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"THE AUTHORITY OF HER MERIT": VIRTUE AND WOMEN IN  
CHAUCER AND SHAKESPEARE

*The American University*

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"THE AUTHORITY OF HER MERIT":  
VIRTUE AND WOMEN IN CHAUCER AND SHAKESPEARE

by

Jeffrey Hunter McQuain

submitted to the

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of

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in

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ABSTRACT

This research involves the feminist argument in the writings of Chaucer and Shakespeare. In the context of a Western literary tradition that denigrates the female, the canons of Chaucer and Shakespeare provide a most untraditional connection of virtue and women. The paper begins with a brief overview of the misogyny that permeates classical literature. Then the poems of Chaucer, from The Book of the Duchess to The Canterbury Tales, are examined for the ways that they champion the words and deeds of women. Finally, the plays of Shakespeare, from The Comedy of Errors to The Two Noble Kinsmen, are explored as extensions of Chaucer's arguments in favor of women and marriage. In particular, the two writers make similar statements on difference and democracy that support the connection of virtue and women. Shakespeare's drama, though, goes even further than Chaucer's poetry in challenging classical authority on the hierarchical

notion of male supremacy. In fact, Shakespeare places the basic tenets of misogyny onstage to demonstrate the truth of their inadequacy. Both writers agree, however, that the female should not be subordinated to the male and that marriage should be celebrated as a source of syncretic power. Thus, in their connection of virtue and women, the two major voices of English literature produce a new argument for a syncretic balance of the sexes.

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"THE AUTHORITY OF HER MERIT":

VIRTUE AND WOMEN IN CHAUCER AND SHAKESPEARE

Debating the subject of virtue and women in Othello, Desdemona asks Iago, "But what praise couldst thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed--one that in the authority of her merit, did justly put on the vouch of very malice itself?"<sup>1</sup> Despite Iago's denial of the possibility of such a woman, Desdemona's words retain considerable significance. Not only does she hint at Renaissance problems with the nature of authority, but also her notion of the virtuous woman echoes the forceful responses of Shakespeare's canon to a Western literary tradition that is predominantly misogynistic. In fact, the debate itself is significant, in that Shakespeare frequently allows both the words and the deeds of his female characters to contradict long-accepted tenets of hierarchies that favor male supremacy. By replacing such hierarchies in his drama with more syncretic relationships, Shakespeare advances ideas about difference and democracy that are strikingly similar to those found in Chaucer's earlier treatments of women. Through the

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<sup>1</sup>Othello 2. 1. 144-45, in William Shakespeare, The Riverside Shakespeare, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 1213.

generic shift from narrative to drama, Shakespeare is able to resolve certain problems of authority and thus to extend the arguments of Chaucer on "verray womanly benignytee."<sup>2</sup> The canons of both authors, however, espouse positive views about marriage and, taken together, provide essentially a new argument on the subject of virtue and women.

Virtue as a desirable attribute in men is as central a notion of Western philosophy before Shakespeare as is the denigration of women. Richard Hooker writes, for example, that "no man of judgment can esteem it better to be rich than wise, virtuous, and religious."<sup>3</sup> The relationship of wisdom and virtue, however, becomes problematic in light of the antifeminism of much Graeco-Roman thought. Perhaps the most disparaging of commentaries on women may be found in Plato's myth of The Timaeus. In denying the attribution

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<sup>2</sup>The Squire's Tale F. 486, in Geoffrey Chaucer, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2d ed., edited by F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 133.

<sup>3</sup>From Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book 1, Chapter 10, in M. H. Abrams, gen. ed., The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 4th ed., 2 vols. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 1:1041. Hooker's argument for the importance of virtue to "The Foundations of Society" in the late sixteenth century reflects the traditional notion of virtue as goodness, either instinctual or habitual, that is revealed through words and deeds. The schematic division of specific Virtues predates Hooker's work and includes a total of seven: three theological (Faith, Hope, and Charity) and four cardinal (Prudence, Temperance, Justice, and Courage). For more detailed discussion, see Peter Geach, The Virtues: The Stanton Lectures 1973-4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). In contrast to the Virtues, the Vices are abstractions of negative qualities and are catalogued in Chaucer's The Parson's Tale.

of virtue to women, Plato states,

Let this, then, be said, that of those which were born Men, it is most likely that as many as were cowardly, and passed their life in unrighteousness, were changed into Women when they were born the second time.<sup>4</sup>

The extremity of Plato's viewpoint is, however, not unrepresentative of classical Greek and Roman statements on the nature of women. Even a casual reading of proverbial wisdom in such a collection as Bartlett's Familiar Quotations reveals the conventionality of antifeminism. Hipponax, for instance, says that "There are two days when a woman is a pleasure: the day one marries her and the day one buries her."<sup>5</sup> The sayings of the Seven Sages, frequently quoted as being indicative of classical wisdom, include a similarly begrudging view of women: between the philosophical recommendations of "Know thyself" and "Nothing too much" is the practical attitude of Pittacus that "Every one of you hath his particular plague, and my wife is mine; and he is very happy who hath this only."<sup>6</sup> Such denigrations of both women and marriage continue in the English literary tradition. John Heywood, for example, implies the outlook of Pittacus in quoting that "Weddyng is desteny, / And hangyng

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<sup>4</sup>The Myths of Plato, ed. G. R. Levy, trans. J. A. Stewart (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), p. 271.

<sup>5</sup>John Bartlett, Familiar Quotations, 14th ed. revised, edited by Emily Morison Beck (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1968), p. 70.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

likewise, saith that proverbe."<sup>7</sup> In the essay "Of Marriage and Single Life," Francis Bacon seems to echo Catholic traditions of the priesthood in juxtaposing the ideas of marriage and common profit; Bacon, who eventually does suggest the value of marriage, begins the essay by saying,

He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public,<sup>8</sup> have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men.

Ultimately, the denial of virtue in women is implied in the etymology of the term itself. Derived from the Latin root vir for "man," the word virtue has been seen fundamentally in the Western tradition as a male attribute.

In this tradition the hierarchical relationship of men and women reflects a related hierarchy of action and language. The subordination of language to action is, in fact, most clearly expressed in sexual terms in a proverb collected by the poet George Herbert: "Words are women, deedes are men."<sup>9</sup> Such a separation of words and deeds is part of a continuing tradition that may be traced back as

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<sup>7</sup>John Heywood's Works and Miscellaneous Short Poems, ed. Burton A. Milligan (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 23.

<sup>8</sup>From Essays or Counsels, Civil and Moral, in Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry, 2d ed., edited by Alexander M. Witherspoon and Frank J. Warnke (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963), p. 42.

<sup>9</sup>The Works of George Herbert, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 349.

far as the Bible and Homer.<sup>10</sup> In the traditions of chivalry, moreover, the emphases on men's actions and women's vulnerability contribute to the associations of deeds with men and words with women. That this tradition is misogynistic may best be seen in classical references to the words and deeds of women.

The words of women, according to classical authority, are generally to be mistrusted and, at best, to be avoided. For instance, the title character of Sophocles' Ajax cites "an ancient saw, ' . . . for women silence is a grace.'"<sup>11</sup> Homer is even more specific in his admonitions about the trust of women, particularly in terms of language. In the eleventh book of The Odyssey, the ghost of Agamemnon warns Odysseus to "indulge a woman never, and never tell her all you know. Some things a man may tell, some he should cover up."<sup>12</sup> As the start of Agamemnon's warning indicates, the behavior of women is no more to be trusted than their word.

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<sup>10</sup>See, for instance, James 1:22 as well as the ninth book of The Iliad. The opposition of words and deeds continues in the current motto for the state of Maryland: "Fatti Maschii, Parole Femine."

<sup>11</sup>Sophocles, Ajax, trans F. Storr (1913; reprint ed., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 29, 31. The relative lack of Renaissance familiarity with Greek drama may be seen in John W. Velz, Shakespeare and the Classical Tradition: A Guide to Commentary, 1660-1960 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1968). That unfamiliarity would, of course, encompass not only the tragedy of Sophocles, cited here for proverbial wisdom, but also Aristophanes' feminist comedy Lysistrata.

<sup>12</sup>Homer, The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1963), p. 199.

The deeds of women, in fact, are even more suspect in the Graeco-Roman tradition. Homer's Agamemnon, for example, laments that "The day of faithful wives is gone forever."<sup>13</sup> The lack of trust in women's language, thus, is extended to a lack of faith in their actions. Although Homer's statements of misogyny are generally directed at wives, other classical writers denigrate the deeds of women in general. According to the tradition, the majority of women's deeds seem designed either to exact revenge or simply to confuse men. In his thirteenth satire, Juvenal states that "Vengeance always is silly, the proof of a mean little mind, and here is one way you can tell it: no one enjoys revenge nearly so much as a woman."<sup>14</sup> Perhaps the strongest statement on the inconstancy of women reflected in their actions may be found in Virgil's The Aeneid. During a dream vision in Book 4, the god Mercury appears to Aeneas and says, "Varium et mutabile semper femina" ("An ever uncertain and inconstant thing is woman").<sup>15</sup> Amid such negative ideas about the words and deeds of women, it is understandable that misogyny entered the mainstream of Western literary history.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>14</sup>The Satires of Juvenal, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1958), p. 456.

<sup>15</sup>The Aeneid of Virgil, trans. Allen Mendelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 100.

As a counter-current to such a powerful tradition, though, the direction taken by Chaucer and Shakespeare seems all the more remarkable. To establish a new argument on virtue and women, such a counter-current would of necessity have had to question not only the established authority but also its hierarchical foundations, particularly classical philosophy and the Church. Probably the document most responsible for pointing the direction of this new argument is the final philosophical treatise by Boethius.

Translated by Chaucer as The Boece, Boethius' The Consolation of Philosophy is precisely the type of an anti-establishment work necessary to instigate such a questioning of authority. A prime example of prison literature, The Consolation of Philosophy is thought to have been written during Boethius' confinement prior to his execution for treason.<sup>16</sup> Although it combines certain notions of ancient philosophy and Christian belief, the work transcends both Greek and Christian thought. This treatise offers a new religion, in a sense, through its vision of love as the unifying force of existence, a love which "halt togidres peples joyned with an holy boond, and knytteth sacrement of mariages of chaste

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<sup>16</sup>See, for example, the discussion of Boethius in Chapter 5 of Edward Kennard Rand, Founders of the Middle Ages (1928; reprint ed., New York: Dover, 1957).

loves; and love enditeth lawes to trewe felawes."<sup>17</sup> This mystical understanding of universal order is offered as consolation to the elderly narrator by a female figure that appears at his bedside. Identified as Lady Philosophy, this figure is described as "a womman of ful greet reverence by semblaunt, hir eien brennyng and cleer-seynge over the comune myghte of men."<sup>18</sup> Preceding Dante's Beatrice by nearly eight hundred years, Lady Philosophy is a remarkable example of wisdom in the female; furthermore, Boethius presents her as a powerful advocate of virtuous behavior in men.<sup>19</sup> As such, she represents a break with tradition that leads to the more forceful statements on virtue and women in English literature.

As the first writer of extended personal narrative in English, Chaucer also provides English literary history with the first suggestion of virtuous women. The foundations for characters in The Canterbury Tales, however, may be found in the arguments of Chaucer's earlier writing. These works examine the merits of women through the issues

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<sup>17</sup>The Boece, Book 2, Metrum 8, Lines 21-24, in Chaucer, p. 341.

<sup>18</sup>The Boece, Book 1, Prosa 1, Lines 4-7, in Chaucer, p. 321.

<sup>19</sup>In fact, the term virtue is used more often in The Boece than in any other single work by Chaucer prior to The Canterbury Tales. See John S. P. Tatlock and Arthur G. Kennedy, A Concordance to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and to The Romaunt of the Rose (Washington: Carnegie Institute, 1927), pp. 1005-06. For tentative dates of Chaucer's works, see Chaucer, p. xxix.

of difference and democracy, particularly in light of the women's words and deeds.

In The Book of the Duchess, for example, Chaucer presents the portrait of an extraordinary woman. Both the words and the deeds of the Lady White testify to the value ascribed to her by a grieving husband. Whether or not the Lady White is meant to represent the first wife of John of Gaunt, the character's significance in Chaucer's poem involves the extended description of the woman's quality. The beauty of her appearance and the grace of her movements require nearly two hundred lines of poetic description by the man in black, followed by his testimony to her inherent qualities of goodness and truth.<sup>20</sup> In the context of a medieval dream vision, such a virtuous woman would call into question the notions of established authority on women as well as on human existence in general, because a celebration of the Lady White's life contradicts the tradition of contemptus mundi. That she could be for her husband "that swete wif, / My suffisaunce, my lust, my lyf, / Myn hap, myn hele, and al my blesse, / My worldes welfare, and my goddesse"<sup>21</sup> suggests a new authority on marriage as a positive relationship between women and men. As the poem

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<sup>20</sup>The man in black praises both her words and her deeds. See The Book of the Duchess, Lines 1003-05, 1015-16, in Chaucer, p. 276.

<sup>21</sup>The Book of the Duchess, Lines 1037-40, in Chaucer, p. 277.

focuses on the man in black and his grief over his wife's death, The Book of the Duchess becomes an emphatic statement in favor of women.

Although The House of Fame is not primarily a work about women, Chaucer does introduce a story in the first book that questions established authority on notions of words and deeds. Chaucer borrows the story of Dido and Aeneas from Virgil, but the medieval poet is careful not to quote Mercury's words in The Aeneid on the uncertainty and inconstancy of women. Indeed, the narrator concentrates on the untrustworthiness of men:

For this shal every woman fynde,  
That som man, of his pure kynde,  
Wol shewen outward the fayreste,  
Tyl he have caught that what him leste;  
And thanne wol he causes fynde,  
And swere how that she ys unkynde,  
Or fals, or privy, or double was.<sup>22</sup>

The effect of portraying Aeneas as a traitor to Dido serves to undermine hierarchical notions of men's superiority to women. At the same time Dido introduces amidst her denigration of men a concept important to Chaucer's democratic argument. This concept, described as "synguler profit,"<sup>23</sup> is juxtaposed to the idea of common profit in Chaucer's next work, which is a poem about democratic

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<sup>22</sup>The House of Fame, Lines 279-85, in Chaucer, p. 285.

<sup>23</sup>The House of Fame, Line 310, in Chaucer, p. 286.

process.<sup>24</sup> The entirety of The House of Fame, though, involves the questioning of authority rather than the presentation of democratic ideas.

The Parliament of Fowls, in fact, offers the first extended consideration by the poet on the subjects of difference and democracy as well as virtue and women. The undermining of authority in The House of Fame continues in The Parliament of Fowls, in which the thematic question of difference is addressed in terms of rank and social structure. In emphasizing the different classes of the birds, Chaucer shows the democratic process of debate in action to select the proper mate for the female eagle. That the decision should ultimately be left to her individual discretion is yet another indication of the poet's faith in the wisdom of women. Furthermore, giving the freedom of choice to the female upholds the notion of a singular will working for the common profit; in this satirical dream vision, for instance, the democratic process of debate tends to delay progress toward the common goals of mating and regeneration. While both Chaucer and Shakespeare will further develop the ideas of women's sovereignty and the true nature of nobility, The Parliament of Fowls begins to focus these issues and to provide the first specific

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<sup>24</sup>The concept of singular profit, undeveloped in The House of Fame, is of crucial importance in the relationship of the self to the other. As such, it is more central to Chaucer's arguments on government in The Parliament of Fowls.

connection of virtue and women. In describing the female bird, the narrator speaks of this formel eagle as "the gentilleste / . . . / The moste benygne and the goodlieste. / In hire was everi vertu at his reste."<sup>25</sup> Thus, the authority of a misogynistic tradition is challenged by a new perspective on the female.

That authority is further challenged in Chaucer's longer work The Legend of Good Women, which is also his most sustained commentary on the need to celebrate the female.<sup>26</sup> From the opening lines, this poem does reaffirm the Church's authority on the unknown afterlife, but the major focus of the work attempts to refute the authority that denigrates women. As a palinode, The Legend of Good Women is intended by the narrator as penance for his own vision of the faithless woman in Troilus and Criseyde and for his misogyny in the courtly-love tradition that permeates his translation of The Romaunt of the Rose. This palinode actually serves to respond to the misogynistic bias of Western literary tradition in general. Each of the cases of faithful women enumerated by the narrator is an example meant to undermine the hierarchy of male

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<sup>25</sup>The Parliament of Fowls, Lines 373-76, in Chaucer, p. 314. The use of the masculine pronoun for virtue again reflects the etymology of the word.

<sup>26</sup>Both The House of Fame and The Parliament of Fowls end with statements by the narrators which support authority; these statements seem to work satirically in their contexts, though, and point toward the stronger challenge of authority in The Legend of Good Women.

superiority.<sup>27</sup> Even the framework of the narrator's extended dream vision contributes to the poem's statement against anti-feminism. The telling of these legends as a penance is suggested by Queen Alceste, whom the god of Love introduces to the narrator. Before beginning his task, however, this narrator takes time to praise Alceste for her goodness and, as he says, "For also many vertues hadde shee."<sup>28</sup>

The concept of vertu is used throughout Chaucer's work to mean either "power" or "(moral) excellence."<sup>29</sup> Because of its connection with both female and male characters, it is understandable that the idea of virtue is frequently cited in conjunction with the power of love.<sup>30</sup> In The Canterbury Tales Chaucer offers his most forceful statements in favor of women, particularly in terms of their virtues and of their love as a source of power. While critics have debated whether Chaucer's tales are intentionally organized into a schematic study of the

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<sup>27</sup>Chaucer's choice of women to include in the work serves to challenge established authority: Medea, for instance, has not often been seen in heroic terms.

<sup>28</sup>The Legend of Good Women F. 528, in Chaucer, p. 495.

<sup>29</sup>Norman Davis et al., comps., A Chaucer Glossary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 164.

<sup>30</sup>See, for example, Eugene Edward Slaughter, Virtue According to Love in Chaucer (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957).

vices,<sup>31</sup> an examination of the women's actions and their language in the poem tends to suggest the virtues as a more plausible organizing principle.

In The Canterbury Tales the deeds of women largely reflect virtues implicit in their characters. The Man of Law's Constance, for instance, faces the overwhelming hazards of fortune and still maintains the integrity of her name. Similarly, the Clerk's Griselda verifies the epithet of "patient"<sup>32</sup> through the constant trials invented by her needlessly mistrusting husband Walter. The questioning of authority on the inconstancy of women is found, in fact, throughout the poem, even in The Squire's Tale where the male hawk deserts his faithful mate. Not all of the women in the tales perform virtuous deeds, of course, but the exceptions are few and perhaps understandable. Cenobia in The Monk's Tale, for example, disdains sex and acts as a virago, leading to her tragic fall. Other female characters enjoy sex to the point of committing adultery, but neither the Miller's Alison nor the Merchant's May is made to seem evil. In fact, the basis of young May's marriage to the elderly January is clearly

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<sup>31</sup>The schematic study of vices in the tales is proposed in Frederick Tupper, "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," PMLA 29 (1914):93-128. The most detailed refutation of Tupper's theory is in John Livingston Lowes, "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," PMLA 30 (1915): 237-371.

<sup>32</sup>The Clerk's Tale E. 1187, in Chaucer, p. 114.

misogynistic, and the character of Alison represents for the reader a celebration of sex. As a response to the Knight's nondescript Emily, the Miller's depiction of Alison helps to underscore the positive value of sexual difference.

The words of women in the tales are equally skeptical of misogynistic authority and celebratory of sexual difference. The often-married Wife of Bath, for instance, is the most outspoken of Chaucer's characters on the value of women. Her prologue debates notions of misogyny and leads into a tale that is largely concerned with the need for women's sovereignty. In continuing the democratic argument of the work as a whole, her tale also includes a description of the true basis for nobility:

Looke who that is moost vertuous alway,  
Pryvee and apert, and moost entendeth ay  
To do the gentil dedes that he kan;  
Taak hym for the grettest gentil man.<sup>33</sup>

In her celebration of sex, the Wife of Bath questions the traditional virtue of chastity, in that "if ther were no seed ysowe, / Virginitee, thanne wherof sholde it growe?"<sup>34</sup>

Her argument here seems more forceful than the hypocritical tale of the Physician that advocates death above the loss of virginity. Even some of the men's words in many of

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<sup>33</sup>The Wife of Bath's Tale D. 1113-16, in Chaucer, p. 87.

<sup>34</sup>The Wife of Bath's Prologue D. 71-72, in Chaucer, p. 76.

the tales support the rights of women. The Miller in his prologue, for example, is insistent that "An housbonde shal nat been inquisityf / Of Goddes pryvetee, nor of his wyf."<sup>35</sup> In supporting the rights of privacy throughout The Canterbury Tales, however, Chaucer does not endorse the ancient authority on the silence of women. In fact, the main point of The Manciple's Tale seems to be that silence operates as a destructive force in terms of human relationships.<sup>36</sup>

In raising the status of women in relationships, Chaucer also attempts to undo the hierarchy of words and deeds. In the poem's General Prologue, the narrator cites Plato's ideal that "The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede,"<sup>37</sup> and the movement of the tales emphasizes that need for a unity of language and action. As the skepticism of established authority increases, the poem offers a humanistic alternative for existence. This humanism involves a syncretic balance of words and deeds, a balance necessary for good human relationships. The necessity of such a balance is most clearly expressed in The Franklin's

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<sup>35</sup>The Miller's Prologue A. 3163-64, in Chaucer, p. 48.

<sup>36</sup>Throughout the final tales Chaucer seems to grow increasingly skeptical about the possibility of good human relationships: the Canon flees when the Yeoman tells his privacy; the Manciple argues that silence is best; and the Parson calls for confession and a retreat to prayer.

<sup>37</sup>General Prologue A. 742, in Chaucer, p. 24.

Tale, in which the possibilities of knowing higher virtue are disavowed and "Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe."<sup>38</sup> In this tale, according to Chaucer, even an act of adultery may be sanctioned in fulfilling the marriage of words and deeds. The most syncretic relationship between man and woman in this work occurs in the prose Tale of Melibee, which contains the most virtuous woman in the poet's canon. Prudence, the wife of Melibeus, exemplifies the virtue implied in her name by advising her husband against taking passionate revenge upon the men who have attacked their daughter. With gentle words and wise counsel, she persuades him to take a more reasonable course of action. As the mother of Sophia ("Wisdom"), she relocates virtue from the abstract level of Lady Philosophy and the spiritual level of Beatrice to the human level of her role as wife and mother. As such, Prudence seems an accessible ideal, a paradox that points the way for the virtuous woman in Shakespeare's drama as "help of man."<sup>39</sup>

In Shakespeare's generic shift from narrative to drama, much of the raw materials for that new drama may be found in The Canterbury Tales.<sup>40</sup> The multiplicity of

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<sup>38</sup>The Franklin's Tale F. 1479, in Chaucer, p. 143.

<sup>39</sup>The Tale of Melibee B. 2295, in Chaucer, p. 171.

<sup>40</sup>The poet's influence is studied in Ann Thompson, Shakespeare's Chaucer: A Study in Literary Origins (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978). Earlier essays on the same subject have included F. E. Budd, "Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Harsnett," Review of English Studies 11 (Oct. 1935): 421-29, and Nevill Coghill, "Shakespeare's Reading in

voices in Chaucer's poem, for instance, moves away from the notion of a singular authority, particularly in the framework of a narrative contest. Thus, the Wife of Bath is able to contradict the authority of a misogynistic tradition. Narrative, which etymologically refers to knowledge, gives way in Shakespeare to drama that regards all absolute sources of knowledge with skepticism. In questioning the very possibility of authority, Shakespeare's works replace religious knowledge, which is suspect, with humanistic truth that is verifiable through experience. Because such truth is often paradoxical, drama serves as the ideal genre for its expression.<sup>41</sup> Composed entirely of speech and action, Shakespeare's plays encompass the spectrum of human words and deeds without exceeding the limitations of that which is knowable. Chaucer acknowledges those limitations in The Canterbury Tales, but the concluding words of the Parson and the poet's own retraction do tend to reaffirm, to a certain extent, the knowledge of medieval

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Chaucer," in Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies: A Festschrift Presented to F. P. Wilson, ed. Herbert Davis and Helen Gardner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 86-99. Spenser's reading of Chaucer is discussed in Alice S. Miskimin, The Renaissance Chaucer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1975). Miskimin also says, though, that "Chaucer's matere, his dramatis personae, his tolerance of human limitation, and his allegorical ironies are nearer to Shakspeare's than to Spenser's" (p. 4).

<sup>41</sup>The notion of Shakespeare's drama as visual dialectic is presented in W. R. Elton, "Shakespeare and the Thought of His Age," in A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies, ed. Kenneth Muir and S. Schoenbaum (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 180-98.

authority. Shakespeare, on the other hand, is able to give a more unified and outspoken critique of that authority in the Renaissance. As an integral part of the critique, his female characters borrow liberally from the Parson's list of virtues; furthermore, they remain uniformly human in their relationships and, as such, imitate to delight and teach what Sidney calls "the ending end of all earthly learning being virtuous action."<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, Shakespeare's women move beyond Chaucer's in the playwright's emphatic presentation of the dangers inherent in ignoring their words and deeds.

The words of women in Shakespeare's drama have been recognized for their value as the main sources of pity and forgiveness for the male characters.<sup>43</sup> Even more important, though, is the value assigned to the wisdom of a woman's counsel in the plays. Not only do men suffer for ignoring such counsel, but also the mistrust of the word of women leads repeatedly to examples of female superiority. Thus, Shakespeare places the basic tenets of the misogynistic tradition onstage to demonstrate the truth of their inadequacy.

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<sup>42</sup>Sir Philip Sidney, Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 83.

<sup>43</sup>Robert E. Fitch, Shakespeare: The Perspective of Value (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 211. The differences of gender are examined in Marilyn French, Shakespeare's Division of Experience (New York: Summit Books, 1981).

In terms of female counsel, for instance, the playwright's warning is clearly evident: the consequence of ignoring a wife's advice is the husband's downfall. Hotspur, for one, advocates the need to "tell truth and shame the devil,"<sup>44</sup> a proposition dependent on unverifiable knowledge, while he ignores the available counsel of his wife Kate. In fact, the words of Hotspur to his wife echo the misogynistic tradition; he tells her,

. . . constant you are,  
 But yet a woman, and for secrecy  
 No lady closer, for I well believe  
 Thou wilt not utter what thou dost not know,  
 And so far will I trust thee, gentle Kate.<sup>45</sup>

Although a more honest character in language and action than the prince who kills him, Hotspur commits a fatal error in disregarding his wife's warnings about impulsive action. The same fate befalls both husbands that fail to appreciate the value of their wives in Julius Caesar. The character of Caesar himself is led by vanity to deny Calpurnia's urgings and to discount her prescient nightmare of his impending assassination.<sup>46</sup> At the same time Brutus fails to take advantage of counsel from noble Portia. The

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<sup>44</sup>1 Henry IV 3. 1. 58, in Shakespeare, p. 864.

<sup>45</sup>1 Henry IV 2. 3. 108-12, in Shakespeare, p. 858.

<sup>46</sup>It is significant that, as in Othello, the title character discounts the speech of his wife in favor of that of a faithless man. Here the conspirator Decius Brutus persuades Caesar to ignore his wife's warning and to proceed to the Senate.

play's critique of Roman one-sidedness takes a particularly dim view of the hierarchy that favors male supremacy. Misogyny has permeated this culture so thoroughly that Portia repeats about herself the tenets of the tradition; she laments, "I have a man's mind, but a woman's might. / How hard it is for women to keep counsel."<sup>47</sup> Not even the self-infliction of wounds can erase her notion of women's weakness. It is significant, though, that her own painful suicide by "swallow'd fire"<sup>48</sup> should pave the way for the subsequent suicide of Brutus after his downfall.

Doubting the word of women can also lead to negative consequences, usually involving the denigration of men. The tragedy of Othello, for instance, is precipitated by the Moor's willingness to believe a faithless man above a faithful woman. Desdemona's advocacy of women's merits in her debate with Iago is later bolstered by the innocence that she shows in questioning Emilia on the subject of infidelity: she asks, "Dost thou in conscience think--tell me, Emilia-- / That there be women do abuse their husbands / In such gross kind?"<sup>49</sup> In her own inability to conceive even the possibility of faithless wives, Desdemona

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<sup>47</sup>Julius Caesar 2. 4. 8-9, in Shakespeare, p. 1117.

<sup>48</sup>Julius Caesar 4. 3. 156, in Shakespeare, p. 1126. Although Brutus expresses stoic philosophy in his views against suicide in the play, his wife's act of courage in facing death provides something of an example for him.

<sup>49</sup>Othello 4. 3. 61-63, in Shakespeare, p. 1234.

underscores the broken faiths of the male characters in the play. Similar to Walter's lack of trust in Griselda, husbands in Shakespeare that doubt the word of their wives are inclined to offer tests, as in The Merry Wives of Windsor. Unlike Chaucer's Griselda, though, the playwright's Mistress Page maintains her integrity and yet also provides correction for her husband's mistrust. By the end of the play, Page's earlier notion that "I will rather trust a . . . thief to walk my ambling gelding, than my wife with herself"<sup>50</sup> is thoroughly undercut and his wife completely vindicated. In fact, of all the plays in the canon, only in Macbeth are the words of advice given by a major female character proven rightly to be held suspect by men. Even in that play, however, Lady Macbeth asks spirits to "unsex me";<sup>51</sup> as the only Shakespearean character ever to use that term,<sup>52</sup> she signals her denial of women as well as virtue.

Shakespeare's emphasis upon language in the connection of virtue and women is best seen in the plays where such language fails. Amid the enormous scope of Henry V, for instance, the most endearing subplot of all the history plays involves the language barrier between

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<sup>50</sup>The Merry Wives of Windsor 2. 2. 302-05, in Shakespeare, p. 303.

<sup>51</sup>Macbeth 1. 5. 41, in Shakespeare, p. 1316.

<sup>52</sup>Marvin Spevack, The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 1401.

England's King Henry and France's Princess Katherine. The single Shakespeare play with a scene almost entirely in a language other than English, Henry V ends with a reconciliation of English and French armies that is underscored by the betrothal of Katherine to Henry. In the couple's flirtatious attempts to cross the language barrier, it is the woman who suspects the man of false words; Katherine says, "Your Majestee ave fausse French enough to deceive de most sage demoiselle dat is en France."<sup>53</sup> That the issue of war should be resolved happily into marriage is a significant statement in Shakespeare's support of women and the power of love, especially here in the notion of the need for common language to negotiate peaceful relationships.

The misogynistic tradition, in which the language of women is best avoided, comes under particular scrutiny by Shakespeare in relation to the problem of silence. The playwright places the words of classical authority on women's silence into the mouth of a clown; the foolish servant Launce in The Two Gentlemen of Verona contemplates the vices of women and says, "To be slow in words is a woman's only virtue."<sup>54</sup> The comedy itself, however, is focused on the inconstancy of men, and its discussion of women's "only virtue" is thereby undermined. Indeed,

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<sup>53</sup>Henry V 5. 2. 218-19, in Shakespeare, p. 970.

<sup>54</sup>The Two Gentlemen of Verona 3. 1. 334, in Shakespeare, p. 162.

the silence of women in Shakespeare's drama proves a most destructive basis for human relationships, the idea implied by Chaucer in The Manciple's Tale. The young Lavinia in Titus Andronicus, for example, describes sex as a subject "That womanhood denies my tongue to tell";<sup>55</sup> after her rape, it is the loss of her tongue and hands that makes her one of Shakespeare's most pitiable figures. A more deliberate examination of women's silence, however, occurs in the character of Cordelia in King Lear. Though seen as "a figure comparable with that of Griselde or Beatrice,"<sup>56</sup> her character challenges the idea of virtuous speech in the first scene. In her resolve to "Love, and be silent,"<sup>57</sup> she demonstrates a failure of language that precipitates the tragedy's action. In addition to the treacheries of Edmund and her sisters, it is Cordelia's own reticence that is schooled by Edgar in the final lines: "The weight of this sad time we must obey, / Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say."<sup>58</sup> Absent for more than half of the play, Cordelia returns to help her father, a virtuous act that reveals the emotion which she cannot articulate.

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<sup>55</sup>Titus Andronicus 2. 3. 174, in Shakespeare, p. 1032.

<sup>56</sup>John F. Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of King Lear (London: Faber & Faber, 1949), p. 125.

<sup>57</sup>King Lear 1. 1. 62, in Shakespeare, p. 1256.

<sup>58</sup>King Lear 5. 3. 324-25, in Shakespeare, p. 1295.

In fact, the deeds of many female characters in the plays stress the connection of virtue and women. Such actions, contrary to the misogynistic tradition, enforce the notion of women as sources of strength for men in particular and for society in general. Ultimately, women's deeds in Shakespeare's drama are required not only for a needed correction of social problems but also for the movement toward social regeneration.

It is ironic, then, that the most effective of women in the comedies are ones who disguise themselves as men. In The Merchant of Venice, all three of the female characters at some point appear onstage as men, most notably Portia who wears the guise of a male lawyer to defend her husband's friend Antonio. Rosalind in As You Like It is dressed as the boy Ganymede for much of the play, and she displays a courage that corrects her initial urge "to disgrace my man's apparel and to cry like a woman."<sup>59</sup> The most sustained play involving such disguise for a woman is, of course, Twelfth Night, in which Viola is dressed as Cesario from the first act to the last. Each of these women is driven to male disguise in order to gain a social power and mobility that is usually reserved for men. Furthermore, by the end of each comedy, the disguise has been revealed, and the revelation of sexual difference is invariably celebrated in the prospect of marriage. Even

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<sup>59</sup>As You Like It 2. 4. 4-5, in Shakespeare, p. 378.

in the romance Cymbeline, the unveiling of Imogen's costume at the conclusion marks the renewal of her marriage and the possibility for social regeneration. The deeds of Imogen, who assumes the guise of the man Fidele, associate the notion of virtue with a woman. The Roman general Lucius even compliments the disguised Imogen for virtue, saying, "Thy name well fits thy faith; thy faith thy name."<sup>60</sup> Significantly, her disguise is an act for survival amid faithless men.

While such disguise does involve deception, the playwright's women are seen to perform the deed toward a virtuous goal. Falstaff, on the other hand, is Shakespeare's only male character to dress as a woman, and his goal in The Merry Wives of Windsor is less than virtuous: to escape the jealous rage of a husband that he has tried to cuckold. In two plays written apparently in close succession,<sup>61</sup> Shakespeare has female characters disguise themselves as other women for a similar goal of secret sexual activity. Both Helena in All's Well That Ends Well and Mariana in Measure for Measure take part in plots meant to deceive men. In each case, however, the audience is made aware of factors that mitigate the woman's guilt: Helena is already married to Bertram when she

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<sup>60</sup>Cymbeline 4. 2. 381, in Shakespeare, p. 1549.

<sup>61</sup>See the chronology in Shakespeare, p. 54. Despite much disagreement about the order of Shakespeare's works, All's Well That Ends Well and Measure for Measure are generally dated in close proximity to each other.

arranges his deception, and Mariana does not even plan the rendezvous with Angelo to whom she has been betrothed. Both of these plays also serve to extend Chaucer's arguments on virginity and the true basis for nobility. The ideas of established authority on chastity are examined in Measure for Measure when a frightened Claudio tries to convince Isabella that sexual activity "is no sin, / Or of the deadly seven it is the least."<sup>62</sup> The weak Parolles in All's Well That Ends Well echoes the Wife of Bath in noting that "Loss of virginity is rational increase, and there was never virgin [got] till virginity was first lost."<sup>63</sup> Although Helena states her intention to remain a virgin until marriage, Parolles' statements on the nature of virginity are not fully undercut and remain Shakespeare's most forceful words on the subject.<sup>64</sup> In the same play is an extended speech on true nobility in terms suggested by the Wife of Bath; here the King defends the goodness of Helena to a reluctant Bertram by pointing out the felicity that "Virtue and she is her

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<sup>62</sup>Measure for Measure 3. 1. 109-10, in Shakespeare, p. 566.

<sup>63</sup>All's Well That Ends Well 1. 1. 127-29, in Shakespeare, p. 506.

<sup>64</sup>According to Spevack's concordance, the word virginity appears in the canon twenty-eight times, nineteen of which occur in All's Well That Ends Well; see Spevack, p. 1432. Connections of this play to The Wife of Bath's Tale have been noted in Coghill, pp. 95-96.

own dower."<sup>65</sup> Once again there is the connection of virtue and women, but this time the idea has been joined to Chaucer's argument about nobility. The King tells Bertram,

'Tis only title thou disdain'st in her, the which  
I can build up. Strange is it that our bloods,  
Of color, weight, and heat, pour'd all together,  
Would quite confound distinction, yet stands off  
In differences so mighty. If she be  
All that is virtuous--save what thou dislik'st,  
A poor physician's daughter--thou dislik'st  
Of virtue for the name. But do not so.  
From lowest place /when/ virtuous things proceed,  
The place is dignified by th' doer's deed.<sup>66</sup>

In this powerful passage Shakespeare provides a tremendous challenge to established authority, especially in his use of the King's dual significance: a man denying the hierarchy of misogyny and a ruler denying the hierarchy at the basis of aristocracy. In building his democratic argument, the playwright insists that virtuous behavior must be measured by "th' doer's deed" and, as such, the measure can extend to women's deeds as well as men's.

By locating virtue in women's words and deeds, Shakespeare is able to replace hierarchical dualisms with new relationships that are more syncretic in nature. Of course, the traditional views of misogyny may still be found in the canon. The male characters in Love's Labor's Lost, for example, vow to avoid the company of women for three years in order to better their minds. The tradition of female subordination reflects in the title of

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<sup>66</sup>All's Well That Ends Well 2. 3. 117-26, in Shakespeare, p. 518.

The Taming of the Shrew, and Hamlet in his first soliloquy exclaims, "Frailty, thy name is woman!"<sup>67</sup> In each case, however, the specific notion is undercut or countered in the movement of the play, so that misogyny is never left unchallenged. Hamlet's own weakness, ironically, appears to be his error in turning away from women by denying Ophelia. While the taming of shrewish Katherina does involve her apparent capitulation to Petruchio in public, there is finally an equality in the marriage that surpasses the relationships of the comedy's other couples. That notion of equality or balance in the relationship of men and women is a central concern of the canon; when that balance is unnaturally upset, as in Love's Labor's Lost, Shakespeare's drama moves toward the restitution of the relationship that is needed for social regeneration. Thus, instead of being denigrated, women in the plays are celebrated as the source of balance and power.

No matter which form of drama that Shakespeare uses, his plays uniformly celebrate women and, especially, the idea of marriage. In comedy, the Beatrice of Much Ado About Nothing is far more human than the spiritual guide of Dante, and she is joined with Benedick in what could be the best marriage in the canon.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Hamlet 1. 2. 146, in Shakespeare, p. 1145.

<sup>68</sup>Benedick, whose name suggests good speech, at first asserts himself against women; eventually, though, he and Beatrice provide correction for each other's errors, suggesting a most effective couple.

In tragedy, Antony and Cleopatra presents the Egyptian queen as the most powerful of all Shakespeare's women and, despite the story of an adulterous relationship, Cleopatra is clearly portrayed as a figure capable of both emotional fidelity and rational action.<sup>69</sup> In romance, the betrothal of Miranda to Ferdinand in The Tempest is celebrated by Prospero's masque in which the goddess Juno offers words of "Honor, riches, marriage-blessing, / Long continuance, and increasing."<sup>70</sup> Even in the history plays, the subject of divorce in Henry VIII does not preclude the depiction of Katherine in an unusually positive light; she remains sympathetic throughout as a woman of strong conviction and conscience.<sup>71</sup> Shakespeare's last history play, Henry VIII ends fittingly in regeneration: the birth of Elizabeth.

While regeneration involves the celebration of sex, the plays do offer opposing viewpoints on the value of sexual activity. The title character of Timon of Athens rails in decidedly misogynistic terms against the "damn'd

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<sup>69</sup>Although Cleopatra draws Antony away from his marriage, Coppélia Kahn argues that she is "only superficially an anomaly, for her milieu of Egyptian fecundity binds her profoundly to the human family through sexuality and procreation." See Coppélia Kahn, Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 193.

<sup>70</sup>The Tempest 4. 1. 106-07, in Shakespeare, p. 1630.

<sup>71</sup>Katherine's portrayal in such positive terms is all the more unusual in light of the play's celebration of the child of Henry's second marriage. By downplaying the role of Anne Boleyn, the drama casts favorable light on both sides of the religious controversy caused by the divorce.

earth, / Thou common whore of mankind."<sup>72</sup> Timon's misogyny, though, is merely a fraction of the play's larger examination of his misanthropy. Imagery of prostitution abounds in various plays, including Troilus and Cressida, and even Marina, the virtuous daughter of Pericles, is taunted for her chastity by the brothel owners to whom she is sold. In maintaining her innocence, however, Marina is eventually saved through her exemplary goodness and is betrothed to Lysimachus. The idea of sexual reward sent for virtuous behavior is of central importance to Shakespeare's later plays, particularly Pericles.<sup>73</sup>

Basically a retelling of the early work The Comedy of Errors, Pericles adds to its predecessor the ideas of family responsibility and the power of faith over time. Rewarded for virtuous service by a vision of the goddess Diana, Pericles is reunited with Thaisa, the wife that supposedly died years before and has lived chastely since their separation. Similar reunions with long-faithful women occur to male characters in other romances as well; both Imogen in Cymbeline and Hermione in The Winter's Tale rejoin their husbands after the passing of time with no suggestions of sexual infidelity in the interim. From the Abbess in The Comedy of Errors to even the divorced

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<sup>72</sup>Timon of Athens 4. 3. 42-43, in Shakespeare, p. 1464.

<sup>73</sup>Alternately, evil behavior results in sexual relationships that are destructive: Goneril and Regan in King Lear destroy themselves in their desire for Edmund.

Katherine in Henry VIII, the virtue of faithfulness is attributed to women, an attribution not always extended to Shakespeare's men.<sup>74</sup> Such virtue is inevitably seen to be rewarded by a renewal of marriage, the celebration of sex as the balance of men and women.

The syncretic idea of replacing hierarchy with balance may be found throughout the canon, particularly in the playwright's positive attitude toward marriage. That attitude is most strongly expressed in A Midsummer Night's Dream in its emphasis on marriage in the first and last acts.<sup>75</sup> Between those acts, moreover, the transformation of Bottom does not undercut his astute statement that "reason and love keep little company together now-a-days. The more the pity that some honest neighbors will not make

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<sup>74</sup>Women's faithfulness is emphasized through the extensive periods of time covered in the plays. The long passage of time, according to Juliet Dusinberre, is more accurately understood by the female characters; she states that "Shakespeare saw women as closer to the physical process of birth and death than men, and consequently more conscious . . . of the need for love to encompass change and growth." See Juliet Dusinberre, Shakespeare and the Nature of Women (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1975), p. 169.

<sup>75</sup>Carol Thomas Neely notes that the major pattern of Shakespeare's comedy is one in which "the women enter, take control, and . . . transform the men from foolish lovers into--we hope--sensible husbands. The women prepare the way for the harmonious endings symbolized by the consummation of a marriage." See Carol Thomas Neely, "Women and Men in Othello," in The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare, ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), p. 215. The movement toward marriage is also explored in Irene G. Dash, Wooing, Wedding, & Power: Women in Shakespeare's Plays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

them friends."<sup>76</sup> The need for balance of love and reason is everywhere in the play, especially in the initial mistake of Theseus. In attempting to legislate love into a hierarchical relationship, he advises the young Hermia that "To you your father should be as a god."<sup>77</sup> Once again Shakespeare questions established authority's attempt to impose such a standard that involves unverifiable knowledge, and the law of Theseus is changed by the end of the comedy. By the time that Theseus reappears in Shakespeare's final play The Two Noble Kinsmen, he has become aware of the limitations of establishing hierarchies with such knowledge. Indeed, his final speech repudiates that knowledge and, without denying divinity, offers a more humanistic posture for men and women; he says,

. . . O you heavenly charmers,  
 What things you make of us! For what we lack  
 We laugh, for what we have are sorry, still  
 Are children in some kind. Let us be thankful  
 For that which is, and with you leave dispute  
 That are above our question.<sup>78</sup>

Such a posture of humility extends the primary virtue of Chaucer's Parson. To overcome the vice of Superbia as the foremost obstacle in human relationships, the Parson recommends "the remedie agayns the synne of Pride; and that is

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<sup>76</sup>A Midsummer Night's Dream 3. 1. 143-46, in Shakespeare, p. 233.

<sup>77</sup>A Midsummer Night's Dream 1. 1. 47, in Shakespeare, p. 223.

<sup>78</sup>The Two Noble Kinsmen 5. 4. 131-36, in Shakespeare, p. 1677.

humylitee, or mekenesse. / That is a vertu thurgh which a man hath verray knoweleche of hymself."<sup>79</sup> In establishing itself as a posture towards divinity, humility in both Chaucer and Shakespeare also works to disavow the possibility of hierarchy in the relationship of men and women. Instead of the established hierarchy, a syncretic balance should allow both sexes to "be thankful / For that which is," essentially the knowledge of biological difference.

That difference, celebrated in sex and marriage, is a central issue in Shakespeare's support of the female. In his final work of narrative poetry The Phoenix and Turtle, Shakespeare makes a forceful statement about the need for syncretic approaches to relationships. The union of the male and female birds leads to a mystical power in this poem, a power capable of undoing hierarchical structures. The narrator of the poem says,

So they loved as love in twain  
Had the essence but in one,  
Two distincts, division none:  
Number there in love was slain.<sup>80</sup>

The mystical power of such union, according to the entire canon, is most readily available to men through syncretic relationships with women. These works place continual emphasis on the subject through repeated movements toward

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<sup>79</sup>The Parson's Tale I. 475-76, in Chaucer, p. 242.

<sup>80</sup>The Phoenix and Turtle, Lines 25-28, in Shakespeare, p. 1797.

marriage and regeneration, echoing Chaucer's earlier ideas about syncretic balance; The Two Noble Kinsmen, with a plot borrowed from The Knight's Tale, even begins by bringing the wedding celebration of Theseus and Hippolyta directly onto the stage. Certainly, given the canon's emphasis on syncretic relationships, it is no accident that Shakespeare's final cast of characters should include only one deity: Hymen, the god of marriage.

In expressing their positive views about marriage, Chaucer and Shakespeare work to redefine the understanding of human relationships, especially in terms of a syncretic balance between men and women. Instead of treating all dualisms as oppositions of good and evil, both writers emphasize the regenerative value of biological difference and then use that difference to point their readers toward the path of wisdom, virtue, and religion. Skeptical of the directions of traditional authority, the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare offer a revised course that avoids the pitfalls of misogyny and favors the way of women. Both canons help to refute misogyny and to provide, through their untraditional connection of virtue and the female, a new basis for "the authority of her merit." But the Renaissance playwright goes even further than the medieval poet. Where Chaucer urges the power of women's virtue, Shakespeare insists upon it. In fact, throughout the single most powerful canon in English literature, Shakespeare provides a message that stands without

contradiction: only through a balance with the woman can man's most powerful relationship of the self to the other ever be realized.

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