and skill managing her own reign (*Vulgate* 252).

As a saint Catherine is typically young, she is "beautiful," and "devout of faith" (*Vulgate* 252). By using the word "vigilant" to describe the care she provides to her people the Vulgate author suggests Catherine is more like a passionate administrator of her father's estate than a ruler in her own right (*Vulgate* 252). In many ways the Vulgate author appears to be more concerned with what Catherine is not interested in doing rather than in what she does do, almost as though he feels the need to justify her presence and ability to the reader.

He emphasizes that even though she remains "girlish" she retains no interest in girlish things such as "games or songs," as though the only way to prove her maturity, ability or full humanity is through the absence of childish and girlish qualities or interests (*Vulgate* 252). Even the care she provides to her people though sounding somewhat wise and motherly in tone is still described as the fanciful concerns of a child with a "girlish" nature (*Vulgate* 252). Even though the Vulgate author clearly describes Catherine's positive actions, still they can be made to appear no wiser, no more capable, and to possess no more strength within her than what she can legitimately carry as a woman.

What Catherine gains from her education is portrayed in a similar manner. Her father bends his resources to supply her with the best education he can offer while he is still alive. Yet there is

still a sense from the text even with all that learning it is not wisdom that Catherine has gained from this education, but merely a skill. The Vulgate author does not describe her as having gained a sense of knowledge of herself or the world around her, but instead she is portrayed as possessing a sense of cleverness used to keep her opponents from over powering her.

However, even in this skill she is also limited as Catherine can only keep herself from being conquered, but she cannot actively conquer others. The Vulgate author's descriptions of Catherine's character remain true to his gendered vision. She has moments of deep and overwhelming emotion that often she does not seem able to control or perhaps much like a child she simply does not have the ability to control. He describes her as being in utter astonishment at the sounds coming from the temple, and as experiencing a wounding "sorrow" on hearing the fear the Christians experience under the threats of death in Maxentius' decree (*Vulgate* 253).

Interestingly, the Vulgate author implies this limitation for both her intellectual and physical prowess. He emphasizes her virgin status, and though the emphasis itself is not out of step with the genre, the manner in which he accomplishes this emphasis is a point of interest here. Her virgin state is by a matter of course an automatic reflection on the requirement of women outside the bonds of marriage, especially those intending to place themselves or remain in a religious community. However, this is not the concern of primary importance to the Vulgate author. Catherine's virgin state is implied through guardianship and the gaze of that watchful and ever mindful protection around her. The Vulgate author places Catherine in an eternal position of infancy.

Catherine cares for her people as a matter of moral duty not out of ability. The Vulgate author suggests that she would feel at "fault if she greedily held onto her father's estate and allowed any one ...to perish of hunger and starvation" (253). She does not care to be a part of the world. She does not care for prestige, for status, or riches, and yet, as responsibly as she behaves she remains under the protection of the constant gaze. The first watch is kept by her father, then by her sophist guardian, next by her household, and finally by Maxentius where she "boldly hastens forth into the sight of the emperor," until her death where she enters the sight of God (*Vulgate* 253).

Clemence's descriptions of Catherine, on the other hand, lead the reader beyond the issue of appropriate gendered status. Catherine's oratorical skills are beyond reproach, "there was no dialectician on earth who could defeat her in argument" (*Virgin Lives* 4). The level of education her father gave her by teaching her "letters and how to argue a case and defend her position" is superlative even for a man of her position (*Virgin Lives* 4). Her abilities, handed down from father to daughter, suggest a kinship between the two shared through their love for learning, passed on

not just through lessons of knowledge but even through examples of his character she takes to heart. Yet, in spite of all these superlative characteristics, Clemence, finds a much more intriguing quality in Catherine, one which no amount of skill or education could have given her, her sense of self and her sense of others.

Clemence sees Catherine's love of learning, good heart, and sense of the world as features in Catherine that convey the quality of her character not just as a woman, but as a full human being. Catherine is both "wise in the ways of the world," while also searching for "higher things" beyond the immediacy of this world which suggests she is both aware of the immediate as well as concerned with the future (*Virgin Lives* 5). She is not fooled by "the whims of fortune," nor is she misled by shallow material things, but is instead more concerned with greater metaphysical and philosophical matters (5).

Catherine is concerned by matters that even in Clemence's time are kept in the spheres of men. Clemence also attributes a spirit of generosity to Catherine and can so stealthily claim that the young princess was both "noble of heart," and ultimately "wise" in her ways (5). Once again, Clemence uses descriptors which are almost never ascribed to women because they are considered "manly" in nature (*Virgin Lives* 5).

When her father dies, Clemence explains, Catherine maintains "his entire kingdom...wisely and kept his household around her" (5). The gaze of protection is not on Catherine in this account, rather she is the one to garner its power and use it for the benefit of those around her, because it is she who watches over others. The most striking descriptors Clemence uses to define her image of Catherine are "noble of heart and lineage," a woman made "perfect and wise" through her love for divine goodness and wisdom (5).

As Clemence moves further into the account we begin to notice something else in the way she shapes Catherine's image. Catherine is no stranger to the pitfalls of human emotion, we know because Clemence explains to her reader just how deeply she feels. Within the account itself, however, outside of the author's direct descriptions we notice that Catherine's emotions do not overwhelm or control her at all, rather she is in control of them. She is "somewhat frightened" by the goings on around her, and yet she demands to know the "truth about it," a bold and direct request by someone in full possession of their faculties and abilities (*Virgin Lives* 5).

Catherine acts directly and without hesitation, going "straight out of her palace" to investigate the situation (5). Her household does not follow her out of concern for her honour as the Vulgate author suggests, but instead they follow because of her leadership. Once at the temple, they see "Christians weeping, groaning and lamenting" (5). This Clemence suggests is a sight that would make "the heart of anyone who heard the noise and the grief [burn] with great

anguish" (*Virgin Lives* 5-6). Catherine like any human being has every right to feel deeply when faced with tragedy and suffering.

Catherine feels the kind of emotion than any compassionate heart might feel, and still Clemence feels the need to emphasize how she "she wisely restrained herself" (*Virgin Lives* 6). Clemence's descriptions continue to imply a natural leadership ability that her family and servants acknowledge and deeply respect. Clemence portrays a character of deeply restrained and felt compassion, someone with foresight, the ability to act, and in possession of a thoroughly keen mind ready to parse truth from lies. Again and again we see "manly" traits very rarely attributed to a young person of eighteen, much less such a young woman, and yet in spite of all this Catherine remains a fairly feminine character.[38]

The Vulgate author is concerned that Catherine be portrayed as a rule keeper. For him she is someone intent on abiding by the law and accounts for her display of emotion as a wound caused by her grief over the sin she is forced to watch around her. The Vulgate author's description implies that Catherine feels deeply only because of the need she feels to "condemn false sacrifice," a doctrinal-theological issue concerned with the breaking of the law rather than with the compassion toward people (*Vulgate* 253).

Clemence's key issues being relationship and inclusivity she instead highlights how Catherine's internal world is focused on her sense of compassion, and concern for other. Clemence reflects in Catherine's internal world a very similar internal world experienced by Jesus himself. It suggests a deep spiritual connection with Christ's teaching and mandate "to love one another" (John 13:34-35). The overlap between Catherine and Jesus displays a degree of emotion over the grief of the suffering she finds of the people around her, her friends (Luke 19:41; John 11:35).

In what appears to be in direct opposition to the Vulgate author's rendition, Clemence portrays Catherine's emotion as stemming from a sense of compassion for the suffering other. In this way, Clemence begins the process of overlapping Catherine's experience with the Gospels. Clemence reflects a Christological typology in Catherine's characterization which links Catherine's authority to Jesus' authority through the saint's actions and emotions.[39] This will be the first of many overlaps, and typologies explored to give Catherine authority as an actor of God's wisdom and goodness.

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[38] The term 'manly' is attributed to a woman when she is seen to behave in a manner befitting a man. Those are usually traits having to do with valour, courage, loyalty, steadfastness. In classical and medieval literature it is considered a term of admiration for a woman capable of behaving stronger than her gender was understood was normally to behave.

[39] See Ross for further discussion on the topic of Christological typologies and their use in gendered saints' narratives.

II. The Account

From the introductions to the main actors within the histories we move onto the interactions between them. The account is structured around four major events: the interrogation of Catherine first by Maxentius then by the fifty philosophers; the conversion and execution of the queen and her royal/military advisor; the destruction of the wheel of torture; and, finally Catherine's last temptations and execution. In both accounts we see that Catherine is the one to approach and engage Maxentius first. Catherine uses her first speech to frame her concerns. In the Vulgate narrative Catherine's speech is a long repository that produces an argument for the true divinity and by extension the authority of God. This speech ends with a condemnation, and a judgement against Maxentius (*Vulgate* 254).

In Clemence's rendition, however, this speech is much, much shorter. Here Catherine actively points out to Maxentius why she disagrees with his decree and his actions. His cruelty is evident to her, but her address reflects her quest for understanding rather than for condemnation. Catherine's request to Maxentius, "tell me the reason, for I cannot understand it," is a search for explanation (*Virgin Lives* 6). This is revealing on two fronts; first because she, as a woman is bold enough to question not only a man, but a social superior; and secondly, because the discourse is not opened with a judgement, but with the opportunity for inner worlds to reveal themselves.

When Maxentius responds, again we see how each author reflects their preconceptions and perceptions through the dialogue and descriptions. The Vulgate author frames Catherine's presence as one filled with the light of God. When he considers how the Emperor looked at Catherine "silently...for a long time [at] the brightness of her face," the Vulgate author links Catherine to the archetype of the Old Testament prophet who came down from the mountain after having seen God directly (254). Catherine's face reflects the light of divine presence. However, unlike the people who saw Moses' face and recognized the divine reflection Maxentius sees the light but does not understand its implications (Exodus 34:29-35).

The Vulgate author sets Catherine up as a hand puppet of God, a representation of his divinity so that when she speaks it is not in fact Catherine who speaks but God himself. The Vulgate sets up the dynamic between them so that when Maxentius argues with Catherine, he is arguing with God. When the discussion disintegrates into a power struggle between the two, the reader will easily recognize the signs of Maxentius' impending fall because he struggles directly against divinity and not a mere woman.

Clemence's gendered perception, however, moves her in a completely different direction. The power struggle between Catherine and Maxentius is portrayed through sexual tension rather than through struggle with the divine will. Clemence places Catherine's assumed sexual presence

in the reader's field of vision. This displays how the tension between the saint and the ruler might have played itself out between a man and a woman, and not between a man and a god.

At first, Maxentius' attentions to Catherine are careful, even delicate. He calls her "fair one," he even compliments her on her oratorical skills (*Virgin Lives* 6). Soon, however, his reactions disintegrate into a dismissive tone of frustration and impatience. He tells Catherine there is "little sense" in what she is telling him, and that her "claims" cannot be proven (6). He cannot accept her position because he believes his reasoning is superior to hers by default of being a man, but when he realizes her ability to reason is superior to his he conspires to overpower her abilities by accessing his philosophers' reasoning abilities and using them all against her.

The exchanges between Catherine and the philosophers is a genre tool meant to showcase Catherine's knowledge base. Maxentius brings them in to show Catherine the error of her ways, but instead it is she who shows them the error of theirs. This debate is similarly structured in both accounts, but each highlights, sharpens or expands sections and responses they view as pertinent to their position.

The vulgate account of this dialogue is much shorter than Clemence's. His interest is not in what the philosophers have to say, but on ensuring Catherine continues to have the space she needs to argue his thematic orthodoxy emphasising God's ultimate authority. In preparation for her interrogation the Vulgate sends an angel to encourage Catherine. The angel explains to Catherine that God "himself will pour forth, in your mouth the vigor of fluent speech" (*Vulgate* 261). This serves only to highlight his original assessment of Catherine's role once again, implying that it is God who will speak to the philosophers through Catherine, and not Catherine. She is merely a tool to be used by God to reveal divine will and authority.

This is a sharp distinction from Clemence's rendition that also sends to Catherine an angel to comfort her. In this account, however, the angel acknowledges to that it is Catherine who has taken God's cause on herself for "his behalf" (*Virgin Lives* 11). She does not need words put into her mouth. She is fully capable to accomplish her feat because, as he tells her, she already possesses "good sense and good reason and eloquence of speech" (11). The implication here is in sharp contrast with the Vulgate edition. Catherine is recognized as the full actor while God has taken the role of the observer.

The angel suggests that it is Catherine who possesses these traits already, and that it is she who is using them according to her own judgment and skill with God's approval. His words suggest that even the relationship between Catherine and God is one of mutual, co-operative and complementary exchange between two minds rather than a hierarchical disciplinary measure between overlord and subject. Even the angel works within a limited capacity in this context as all

he can offer her is assurance of her path, and re-assurance of the final outcome of the path that ultimately she has freely chosen.

Another sharp moment of contrast arises during the course of the debate with the great fifty. In this section we find the distinction is with the content of the discussion itself. In the Vulgate rendition the author falls back into a discourse on Christology. Catherine argues for the full authoritative nature of the divine in the person of the Christ figure. There are only mild interjections of Platonic philosophy from the fifty philosophers on occasion to object to her arguments.

The Vulgate author ensures that Catherine's theological position is strong enough to strike down their pagan religious philosophies. The vulgate author has Catherine give repeated examples of Christ's miracles. These are a reminder of God's power in the world, and an emphasis on the theology of the cross as a symbol for the divine victory over the permanence and finality of human frailty and mortality (*Vulgate* 264-66).

The discourse Clemence presents during Catherine's interrogation with the fifty, however, takes on a completely different tone. She goes back to the beginning, to the book of Genesis in order to produce a gender neutral (re)interpretation of the creation narrative. Here we finally have a full view of the gender issue which informs Clemence's work. Her first point of reference is the moment of the "fall," the moment that Eve takes the apple, eats and offers it to her spouse (Genesis 3:5-6).

Clemence concedes that the "enemy deceived the woman through the apple which she ate [and] gave to her husband" (*Virgin Lives* 13). This is not an aspect of the Christian narrative she can rewrite though she can de-emphasize it and greatly lessen its prominence. For Clemence the story really and truly begins before this moment (13). The narrative does not begin with Eve, Adam, and the apple, but with God's intention for the human race. Sin is not the central or primary issue, but a secondary one. What is primary for Clemence, she explains is that God "made men and women to be rational beings and then placed them in the garden" to co-exist together equally each as a part to the whole (13).

The implication in this statement is significant because it directly opposes the vision and orthodoxy of the Vulgate text. The main point of her message is a gendered point which alters the course of woman's destiny within theological, philosophical, and literary discourse. Woman is an equal partaker in both the relationship with God, and of the inheritance of salvation. God, she proclaims, had intended for women to participate fully, to have an active role in the full experience of humanity. The imbalance of sin, the result of the fall is what caused the imbalance of power between the genders, and what gave God cause to take "pity on them" both (*Virgin Lives* 14).

This imbalance of power between the genders is therefore not the natural state of human interaction but a result of fallen human natures, the true result of the "apple" moment (*Virgin Lives* 14). The consequence of the apple remains, therefore, the responsibility of both of "them," both for men and for women to resolve and overcome (14). The ensuing explication of Christ's nature, the redemption for humankind from the original consequence, is then a theological precept that has full implications for both men and women. God's full redemption then, according to Clemence's theological argument, is made equally and freely available to both men and women. If women can ascribe to new role models of the human experience, they can also be saved from sin without having to destroy or subvert their feminine characteristics.

All of the fifty are of course in the end converted. The Vulgate account renders the conversion a result of the "divine spirit [within her] which pronounces something hardly natural" or even acceptable within Catherine (*Virgin Lives* 19; *Vulgate* 268). We see how the fifty in Clemence's account instead willingly admit to Catherine's wisdom and her ability to speak deep truths. In the end all fifty are sent to the stake and all fifty leave corpses that appear glowing and untouched by the smoldering flames, a sign of God's grace on the philosophers (Virgin Lives 21; Vulgate 269). With the Fifty out of the way, once again the reader is left to watch the more immediate power struggle between Maxentius and Catherine.

Clemence takes a moment to reiterate the goodness and wisdom of God through Catherine's responses. The Vulgate author returns to a more direct approach, turning the reader's gaze back to Maxentius. Attempts are made to persuade Catherine back to paganism by offering her power, prestige, status, riches, adoration, and glory. Maxentius will gladly place her "second in rank only to the queen," but this is not even a mild temptation for Catherine. That moment appears to bear no significance to the reader except to make a momentous introduction that foreshadows a future relationship between Catherine and Maxentius' current wife (*Vulgate* 270).

In a strange turn of events, however, Clemence's version suggests Maxentius does not attempt to lure Catherine with power and prestige, but with a lover's adulations, not unlike the one's we might find in court literature.

> Oh, fair maiden, how lovely your face is. Those eyes are so well set; they always seem to have a wise smile in them. No mortal woman born on this earth can be compared to you in beauty. A mantle of royal purple would be very fitting for that beautiful body. Now consider your youth and follow our true path. It would certainly make me very happy if you would believe me. I suffer greatly on your account, fair one since you scorn our law and consider our gods false and worthless and full of the enemy's cunning. (*Virgin Lives* 22)

Maxentius' adoration for Catherine is an acknowledgement of her physical as well as her intellectual beauty. He makes himself momentarily vulnerable in her presence. He describes her beauty and intelligence as an excess of human limit he places her far beyond the realm of other women, and catapults her into the role of a goddess he would willingly worship. Or perhaps, this is simply a ruse to weaken what he believes are his feminine defences and ultimately overpower her.

All the promises that follow are similar to those found in the Vulgate version. Power, adoration, prestige are all promised. All are intended to test Catherine's resolve in her decision to remain faithful to God. This marks another clear feminist moment in Clemence's account that directly opposes the Vulgate rendition. The author acknowledges in Maxentius' offer of marriage the source of all acceptable female desire in the patriarchal realm.

The source of the gender binary power struggle is the customary female desire to be sought by a man. It is a very faint but still present pre-modern recognition of the presence of female jouissance.[40] This is the reference to Catherine's physicality, the momentary exclamation of what she could become if she chooses to succumb to her sexuality. Clemence is attempting to highlight Catherine's physicality in a very human, very real, and undeniably feminine manner.

Catherine denies Maxentius' advances, his proclamations of love, and his offer of marriage, but she does not deny the physicality or femaleness of her being. Clemence instead simply places her in a position to prioritize her needs. This is as if to say yes, in fact, Catherine did have a physicality that included sex, but that was not her primary concern, least of all a motivator for her actions. Others may have noticed and responded to it, but for Catherine, Clemence might say, the real issue is one of integrity and authenticity, and not one of desire for beauty and power.

Catherine's response is a flat denial to Maxentius' offer. She does not want to be his wife. She does not want the riches, the glory, or the power he can offer. She does not want any of what he has to offer. She is not motivated by the traditional outlet for femininity. Her desire is intellectual, spiritual, and ethereal in nature.

She already has a "bridegroom" that "desires my love" (*Virgin Lives* 23). She has already "made a covenant" with him, a promise of loyalty and dedication from one soul to another (23). She gives a thinly veiled reference to the Song of Songs when she explains to Maxentius that "I

[40] Virginia Burrus implements this term for hagiographic analysis as an "erotically joyful" moment in which the saint finds joy in the pain of their torture. In this case I have decided to implement it as a term referring to an awareness of pleasure or joy through the presence of one's sexuality. This is much closer to Cixous' use of the term.

am his beloved and he is my lover" (*Virgin Lives* 23; Song of Songs 2:16, 6:3). This is a deeply emotional commitment. It showcases a love that demands all her loyalties and implies a deeply spiritual relationship defined through sexual concepts. Her loyalty to Christ counters the offer of love that Maxentius presents to her.

Her relationship to the divine makes Maxentius' offer painfully trivial and superficial because of its based on physical attraction rather than spiritual conviction and emotional devotion for other. The relationship between Catherine and her beloved cannot, of course imply a truly sexual component for the obvious reason that Christ is a metaphysical figure rather than a physical one. The marriage Catherine has chosen is an ideal, an alternative that redefines the power balances between men and women. This is a relationship in which she feels completely free to express her self-agency, to self-determine her life's path and future.

The relationship suggests that a woman of intelligence and conviction may not want to inhabit the secondary status of the dependant other within the binary, but to reside in a place of mutual respect and equality. However, like Judith Lower Newton's response to the "marriage" conclusions in her study of nineteenth century Victorian gendered authors, the modern reader may reel with disappointment from Catherine's choice (Lowder Newton 21). Clemence's choice to follow the acceptable literary "comedic" resolution for her rendition of the Catherine account will appear limited at first light especially because it resolutely ends in Catherine's death (Frye, *Anatomy* 163). However, just like the suggestions put forward earlier, we must reconsider the author's implementation of the customary resolution for the genre structure. We know that the author is restricted in how far she might invert her narrative, which suggests the question that needs considering is not why does she implement the customary conclusion, but how does she implements it.

Catherine chooses ethereal marriage and the finality of death for two reasons. The first is simple and based purely in an eschatological understanding of time. Death, theologically speaking, is not viewed as a final ending, but as a gateway to the next world. Clemence adopts the fundamental theological position that the power of death has been broken by the action of the Christ figure on the cross, that death being broken by this act does not hold the power to stop true life. Catherine, therefore, does not view her decision as a decision toward death, but as an action that will move her through death and beyond it.

This marriage presents itself to Catherine as a viable opportunity for a new life, and if she must die to preserve it she is more than willing to do so. The marriage is, therefore, an expression of shared emotional, spiritual and intellectual mutuality, of mutually sharing, mutually partaking, and mutually contributing and including. Clemence uses sexual images from the Book of Songs

in the same spirit as the original author does, as a metaphor for deep spiritual connection, the relational aspect of being in relationship with the divine.

Catherine has not chosen to repress her gendered sexuality or her femininity into a male prescribed role in order to overcome her fallen nature.[41] Rather she embraces her femininity through her humanity, through her intellectual and spiritual ability rather than the physical and maternal one. She chooses the relationship which allows her the freedom to express every aspect of her being that matter to her most, and do it freely, without fear of reprisals, rejection, condemnation, betrayal or loss (*Virgin Lives* 23).

Clemence goes on to express another more surprising aspect to Catherine's ability to maintain a hold of her femininity. The depth of Catherine's loyalty toward this relationship is tremendous considering the fact that she faces being tortured and killed for it. She does not hesitate to respond: "I love him so much that I cannot be parted from him; for I love him alone, and him alone do I desire" (*Virgin Lives* 23). The quote reflects the dynamic passion between lovers represented both in the Old Testament context of the Song of Songs, as well as the Romance literature of the English court.

Clemence continues to ascribe traditionally male qualities to Catherine even while allowing her to maintain a strong grasp on her gendered characterizations. All her traditionally gendered characteristics, her beauty, her femininity, her physicality, her ability to empathize all remain intact alongside the masculine characteristics that she similarly ascribes to her: loyalty, rationality, intelligence, skill, awareness. She is a whole individual, rounded out by characteristics from both sides of the gender binary.

What is most interesting in Clemence's rendition is how in spite of her inherently feminine and therefore sexually inscribed nature, Catherine very clearly overcomes the internal spiritual battle without hesitation. This directs the reader's attention back to the Vulgate author's transference of authority from God to man because of this very same inherent quality, which comes from man's innate ability to overcome the internal spiritual battle. This is the "point of confrontation" for Clemence (Foucault, Discipline 27). This is where the connection is reflected and inverted from the source text. Clemence clearly displays how Catherine is able to accomplish something inherent to her being; this is something the Vulgate author has already declared impossible because of Catherine's gendered being.

[41] The reference is for I Timothy 2:15, "she shall be saved through childbirth." The verse indicates that woman's peril is in her physicality both individually and by her gender, gaining her salvation through the pain of her physicality.

The Vulgate author is concerned with the temptation as a temptation of power by referring to the "crown of blessedness [that] can be offered" on one side and the "imperial purple on the other" (*Vulgate* 269). Clemence instead represents the temptation along more traditionally female concerns surrounding desire, and marriage, "I have desired that I be a spouse to Christ" (*Virgin Lives* 23-24). In response to her refusal Maxentius sends Catherine to be brutally beaten, a weak attempt to break her mental and emotional will in order for Maxentius to reassert his authority over her. The true purpose of these scenes, however, is for Clemence to reassert Christ's authority over Maxentius, and return its power to Catherine by superimposing the experience of her physical torments with the Gospel depictions of the Christological sacrifice (25).

> He submitted his body to cruel scourges for the sake of me whom he saved in his goodness. When he took our humanity, he placed himself in a narrow dungeon. He whom the whole world cannot contain lay for a long time in a womb. But he encompasses in Himself the entire world and all creatures within it. He who lavishes his grace on other lay in that confinement for my sake, and for love of Him I shall gladly accept the darkness of this dungeon...for he did much more for me. (25)

The format of the response is written in prayer form, in a doxology. Clemence reminds her reader of Christ's physical suffering and sacrifice. She then shows the reader how Catherine suffers through her own physical torment and abuse. She accomplishes all of this while giving the words to her reader in a structure they can imitate in their own moments of personal or communal reflection.

Christ's and Catherine's sufferings are linked typologically in this way. They are made to overlap through a mirror reflection of their experiences. The Vulgate author is instead careful not to confuse the two. By connecting the image of Catherine's pain and suffering with the similar experience and pattern of the process of Jesus' death as they are told in the Gospels, Clemence points out how Catherine's pain is just like Christ's. This is a reminder to follow the Gospel archetype and treat Catherine's authority in the same fashion as Christ's would be treated. This superimposes the concept of equality in marriage, as well as in relationship and community, while providing the "body" the space it requires to complete its task.[42]

[42] This reference to the "body" has several different connotations. The first is a referral to Jesus teaching about the care for others (Matthew 25:40-45). The next is as the image of the church as the bride of Christ as noted previously. The last one noted here is a Pauline reference, a teaching regarding the "body" of believers. The church represented as a body with different parts working together in tandem to create the whole (I Corinthians 12:12-31).

After this episode, while Maxentius is away, Maxentius' queen and his military advisor make their presence known. The queen dreams of Clemence and requests to speak with Catherine. Porphyrius, the king's friend and the queen's advisor are converted by the eloquence of Catherine's oratorical skills as well as by her logic, and when they return from Catherine's cell Porphyrius extends this powerful experience to his soldiers converting them to Christianity as well (*Virgin Lives* 30).

When Maxentius returns to find his two most trusted compatriots in collusion with Catherine, converted to her religious convictions he begins his descent into darkness. He accuses Catherine of "sorcery," the very arts Clemence implies is coming from Maxentius (31). He asks Catherine one more time to renege on her faith threatening death, but Catherine reaffirms her divine authority.

Once again she links herself with the archetype of the crucifixion, linking her flesh in a metaphysical marriage to his, "he offered his flesh for me" (*Virgin Lives* 32). The link cannot be lost on her audience. As Catherine gets closer to ascending toward her bridegroom in heaven, Maxentius furthers his descent into hell through the depths of a dark madness. The vileness of his inner world is about to reveal itself in the actions of a man losing control of his own thoughts, and interestingly is superimposed on the typology of Pontius Pilate.[43]

However, before we get to the place where the queen and Porphyrius can reveal their conversion and ultimately their betrayal, Clemence and the Vulgate will have another opportunity to remind their audience who is ultimately in control throughout all of this chaos. Someone suggests a wheel of torture, specially made just for Catherine. Maxentius has the wheel made, and Catherine is set to pray, not for her own sake, but for the sake of others to allow Catherine the opportunity to show the people an example of God's power. The wheel explodes and kills thousands. In response to this thousands more convert, and Maxentius can only rage ineptly against his inability to control one small, weak, and vulnerable young woman (*Virgin Lives* 35; *Vulgate* 284).

The moment is rife with literary tension between Maxentius and Catherine. The Queen now adds to this and presents herself at court only to confirm the reader's suspicion. The queen prophesies Maxentius' doom. She comes down from her perch in the window tower above to warn Maxentius that should he continue to make war against his "own creator," he will bring on his own destruction (*Virgin Lives* 35; *Vulgate* 284).

[43] This is a reference to the Roman prelate who condemned Jesus to death (John 18:28-38).

The queen implies that he is engaging in a fool's errand that will only serve to provoke God's judgement. Such treasonous statements, of course cannot go unpunished, and Maxentius orders the queen's death. After the queen's execution, Porphyrius, Maxentius' most trusted advisor also reveals his new Christian identity. This time instead of deeming the conversion a direct act of betrayal, he attempts a gentler approach. Maxentius attempts to dissuade his advisor's decision by threatening to have he and all his men executed unless he recants.

The differences in Maxentius' reactions in these two scenes are both inverted by Clemence. The Vulgate portrays Maxentius' reaction to his queen's betrayal in an almost stoic and calculating manner. He begins to lament her actions ("O Queen, why do you speak this way?"), but it quickly becomes obvious that his primary concern is not emotional but political (*Vulgate* 284).

> ...if conjugal love should so weaken me that I ignore this affront to the gods because of the deluded wavering of the queen, what remains except that the other Roman matrons of the empire, imitating the example of this same delusion, may turn their own husbands from the worship of the gods, and presume to bow down the entire body of the realm to this incredible sect of Christians?" (*Vulgate* 285)

The Vulgate author reflects the Vashti factor, referencing the Old Testament account of Queen Esther (Esther 1:1-10). Vashti's refusal to appear before her king when called translates into a direct act of treachery worsened by the noblemen's fears that such an example would only serve as an example of obstinacy and rebellion to the women of Persia. Convinced that "there will be no end of disrespect and discord" in every household because of this they advise Xerxes to remove Vashti from his presence immediately, and that he should "give her position to someone else who is better than she" (Esther 1:18-19). The Old Testament account does not explain if Vashti was killed or simply removed from the King's sight, but she is taken and never heard from again.

The Vulgate author does not hesitate to similarly reflect this decision in his treatment of the queen in his account, but with even greater brutality than depicted in the Old Testament narrative. Maxentius orders the Queen "to be torn by wild beasts and birds," and refuses her any burial (*Vulgate* 285). She is taken away and looks to Catherine for encouragement, but even she, it seems can offer little hope. There is only enough time for Catherine to remind to take courage and "act manfully" before the queen is dragged away to her death (*Vulgate* 286).

Maxentius does not remark further on the situation, there are no laments, no concern, and no grief to express. The queen is gone, and the matter is closed until Porphyrius decides to bury her body and is discovered in his conspiracy. Here we finally see a true emotional reaction from

Maxentius, driven to the brink of insanity. When Porphyrius admits his part in the queen's burial as well as his conversion, Maxentius breaks down.

> At this, the tyrant, as if stabbed with a deep wound, let out a loud roar in place of a lamentation, as if he had lost his mind. The entire region resounded with it; "O! O wretched me! O me, to be pitied by all! Why did Mother Nature bring me forth into this calamitous life, for whom everything is taken away... Behold Porphyrius, who was the only guardian of my soul and the solace of all my labor, in whom I was released from all care and anxiety, as if her were a special stronghold for me— behold him overthrown by some assault of demons, I know not what, as he spurns the worship of our gods and confesses publicly...this Jesus, whom that crazy mod of Christians worships as God! (*Vulgate* 287)

Porphyrius' death is swift and cruel. Maxentius orders that he be executed along with his converted troupe of soldiers. He concludes the Vashti factor by turning to Catherine and asking once again for her to reconsider his proposal before uttering the last threat of execution.

When these sections of the account are taken into consideration in the Clemence rendition several scholars comment on the connections between this segment of Clemence's work and medieval courtly romance, or more specifically between the segment and Marie de France's *The Lais* (Batt 107). Clemence does not just allow Maxentius to display emotion on hearing his wife's strong rebuke, but provides an example of the outward expression of grief a man might have on recognizing a deep sense of grief and loss.

She does not go to the Book of Esther for inspiration in this case, but instead references the Pauline epistle to the Roman church in the middle of the first century. The chapter is a complex theological and philosophical hermeneutical explanation of Old Testament religious laws and how they are applied within the newly established Christian communities. Paul's examination of the law in the Old Testament is not just a doctrinal struggle he attempts to set out for the religious communities he has helped to establish, but a personal reflection on his own struggle with where the old laws apply to the new life he lives now as a convert to Christianity.

Clemence's understanding of biblical laws in this case is quite sophisticated, and she displays that subtlety rather clearly in Maxentius' speech. She attempts in this segment not only to underscore the legal, or social implications, but the spiritual and emotional ones as well. Paul says:

> "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it

> is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me [because] I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." (Romans 7:15-18)

Maxentius replies rather similarly: "Wretch that I am, I can do everything I do not want, and that which I want most I cannot do. I amass power counter to my desire, but I lament this powerless desire. For if I had power to effect my desire, my trouble would be ended" (*Virgin Lives* 36). Clemence has given him back his humanity. He suffers and struggles with the decision, but in the end, he makes the choice that most clearly reiterates the values he has kept in his soul all this time. Clemence's version still places the queen in the same position. She cannot escape, she will without question be executed, but Maxentius is made aware of his folly. He is no king, but a broken man.

The account provides the reader with an internal dialogue for Maxentius, it points to the nuanced conflict in his soul. She makes use of the Pauline consideration of the "inner mind" to enhance a literary character (II Corinthians 4:16). What Maxentius hopes for personally, and what he must do publicly is cleverly inspired by the Corinthian thesis on the "inner" and "outer" man (II Corinthians 4:16).

Clemence's narrative may very well also be a political commentary on the life of rulers during her time. She is taking a very strong stance against a man who by refusing to "renew" himself spiritually will find himself caught in situations that are legally, socially, and personally questionable at best, and reprehensible at worst (II Corinthians 4:16). In this way she provides a brief but clear glimpse into her understanding of a medieval king's delicate balance between himself as a man and the man as a function.

The author is moved with emotion for the repercussions that women endure because of the decisions made by the men in their lives: "certainly, anyone who has ever loved a woman would feel compassion" (*Virgin Lives* 28). Everyone weeps for the queen, from the peasants in the fields, to the nobility in their chamber. Everyone is grieved for the loss and presence of a woman. When Maxentius finds out that Porphyrius has participated in this conspiracy, there is nothing to hold him back. Though Maxentius blames Porphyrius, as his wife's advisor, for leading her astray (a quality not usually admitted in a medieval man), he gives him several chances to recant and re-convert.

Porphyrius refuses, and once executed Catherine is the last to follow. But even in death Clemence gives Catherine control of her decisions. Catherine calls her executioner "friend," and tells him not to fear reprisals because she acknowledges that he is doing the "will of the tyrant" (*Virgin Lives* 42). Her next words, however, "Do not be slothful...my bridegroom summons me,"

suggest Catherine is ready to complete her undertaking (42). The author, the subject and the reader are all in agreement that she will be reunited with her groom and the wedding will be concluded. The comedic structure is completed as the bride is reunited with her true love, the authentic groom.

III. The Ending

Clemence's excessively brief description of Catherine's death leaves the reader with an anti-climactic feeling. There is no scene so violent that could require such attention. The resulting miracles, the milk that flows from Catherine's body after she has died, the spiriting away of her body by angels, the healing others experience because of her death, are all closely followed from the originating source text. The real climax of the narrative is in the discourse, the combative discussions meant to philosophize and connect with biblical hermeneutical and political commentary. The rest is merely a liturgical reminder of why the community venerates Catherine, and why her story is viewed as fundamental reading for any women.

Clemence, however, does finalize her conclusion with closing remarks of her own. She reminds her reader of her authorial presence. She brings the attention back to herself, and the work she has just completed. Her implied purpose, she states is "for love" of Barking (*Virgin Lives* 43). Her comment suggests that even if the work was commissioned or sponsored by a benefactor her motivation for producing it was impassioned by concern for her community (43). Clemence acknowledges the reader's presence and engagement with her work. She relegates them once more with a last but brief reminder on the crux of her topic, the major theme that ties all of her themes together: love for God, and God's love for humanity.

The Apostle Paul's reiteration of the theme of love in I Corinthians 13 ("without love we have nothing"), and like Jesus' own words in the Gospel of John ("no man hath greater love than this, that he should die for his friends") echo in Clemence's last words (John 15: 13). She reflects the ultimate ideal of that divine love through love for other. God's love is not only an eternal love for Clemence but one rooted in friendship displayed in the account through Catherine's act of courage. Catherine's love for God and for her friends is clearly similarly depicted and follows the same trajectory Clemence has laid out for her readers to follow. Just like the "son of man [who] did not come to be served but to serve," Catherine has died in an effort to protect her friends, and Clemence has fulfilled her love for God and her community by completing her duty of reflection through the written word (Mark 10:45).

Conclusion

Though clearly very similar to the originating texts in many ways, Clemence's reiteration of the Catherine account is not a duplication of her sources. Her work is a reinterpretation of biblical typologies and gendered ideals re-inscribed into the narrative. Clemence's rendition of the account, like the Vulgate account, is rooted in the religious tradition of medieval literature. Her theological considerations of biblical texts, religious narratives, and Romance tropes make the account clearly stand out from previous depictions of Catherine.

Hagiographic narratives fit this categorization in particular because they are fundamentally religious in nature, devout in purpose, and are intended to be read within a matrix of orthodoxy set out by doctrine and religious tradition. They are romantic in nature, and comedic in structure, but more importantly they create a stage for the expression of narratives outside of religious orthodoxy. Authors, compilers, or editors of hagiographic narratives are free to fashion their stories as they see fit, sometimes according to orthodox teaching, and sometimes taking liberties they could never take anywhere else.

Often the literary re-interpretation of historical or fictional saints' lives envisions the stories of saints in a typological manner. They can be rooted in the narratives of the Old Testament, but more than likely they are developed from the biographical nature of the Gospel narratives. They are constructed as extensions of the Christological and eschatological concerns of the New Testament authors and as such they revel in metaphoric tropes, allegories, symbolism and images that largely reflect a largely spiritual and sometimes mystical world view.

In a paradoxical twist, however, it is precisely within such texts that we find the liminal spaces necessary for religious, political, and gendered dissent in the West. The genre, by the nature of its creation, is a repetitively copied and re-copied structure of writing focused on the partly historical, partly embellished, and sometimes made up pieces of the lives and martyrdoms of men and women. These men and women may be characterizations of historical people, but they are for the most part representations of the author's ideations or idealizations of the lived expression and experience within the Christian faith.

As a result, such texts are often highly imitative, doctrinal documents, largely repetitive, highly entertaining, but sometimes monotonous and wearisome to read. For a long time they were kept to the realm of the devoted and left forgotten by scholars. In recent years, however, the literature is beginning to make a resurgence as more literary historian are starting to take note of its connections to the rest of the pre-modern literary world. By giving such texts more

consideration and analysis we can surmise that such a literary tradition would also leave some room for women as authors looking to rewrite the misogynistic depictions, traditions, and teachings in their world.

To approach this tradition in a more systematic and comparative manner than has been done in the past, the method outlined in this thesis, will help scholars to determine exactly how such women may have participated in the history of this historical literary tradition. One of the ways I have suggested this can happen is by approaching the differences between renditions and expansions of the same accounts. Such differences, especially when considered in context of gendered writing and depictions suggest that we may also gain a significant amount of knowledge in how pre-modern women ascribed and contributed not only to a gendered canon but to the prominent historical one as well.

Though such texts may not appear subversive, the act of rooting, appropriation, and reclamation is as subversive a process in the pre-modern period as it has been in the modern and post modern eras. The medieval gendered author, not unlike her nineteenth-century counterpart, applies palimpsestic means by which to speak against the hierarchical and male oriented religious precepts inscribed in texts so that they might (re)create the tradition to make room for the female voice. Clemence's representation of the Catherine *passio* accomplishes this very feat.

She presents a well written and well thought out account of a pre-modern gendered literary experience. Her work suggests a deep liturgical consideration of religious identity and expression that reflects on the spiritual connections necessary for a thriving and cultured community, but the text does not stop there. The elements in Clemence's work point to a larger literary theological construction based on the narrative as she found it in the previous Vulgate account. Much of what she portrays in the work is symbolic of the larger social structures and strictures she is surrounded by.

She very clearly recognizes the limitations that she and other women must contend with in their everyday lives, but she is not satisfied to merely reflect on them. She participates rather actively in the process of appropriation and re-creates a new source of authority for herself as well as for other women. Clemence roots herself within the tradition of texts in order to relay these experiences literarily. She does not keep them as they are but instead disassembles them through a reconsideration of Saint Catherine's account.

When she reassembles the text through a gender positive vision we find she has managed almost exclusively through a reinterpretation of traditional theological discussion on the nature of divinity to rewrite the entire direction of divine authority to include women at the very source of

that authority. Clemence's ideation on gender and the Catherine account is fueled directly by a theological re-vision of divinity, authority, community, and gender.

Clemence does not deal directly with the issue of gender at first. Rather her main concern is the question of authority as it is defined through the communal nature of the Triune God. Through these discussions she reshapes and defines the parameters between gender and authority, and by this process alters it significantly. As she restructures the defining elements of authority, community, and divinity, the result is a space in which to similarly adjust the defining relationship of gender which also re-structures the parameters of women's roles and gendered depictions within the text.

Women need not be kept imprisoned or held back by restrictive socially determined expectations. They are free by choice and engagement of their abilities to be fully active members in the "image of God" (Genesis 1:27). Through a revision of the creation account and a reassessment of woman's place within it, Clemence espouses the principle of inclusivity within community and divinity as a way to suggest that women can be fully participating members of God's authority. By providing a gendered misprision biblical, liturgical, and even romantic narratives she re-inscribes the Catherine account with a new meaning and vision than the previous Vulgate rendition.

The gender positive interpretations of scripture and religious narratives support her re-inscription of the Catherine account. The saint is no longer an obedient and supernaturally able servant of God or a symbolic representation of clerical authority, or even an example of faith through trials. Details from previous versions of the account are purposely selected, rearranged, expanded and reshaped in order to exemplify a gender positive stance toward her subject. Thus she uses St. Catherine as an embodiment of the connections between gender and authority. This is reflected in her interpretation of God, the role of the saint, and the source of authority as an inclusive relationship in community, especially the community of women.

This makes Clemence's rendition literarily as well as theologically based. She takes earlier readings of the Catherine narrative and re-inscribes them with her own biblical misprision, infusing them with concrete ideas about women, power, and the body. She produces a utopian vision of gender that invokes an inclusive form of divine authority as the source for her feminist reading of religious literary structure, narrative, typology, images, and archetypes.

The account often obliquely references biblical texts and images taken from across the New Testament, and changes them to explain or exemplify the new meaning the author envisions within the account. She engages the reader first with philosophical dialogue in the prologue, and then through narrative and depictions in the model of Catherine's story. The first is built on her

misprision of biblical texts and the Vulgate account, while the other is built on the theological exposition of the prologue.

The work is structured to support a medieval feminist reconstruction of gender that redefines the dynamic between women and power. Her concern, however, is not so much with a modern conception of power as it is with the re-definition and distribution of authority that allows women to fully participate in the communities through the contribution of learned skills and inherent talents. Like the Catherine account suggests, women are capable of performing a variety of duties outside of the institution of marriage as well as outside the social construction of gendered binaries. They can do so much more outside of the normative expectations of gender performance if they feel they have the authority to do so.

Clemence's method is subversive though her aim remains inclusive. She does not subvert authority in order to overthrow it; she subverts it in order to reclaim it, both on her own behalf as well as for other women. She subverts traditional readings of fundamental biblical accounts, like the creation story, used by religious and political authority historically implemented to keep women in submissive positions, while completely avoiding others such as the Vashti factor from the Esther account. She selects and rewrites these narratives and assumes them for the re-appropriation of the Catherine account, and by doing this she subverts male inscribed gendered depictions in order to reclaim the saint's narrative for a gender positive purpose and vision.

The act of literary re-appropriation is a conscious redirection of power that disrupts the movement of authority in previous texts, alters its focus, and shifts its destination. The texts are read in an entirely different manner, and their meanings are changed, as is their application. This is an extraordinary literary feat, something not usually seen in medieval literature let alone in liturgy. Out of the saint's dystopic experience of the world Clemence leads the reader to a utopic experience of gender, authority, and community defined through an alternate ideal of divinity.

The result in the shifting of power leaves Clemence free to re-assign the male authority she gleans from her sources and confer it directly onto herself as the self-identified author in the text. This redirection is aimed directly at women, and is intended to confer her authority onto her reader. She considers this authority legitimately her own as she claims it for/from Catherine's story and disburses it to her reader. This makes the issue of authority, a form of power in gender purposed and female authored writing, a crucial lynchpin in the analysis of Clemence's work. It allows the author to root, subvert, and reclaim a deeply male centered literary tradition for a gendered focused approach.

Clemence recovers that authority for herself as the author, then for her subject as the example of that authority, and lastly for her community to engage in. She models her reclamation

within the prologue through a philosophical dialogue. She engages with the account through the sources, and then through her own reiteration of Catherine's experiences she provides the means for her readers to follow the example she has outlined for them. The authority Clemence reclaims empowers her to take hold of the patriarchal depictions of women in the literature, to do with them as her judgement sees fit without apology, and hold them up as examples of powerful interpretations of women in society.

The act of appropriation and reinterpretation as a deeply subversive function in literature is rarely associated with medieval texts, the more didactic and devout the genre, the further the association between genre and subversion. Though theorists are beginning to view hagiography as an increasingly fundamental part of the developing canon in western literary culture, it remains for many a tedious and encumbered genre to assess partly because of its didactic character, and partly because of the highly religious and theological elements inherent to its content, purpose, and structure.

There is at present a gap between medievalist attention to gendered medieval religious literature and current feminist considerations of gendered authorship and authority. Greater examination and analysis of this disconnection in future research will provide a comprehensive and comparative manner by which to connect these disparate sides. Attaining such connections will also provide greater clarity on the issues around gendered authorship, writing, and voice in the pre-modern context.

I suggest in this thesis, that it is precisely within such examinations that we will find not only exceptional examples of pre-modern gendered literature, but discernible examples of gendered dissent and critical arguments with the dominant social and religious views in the medieval era. The differences between accounts and renditions provide room gender focused theological, social and sometimes even political observations to be displayed. The liminal spaces give such authors the palimpsestic tools they require to fully display a normally suspect and largely unseen point of view.

The liminal spaces within such texts act like literary safe havens for the female voice. They reveal it from within its historical construction. They create room within the literature for gendered considerations, legitimizing them, and even against all odds holding them in perpetuity for future audiences. These voices display an alternative approach to the conventions of male authority and authorship largely dominant in this literary tradition.

Such texts are, as a result, able to expose the tradition to the gendered voice. They leave concrete evidence and examples of the process of gendered authorship encountered by pre-modern female authors. Fully considered, these examples of historical gendered writing through feminist

theory will inform and re-shape considerations of historical gendered writing. By altering or adjusting critical models of feminist critical readings of historical gendered writing, the theoretical model can also be adjusted to include the works of pre-modern religious authors within its scope.

Previous literary historians have been too often dismissive of the possibilities within such texts. However, it is precisely within the differences where we will find answers to current concerns around gendered voice and authorship for pre-modern gendered authors. There are few gendered authors writing in the early part of the European medieval literary tradition. There are even fewer who can be said to have written in a largely independent manner, informed by a reasonable education, with knowledge of the Latin language, and political support buffering them from oppressive gendered and religious expectations normally used to silence the female voice. Like Clemence of Barking's account of Catherine, these are the texts that will further current knowledge of historical gendered writing.

Clemence's rendition of the Passion of Catherine of Alexandria is a work steeped in the theological, philosophical, and literary considerations of her time. The account has received a fair amount of attention as a didactic and conservative form of writing. As a result, very little current critical or deconstructive analysis has been gathered for it, or for other texts like it. Feminist analytical methods necessary for the comparison of such a gendered text to the source texts of preceding male authors are non-existent. This connection is significant because it reveals the possibility for further exploration in the construction of a historical gendered literary tradition in the West, delineating exactly how and possibly why the female authors distinguish themselves from their predecessors.

Such an approach may well point out places where previous feminist enquiry in earlier gendered literary models can aid new critical applications of analysis for a gendered literature seemingly removed from feminist critical concerns. The palimpsestic qualities within female authored hagiographic accounts are buried beneath the rich philosophical and literary tapestry that informs the author's world. This literature has in previous occasions left feminist theorists unable to formulate a response to what appears on the surface to be a reiteration of misogynistic patriarchal structures of power within the religious tradition.

What deconstructive feminist theorists have been unable to consider until recently, however, is that it is precisely because of this quality and its relationship to the Christian tradition that the dissenting nature within such writings exist. We have yet to fully uncover and mine such works in greater numbers for the revelations they can provide on the experience and characteristics of gendered authorship prior to the modern era. However, an early critical feminist consideration of such a text can begin to make the connections necessary to further the scholarship in this field.

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