

GLORIOUS HERETICS: LITERARY CRITICISM,
HERESY, AND COMMUNITY

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Introduction
Heresy Where?:
Locating the Idea of Heresy in Literary Criticism

In a recent essay for *Civilization*, Roger Shattuck laments what he sees as the devaluation and corruption of literature in academic studies. After listing a long series of grievances with his profession, Shattuck calls for a "forum . . . in which literature will take precedence over politics, ideology, social agendas and theory. No one would exclude those concerns from literary studies. But they should not run the show" (72). To that end, Shattuck and several other literary critics have formed the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics (Shattuck presides as president), an organization that seeks to create a dialogue in which "Literature would have no rivals" (72). The Association has gained quick popularity with 1,400 members and could boast 300 participants in its first national meeting in September 1995 ("Treating" A22). That gathering had only a handful of sessions for the reading of papers, but generated a sense of enthusiasm and purpose. Leaders admit, however, they must clearly define the goals of the Association and organize a forum for job opportunities, a major attraction of belonging to the Modern Language Association (A22). Shattuck and others intend to confront head-on the profession's largest organization, a group Shattuck claims has fallen to "a well-concerted radical caucus" (71).

The reaction to Shattuck and his new group has been swift and decisive. Sander L. Gilman, current president of the MLA, sees the recent formation of the Association as the product of nostalgia and a loss of power within literary studies by certain scholars: "critics

of the latest trends in scholarship were once on the cutting edge of literary rebellion Now a new revolution is under way" ("Treating" A22). Gilman's not so subtle insinuation is that literary criticism has passed certain malcontents by in the last few years. Jay Parini receives the entire back page of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* to voice his reactions. Parini calls Shattuck's *Civilization* article "disturbing" and "wrong-headed" (A52). Defending current trends in criticism, he claims that "Nobody needs an 'ism' to appreciate or study literature, and no theorist has ever suggested as much. But Mr. Shattuck, like many others in the new association, *thinks* somebody is saying this" (A52). After acknowledging that some critics use theory poorly, he writes, "The desire to return to a prelapsarian kingdom where ignorance was bliss and ideological bias was strong but unvoiced, is bewildering" (A52). Notice the perception that critics of Shattuck's ilk remain out of touch with reality and long for a day when their type of criticism ruled the stage. Neither Gilman nor Parini gives the least amount of credence to what Shattuck and others say is wrong with the profession; in their minds the real issue has to do with a desire to wrestle control away from current scholars because Shattuck and his followers have fallen out of positions of influence in the institution.

So has a permanent schism opened up in literary studies and will we now see criticism head down two divergent paths? Probably not immediately. The plurality of voices in criticism makes any claims for a "well-concerted radical caucus" hard to support, and the MLA simply controls too much money and power to feel any serious threat to its position. Nevertheless, a significant number of prominent critics, among them Shattuck, Denis Donoghue, and Paul Fussell, have determined that to make their voices heard they must step outside the usual apparatus of their institution. In religious terms, many critics have decided to establish their own house of worship with an alternative critical liturgy; we may be witnessing the dawning of a new literary denomination.

This type of separation always occurs at the end of an institutional struggle;¹ new denominations, associations, and ruling bodies form, and extending the religious comparison to discover the roots of this battle may serve us well. Literary critics often see themselves as a sort of cultural priesthood, protecting literature and art from the ravages of time and the unredeemed.² Douglas Bush, for example, took New Critics to task in 1959: "My creed is of no account to anyone except me, but, so far as I am aware, it rests on the conception of poetry which reigned for some 2,500 years, through the greatest periods of literature" (21).³ Bush remained the Good Soldier of the faith, defending and supporting the long tradition of literature from the beginning of Western Civilization. Today he would find himself fending off attacks from within the walls of literary criticism itself, a development most established critics of the first three decades of this century responded to with a mixture of surprise and horror .

But rancor and challenges within literary criticism happened because the institution of literary criticism had something worth fighting for in the first half of the twentieth century. During this time, working in a university as a literary critic became a profession, a profession that offered a secure salary, book deals, and a certain amount of prestige, especially within intellectual circles. No longer did people merely sit around coffee houses and discuss the merits of literature or write reviews for newspapers on the subject at their leisure. Nor did criticism remain a sort of sidelight for writers of fiction and poetry: an opportunity to comment on the literature of the day (including one's own), a chance to set forth and proscribe one's aesthetic principles, and maybe the opportunity to make some extra money in the process.⁴

Once academia captured the practice of criticism, however, it became a *discipline* with structure, hierarchy, and methods of training. One no longer dabbled in criticism; one worked as a Critic. We should find it only natural then that the institution of criticism finds

itself operating under the same dynamics as other clearly defined and rigorous disciplines.⁵

One of those dynamics involves the process by which a faction within the institution challenges the authority and power of the ruling majority, a process which leads itself to the previously mentioned religious parallel: many sociologists and rhetoricians in the last several years have discovered that much discourse involving power struggles within an institution mirrors the debates over heresy and orthodoxy in religious disputes. Heresy takes on a political dimension in these discourses; the definition, identification, and expulsion of heresy become strategies of institutional control over perceived challenges to its power. The heretical party uses the occasion to challenge the assumptions the institution rules by and seeks to shift the locus of power by claiming its ideology can save and better administer the group.

I want to examine the ways in which the ideas of heresy and orthodoxy play themselves out in literary criticism, and this study will begin with a sociological approach to literary criticism as a recognizable institution with a well-defined power structure. I find such an approach legitimate and needed because too often literary critics view themselves as above the fray of normal societal pressures, as if the usual methods of examining institutions cannot find application to them because of some kind of objective superiority. But such idealism proves false; like any community, literary critics act and react in ways similar to any other specialized society. The study of how critics and criticism respond to structures and challenges can provide a better understanding of behavior within the discipline.

This study will limit itself to exploring the ways in which heresy becomes a strategy for certain critics using the methodologies of different schools of critical theory. In that sense, what comes under scrutiny involves only one *facet* of the society of English studies. By focusing on the rhetoric of heresy in literary criticism, the opportunity exists to

carefully demonstrate how heresy operates in the dominant mode of expression within the field: published interpretation and criticism.⁶ Looking at heresy in this way allows for a thorough examination of the topic while suggesting far-reaching implications for the entire institution.

This is not to suggest that all critics indulge in heresy or that criticism is the only means by which members of the institution express themselves. Teaching, presenting at conferences, administering programs, and many other duties comprise the life of the English scholar. But the fact remains, rightly or wrongly, that publication looms as the driving determinant of success and position in the institution. It would seem only reasonable then to isolate this practice and study it more closely. But doing so does not mean to suggest that all rhetoric is heretical and therefore monolithic, or that no other activities make up the life of the institution.

The discipline of sociology furnishes a model helpful to a discussion of perceived heresy within an institution. Lester R. Kurtz presents an excellent study of heresy during the Modernist crisis in the Catholic church in his article "The Politics of Heresy" and his book on the same subject, *The Politics of Heresy: The Modernist Crisis in Roman Catholicism*. Kurtz thinks of heresy in terms of rhetorical responses to threats to institutional structure and contends that attempts to purge heresy serve to maintain power relationships within that subculture. The result consists of what Thomas M. Lessl calls the managing of "internal deviance" ("Heresy"19). Lessl's own application of Kurtz's model to the dispute between evolution and creationism, an academic controversy, provides a potent example of how the ruling elite of a community strives to squelch all challenges to its power, whether they prove real or imagined.

Kurtz outlines in his works five dominant characteristics of the orthodox reaction to alleged heresy: 1) the identification of heresy which results in a crisis within the

institution; 2) a struggle over authority; 3) the building of solidarity to remove the heresy; 4) the defining of "orthodoxy" through boundary-work; and 5) a ritual through which pressures upon the institution are relieved. The first characteristic concerns the perception of heresy, which brings about a crisis, with the heretics coming from within the community: "Heretics are within the circle, or within the institution; consequently, they are close enough to be threatening but distant enough to be considered in error" ("Politics" 1087). Kurtz notes that "In Catholic tradition, a heretic is a baptized, professing Catholic," and therefore the "heretic is a 'deviant insider'" (*Politics* 3-4). While attacks from outside the group require answering, they do not pose the same threat from members inside the institution because they disrupt more completely and even have the capacity to ascend to positions of power, thus altering the direction and purpose of the community. Kurtz explains that "only when criticism and challenge come from within, only when it claims to be orthodox, does the institution grow alarmed" ("Politics"1096).

Lessl provides a relevant illustration. The first appearance of creationism in the 1920s caused little concern for scientists because it grew from outside the ranks in the fundamentalist religious community. Scientists shrugged off such a threat as a conservative reaction to modernism, and their cause found public vindication in the 1925 Scopes trial. However, when a small group of scientists within the community began forming their own journals and organizations to advocate creationism in the 1960s, scientists viewed the developments with great alarm because creationism intruded upon science in a search for authority (Lessl 19). As a result, Lessl believes the "discussion has focused on the deviance of the creation scientists who, having all the accrediting insignia of science, audaciously violate its conventions and become, in effect, a heretical threat to the scientific establishment" (19). Heresy provokes such strong reactions because "criticism from within a social organization may be more intellectually offensive than external

criticism" (*Politics* 11).

A contention over authority commences when heresy begins, and Kurtz identifies this as the second characteristic of internal deviance. Lessl grants that the orthodox may see the crisis as the defense of truth, but the dispute may also "be regarded as a political struggle" ("Heresy" 21). Kai T. Erickson demonstrates that the antinomian heresy in Massachusetts had its beginnings in Anne Hutchinson's parlor long before the local clergy took notice, because until she declared their inability to interpret scripture, they had no reason to view her as a threat to their authority and power. Lessl observes that this brought about the "transformation of Hutchinson's deviant doctrines into a challenge to ecclesiastical authority" and made the clergy anxious to remove her from the church, though "the doctrines she espoused were widely known long before she was prosecuted as a heretic" ("Heresy" 21). Kurtz argues that expelling heretics "reinforces systems of dominance" ("Politics"1086), and there occurs no reason to assert that dominance unless the orthodox see their authority, not just their beliefs, called into question.

Heresy's third characteristic involves the building of solidarity among the members of an institution. Lessl writes that "Heresy is two-sided, [sic] it at once threatens the institution by introducing and propagating error but also causes the institution's members to draw together in a community of responsibility devoted to extinguishing the fires of deviance" ("Heresy" 21). Heresy demands the cooperation of the segments of the group for the continued survival of orthodoxy. Lewis A. Coser recognizes that "renegadism signifies and symbolizes a desertion of those standards of the group considered vital to its well-being, if not its actual existence" (69). The creationist heresy in science, "benefits institutional science to the extent that it brings together scientists who are ordinarily isolated within their specialization and produces among them a renewed social consciousness" (Lessl, "Heresy" 21). One of the interesting by-products of this solidarity

involves a new sort of opportunity for publication: the defense of orthodoxy and the castigation of the heretic. Lessl points out that "the publication of anticreationist books has become almost a subindustry for scientists" ("Heresy" 24). The orthodox often spend more time maintaining power than going about the business of the institution.

Boundary-work constitutes the fourth dimension of heresy. The orthodox must establish what exactly orthodoxy consists of in order to keep the heretics at bay and in clear relief from the true believers. Defining limits often involves a negative process: "the boundaries of what is true and acceptable are marked out through a systematic identification of what is false and unacceptable" (Kurtz, "Politics" 1085). Boundary-work must take place because as Kurtz notes, heresy is "claimed by its proponents to be truly orthodox" ("Politics" 1088). Often an institution operates without giving much thought to what philosophy actually underlies its method and purpose. Heresy provides a set of values and propositions to reject, and in that rejection orthodoxy can better define itself.⁷

Last of all, heresy serves as a ritual activity "through which anxieties attendant to orthodoxy are relieved" (Lessl, "Heresy" 22). Heretics, according to Kurtz, become easy and available scapegoats for all the pressures put upon an institution ("Politics" 1097). In the case of the modernist controversy among Catholics, "modernists came to represent all that was wrong with the modern world" ("Politics" 1094). Unable to control forces exerting a strain from outside the group, the orthodox hunted down and purged the internal deviance as a stress-relieving alternative. Heretics can even carry blame "for externally located causes of tension" (Lessl, "Heresy" 22). The orthodox solace themselves in the belief that the expulsion of heretics from within the institution will somehow solve all the extra-institutional problems confronting the group. In the case of evolutionists versus creationists, Lessl believes the creationists become "the most immediate and concrete representatives of outward evil," when in fact the real threat to

scientists exists in "popular and political ambivalence" ("Heresy" 24).

To Kurtz's model should be added Max Weber's ideas on the nature of sacred texts, for these ideas apply fruitfully to the dialogue surrounding literary criticism. Weber makes a helpful distinction between texts and the interpretation of them: "*Canonical Scriptures* contain the Revelations and traditions themselves, whereas *dogmas* are priestly interpretation of their meanings" (458). In Weber's formula, literary works would stand as canonical scripture with the criticism surrounding them constituting dogma. One of the great howls often heard among critics is that the opposition commits the error of dogmatism.⁸ But according to Weber, dogma results from the interpretation of any canonical text.

One possible formulation then of the controversy among literary critics requires imagining the factions as warring literary priests. With the canon set, a battle ensues over whose interpretation, whose dogma, will prevail, and as a result this interpretive struggle helps determine which group will gain control of the community.⁹ The irony rests in the strange way heresy gets defined over the course of this struggle. For I would add an important addition to Kurtz's model as it applies to literary criticism: unlike any other institution, literary discourse rewards heretical expression as it questions and very often condemns orthodox rhetoric. Heresy becomes a strategy to gain a voice and power in written literary interpretation. Literary critics seek to avoid the tag "orthodox interpretation" at all costs in their careers. One way for critics to carve a place for themselves in literary criticism involves creating an image of themselves as iconoclasts at war with the texts they interpret and reformers of the culture that produces those texts. Heresy for heresy's sake produces a constant barrage of criticism that strives to obliterate all commentary that went before it, very often subsuming the text under study along with it. Literary texts are no longer sites for interpretation, but rather "sites of contention,"

opportunities not to extract and amplify meaning, but occasions for critics to espouse the latest heresy, very often with tenuous connections to the text being engaged. As Hayden White comments on criticism in general, "The critic no longer knows exactly why he is doing what he does or how he does it; yet he cannot stop. He is in the grip of a *vis interpretativa*, the compulsive power of which impels the critic to reflect more on criticism than on 'reading'" (267). This describes perfectly the consuming impulses of heresy.

An example from recent criticism will help to illustrate. A popular topic of the last five years in literary studies involves colonialism, postcolonialism, and empire. The urge to attack texts in light of their response (or most often their lack of one) to colonial and imperial questions now consumes a great amount of print in journals and panels at literature conferences.¹⁰ Certainly a book that should immediately come to the forefront of such discussions is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. No book of the early twentieth century better captures the depravity and moral vacuum of colonial endeavors than Conrad's. While Marlow unravels his tale down the Congo, western civilization itself comes unraveled, culminating in Kurtz's final pitiful croak of despair, "The horror, the horror." In a climate of multicultural studies and marginalized literatures, no text seems to anticipate and condemn the excesses of empire better than *Darkness*.

But a problem immediately confronts today's heretical literary critic. People have already intimated that *Heart of Darkness* contains much of what fills colonial interpretations of texts.¹¹ And the one thing a heretical critic must not do is give the least appearance of trucking with the orthodox. So what might appear as a great opportunity for new historians and cultural materialists to exercise heretical strategies and expose all the brutalities of colonialism becomes instead an overwhelming dilemma merely because someone else has hinted at it before.

So what does a prominent critic of imperialism like Edward W. Said do with

Conrad? In *Culture and Imperialism* Said tackles *Darkness* and reaches this most remarkable conclusion:

They [Marlow and Kurtz] (and of course Conrad) are ahead of their time in understanding that what they call 'the darkness' has an autonomy of its own, and can reinvade and reclaim what imperialism has taken for *its* own. But Marlow and Kurtz are also creatures of their time and cannot take the next step, which would be to recognize that what they saw, disablingly and disparagingly, as a non-European 'darkness' was in fact a non-European world *resisting* imperialism so as one day to regain sovereignty and independence, and not, as Conrad reductively says, to reestablish the darkness. Conrad's tragic limitation is that even though he could see clearly that on one level imperialism was essentially pure dominance and land-grabbing, he could not then conclude that imperialism had to end so that 'natives' could lead lives free from European domination. As a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them. (30)

Said could write a handbook on the politics of heresy. With noticeable ease he acknowledges the observations of the past ("They . . . are ahead of their time in understanding what they call 'the darkness' has an autonomy of its own"), but he must quickly reach a decision. Said cannot repudiate the critics of the past in this particular case because to do so would involve a repudiation of his own form of heresy. I use the word "heresy" here in the sense of innovation. The idea of innovation for its own sake remains one of the standard definitions of heresy in theological discussions and best captures the essence of heresy in literary criticism.¹²

Other critics have noticed Conrad's dark ruminations on empire. Said's special

province, so he cannot dismiss them; instead he dismisses Conrad himself simply because *Heart of Darkness* fails to "grant the natives their freedom." Being too much "of his time" comprises the horrible trespass Conrad stands guilty of in Said's eyes. In other words, says Said, because Conrad's text draws too close to my heresy concerning empire to the point other critics have noted its possibilities, I must become yet more heretical and demand a political expression from Conrad he remains forever incapable of uttering. Said concludes by turning his conclusions into a moral certitude: "The cultural and ideological evidence that Conrad was wrong in his Eurocentric way is both impressive and rich" (30). Indeed, Said holds not only Conrad to the rigors of his heresy, he condemns all writers of the colonial period who do not tow his ideological line: "One of the difficult truths I discovered in working on this book is how very few of the British or French artists whom I admire took issue with the notion of 'subject' or 'inferior' races so prevalent among officials who practiced those ideas as a matter of course in ruling India or Algiers" (xiv). Said constantly takes writers to task for not engaging the heresy he has built his career upon. One can only say these authors commit a Sin of Omission; fail to criticize empire adequately, says Said, and the writer fails as an artist.

Heresy for heresy's sake, innovation that delights only in its own voice, always paints the critic into such corners. Said's rhetoric at times would like to embrace Conrad's achievement--he never questions Conrad's inclusion in the canon or that he writes great literature--but his heretical purpose will not allow him to do so. Instead of extending what smacks too much of an orthodox argument, Said must destroy and level everything and rebuild a new heretical stance upon the ruins. The result brings into being a rather half-hearted condemnation of a work containing tremendous power and vision, a work that placed in its proper context calls into question many of the assumptions underlying empire and European power.

This fate often befalls works in the canon; after all, the ultimate heresy involves removing a canonical work from its entrenched position. But this occurs through a long process of heretical discourse until finally, the text exhausted, critics innovate it into exhaustion. This layering of heresy, the sedimentary formation of rhetoric, often removes a critic so far from the text that no real engagement transpires. We get criticism about criticism; journal articles become ever longer as the heretical critic seeks to lay waste to all that has gone before to expound yet another "innovation." Or worse yet, in what I see as a distressing characteristic of more and more writing, the critic has nothing more to say than that everyone else has got it all wrong.¹³ Such an approach, a Heresy of Negation, must ultimately collapse under its own destructive impulse, threatening to consume all literature with it.

Indeed, we can see a crisis in literary criticism occurring. Barbara Hernstein Smith, former president of the MLA, writes in *Profession* that she welcomes the "radical destabilization of the domain of literary studies" because the discipline "will be effectively and undeniably undone." She goes on to claim that "'literary theory' will be seen as having operated not as an agent of an ultimate disintegration but, rather, as the most fertile site of an interim destiny" (2-3). But as Avrom Fleishman points out, Hernstein Smith offers nothing to fill this destabilization of literary studies except "the savor of change" ("Condition" 813).

The real issue behind the "radical destabilization" of literary criticism again can be traced back to the idea of heresy. Heresy for its own sake must constantly find new areas of interest to consume as old texts and approaches lose their heretical opportunities. One can only say something completely different about a given text for so long. So we see a heightened awareness of more obscure texts by canonical writers (witness the explosion of comment on Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*)¹⁴ or an insistence that marginalized or "lost"

writers come to the forefront to correct old abuses stemming from cultural elitism.¹⁵

Heresy is a monster that critics can never satiate, and what better place to innovate than at a site where no one has ever said anything before? Finally, in the process we dispense with any notion of "literature" at all because we exponentially increase the boundaries within which heresy can thrive and comment. As the director of undergraduate studies at Syracuse put it, "What you read is not now as important as how you read it" (Langiulli 5).¹⁶

What all this suggests should alarm the most confident practitioner of literary criticism. The Rhetoric of Inclusion does not have an ideological or philosophical basis; instead, the drive to ever-widen the boundaries of literary studies involves an effort to establish new areas of power within criticism. Heretical discourse has no interest in the text it engages. The critic merely uses the opportunity the text provides to shout a heresy the critic hopes will be heard and acknowledged widely enough to allow an entrenchment in the machinery of reward the profession dispenses (tenure, grants, and the like).

The risks involved in such an attitude cannot be underestimated. First, literary critics find themselves in grave danger of relinquishing control over their own discipline. Students now flock to hear Robert Coles, a psychologist, lecture on literature at Harvard because he uses texts to comment on the human condition and how we might respond to them. Many philosophy departments have increasingly turned to novels and other imaginative literature to ponder the questions of existence because their own discipline long ago fell into the disputes about language and meaning that now plague literary studies.¹⁷ As some critics insist on chasing the golden bough of heresy, other disciplines happily seize upon the rich contents of literature as a means of providing access to difficult concepts and propositions their own efforts cannot express as well or as artfully.

Such literary criticism, in its quest for new forms of heretical expression, often

appropriates the methodology and ideas of other disciplines. While interdisciplinary study often yields more holistic conclusions, the perception often arises that literary studies have so spent themselves on innovation that they must constantly borrow from outside sources. I asked a respected historian once what he thought of New Historicism in literature, and he simply laughed and said historians had been doing "New History" since the turn of the century. Literary critics often appear a step behind other disciplines, simply imitating the work of other fields. This seems especially true of American critics who often look to Europe for theoretical assumptions and ideas. Many French critics complain that Americans indulge in theory they left behind years ago.¹⁸ Rather than using other disciplines as tools to generate original and creative work in literary studies, too many critics appropriate the structures of other fields to espouse a new heresy in purely imitative terms. Sometimes these attempts prove tenuous; sometimes they prove laughable.¹⁹

The constant drive for innovation also makes for an educational process that rewards the passing fad over the solid foundation. The endless search for the next theoretical rising star makes for a patchwork of knowledge and a haphazard grounding in the contexts from which literature arises. As Fleishman sees it, "A shared conception of English as a body of knowledge, changing but coherent and comparable to those of other fields, has fallen by the wayside, when it has not been scorned as an ideological fiction" ("Condition" 815). This loss of a center from which to work, this inability to define what literature offers us and how it can be interpreted certainly stands as the gravest consequence of heresy for heresy's sake.

What I am suggesting is that for quite some time many literary critics have been indulging in criticism that has nothing to do with literary studies and everything to do with gaining power in literary criticism. Heresy revolves around either: 1) An effort by members within the institution to re-define the basis of orthodoxy, believing the

community will be best served by such change or, 2) A political struggle within the group to control the means by which orthodoxy gets administered. The difficulty within literary studies occurs because the devices of power and purpose are the same: criticism. Critics have never found an effective means to wrestle over institutional questions so they do so through criticism, the same instrument by which they wish to disseminate the boundaries of orthodoxy and make clear their purpose. Once orthodoxy becomes anathema, heretical criticism has nothing left to do but seek increasingly outrageous stances that offer opportunities to win places of influence in literary studies. But heresy cannot continue to thrive in an atmosphere where it has no sense of orthodoxy to question or reform. Nor can it struggle to re-establish an orthodox set of assumptions for the community to uphold and rally around when orthodox expression has lost all meaning.²⁰ Such institutions generally die, having killed their very reason for existence.

Orthodoxy as a formulation from which community begins does not contain an inherent repressiveness. The myth in much criticism that all structures seek to oppress and exclude denies the fundamental construction of any functioning community.²¹ Literary critics themselves draw boundaries. Otherwise freshman essays on Milton would appear alongside Stanley Fish, and the millions of dollars the MLA makes from their handbooks would be abandoned for a documentation system based on personal integrity. Every institution must have a purpose, a clearly defined set of goals, an orthodox vision, that allows it to perpetuate itself and foster the good of the community. Literary criticism, by denying that vision and creating a set of theoretical schools that not only undermine but virtually destroy the possibility of a scholarly community, threatens to annihilate itself in the name of heretical freedom.

What purpose, what type of orthodoxy, should literary criticism support? I in no way support a *return* to anything as do some critics who appear more nostalgic than

anything else. One of the complaints by young scholars at the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics meeting concerned the dominance of New Critical readings at most sessions ("Treating" A22). New Criticism, Structuralism, and Deconstruction are all heresies that have come and gone, replaced by new innovations in a never-ending cycle. These impulses long for nothing more than a return to the time when a particular critic's heresy reigned supreme in literary interpretation. Nor do I wish to demand a monolithic approach to literature. Institutions that allow no diversity, no challenge to orthodoxy, become as stagnant as those that trumpet heresy for its own sake. Both lead to a preoccupation with power and lead away from a responsible cultivation of purpose.

I want to suggest a few, tentative steps toward an orthodox exterior in which a plurality of critical voices might reside comfortably. Simply put, the basis for steering literary studies away from heretical posturing and back to a coherent mission involves keeping before all endeavors the idea of fostering community in the critical institution. Without a sense of group identity, without the ability to direct critical energies toward the success of a defined, prospering community, literary criticism will inevitably disintegrate into a tool for the wielding of political dominance.

In the following discussion, after identifying the rhetoric of heresy in several theoretical schools, I will develop the idea of community in literary studies. Let me say here that community must occur at every level of the institution: teachers must foster a sense of belonging in the classroom as students learn to read and engage texts; graduate students must sense a call to a community of well-educated, competent scholars who look to the long-term achievements of research instead of the latest passing critical fad. But none of these achievements will become possible until criticism seeks to clarify and enrich all kinds of reading and writing projects, especially concerning the texts the community deems most important to its development. Finally, literary studies must project to people

outside the institution that our discipline has much to offer and strives to deliver a body of research and criticism that benefits all facets of society, both academic and general.

Before any communal stocktaking can take place, however, criticism must recapture the essence of its mission: the study and interpretation of literature. How we define literature must of necessity always remain in flux, but critics must come to terms with the fact that certain texts demand attention in any cultural setting. The barrage against any concept of Literature, the erasure of the author, the cries of protest about oppressive structure become the heretic's way of lazily extending the boundaries of what texts can merit attention under the heading "literary criticism." Certainly literatures suffer marginalization, and individual authors get lost in the shuffle of cultural assumptions and discrimination, but the job of the critic should be to restore those texts that deserve inclusion in the discourse of literary studies and to weed out the rest.

The text seems a logical place to embark on the creation of a center for literary studies. The integrity and voice of its contents must not be manipulated or cast aside in favor of critical heresy meant to further some political or personal agenda inside the community. Theory should be seen as a tool to help understand the text and not a hammer to create a space for power within the institution. While the political implications of texts both in their historical context and today should not suffer neglect, criticism has no business engaging in institutional politics. One of the basic assumptions of this study is that texts have something to say, and the critic must learn to listen. Certain boundaries exist and within them particular texts can say and do many things. The greater the achievement of the text, the greater the richness of its voice and depth of its resonance. But the critic should learn to admit when the text proves incapable of uttering what she wants to hear, or the whisper remains too faint for readers to decipher adequately. And the community should react vehemently when it realizes the primacy of the text undergoes

abuse for the sake of innovation and heretical musings; the diminution and manipulation of the text mean the diminution and manipulation of literary criticism.

Placing the text at the center of literary studies and within a construction of community allows for the diversity that any healthy group demands. Wayne C. Booth explores the boundaries that must be placed upon that plurality in *Critical Understanding*. He offers three basic assumptions that must rule literary criticism for both community and plurality to survive within the critical debates of texts. As starting points, they allow critics the chance to better define and analyze the strategies of heresy. Although the concept, definition, and practical application of community will be enlarged upon throughout this study, Booth provides an excellent place to begin the process of discovering a center from which to proceed. Plurality for Booth requires vitality, justice, and understanding.

Vitality insures the constant exchange of ideas and critical positions:

The question must always be, under this criterion, *does* this critical statement in fact increase the likelihood of further critical life? Or does it leave its author complacent, while his adversaries, sensing danger, are tempted to retaliate blindly, lashing out in wounded fury? (221)

The idea of vitality allows for a great diversity of voices speaking on texts, but they cannot seek to isolate and cut off other approaches. Booth asks whether any critic under scrutiny offers "to vitalize only yourself or me as well," and "are you offering life to a community of *readers*" (22)? Heresy within literary criticism moves to silence other voices to gain a position of authority over the text and other critics. As Booth notes, "Much polysemic criticism seems to offer a strange and destructive new *contra-cogito* 'I invent new readings, therefore you, the author, *are not*' (222). Heresy undermines vitality by engaging in a "search for ways to impose what I already know" (223). This imposition does not allow for others to reply to the heresy or seek to discover new meanings from the text. Booth

compares such criticism to a "medieval jousting--a zero-sum game in which *my* rise depends on *your* fall" (222). Heresy as a strategy for power squelches vitality by always putting the rise of the critic practicing it before all other considerations of community or genuine critical debate.

Justice comprises the second necessary component for plurality in criticism. Booth sees justice as being "violated whenever any critic is granted less than his due" (223). Justice derives from considering not only what a text means but what critics owe it (224). Part of that responsibility to the text involves its autonomy and unique expression. When texts become mere occasions to assert power, as is the strategy of heresy, "there is nothing to prevent us from reducing all varieties of meaning to a single meaning" (225). The impulse of heresy in literary criticism reduces texts to a single meaning by violating others' right to justice, to a fair representation, as the heretical critic ignores the demands of the text in favor of espousing an interpretation meant to achieve power. If all the heretical critic wishes to achieve is dominance in the discourse, then any text will do and no text will receive the justice due to it.

The final component of maintaining community and plurality is understanding. Booth recognizes that much criticism "is not concerned with the *possibility* of understanding at all, but with its desirability" (231). It is precisely the desirability of understanding that the heretical critic wishes to always undermine, because in doing so the heretic opens up the possibility of ever greater liberties being taken with the text and interpretation. Understanding must by necessity place boundaries upon interpretation:

That's precisely what the effort of human understandig is based on: the assumption that one code *will* dominate over another in such a way as to establish superiority, in a given setting, of some readings over some other readings. (232)

But such dominance threatens the heretical enterprise; if one reading leads to greater understanding than another, then the heretical critic loses the opportunity to dismiss such a reading on the basis of orthodox oppression or the impossibility of the text "signifying" any meaning adequately. Heresy must always fight against understanding to enable the infinite progression of heretical readings and interpretations that allow critics to isolate their discourse from all others.

All three of these ideas, (or tests as Booth refers to them), working together provide an excellent starting point to illuminate and curb the proliferation of heresy in literary criticism. Instead of seeking to deny vitality, justice, and understanding for the sake of heretical power, criticism must turn toward these concepts along with community to enrich and insure the health of literary studies. Booth notes that "The Babel of critical voices is transformed at the moment when each critic decides that his survival depends not on shouting down all the others but on granting them a just hearing" (232). This "shouting down" provides an apt description of the strategy of heresy in criticism. Heresy must strive to negate other voices so the heretical pronouncement of the critic gains authority over all others.

The final consideration of heresy at this point involves accountability. What happens as the result of innovation for the sake of innovation in literary criticism? What consequences derive from the heretical strategy? Is all to be abandoned for the sake of achieving power within literary discourse? That becomes the ultimate question of the discussion of heresy and community in this study. And while beginning with a sociological view of heresy, the question of accountability, community, and value in the critical enterprise leads to a metaphysical problem. Does more exist in literary criticism than the Will to Power and the drive to attain individual autonomy and control over the texts that critics study? I would answer that question with an overwhelming yes, and this study will

seek to discover a basis for a new idea of criticism based upon the ideas of community and an orthodox center for literary studies.

By now I have most certainly incited enough protest and cries of disbelief to make even the most stalwart reader cringe. Nevertheless, I hope to accomplish several things in this study. First and foremost, by examining several theoretical schools I want to illustrate that a frequent impulse filling scholarly journals has nothing to do with literature or literary studies but everything to do with heretical pronouncements meant to gain access and control over criticism. Critics need to realize the abuse of heresy and seek to remedy the excess of political gamesmanship that proliferates under the guise of criticism. By bearing in mind Booth's criteria for plurality, the abuses of heresy against community become evident. Next, I propose to work toward a definition of community that I think would alleviate many of the pressures and chaos within literary studies. Finally, I want to use that definition to offer a type of criticism that employs the theory under consideration in a way that promotes both the primacy of the text and the fostering of community. By such modeling, this study can move beyond the normal complaints about the problems and crises of criticism and offer an alternative which I think could go far in moving the practice of literary studies in an expansive and purposeful new direction.

Rather than trying to locate heresy in all of literary criticism, I have narrowed my study to Shakespeare and Milton studies. Two good reasons exist for such a choice. First, Shakespeare and Milton remain so solidly entrenched in the canon that it becomes relatively easy to focus on what is said about them rather than canonical debates of whether they should be read at all. Second, the plurality of voices commenting on such enormous figures allows for a wide range of theories with which to engage. We can identify heresy in a wide variety of theoretical schools while still keeping our focus on only two figures and their works.

I will begin by looking at the formulation of heresy as a strategy for power in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. I begin there because the figure of Satan clearly defines how heretical interpretation can be used as an agency for domination and how community runs counter those impulses. I will then look at the genesis of heresy in the institution by examining the Critic/Scholar debate in Milton studies. In this debate occur all the elements of Lester Kurtz's model. The idea of orthodoxy as a center from which criticism proceeds quickly gets rejected in favor of heresy to gain influence in the institution, the unique characteristic of heresy as a strategy in literary criticism. The next chapter will study performance criticism in Shakespearean studies and use the heresy found there as an occasion to formulate a definition of community which will serve as a starting place for the rest of the work. Subsequent chapters focus on heretical arguments in certain theoretical debates followed by criticism employing that particular theory and a definition of community. Completing the study is a more extended discussion on the idea of community as it applies to criticism and literary studies.

Such a study as this will engender much skepticism, but for too long literary critics have proven unable to cast an inquiring eye upon themselves. Given the recent political correctness debates with detractors outside the institution, an even greater reluctance has developed to confront honestly the weaknesses and abuses in literary studies as they now stand. The voices of heresy drown the voices of reason and common sense all too often, and many simply enter the innovative fray apprehensive they will lose power or security in departments and the field at large. I have no nostalgic impulses; no longing for some "golden era" of criticism informs my thinking. The fact exists that when literary criticism indulges in heresy for its own sake it loses a sense of purpose and vision that can hold the enterprise together. This study wants to point out the process by which we have arrived at such a state and formulate a modest suggestion about how we might begin to reconstruct

our community and orthodox center.

Chapter 1
Satan:
The First Heretic

What is at stake in the practice of heresy as a strategy to gain control over an interpretative situation and a community of interpreters? While this study will look at the dynamics of heresy in literary criticism, a beginning point for thinking about heresy and its consequences offers itself in the character of Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Milton creates in Satan a force of rebellion who is above all things heretical, as outlined in the introduction, in his attempts to overthrow heaven and establish autonomy. Satan uses interpretation as a weapon to undermine the community which he sees as shackling the interests of his individuality and freedom.

What Milton subscribes as a remedy to Satanic revolt is not simply the fixed and unchanging ways of God. God's dealings with both the angelic hosts and Adam and Eve organize themselves around the concept of community and relationships. For Milton, the ground of community must derive from the transcendent presence of God in all affairs. And because Truth is to be found in a person, not a quantifiable object, relationship describes the apprehension of that presence. Martin Buber describes this presence as the "center" necessary for all community to exist: "The real essence of community is undoubtedly to be found in the--manifest or hidden--fact that it has a center" ("Comment"89). Buber sees this as the first cause of all manifestations of community: "It is not the periphery, the community, that come first, but the radii, the common quality of relation with the Centre. This alone guarantees the authentic existence of the community"

(*I and Thou* 115). Here the sociological description of a community is replaced by identifying the metaphysical grounding of any community. Without considering that grounding, all conversation about community ceases because community itself loses the center that makes it possible. And the heretical impulse as a strategy for power destroys that center as demonstrated by Milton in the character of Satan.

The revolt of Satan and the remedy of community also strike at the fundamental question of interpretation and existence. Do individual power and autonomy best describe the state of existence or does the organization of community around a center reflect the reality of being? For Milton that answer is a resounding vote for community and the rebellion of Satan threatens the basis for community to exist both in heaven and on earth. That Milton chooses heretical interpretation as Satan's chief tactic in his war against God demonstrates how central the act of interpreting the world in all its facets was for Milton. Everyone must interpret, and the nature of that interpretation, whether for individual control or communal well-being, determines the possibility for the survival of all human endeavors.

Milton would perhaps find himself scandalized, however, to note how much more critical attention has been paid to the character of Satan in *Paradise Lost* than God or Christ ever receive. Or would he really? The answer to that question, of course, has much to do with the way one perceives Satan and how vital a role in the epic one subscribes to him. Critics have long argued over the "success" of Satan in many different terms: as dramatic creation, as adversary, as object of scorn, as hero, as source of temptation and evil. And despite all the divergent voices, the reactions to Satan basically lead in two primary directions: Satan as Hero or Satan as Ass.¹

The description of Satan as Ass originates in C.S. Lewis's *A Preface to Paradise Lost* in which he maintains that while readers can appreciate Milton's depiction of Satan in

an artistic sense, in the end, "mere Christianity commits every Christian to believing that 'the Devil is (in the long run) an ass'" (93). Upon this foundation much criticism follows: Milton does a masterful job of portraying evil in the character of Satan, but in the end his readers must recognize that evil and reject it. The reasons and formulations of evil may vary, but the conclusion is inescapable: Satan represents a stance the reader must abhor. In many ways Satan as Ass equates to Milton as Success. The poet's ability to bring readers to a recognition of Satan's inherent evil and corrupting voice in Eden permits those same readers to choose a different path than Adam and Eve and ultimately to understand the ways of God.

Seen in this light, much of the commentary on Satan as Ass revolves around Milton's ability to make the reader apprehend Satan as a figure to detest and to see him as the source of misery in the poem. This approach also creates a context for the most powerful application of the reader's position in *Paradise Lost*, Stanley Fish's *Surprised by Sin*. Rather than a book that merely makes startling and outrageous claims, *Surprised by Sin* can be seen as firmly in the line of Lewis's Satan as Ass. Only in Fish's scenario, readers come to the recognition of Satan's evilness by first coming to terms with their own fallenness. By identifying readers with Satan, by seeing him as somehow heroic, powerful, or wronged, Milton turns a mirror upon the audience to assert that such feelings link them with Satan and place them out of favor with God. Fish still regards Satan as a character to reject; *Surprised by Sin's* brilliance resides in recognizing the manner in which Milton leads his audience to that understanding. The very inability to read correctly and see Satan for what he is demonstrates the insidious nature of his power and the reader's need to escape it. Milton would have critics believe Satan is Hero to make the revelation that Satan is Ass all the more irresistible.

Taking a somewhat different approach, Balachandra Rajan explores this topic in

regard to readers of Milton's day in *Paradise Lost and the Seventeenth Century Reader*.² Rajan traces the reaction of Milton's contemporaries to Satan as one of terror, the very emotion Milton seeks in the poem (94-95). Milton's language, argues Rajan, would have registered with his readers to hold Satan in contempt (95). But Rajan also understands that Milton must tackle Satan poetically as well as morally, and therefore to keep the tension in the epic, "the weight of the poetry is . . . thrown in on Satan's side" (96). This strategy has the effect of equalizing "in our imaginations the relative magnitude of the contending forces" (96). While Milton succeeds in leading the seventeenth-century reader to revile Satan, he does not adequately offer an alternative: "The failure lies not in the depiction of Satan but in that of the heavenly values which should subdue him" (106). Christ's victory in the poem "remains a moral rather than a poetic victory" (107). Milton triumphs in making Satan an Ass but fails to clearly make Christ the Hero in terms of poetic strength.

It takes only a very small leap indeed to move from Christ failing to triumph completely in the poem to declaring Satan as Hero. Once again an inverse seems to hold true: Satan as Hero means Milton as Failure. The main source of this failure derives from Milton creating a Satan too sympathetic to his own inclinations and those of his readers. As early as 1930, E.M.W. Tillyard laments that "I do not see how one can avoid admitting that Milton did in part ally himself with Satan, that unwittingly he was lead away by the creature of his own imagination" (*Milton* 277). Tillyard makes this point in the delightfully entitled portion of his book *Milton*, "Unconscious Meaning" in *Paradise Lost*. For Tillyard and others after him, Satan "gets away" from Milton and the result creates a "Satan [that] is a more powerful figure than the Son" (278). *Paradise Lost* becomes a book with pessimistic overtones as Milton fails to have God and Christianity triumph over a Satan too powerful to control. Again the source of this inadequacy derives from Milton's

identification with Satan: "There is only one figure in *Paradise Lost* whose strength is shown through conflict and endurance. This is Satan, and it is through him that Milton's own heroic energy is most powerfully shown" (*Milton* 278).³

A.J.A. Waldock also firmly posits Satan as hero, but sees Milton's failure as much more extensive. The true base for Satan's hold over the poem occurs due "to Milton's inexperience in the assessment of narrative problems" (5). *Paradise Lost* must keep the reader's interest, so Milton cannot "spoil Satan too soon, spoil therefore the story, spoil the poem" (72).⁴ This narrative dilemma causes Milton to invest too much plausibility into Satan's rebellion: "Milton succeeded in suggesting a rather greater degree of provocation for it, and therefore of reasonableness in it, than he ever intended" (74). Like Tillyard, Waldock sees Satan getting away from Milton, and both critics believe the poet must find a remedy to this problem. Satan becomes too interesting, so Milton has to intrude and tell readers not to admire Satan. Through "using this method of allegation Milton can produce a trump card whenever he wishes" (81). This process, however, ruptures the poem and destroys its artistic and creative integrity (78). Besides which, Milton cannot control Satan in this manner because demonstration always triumphs over allegation (78). Milton demonstrates Satanic power, then tries to allege its impotency; "Satan, in short, does not degenerate: *he is degraded*" (83). The loss of control over Satan signals for Waldock a loss of control over the entire poem.⁵

The question certainly arises then as to whether Satan as Hero and Milton as Successful might exist peacefully together. For the Romantics, of course, this union works, because as Rajan writes, the Romantics attack the "question of what the poem is by suggesting that there is a poem other than the official poem on which the real nature of Milton's accomplishment is to be found" ("*Paradise Lost*" 106).⁶ Rajan solves the problem of Satan as Hero, not by positing another "hidden" poem but by arguing for

another genre present in the poem other than epic. *Paradise Lost* becomes tragedy and epic, "a mixed-genre poem with a different protagonist for each of its primary genres" ("*Paradise Lost*" 107). Rajan offers a most plausible compromise here between Satan and Milton's achievement in *Paradise Lost*. Rather than viewing Satan as a character in charge of a play, Rajan allows Satan his heroic qualities by giving him his own genre to rule over. In the end, Christ emerges triumphant in the epic mode of the poem, the mode which justifies the ways of God to man.

Whatever a critic's approach to Satan in *Paradise Lost*,⁷ all critics and readers judge Satan and Milton's depiction of him. Invariably, the critic uses the Son or God the Father as the measuring rod by which Satan finds defeat or usurps the heroic energy of the poem. Satan as Hero overcomes the forces and rhetoric of heaven despite Milton's best efforts, or Satan as Ass wilts under the power and authority of God's benevolent plan for the universe. Either Satan diminishes throughout the poem as he strays farther from the Son's example of sacrifice and love, or Satan overwhelms the attributes of God through the sheer force of his will and independence. Always the measurement for success or failure derives from the Son or God as the challenges to his heroic status.

An example of this critical tendency appears in John Steadman's "The Idea of Satan as the Hero of *Paradise Lost*." Trying to find a union of Satanic heroism and Miltonic success, Steadman argues that Satan be seen as the "image of an eidolon, a pseudo-hero" (254). Steadman then traces Milton's sources for his portrayal of Satan, including Machiavellian and classical resonances.⁸ Steadman recognizes that the "Satanic image is not simply an illusion but a perversion of true heroism" (255). Steadman, like most critics before him, locates this true heroism in the person of the Son in the poem. So the qualities readers admire in Satan in fact demonstrate a misunderstanding of what constitutes heroism, the correct definition of which appears in the portrayal of the Son in *Paradise*

Lost. Steadman takes Satan's alleged heroic power, measures it against the Son, just as Milton does in the poem, and finds it sorely lacking.

Pondering the idea of Satan as Hero in *Paradise Lost* instead of the Son or God has produced a rich and distinguished body of criticism; much of the "problem" of Satan in the poem, however, derives from an essentially unjust and unwarranted comparison. Satan is not heroic and therefore not in contention with the Son, but rather heretical.⁹ More precisely, the contention is over the *interpretation* of the Son and what the Son's presence means in terms of the community of heaven. As the first heretic, Satan displays all the characteristics of heresy outlined for this study, but even more important, Satan makes a move for interpretative autonomy that mirrors the strategies of heretical literary critics today. In the search for autonomy, Satan threatens, disrupts, and finally divorces himself from the community he pretends to defend with his heretical pronouncements. In addition, Satan uses his interpretative powers to cause the fall of Adam and Eve and puts in peril the community of earth. Satan as Heretic creates a seductive rhetoric that moves attention away from collective responsibility and toward a false sense of independence and freedom, an independence and freedom readily misapprehended as heroic. In the end, Milton powerfully asserts the isolation that results from heretical stances which seek nothing but interpretative power and control for their own sake detached from any sense of communal welfare.

The orthodox utterance about the nature of Christ and his power marks the place to begin examining Satan as Heretic. For it is that declaration that forms the basis for the center that creates the community of Heaven. In Book V of *Paradise Lost*, God calls together the hosts of heaven to declare his Son co-equal with Him:

your Head I him appoint;

And by my Self have sworn to him shall bow

All knees in Heav'n, and shall confess him Lord:

United as one individual Soul

For ever happy: him who disobeys

Mee disobeys, breaks union, and that day

Cast out from God and blessed vision, falls

Into utter darkness, deep ingulft, his place

Ordain'd without redemption, without end. (5.606-15)

Here God makes clear the nature of the Son's authority (equal with His own) and makes just as clear the conditions under which those who wish to stay within the community of heaven must abide along with the penalty for disobedience. God thinks throughout the passage in a collective sense: obedience produces "one individual Soul" and disobedience "breaks union." Nowhere does God couch the power of the Son in terms of individuality meant to arbitrarily assert itself. The Son's presence in heaven merely extends the authority of God, an authority which orders, enables, and ensures a harmonious community. God and the Son form the center which makes community possible in heaven.

What really seems to rankle Satan beyond having his position challenged is the ability of God to change so easily the nature of the structure of heaven simply by naming it so. Satan does not crave the power of creativity so much as the power to interpret what creation means. God (in Satan's mind) calls the Son supreme and that act of interpretation about His nature causes all of heaven to acquiesce. Satan therefore tells Beelzebub that "new Laws thou see'st impos'd" upon them (5.679). The key word in the line becomes "impos'd" as Satan cannot see the Son's ascendancy as anything more than an interpretative choice that denies Satan the position he conversely interprets as rightfully his. Satan will grant God the power of creating, but he will not relinquish what he imagines as his autonomous right to determine what creation means. Heaven, for Satan, is in the eye of

the beholder, or better still, in the interpretation of the individual. God has "impos'd" an interpretation on all of heaven that usurps Satan's ability to retain control over his individual freedom and authority. Already Satan thinks of interpretation in terms of individual power and control and not as a means to further enrich the community.

Satan becomes heretical, not heroic, in order to correct what he claims is an abuse of interpretative authority. Like all great heretics, Satan appeals to his followers by claiming their rights have been violated and their freedom trampled; he must stand up and expose the injustice that threatens the life and quality of heaven. He does so by offering an alternative interpretation of the Son:

Will ye submit your necks, and choose to bend
 The supple knee? ye will not, if I trust
 To know ye right, or if ye know yourselves
 Natives and Sons of Heav'n possess before
 By none, and if not equal all, yet free,
 Equally free; for Orders and Degrees
 Jar not with liberty, but well consist.
 Who can in reason then or right assume
 His equals, if in power and splendor less,
 In freedom equal? or can introduce
 Law Edict on us, who without law
 Err not? much less for this to be our Lord,
 And look for adoration to th' abuse
 Of those Imperial Titles which assert
 Our being ordain'd to govern, not to serve? (5.787-802).

In order to convince his hosts to rebel, Satan must convince them that God's interpretation

of the Son means not community but slavery to an unqualified ruler. Satan cleverly addresses his followers as "Natives and Sons" of heaven to imply clearly that everyone is "God's son"--everyone has just as much right to autonomy as the sovereign being forced upon them. Again Satan returns to the idea of law to perpetuate his case against God as the force that imposes a meaning upon them which leads to their loss of freedom and equality. As this study will point out in other instances, the heretical voice in the community always claims to have the best interests of the group at heart in a move to establish itself as the voice of power and control. Satan must destroy the orthodox position of the Son's role in order to achieve the dominance of his own heresy.

Dominance best defines how Satan regards interpretative power. He never thinks in terms of how the position of the Son will influence the community or of what interpretation will bring about the most good for heaven. Instead, interpretation simply equates with the opportunity to control all those who do not have the ability to determine the Son's role. Nowhere does Satan ever compare himself with the Son; he only disputes who has the authority to decide what the Son *means*. As such, Milton never really compels readers to make a choice between Satan or the Son as hero; rather, Milton asks readers to decide whether interpretation means prosperity for the community or individual power.

In Book 5, Milton counters Satan's heretical challenge with Abdiel. Not only does Abdiel uphold the orthodox view of the Son, but he understands that this position has the interests of the community in mind:

Yet by experience taught we know how good,
 And of our good, and of our dignity
 How provident he is, how far from thought
 To make us less, bent rather to exalt

Our happy state under one Head more near

United. (5.826-31)

God's exalting of the Son has nothing to do with exerting power; God simply desires the best for all of heaven and what might cause all to be "more near united." Abdiel formulates the conditions under which the community can thrive. The Son's authority marks the boundary-line of what is necessary for the continuance of heaven as a harmonious world in which all can find contentment. No reason exists to resent this demarcation as God does not seek to restrict those in heaven but rather protect them and their freedom to exist as independent creatures. For Abdiel, God, and by extension, the Son, ask for no more than what has to occur for heaven to exist as heaven. The center cannot be destroyed or all community will be destroyed along with it.

One can imagine Satan holding his hands over his ears during Abdiel's defense of the orthodox interpretation of the nature of the Son and the structure of heaven. Particularly rankling for Satan has to be Abdiel's insistence that God's creative power gives Him the right to prescribe the best course for that creation. Satan must now confront what before did not trouble him, God's authority as creator and center, not simply interpreter, of creation. Heresy must work backwards to steadily break all ties to any authority outside of itself, to any connection with a community which might impose boundaries on heretical utterance. The heretical voice of Satan insists on his autonomy to the point of self-creation:

That we were form'd then say'st thou? and the work

Of secondary hands, by task transferr'd

From Father to his Son? strange point and new!

Doctrine which we would know whence learnt: who saw

When this creation was? remember'st thou

Thy making, while the Maker gave being?
 We know no time when we were not as now;
 Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd
 By our own quick'ning power. (5.853-61)

The use of the word "Doctrine" indicates Satan's consistent strategy to see all boundaries in the community as mere interpretations which seek to enslave him. "Facts" do not support God's creation of the angelic hosts, only God's interpretation, his doctrine, of how heaven came into being. Again he asserts his rank as one of the "Ethereal Sons" (5.863) to highlight the Son's promotion as an act of interpretive suppression. All are sons in heaven, self-created, and as such all have the power and right to determine their authority and place in heaven. Satan's heresy becomes ever more isolating in order to maintain its separation from all other claims of control or responsibility.

Inevitably Satan must put this interpretation to the test, and so he rebels against God. If that rebellion is viewed as a heretical attack upon the community for dominance and control, then Satan's efforts make much more sense. Because if Satan's interpretation of heaven is correct, if all are sons and all self-begot, then Satan stands a remarkably fair chance of winning his revolution for interpretative freedom. Of course, he is wrong; he mistakes the Son's actual authority, his necessary governance over heaven to ensure its perpetuation, as a mere disagreement over interpretation. His demands for unlimited heretical thought or utterance, for heresy for its own sake, for innovation to always outflank any other bid for power, cannot co-exist with the idea of community. Satan fails and undergoes expulsion from heaven for desiring the power of interpretation devoid of all responsibility or regard for the communal boundaries that make it possible.

After his fall, Satan consistently refuses to grant that his interpretation of the Son contains any error. God wins only through brute force: "Whom reason hath equall'd, force

hath made supreme/Above his equals" (1.248-49). Satan's interpretation would have won over the community if God did not have "Thunder" to make him more powerful. Never in the poem does Satan realize his heresy negates the community he would rule over. By holding up his interpretative control as the only good, he shatters all possibility of a center that would make any community tenable. His heresy seeks nothing but itself. Satan betrays himself by exalting his mind's ability to "make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (1.255). The heretical impulse in Satan constantly desires the ability to transform things into what they are not through interpretive will; he rushes to get outside the boundaries that make anything discrete. And the only way to gain interpretive control over fellowship and community, requires characterizing it as slavery, oppression, and bondage so that the heretic's position appears liberating.

The context in which Satan's heretical arguments get initially aired is, of course, in the council of the fallen angels at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*. As they discuss what to do in the aftermath of their fall, Mammon tries to convince his fellow conspirators to think no more of doing battle against God. He attempts to create a heaven out of hell through interpretive prowess:

How oft amidst

Thick clouds and dark doth Heav'n's all-ruling Sire
 Choose to reside, his Glory unobscur'd,
 And with the Majesty of darkness round
 Covers his Throne; from whence deep thunders roar
 Must'ring thir rage, and Heav'n resembles Hell?
 As he our darkness, cannot we his Light
 Imitate when we please? This Desert soil
 Wants not her hidden lustre, Gems and Gold;

Nor want we skill or art, from whence to raise

Magnificence; and what can Heav'n show more? (2.263-73)

Mammon interprets both hell and heaven in terms which cast a positive spin upon their position; they need only put themselves to the task, and they can transform their world into a reasonable imitation of the heaven they have lost. Mammon attempts to use his interpretation as a means of establishing an alternative community that thrives according to materialistic dictates. The act of interpretation, of saying this means this, Mammon believes brings any situation into being.

Beelzebub, speaking for Satan, rejects Mammon's interpretation by demonstrating a remarkable understanding that their heretical position disqualifies them from any thought of community, whether created through their own volition or through reconciliation with God. The very act of embracing heresy for power and control moves the heretic away from the center that make any community possible. War or peace become equally futile positions because both indicate that the end result might lead to the re-establishment of what they knew before, and their heresy prevents that utterly. Beelzebub makes clear that the only option available involves extending the isolation of their heresy to a new community more prone to subversion. Beelzebub mentions earth as a possible place to spread their interpretative power:

Thither let us bend all our thoughts to learn

What creatures there inhabit, of what mould,

Or substance, how endu'd, and what thir Power,

And where thir weakness, how attempted best,

By force or subtlety (2.354-58)

Satan has, of course, calculated everything here, from Beelzebub's speech to the profitability of "force or subtlety." Satan now understands that his attempts at force can

only be thwarted; his power lies in the ability of convincing others that his heresy offers a more attractive alternative than God as the center for community which results in a relationship with the divine and others. Even though the angels have fallen with him, Satan must continue to control the discourse of hell to insure his power and autonomy over all acts of interpretation and over all new possible sites of heretical subversion.

Satan has no intention of practicing the equality he so eloquently champions in heaven; he will go alone to earth because to maintain his heretical power he can never share authority. To retain his potency, Satan must keep his heretical interpretations solely for his own use. His long speech in Book 2 about the dangers of chaos and the world he seeks (310-429) serves only to insure his dominance over the only place he can extend his powers of heresy. The followers of Satan never realize they exercise no influence or power over the rebellion against heaven or the subversion of earth; Satan speaks the heretical words in both places, and they merely suffer the consequences of his utterance, once by getting thrown out of heaven, secondly by being turned into serpents. Satan wants a community of heretics no more than he wants to remain in the community of the orthodox; both would involve relinquishing the interpretive autonomy that drives him to hell and forces him to remain there. *Paradise Lost* continually depicts Satan in isolation, cut off from any form of relationship or community by his insistence on heretical power.

Satan's journey marks the continuance of his search for heretical power and control. Unsatisfied by the heresy that causes his expulsion from heaven with a third of the angels, Satan now seeks a place to indulge his interpretative autonomy and again disrupt the community that God has established. His efforts constitute a battle to gain a heretical victory over God's boundaries and to undo the center required for fellowship throughout creation. Satan wishes to prove that his heresy has more relevance and allure than God's vision of harmonic relationships centered upon community, that individual power, not

collective fellowship, dominate existence. Said another way, will Adam and Eve's impulse for interpretive autonomy defeat God's decree that one kind of knowledge must be sacrificed to remain in proper relationship with deity, nature, and each other?

Although Satan makes his desire for heretical power clear throughout the poem, the lingering pull of community appears from time to time. As Satan prepares to tempt Adam and Eve, he reflects for a moment on the paradise they inhabit and on them:

O Hell! what do mine eyes with grief behold,
 Into our room of bliss thus high advanc't
 Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps,
 Not Spirits, yet to heav'nly Spirits bright
 Little inferior; whom my thoughts pursue
 With wonder, and could love, so lively shines
 In them Divine resemblance, and such grace
 The hand that form'd them on thir shape hath pour'd. (4.358-65)

The attraction of the community which makes such beauty and contentment possible causes a momentary grief for Satan, a grief so profound that he even muses on the possibility of loving Adam and Eve. But such love would require the release of the heretical autonomy that guides all of his judgments, so he must reject it completely. Adam and Eve become nothing more than two new candidates for the isolating heresy Satan champions as freedom and true equality with God. Even more than Adam and Eve's fall, Satan desires the ruin of the conditions that make the productive, stable, and contented world of Paradise thrive because that world challenges the misery Satan possesses in exchange for complete heretical control over interpretation. The proof that what he has chosen is very meager indeed tortures him, so he moves to disrupt and shatter it.

In his temptation of Eve, Satan emphasizes that placing any limits on interpretation

means a diminishment of freedom and individual authority. Interestingly, Eve's initial reaction at being led to the Tree of Knowledge demonstrates the conditions put upon interpretation within a community:

Serpent, we might have spar'd our coming hither,
 Fruitless to mee, though Fruit be here to excess,
 The credit of whose virtue rest with thee,
 Wondrous indeed, if cause of such effects.
 But of the Tree we may not taste nor touch;
 God so commanded, and left that Command
 Sole Daughter of his voice; the rest, we live
 Law to ourselves, our Reason is our Law. (9.647-54)

Eve clearly understands the boundaries and center which make the Garden's community possible. As Dayton Haskin has argued in *Milton's Burden of Interpretation*, the very state of humanity requires having to interpret the world repeatedly in order to understand what it means and how to react to it. As the first humans, Adam and Eve indulge in interpretation at every level of their existence: in deciding how to tend to the garden, in naming plants and animals, in responding to each other's needs. But in order to enjoy all that Paradise has to offer they must limit their interpretation when it comes to God's command not to eat from the Tree. The Tree denotes the demarcation of where interpretation for the good of the community ends and heresy for the sake of individual power begins. Eve correctly rejects any possibility of understanding the Tree differently than what God has said about it.

Satan brushes aside her objections, however, by suggesting that she has interpreted God erroneously, that her refusal to eat has nothing to do with obedience but instead derives from a mistake over meaning in God's words. Satan quickly offers an alternative

interpretation that will bestow on Eve all the power and freedom she so richly deserves:

he knows that in the day

Ye eat thereof, your Eyes that seem so clear,

Yet are but dim, shall perfectly be then

Op'n'd and clear'd, and ye shall be as Gods,

Knowing both Good and Evil as they know.

That ye should be as Gods, since I as Man,

Internal Man, is but proportion meet,

I of brute human, yee of human Gods.

So ye shall die perhaps, by putting off

Human, to put on Gods, death to be wisht,

Though threat'n'd, which no worse than this can bring. (9.705-15)

Satan always defines any limit on interpretive power as a lack, and Eve lacks mightily by being denied the knowledge of Good and Evil. The clever turn on the word "death" as simply putting off one form for another really captures the essence of Satanic heresy. By tempting Eve to transform herself into something new, Satan pushes Eve outside the boundaries of community and into heretical isolation. From there she can interpret whatever and however she pleases, but she cannot enjoy the benefits of community and the diverse interpretive opportunities she partakes in there, opportunities that impact others, not just herself. Satan offers Eve the chance to become a Goddess in a vacuum; stepping outside the center of community leaves a voice interpreting into a void, just as Satan does.

This chance for interpretive autonomy proves too attractive to Eve, and she launches a heretical expression of her own to justify the act of eating from the Tree:

For us alone

Was death invented? or to us deni'd

This intellectual food, for beasts reserv'd?

* * *

What fear I then, rather what know to fear

Under this ignorance of Good and Evil,

Of God or Death, of Law or Penalty?

Here grows the Cure of all, the Fruit Divine,

Fair to the Eye, inviting to the Taste,

Of virtue to make wise

(9.766-68,774-78)

Eve interprets just like Satan here; the inability to taste and know and interpret creates a lack that limits true freedom and power. Once Eve no longer thinks of the prohibition as the boundary of community, she interprets God's command as a restriction on her *personal* right to know and to make meaning. She eats from the Tree to assert her authority beyond simply hearing what God says. Instead, she interprets what He means in any way she deems fit. Satan's victory projects Eve outside the Edenic community which has been the source of all her contentment in the poem.

Unlike Satan, Eve, however, quickly realizes that heretical power in isolation means nothing to her. She briefly ponders a course like Satan's, wondering if she should retain all power unto herself, apart from Adam and ultimately God, in true heretical fashion:

shall I to him make known

As yet my change, and give him to partake

Full happiness with mee, or rather not.

But keep the odds of Knowledge in my power

Without Copartner? (9.817-21)

These lines actually echo much of what Satan has said and done throughout the poem. Eve momentarily becomes seduced by the control heretical power bestows and recognizes she cannot share that power and remain autonomous. At once she gives up the notion and opts again for the pleasures of community:

Confirm'd then I resolve,
 Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe:
 So dear I love him, that with him all deaths
 I could endure, without him live no life. (9.830-33)

Eve, in remarkable contrast to Satan, finds the isolation of heresy intolerable and can think of interpretation only in terms of sharing and community. The ability to interpret means nothing without the support of community to validate and uphold the interpretation. Satan loses control over Paradise mere moments after his victory; Eve's choice to share with Adam from the Tree re-establishes the condition of community albeit in a fallen and lessened state. Even without God's forgiveness, Eve seeks the community that gives true purpose and meaning to all her interpretive acts. Her misguided effort to include Adam in the fall utterly destroys the heretical process Satan tries to establish on earth.

It is worth repeating that Eve seeks community and understands that only in sharing with Adam can she overcome the burdens of the fall. Satan in contrast fails to understand the extent of forgiveness through the misinterpretation of the Son which begins his heresy. The Son's promised sacrifice produces a hope which allows community to be re-established, and his death and resurrection will spiritually re-establish the conditions of fellowship before the fall. Satan never understands the power of community to create a center which allows interpretation *and* fellowship. Books 11 and 12 can essentially be seen as Milton's attempt to demonstrate how that community will withstand the temptation of Satan to isolate itself for the sake of heretical power and autonomy.

Satan as Heretic highlights the seductive qualities of the Satanic quest for autonomy, for the right to interpret what anything means in any way possible, while also forcefully acknowledging that heresy for its own sake will destroy the boundaries of community that make interpretation worthwhile and purposeful. Satan can indeed interpret whatever he likes, but Milton forces readers to ask what Satan finally gains in this autonomy. The hissing that fills hell after the fall of Adam and Eve, the cacophony of voices isolated and spouting interpretation which leads to nothing, cannot impress most readers. In return for the opportunities of sharing and having a communal purpose, community insists upon a center for interpretation. This center delivers the right to achieve a purpose and create a narrative about family, society, and relationship. As Eve recognizes only seconds after eating from the Tree, heresy also exacts a price. In exchange for complete heretical autonomy, the individual forfeits the circle of community and the support of those within it interpreting for reasons beyond their own power and control. Everywhere Satan turns is hell because ultimately everywhere the heretic turns is within the narrow confines of isolation and vaunted interpretive power. Hell means absence: of God, of community, of others, and of possibility. The heretical impulse for its own sake produces an absence of everything but the drone of the heretic's voice shouting "I am free" to fill the emptiness.

Satan offers a powerful warning of the destructive impulses of heresy for the accumulation of control and autonomy. While such impulses do not make heretical literary critics satanic, Milton demonstrates through Satan the options posed by interpretative choices and argues forcefully that heretical interpretation, divorced from a center that forms community, cannot ultimately sustain itself or the community it undermines. Milton's justification of the ways of God to men comes down to a proposition: relationships which emanate from a clearly defined center comprise the very essence of

meaningful interpretation and existence.

Chapter 2
Milton, the Critics, and the Scholars:
The Battle Commences

The example of Milton's Satan as a heretical strategist who aims to gain power through interpretive autonomy leads rather naturally to a recognition of heresy within literary criticism as a critical battle ensues over his creations. Oddly enough, Milton, the great recorder of the dangers of heresy has never been a stranger to accusations of heresy himself. From his own time until now, the ideology and doctrine surrounding Milton's work have always garnered a substantial amount of attention. Do we perceive Milton as the great justifier of the ways of God to man, or as the radical political activist willing to support and defend regicide at the cost of his own sight? Do we champion the author of *Aeropagitica* or condemn the man who often appears as an elitist? Milton seems full of dichotomies and contradictions, and one of the unusual facets of his reputation remains the ability of nearly any critic to discover heresy or orthodoxy in Milton's work, depending on what one ultimately wants to discover.¹ And often the critic finds both, a possibility which harkens back to Johnson's division of Milton into poet and man. Unlike any other giant of English literature, Milton exists in constant flux, forever awaiting the next attack upon his work and ideas. We certainly never deny Milton his greatness, but neither do we ever quite make up our minds about him in much the same way we feel ambivalent about a mysterious character in a novel; do we feel attracted to the character's seeming goodness or the nastiness that we somehow recognize lurking just beneath the surface?

The relative ease of building a strong case either way concerning Milton's heresy or orthodoxy tends to make Miltonists frightfully staunch in their critical positions at times. "The true Miltonist," points out M. K. Starkman, "is a militant man and totally involved, head and heart" (209). The heresy debate for Miltonists elicits the same passion that questions over authorship of the Gospels produce for biblical scholars. We see the zenith of this militancy on display during the battle between the Critics and Scholars² beginning in the late twenties and lasting until the end of the fifties.³ And heresy encompasses much more than simple adherence to the traditional tenets of Christianity; Milton's style, his place in the canon, his politics, his influence, and his genius all come into question during the struggle. A simple glance at the criticism of the time often creates the impression that a desperate war simply to keep Milton in the curriculum takes place.

As discussed in the introduction, the search for heresy in an institution often becomes a political struggle between warring factions. While I wish to examine the charges and counter-charges brought against Milton during a thirty year period, I also want to notice how this battle quickly falls into line with Lester Kurtz's model for heresy and orthodoxy within a structured organization since the debate over Milton quickly grows into an argument over what constitutes literary critical heresy and orthodoxy--rhetoric which reflects the search for control over criticism. Thus the emerging dialogue over heresy occurs at several fascinating levels. Ironically, Milton remains the controversialist through all time; he sparks a challenge to the established methods of traditional historical scholarship. In the case of Milton, we can discover when actual criticism meant to further the study of Milton and his texts occurs and when criticism has different intentions in mind, namely the defining of critical heresy and the quest to maintain certain bases of power within the circle of literary critics.

An examination of this debate in Milton studies uncovers the presence of all five of Kurtz's characteristics of the orthodox reaction to alleged heresy. There is first an identification of heresy and a resulting crisis within the institution. A struggle over authority and the building of solidarity to remove the heresy follow. Through boundary work there is a defining of orthodoxy and finally a ritual through which pressures upon the institution are relieved. As early as 1920, T. S. Eliot writes in "The Perfect Critic" that "it is to be expected that the critic and the creative artist should frequently be the same person" (16). But research indicates that Scholars take little heed of Eliot because he exists outside the critical institution as a poet whose reputation remains in doubt.⁴ Only when Eliot's influence grows, especially when other academic critics begin following his lead and attacking Milton and orthodox methodology, do the Scholars perceive the threat as being an internal one and grow uneasy. One need only examine the furor after F. R. Leavis attempts to validate Eliot's conclusions about Milton to notice the remarkable shift in importance Scholars place on the debate; the criticism moves within the ranks and becomes heresy.⁵

Eliot also serves to highlight the point of a contention over authority. Several critics in the twenties call Milton's orthodoxy into question, among them Denis Saurat. Saurat claims "Milton's God is far from the God of popular belief or even orthodox theology," and that Milton delights in "the destruction of orthodox ideas" (113-14). Yet such statements meet with toleration because Saurat remains firmly in the camp of historical scholarship.⁶ Indeed, C. S. Lewis, who vigorously opposes Saurat's conclusions, lauds the methodology employed by Saurat and sees it as an advancement of the historical approach.⁷ However, when T. S. Eliot and others begin attacking Milton, and more important the methodology and legitimacy of the Scholar's interpretations, the battle is joined. After all, to employ historical scholarship in the pursuit of Milton's ideology is one thing, but to assail Milton's

place in the canon and declare prior criticism of Milton as the "orthodox eulogy," as Leavis does in *Revaluation*, is quite another (46). Debate over Milton quickly shifts to a debate over who deserves the designation of authentic critic, and the Scholars quickly recognize not only that Milton needs defending, but that their authority over literary criticism demands attention as well. And like any institution they react quickly and vehemently. Later we will examine the shape that reaction takes, but for now we should simply note that the Scholars see a heretical faction growing in their ranks and move to stop it because such a group forms a challenge to their own authority.

The building of solidarity plays a very positive role for a group like literary critics who often toil in isolation and sometimes fail to identify with other members of their community. During the Critic/Scholar quarrel the solidarity demonstrated in journals and books borders on fanatical, and the unity shows through on both sides. An article that starts as a discussion of Milton very often transforms itself into a cheerleading session for whatever faction the writer supports. One does not quote a source; one either commends or heaps abuse upon it.

The most intriguing example of this bandwagon support occurs in the work of E.M.W. Tillyard. In 1930 Tillyard publishes *Milton*, and he devotes his final chapter to a defense of the Scholars' ideas and conclusions in regard to Milton. Tillyard recognizes that "the idea that Milton's theology is outworn and that his views on life have no modern relevance is still very widespread" (363), but the chapter argues instead that Milton's ideas remain "as applicable to-day [sic] as in the Seventeenth Century" (365). The connection between the relevance of Milton and the Scholar's approach needs no overt development in Tillyard's mind. Throughout the book he employs the term "critic" to refer to any literary interpreter. This may appear as a small matter, but it gains huge significance when we compare *Milton* with Tillyard's 1951 collection of essays, *Studies in Milton*. Here the

author refuses to even acknowledge the existence of the Critics or their assertions. Only once does he refer to Eliot, and that quote derives from the poet's "recantation" lecture. But most fascinating of all, Tillyard will not even use the word "critic" in any meaningful way in his writing. Instead he chooses the word "scholar" in an obvious display of where his loyalties lie. Throughout the book he extols the virtues of the Scholar's methodology: "Scholars, naturally, in piecing together the pattern of Milton's thought, have used the total body of his work: verse and prose alike" (137). Over and over again Tillyard leaves no doubt that the Scholars retain the correct technique and interpretations about Milton. Critics do not even deserve mention. This exclusion constitutes nothing less than an enormous show of disdain for the Critics and an effort to champion the cause of the Scholars in 1951.

Critics cheer for their position as well. Leavis continually encourages others with his same outlook and even works to enlist new recruits. In "Mr. Eliot and Milton," Leavis suddenly digresses to commend A.J.A. Waldock's book, *Paradise Lost and Its Critics*, as "by far the best book on Milton I have read" (15). So everyone will know Waldock agrees with the Critics either implicitly or explicitly, Leavis informs us that the book "is a more damaging criticism than Professor Waldock himself recognizes" (16). Waldock operates as one of us, says Leavis, whether he knows it or not. The focus of many articles quickly turns from Milton to methodology and critical attachment, as when M.K. Starkman mysteriously condemns a book by Kathleen Nott he considers "militant polemic" (224), but supports his own diatribe against the forces of heresy as he defines it (which will be examined later). The solidarity heresy engenders may be its most important facet; generally after the initial panic and shouting, the group discovers a new focus and vigor and purpose and very often a means of including the contentious party. All of these factors eventually appear as the Critics and Scholars debate continues.

Boundary-work often involves a negative process: Critics spend much time informing us what errors the Scholars commit and Scholars return the favor. Often an institution operates without giving much thought to what philosophy actually underlies its method and purpose. Boundaries must be drawn to bring that philosophy into focus for the group. At the 1951 meeting of the Modern Language Association, both sides of the Critic/Scholar issue present papers supposedly outlining their positions. A.S.P. Woodhouse represents the Scholars and Cleanth Brooks the Critics.⁸ Both men have difficulty defining their approaches. Woodhouse admits that "historical students of literature have tended to work by a silent instinct of accumulation like the bee," but he will "try to set down a few points towards the formation of such a theory" (1033), a feat he fails to accomplish, offering a less than elucidating defense of orthodoxy. Brooks, too, has problems expressing succinctly the view of New Criticism. Both succeed at pointing out the faults of the other. Brooks complains that Scholars such as C.S. Lewis "utterly misunderstands [sic] the true nature of the opposition to Milton" (1046). Woodhouse dismisses the tendency of the Critics to overlook important historical evidence when it does not suit their purposes. Both sides throughout the war find it easier to define themselves in terms of what they are not rather than in terms of what they actually are, much in the manner Kurtz describes. Heresy provides a set of values and propositions to reject and in that rejection orthodoxy can better define itself.

An excellent current example of the ritual activity of heresy can be seen in the highly polemical nature of recent criticism attempting to fend off attacks of Political Correctness from outside the institution.⁹ A perceived deviant insider becomes easy prey when the real frustration lies outside the community. In a similar fashion in the Milton debate, Scholars find in the Critics an inward malady to expel when in fact the issues go much deeper than simple critical heresy. Modern society undergoes tremendous change and fragmentation

during the era, and many scholars feel literature itself under siege. Articles often moan the loss of a stable, classic culture, and Scholars especially sense the gap between literature and its ability to influence or interest the public widening.¹⁰ Scholars witness the world they know and cherish crumbling, and the Critics serve as a convenient internal deviance upon which they can project their frustrations. The image of barbarians destroying the citadel of learning and culture recurs over and over in orthodox attacks on heresy, reminding us of Douglas Bush's claims that his theories concerning poetry have "reigned for 2,500 years, through the greatest periods of literature" (21), and the Critics threaten to dismantle all of them. He fears that the approach of Critics "is not likely to make converts from the world at large, and literature and the humanistic tradition surely need converts now more than ever before" (21). Bush's use of the word "converts" in relation to the battle within literary criticism again echoes the religious dimensions cast on the situation. Defining and expelling heresy becomes a ritual to right all that the Scholars see wrong in the world. Gerald Graff recognizes that it appeals to certain critics "to think of themselves as last-ditch defenders of civilization against the invasion of barbarian relativists and terrorists" (*Beyond* 5).

Robert Martin Adams develops this theme with vengeance in *Ikon: John Milton and the Modern Critics*, a book which quickly develops into a mournful ballad on the loss of the standards upheld by Scholars. Critics are dirty, unprofessional meddlers who have no authority to propagate their shoddy interpretations and "Byzantine ingenuities" (34). Adams thinks the critical approach of Don C. Allen "would make hash out of almost all the poetry written by John Milton, or for that matter by most English poets" (33). The book portrays the Critics as crude unruly men who threaten to tear down all the beauty of not only Milton, but literature in general, and it argues they must be stopped. Rather

ironically, Critics such as Leavis and Brooks will often make the same claim against the Scholars, complaining that they have ruined Art by reducing it to a sterile science of facts.

Max Weber's ideas on the nature of sacred texts apply fruitfully to the Milton controversy. Both sides of the Critic/Scholar controversy complain that the opposition commits the error of dogmatism. Weber argues that "canonical sacred collections became officially closed against secular or religiously undesirable additions as a consequence of a struggle between various competing groups and prophecies for the control of the community" (459). Milton's place in the canon never faces any real challenge; the Council has already closed the collection so to speak. Unlike today, when the works present in the literary canon undergo much debate, Milton's place remains secure, although one might contend Eliot tries to assail Milton and Leavis thinks he succeeds, especially in light of Leavis's use of the term "dislodgement" in *Revaluation*. Thinking of Eliot's remarks in terms of a battle over influence on the canon, however, offers a better gloss on the situation.

The Critic/Scholar controversy may be seen as a war between factions of literary priests. A battle rages over whose dogma will prevail, and as a result this struggle helps predict which group will gain control of the interpretation surrounding Milton's work. The Critic/Scholar debate, however, marks as well the beginning of the move away from Kurtz's model to the addition I have formulated: heresy becomes any "dogmatic" utterance concerning Milton, any "orthodox" stance a side takes to further a cause, whether it be critical, religious, political, or social.¹¹ The true literary critic in any area of study breathes the purified air of objective interpretation without the taint of any special agenda or hidden motive. Such a vision, however, cannot hold; any attempt to extract meaning from a text brings about the formulation of dogma. Any view privileges itself over another.¹² The conflict arises when the community will not allow a plurality of dogma, and that occurs

during the Critic/Scholar debate. Here the censoring of Booth's idea of vitality begins, and along with it the notions of justice and understanding. Both sides seek to isolate and dismiss the claims of the other in increasingly stringent positions. The real tragedy that arises from the Critic/Scholar debate involves the constant insistence thereafter for heretical interpretations. Orthodoxy gets cast as a detrimental force undermining criticism. Literary studies fail to re-define an orthodox position and instead pursue heresy as a powerful and meaningful option for obtaining power in criticism.

The natural question to ask about these developments is why Milton becomes the focal point of a heresy dialogue. Defined and frankly nasty fights have emerged in Milton criticism over the years.¹³ Despite his firm place in the canon, Milton's ideology and public persona elicit ambiguous reactions, and as Tillyard points out

you cannot ignore [Milton], any more than you can ignore Alexander the Great, or Cromwell, or Napoleon. He is too extraordinary a person to shut out from our notice; and he is perhaps the only man of this type who has translated the mental urge into literature and not into action. (*Milton* 368)

The Critics seize upon ambivalence and Milton's dominating personality and use them to their advantage. Even when Eliot makes a so-called "recantation" on Milton, he admits that he carries an "antipathy towards Milton the man" ("Milton II" 168). Eliot then summarizes the uneasiness surrounding any evaluation of Milton: "of no other poet is it so difficult to consider the poetry simply as poetry, without our theological and political disposition, conscious and unconscious, inherited or acquired, making an unlawful entry" (168). Scholars themselves often disagree about Milton's politics and theology; the Critics take the argument a step further and begin to question the poetry as well, indeed question the whole system that gives Milton such prominence within the canon. But the seeds of discontent are always present with Milton; it takes very little encouragement to fan the fire,

and one can easily forget the distinction between man and art in the heat of exchange. Milton offers the perfect chance to draw the lines in the critical sands. Critics quickly move from a suspicion of Milton to a suspicion of the kind of people and methods that would support him, and the pursuit of heresy begins in earnest.

Some primary salvos in the Scholar/Critic skirmish find their way into journals in the late twenties and early thirties, but the real war begins with Eliot's comments on Milton in 1936. Eliot wastes no time having at Milton: "the serious charges to be made against him are in respect of the deterioration--the peculiar kind of deterioration--to which he subjected the language" ("Milton I" 156). The mischief caused by Milton appears endless: "Milton writes English like a dead language" (159); "he may still be considered as having done damage to the English language from which it has not wholly recovered" (164); "His language is . . . *artificial* and *conventional*" (158); and "Milton's poetry could *only* be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatsoever" (157). Eliot single-handedly ruptures the line of influence exerted by Milton, hints that any poetry that imitates Milton probably lacks merit, and basically claims that if anyone desires to write relevant modern poetry, Milton will most certainly have to be shed. Eliot cannot ignore Milton; the position he takes in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" makes that impossible. Instead, Milton requires direct confrontation; he requires chastising and pushing aside because Eliot chooses to follow another line of the tradition, most notably Donne, and the Scholars place Milton far above Donne in the canon. The Scholars, therefore, will have to be reckoned with as well.

Eliot lays the groundwork for the assault on the orthodox viewpoint:

There is a large class of persons, including some who appear in print as critics, who regard any censure upon a 'great' poet as a breach of the peace, as an act of wanton iconoclasm, or even hoodlumism. The kind of

derogatory criticism that I have to make upon Milton is not intended for such persons, who cannot understand that it is more important, in some vital respects, to be a good poet than to be a great poet; and of what I have to say I consider that the only jury of judgement is that of the ablest poetical practitioners of my own time. ("Milton I" 157)

Eliot's language suggests certain people in literary criticism "cannot understand" his interpretation of Milton and in fact suppress any dissenting points of view in the name of peace. But his best rhetorical move involves the exclusion of everyone but the "ablest poetical practitioners" from judging him. Eliot denies vitality by refusing to listen to certain positions and squelches justice by not giving Scholars and Milton a proper hearing through a narrow definition of who can actually practice criticism. But for Eliot, Scholars, in their reactionary stance and support of Milton, have disqualified themselves from participation in modern criticism; they remain out of touch, like Milton's language, with the realities of contemporary art and methodology. Eliot clearly throws down a challenge to the autonomy he believes Scholars try to exercise over canonical texts. Rather than grapple with them, he simply excludes them as relics of the past clinging to the incorrect tradition needed for the creation of poetry in the modern era. Milton's poetry is a bad influence; Scholars champion Milton; Scholars are bad critics.

One limitation of Kurtz's model concerns the lack of comment on heretical techniques used against orthodoxy. Heretics appear to use many of the same rhetorical devices in their condemnations the orthodox use against them. The most evident of these involves a protest that orthodoxy has somehow lost touch with present reality and concerns. The standard dogma can no longer cope with pressures a new age brings to bear upon it. The Milton debate reflects these protests when Eliot calls for a new language, claims Scholars cannot understand his approach, and portrays orthodox criticism as exhausted. If a change

does not transpire, the institution runs the danger of falling into decline. Critics throughout the debate complain literature has fallen out of favor with the public because the Scholars' stranglehold on the texts has alienated everyone but them; they must save the community and make literature relevant again to the masses. Thus Leavis condemns the Scholars' belief that

qualities like Milton's represent a higher kind of unity. [This] goes with the kind of intellectual bent that produced Humanism--that takes satisfaction in inertly orthodox generalities, and is impressed by invocations of Order from minds that have no glimmer of intelligence about contemporary literature and could not safely risk even elementary particular appreciation. (*Revaluation* 61)

Not only do Scholars have no authority to speak on current literature, but their cries for an ordered universe reveal a decrepit attitude as well. Cleanth Brooks paints a picture of the Scholar as an archaic remnant of the past,¹⁴ and O'Connor refers to "archaeological scholarship" out of touch with the present (361). This ancient regime, removed from the realities of modern life, must pass away so literature can regain its vitality. As Kurtz puts it, "heretics usually believe themselves to have the interest of the sacred institution and tradition at heart" ("Politics" 1089).

Leavis continues these strategies with a fanatical zeal. He immediately appropriates Eliot's criticism of Milton and uses it as an opportunity to chide the orthodox. He practices the rhetoric of a triumphant political party in *Revaluation*: "The work has been done, the re-orientation effected: the heresies of ten years ago are orthodoxy" (10). The boldness of Leavis's position throughout his book are astounding. He decrees the decline of Milton with complete confidence: "Milton's dislodgement, in the past decade, after his two centuries of predominance, was effected with remarkably little fuss" (42). Better yet, we no longer have to chant the "orthodox eulogy" (46). Not only does Milton stifle us,

but so do the Scholars who support him. Leavis calls reading *Paradise Lost* "the monotony of the ritual" (44), an echo of the Scholars' eulogy. Milton grows into symbol; he represents all that is wrong in poetry and his work represents the remnant of a spent orthodoxy. Leavis proclaims that Eliot has rescued poetry and made it powerful and meaningful again, and in the course of doing so has also exposed the horrible Scholars who helped perpetuate such a ruined system.

Scholars waste no time responding to this threat. C.S. Lewis identifies precisely the challenge to the Scholar's authority Eliot represents: "a recent remark of Mr. Eliot poses for us at the outset the fundamental question whether we (mere critics) have any right to talk about Milton at all" (9). Eliot's rhetoric does not simply question Milton; it calls into question the whole enterprise of literary criticism and who has the right to interpret literary texts. Lewis quickly dismisses the idea that only the poet can judge poetry: "For who can endure a doctrine which would allow only the dentists to say whether our teeth were aching, only cobblers to say whether our shoes hurt us, and only governments to tell us whether we were being well governed" (11)? Likewise, Herbert Grierson includes Eliot in his study of Milton but summarily brushes him aside. The important development, however, remains--well-respected Scholars perceive the necessity of responding to Eliot in some manner because much more than an interpretation regarding Milton hangs in the balance.

A strange characteristic of the Scholars' response revolves around an attack on more than simply Eliot and his band of followers. The philosophy among the Scholars runs something like this: "As long as we are going to identify the heresy of the Critics, let us root out all the deviance existing among the ranks." Feelings of resentment among the orthodox at what they perceive as the destruction of their critical method cause a finger-pointing upheaval. The example of Arnold Williams' entry into the fray highlights the

unusual mixture of what the Scholars believe to be heretical elements in literary criticism. Williams argues that the heresy involving Milton involves the intrusion of conservative ideology into literary criticism. "It is not strange," writes Williams, "that critics of Milton should read into their criticism their own religious, social, and political attitudes" (90).

Perhaps not unusual but certainly heretical:

Conservative and radical have alike a right to criticize from their points of view. But the reader of criticism should know what is happening. He should not be permitted to regard as the results of scientific and objective scholarship something which is only a private reaction. (91)

In other words, expressing opinions is fine as long as it is not confused with "real" criticism. The use of the terms "scientific and objective" in describing scholarship makes clear the notion that orthodox (in the sense of true or authentic) critics exist above the sphere of political or religious influence. The heretic commits the sin of dogmatism, of allowing personal systems of belief to interfere with the critical process, of using an author as the means of pushing another, usually detrimental, agenda.

Williams naturally brands Eliot a heretic immediately. He asserts that "a close perusal of Eliot's remarks over a period of years shows that his basic criticism of Milton is ideological and that only because Eliot's principles of criticism proceed from his theological and political conservatism does Milton violate them" (92). Discovering the basis of Eliot's dislike of Milton proves easy for Williams: "It is not marvelous that one who assumes the correctness of Catholicism and traditionalism should condemn a poet who embodies the contradictory isms" (94); and Williams also complains of Eliot's dogmatic approach to criticism: "Are we to suppose that only one kind of theology exists? And if so, is it by any chance the *via media* of Anglo-Catholicism" (92)? While the abuse Williams heaps on Eliot might seem inevitable, the next heretics he names can surprise one. Not only does

Eliot fail to meet the standards of true criticism, but so do Grierson and Tillyard, figures hardly to be thought of as renegades. Indeed, we have seen that they attack Eliot and the Critics, yet they perpetrate heresy according to Williams. Their dogmatism consists of a conservative pessimism that they try to foist on Milton. Williams argues that as a result of Grierson and Tillyard's disappointment with events in 17th-Century England, they assume Milton had to be disillusioned too (94). The sarcasm Williams displays toward Grierson because of his alleged unhistorical technique almost makes one uncomfortable. He ends by stating:

Critics of conservative leanings suppose that had they been in Milton's place they would have come out of the ordeal pessimists. Alternatively, these critics see as pessimistic a scheme of religion and politics certainly understood by Milton as optimistic. Their attempt to distort the meaning of *Paradise Lost* into something its creator never intended and into which no spirit sympathetic to his would ever suspect is one with the attempt of Eliot to exclude Milton from the main stream of English poetry. Both come from a misunderstanding of the essentially radical character of John Milton. (106)

Williams betrays himself here at the end. His pronouncements contain dogmatic utterances as well regardless of whether he arrived at his conclusions "objectively" or not. Eliot, Grierson, and Tillyard all hold ideas about Milton different from Williams and that deviance cannot be tolerated on both a critical and political level. The intrusion of societal realities into literary matters ultimately troubles Scholars the most. What they deem the "purity" of their type of criticism increasingly comes under attack and appears more and more untenable in the modern era; Scholars like Williams even berate members of their own leaning who let unpopular interpretations creep into their work.

The Scholars generally reserve their remarks for Eliot until the 1940s. Then both Leavis and Eliot renew the battle. In 1947 Eliot makes what some believe a reversal in his attitude toward Milton. The essay Eliot presents, however, continues the same line of thought only in a different direction. Eliot writes of Milton, "His work illustrates no general principles of good writing; the only principles of writing that it illustrates are such as are valid only for Milton himself to observe" (176). This hardly constitutes a ringing endorsement of Milton and becomes even less of one when we remember Eliot demands modern poetry evoke the tradition. If no one can look to Milton for inspiration, he will exist in isolation and his greatness will be a solitary and empty one. But why does Eliot bother calling Milton great at all? Eliot apparently does not want to stray too far from the canon and commit the errors he sees in Milton, so as a critic he has to find a way to endorse Milton while at the same time negating any influence he might have on contemporary poetry. "Milton II" accomplishes both these objectives quite well.

The continued subtle denunciation of Scholars, however, does not change a bit. Eliot says that "The Scholar is more concerned with the understanding of the masterpiece in the environment of its author: with the world in which that author lived, the temper of his age, his intellectual formation, the books which he had read, and the influences which had moulded him" (166). Such a view contrasts with the critic/poet who "is concerned less with the author than with the poem; and with the poem in relation to his own age. He asks; Of what use is the poetry of this poet to poets writing today? Is it, or can it become, a living force in English poetry still unwritten" (166). The sly contrast between the two styles of criticism bears inspection. Scholars create biographical footnotes about authors while Critics involve themselves with Art, adding vitality to present and future poetry. Eliot paints the picture of an aloof academic researcher who has nothing to say or contribute to the present other than archaic trivialities only other Scholars will read. Their

place and power have been usurped by the Critics. Again Eliot refuses to offer justice to the Scholars' work by simply labeling them as obsolete.

Leavis quickly responds to Eliot in "Mr. Eliot and Milton" for two reasons. First, he wants to destroy the Scholars' approach to poetry once and for all, and second he wants to make sure everyone understands that Eliot still does not like Milton. Leavis works hard in the essay to keep Eliot firmly in his camp. He uses parenthetical statements to assure us of what Eliot really meant: "the weakness noted by Eliot (though he won't call it flatly that)" (14), and "the man who uses words in this way has (as Mr. Eliot virtually says) no 'grasp of ideas'" (18). Leavis understands, if Eliot does not, the need to keep a consistent critical stance or run the risk of ridicule from Scholars who can back up their claims about Critics having no real foundation to build upon. The incident serves to illustrate the difficulty heretics have in maintaining solidarity. Many rebellious members of an institution enjoy any position as long as it deviates from the establishment; in that sense they do not qualify as true heretics who try to correct what they believe to be error. There will always be people at the fringe of any movement who simply like the idea of being "radical." While Eliot does not fall into such a category, Leavis fears others will believe he does, and such a perception could undermine their genuine efforts.

Leavis launches his most vicious attack on the Scholars in the same essay. When it comes to poetry, Scholars cannot even demonstrate the "elementary conditions of talking to the point" (2). Scholars would not know good poetry if they saw it (3). Scholars also lack the "responses of a trained sensibility to the work of the poet" (3). Leavis follows the same reasoning as Eliot, only in a vehement manner. If you want to know the trivial habits of the poet, ask the Scholar; if you want to know about the poetry and its relevance to your world, ask the Critic. Leavis claims Milton cannot sustain analytic or discursive thinking, and

That is why the ardours and ingenuities of the scholars who interpret *Paradise Lost* in terms of a supposed consistency of theological intention are so absurd, and it is so deplorable that literary students should be required to take that kind of thing seriously, believe that it has anything to do with intelligent literary criticism, and devote any large part of their time to the solemn study of Milton's 'thought.' (19)

Even students must be protected from this insidious form of criticism. Leavis battles for control of the recruits who will eventually take over leadership of literary criticism. Whose dogma will be taught? Leavis accuses the Scholars of supporting a bad poet, therefore losing all authority to lead and set policy within the university. There can be no doubt as to the cause of poetic decline:

poetry must express itself in a concern for the present function of criticism; for it is the weakness of that function during the last twenty years that has permitted the most elementary and essential discriminations to pass unregarded, and the lessons to be ignored or unperceived. (30)

Reject the Scholars, follow me, study Eliot, and poetry will regain the contemporary relevance it has lost, cries Leavis. But the Scholars would not relinquish their power so easily.

The basic shape of the Scholars' response to heresy involves the undermining of its methodology; the Critics lack any solid foundation to their study, display bad scholarship and let personal opinion (dogma) creep into their interpretations. The Scholars always portray themselves as the critical ideal--objective, scientific, and without dogma or propaganda in their criticism. The Critics continue portraying the Scholars as out of touch with reality and only interested in the mundane details of history. They have nothing to say about art and its relevance. Heresy becomes defined in terms of orthodoxy; any allegiance

to a system or personal belief gets branded as bad criticism, a charge which still holds true today. To be tagged the follower of some "orthodox" school of thought means a lack of critical skill and acumen.

Developing the Scholars' argument, Douglas Bush writes that "the new criticism has shown the defects of its virtues, that its approach to poetry tends to be narrow and dogmatic and also erratic" (14). Challenging the authority of Critics, he wonders if "the new criticism always rests on a basis of solid knowledge" (15). In a rather elitist remark, Bush states that the Critic's rejection of scholarship puts "himself under the handicaps of the man in the street" (16). And in a fine turn of the debate, Bush accuses the Critics of being the aloof and out of touch members of the group; their criticism appeals only "to an inner circle of initiates"; finally, "cultural divisions have been accepted as unbridgeable, . . . poets and critics have decided to write for one another" (20-21). Finally, Bush worries that the Critics "have been doing all they could to create a moral vacuum" (21). Andrew A. King suggests that one of the strategies of the orthodox is to "cry anarchy" (128). Doing so accomplishes "more than to brand the activities of the challengers as merely criminal and sinister. As destroyers of society they strike at everyone" (129). In a ritualistic way Bush can blame the Critics for the general breakdown of values and morals he witnesses outside the institution, a breakdown he is powerless to stop. Woodhouse also calls the methodology of Critics into question and firmly asserts that Scholars are the true holders of critical truth and the faction within the group who should control the interpretation of Milton's texts.

The Critics heap abuse on the Scholars at the same pace. O'Connor contends Scholars avoid the real problems confronting society and poetry and that "The techniques of the critical process are ignored for the standard cliches and illustrations of the literary historians" (361). Throughout, O'Connor employs the term "orthodoxy" derisively. John

Peter begins by telling us as a simple professor he has no real interest in the debate but by the end declares a ringing victory for the Critics. The main problem revolves around the Scholars making any adequate rebuttal of Leavis: "When I regret the lack of a meticulous and specific consideration of Dr. Leavis's case from the other side I am not, then, I believe, demanding from his opponents more than would seem to be required of them already by the nature of disputation itself" (14). Translation: Critics debate logically by the rules of criticism and Scholars do not. Peter even intimates that if the Critics gave up the dispute, it would be far less horrible than the suppression of information the Scholars practice: "to withhold from the students opinions that might conflict with those of a teacher whose regard for Milton bordered on adulation, is much more serious, and even a little sinister" (14). Over and over appear the same charges of clinging to a bankrupt tradition, one removed from the interests of actual existence.

The real champion of Critics, Cleanth Brooks, draws a picture of the archaic Scholar: "the scholar's abiding danger is that he will abandon poetry altogether in his preoccupation with individual peculiarities and the accidents of history, finally ending up with a sort of biographical and historical total recall" (3). Brooks responds to Bush: "Naturally, Professor Bush fixes upon T.S. Eliot as the Satan who has drawn off the third part of the host of Heaven (or at least a third part of the graduate students) from their proper allegiance" (4). But Brooks's real denunciation involves, again, the dogmatic and propagandistic nature of the Scholars:

it is not enough to prove that Milton is a great humanist and that our own besotted age needs Milton's moralistic vigor. Or to prove that Milton is a great Christian, and that to modern paganism even a Christian has something of value to say. The pressing issues have to do

with Milton as an artist, and the attack essentially has to do with the nature of his art. ("Milton and Critical Re-estimates" 1046)

The message rings clear; we concern ourselves with the true work of the critic and Scholars propagate orthodox doctrine. Orthodoxy has become the position to avoid in critical debates.

The battle reaches its climax in M.K. Starkman, who basically declares everyone a heretic but himself. He wonders if the craze for Milton is "an entirely *uncritical* zeal that motivated all these changes [the move to defend Milton against criticism], a zeal to do God's work, even if unpleasant" (211). Those who support Milton do so "to promote faith in Christ via faith in Milton, and that faith in Milton has been only a secondary condition" (224). Therefore, "The quarrel over Milton in our century, which began on critical grounds, has been resolved on religious ones. And this is dogma" (222). Quite a surprise. But the Critics do not escape the wrath of Starkman either: "[A]s Eliot and his school distorted Milton for their orthodoxy's sake, the New Critics . . . distorted him for their Art's sake" (217). Art becomes just another form of dogma, and the Critics only use Milton to push their critical method. Starkman eventually gets around to blasting all critics, so that only he remains a true member of the community. Starkman's ranting demonstrates how far Milton criticism strays from being about Milton and how instead it becomes a weapon in the struggle for control of criticism.

This survey of the rhetoric of heresy will end with C.S. Lewis because he appears to understand fully the stakes in the Critic/Scholar controversy. Lewis defends orthodoxy in the traditional manner, not to retain control of the group but to maintain a value system against decay. Lewis sees in the challenge of the Critics the beginning of subjective criticism in all its forms and the loss of any sort of transcendent reference in all of society. He expresses those concerns in his *Preface to Paradise Lost*:

The older poetry, by continually insisting on certain Stock themes . . . was performing a service not only of moral and civil, but even of biological, importance [P]oetry was formerly one of the chief means whereby each new generation learned, not to copy, but by copying to make, the good Stock response. Since poetry has been abandoned that office has not bettered We need most urgently to recover the lost poetic art of enriching a response without making it eccentric, and of being normal without being vulgar. Meanwhile--until that recovery is made--such poetry as Milton's is more than ever necessary to us. (57)

While Lewis sometimes forces Milton into the mold of orthodoxy, he does so because Milton exists as his best option in the fight. And Lewis has no problem admitting Milton subscribes to some heretical beliefs: "Heretical elements exist in it [*Paradise Lost*], but are only discoverable by search: any criticism which forces them into the foreground is mistaken, and ignores the fact that this poem was accepted as orthodox by many generations of acute readers well grounded in theology" (86). For Lewis, Milton offers a sense of order and meaning in a world coming apart at the seams, and he understands perfectly where literature and criticism will end up without some sort of transcendent structure. For Lewis, a center that forms the basis of any understanding or community must involve a set of stable, transcendent values. Poetry has already begun to decay: "The idea of a poetry which exists only for the poet--a poetry which the public rather overhears than hears--is a foolish novelty in criticism. There is nothing specially admirable in talking to oneself" (54). Ultimately most Scholars feel the same pressures as Lewis; one can even make the argument that Critics also sense a crisis in society and literature and seek to remedy it. But most Scholars cannot separate the spiritual crisis from the crisis in authority they see in the Critics, and as a result use heresy as a political instrument which

undermines their efforts at tackling the bigger issues confronting them. Scholars may win the battle with the Critics, but they lose the war; criticism becomes everything they hope it will not. The drive to retain control of the institution of literary criticism outweighs the desire to address the philosophical crises inherent in the modern age.

Whether one agrees with Lewis's orthodox formulation does not matter; the fact remains that he attempts to project some goals and a purpose for criticism and literature. His would be one of the last voices calling for literary critics to rally around an orthodox center. The idea of New Critics representing the radical, destabilizing voice in criticism can only strike us as amusing today. Kurtz knows that eventually a powerful enough heresy will become the orthodoxy the next generation rages against. Critics today are forever rallying against what they see as the abuses, shortcomings, and stagnation of New Criticism the way Scholars did in reply to the Critics. Much of the rhetoric is identical.

In the end, both Critics and Scholars invest much time in the rhetoric of heresy, often to the detriment of the criticism they wish to protect from corruption. But once New Criticism invokes the ingenious tactic of casting orthodoxy as the position to expel at all costs, they create a precedent that many critics seeking power in literary criticism thereafter employ. Heresy for heresy's sake will take literary criticism down a path that encourages innovation for no other reason than it supplies a compelling means of acquiring power within discourse. Such an approach will engender strange results and exotic formulations. It will also point out how little innovation has to do with literary criticism and how much it instead has to do with literary power.

Chapter 3
The Heresy of the Performance:
Community and Literature

The Critic/Scholar controversy in literary criticism set precedents that subsequent heretical critics would follow as a strategy for gaining a voice and power in literary interpretation. The identification of orthodoxy as limiting and undesirable in criticism, the drive to innovate for innovation's sake, and the attempt to negate other voices in the critical debate have become the hallmarks of the heretical style. All of these characteristics strangle vitality, justice, and understanding as outlined by Booth, and the emergence of heresy in criticism marks a significant threat to plurality and community.

Innovation, however, tends to create a unique heretical expression for every theory and field within literary studies. This chapter will explore the relationship between text and performance in Shakespeare studies and discuss the ways heretical critics on both sides of the debate seek to gain authority over the discourse. The interesting development in this struggle occurs in the way each side attempts to completely shut out the conclusions of the other; not only do textual critics refute the claims of performance critics, they call into question the very approach that leads to their interpretations. Likewise, performance critics claim using text to engage Shakespeare contains a fundamental error, and subsequent discourse using that means must be rejected.

After sampling the heretical moves on both sides of the debate, the chapter will look at community as a means of escaping the heretical stalemate that takes place as both heretical

camps destroy any possibility of vitality or understanding by dismissing the methodology and therefore interpretations of the other. These first steps toward community beyond Booth's criteria for plurality will form the basis for eliminating the destructive impulses of heresy in literary criticism. Heresy diminishes the health of criticism by moving to eliminate other, competing voices in the critical debate; the fostering of community curbs those tendencies by offering an atmosphere of free exchange of views that do not have to silence other interpretations to gain a hearing and place in literary criticism.

While literary critics sometimes fail to take into account the performance aspect of Shakespeare's plays and privilege the text over a dramatic interpretation, performance criticism has increased in recent times and poses important questions.¹ What for instance is a "perfect performance?" Should readers dismiss the importance of performance when studying, and more importantly interpreting, Shakespeare? Such questions raise issues which strike at a fundamental dilemma in Shakespeare scholarship today: should readers privilege the text over performance in interpretation² or instead champion performance as the only means of discovering anything about Shakespeare's plays?³ Beneath these questions lies an even more disturbing problem: can literary critics actually create a space of authority that enables readers to interpret Shakespeare, or for that matter, any drama? The avoidance of such uncertainty may reflect an apprehension of arriving at a suitable resolution.

These problems also provide a fertile ground for the work of heresy to blossom. Performance and its relation to Shakespeare studies make for a fascinating mutation of the heresy/orthodoxy debate. For in pitting the text against the performance, critics have not just a struggle over what interpretation will conquer, but also a contention over how to begin interpretation of Shakespeare. Is one mode of approach "right" and the other "wrong" when engaging Shakespeare's work? Should the text have priority over performance? The

answers have tremendous repercussions for the cause of heresy and the balance of power in Shakespeare studies.

An initial question begins the discussion: must readers witness a perfect performance to interpret Shakespeare at the level of enactment?⁴ Such a notion embodies a fascinating set of assumptions concerning interpretation. First, there is the demand for "perfection," an injunction which confronts many difficulties inherent in live theater. What if the actors fail to deliver their lines in a convincing or comprehensible manner? What if budget does not allow for suitable costuming or scenery? Does a director's attempt to modernize the play for accessibility compromise its accuracy? Does the performance strive to re-create Elizabethan stage practices or pursue some other standard? All of these variables can and do reduce Shakespearean play-texts to something less than their desired, intended, or potential effect. This sort of imperfection does indeed stifle interpretation and may even thwart judging a play's effect upon a given audience.

This call for perfection, however, seeks much more than the prevention of "bad" performances of Shakespeare's plays. The real issue involving the idea of perfection in performance concerns stability.⁵ Some literary critics cannot conceive of structuring an interpretation upon the volatile event of a live performance. No continuity would exist to test and validate such an interpretation even within the scope of two performances of the same run of a play. Too many possibilities for discrepancy would exist, putting any claims of meaning into jeopardy. The very business of interpretation requires this sort of stability; in order to test an interpretation, other critics must have access to the same work, in the same state, upon which conclusions depend. Certainly one of the quickest ways to discredit or undermine interpretation lies in claiming the critic possesses an "incorrect" or corrupted form of the work such as a bowdlerized text or even a forgery. It is not hard to imagine the objections that can arise out of an interpretation of a once-occurring live performance;

modern readers have no opportunity to respond and object since the work no longer remains available. The interpretation transmits no real meaning since the performance no longer exists to be watched and appreciated in light of that interpretation. Any interpretation collapses once the object under scrutiny no longer remains available for others to apprehend.

But another subtle assumption operates under the idea of ever achieving a perfect performance. Since performance delivers an unstable, and therefore undesirable, space for interpretation, the critic must turn elsewhere to encounter Shakespeare's art. And where else can the critic turn but back to the text? Performance's seeming imperfection and inability to offer a ground for interpretation clear the way for the text to emerge triumphant in the battle for interpretive dominance. Somehow the text possesses a "perfection" the performance does not. Critics generally see the text as complete, stable, able to remain constant over the wars of meaning waged upon it. And even in the case of Shakespeare, someone who very often may not have even produced what readers might think of as a written play, they still see the text as accurate and reliable, able to divulge its meanings, intentions, signs, irony, and otherness with very little difficulty. While the opportunity to oversimplify exists here, debate does sometimes rage around variant texts and new constructions;⁶ for the most part many critics give scant thought to the validity of the text poured over to discover meaning and interpretation.

And from where does the primacy of the text as the center for interpretation derive? I would argue that the novel creates this impulse. The novel demands a text for its existence. Poetry was sung and transmitted orally long before being published, and drama existed in performance. But the novel from its inception required a text, and as the novel rose in prominence within literature, so did the text as a place where meaning takes place. We have reached the point now in history where for the literary critic art means text. The critic usurps other art forms and textualizes them. And more insidious, the greater resemblance

that text bears to what critics conceive as novelistic, the greater attention that text garners. The script of Shakespeare, an intermediate form meant to become something else (performance), has been novelized to make it worthy of interpretation. More and more Shakespeare's plays are read like novels, not dramas, with almost no thought to how they would exist in performance or how the words we encounter in the text might be delivered from the stage. Much criticism sets forth claims all but impossible to realize in performance,⁷ therefore impossible to reconcile with the fact that Shakespeare wrote drama for the theater. But this does not matter; meaning exists in the text and one can employ the methods of novelistic interpretation to extract that meaning.

The very act of textualizing creates an isolation that produces danger for any institution. Literary critics may seek to erase all connections of power and control over the text and posit authority with themselves. In other words, critics can continually create more space for an ever widening range of heresy to occur. When thinking of literary criticism in this way, one may see the events of the last thirty years as almost inevitable. Lest the author exert any influence over her creation, she is dispensed with along with any notion of intent that might curb the interpreter's musings. But even the words of the text itself can prove too constricting, so some critics concentrate instead on the spaces, margins, and whiteness of the page. The impulse of heresy re-writes its object of inquiry so that anything might be uttered in the name of interpretation.

In one sense, railing on about such things does no good. The reality of the situation nearly demands Shakespeare be textualized because the general population's access to performance remains so limited. It would be foolish to ban Shakespeare from every place but the theater. The plays in print at least offer an avenue for contact with the general public and scholars alike that might not happen otherwise. Such a reality creates a tremendous tension; critics cannot avoid what they see as their responsibility to interpret a play as text

once that option becomes available. The problem arises when critics abandon all other ways of thinking about Shakespeare other than as text or pseudo-novel or an occasion to produce a new heresy and gain position in the critical debate.

There remains one final thing to consider about the notion of a perfect performance. Perfect by whose standards? Certainly the literary critic must feel at least adequately equipped to determine such perfection, but what set of criteria does the critic use to judge performance? One could argue to return simply to the text. The performance for most critics does nothing but present a certain interpretation of the text to the audience. Its merit rests completely in this fact. And since no one interprets texts better than the literary critic, performance gets reduced to an acted-out, approximate interpretive discourse. To put it another way, for the most part textual critics interpret the performance's interpretation of the text according to their interpretation of that same text. The performance again is rendered obsolete. It is much easier to read an interpretation than to waste hours watching it performed. The performance never gains the space as an act-unto-itself to consider and interpret. Textual critics continually return to the text to ascertain all value about Shakespeare. So ultimately all ideas of perfection reside in the critic, the interpreter, and those ideas always originate from the text.

Tremendous pressures also result from the idea of performance. For to allow a performance to exist authentically as performance, the critic must relinquish a certain amount of interpretive authority--unless of course, the critic wishes to direct, produce, and act every part. The performance remains a communal act of enactment. Therefore the critic must continually push performance back within the boundaries of the text. This decision manifests itself as a move on the part of the critic to label performances as "wrong" or inadequate when they fail to parallel a critic's interpretation of the text. Textual interpretation is about control: over meaning, over emphasis, and over importance.

Performance is about participation: a communal act of completing the play and creating meaning that is the property of the community involved. Power disperses in performance to the extent that any attempt at control proves fruitless.

So the issue of a perfect performance ultimately revolves around interpretive control, which is about power, which leads to a recognition that performance assembles itself around community, not power, and must therefore be subdued by the literary critic or re-fashioned to bring performance under the critic's dominion; heresy in literary criticism cannot tolerate community or the dispersal of power away from the critic's autonomy over the text. Critics therefore seek to force the meaning of performance back into some interpretation of the text (although in other ways some critics attempt to accomplish control over performance). Looking at the way the text/performance battle rages and the limitations of these approaches can demonstrate how performance can escape the question of power and control and can instead focus on community. Such a move certainly places the critic in danger, but the results make those dangers worth hazarding.

The shape of the text/performance dilemma takes several forms, but the major approaches to the problem may be described as follows: an insistence that the text and performance are mutually exclusive, with neither informing the other; an attempt to demonstrate how either text or performance can inform the other, with one holding primacy as a vehicle of interpretation; a move toward some kind of synthesis between the two that produces another sort of interpretive space. In the end, though, nearly all formulations return to the text or into a textualization of the performance to gain control and access to a certain type of interpretive act.

Certainly the most obvious of these approaches simply claims the text to be central to any sort of interpretation of Shakespeare's plays. New Criticism provides the impulse for the supremacy of text, and as W.B. Worthen points out, "New Criticism necessarily

discredited stage performance--as well as criticism speaking 'in theatrical terms'--as extrinsic to a play's literary design" (443). Interestingly, even though Worthen recognizes the dimension of performance, he basically returns to New Critical conceptions, beginning his article on performance theory with a quote by G. Wilson Knight:

The proper thing to do about a play's dramatic quality is to produce it, to act on it, to attend performances; but the penetration of its deeper meanings is a different matter, and such a study, though the commentator should certainly be dramatically aware, and even wary, will not itself speak in theatrical terms. (vi)

Worthen writes nothing that would convince his readers that he does not agree completely with Knight. This article constructs an argument most textual critics adhere to; while paying homage to the performance and its possibilities, they immediately dismiss performance as a place where *true* interpretation can take place. At the end of his essay, Worthen argues that performance "is not an unconstrained means of realizing the text but a practice related to other modes of cultural transmission, signification, and interpretation" (450). In other words, performance remains too messy and includes too many variables ("other modes") to ever trust its meaning. The critic engaging the text free from cultural and group restraints provides real interpretation. And for all the recent discourse on cultural significance and context and restoring the text to its time, most critics still believe they engage the text in a manner others cannot, and therefore arrive at a form of "truth" about the text. The critic and his heresy always remain supreme no matter the approach or supposed ground-breaking theory employed.

The textual critics find their greatest expression in Harry Berger's "Text Against Performance," an essay that nearly all performance theorists engage and attempt to discredit. Berger simply claims that Shakespeare himself demonstrates a "textual antitheatrical" propensity that argues "against the stage centered approach" (51). But

Berger's most telling statement occurs when he explains that the text "gives us a control over meaning which performance in the theatrical space and time denies us" (51). Berger offers an argument about control that appears absolutely necessary for interpretation and meaning to take place. The "us" in the passage refers to critics, and Berger seizes that control by privileging the text and demeaning performance as somehow chaotic and perhaps as a result even dangerous. But the danger only affects the critic who may lose authority over Shakespeare in the communal act of performance. Berger does consider performance again in his recent book *Imaginary Audition*, but places the theatrical experience in the mind of the reader and sees actual performance as too constraining to arrive at purposeful interpretation.

The most forceful and direct refutation of Berger occurs in H.R. Coursen's recent *Shakespearean Performance as Interpretation*, in which he simply states that "A Shakespearean script exists only in performance. Period" (15). Coursen elaborates: "The script is not sitting there in its perfection. It is awaiting a new interpretation, one that may be assisted by the act of reading but which must emerge in production" (43). Coursen touches on a key point in performance theory: somehow Shakespeare's texts lack fulfillment until they find their way to the stage. Performance for Coursen "completes" the play; by focusing only on the text, one focuses on a partial work of art, an act akin to interpreting a block of marble before the sculptor takes a chisel to it. J.L. Styan defines the text as "only a plan for drama, and is equivalent at best to the scenario of a film or the choreography of a ballet, never the film or dance itself" (92). By not bearing these factors in mind, critics read Shakespeare's texts, according to John Russell Brown, as "most peculiar novels" (*Discovering 2*).

The limits of the text as interpretive ground are crucial to understanding performance theory and its resultant approach.⁸ No performance theorist denies the text exists, only that

it functions as something other than the normal area for exploration by the critic. As Styan puts it, even though "a play text is written in words . . . they are not the same sort of words we find in novels and newspapers. They are a code which waits to be projected and deciphered" (92). This deciphering unfolds in performance. Again commenting on the limits of the play text, Brown argues in *Shakespeare's Plays in Performance* that "there are many other elements in a drama that must be appreciated--those which are not so easily reached through the printed page--and the very words themselves can be fully known only if they are considered in their dramatic context" (10). Coursen believes the text must undergo an "extratextual" process because "it is precisely through such extratextuality that we learn what the script might be saying" (33). Performance offers that extratextual element the play requires.

Performance theorists understand that textual critics might posit the idea of enactment as nothing more than undefinable emotion: "the magic of theater" takes over and makes Shakespeare real to us. Thomas Cartelli understands Berger's argument against performance by locating the place the critic occupies in performance: "Berger commits himself to the study of Shakespearean play-texts from the vantage point of resistance, a position from which engagement must always seem suspect and self-mystifying, indeed, must always seem like submission to a spell" (10). The critic, says the performance theorist, cannot step outside the work in the way he can with a text. Playgoers must participate in the act of creation and that place within the work makes them uncomfortable when it comes to interpretation because such a location threatens stability. Barbara Hodgson notes that performance

acknowledges, in its every aspect, its ephemeral nature. Such an acknowledgment is truer to history--both critical history and performance history--than attempting to create a text that will not be disturbed by time. For

disturbance--one might also call it transformation--is just what Shakespeare's texts are all about. (65)

The critic must be present at this transformation to divine the true nature of Shakespeare's texts. No longer can critics occupy a seat of authority outside the work as they can do when encountering texts; they must instead move inside and participate which puts them in a very vulnerable position, open to being interpreted instead of interpreting.

The importance of the position of the critic with respect to interpretation cannot be underestimated. Richard Levin understands perfectly the authority that derives from standing outside the text to determine meaning. He demonstrates how the textual critic believes "every major play presents an apparent or outer meaning, intended for those clods of ordinary intelligence in theaters, which is always wrong, and a real or inner meaning, intended for the wiser few in their libraries, which always seems to correspond to his own beliefs" (547). But even though difficulties exist, Levin still privileges the text because in performance theory no suitable means can be found to "determine *which* performance [I]t would have to mean *any* performance" (548). Such instability would lead to interpretive chaos and too much subjectivity as critics view different performances of differing quality. Heretical textual critics simply cannot come to terms with the inside nature of performance theory. Interpretation has always been in many respects an outside activity, albeit a rather exclusive club of outsiders. As Levin makes clear, certain critics formulate that there are those who can stand outside in order to see inside a text, and there are those who cannot ("clods of ordinary intelligence"). Stepping outside to gaze inside denotes a reach for power over the text. The heretic cannot stand inside the work and at the same time encompass and control it.

Demanding that the critic move in regards to Shakespeare, however, constitutes a power move of its own, a heretical strategy about position more than interpretation. By telling

textual critics they have been occupying the wrong space, performance theorists seize control of the discourse surrounding Shakespeare. Textual critics can write all they want; their conclusions emanate from the incorrect seat of authority, a claim which has profound consequences. A great body of criticism has at the least been declared irrelevant, if not totally wrong. The heretical performance theorist has cleared an enormous space of authority from which to speak, not having to confront or overcome the accumulation of hundreds of years of competing voices of power. This shift in the location of the discourse proves a brilliant move of usurpation. Heretical performance theorists claim they do so for the good of Shakespeare, to correct "incorrect" interpretation damaging to a true understanding of Shakespeare's art and accomplishments, but the fact still remains that a new position of control over Shakespeare, a new heretical voice has been established, or is trying to establish itself.

This trend might not disturb critics; indeed it might even prove a refreshing way to change the nature of interpretation, if performance theory as applied by heretical critics did actually move within the play and participate in its creation. But the truth of the situation appears to be something quite different. Performance theorists simply find ways to stand outside while claiming to be inside the performance. This outcome, the textualizing of the performance, allows the heretic to again apply the normal tools of interpretation and control. What starts out as an impulse towards community quickly reformulates itself as a heretical expression. And not only does this heresy declare its interpretation the correct one, but it takes the original tactic of suggesting the *means* of all prior interpretation needs correction. Heretical performance theorists must immediately find a way of consolidating the tremendous power this move establishes; they will not disperse that power, so instead they return to the only mode of control they know, the text.

This textualizing of the performance occurs at many levels, but the most common method consists of focusing interpretation on film and television versions of Shakespeare's plays. Coursen asserts that such an approach provides the stability needed for interpretation. He heralds the VHS cassette as the great tool of performance theory since the critic can rewind and re-watch the performance. But what does this have to do with enactment and participation? This seems to run totally counter to Coursen's objection that "the reader does not engage in the communal act of theater nor does he or she participate in and contribute to the continuum of energy that is created by performance" (18). The cassette becomes a book (text) to read and re-read under conditions the critic manipulates completely. How can any continuum or true performance occur if the critic stops, rewinds, and replays portions of the play? The critic in no way enters into that communal act. Fragmentation results in just the same way a close-reading isolates certain passages to interpret. The play has become textualized, encompassed, and remains under the complete dominance of the heretical critic to extract meaning as desired. Heretical moves in literary criticism always accumulate power; they never relinquish it. Performance must undergo containment so the critic can use it to maintain leverage in the institution.

Even when the critic attends a live performance of Shakespeare, a certain outsidership remains to insure control over meaning. Blasting Miscall Kahn's 1989 production of *Twelfth Night* at the Folger--set in India--Coursen decrees, "I do not believe, though, that Washington is ready for much more than the basic sappiness of Kahn's conception and rendition" (30). Notably Coursen creates a significant distance between himself and the audience. He assumes the audience could not interpret the play because of their low level of expertise, an expertise Coursen of course possesses. He stands clearly outside the performance textualizing both the play as it is enacted and the audience, himself excluded. Again no participation takes place. Coursen complains throughout his book of audiences

who give standing ovations to inferior productions and directors who utterly fail, such as the "god-awful Bognadov version" of *Taming of the Shrew* (28). In no way trusting the audience to interpret with him, Coursen stands outside all performance to judge it rightly. Perhaps most telling, he points to the existence of "fallacy" and "possibility" when it comes to interpretation in performance (32). But from where could Coursen determine such things except from the play text or the textualizing of a performance? He will allow no communal meaning to develop.⁹

Another approach to performance consists of reconstructing the event of performance itself for interpretation. Cartelli's believes "the playtext . . . asks us to reconstruct the dynamics of audience engagement from the point of view of the audience itself " (11). This can take several forms. First, the critic can reconstruct a hypothetical audience, a sort of average audience, and determine how that audience might engage a play. Second, and more common in recent studies, the critic can reconstruct an actual audience, most often an Elizabethan one, and interpret that audience's reactions and engagement especially in terms of social influence upon the culture. This approach occurs most often in New Historicism, with the emphasis often being more on the audience instead of the play itself. Indeed, it often seems irrelevant which play the critic examines; the audience will always react in a clearly predictable way, usually a politically subversive one.¹⁰ While both approaches yield often interesting criticism, in the end the central issues discussed here rarely come into play. If critics posit a hypothetical audience, no real engagement takes place, and if they reconstruct an audience, the power again resides in the hands of the critic who interprets, from the outside, the reactions and meanings that derive from a performance. Critics draw no nearer to that illusive idea of participation and enactment.

So performance theory and Shakespeare would appear to reach an impasse. On the one hand, the heretical strategy of some textual critics dismiss or ignore the component of

performance; on the other, heretical performance theorists demand performance emerge as the central event in interpreting Shakespeare's drama. The impasse arises when these same performance theorists textualize performance and therefore revert back to employing the same language, techniques, and control as the textual critics. Performance theory has identified a very serious need, for participation in enactment, but it has yet to discover a workable solution. The dictates of heresy overcome the impulse to create a space for performance to occur. The heretical critic wrestles control of the play back for the benefits of power in the criticism.

A possible way out of this situation does exist, however, and a play by Shakespeare may contain part of the solution. But before looking at it, critics must be willing to leave textual criticism behind. Critics must allow for what they do, but they cannot pretend it has anything to do with Shakespeare's plays as drama. Instead they should concede that textual critics investigate a set of texts called, for want of a better term, Plays, that exist apart from the Play Scripts Shakespeare wrote for performance on the stage. Such a concession would allow textual critics to continue their interpretation without muddling the issue of performance, and it would also allow performance theorists to quit feeling the impulse to seize control of the discourse and therefore performance itself. Both camps must escape the impulse to textualize every form of art in order to impose interpretative control upon it. This textualization becomes an easily controllable medium to exert heresy under the guise of restoring Shakespeare to performance.

The intent here is not to make another heretical move around the normal means of interpretation to seize power once again. Rather it is to clear a neutral ground of community that might allow both the critic and enthusiast of Shakespeare to sit together in a new forum of interpretation and meaning. Rather than rendering the present discourse on Shakespeare somehow "wrong" or obsolete, I wish to declare Shakespeare as something

more than textual, and therefore in need of another mode of apprehension, a mode apart from the usual work of the critic, a mode that in no way seeks control over meaning or arrives at an autonomous interpretation. Do Shakespeare's plays offer a new alternative of thinking about literature, criticism, and the institution's relationship to it? I believe they do. And with the play as the subject, some first, tentative steps away from the trend of heresy can begin.

Approaching performance requires foremost the constant idea of community. A performance means nothing without an audience, and an audience does not gather to stare at a vacant stage. But community means more than a simple assembly; a degree of participation on all parts of the community must take place in order for the performance to succeed. Meaning can never be invested in only one area of the performance. If a director refuses to share a common vision for the play, the performance will falter. If an actor does not participate in the interplay of characters, the sense of the play will vanish. If the audience never gains access and therefore fails to respond, no meaning can take place. Such performance remains a far cry from the isolated act of textual interpretation of performance. Peter Brook states that in performance "what matters is for us [actors and audience] to have a living contact with one another. If this contact isn't there, then everything we can possibly say about the theater in theory just falls to pieces" (1).

How can this "living contact" in performance find definition? One possibility involves considering the Greek idea of community, or fellowship, as a way of modeling community in performance. The most common Greek word for true fellowship, *koinonia*, derives from two words, *koinonos*, a sharer, and *koinos*, shared by all.¹¹ *Koinonia* itself means partnership, or even more literally, participation. This participation and sharing can exist on any superficial level, but *koinonia* describes the most intimate and complete type of community possible. John uses it to define a Christian's relationship with God and the

community of the church (I John 1.6-7) and also warns that those who do not enter completely into the truth of Christianity delude themselves into thinking they possess *koinonia* (I John 1.6). This fellowship not only defines the relationship of community, but it also creates the space within which meaning and truth take place for the member. All are partakers and sharers, and without *koinonia* not only fellowship, but meaning and truth, cease to exist.

The idea of *koinonia* insists that all the members of the community must participate for meaning to occur. Those who stand outside of this fellowship also find themselves cut off from the true meaning of the community's activities, an idea which fits nicely into the context of performance. The entire participation of those present creates the meaning of any performance. Any interpretation that goes on happens in the moments of any particular enactment. Once the performance finishes, once *koinonia* is broken, any further grasping for meaning becomes futile. The members of the community may ponder the significance of the event for themselves as individuals, but they can in no way make any claims of meaning apart from the full participation of the community that made the performance possible. The act and the interpretation of that act take place simultaneously as the community both creates and comments upon that creation in performance.

Skepticism toward such an approach results from seeing all literature as the property of individuals to take and shape in whatever way desired, especially now that post-structural critics have dispensed with the author and intention. The usual means of forging meaning from the text concerns autonomous power, especially in regard to heresy in literary criticism. The suggestion here is simple: meaning in performance means sharing and participating in a community. That meaning becomes the property of all of the community and vanishes once fellowship ceases at the end of a performance. Heretical critics cannot control and dictate communal meaning to gain power over the performance. Such

fellowship requires trusting not only the performers but those viewing the performance. Even more important it means sharing the act of interpretation and meaning with all those in the community because these ideas can occupy a space not defined in terms of power or authority.

The question of power in literary interpretation strikes at the heart of both heresy and the alternative of community. Does the assertion of power in interpretation form the only basis from which to engage literature? Heresy in criticism works from that assumption and would have the entire institution believe the same. But as Booth has demonstrated in his work on plurality, and as this study has illustrated, the move for power in interpretation through the banishment of other voices undermines the entire critical enterprise. Booth argues that "wherever understanding is maimed, our life is threatened; wherever it is achieved, our life is enhanced" (349). The strategy in heresy to deem opponents as "dogmatic" or "orthodox" in a crippling sense maims criticism by diminishing the open inspection of all types of interpretation.

But even more than that, heresy and community lead to questions about the very metaphysics of existence. Does individual autonomy and power outweigh all considerations and define the basis of what it means to be human? If it does, then the strategy of heresy makes perfect sense as a position within literary criticism. But can *koinonia* better define both the critical and the human enterprise? Mary F. Rouseaus writes that "The ultimate roots of questions about community, then, are metaphysical--the perennial problem of the one and the many" (3). How those questions are answered determines the methods and strategies employed by critics in literary interpretation.

Performance leads to the heart of these questions by positing an interpretive setting where participation becomes crucial to any sense of meaning. The picture of the meditative critic alone with a text determining meaning becomes untenable in a performance situation.

Therefore performance offers a unique opportunity to test the ideas of community as a model for other areas of textual criticism. The question of the one or the many has already been answered in performance; the gathering of the many makes community a necessity in rendering meaning.

To return then to the question posed at the outset of this chapter, should we read Shakespeare? Does encountering Shakespeare so frequently in texts diminish the ability to form community when viewing a performance? Do those who textualize Shakespeare form an interpretation that they then impose on the performance and the audience and therefore stifle *koinonia*? If critics bring no preconceptions to the performance might they trust those performing a bit more? Might they be willing to listen to the reactions of other members of the audience during the performance while also offering up their own? Might they more quickly abandon themselves to the spirit of the play rather than standing outside to make sure everyone gets the performance "right"? Does reading Shakespeare in the end destroy Shakespeare?

At the very least it would seem critics should read Shakespeare in a new way if they ever hope to recover the performance aspect of his art. What form that reading takes should be the real task of the performance theorists. Shakespeare criticism should also invest in what forms the basis for *koinonia* in the performance setting. How can critics better foster this sense of fellowship so that true performance can take place with regularity in Shakespearean productions?¹² The actors and directors and scenery makers are more than adequate; the real problem lies in critical attitudes toward performance and the hesitancy to participate in it. To discover another dimension of Shakespeare heretical critics must relinquish their desire to control and market what they uncover in performance, a relinquishing made difficult because it conflicts with the interests of heresy in literary criticism, interests constantly striving for new heretical expressions devoid of community interest.

No debate whether Shakespeare considers or ponders the best and most effective way of engaging and communicating to his audience is necessary here; the basic economic demands of delivering a product audiences will pay to see make Shakespeare's interests in that area clear. Shakespeare appears to have a clear sense of his audience, but to what extent does that sense include the idea of *koinonia*? At least a glimpse of Shakespeare's philosophy emerges in Act 5 of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play within the play that concludes the wedding celebration challenges Shakespeare's audience and their attitude toward performance.

The members of the wedding party appear ready to enter into the community of performance at the beginning of the play, when Theseus dismisses the objections of Egeus that the play will be too crude for their liking:

I will hear this play;

For never anything can be amiss

When simpleness and duty tender it. (5.1.81-3)¹³

Theseus imparts perfectly here the idea that as long as the performers honestly engage the play and they as the audience share in their effort, meaning will ensue from the community. However, what ensues is not community, but the reshifting of the Athenians to a position outside the play, a position from which they can interpret the play. After Quince's Prologue, everyone comments on the defects of his delivery, including Lysander, "He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt: he knows not the stop" (5.1.119-20). Continually throughout the play, the audience (wedding party) continually punches through the performance to demonstrate its imperfection and unreality, as when all continue to remark on Snout's role as the wall. While Snout knows perfectly well he at no time becomes a wall, he acts in good faith to create a performance out of which meaning might take place. However, the audience refuses to enter into fellowship with the actors to create meaning in the

performance. Theseus and the others remain outside the performance as critics, never permitting completion of the performance to occur. It is their shortcomings, not those of Quince and his players, that doom the performance to failure in terms of a communal experience.

Shakespeare further delineates the crucial roles of all participants, audience and players alike, in performance by stressing the innocence of the players who act the drama. As to the matter of having a lion in the play, Bottom warns

you must name his name, and half his face must be seen through the lion's neck, and he himself must speak through, saying thus or to the same defect: "ladies," or "fair ladies, I would wish you" or "I would request you" or "I would entreat you not to fear, not to tremble. My life for yours. If you think I come hither as a lion, it were pity of my life. No, I am no such thing. I am a man, as other men are"--and there, indeed, let him name his name, and tell them plainly his is Snug the joiner. (3.1.33-42)

Bottom has faith that whatever the play says signifies to the audience, even to the point of causing panic because a lion roams the stage. Thus, adding some loam to Snout makes him a wall. Bottom and the players fail to recognize that the audience must also accept these conventions in order for the performance to be enacted.

These ideas in many ways mirror the shortcomings of New Criticism after the Scholar/Critic debates. New Critics, like Bottom, believe literature contains some fixed meaning that reveals itself without the help or acknowledgement of the reader or audience. That world within the piece of literature contains truth that remains self-evident throughout all time. Yet this belief leads to a clever type of heresy that then announces that the critic will divulge the truth inherent in literature, just as Snout announces "I am a wall." Such perceptions stifle community by withholding the work from the audience and dispensing its

"meaning" through the narrow voice of the critic or the passive acceptance of what the actors tell the audience. No participation ever takes place.

Shakespeare does a remarkable job in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of demonstrating how meaning and power can be withheld in performance by the audience as well. After all, should the Duke and his party enter into fellowship, they would have to bestow power onto the players to create meaning in the same way they can. Performance always levels power relationships, and Shakespeare deftly has the working class act in this play to highlight the difficulty some have of sharing power in performance. The Duke cannot do it; although he extols the virtues of simple honesty in performance, he still refuses to uphold his end and participate in the meaning of the play; to do so would mean creating a sense of equality he appears unwilling to foster.

The attitude of Theseus actually serves as an ironic commentary on literary criticism today. In the effort to find innovation, the heretical critic always works to stand outside the text in order to contain it and its meaning. Any sharing of that interpretive power, even with the text itself, threatens to diminish the critic's power over the discourse. The critic must strive to focus all attention on the act of interpretation, sometimes destroying or marginalizing the text or performance itself to insure the success of the heretical statement.

However, even as he stands outside the performance community, Theseus makes two of the most telling remarks about *koinonia* found anywhere in Shakespeare. After Hippolyta complains that "This is the Silliest stuff that ever I heard," Theseus replies, "The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them" (5.1.209-11). Then continuing in the same vein, Theseus comments, "If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men" (5.1. 214-15). Certainly, says Theseus, performance means nothing but illusion, but if the audience will participate through imagination they can invest reality in that communal act. The shadows have life as long as

the community will sustain and empower them. In one sense, Theseus declares a performance only as good as the audience that watches and completes it with the players; the performance becomes as great as all parties allow it to be. And no matter how great the performers, no performance will succeed in the end if the audience withholds its participation. That seems to be the message of Robin in the Epilogue:

If we shadows have offended,
 Think but this and all is mended:
 That you have but slumbered here,
 While these visions did appear;
 And this weak and idle theme,
 No more yielding but a dream,
 Gentles, do not reprehend. (5.2.1-7)

If viewers do not like what they have seen, says Robin, they may simply refuse to impart meaning to the performance through sharing; all will then be but a dream. The second *koinonia* fades, the audience awakens from the illusion and punctures the reality they helped to create in the performance. Theseus and his party puncture that community from the outset while Shakespeare advises the audience that they have the choice to invest the performance with meaning or stand outside and merely view a spectacle to criticize and interpret. Either way the play gets acted; it merely becomes a question of whether true performance occurs within the community participating in it. Again the issue of whether power or shared meaning dominates the critical enterprise arises. In the context of performance the only sensible answer has to be that the idea of *koinonia* must prevail for any real meaning to take place.

Critics will not suddenly leave Shakespeare's texts to the actors and directors; too much power remains at stake to be so naive. But perhaps the sense of *koinonia* clears a space for

performance not to be controlled by heretical textual and performance critics alike. If critics can somehow share Shakespeare with the audience and the performers, they might discover more about the plays than all commentary and interpretation have labored to uncover for so many years. But such a community requires a trust and participation that must be cultivated. Perhaps some sector of literary criticism will take it upon itself to lead others into such fellowship. Perhaps such should be the goal of criticism as it touches upon Shakespeare.

The concept of *koinonia* can extend much further than merely performance of Shakespeare. The idea of community can form the basis of an approach to literary criticism that delivers critics from the morass of heresy. By applying the idea of community to the study of literature in order to accomplish the goals of the institution and arrive at meaning in any literary setting (the classroom, a text, a performance, a journal article), critics can devalue the merits of innovation for its own sake as a means of consolidating power in criticism. The emphasis moves away from what critics can say for the sake of uttering something heretical, to what they should say to further the success and well-being of the community.

Critics must participate with literature in order for the community to thrive. They must listen to the text and allow it to enter into the act of interpretation. They must participate with other critics and even others outside the institution to better understand what they are about. This type of participation will produce a plurality of voices as defined by Booth because community means respecting vitality, justice, and understanding through mutual sharing and participation. Heretical critics must check impulses which do not have the interests of the community or the vitality of the text and its interpretation in mind. Dissent should be a vital component of the process, but it should be dissent that genuinely has the goal of reforming the community when it has strayed from fostering the understanding of

literature or the purposes of the field. Systematically destroying works and interpretations because such a heretical stance accumulates power in criticism does nothing to further the community or the study of literature. Likewise, divorcing interpretation from the text in order to write something innovative in no way adds to the advancement of understanding as it does not give justice to what the text has to say.

The suggestion here is that a large body of criticism in literary studies refuses, like Theseus and the wedding party, to allow community and enactment to occur for the sake of maintaining power. This study will continue to demonstrate that such voices use heresy to thwart community and the presence of the text to insure their own control over literary discourse. True *koinonia* always leads to a sharing of meaning and an emphasis on equality. Heresy in literary criticism tries to get outside community to encompass and dominate all interpretation and meaning.

Theseus never experiences a performance of the play offered by Bottom and his fellow actors; he never enters into *koinonia* or allows for the possibility of true enactment by the community. Like heretical literary criticism, he instead creates an interpretation divorced from the performance that he can control and preside over. Not what happens, but what Theseus says is happening becomes the focus of the action. This stance has enormous advantages in terms of power within the group formed by the wedding party and players, but Theseus loses the possibility of a sharing of meaning and interpretation that can energize the community to move in new directions and produce collectively what Theseus could never attain with his autonomous grasp on what the play means. Only Theseus, not the community, benefits from his position. Eventually he will only be talking to himself.

Purposely absent here is a precise indication of the specific direction in which the community of literary studies should move or what goals it should pursue. That task remains for the institution as a whole. Instead, the following chapters will examine how

heresy infiltrates certain critical theories and how that heresy removes itself from the texts it claims to study and the community as a whole. Following these examinations are suggestions, illustrated through analyses of specific texts, of how a particular theory might be used for the good of the community no matter which path it might choose. Criticism must choose a communal direction or critics will all be talking to themselves, much to the annoyance of everyone else.

Chapter 4
New Historicism:
The Heresy of Relevance

In 1054, when Rome finally decided it must force a schism with the Eastern church, the main point of contention involved the theological concept of *filoque*, the assertion that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Son and the Father in an act of full godhead by Christ (Johnson 180). Rome had only included the term in its mass since 1014, and that at the urging of Henry II, but the pope's court convinced itself *filoque* involved one of the foundational utterances of the church and derived from "immemorial antiquity" (Johnson 180). When the papal legates met with representatives from the East, they accused the East of purposefully omitting the "*filoque* from their creed centuries before" in an act of subversion against the Roman church (Johnson 180). The final schism had occurred.

This dispute about *filoque* displays New Historicism in action.¹ Or perhaps it should be called Proto-New Historicism. The papal legates, while convincing themselves of a long historical progression of subversion by the East, arrived at a radically different conclusion about it than present-day New Historicists. Rome saw such subversion as a threat to its security and therefore moved to suppress it; today's New Historians champion subversion and locate it everywhere in Renaissance texts, from Shakespeare to records of New World colonialism.² This subversion in texts shapes and re-shapes the culture and society where such literature finds itself. Literature does not merely reflect reality; texts create and transform reality.

The controversy involving *filoque* also demonstrates a favorite methodology of the New Historicist: The Opening Anecdote.³ Frank Romany complains that New Historicism does nothing but rely on "telling anecdotes" (272), and David Bevington calls the "eccentric anecdote" one of the distinguishing characteristics of New Historical rhetoric (74). These anecdotes generally derive from some obscure event or text from the Renaissance and become the structure and point of the argument that follows. The Opening Anecdote seeks to provide a bridge between the literature under study and the cultural subversion it supposedly ignites. A better name for the anecdote might be The Totalizing Metaphor. The Totalizing Metaphor constructs a world in which literature continually undermines the oppressive elements of society and offers instead a subversive voice of openness and liberality, a breaking down of barriers into the fresh light of plurality.

The major problem with New Historicism and The Totalizing Metaphor concerns the hollowness of its construction. In the end, the New Historicist weds text and historical context with a clever anecdote which intends to convince readers of their unbreakable union and interplay. Jean E. Howard rightly points out that "such a procedure seldom stops to question why a particular historical context has been selected to align with the literary text, as if such choices were not often arbitrary in the extreme and [a hindrance] to seeing the full intertextual network in which a literary work exists" (24). The Totalizing Metaphor seeks to convince by the sheer force of its originality, rather than by the actual and demonstrable connection between a particular text and a specific historical moment. As Frank Romany warns, "works of art and the world are not really equivalent or homologous with one another. It is essential, therefore, to be as attentive to as possible to the specifics of both if we are to avoid a historicism that is wayward, eccentric, and unhistorical" (287).

Stephen Greenblatt, in *Shakespearean Negotiations*, purposes to reveal the movement of "social energy" in Renaissance texts. He begins his essay "Invisible Bullets" with an anecdote about Marlowe's alleged atheism and its connection with Thomas Hariot, the Renaissance scientist, often accused of atheism but with very little proof. These events turn themselves into an anecdote concerning the presence of doubt and disbelief in the Renaissance. Greenblatt provides an account of Hariot's writings on the New World, in particular the Algonquins, and their potential connection to Shakespeare's history plays, most notably *Henry V*. He supplies this connection by claiming "Hariot's description of Algonquian society implies a description of comparable mechanisms in his own culture" (27). Greenblatt then makes a most telling statement:

There is a perversely attractive, if bleak, clarity in . . . deciding that subversive doubt was totally produced and totally contained by the ruling elite--but the actual evidence is tenebrous. We simply do not know what was thought in silence, what was written and then carefully burned, what was whispered by Hariot to Raleigh. (35)

Even though Greenblatt concedes the unknowns of the historical particulars, he does not let this lack of evidence bother him. The fact that a text *may* harbor subversive undercurrents remains enough for him; the possibility that Hariot might be undermining the dominant ideology of the day should be enough to enable critics to take the gigantic leap (by using that Totalizing Metaphor at the start of the essay) that somehow in turn Shakespeare's writing perhaps turns Elizabethan society in new directions, although Greenblatt admits "it is not at all clear that *Henry V* can be successfully *performed* as subversive" (63) [italics mine]. Stanley Fish, in his essay about New Historicism and Milton studies, calls such conclusions historical "non-work," that somehow New Historians feel the connection between history and texts is a "relevance [that] need not be

demonstrated; it is merely assumed and because it is assumed one need not establish it by going through the steps that practitioners of other kinds of criticism consider obligatory" ("Milton's" 261).

Heretical New Historicists assert perhaps the oddest of all heresies. It is an impulse which abandons all in the name of political relevance. As Howard Felperin notes, New Historicism begins "with the signified it desires rather than the signified it encounters. It knows in advance the meaning it seeks from the text, which it either approves for delivering or, more often nowadays in the cause of canonical texts, rebukes for failure to deliver" (ix). Felperin, of course, has his own heresy to defend, but his statement strikes at the fundamental outlook of heretical New Historians--they want beyond all else to prove literature influences and molds the outlook and decisions of the society that produces it. Too often though this desire proves too difficult to trace, so instead the heretical New Historian resorts to a favorite strategy: literature-as-subversion. The text may not actually participate in the political choices of a society, but why should it? Society operates under the heavy hand of domination, and literature seeks to destroy and wrestle that authority into a freedom of plurality. As a heretical strategy, New Historicism attacks not only the orthodoxy within literary criticism, but any orthodoxy that chokes any facet of society. This tactic yields much greater results. All the critic must do is hint at the potentially subversive nature of the text, a subversion generally contained by either the state or the author, to win the case. Heretical New Historicism is all about what might happen rather than what actually happens in the Renaissance. Or as Alan Liu puts it, New Historicists love the Renaissance because "the interpreter can fantasize about subverting dominance while dreaming away the total commitments of contestation" (751). The Totalizing Metaphor creates a tidy structure that makes literary texts appear enormously influential over society and its political negotiations.

Like all literary heresies, heretical New Historicism claims to save criticism from some stifling orthodoxy, in this case all types of formalism. Jonathan Dollimore, a leading proponent of cultural materialism, the British counterpart to New Historicism, sees his methodology as a personal journey to freedom.⁴ He tells the reader that "as I became more familiar with literary criticism of this drama [Renaissance], I realized that much of it tended to normalise, moralise, and suppress exactly whatever it was I found attractive" (*Radical xi*). Jean Howard agrees, complaining that "a purely formalist pedagogy should be debilitating for those who teach *any* literature, not just that of the Renaissance" (15). Dollimore contends that his work "presumes to challenge a politically conservative way of doing criticism" (*Radical xiii*).⁵ Formalism offends heretical New Historicism for obvious reasons; formalist thought always tries to wrench the text from its historical context and create a set of conclusions that exist for all time and all readers. Such an interpretative strategy looks within the text for answers without reaching outside the text to gauge the impact the world around might have on a work.

Heretical New Historicists attempt to carve away the foundation that upholds formalist conclusions, what Dollimore calls "essentialist humanism" (*Radical xxxii*). The only way to ascribe transcendent properties to a text is to construe a reader with a transhistorical essence to apprehend them. Arguing for New Historicism, Louis Montrose believes the theory is "new in resisting a prevalent tendency to posit and privilege a united and autonomous individual--whether an Author or a Work--to be set against a social or literary background" (6). The individual has no essence, and therefore the true object of study should entail what societal forces create the behavior of individuals in any given time period. Heretical New Historicists argue that literature plays a large role in that creative process. Dollimore goes so far as to see essentialist approaches to literature as sinister: "the entire counterfeit of transcendence and of the hereafter has grown up on the basis of

an impoverished life" (*Radical* 250), and "Essentialist theories of human nature, though not intrinsically racist, have contributed powerfully to the ideological conditions which made racism possible" (*Radical* 256).⁶ Dollimore and other Heretical New Historicists brush aside the question of essence in humanity as easily as Greenblatt forms his metaphors on the relation between literature and society.

Such outcomes should come as no surprise. The drive for heresy makes all other considerations secondary. Therefore, the demand for historical inquiry on the one hand and a somewhat theoretical laziness on the other, reflects a constant problem in literary studies; "'English' has always had to be on the defensive against charges of 'unseriousness,' but has also been anxious and embarrassed by any connection it might have with philosophy or 'high theory'" (Smith 270). Dollimore wants to banish "essentialist humanism," while at the same time tell readers that the heretical New Historicists uniting of history and literature overflows with relevance. Relevance becomes the great creed of the heretical New Historicist, and the more relevance the better. From it comes the wish of the New Historicists to obliterate the unique essence of the individual because in doing so the critic can then think of society in terms of a mass, responding univocally to the forces of culture shaping it. Individuals become nothing more than a representation of the societal whole, reacting and functioning in the same manner as any other randomly chosen person.⁷ This mode of interpretation allows the New Historian to generalize on a grand scale, to assert that any hint of subversion found in a text subverts all of society equally.⁸ Because people merely become what the culture dictates, the critic uses The Totalizing Metaphor as a means of describing the entire society. Liu sees this as the "*searching* for the subject, *any* subject able to tell us what *it* is . . . that connects the plural to the dominant, historical context to literary text, and so creates a single movement of culture, a single motivated artifact" (732). The idea of a "single moment of culture" permits the

heretical New Historian to defend his work as encircling the entire society he peers at through the lens of his metaphorical unification.

New Historicism's pursuit of relevance has as much to do with the current state of literary criticism as it does with comprehending the Renaissance. New Historicism "is motivated not by curiosity about literature and history in the past so much as deep embarrassment about the marginality of literary history now" (Liu 722). The project of heretical New Historicism involves convincing literary criticism of the impact of literature upon the forces of change in history, but it also works hard to persuade itself that the task of the critic carries importance as well. The subtext of heretical New Historicist rhetoric tells the reader of the momentous implications of the literary historian. The heresy of New Historicism is not only correct; it is important to the present culture.

Many heretical New Historicists appear to feel disenfranchised in the larger circle of academics and society at large. Much of their discourse revolves around a longing to possess more power in shaping political and cultural thought, much in the same way they posit such opportunities in the Renaissance. Howard "imagines . . . literature participates in historical processes and in the political management of reality" (25). He almost appears to say this out loud to himself on the page as a source of comfort in the interpretative enterprise. Even more to the point, Montrose acknowledges, "Many of those who profess the humanities see themselves and their calling as threatened by marginalization within a system of higher education increasingly geared to the provision of highly specialized technological and pre-professional training" (11). Montrose continues this lament to the final moments of his essay: "I do not believe that it compromises the intellectual seriousness of this concern [New History] to see it as impelled by a questioning of our very capacity for action--by a nagging sense of professional, institutional, and political impotence" (11-12). Unable to garner the power they long for in the present, heretical

New Historicists instead look to the past as a place where literature accomplishes everything they cannot. Greenblatt's mournful quoting of Kafka at the end of an essay, "There is subversion, no end of subversion, only not for us" ("Invisible Bullets" 65) could easily serve as the slogan of heretical New Historicism. Liu rightly concludes that New Historicism recognizes that "postmodern intellect is a failed political 'power'" (747).

The heretics of New Historicism, faced with such a situation, understandably reach for power outside the institution as well as within it, and they brand any type of interpretation as hopelessly orthodox which does not seek the same influence. Again they exhibit a repulsion to New Criticism because it lets the text retain an intrinsic value. Critics like Dollimore seek interpretations that give "not a vision of political freedom so much as a subversive knowledge of political domination, a knowledge which interrogated prevailing beliefs, submitted them to a kind of intellectual vandalism, radical in the sense of going to their roots or even pulling them up" (*Radical* xxi). Greenblatt asserts that "everything represented on the stage was at least potentially dangerous and hence could be scrutinized and censored" (19). Notice the dynamic literary world both men create; subversion and radicalism lurk behind every page and near every text. Such is the subversive role heretical New Historicists wish for themselves in their culture, and they accomplish it to a certain degree by uncovering the layers of domination in Renaissance society and the literary texts that undermine such efforts. New Historicism becomes "an elegant form of social protest" (Bevington 73-74) for the critic who feels otherwise powerless working in the institution. The heretical critic embraces a subversion methodology because the New Historicists believe they too must sabotage the structures of domination around them. Speaking of Louis Montrose's work, Anthony Dawson thinks "it seems . . . possible and even fruitful to locate Montrose's project within a present-day politics whereby his own texts also contest authority, most especially that of older

historicisms and the humanist assumptions they embrace" (332). The heretical New Historicist wants nothing more but to elicit this sort of conjecture, not only within the institution but outside of it. The heresy of New Historicism has no time for critics who do not push the reading of texts into generalities that demonstrate the importance of literature in shaping society. All other approaches become stagnant orthodoxies that set up modes of domination over literary criticism.

Once the critic locates an area of subversion, "what happens when this kind of challenge begins to have its effect and prevailing power structures are indeed partially 'deligitimated'? At this stage those in power typically make violent and punitive bids for religitimation, finding scapegoats in the process" (Dollimore, *Radical* xxiii). An excellent question, and demonstrating the answer to it would seem to be the next logical step for Dollimore and the heretics of New Historicism. But this important juncture marks the spot where the heretical New Historical enterprise begins to stall. For despite all the assertions of subversion and the movement of texts in society, New Historicism has problems delivering historical facts to demonstrate its discursive certainties. Time and again the critic cannot escape the metaphorical and exchange it for the actual and concrete. Fish points out that all too often the New Historical reading contains words such as "'probably,' 'would have been appropriate,' 'it is interesting,' for these words act to remove the argumentative pressure from the facts they introduce" ("Milton's" 261).⁹ The heretical New Historical reading always remains fixed in a state of possibility; critics use a steady stream of "possibility" words: maybe, implies, imagines, could be, potentially, presumes, perhaps.¹⁰ Liu argues that "the New Historicism proceeds tropologically *as if* literary texts and historical con-texts had equal priority" (744). But when it comes time to demonstrate that equality, New Historical critics fall back on the Totalizing Metaphor in place of specific events. What they offer "is only a metaphorical transference pointed out . . .

through a deft manipulation that might well seem to older historians of ideas a wave of the wizard's wand" (Liu 744). The heretical New Historicist replaces history with histories, actually imagined histories that do not "seek to change the present through the process of historical and critical inquiry so much as to rewrite the past in terms of the present" (Smith, "Rest" 276). And that present contains the figure of the New Historian as heretic seeking relevance in contemporary society through a subversive reading of the Renaissance.

The heresy of New Historicism raises and then fails to answer the concern, what does literature *do* in the process of history, or as Nigel Smith asks, "what happens after representation? What about circulation, dissemination, affect? How are they to be measured" (275)? Liu wonders, "Given New Historicism's prejudice for synchronic structure--for the paradigmatic moment-in-time in which the whole pattern of historical contexts may be gazed at in rapt stasis--is any *action* conceivable at all" (734)? Heretical New Historians confront the same frustration they experience in the present; they can construct a scenario whereby literature does something in the Renaissance, but they struggle to find a method or set of events to demonstrate that action in definable terms. Greenblatt claims at the start of *Shakespearean Negotiations* that he wishes to hear the dead speak; instead, to deliver any message of subversion that carries weight, he must speak for the dead. He admits as much in his use of the quote by Kafka; there is no subversion so it must be created; in turn the reader must be convinced that metaphorical potential equals historical reality. New Historicism as a heresy believes it can save criticism by making it relevant to society and culture at any cost.

In the quest for relevance, heretical New Historicism, regardless of all the talk of histories and identifying a locus for a particular narrative, continues to search for monolithic answers to questions of how culture and society work, what Barroll deems "monological history" (445). Liu argues that New Historicism simply becomes another

type of formalism due to this impulse, exchanging the concept of "motive" in interpretation for "power" (734). The failure to show conclusively how literature subverts or shapes power results in large part from New Historicism looking for a narrative that will define all people of the Renaissance. People, with or without an essence, do not all come under the same influences or react to them equally. Heretical New Historicism simply wants too much in the way of relevance; it demands a totalizing answer for literature's role in culture, and such an answer does not exist. The heresy of New Historicism wants total control of the culture and texts it studies. The heretical New Historian claims history is too fragmented, pluralistic, and diverse to control, and then creates a narrative that denies all these things and contains an imagined history with a metaphorical fence. But the heretical New Historian remains essentially correct because the imagined history of New Historical discourse bears little resemblance to the actual histories that resist all attempts to subdue them.

Heretical New Historicism also suffers from the extremely narrow way it defines relevance in its discourse. For the New Historian relevance means power, especially political power as vested in the state. The oversimplistic recourse to the Will to Power plagues much of postmodern culture and refuses to acknowledge that relevance governs a wide spectrum of activities and events. New Historicism as a heresy has done a tremendous job of pointing out the need to pursue some type of relevance outside the institution, but like all other heresies it immediately returns to the strategy of gaining control over the criticism, and in the case of heretical New History, power in the culture at large. Ultimately it loses a vision of what that relevance might entail. The drive to define all relevance in terms of power comes back to the essential dilemma Milton outlines between Satan and the community he rejects: which carries the greater significance, individual control or communal sharing of purpose?

The inability to define and pursue relevance in terms other than power also comes back to issues of community in literary criticism. The community has failed miserably to formulate a center that defines a purpose for criticism within and without the institution and therefore opens the door to strategies of heretical power to fill the vacuum. English studies can be relevant without controlling political machinery or guiding foreign policy or determining legislation.¹¹ What about the relevance of producing a literate society through the classroom equipped to make a life and participate in the world at large? What about a History of Comfort to demonstrate the ways in which literature provides a means of expression for the marginalized and suffering? What about pursuing the relevance of a shared body of images and ideas the population draws upon to govern itself? What about a History of Delight that records the manner in which literature increases the quality of living and well-being of society and diverts frustration in creative directions? Insisting that relevance exists only in those texts that influence or subvert the minute circle of political interests in any culture has to be the most oppressive kind of history of all.

All of these suggestions mean heretical literary criticism itself will have to stop writing its own history as a battle for control over criticism through the process of heresy. Heretical critics will have to make a history that allows room for community and a plurality of relevance. They will have to agree upon and pursue those avenues of relevance which put the interests of the community ahead of individual power and control. Literary critics should stop being embarrassed by what they do and instead celebrate the many ways they can shape the culture of this century, perhaps not in terms of political power, but in a myriad of other ways--perhaps most markedly by modeling an idea of community for the society at large.

Towards that end, it seems only reasonable that the first step in making history and literature relevant involves moving away from the Totalizing Metaphor. Heretical critics

need to set their sights on the particular and the concrete situations that arise out of specific events and details. What can literary criticism learn, not by generalizing the impulses of literature, but by measuring the actual impact certain texts exert over actual individuals?¹² This methodology does not have the ability to deliver the enormous claims of heretical New Historicism, but it does provide a means of access to history and literature that will lead to conclusions both the community and those outside of it can respect, examine, and study. Instead of potential it offers actuality, an actuality critics can assert with confidence. As the community looks for ways in which literature delivers relevance in quantifiable terms, those outside the institution will take notice and critics can achieve, on a smaller scale than heretical New Historicism seeks, an influence that impacts society. This chapter will now turn its attention to just such a concrete situation, Shakespeare's *Richard II* and the Essex rebellion, as a means of modelling the approach just outlined. Hopefully the results will demonstrate the ability of literature to speak to individuals within society, although the outcome may provoke surprise.

On Saturday, February 7, 1601, a special performance of Shakespeare's *Richard II* took place at the Globe Theater. The performance was notable in that the play had not been presented in quite some time and that many members of the audience supported Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, in his plans to force Queen Elizabeth to restore him to a place of prominence in the government. In fact, these very men have convinced the actors to perform the play in exchange for 40s. plus the gate receipts (Lacey 282). The performance gains greater significance when on February 8, Essex and his followers indeed stage an unsuccessful rebellion against Queen Elizabeth. Essex will later be executed, and the actors from the Globe required to testify in preparation for his trial. Although the actors are cleared of any conspiracy related to the rebellion, the state obviously wanted to discover what connection, if any, this performance had on the uprising.

The question of that connection remains today. Literary historians and critics have long debated the importance and relationship between Essex's coup and the performance of *Richard II* the night preceding it. Critics such as Evelyn May Albright view the staging of the play as an indication of the political influence of Shakespeare on society in general and Essex and his followers specifically. Some have even gone so far as to suggest Shakespeare had Essex or someone similar in mind as he developed the character of Henry Bolingbroke, most notably Lily B. Campbell. She views *Richard II* as political allegory for Elizabeth's own court and the intrigues present there. Shakespeare becomes political satirist and his play, in the words of Peter Ure, "a mere peg on which he hung a political controversy of his own time" (lvii).

No literary mystery stands complete without a vehement denouncement from an opposing faction. In this instance Richard Heffner feuds with Albright in *PMLA* over her interpretation of Richard II's relation to Essex. Heffner complains about the way Albright reads certain documents from Essex and others during his trial to mean he has great interest in the play and watches it often.¹³ Disagreement stems from two essential matters: does Shakespeare actually have political allegory in mind when he writes the play, and how familiar is he with Essex and his standing at the court? Ure finds it hard to imagine Shakespeare anticipating the events of 1601 in a play he most probably composed around 1595. He complains that "There is not reason at all to suppose that what Essex's followers hoped would have a seditious effect in 1601 had been composed by Shakespeare six or seven years earlier with a seditious intention" (lviii). The problem appears to result from the inability of formalist critics to conceive of Essex's followers using *Richard II* to stir up dissent unless Shakespeare had intended it to do so in the first place. The resulting interpretation allows only the events surrounding Essex to wield any influence in its formulation, and elicits a dissenting response that such an interpretation views the texts in

a too narrow and manipulative fashion. The considered texts include not only the play but the documents surrounding Essex and his career.

The idea of intention on the part of Shakespeare may appear almost quaint today, but the fact remains that formalist critics have definite criteria for their historical approach and proceed accordingly. Heretical New Historicism abandons intent, of course, and contends that a play only requires the potential to be political or seditious to warrant historical scrutiny. *Richard II* and Essex appear tailor-made for the New Historicist. The critic does not even need to create a metaphor to demonstrate the connection; the interplay exists on the foundation of concrete events.

So what do heretical New Historicists say about *Richard II* and Essex?

Surprisingly, remarkably little. Greenblatt covers the incident in *The Power of Forms* and rejects the idea of those who say *Richard II* carries no political subversion: "[I]n 1601 neither Queen Elizabeth nor the Earl of Essex were so sure: after all, someone on the eve of a rebellion thought the play sufficiently seditious to warrant squandering two pounds on the players, and the Queen understood the performance as a threat" (4). But Greenblatt never really takes his argument much farther and never discusses the situation at length. Jonathan Dollimore gives even less attention to Essex, simply stating that "A famous attempt to use the theatre to subvert authority was of course the staging of a play called *Richard II* (probably Shakespeare's) just before the Essex rising in 1601" ("Introduction" 8). Dollimore actually undercuts the connection to Shakespeare, casting doubt on which play The Globe performed and simply leaves the affair at that. Even Leonard Tennenhouse, who examines Essex more in depth, makes little of the *Richard II* performance. The fact remains that no New Historian has ever given Essex and *Richard II* the type of analysis one would expect from a theory that benefits from the historical certainty of subversion the situation offers.

Two reasons explain the strange lack of interest in Essex. The first has to do with the nature of heresy in literary criticism. In the never-ending quest for innovation, heretical New Historicism offers an exciting avenue of possibility, except where *Richard II* is concerned. After all, earlier formalist historians have noted the possible subversion in the text, even though disagreements ensue, and simply removing the need for intention on Shakespeare's part does little to advance the argument. For fear of covering old ground and losing the opportunity for a clearly heretical stance, heretical New Historicists merely recognize Essex in passing, even though he offers such rich opportunities to build on past research. The dictates of heresy stifle this impulse as New Historians look instead to spaces of their own, free of prior critical attention.¹⁴

The other, more compelling reason, involves the nature of heretical New Historicism itself. Essex and his failed coup do not lend themselves to the totalizing impulses of the heretical New Historical approach. How can one apply this situation to all of Elizabethan society when only a handful of people take part and others fail to join them even when given the chance? The Essex rebellion has too many particulars and specifics to suit the heretical New Historian; it is in that sense too historical to warrant appropriation by the Totalizing Metaphor. Heretical New Historicism in the end depends on rebellion that might happen, not rebellion that actually does happen, because such events restrict the subversive enterprise to definable locations in society. Essex acts, and in that action, shatters the world of static possibility the heretical New Historian cherishes.

What then should critics make of Essex and *Richard II*? Must the incident be jettisoned simply because the rebellion does not conform to a general rule governing all of society? Does *Richard II* fail as a piece of subversive literature simply because only a few, and not all of society, rally around its contents? I do not think so. Would it not be fruitful to examine the historical particulars of this case and see what can be discovered

about the effect of literature on certain people? The men in the Essex rebellion do not fail in making a connection between art and life; they are moved and led to actions based in part on their reaction to Shakespeare's *Richard II*. Barroll has no doubt the conspirators were "fascinated by the power of stage plays--upon themselves, at any rate" (454). The fact that the rest of England did not share in their response does not lessen the effect upon those particular individuals. Dollimore, in his only other comment about the play and Essex, draws even closer to an answer: "what made Elizabeth I so anxious was not so much a retrospectively and clearly ascertained effect of the staging of Richard II (the uprising was, after all, abortive and Essex was executed) but the fact of the play having been appropriated--been given significance for a particular cause" ("Introduction" 12). The idea of appropriation describes perfectly what occurs, and that act does not lose its importance because the uprising fails. Why Dollimore refuses to follow this line of reasoning remains a mystery.

But why this appropriation, and more specifically, why Shakespeare's account? The attorney bringing charges against Gilly Merrick, one of the conspirators, notes that when Augustine Phillips tried to persuade the conspirators to show another play they responded that "no play else would serve" (Albright 689). The intriguing relation to draw out of the performance of *Richard II* involves determining those circumstances which would make the presentation of Shakespeare's play so appealing to Essex. The crucial historical factor worth examining is how Shakespeare's rendering of the facts could influence men to internalize the play to the point of rebellion. In order to do so the play does not require having repercussions for all of English society. Nor does the government have to perceive the play in the same way Essex and his men do. To approach Essex honestly, he and his followers must achieve individuality as real men who live in a definite time. The play must disclose attributes which could compel men to commit acts of treason. To draw larger

inferences about Elizabethan society as a whole defeats the purpose and creates automata which move and talk at the command of the heretical critic to substantiate his theories.

The real interest should lie in real historical persons engaging life and a piece of literature.

The first point to consider then is the man himself, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex.¹⁵ If critics discover an unbalanced ruffian with delusions of grandeur, conclusions may prove less valuable because in the end the man had no grasp of reality. But such is not the case. Devereux was born November 10, 1567 to Walter and Lettice Devereux, who at the time were Viscounts but not yet Earls. Walter died at an early age and left Robert with huge debts totaling over 35,000 pounds (Lacey 26). As a result, Devereux travels to the court of Queen Elizabeth to secure favors and hopefully a lucrative position with the government. Most coveted would be a job that levies taxes because the holder of such a title kept any profits above what the government required. Essex received more than he bargained for. After distinguishing himself in a battle against the Spanish on behalf of the Dutch, he quickly rose to prominence in the court and became the Queen's favorite. They engaged in some type of affair, although the exact nature of it is hard to determine owing to Elizabeth's penchant for playing rivals off one another and Essex's and the Queen's often stormy quarrels (Strachey 58-60). That Essex was twenty and Elizabeth fifty-four when they began their relationship complicates matters even more. Holding considerable power at court and possessing the ambition to put it to his own personal advancement, Essex gained further notoriety with a series of military adventures, including the taking of Cadiz in 1596.

Essex's career might have continued along its charmed course if not for the fact he was human like everyone else. He had great, sometimes unrealistic, aspirations, mood swings, and was jealous of anyone he perceived as threatening his place at court, especially Robert Cecil, son of Lord Burghley. Essex's antagonism toward Cecil proved to be the beginning

of his downfall. During a Council meeting to select an ambassador to handle the Irish rebellion, Essex nominated a friend of Cecil's, but Elizabeth saw through the power play and dismissed the idea. Essex would not let it drop however:

Essex lost his temper, jugged his bearded jaw fiercely at the Queen, and then turned his back on her contemptuously. Furious, Elizabeth stood up, reached out and caught Essex a fierce box on the ear Essex whirled, his hand on his sword. Nottingham stepped between the two combatants. Essex was beside himself shouting that he would never and could never endure such an insult from any man, and especially not from a woman.

(Lacey 212)

Certainly only Essex's close relationship with Elizabeth saved him from being dispatched to the Tower of London. As it was, the dispute lasted for more than two months (Harrison 207). Essex sulked in the country, and while absent, Elizabeth made up her mind to send him to Ireland for his insolence (Harrison 210).

Ireland was no small punishment to endure. Two thousand British soldiers had just been massacred at Yellow Ford by rebels under the command of the Earl of Tyrone. The situation had gotten out of hand, with the only garrison of consequence at Dublin (Strachey 170). Essex received ill-equipped troops with no stomach for civil war, and he had little will to fight. Essex would write a lament-filled letter to Elizabeth shortly before his departure:

From a mind delighting in sorrow, from spirits wasted with passion, from a heart torn to pieces with care, grief and travel, from a man that hateth himself, and all the things else that him alive, what service can your Majesty expect, since any service past deserves no more than banishment and proscription to the crudest of all islands? . . . [Y]our Majesty shall have no

cause to mislike the fashion of my death, since the course of my life could never please you. (Nichols 432)

Essex hardly displays the confidence needed to go and fight a civil war. He further suffered under a barrage of sarcastic letters from Elizabeth questioning his tactics and desire to fight. When Essex made a secret deal with Tyrone, a deal Strachey views as the "most impotent that could have been imagined" (214), Elizabeth not only rejected it but hinted it could involve disloyalty (for some strange reason Essex refused to divulge the full contents of their conversation which basically consisted of agreeing to a truce to last the duration of six weeks when each party might renew it [Strachey 214]). This secrecy would cost him dearly. Essex decided his only recourse meant returning to England and explaining himself, even though he was under direct order not to do so. Essex convinced himself Elizabeth was being manipulated by bad advisors, and his own standing had suffered because of them.

Essex did not return home to open arms, but Elizabeth quickly put aside her opposition to him and all seemed well for the moment (Harrison 249). However, when he returned later in the day, Elizabeth, suddenly furious with him, confined him to York House to stand trial before the Star Chamber on charges of treason.¹⁶ Essex must have been stunned at this change of mind on Elizabeth's part; at this point Essex convinced himself that all of the Court except for the Queen were trying to remove him from power and influence. Surely Essex could relate to Bolingbroke's words when banished:

every tedious stride I make

Will but remember me what a deal of world

I wander from the jewels that I love. (1.3.268-70)

Essex's perceived banishment from Court marks the beginning of his identification of himself with a Man Wronged, and there appears no better model in popular drama than the

Bolingbroke of Shakespeare's play.

A few months later Essex found himself on trial at a public hearing before a Special Commission, but its only purpose was to publicly scold Essex for his deeds. They found him innocent and released him from confinement on August 26, 1600, nearly one year after his first internment. Banished from court, Essex received orders to retire to the country (Harrison 269-70). Such banishment insured Essex's inability to pay his debts, as removal from court meant removal from lucrative government titles. Essex found himself on the brink of economic ruin just prior to his rebellion. He frantically wrote Elizabeth of his impending collapse in September of 1600: "but [for] the means of satisfying a great number of hungry and annoyed creditors which suffer me in my retired life to have no rest, I would appear still before you Majesty as a mute person" (Harrison, *Elizabethan Journals* 116).

From the country, Essex wrote another fascinating letter to Elizabeth, begging her to end his banishment:

I am gnawed on and torn by the basest creature upon earth. The prating tavern haunter speaks of me what he lists; the frantic libeller writes of me what he lists; they print me and make me speak to the world, and shortly they will play me upon the stage. (Williams 147)

Essex fears what might happen should he be played upon the stage. He somehow feels that the image of him portrayed will be more powerful than his own character and abilities. Here the first glimpse of Essex's fascination with drama as a means of power shines through. The representation of him carries greater impact than his actual existence. His later identification with the dramatic representation of Bolingbroke becomes more logical in light of this letter. Literature carries a power he craves and tragically trusts in, causing in part the downfall of his career.

The mood of Elizabeth's court also played a role in Essex's perception of himself. Critics who argue that Shakespeare writes political allegory in *Richard II* are not being as ridiculous as one might suppose because members of the court themselves drew such parallels. As early as 1598 Sir Francis Knollys employed the analogy between Elizabeth and Richard in a letter of warning sent to her (Albright 690-91), and Henry Lord Hunsdon explained his lack of influence at the Court by writing, "I never was one of Richard II's men" (Chambers 353). Elizabeth's costly wars and many favorites make for easy comparisons. Lily B. Campbell recognizes that "While there were other lessons which Richard was used to mirror, it was as a king who was dominated by favorites and who allowed favorites to rule and ruin his kingdom that he was generally thought of during the first thirty years or so of Elizabeth's reign" (176). Such comparisons cannot have been lost on Essex, and especially recognizable to him was the idea of unwise advisors. Of course, Essex defined as unwise anyone who opposed him, and he twisted history to mean something disastrous might happen if Elizabeth became corrupted and continued to ignore his advice. Essex always publicly claimed his motivation for rebellion involved saving the Queen from the unwise counsellors who dominated her. His cause had only the best interests of England in mind and "To the last Essex insisted that he wouldn't have shed the queen's blood" (Campbell 188). Even from the scaffold Essex declared he meant no harm to Elizabeth: "I beseech you and the world to hold charitable opinion of me, for my intention toward her Majestie, whose death I protest I never meant, nor violence toward her person" (Nichols 548). Leonard Tennenhouse thinks Essex's rebellion "seems to have been aimed at controlling the magical body [Queen Elizabeth]" (88). Like Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, Essex only wanted order and justice to be restored to England. Whether true or merely a philosophy Essex used to convince himself and his followers, the precedent of Richard's deposition always lingered in the air of the court. After the rebellion, Elizabeth

herself commented to William Lambard, "I am Richard II. Know ye not that" (Nichols 552)?¹⁷

Other factors contribute to the Richard story as well. If Elizabeth feared being deposed, who would do it? Interestingly, many people seem to have formed a definite opinion on that issue. When Essex argued for a continuation of the war with Spain in 1598, many took note that Essex appealed to the public when the Council failed to take heed of him. Such tactics caused some to equate Essex and his tactics with Machiavelli (Lacey 209). Others had kinder things to say about Essex. In 1594 Robert Parsons published *A Conference About the Next Succession to the Crown of England*, a book which fabricated a conference to discuss who should succeed Elizabeth. The most intriguing facet of the book is its dedication to Essex. In it Parsons hints that Essex should be made the next king (Campbell 176-77). John Hayward also dedicated a book to Essex and saw for him future glory. The dedication contained enough inflammatory material to get Hayward imprisoned and tried although he eventually secured his release (Barroll 451). John Wolfe, the printer, declared in his statement at the trial, "500 or 600 copies were sold . . . as no book ever sold better" (*Calendar* 451). The public seemed to enjoy the Richard/Essex association as well. As if Essex's ambition was not enough, add to that the expectation of people around him that he might very easily ascend to the throne. Essex underwent comparison with Henry Bolingbroke in some circles; he was just, loved by the people, and armed with a sincere grievance against the crown. That the story of Richard II came to loom very large in Essex's life appears in a letter he wrote to Lord Keeper Egerton (Keeper of the Great Seal) in reply to a warning to be careful of his conduct after his confrontation with Elizabeth over the Ireland situation: "What, cannot Princes err? Cannot subjects receive wrongs? Is an earthly power or authority infinite? Pardon me, pardon me, my good lord, I can never subscribe to these principles" (Lacey

213). Essex has spoken the unspeakable about a sovereign. Yet he couched his argument in relation to his being wronged. The parallel between this letter and Bolingbroke's justification for deposing Richard, especially in Shakespeare's account, is remarkably clear:

My father's goods are all distrai'n'd and sold;
 And these, and all, are all amiss employ'd.
 What would you have me do? I am a subject,
 And I challenge the law. Attorneys are denied me,
 And therefore personally I lay my claim. (2.3.131-35)

Essex believed that his banishment from Court did not allow his case to be properly heard. He longed to find a way to appeal to the Queen directly. It makes sense to recognize Essex's increasing identification between himself and the Richard story.¹⁸

As for the production of Shakespeare's *Richard II*, there seems little doubt that Essex saw the play. Essex's closest friend, the Earl of Southhampton, Shakespeare's patron, held private performances of plays at Essex House. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote to Robert Cecil on July 6, 1597 indicating that he and Essex had a private showing of *Richard II* and that the latter enjoyed it greatly (Chambers 353). Speculation also abounds that Essex not only saw the play but watched it often (see Note 13). Finally, we have the involvement of Essex's followers in the performance of *Richard II* the night before their rebellion. The actual men who arranged the performance were Charles and Jocelyn Percy and Lord Monteagle (Barroll 446). Rather than seeing the performance as an attempt to undermine authority, would it not make more sense to view the showing of the play as a means of steeling Essex's followers into action and confirming their belief that Essex would prove to be another Bolingbroke? Bolingbroke was a man who acted and was rewarded. The Privy Council forced Essex and his followers into just such action. While several of the conspirators watched *Richard II*, a messenger arrived to inform Essex he must give an

account of himself to the Council (Strachey 241). Although unprepared, the men decided they must rise up and rebel or Essex might be arrested before they could.

The appeal of Shakespeare's version of *Richard II* to Essex's followers and to Essex himself should prove most apparent. Plenty of accounts of Richard's life existed to choose from for anyone interested. Among them are Holinshed's *Chronicles* and Daniel's *Civil Wars*. What is important is not only the appeal of the Richard story to Essex but Shakespeare's interpretation of that story with which Essex identified most strongly. The dilemma of staging the deposing of a king for an Elizabethan audience forces Shakespeare to present the story in the most pleasing and least offensive manner possible. Bolingbroke cannot be characterized as a fiendish usurper who succeeds. Instead, Bolingbroke emerges from the play as a man wronged who only wants what is rightfully his and, as William Kittredge puts it, "Bolingbroke appears to be a creature of events, rising naturally to assume the throne of England once it has been vacated for him" (xv). In addition, Richard does not really get deposed; he abdicates after recognizing the hopelessness of the situation and his own foolish mistakes. Shakespeare, according to Tennenhouse, "makes Richard appear as a tragic version of the patriarch who exercises his authority for penurious and exclusionary ends. In contrast with the anointed king, Shakespeare makes the displaced and dispossessed Bolingbroke into the figure who rescues the principle of genealogy and links it to the law" (76). Richard's death is not Bolingbroke's fault but the result of the misguided judgement of Sir Pierce Exton. Shakespeare creates a Bolingbroke guided by destiny to the throne; he rightfully belongs there.

At least that is how Essex and his men could easily construe it. Bolingbroke's return from exile to reclaim the lands Richard has taken must strike a chord as well. Essex's major followers all owed huge amounts of money, including the Earl of Southampton, who owed the modern equivalent of over half a million dollars (Lacey 271).

Hasn't Essex been betrayed of income due to the treachery of Elizabeth's wicked advisors? After his first trial for treason, Essex was denied renewal of his contract to exact duties from the import of sweet wines from the Mediterranean and Levant. Its loss finally sent him to the brink of financial ruin (Strachey 235). Like Bolingbroke, Essex and the others want only what is rightfully theirs. Bolingbroke is a man to be admired, a man who stands up for what is his, even if that means challenging the King. Once more we can hear the echoes of Essex's "What, cannot Princes err?" Essex is no criminal; he has been wronged and no one, not even the Queen, should be allowed to impede justice. If other events happened to transpire, as in the case of Bolingbroke, so be it. He wants justice so he can rid Elizabeth of the men poisoning her against him. Essex and his admirers surely derived a great pleasure from seeing Bolingbroke dispose of Bushy and Green:

Near to the King in blood, and near in love
 Till you did make him misinterpret me--
 Have stoop'd my neck under your injuries
 And sigh'd my English breath in foreign clouds,
 Eating the bitter bread of banishment,
 This and much more, much more than twice all this,
 Condemns you to the death. (3.1.17-20, 28-29)

Equally attractive to Essex's faction must be the relative ease with which Bolingbroke moves from one victory to another. Even when men such as the Duke of York oppose him, they end up following him (2.3). The King himself wilts under the force of Bolingbroke's destiny and abdicates. The people love Bolingbroke as well:

Ourself and Bushy, Bagot here, and Green
 Observ'd his courtship to the common people;
 How he did seem to dive into their hearts

With humble and familiar courtesy;
 What reverence he did throw away on slaves,
 Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles
 And patient underbearing of his fortune,
 As 'twere to banish their affects with him.
 Off goes his bonnet to an oyster-wench;
 A brace of draymen bid God speed him well
 And had the tribute of his supple knee,
 With "Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends";
 As were our England in reversion his,
 And he our subjects' next degree in hope. (1.4. 23-36)

This sort of groundswell of support Essex felt he had himself, and its failure to materialize on the day of the uprising went far toward making the whole scheme collapse. Cecil complained that "with the common people and soldiers he pretended that none cared for them but himself" (*Calendar* 583). Essex felt confident that like Bolingbroke he had won the heart of the common people and that they would respond when he decided to clear the court of the evil present there. Elizabeth's council realized, however, that "notwithstanding the great love the Londoners bore unto the Earle, yet they will not cyde with hime" (Nichols 545). Essex counted on this support to outweigh all other obstacles. "Even after the government discovered his plans," writes Tennenhouse, "Essex believed the mere display of his colors and the support of relatives, friends, clients, and household retainers would gain him the popular voice and military force to achieve authority" (88).

Essex's own ineptness at carrying out the rebellion may have had more to do with its failure than anything else. The people never received the opportunity to rise up because the conspiracy ended before it hardly began. Once things began to collapse on the

afternoon of the 8th, Essex made a pitiful march into the City to rally support, but no one had been told of his plans or even of his presence once he arrived (Harrison 286-87).

Those who did happen to see Essex totally misapprehended his intent: the Londonders thought "that the Queene and Earle were made friends, and that her Majesye hadde appoynted him to ryde in that triumphant manner through London, unto his house in Seeding-lane" (*Progresses* 544). While contemplating his rebellion, he must have seen himself as riding on a crest of popularity from one success to the next just as Bolingbroke in Shakespeare's play. He would use that power just as Bolingbroke does, first as a bargaining tool to get justice, then if that failed, as a weapon to take what was rightfully his:

Henry Bolingbroke

On both his knees doth kiss King Richard's hand

And sends allegiance and true faith of heart

To his most royal person; hither come

Even at his feet to lay my arms and power,

Provided that my banishment repeal'd

And lands restored again be freely granted.

If not, I'll use the advantage of my power,

And lay the summer's dust with show'rs of blood

Rain'd from the wounds of slaughtered Englishmen. (3.3.35-44)

Essex identifies with Bolingbroke's ability to act, a decision that would eventually cost him his life. Interestingly, if he would have acted like Bolingbroke, Strachey, Harrison, and Lacey believe he would have had a reasonable chance of succeeding in his rebellion.

While we cannot know for certain Essex's reaction to Shakespeare's *Richard II*, the world in which Essex found himself after his disgrace and removal from court,

combined with his financial problems and frustrated aspirations, may have prompted him to identify more and more with the Richard saga, especially as rendered by Shakespeare. As the Bolingbroke who will deliver England from her woes, he will purge Elizabeth's court of the harmful influences that threaten to destroy it. If the tide of approval washes him into the throne, so be it. Essex can live the fantasy of Shakespeare's rendering; the people will clamor for him, and there will be no bloodshed--even his foes will join his side. For Essex does not want to wrest power from the state; he wants it thrust upon him in the same manner Bolingbroke seems to gain it. All of these issues culminate in the performance of February 7, 1601. Ultimately, Essex's followers did not expect the play to stir up much public dissent; the play had become for them a sort of fantasy into which they could project themselves. Their lives might be such if circumstances worked out correctly. After all, the Richard II story was clearly in the air. Essex would be vindicated, and they would reign with him wisely and divide the wealth of the nation among them. Only when they finally tried to create their own revolution did they discover their plans to be as much an illusion as Shakespeare's play.

The real tragedy of the Essex rebellion concerns the inherent danger of equating literature and reality too closely. Essex and his followers began to believe the self-contained world of the play mirrored their own reality. The simple train of events, inevitable conclusion, and powerful closure became irresistible set against their own chaotic state. History became a closed narrative with no threat of rupture or chance of competing claims to authority or outcome. Essex never planned his rebellion because he did not need to; the throne and justification would come to him as easily as it does to Bolingbroke. Hasn't that always been one of the most powerful attractions in literature? The certainty of the ending, the relative ease of resolution, the linear momentum of events, all these hold us spellbound, set in the foreground of our own uncertain existences.

Heretical New History instinctively knows this as well and therefore seeks a metaphorical wholeness based on potential rather than a truly historical narrative full of disappointment, fragmentation, and openness.

Heretical New History and the community of literary criticism should make as its focus the individual in history. It should locate women and men in history and with the documents available place them in a world where they can engage the texts of their time. To force generalizations from such a limited number of examples is naive at best and ludicrous at worst. Even if oppressive structures exist, how do individuals still manage to make their society function and how do texts help in that process? No one piece of literature can either reflect or shape society as a whole. But any one text can influence any one individual from that time. The community needs this kind of literary history because the world measures relevance in terms of real events, not potential subversions. Even if it remains impossible to know all of Shakespeare's intentions surrounding *Richard II* or how the play molds Elizabethan culture, critics can discover how it may have influenced one man such as the Earl of Essex and how that influence profoundly altered the society of London and of the court. Essex and others appropriated a text and, despite any intention of the author, used it as a tool to formulate their perception of Elizabeth's reign and determine how things could be different. Studying such appropriations in history can tell us much about the ability of literature to induce change or maintain a stable meaning from one individual to the next. History is comprised of the individual acts of real people, not machines responding to the general laws heretical New Historians, or anyone else, create for them. And the power of literature to move such individuals to acts heroic or base remains a subject worth pursuing.

Chapter 5
Milton and Women:
The Heresy of Gender

Up to now, the heresies looked at in this study have been ones generally open to all the members of literary studies; the critic simply adopts the strategies and rhetoric of the heresy to participate in its dissemination. However, the heretical voices heard in criticism very often try to exclude competing interpretations in varying ways limiting Booth's sense of vitality and justice. Thus, heretical performance theory attempts to negate those critics who focus on the text by declaring all such efforts contrary to a true understanding of drama. Heretical New Historicists reach for authority by insisting that the determination of political relevance in texts should be the real work of the literary critic, thereby isolating approaches with different concerns.

Both of these heresies allow anyone to join their ranks though. They proselytize in a certain sense, welcoming all those who see the truth of their theory to come and participate. After all, more practitioners of a certain heresy usually result in more influence and power within literary criticism. What if a heresy takes a different tack, though? What if a heresy not only declares the work of orthodoxy null and void, but at the same time announces its unique approach as out of reach to the overwhelming majority of literary critics? A new basis for power establishes itself; the heretic erases the criticism of orthodoxy but also reserves control over her own rhetoric by preventing a dilution of power as other critics seek to appropriate the heretical voice.

Feminist criticism presents a heresy of this type. While pursuing the

interpretation of literature in feminist terms, the critic also implicates society in a system of patriarchy whose impulse desires the restriction and subjection of all women. Literature seeks to perpetuate this system by portraying women in subservient terms. Using gender as the basis for its expression, feminist criticism marks a new center of power but also restricts those who can participate: those not benefitting from or furthering the aims of patriarchy. While some men indeed write feminist criticism, a certain "outsideness" always exists in their efforts as can be seen in the examples that follow.

Heretical feminist critics have a pervasive way of rejecting all objections to their heresy--to disagree simply means the critic wants to keep the present system of patriarchy intact. The outcome puts the heretical feminist critic in an enviable position; she retains a seat of control in literary criticism that very few can join, and she also resists having her position being assailed through the fear of appearing oppressive and patriarchal. Most non-feminist critics cautiously agree or defer to the feminist critic's interpretation, recognizing they are unable to comprehend fully or to criticize legitimately. The feminist critic also has the ability to move easily outside the canon to declare most works part of the patriarchal structure, creating the need to find better models of women in more marginalized texts, usually by women.

In talking about feminism in heretical terms here, I do so with the awareness of the complexities of feminist thought, the enormous disagreement among feminist critics on certain issues, and the fact that not all women are feminist critics. My aim is to demonstrate a definite line of thought in feminist criticism which employs several heretical strategies concerning Milton. A large body of criticism takes Milton to task for his portrayal of women, and in the process these critics, mostly pursuing a feminist line of thought, create a space of power for themselves and collapse the influence of Milton and also much of the criticism written about his work. This heresy very often contains

something like a moral imperative to it; to support Milton and his patriarchal view of women supports the oppression of women today.

Couching interpretation in moral terms produces an interesting outcome in the heretical debate surrounding Milton. Rather than agreeing with feminist critics and trying to participate in feminist power, many Miltonists seek the rehabilitation of Milton's work in a series of texts friendly to women, indeed empowering toward women. Milton becomes a sort of proto-feminist antithetical to the normal antagonism most Renaissance texts display towards the feminine. Why does this occur? Several possible reasons exist. For one, many critics refuse to have Milton carry the taint of misogyny that dogs him throughout many time periods; for another, unlike many other battles in literary criticism, in this one several critics perceive feminist conclusions about Milton as definite acts of misinterpretation, errors in understanding, as Booth would put it. Finally, such an act delivers its own kind of heresy. Milton the Radical, undermining the prevalent ideology of his day, carries a powerful image of subversion most heretics revel in today. Such an interpretation thwarts one heresy while simultaneously producing a new one critics can use as a new base of power.

Almost all discussion of Milton and heretical feminist criticism leads to the discourse surrounding the perception of Eve in *Paradise Lost*, and this one will be no different. Eve is the key woman in Milton's work, the source around whom critical commentary centers and from whom most conclusions about Milton's attitudes derive.¹ The depiction of Eve also involves Milton's treatment of biblical texts and raises the question of how much he either participates in or writes against the patriarchy many heretical feminist critics find implicit in the Old Testament. Complicating matters further, Eve falls before Adam in *Paradise Lost*, and interpreting how Milton handles that event goes far in determining how a critic views Milton and women.

Much has been said about Eve that will not find its way into this discussion which will instead follow a clearly defined line of comment and response that best exemplifies the feminist heresy and the reaction to it in Milton studies. What emerges from this debate are two startling different constructions of Milton: one casts Milton as a patriarchal authority subjugating women in his work and in some sense thwarting all women and especially women writers after him; the other construction offers a Milton uniquely in tune with women and their struggles which he then seeks to address in his work. Perhaps nowhere else in literary criticism is there such a polarity of interpretation as a heresy seeks to establish itself and a counter-heresy emerges to engage it.

Two articles from early in the feminist controversy about Milton help to define the major points of each camp. Marcia Landy's "Kinship and the Role of Women in Paradise Lost" lays the groundwork for later heretical readings, although she does not take a decidedly heretical stance, and Barbara K. Lewalski's "Milton on Women--Yet Once More" replies to it. Landy quickly draws the boundaries for a new type of criticism, noting that commentary on Milton "has come largely from men and that their views have determined the critical climate" ("Kinship" 3). The problem with this situation is that "a reading is that critic's reading and grows out of that individual consciousness" ("Kinship" 4). The point Landy suggests is that male critics remain unaware of Eve's true condition in the poem because they operate under the limitation of their "individual [male] consciousness." Landy employs the tactics of the heretic; she works to isolate the orthodox stance on Milton by implying it ignores the concerns and perceptions of women. Such blindness can only lead to incorrect interpretations of Eve since it overlooks the subjection of women in general that Eve represents.

Milton's own view of women has more to do with his time than with the poet himself: "rather than being a misogynist, Milton was a representative seventeenth-century

Protestant poet ("Kinship" 5). Here Landy pulls back from an assertive heretical stand and the article plays a clever rhetorical game as it seeks in many ways to stay within certain orthodox boundaries; being the one to suggest Milton should be expelled from the canon on feminist grounds does not enter into the argument. Instead the work makes the argument that Milton writes as a product of his culture. The implications however will prove telling: not only Milton, but all men in the seventeenth-century become hostile toward women. Landy exonerates Milton by having to condemn the entire society. All of seventeenth-century society works to keep women in their place.

Turning to Eve, Landy makes her emblematic of all efforts to subjugate women under male dominance. She touches upon the key points in the feminist complaint against Milton: the denial of authority, creativity, and knowledge to Eve keeps her in a subservient state. Landy argues that Eve "is deprived of authority and punished for attempting to usurp it" ("Kinship"10) and has no means of expressing creativity: "The principle of creativity, the highest principle of the cosmos, is denied to women" ("Kinship"11). Finally, "Eve's desire to know is limited by Adam's censorship" ("Kinship"12), thus making her "less well equipped than Adam to understand the temptations of the serpent" ("Kinship"11).² Eve's only role in Eden consists of her being a mother-wife, a role Landy sees as "childlike," passive, and always under Adam's dominance. Landy ends by stressing again Milton should not be called a misogynist. Milton does everything possible in *Paradise Lost* to make Eve inferior to Adam; labelling Milton a misogynist at this point makes very little difference. Landy triumphs over Milton while appearing to defend him.

Lewalski answers Landy directly in her article and formulates the basic argument against feminist criticism of Milton. First though, she must defend the last vestiges of her own heresy, New Criticism. Lewalski asserts that feminist criticism has too narrow a focus, and she "would yet affirm the capacity of great art to transcend these lesser

categories of human experience and speak to our common humanity" (4) because poets "are gloriously and supremely right about the most essential things" (5). She also warns that "a feminist analysis of *Paradise Lost*, with its nearly exclusive emphasis upon the image and role of women in the poem, may do real violence to a woman reader's imaginative experience of and response to everything else that the poem contains" (4). Not only that, "Feminist criticism often seems prone to substitute sociological for literary analysis" (4). Lewalski gives a last hurrah here in the early seventies for the New Criticism crumbling under the pressure of newer and more dynamic heresies within the field. Such bandwagon support of one's heresy still goes on at the beginning of many critical articles yet remains largely unstudied and uncommented upon in literary criticism.³

Lewalski then turns to a defense of Milton himself, claiming vehemently that "few writers of any era--including our own--have taken women so seriously as Milton does, as multifaceted human beings with impressive intellectual and moral powers and responsibilities" (5-6). This argument on Milton's behalf appears over and over again in criticism as scholars attempt to fashion a Milton in step with feminist concerns. Turning to specific points brought up by Landy, Lewalski sees Eve as one who "is imagined to share fully with her mate in the necessary work of the world" (8).⁴ As far as a lack of authority goes, Eve names the flowers (XI.276), a "point unperceived by many critics, including Professor Landy" (8). The emergence of any new heresy generally receives its greatest condemnation in how the heretic reads a text: Scholars call New Critics sloppy, New Critics call Post-Structuralists sloppy, Post-Structuralists call New Historicists sloppy. Lewalski calls Landy's competence as a critic into question by attacking her methodology.

The issue of Eve's knowledge and access to information has nothing to do with her fall according to Lewalski: "among the complex factors involved in Eve's fall, one which is specifically excluded is insufficient intellectual powers" (15). Eve has sovereignty and

power over her decisions, and she has the intelligence to make wise ones, as "Eve is no dependent child-wife: her choices are and must be freely her own" (13). Her dependence on Adam has nothing to do with subservience because "Eve is, if anything, shown to be even more necessary to Adam than he to her" (18). Lewalski seeks an independent Eve, unfettered in her actions by a clinging need for Adam. Eve falls, but she falls on her own terms, able to make the choice clearly for herself. She does not enter into the temptation with Satan already tainted and therefore doomed to failure. The negotiation of Eve's fall becomes complex; feminists want to absolve Eve of her guilt by demonstrating Milton creates a weak Eve who has no defenses or possibility of triumph because Milton's patriarchal system demands a clear scapegoat for sin entering the human race. Those who support Milton desire a strong Eve who bears all responsibility for her fall, because in that act she demonstrates her autonomy over herself, apart from Adam and even God.⁵

Lewalski's perception of Eve focuses on what occurs after the fall. Eve becomes a symbol of hope and redemption for all of humanity: "it is the woman who is made a type of the Messiah's redemptive love" (19). Eve reaches out to Adam so they may reconcile and create a new life for each other that foreshadows the ultimate reconciliation of God and humanity through Christ. This redemptive role functions as the crucial point for those who counter heretical feminist arguments against Milton.⁶ Whatever happens before the fall, Eve guides humanity in the right direction afterwards and will eventually be the source of its salvation. Lewalski ends again on a New Critical note: "it will not be long before we can all again read Milton for what is of enduring importance rather than what is historically conditioned in his conception of men and women" (19). The heretical feminist voice in criticism threatens to drown out the real issues of literature that transcend all time.⁷

So the battle lines around Milton and women find clarity in the early work of Landy and Lewalski. The feminist argument sees Eve as lacking in authority, creativity, and

knowledge; the absence of these lead her to a certain fall and subsequent dominance by Adam. Milton's supporters argue Eve has all she needs for self-sufficiency and takes on a redemptive status after the fall. These arguments undergo some variation, and in the tradition of all literary heresy, much greater theoretical sophistication with attending jargon. But the key issues remain the same. As the case for and against Milton's depiction of women rages, an interesting event occurs; a critic appropriates Milton as the acme of male repressiveness in a patriarchal society. In perhaps the greatest heretical expression ever in literary criticism, Sandra Gilbert, first in a *PMLA* article and then as part of a larger study with Susan Gubar, outlines the looming presence that is "Milton's bogey."⁸ Gilbert takes heresy in feminist rhetoric to new heights.

Gilbert basically posits Milton as the source from which women feel cut off from the opportunities of writing in particular and the possibilities of any fulfillment in general. *Paradise Lost* becomes the locus that "expresses institutionalized and often elaborately metaphorical misogyny" (189). The focus of this hatred against women, the "barrage of angry words" by Milton, is of course Eve (210). Milton accomplishes his misogyny so completely that "to the female imagination Milton and the inhibiting Father--the Patriarch of patriarchs--are one" (192). This identification of Milton with the "inhibiting Father" occurs as "the story Milton . . . most notably tells to women is of course the story of woman's secondness, her otherness, and how that otherness leads inexorably to her demonic anger, her sin, her fall, and the exclusion from that garden of the gods which is also, for her, the garden of poetry" (191). Milton's bogey forever tears asunder the idea that women might participate in poetry, in creativity, in a male-dominated world which reserves that power for itself.

Milton's campaign against women involves the identification throughout *Paradise Lost* of Eve with Satan: "Milton himself seems deliberately to have sketched so many

parallels between her and Satan that it is hard at times for the unwary reader to distinguish the sinfulness of one from that of the other" (196). Gilbert employs a revealing tactic here. Milton is so diabolical that uninformed women cannot discern his intent properly. Such a statement in turn allows her to assign great power into the hands of the critic, especially herself. Such critics (whom I have labelled heretics) claim to return control of the text back to the public, but in reality they always portray themselves as "reading correctly" and passing that knowledge on to the uninitiated.⁹ Gilbert declares that Milton cannot be trusted, that his wiles remain too complex for the normal reader to unravel; she will perform the service for others and in doing so shepherd interpretive control of the text.

Eve's identification with Satan also means that "Milton's Eve falls for exactly the same reason Satan does: because she wants to be 'as Gods,' and because, like him, she is secretly dissatisfied with her place, secretly preoccupied with questions of 'equality'" (196). The association becomes so strong that "the enmity God sets between the woman and the serpent is thus the discord necessary to divide those who are not opposites or enemies but too much alike, too much attracted to each other" (196). Finally, "in the grim shade of sin's Medusa-like snakiness, Eve's beauty, too, begins (to an experienced reader of *Paradise Lost*) to seem suspect" (199).

Eve, unable to participate in the act of creation which poetry and writing engenders, has no option but to follow Satan's path, and Gilbert therefore has no option but to make Satan the true hero of the poem for women. Eve embraces Satan because "Eve is the only character in *Paradise Lost* for whom a rebellion against the hierarchical status quo is as necessary as it is for Satan" (202). Gilbert simply takes the Romantic idea of Satan as hero in the poem and turns it to her own uses. Eve becomes a revolutionary seeking freedom and equality just as Satan does in his rebellion against heaven. "The Prince of Darkness," argues Gilbert, "was literally the first Outsider" (205), a position

women from Eve on inhabit; therefore, they seek to become like Satan. The woman writer's "feelings of female powerlessness manifested themselves in her conviction that the closest she could really get to being Satan was to be his creature, his tool, the witchlike daughter/mistress who sits at his right hand" (207). In the end, dominated by Milton's bogey, women sees themselves as "at best a creation of male 'Genius'" (208). Women have no place to reside in Milton's poem: "as a male poet justifying the ways of a male deity to male readers he rigorously excludes all females from the heaven of his poem" (211). Gilbert argues that all women writers, especially those of the nineteenth century, struggle to free themselves from Milton's bondage just as Satan rails against God in *Paradise Lost*.

The brilliance of Gilbert's heretical attack is both breathtaking and troubling. In a brief span Gilbert lays to waste years of Milton scholarship while implicating it in a system of bondage for women writers. She accuses Milton of stifling the women authors who followed him and solidifying a patriarchal culture that gives women no power to express themselves through authorship. Furthermore, Gilbert claims women share a female unconsciousness that reacts to Milton in a unified manner, and she takes the role of chief spokeswoman for that unconsciousness. This creates an avenue of power for Gilbert that silences her opponents by branding them oppressors and allows her to speak for what she perceives as a monolithic female vision of literature and interpretation.

But after the initial surprise of Gilbert's argument, one quickly realizes that very little evidence exists for her case beyond the force of her rhetoric. Gilbert offers no close reading of *Paradise Lost*, no references to key passages to illustrate her contentions, no critical background of how she arrives at her conclusions. She quotes one critic, Robert Graves, and a handful of feminist theorists that have nothing to say about Milton himself.¹⁰ Gilbert's heresy expects critics to believe on the basis of nothing more than a force of will. Gilbert demands faith in the assumption that Milton must inescapably think the way he

does and Eve must as a result be hopelessly subjugated along with all women. Criticism becomes a hostage to Gilbert's heresy--rejecting her reasoning means siding with Milton and patriarchy--in the name of freedom for women. Booth warns to "Suspect any text that sets itself up as king, demanding one law for itself and applying other, more stringent, laws to the commoners" (224). "Milton's bogey" in many ways finds itself predicated upon another bogey, the specter of male oppressiveness that must be eradicated at all costs and accepted as informing the production of whatever text the heretic assails.¹¹

To disagree with Gilbert does not minimize the contribution of feminist thought or the way it greatly enhances the reading of texts today. Feminist theory has gone far in demonstrating how authors and texts seek to contain the idea of women within narrowly prescribed roles. Such criticism also provides new ways of thinking about writing and its impact upon a much broader spectrum of readers. However, Gilbert's use of feminist thought as a heresy abandons all such benefits in the name of establishing power within literary criticism, and she does so by also holding herself above the normal critical practices of most scholars. The innovation matters above anything else; the proof for the argument gets buried under the heretical assertion and its formulation.

Gilbert demonstrates how heresy can become a destructive impulse. More than just an attempt to offer new interpretation, this species of heresy offers provocative conclusions meant to negate other criticism. This tactic not only fractures the community of literary studies; it undermines the very credibility of its existence. Heretical criticism becomes little more than a verbal game in which the participants take ever more strident positions to score points in the academy. Heretical literary criticism has nothing to offer the community or those outside of it except political posturing where the winners are determined on the basis of who can utter the most outrageous heresy on any given text. Literary studies of this type fail to discuss purpose, meaning, relevance, proof, evidence,

impact, plausibility or scholarly integrity; they aim instead to deliver arguments void of any based upon rhetoric or political oneupsmanship.

In light of Gilbert's charge, Milton scholars face a crisis concerning Eve and *Paradise Lost*. Does Gilbert's heresy discredit Milton and along with him years of critical study, or does Milton have more to offer feminist thought than a mere "bogey" to dismantle? The reaction to Gilbert takes a fascinating turn. Even those who laud Gilbert's conclusions feel uneasy about her methods,¹² and several critics use her criticism as an opportunity to return to many of the issues raised earlier by both Landy and Lewalski. In many ways, Gilbert's criticism ignites an interest in Eve perhaps long overdue, and this interest in turn solidifies many ideas about Milton's views of women just below the surface of much earlier criticism. Gilbert posits a patriarchal yes-man in Milton, and critics offer in return a proto-feminist Milton anticipating and addressing the concerns of women in the twentieth century. This controversy produces one of the few instances where a heresy fosters a genuine response that seeks to refute that heresy's claim and delivers an alternative meant to restore Milton's importance and not simply spawn more innovation. The critical community responds to a challenge and writes a body of criticism that furthers the health of Milton scholarship.¹³

William Shullenberger best captures the heart of the feminist controversy and suggests his own remedy for it.¹⁴ Recognizing the reductivist tendencies of Gilbert's argument, Shullenberger points out the monolithic conclusions of Gilbert's hypothesis:

the unquestioned assumption about that study [Gilbert's] is that it is bound to be antithetical, as if the only woman's response to poetry with the kind of claims which Milton makes is to be a resisting reader, to anatomize the terror and refuse the amazement, to dismiss the possibility of blessing as if it could only be given to a son. (69)

Shullenberger also wonders if Gilbert's approach means that "traditional" women critics "purchased their interpretive authority by sacrificing the authority of their experience as women" (69). Keeping the idea of a community of readers before him, Shullenberger warns that Gilbert can poison women readers of Milton by her unfounded claims of misogyny (70)¹⁵ and then adds a note challenging her methodology: "Gilbert's procedures open themselves not just to interpretive differences but to basic questions about the ethics of scholarship" (82). Shullenberger allows for plurality in criticism ("interpretive differences"); what he attempts to correct are heretical abuses that substitute rhetoric for strong critical methodology (research, textual evidence, biographical context).

Turning to Milton and Eve, Shullenberger argues instead that "the subtext of *Paradise Lost* encourages and supports feminist reading" (70). Shullenberger does an excellent job of avoiding the self-defeating strategy of heresy; instead of dismissing heretical feminist reading out of hand and offering his own brand of heresy in its place, he embraces feminist concerns as important to the community and challenges only Gilbert's conclusions about Milton. Shullenberger does justice to Gilbert's position and then offers a critique and an alternative. Why do Gilbert, Landy, and others reach their particular conclusions? Because "the prospect of finding their own critical idealism confirmed and encouraged by so powerful a patriarchal text would be embarrassing" (70).

Acknowledging that Milton anticipates and engages feminist concerns, allowing for the possibility that Eve emerges independent and vital from the text, means heretical feminist critics lose a tremendous amount of power over the text, and especially over texts written by males. Literary heresy abhors diluting or sharing its power. Such an outcome also means heretical feminist critics cannot dismiss all male texts as inherently oppressive, thus greatly narrowing the range over which they can exert control.

Once critics allow Milton to speak to feminist issues, however, they discover "His

representation of true heroism, embodied in the gracious actions of Christ and of Eve, anticipates what feminist psychologists and social historians describe as 'women's values'" (71). Shullenberger expertly summarizes feminist precepts and then applies them rationally to Milton, but he does not duck the fact that by necessity Milton is "nominally patriarchal. Feminist criticism provokes the question whether the poetry is consequently *repressively* patriarchal" (72). While no one can deny that Milton's age was a patriarchal one, does that guarantee a certain type of writing? Shullenberger, by bringing us back to the text, demonstrates that it does not. The possibility but not the certainty exists. The text should be allowed to speak for itself, and Shullenberger, unlike Gilbert, allows it to do so.

Shullenberger's reading of *Paradise Lost* brings critics back to the central issues raised by Landy--authority, knowledge, creativity. Eve gives up one type of knowledge and creativity for others throughout the poem: "Her food preparation is an art of earth more dignified in its spirituality than Adam's fruitless and quizzical astronomical speculation" (74). Milton celebrates domestic spirituality in the poem and Eve is the example, "Eve *is* Eden" (74). The idea of identity for Milton concerns a "non-self-centered relational structure," a structure Eve works desperately to restore at the end of the poem so that Adam can begin the process of redemption. Eve embraces the values of a center and community that Satan so utterly rejects. As a result, "All that is Edenic argues against the feminist embrace of Satan as the covert hero of the poem and Eve's model for a self-assertive identity" (78). Heretical feminist critics must elevate Satan to the position of hero because to do otherwise means admitting Milton understands women and his poem has something to say to them. This, as Shullenberger recognizes, would prove too embarrassing and costly for the heresy of feminism.

While Shullenberger goes far in restoring a balanced picture of Milton in criticism, it will take a heretic as bold as Gilbert to make the case for a feminist Milton complete.

Just such a critic is Joseph Wittreich. *Feminist Milton* is Wittreich's brilliant effort to become even more feminist than heretical feminist critics. Wittreich works from the premise that "Milton was not just an ally of feminists but their early sponsor" (ix). He circumvents normal readings of Milton to discuss the ways in which women until the middle of nineteenth century read Milton. His study reveals "Milton's epic-prophecy is in part a woman's text--indeed, a lost feminist text--a large part of which has been buried by patriarchal culture. It is a text that invites and has its own hidden agenda for a feminist criticism that would remove from literary works incrustations of patriarchal interpretation" (x). The problem, argues Wittreich, is not Milton but criticism's patriarchal reading of Milton through the years. Critics must look elsewhere to read him correctly.

The real place to apprehend Milton and his attitudes on women can be found in women readers prior to the Victorian era:

Paradise Lost especially was regarded as a woman's text--not just one through which women could challenge the cherished beliefs of Milton's male readers, but one through which Milton himself had challenged those beliefs by fashioning a new female ideal with the intention of forging a new social and political reality. (Wittreich xii)

Wittreich shifts the focus away from literary criticism to women readers of the past, and he also suggests Milton contains not a latent misogyny but an active feminist agenda. How does he explain the conclusions of modern feminists? Wittreich has an explanation that champions women of the past: "that their perception of Milton differs so markedly from that of present-day feminists opens the question of which group of feminists, yesterday's or today's, has been seduced by patriarchal culture and is, while promoting its traditions, purveying its attitudes by perpetuating its readings and interpretations" (xix). The real heretics, claims Wittreich, are women readers who create their own sense of meaning apart

from patriarchal literary criticism. Modern feminists reach the conclusions they do because they "have accepted the tamed Milton of critical orthodoxy" (14). Wittreich implicates today's heretical feminists in patriarchal mis-readings of Milton that lead to erroneous interpretations.

If nothing else, one has to appreciate Wittreich's outflanking of heretical feminist critics by claiming a position even more feminist than theirs. At the same time he takes on the mantle of true heresy that seeks to undermine the oppressiveness of patriarchal, orthodox readings of *Paradise Lost*. For Wittreich, "*Paradise Lost* introduces disharmonies beneath an apparently harmonious surface in order to transport conventional propositions about women into a zone of new and (to the orthodox) unsettling perceptions" (9). Critics should not doubt Milton has a feminist message to deliver: it only takes a critic of Wittreich's skill to point out those "disharmonies" just below the surface. Wittreich projects a positive view of Milton toward women while at the same time retaining interpretative control so that he can guide critics to that conclusion.

One might conclude Wittreich engages in the same type of rhetoric as Gilbert but with a different spin. Yet he does not end there. Through a careful review of women readers' attitudes toward Milton, and especially Eve in *Paradise Lost*, Wittreich makes a strong case for his feminist Milton. Books 11 and 12 become the keys for this reading, "the books in which females readers found ideological mirrorings were the ones a male readership would muffle" (110). Wittreich returns to the idea of Eve as symbol of redemption offered, as we have seen, by other critics. Eve's

submission is less to a husband than to a fate that befalls Adam and Eve alike. It is a submission to mutual cooperation, service, and understanding--a selfless submission to and expression of love in accordance with the Blakean adage that the sublimest act is to put another

before you. Eve's is an expression of love without subjection. (106).¹⁶

Wittreich refers to 12.596-97, ("all her spirits compos'd/To meek submission"), arguing that after the fall Eve "excels Adam" and her vision "gives life to Adam, . . . redeems him and history and restores paradise to both" (99). Likewise the final two books show an Eve who sings "lyrics which, religious in nature, embody a redemptive hope and ascribe to Eve herself a redemptive role in history" (104). Eve offers women readers a model of strength and stability, a model that does not weakly follow Adam out of paradise but who instead forges a hopeful path that will end in the salvation of humanity. Those critics who cannot see this remained shackled by the criticism of the past:

It is true that men have controlled, and still control, the climate of critical opinion, but in this they are currently aided and abetted by a feminist criticism that would turn the revolutionary Milton into a reactionary or make a cautious . . . Milton out of a bold and inquiring spirit. (154)

Current heretical feminist critics spout the same patriarchal interpretations of Milton, only they condemn him for his views rather than praising him as male critics do. Both are amiss in their conclusions.

Wittreich goes far in bringing the controversy of Milton and women back to the portrayal of Eve in *Paradise Lost*, but his book remains steeped in heretical charges and counter-charges. Nevertheless, his work clears the field to look at Eve honestly and decide what happens in the poem rather than to use the text as an occasion to espouse feminist doctrine, either positive or negative. In one sense Eve continues to be dominated, albeit by critics who mean well and desire her release from patriarchal structures. But the truth of the matter is Eve does that herself in the poem, and she does so through focusing on a different type of authority, creativity, and knowledge that most critics rarely consider. Eve's alternative way of thinking clearly privileges relationship and community above other

modes of existence.

Critics can see these issues at work in Satan's deception of Eve. Does Eve fall through inferiority or for some other cause? As Philip Gallagher points out, whatever the reason, Eve must fall due to the restrictions of the biblical texts. Milton does not somehow diabolically plot the undermining of Eve; she falls in Genesis and she must fall in Milton's epic. But what Milton does instead is create an atmosphere conducive to deflecting the outcome of that event on to Satan and away from Eve. As Gallagher so insightfully argues, Milton early on shines the focus toward Satan: "Th' infernal Serpent; hee it was, whose guile/Stirr'd up with Envy and Revenge, deceiv'd/The Mother of Mankind" (1.34-36). Here the poem "tends to deflect blame for the deceived to the deceiver, and it dignifies Eve as the progenitrix of the human race instead of demeaning her as a secondary and derivative creation" (52). For some reason, critics downplay Satan's deception when it comes to Eve and inflate it when it comes to everyone else (Satan almost overthrows Heaven). Besides, too often critics pretend that she is the only one deceived in the whole epic; the fact of the matter is nearly everyone who comes into contact with him falls. A third of the host of Heaven listens to his message; Sin and Death allow him to pass toward Eden; the sentinels prove powerless to stop him. Only Abdiel and God personally see through Satan's deception in any meaningful way. All others must be warned by God to be wary of Satan's ploys.

Of course this includes Adam and Eve who do receive ample warning, causing the reader to wonder, "how can Eve possibly be deceived?" (Gallagher 53). But Milton again highlights Satan's abilities, not Eve's fallibility, in this process by demonstrating, as Gallagher illustrates, the deception of Uriel. Satan easily deceives Uriel because "neither Man nor Angel can discern/Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks alone,/Invisible, except to God alone" (3.682-84). These startling lines make it clear that Uriel has no power to

discern Satan's disguise and false witness. In this moment, Gallagher notes, "The deception of this angel allows us to see--long before the temptation and fall--that Eve's intelligence is equivalent to that of Adam. But apart from certifying her mental acuity, the passage more importantly renders plausible--*though it does not cause*--Eve's transgression" (55).

Uriel's deception also helps to explain Adam's reaction to Eve's fall: "Ignorant of the experience of Uriel, Adam erroneously thinks that deceit can be mastered by intellectual discernment; he is dead wrong (no wariness can prevent a 'fall into deception')" (Gallagher 63). Uriel, who stands "In sight of God's throne" (3.655), fails to see through Satan's pretense; Eve too, no matter her intelligence or perception, has no chance against Satan's hypocrisy; she has no reason to doubt the sincerity of the Serpent's message, although she has every reason to reject the temptation to spurn God's command. She disobeys God through a conscious choice, not because of inferiority or a knowledge Adam possesses and she does not.

Misunderstanding occurs when critics privilege Adam's interpretation of the event over Eve's and simply accept Adam's plea ("Would thou hadst heark'n'd to my words, and stay'd/With me, as I besought thee" [9.1135-36]) as a simple cure to what has befallen them. Such a reading ignores the real truth spoken by Eve:

hadst thou been there,
Or here th' attempt, thou couldst not have discern'd
Fraud in the Serpent, speaking as he spake;
No ground of enmity between us known,
Why hee should mean me ill, or seek to harm. (9.1148-52)

Just as Uriel has no reason to suspect Satan as an angel of light, so Eve has no reason to suspect the Serpent. Critics condemn Eve in the same way Adam does, giving themselves

a sense of moral superiority over both her and the poem. Eve must be flawed to fall; Milton must be a misogynist to create a flawed Eve. It is too much to accept the fact Satan outwits human intelligence and that human will can fall prey to temptation. Adam refuses to acknowledge such a possibility, as does the critic who refuses to understand Eve's choice as totally her own, free from any inferiority or defect of judgement. The censure of Milton's depiction of Eve has more to do with a reluctance to face all humanity's weaknesses than it does with Milton's alleged misogyny.

The amazing thing to note in so much criticism of *Paradise Lost* is how often critics apprehend the choice between Eve's vision of the world and Adam's, and how often they choose Adam's interpretation with little or no thought of the reasons why. Perhaps Wittreich has stumbled upon something; perhaps critics have become so conditioned to reading Milton in a patriarchal way that they condemn the poet for their reading instead of themselves. Clearly after the fall, Eve's voice becomes the one most associated with right thinking and God's divine will for reconciliation. Yet critics still go right on listening to Adam's childish response to the fall (it's Eve's fault not mine) and ignore Eve's beautiful efforts to restore what has been so tragically lost.

But Eve's choice to eat the fruit strikes deeper than feminist concerns--it goes to the very core of the critical enterprise. In her choosing, Eve turns her back on the community she otherwise cherishes in the poem for selfish self-enlightenment. Her choice in turn calls into question the glorification of self-indulgence that marks the rationale behind much literary criticism and intellectual pursuits. The call to an individuality that abandons all responsibility toward the community and relationships, the impulse to privilege the self above all other possible good, the strident insistence that any gesture toward the sharing of duties and work means an inherent oppressiveness, all of these characteristics define the heresies this study has been examining, all of which recoil at Eve's

fall as a repudiation of their philosophy. Certainly Eve cannot fall because she desires independence and autonomy; to see such an act as the source of sin and tragedy means the author (Milton or the Bible) must harbor a patriarchal bias that seeks the control of women so that men can pursue the exact same course on their own.

For such a vision of fulfillment, Satan becomes the only hero. Only he constantly rails against community, responsibility, and accountability to others. Only he has the unbridled freedom to do whatever he wishes despite the destructive results. Satan becomes the heretical ideal, an individual unencumbered by any duty other than his own satisfaction and accumulation of power. Milton repeatedly condemns such impulses and delivers a clear message that such a course in the end leads to personal and spiritual ruin. As C.S. Lewis points out, to vote for Satan is to vote for "incessant autobiography" (100). Everywhere Satan turns is hell because everywhere Satan turns he finds only himself with no hope of relationship with any other creature. Satan wants not only God's power but his isolation, what he perceives as the independence from all other beings to pursue any course of action he wishes. Satan even demands self-creation to insure his autonomy:

We know no time when we were not as now;

Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised

By our own quick'ning power (6.859-61)

Satan's desire mirrors only too well heresy's drive to free itself from any connection to other criticism, to declare itself "self-begot" and without need of any influence or support. Heresy gathers power for its own sake without thought for the rest of the community's existence.

Adam comes dangerously close to the same tendency, and thus his need for Eve. Eve embodies community and relationship as God makes clear:

I, ere thou spak'st,

Knew it not good for Man to be alone,
 And no such company as then thou saw'st
 Intended thee, for trial only brought,
 To see how thou couldst judge of fit and meet:
 What next I bring shall please thee, be assur'd,
 Thy likeness, thy fit help, thy other self,
 Thy wish, exactly to thy heart's desire. (8.444-51)

God understands Adam's need for Eve; God brings Adam to the same recognition before creating her. By providing Adam with "thy other self," God establishes an idea of relationship which should govern human accomplishment. As the center of community, God models this idea throughout the poem by always using power to create new relationships and to heal fragmented ones. God creates humanity in response to Satan's rebellion; God creates Eve to complete Adam; God allows the Son to sacrifice His life to bring about the re-establishment of communion with fallen creation. God's expression always involves the furthering of harmony and community among things, never the isolation or championing of self-realization apart from others.

Eve keeps this idea before her, except in her deception by Satan. It is clearly reflected in her attitude toward knowledge. When Adam inquires of Raphael about astronomy, Eve "Rose, and went forth among her Fruits and Flow'rs" (8.44). Eve recognizes that such knowledge has nothing to do with maintaining community in Eden, even though she could understand fully whatever information Raphael might impart (8.48-49). Rather, as Stevie Davies writes, "Milton makes it possible for us to see that the tendence of 'fruit and flowers . . . bud and bloom' may express a variant form of wisdom and virtue" (243). Eve chooses correctly when Raphael warns Adam not to seek knowledge that does not bear upon his own existence: "joy thou/In what he gives to thee,

this Paradise/And thy fair Eve" (8.170-72). What Eve really desires is the interaction she will enjoy with Adam, not the raw knowledge he will impart, because in their conversation they strengthen the relationship that sustains them.

The question here becomes one not of gender, but an option between two modes of knowing. Adam repeatedly longs for knowledge for its own sake, detached from any significance to Eve or their ability to live successfully in Eden. Eve always privileges knowing that furthers their relationship and sense of place in the world, so she leaves to tend to their surroundings. Her knowing always leads back to the center of community. Critics who privilege Adam's impulses either view Eve as inferior or Milton as sexist for not having Eve pursue knowledge in the same way Adam, and they, would. Critics fall prey to the same delusion Adam does: that somehow the accumulation of any knowledge means progress. Eve recognizes that knowing for its own sake does nothing but give the individual a false sense of power over creation; it will come to nothing. Raphael tells Adam

Heav'n is for thee too high

To know what passes there; be lowly wise:

Think only what concerns thee and thy being (8.172-74)

Raphael does not have to admonish Eve; she already knows and practices his counsel.

Eve demonstrates her greatest understanding of community and relationship after the fall. She initiates the reconciliation that prefigures Christ's redemption of humanity.¹⁷ Adam can think only in terms of affixing blame and does everything possible to distance himself from Eve and the fall. He utterly rejects his responsibility and his relationship with Eve. Adam reasons in terms of the law which condemns,¹⁸ Eve thinks in terms of love which redeems. She turns to Adam for consolation and hope:

I beg, and clasp thy knees; bereave me not,

Whereon I live, thy gentle looks, they aid,

Thy counsel in this utmost distress (10.918-20)

Adam sees the fall as a personal disaster brought about by another; Eve sees the fall as jeopardizing the relationship that is the only possibility for existence. Adam transfers blame while Eve takes it all upon herself as a means of reconciliation. Jason Rosenblatt recognizes that "Eve proclaims the continuity of her love for Adam and the supreme value of their life together" (59). Only after Eve's offer to bear the punishment alone, only after Eve models the correct response to the fall, does Adam recognize the importance of sharing their sorrow:

But rise, let us no more contend, nor blame

Each other, blam'd enough elsewhere, but strive

In offices of Love, how we may light'n

Each other's burden in our share of woe (10.958-61)

This new Adam emerges solely from Eve's grace, before even God reaches out in forgiveness. Rosenblatt argues that "Adam the unworthy becomes worthy, not through a complex system of mediation that requires his own loss of identity and his redeemer's crucifixion, but simply and immediately through the transforming power of Eve's love for him" (59). Eve recognizes her sin as one against her relationship with God and Adam, a striving for power that banishes all notions of sharing and community and can only lead to death. Her response involves reconciling with Adam, the most pressing presence in her life, and then leading both of them to reconcile with God, even if that means bearing the full brunt of God's wrath. Even Eve's contemplation of suicide displays a selfless act meant to ensure no suffering befalls generations to come.

Eve, not Adam, becomes the source of humanity's redemption ("By me the Promis'd Seed shall all restore" [12.623]) as she has already brought Adam back into

relationship and community. Adam's inability to think of the fall other than in terms of the law and rigid consequences (abstract knowledge) threatens his relationship with both Eve and God. Because Eve instead thinks in terms of relationship, she understands that forgiveness and redemption always remain possible among people who love each other and a God whose essence is love and who forms the center of all community in the poem. And although punishment does occur (banishment from Eden), the real meaning in existence (relationship) remains intact. So Eve confidently instructs Adam to lead the way out of Eden:

but now lead on;
 In mee is no delay; with thee to go,
 Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,
 Is to go hence unwilling; thou to mee
 Art all things under Heav'n, all places thou. (12.614-18)

Eden for Eve has always been about relationship; she emphasizes it to Adam as they leave a physical location to forge a new paradise in spiritual terms. Rosenblatt sees a parallel here between Eve and Ruth: "Eve's brave, heartening charge to Adam to lead them out of paradise . . . merits comparison with Ruth's decision to live with Naomi in a decidedly secondary world" (59). But no world is paradise without others to share it with, and no world is secondary if a community exists to enjoy its pleasures and bear its burdens. Eve's momentary loss of that truth causes the fall, but her immediate regathering of it makes anywhere Adam and Eve travel a potential Eden.

Eve resists oppression by patriarchal society and heretical feminist criticism. She emerges as the impetus of redemption in *Paradise Lost* and holds the promise of redemption for all humanity. As long as heretical literary criticism rejects community, it will reject Milton's Eve; as long as heretical feminist criticism champions Satanic

autonomy, it will portray Milton as a misogynist. Eve's call to relationship runs alien to the heresy that literary studies reward; it is little wonder heretical critics brand her as a failure in need of deliverance from the life of community that makes "all places thou" for her. But perhaps the first glimmers of hope emerge as Miltonists resist the conclusions of heretical feminist readings and instead look to Eve as a model for women and all humanity. Eve's way involves exchanging one way of knowing for another and sacrificing pure self-interest for the welfare of the community, the ultimate act of self-fulfillment.

Chapter 6
The Word and Its Act:
Toward an Idea of Community

The final chapter of this study will seek to move toward a more extensive definition of community for literary criticism to consider. Booth's ideas of vitality, justice, and understanding provide a reasonable set of expectations for critics to follow as they seek to encourage a sense of plurality that allows the community to flourish. Buber and Milton demonstrate that some sort of center must define the enterprise of community, so that all the members have a clear sense of where their energies and purposes lie. Buber and Milton both envision this center in terms of some transcendent idea, and this chapter will also posit a center with clear metaphysical dimensions that allows for both plurality and purpose to be maintained.

But why should community matter? Why should there be an insistence on communal value over individual power and achievement? Because heresy in literary criticism is not only antithetical to the survival of the institution which it seeks to dominate and control, it is antithetical to the very means by which all people exist. In other words, heresy not only threatens criticism, but the basis for all possibilities of functioning in society. Heresy as a strategy for power at any level denies the communal imperative which makes all meaning and purpose possible.

This chapter will begin with a clarification of what community means and what the foundations for its survival entail. Then, beginning with the ideas of *Logos*, *Dabhar*, and

Edah, the options for the way a text can be read will be explored with a formulation of what type of reading insures the creation of community. Then, by looking at a passage from Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, that type of reading will be modeled. Finally, some suggestions for where this type of reading might lead the community will be explored. A basic organizational structure will be implemented here that seeks to uphold the criteria of plurality and that warrants further discussion among the community of literary critics as to where the institution should move to create a center from which community can thrive.

The idea of what constitutes community is certainly not a monolithic one. Frank Kirkpatrick offers three models of community that cover the range of communal structures found within all facets of society. The first of these, the atomistic/contractarian forms the type of community generally thought of as American culture. Kirkpatrick argues that "Its controlling metaphor is that of independent atoms rationally contracting with each other for the terms of their enforced relationship" (2). The ideas of Locke immediately come to mind when thinking of contractarian community and the emphasis in this model is the autonomy of the individual not relationship. Kirkpatrick sees this as a negative model for community as it "takes the practical life with utmost seriousness, regards it as essentially a clash of wills, and resolves the conflict by the individual appropriation of power. The relation of agents in this mode is essentially one of competition for power" (180). This type of community "arises out of fear of the power of the other person to limit my freedom to do what I want" (181).

The emphasis in the contractarian model always returns to the individual seeking the limits of power over the world and others. Any agreements entered into are seen merely as necessary impediments to complete autonomy. Each individual attempts to construct binding contracts that favor his or her own pursuit of power. Heresy in literary criticism, when it thinks of community at all, uses the contractarian model to formulate its

relationship to the institution at large. Heresy works to hold all other claims of responsibility at bay while pursuing a course of individual realization. It seizes every opportunity to dominate other positions in the critical debate through a rhetoric of isolation that defines all competing interpretation as threatening to freedom and autonomy. The use of the terms orthodoxy, dogmatism, and tradition becomes the means by which other voices are negated. The contractarian model appeals "to the morality of the law as a way of keeping the other at bay" (Kirkpatrick 181). This model constructs itself more in terms of the minimum requirements of relationship to others rather than to a full interplay among members of the community. Eric Loewy recognizes that a contract arrangement for community cannot insist on "obligations beyond those of utter respect for freedom" (105). While sounding enlightened, such a view creates stagnation since any relationship makes demands on basic individual freedoms. Responding to the need of another causes the forfeiting of attending to personal needs in some respect.

The second mode of community Kirkpatrick terms the organic/functional which metaphorically exists as "organs, interdependent and functionally related to each other within a larger organism" (2). The concept of the communal as a living organism with individuals performing functions for the survival of all would seem to offer a reasonable model of cooperation. But performing required functions can often cause a sense of doubleness for the individual. The Scottish philosopher John Macmurray calls the organic model the contemplative because

the person conforms his practical life to the demands of the social order but in his private life withdraws into what he regards as his 'true' self. If the real world does not meet his needs, he creates an ideal or spiritual world where they can be met. Real life is enjoyed at the level of contemplation, meditation, or simply privacy He makes his activity in the practical

world as automatic as he can. (Kirkpatrick 180)

This in many ways describes the dilemma of the heretical New Historian. Confronted with the difficulty of making society function according to a personal ideal, the heretical critic creates a metaphor to describe how the public world should operate in terms of the individual vision created. The pressures of actual society cause a retreat into an imagined construction of how literature and culture should interact. The heretical critic then chooses bits and pieces of actual life to bolster the private world. Kirkpatrick sees the organic model predicated upon "fear of relationship with the actual other: a fear that in practice the other can disturb the center of my being" (181). The organic model produces an outer adherence to what Macmurray calls "good form" while the members believe all the while that the real business of existence takes place internally through contemplation and reflection.

Buber would define both of these modes of community as deriving from *I-It* relationships. For Buber, "There is no I taken in itself, but only the I of the primary word *I-Thou* and the I of the primary word *I-It*" (3). No true community occurs through the objectification of people so they can be controlled for the purposes of achieving individual power and control. Buber does not deny the reality of *I-It* relationships because the "will to profit and will to power are natural and legitimate as long as they are tied to the will to human relations and carried by it. There is no evil drive until the drive detaches itself from our being" (98). Buber does not deny the basic desires for profit and power, but without tempering those with responsibility to the Thou of the *I-Thou* relationship, "they abjure life" (98). Therefore, "The structures of the communal human life derive their life from the fullness of the relational force that permeates their members" (98). Both the contractarian and the organic models of community seek to create a society in which the individual can function without responsibility to the Thou of the *I-Thou* relationship. The individual can

exist by objectifying all human relations into the I- It and seek to control them for the purpose of power divorced from the spirit. Eventually, however, life exacts its price: "To be sure, life takes its time about settling the score, and for quite a while one may still think that one sees a form move where for a long time a mere mechanism has been whirring" (98).

Heresy as a strategy for power seeks the objectified relationships of the *I- It* construction. Without a sense of responsibility to others in the community, by seeing the communal as an arena to exert as much individual autonomy as possible, the heretic tests the limits of isolating and defeating other critical interpretations. But as Buber points out, this eventually destroys the existence of community and in the process the heretic no longer has a place to declare control. Life, as Buber says, eventually settles the score. Booth would see this as the defeat of plurality and therefore the diminishment of the critical enterprise.

Kirkpatrick and Macmurray argue that the problems of the contractarian and organic modes derive from an incorrect construction of the individual. Kirkpatrick identifies this issue with the construction of 'self' as a thinking individual:

To start one's understanding of persons with the assumption that they are essentially thinkers is to start with persons in practical isolation from other persons, as Descartes himself did when he began by doubting everything with which he was immediately in relation. (159)

The outcome of such a construction is that the self "does not know from the outset that it is a 'thou' in relation to other selves because its starting point does not permit it to accept anything as a given other than its own thinking withdrawn from relation to others" (160).

The self as thinker leads to a construction of binaries (theory/practice, reason/action, mind/body, appearance/reality) that makes relationships impossible to maintain because the

self always returns to its isolation.

Macmurray is adamant about the illusion of the self as autonomous thinker, isolated and complete:

[T]here are few things which I can desire to do, and none that are of personal significance, which do not depend upon the active co-operation of others. We need one another to be ourselves. This complete and unlimited dependence of each of us upon the others is the central and crucial fact of personal existence. Individual independence is an illusion; and the independent individual, the isolated self, is a nonentity. In ourselves we are nothing; and when we turn our eyes inward in search of ourselves we find a vacuum It is only in relation to others that we exist as persons; we are invested with significance by others who have need of us; and borrow our reality from those who care for us. (211)

But how does one escape the long tradition of formulating the self as autonomous thinker? Macmurray posits that the self should be thought of not as inward thinker, but outward agent. Therefore, "Acting, that is, engaging ourselves with a world exterior to us, both precedes and follows the temporary withdrawal into thinking" (Kirkpatrick 162). As a result, "the ultimate test of one's thinking must be in its ability to return one to the fulness of immediate experience without frustration or repeated failure" (162). This construction does not negate thinking; it merely makes it the tool of the agent acting in the world.

But how should the self as agent act? This leads to the third construction of community, the mutual/personal. The mutual/personal is a community where "distinct persons find fulfillment in and through living for each other" (Kirkpatrick 2). Rather than seeing others as threats to individual freedom, others become the entire reason for communal existence. In fact, others form that center the community requires for success:

"the center of interest and attention is in the other, not in himself" (Macmurray 158).

Loewy overcomes the objection that such a model defeats individual achievement: "the relationship between individuals and their communities, far from being a necessarily competitive one, is a relationship in which both seek to expand their role and in which both see that expansion as critically necessary for both" (172). Loewy terms this constant expansion and change for the success of both individual and community "homeostasis" (47). Here the embodiment of Buber's *I- Thou* construction finds fruition; community "is constituted by seeking the fulfillment of others for their own sake" (133).

Such a model of community requires a tremendous departure from much Western thought where the individual and personal fulfillment so often reign supreme. What Macmurray, Kirkpatrick, and others suggest is that the self as an individual thinking in isolation is an illusion that thwarts not only community but genuine existence. The need for others to create any sense of self leads to community as the foundation for all subsequent endeavors.

The idea of responsibility to the Other as the center of community finds helpful clarification in the work of Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas sees the encounter with the Other as the quality that actualizes the self. The apprehension of the Other leads to a realization that "I experience myself as an instance that tries to appropriate the world by labor, language, and experience, whereas the other instance does not permit me to monopolize the world because the Other's greatness does not fit into my enclosure--not even that of theoretical comprehension" (Peperzak 21).¹ Levinas defines the encounter with the Other in terms of height (*hauteur*) that comes to the self from on high and parallels transcendent apprehension. For Levinas, total Otherness approaches a type of divine encounter that the self must respond to in terms of responsibility: "we recognize the Other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the Other is a relationship with a Mystery" (75).

After having one's world punctured by the Other, the self comes to the realization that "obligation with regard to the Other is also infinite, who, without self-interrogation about reciprocity, without posing questions about the Other at the approach of his face, is never done with the neighbor" (108). Levinas conceives of this responsibility to the Other chiefly in moral terms:

the encounter with another reveals the supreme law: my selfhood must bow before the absoluteness revealed by another's look or speech. My home, my food and beverage, my labor, and all my possessions of the earth that I enjoy receive their definitive meaning by being put into the service of another who, by her unchosen 'height' makes me responsible. (Peperzak 24)

Unlike Heidegger, who emphasizes the contemplative and poetic aspects of human life, Levinas asserts the moral responsibility to the Other as the basis of meaning in human life (Peperzak 26). Furthermore, the self cannot generalize responsibility to the Other, but must care for Others individually as they are encountered. This process accomplishes two things: first, the self is not overwhelmed by knowing it must care for all Others, only the one now meeting the self face to face, and second, the self cannot generalize about responsibility because "collective measures lose their human meaning because they have forgotten or masked real faces and real speech" (Peperzak 31). Such generalizing causes a dangerous situation as "This forgetfulness is the beginning of tyranny. If the infinite dignity of concrete individuals whom we love has been obscured, the only outcomes are universal war in the name of innumerable conflicting needs, or the dictatorship of an ego who happens to be the handiest of all" (Peperzak 31-32).

Levinas's ideas about responsibility to the Other fit well with Macmurray's formulation of the self as agent, because it is only in acting in behalf of the Other that the responsibility of the self can be truly fulfilled. Community finds as its center all Others that

the self come into contact with in personal, concrete situations. This mutual effort of providing for the needs of each other creates a genuine sense of *Koinonia* that makes all relationships and meanings possible.

The claims of the Other and of community exclude the strategy of heresy. As Levinas makes clear, heresy seeks to appropriate the Other for purposes of control and dominance. Such a tactic denies not only the uniqueness (height) of the Other but denies the essential nature of existing as a self. An act of seizure against the Other constitutes an act of violence against the self as one who bears infinite responsibility for the Other. The quest for individual power and control denies the primary state of being, responsibility to the Other, that defines human life.

What impact do such theories have upon literary criticism? The critic owes the text, as a production of the Other, the responsibility that the Other demands. Isn't the erasure of the author in post-structural theory merely the attempt to deny the Other so that the text can be appropriated for individual power and control? Interpretation becomes an act that the critic makes on behalf of the text to insure its survival as a unique production of an Other. As such, the critic must not view the text as an occasion for the accumulation of power, for such a view leads to the seizure of the text in an attempt to render it the Same as the critic's own theoretical or heretical outlook or to expel it when it cannot be easily rendered to that Sameness. Such approaches violate the unique Otherness the text possesses and undermine the critic's responsibility to it. Rather than an opportunity to assert individual power, the critic must ask, "What do I owe this text as a unique expression of an Other?"

Naturally the immediate objection to such a responsibility emanates from questions of intention, language, and signification. But if the self sees the Other not as a unique difference to be feared, but as the basis for existence, language should not intimidate the

critic. The way to think of the Otherness of language takes the self to the idea of *Logos*. Derrida claims in *Differance* that all philosophies of language in the end are theological.² Taking Derrida at his word, one may assume that language concerns a theory of God, which forms the basis of considering language's height (*hauteur*) as defined by Levinas. The self's relation to language then concerns itself with *Logos* as the divine utterance of God, not *logos* as mere word, argument, or even calculation.³ Language must be theological because language comes nearest to apprehending that divine utterance, that Word, and containing it within its own words.

As Derrida sets out to construct his theory of God, and Derrida best defines the crisis language causes in responsibility to the Other, he finds himself continually frustrated by the words that cannot name the Word: "There has to be a transcendental signified for the difference between signifier and signified to be somewhere absolute and irreducible" (36). Language as it is commonly known cannot find that transcendental signified, however, and the sign becomes "deferred presence": "this structure presupposes that the sign, which defers presence, is conceivable only as the *basis* of the presence that it defers and *moving toward* the deferred presence that it aims to reappropriate" (61). This difference between the sign and the presence it wishes to name becomes the foundation for all of Derrida's ideas about God and subsequently about language. In the end, "in the *system* of language, there are only differences" (64).

This difference, or *differance*, Derrida also defines as an absence, an absence of presence, an absence in writing of both the speaker and hearer, an absence even of all Otherness, and this absence produces a "drift" in the sign that enables the word to signify a plurality of meanings. Absence means that

Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be *cited*, put between

quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. (97)

Because the sign does not mean one thing (its signified), it can mean all things. Critics do not consider the sign and the signified it seeks, but rather the space between them and all that might fill that absence.

Drawing finally to the heart of his theological quest, Derrida uses the imagery of John to complete his description of the estrangement of the Word from language. In "Plato's Pharmacy," "*Logos* is a son, then, a son that would be destroyed in his very *presence* without the present *attendance* of his father" (117). But unlike in John where the father and the son are one (John 1.1), the son goes forth without the father and as a consequence will be "nothing but, in fact, writing" (117). Writing then, the son without the father, becomes "a desire for orphanhood and patricidal subversion" (118). Who will take up this orphan, what will the son do without the father? Here it seems the critic might come to the rescue as the "responsibility for the *logos*, for its meaning and effects, goes to those who attend it, to those who are present with the presence of a father" (118). It would seem the responsibility to the Otherness of the text might be fulfilled. But the critic who would name the son must be wary, because writing as *pharmakon*, as Derrida deconstructs the parable of Plato, means both poison and remedy, and therefore there is no "such thing as a harmless remedy. The *pharmakon* can never be simply beneficial" (128). Those who would translate *pharmakon* as merely remedy fail to recognize the word retains all of its possibilities, including poison, against any attempt to interpret it.

So the Word, the son, proceeding from the father becomes a word, an orphan that belongs to all and yet no one, that contains all its meaning and its non-meaning as inscribed in writing. Derrida takes God to task for leaving the son unattended, for allowing the Word to drift into the unstable world of mere human language and inadequate signs,

because signs, apart from their signifieds, have the potential to do no end of harm as interpreters fill up the spaces in-between them. What mischief will be visited upon humanity by the absent father who allows the Word to roam free and without signification? For every remedy an equal calamity awaits unleashing. There exist no readings but only mis-readings, no interpretations but only mis-interpretations.

This instability of the sign in language would appear to make protecting the interests of the Otherness of the text impossible, because the gap between sign and signified makes apprehension of the Otherness all too fleeting. But if the word names a cancer so it has the ability to name a cure. For what Derrida fails to take into account about the *logos* concerns its dual function as both word and act. The *logos* does not merely exist as the utterance, the speech, the word of God, but also as God's agent of action. The son, no matter how removed from the father, contains the act of meaning within himself. He will go forth; he will signify in some matter; his purposes will not be thwarted. The Hebrew *dabhar*, word, pertains here as it carries with it the connotation of "deed." As Thorlief Boman points out, "'Word' is, so to speak, the point of intersection between two entirely different ways of conceiving of the highest mental life" (68). For the Greeks, the Word leads to reason; for the Hebrews, the Word leads to deed. But as Boman points out, the two words are so intertwined that they give and take from each other (67-69). Like the spirit brooding upon the water in Genesis, the *logos* tabernacles among us (John 1.14) seeking the signifier that will make action, any action, possible. The word must find an outlet which allows it to *mean*, to be this and not that, and it does not rest until it finds the signifier that will accept that responsibility. The word, through the tremendous force of its own will as *act* and *utterance*, collapses the space of its own accord and crushes any rhetorical structure that seeks to hold it at bay.

In a similar way, the father lets the son wander where he may. Implanted in the

father's utterance is also the father's will as to how the word should act, but the father will not coerce the son. The word speaks of the act that it desires, but only through the recognition of the interpreter can that action find completion. Here the ability to connect to the Otherness becomes possible. The word can be led to any signifier the interpreter chooses, but the word cannot be held at bay to make all meanings possible. What deed forged through interpretation does the critic owe the text and the community which depends upon responsibility to all Otherness? As action, the word will only hold one meaning at a time. The word may indeed be remedy or poison, but it cannot be both simultaneously because as an action as well as an utterance the word must choose. If critics or readers absolve themselves of that responsibility by imagining they can hold the word hovering over the space meaning all things, they merely send the word on its way to a place where choices will be made and the word can act.

Saying the word can be both remedy and poison at the same time reveals the true dangers of language lurking in the space between sign and signified. One action will prevail; the word seeks the signifier that gives it lodging. Language as remedy and poison leads to phrases such as "ethnic cleansing" and "collateral damage." Writing contains possibility, but writing must be interpreted to be made intelligible and then the deed comes to fruition. One of the key terms in the idea of community in the Hebrew language is the word *edah*,⁴ which literally translated means "testimony" or "witness." But *edah* is "used only of things posited to establish permanence and unequivocal facts" (Harris 649). The word includes the testimony of God's covenant with Israel and the stones gathered as a remembrance of the work of God in a particular locale. The idea of *edah* is that to belong to the community one must testify to something of value. The critic in the community of literary studies must testify to the deed that brings remedy from the text and so protects and provides for its Otherness. That testimony can provide further remedy to the

community at large or it can serve as a warning when it sees the language of the text heading toward an act that could result in poison or violence.

In Act 2.1 of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* the opportunity arises to comprehend how different ways of interpreting testify to certain deeds emerging. Tamora's sons and Aaron plot the rape of Lavinia. Aaron instructs the men to leave the court because

The Emperor's court is like the house of Fame,
The palace full of tongues, of eyes and ears,
The woods are ruthless, dreadful, deaf, and dull.
There speak and strike, brave boys, take your turns.
There serve your lust, shadowed from heaven's eye,
And revel in Lavinia's treasury. (2.1.127-32)

Entering this course of action leads to violence taken against Lavinia and subsequent bloodshed between families to revenge the deed. All of these acts arise out of an interpretive choice: Aaron and Tamora's sons "read" nature in a particular way.

Critics and readers alike have long thought of nature as a text to be read and learned from throughout history. From the first religions that looked for signs (words) from nature that their sacrifices pleased the gods of the woods, to Emerson reading nature to discover the transcendent, to environmentalists of today reading the treatment of nature as a parable of humanity's own destructive tendencies, nature has been read to discover meaning and purpose. Those "readings" have in turn led to actions proceeding from the words found in nature.

Paul certainly sees the issue that way in the book of Romans. He makes it clear to his audience that anyone can "read" nature to discover the truth of God's creative work: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men

are without excuse" (Romans 1.20). For Paul, this "correct" reading of nature should lead one to acknowledge the author of nature's wonders and give praise for them (1.21). In fact, this reading should prove quite simple as God "has made it plain to them [even the pagan]" (1.19). However, Paul makes it just as clear that nature can be mis-read, to make a plurality of other dangerous meanings possible. These other meanings also produce actions that lead to destruction: "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator" (1.25). Once nature opens itself up to such mis-reading, various kinds of tragic acts result, acts that for Paul lead to death and separation from God (1.24-32).

For Paul, the word (nature) must seek only one action, the praise and recognition of God. Yet at the same time Paul recognizes the word can seek other actions based upon other readings (for Paul mis-readings) of nature. One can easily read nature as end unto itself, as an object to worship rather than an object that points to the true focus of worship. Trying to deny the presence in the word, however, will not deny the word's ability to act; Paul argues that one either produces life or death according to how one reads nature's text. One cannot hold the word's ability to act in stasis by recognizing all the possible outcomes the word can generate. So nature (the word) contains both life and death, but the reader will never have the opportunity to keep both in check by asserting the reality and presence of both. The reader must choose.

Aaron and Tamora's sons read nature in such a way that they radically deny any divine presence in the woods. For them, nature shields humanity from the transcendent; it does not reveal itself as God's creation. And just as Paul reasons, this reading of nature allows for acts that lead to death. Lavinia, in fact, begs for a different interpretation:

'Tis true the raven doth not hatch a lark.

Yet I have heard--O, could I find it now!--

The lion, moved with pity, did endure
 To have his princely paws pared all away.
 Some say that ravens foster forlorn children
 The whilst their own birds famish in their nests.
 O, to be to me, though thy hard heart say no,
 Nothing so kind, but something pitiful. (2.3.151-56)

Lavinia offers another reading of nature, a reading that sees the possibility of mercy and compassion in the midst of the struggle for survival, and that also takes her Otherness into account in her relation to Tamora's sons. She offers this interpretation as a means of escape from the cruelty Tamora and her sons would commit. Her alternative to Aaron's reading of nature can bring no solace however unless Tamora's sons let her words produce the action they desire. It does not turn out to be so--Lavinia's reading does nothing but hang emptily in the air as Tamora's sons drag her off to be raped and mutilated.

The reading of nature as a place of violation exists together with nature as a site for mercy. The word will not remain still, though; it must seek an action to complete itself, and Tamora's sons choose violence over possible reconciliation by interpreting in a way that forgoes their responsibility to Lavinia. That the presence of mercy still resides in the text of nature means nothing for Lavinia; that the space between sign and signified might as easily allow her freedom becomes impotent in the face of her screams for pity in the woods as Tamora's sons pervert the word for the darkest of actions.

One can easily appreciate the terror of choosing the action that can ensue from the responsibility of interpretation. But the word will find its act, and the attempt to hold the text in potential will simply delay the act but will fail to defer it indefinitely. The critic who will not choose has already chosen, because the word moves on to find a new site for action, and the critic relinquishes the right to protest through the failure to testify. The

gesture of shaking one's fist at heaven, of raging against the inability to know for certain, cannot find erasure through trying to withhold all knowing from the text. Tamora's sons read nature and Lavinia cannot defer their act by suggesting the text contains within itself the promise of mercy as well as violence.

Demetrius and Chiron must now find a way to blot out the horrendous crime they have committed. Like Philomel, Lavinia's tongue is cut out so she cannot testify against her attackers. But the brothers know that this will not suffice; writing can still betray them. The word does not lose its potency simply because Lavinia cannot speak it; writing the names of Tamora's brothers will bring the vengeance she desires because her writing will find interpretation from a community (her family) that will not let the space remain silent; that community will take Lavinia's Otherness seriously and seek to protect it. They will fill it up with the act to avenge Lavinia's ravishment. So the brothers cut off Lavinia's hands and Chiron taunts her to "Write down thy mind, bewray thy meaning so,/An if thy stumps will let thee play the scribe" (2.4.3-4). Chiron is confident that could she write, Lavinia would "write her mind" and precisely describe the atrocity done against her. The brothers have no doubt that writing and the spoken word both do the work that leads to action and would inevitably hasten their death.

Shakespeare's use of the word "bewray" deserves notice in this context. The word connotes the idea of "revealing" or "divulging." Lavinia must have writing to "reveal" the source of her rape. The signs of her body cannot lead back to the signifiers who imprinted them. Without language, Lavinia cannot testify as to who inscribed the wounds upon her, although all can "read" her body to understand the outcome of the act. A real gap between sign and signified exists as Lavinia stands helpless to name the origin of her condition without writing. In vain, Marcus tries to discover the source of Lavinia's suffering, but he can only comment instead upon its effects (2.4.11-57). Demetrius and Chiron have

literally cut off all means of Lavinia taking the signs of abuse on her body and tracing them back to Tamora's sons as the signifiers that cause her anguish. She has no word to speak or write and therefore no act to defend her.

Yet Lavinia does in the end "write her mind." First, she names her plight by finding the story of Philomel in Young Lucius's books (4.1). Lavinia need not write her own tragedy; she merely needs the shadow of Philomel's story to fall across the path of her family to begin the process of signification. She accomplishes that beginning through writing and words which name the signs upon her body while at the same time everyone in the play still reads nature as a place of horrors. "O, why should nature build so foul a den/Unless the gods delight in tragedies?" (4.1.58-59), asks Marcus as Lavinia's plight starts to dawn upon him. Lavinia creates the context of her suffering through writing; now she must find the means of naming the origin. She does so, again through writing. After Marcus demonstrates how to write with a staff upon the ground with his feet and mouth, Lavinia takes her turn and writes the names of Chiron and Demetrius in the dirt (4.1.79). Writing the words allows the process of vengeance to begin. Marcus recognizes that "There is enough written upon this earth/To stir a mutiny in the mildest thoughts" (83-84).

Yet what will happen when Lavinia quits that piece of earth and the names of Demetrius and Chiron linger in the dust? Could heretical critics say that in her absence they will again take on the ability to register any meaning as signs displaced from their signifier? Indeed they may, but they will still seek their act, and the reader will again have to choose where they will rest. Even if a foot should wipe away those names, the act against Lavinia will never change, the signs her body carries of that violation resist erasure even after the words have passed away. Heretical critics cannot obliterate history by passing their critical feet over the dust of countless texts and pretend to re-write in the spaces the acts those words have sought and fostered. Neither can critics hold the text at

bay to never act again. In the absence of the father, they must attend to writing and testify as to whether this word will become remedy or poison, and if they say to the word "you are both" they shoulder the responsibility for the consequences of whatever act ensues.

The heretical critic then can offer no solace to Lavinia that Tamora's sons might have read nature differently, that the absence that allows the violence against her also contains the mercy that might save. Instead, they must choose to write the names of Demetrius and Chiron in the dust as Lavinia does to testify that their reading contains poison, to make clear their interpretive choice has led to ruin and atrocity. They must name the origins of that act in this poisonous reading just as Lavinia names the origins of the signs upon her body. They have no power to change the act that proceeds from the word Demetrius and Chiron read in nature, that the woods shelter them from "Heaven's eye." They only have the power to say no to that reading and declare all subsequent readings of nature in this way as guiding the word toward a venomous act.

But the text unlike the deed still remains. And here readers and critics have the opportunity to champion the mercy that Lavinia pleads for in the woods, a mercy that readers and critics owe Lavinia's Otherness as a community. They can choose to guide the word toward its future acts and offer the remedial side of the text in interpretation. Doing so does not ignore the poison or somehow deny its presence in the text. Instead, they recognize all the text contains and testify to the interpretation which seeks to lead the word to the act which brings mercy not violence. Writing will not rest in the knowledge that all acts remain available to it in the space. Writing awaits the interpretation that points toward the shedding of all other contingencies and leaves only a concrete act where the word can find completion. Just as the self is agent, so is the word. Writing does not concern itself with whether that deed contains the poison or the remedy; it only desires the voice that makes the word flesh, not possibility.

The prospect of choosing an interpretation which leads to remedy should certainly give every literary critic pause. But the responsibility of the critic to Otherness makes it imperative. That language contains both remedy and poison does not defer that obligation. But as this chapter has sought to show, trying to hold the two in stasis collapses in the end by failing to take into account the act the word desires. The word will not be held in stasis, and if the critic abandons the field, the word will follow any who offers a deed. Critics have no right to condemn the act by refusing to acknowledge its existence in the first place and believing the word can remain satisfied in its potential. Without God, without the father that attends the son, leading the word to the ideal action creates an anxiety that many critics cannot overcome. Therefore, they retreat back into the space between sign and signified and pretend all acts remain hidden there.

Where does Lavinia fit in this world? Will critical reluctance heal her wounds? Will acknowledging that other reading of nature she posits restore her body to herself? The word needs attendance; critics are the surrogate parents who must make the heartrending choices that lead to acts they can never control totally. But not to choose leaves an orphaned word susceptible to the most horrific forces critics can imagine residing in the space. The dictates of Otherness demand the effort be made to testify to the remedy that makes the word flesh. Do critics have the stamina for the struggle? Do they dare risk the atrocity for the healing touch of mercy? Can they limp away when the words cripple them with their power? No act can be held in binary purity; how will critics keep the remedy from erupting into poison?

Only by struggling together can literary criticism hope to determine the remedy from the poison. But even if those efforts sometime fail, "community is constituted not solely by its degree of achievement, but by the intention which sustains it" (Kirkpatrick 195). Making these choices will not be easy, but ignoring them will only allow the word to

seek the act elsewhere, an alternative that should give literary critics discomfort. There will occur moments when an interpretive choice brings pain, but critics must risk that possibility. Heresy cannot thrive in a community that puts the word and the act before power, that takes up its responsibility to Otherness rather than trying to isolate the text for the purpose of holding it hostage to interpretive autonomy and control.

Lavinia is raped not because nature refuses mercy as a possible reading, but because Tamora's sons refuse to make the choice that leads the word to a remedial act. Critics become co-conspirators by not testifying against that reading and no amount of discussion about the space and the plurality of other meanings that *might* have issued forth relieves them of that guilt. And to further withhold the choice that asserts the mercy of nature as a text makes cruelty a possible deed the word seeks over and over again. That does not negate forever the possibility of other interpreters choosing that act, but it gives the community the right to express outrage and censure whenever it does occur, because the community has wrestled with the word and can say, "This and not that" can happen in relation to the word and the act in order to protect the interests of both Otherness and the community.

If literary criticism desires relevance, influence, and even a political voice, it must exchange heretical power for communal authority; it must bend and make difficult choices that may for a time produce regrettable outcomes until critics learn what is best for the institution and those they seek to instruct and speak to in society. Such positions are not naive; they are rather imminently practical. The word will find its act. What role will critics play in guiding it there? Literary criticism needs to explore the remedy of language instead of clinging to the belief that heresy offers a quicker avenue to power.

But the demands of community and Otherness do not stop at the level of criticism. Literary studies must explore what it owes to Others at all levels of the critical enterprise.

As teachers, how do critics foster the Otherness of students and ensure their well-being and success? As members of a larger institution, what do critics owe other members of the academy? What should critics testify to outwardly to the public who increasingly see literary criticism as hostile or worse, meaningless? All of these questions must find answers if community will have any real impact on literary studies. And the formulation of those questions begins when critics abandon heresy for the responsibility to Others in all its forms.

And what does this study testify to in the end? Does it really believe in community as a genuine principle for literary studies? Solace can be taken in Kirkpatrick's idea of "intention" ensuring success for the community even when reality falls short of the goal. If heresy continues to be seen as a viable alternative for power in criticism, then eventually the institution of literary criticism will simply be "whirring" without any purpose, to use Buber's phrase. Only in mutuality, only in seeking the success of others in the community and in interpretation can literary studies form a basis for continued meaning in the academy and society at large.

Notes to Introduction

¹ Perhaps the best example in recent history involves the Southern Baptist Convention. After much wrangling and rhetoric and efforts at finding common ground, the two warring factions in the convention went their separate ways, with the Southern Baptists representing the "conservative" wing of the denomination and the Baptist Alliance the "liberal." This marks the end of a long debate over heresy and orthodoxy and the political debate that attends it, although we still see arguments as both sides claim the other tries to infiltrate their ranks.

² This metaphor of literary critic as priest occurs quite often in English studies and has been used to great effect by Harold Bloom. See especially *Kabbalah and Criticism*. See also Frank Kermode's *The Genesis of Secrecy*, where the religious and priestly role of the critic pervades the work.

³ This outburst occurred at the end of the Scholar/Critic debate among Milton critics. For a complete treatment of the conflict, see Chapter 1.

⁴ W.H. Auden admitted the necessity of writing criticism for the poet of his era in *The Dyer's Hand*. Auden understood the job as a question of economics more than a profession.

⁵ Science offers the best comparison with literary studies as a discipline with certain dynamics. See Lessl's "Heresy."

⁶ The question immediately arises as to the scope a sociological study should take. This work does not attempt to examine all the facets of the institution, but rather tries to explain

the working of heresy within literary criticism. Such an approach is widely used in the application of sociology to other disciplines. See Lessl's work with science in "Heresy" and "The Priestly Voice" where he uses sociological models to examine written discourse only in the examination of science as an institution.

⁷ Orthodoxy as a term will carry various meanings in this study. As used here in the usual sense, orthodoxy refers to the established beliefs, doctrines, and practices that govern an institution. As the term refers to heresy in literary studies, orthodoxy means any literary interpretation that the heretical critic wishes to negate or diminish for the purposes of establishing the power of his or her own position. Orthodoxy as it refers to community carries the idea of a center from which the institution proceeds to carry out its purposes. The context of each use of the term should supply its meaning as defined here, but each will be clarified where needed or when used in a potentially ambiguous way.

⁸ Dogmatism also carries more than one meaning in this study. In Weber's sense, dogma merely denotes the interpretation of a text deemed authoritative by the institution. For literary critics, however, dogma carries nothing but a negative connotation. Dogma refers to any interpretation that stifles or denies the viability of other approaches. Critics label other interpretations as dogmatic to cast them as detrimental to the free play of ideas in literary criticism. Employing the term dogma stigmatizes an interpretation and allows the heretical critic to offer an alternative with greater power.

⁹ The stability of the canon within literary studies has undergone tremendous challenges over the past several years as critics try to redraw the boundaries of literature. But dogma quickly forms around even the most "marginalized" of texts critics interpret.

¹⁰ David Denby points out the recent interest in imperial and colonial studies in his essay for *The New Yorker*. It is instructive insofar as it is written by an "outsider." *Mansfield Park*, *Great Expectations*, and, of course, *Heart of Darkness* are among the books he

mentions in recent colonial studies. The former two books are of special interest, since they deal with empire in the most obscure of ways. Denby finds most of the arguments baffling or even ludicrous, but in the end he defers to the expertise of the critics.

¹¹ From the start, critics have noticed the critique of imperialism employed by Conrad. By 1967, Avrom Fleishman tries to redefine Conrad in *Conrad's Politics*, working against earlier work by Robert Haugh who characterizes Conrad as a conservative critic of the humanitarian enterprise. In 1982 Jacques Darras points out how Conrad takes the West to task on every imaginable topic, including empire. In 1985, J. Hillis Miller sums up a common critical perception: "*Heart of Darkness* is perhaps most explicitly apocalyptic in announcing the end, the end of Western civilization, or of Western imperialism, the reversal of idealism into savagery." So the subject of empire has been well covered in Conrad studies.

¹² See Pelikan for the definitive commentary on heresy and innovation in Christian theology.

¹³ See especially Chapters 1 and 2 of this study where critics try to create space for their heresy by negating theoretical approaches even more than individual interpretations.

¹⁴ See Dessen as well as the Jackson and Smallwood anthology and new editions edited by Hughes and Bates.

¹⁵ We see the explosion in the "discovery" of marginalized writers especially in regard to women writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in "national" voices among colonial endeavors in Africa, India, the United States and elsewhere.

¹⁶ The University of Syracuse in fact requires no surveys of literary history or seminars on major writers. Instead students take courses in "textual studies" that define no authors, texts, or time periods. Students examine Discourses, Theories of Representation, and "Sexualities" among others (Langiulli 5).

¹⁷ The Head of Philosophy at my institution now uses novels instead of philosophy textbooks for nearly all of his classes.

¹⁸ See McMillen.

¹⁹ The most immediate examples that come to mind are recent forays in Chaos Theory and literary criticism. Witness the large field of debate among scientists over what uses to put such theory to or what purposes at all might come of Chaos Theory, and the use of the discipline in literary studies becomes dubious.

²⁰ Indeed "meaning" itself increasingly comes under attack as heresy gains dominance. White calls this Absurdist Criticism which has no foundation except the denial of all foundations. See the final chapter of *Tropics of Discourse*.

²¹ Foucault becomes one of the major proponents of the view that structures in society are oppressive. Foucault sees the watchful eye of society as a "gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself" (*Power/Knowledge* 155). Foucault makes these remarks in regard to Jeremy Bentham's idea of the "Panopticon" and it becomes the overwhelming metaphor of his work. All structures have the potential for violence as modern thought is always "advancing towards that region where man's Other must become the Same as himself" (*Order*, qtd. in Coles 71). This drive for Sameness leads to oppression at all levels of society. Coles wonders, "why would and how could a self who viewed the world only in this way [as violent] somehow express a sense of respect for, affirmation of, and commitment to other selves? Why care? What can 'belonging' mean in light of a thoroughly discordant philosophy" (97)?

Notes to Chapter 1

¹ The real controversy surrounding Satan begins with the Romantics. As Joseph Wittreich points out in his excellent collection of Romantic commentary, the Romantics "more so than any others, are the shapers of 'modern attitudes'" (*Romantics* ix). While contemporary critics see the Romantics as the main proponents of Satan as Hero, Wittreich's valuable anthology documents a wide range of Romantic views toward Milton including Satan as Ass and the Promethean parallel of Satan as Human Striver.

² S. Musgrove also explores the readers of Milton's day and argues they reach the same conclusion as Lewis about Satan: "Milton does not need to prove that Satan is evil; he expects his readers to do it and to believe it from the start" (303). That Satan is an Ass is a simple matter of fact; the readers of Milton's day knew it, and Lewis posits that Christians of today must know it as well.

³ In his book-length study of Milton's Satan, Werblowsky argues that Milton makes Satan too appealing as a Promethean figure, "which has proved detrimental to the unity and purpose of the poem" (xvii).

⁴ Swift believes that Milton creates a heroic Satan to keep interest in the poem, but he views Milton's use of simile as an effective means of "disguising Satan and permitting him temporary escape from God's and the reader's judgements" (426). When ready, Milton shows Satan for what he is and Satan never "gets away" from Milton as Waldock argues.

⁵ Merrill thinks that Milton's loss of control over Satan causes the oddity of Satan being "a source of a much profounder religiosity than the juridical God who speaks in Book II" (285). Merrill also comments on Milton's failure to characterize God as an artistic match to Satan.

⁶ A long line of critics expose the idea of a hidden poem, especially the Romantics, but

most potently Sandra Gilbert who sees Satan as the only alternative for Eve to follow in a hostile, patriarchal world. See *Madwoman*.

⁷ Recent commentary on Satan has slowed a bit, and following critical trends, critics have turned to grounding Satan in historical and biographical contexts. Schaar sees Satan as a deconstructor, while Lanier feels Satan reveals Milton's anxieties about publishing, especially in *Paradise Regained*. Particularly interesting is Freedman's linking of Satanic characteristics to Milton's translation of documents announcing the new king of Poland shortly before Milton's death.

⁸ Steadman recognizes the work of Frank Kastor in this area who traces the literary allusions to Satan as Archangel, Prince of Hell, and Tempter that Milton might have drawn upon.

⁹ William Hunter was among the first to look at Satan's heretical utterances in concrete terms, but he thinks in terms of religious heresy, especially Arianism and Milton's possible connection to it.

Notes to Chapter 2

¹ The first portion of this chapter will use the term "orthodoxy" in the classic sense defined in the introduction (i.e., the established beliefs, doctrines, and practices which govern an institution) and will note when the meaning of the term changes in the discussion.

² A definition of the terms "Scholar" and "Critic" seems essential to the discussion which follows. The easiest way to formulate an idea of the two opposing camps resides in understanding that Scholars represent the "orthodox" position and Critics the heretical element. Scholars can be seen as the established power within criticism. Their critical technique involves what we would now call the historical approach. They place great

emphasis upon historical context and especially upon authorial intent. Their research, exhaustive and at times overwhelming, promotes the idea that proper research produces "correct" interpretations. They generally favor biographical study over textual analysis as a means of arriving at their conclusions.

Critics are harder to categorize. While many of the Critics hold to New Criticism, not all do. For the most part Critics place emphasis upon the text and believe all meaning and worth can be derived from simply studying it free from extra-textual interference, and they want almost desperately to make poetry relevant to the modern age, sometimes at the cost of accurate historical information (see Bush). "Art," not boring historical archaeology, constitutes their battle cry. At first Critics reject Milton, but they do this more to contrast themselves with the Scholars than because of any great loathing of Milton (except for Leavis, possibly). Later, many Critics, especially New Critics like Ransom and Brooks, show an appreciation for Milton, but still lambast the methods and techniques of the Scholars. Therefore, one should not equate liking or disliking Milton with the two terms. Plenty of Scholars criticize Milton; it is simply the methods they use to arrive at that criticism that come under question. Critics feel Scholars are more interested in cold, historical facts than they are in art, a position they feel causes the alienation of the public. Scholars hold in contempt what they believe to be the sloppy, subjective approach to literature Critics practice. As the orthodoxy/heresy debate becomes less and less about Milton and more and more about the control of literary criticism, Scholars and Critics do not hesitate to lambast members of their own camp. For a complete history of Scholars, Critics, and literary criticism in this century see Graff's *Professing Literature*.

³ While I realize these dates are rather arbitrary and vague, they provide a good frame to work within since the Critic/Scholar debate does not appear anywhere as an official period in literary history. This also explains why I omit some prominent Miltonists who do not

really rise to importance until the 1960s, most notably Stanley Fish and especially his reading of *Paradise Lost*.

⁴ Other Scholars question not only Milton's ideology but his standing as a poet, Empson being the most prominent. He does not hesitate to dismantle Milton's reputation, but he always does so in a "Scholarly" manner, resorting to extensive historical research and reasoning.

⁵ See Leavis' *Revaluation*.

⁶ As the debate between Critics and Scholars grows more intense, increasingly Scholars overlook disagreements in interpretation to fight the Critics on a united front.

⁷ See Lewis's *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, especially the opening chapter.

⁸ Woodhouse's paper later appeared in *PMLA* as "The Historical Criticism of Milton," Brooks' as "Milton and Critical Re-estimates."

⁹ For an entertaining account of the Political Correctness wars, see Fish's *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech*. The source of much consternation within the academia in general derives from D'Souza's *Illiberal Education*. Graff in *Beyond the Culture Wars* takes D'Souza and others outside the institution to task in the first two chapters of his book before launching his own ritual criticism of English studies.

¹⁰ See Lewis, Adams, Tillyard, Bush, and Woodhouse.

¹¹ Here the shift in the term "orthodoxy" occurs marking it as a position to be avoided in literary criticism because of its stifling and dangerous implications.

¹² Booth's idea of understanding serves as helpful gloss on the situation. Understanding implies that one reading proves superior to other readings, another formulation of the idea of dogma in Weber's sense.

¹³ One of the more interesting controversies of late in Milton studies concerns the authorship of the *Christian Doctrine*. William B. Hunter shocked the Fourth International

Milton Symposium in Vancouver by suggesting Milton did not write the *Doctrine*. The Fifth Symposium took up the question again in Wales in 1995 by means of a working panel consisting of Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, David Holmes, and Fiona Tweedie. The issues surrounding authorship are heated and extremely political. Those who want to project a radical Milton have a great stake in keeping the *Doctrine* in the Milton canon, while others can make their reputation by discrediting it. There also exists an undercurrent in the debate of British scholars feeling much more qualified to explore the subject because they view American scholars as suspect in historical methodology.

¹⁴ See Brooks' "Milton and the New Criticism."

Notes to Chapter 3

¹ Perhaps the greatest indication of the prevalence and influence of performance theory can be seen in the attention now paid by journals to current performances of Shakespeare and other playwrights. *Shakespeare Quarterly* devotes an entire section of each issue to "Shakespeare in Performance," and the French journal *Cahiers Elisabethains* reviews Renaissance drama, complete with photographs from the performances. Many other journals now regularly include performance reviews and criticism in their issues.

² See Berger.

³ See H.R. Coursen.

⁴ While the idea of perfection in performance may seem like an odd approach to the text/performance debate, "perfection" in many ways strikes at the heart of the issue. For many critics, the text constitutes a "perfect" ground for interpretation and discourse, while performance remains too slippery and transient. Coursen warns that critics often search

for an "Ur-performance . . . -- a platonic context which must condemn any manifestation as imperfect. But productions do not strive to be 'perfect'" (43).

⁵ Barbara Hodgson echoes the tension between text and performance: "the critical reading [of text] seeks to stabilize the text, the performance acknowledges, in its every aspect, its ephemeral nature" (65).

⁶ I think especially here of the rage surrounding the re-structuring of Joyce's *Ulysses* and the always lively debate over Shakespeare's folio.

⁷ For an excellent discussion of textual readings impossible to realize in performance see Levin.

⁸ While this chapter is not an exhaustive account of performance theory, it is also not an attempt to dismantle its aims and critical approach. In pointing out some of its tendencies, especially its potential to voice a heretical position which gains authority and power, I have chosen a small representative sampling within the discourse. Performance theory is neither monolithic or redundant, but there is a strain of performance theory that shares common assumptions and moves for power through heresy.

⁹ Martin argues that the privileging of text over performance has its roots in the captialistic system. But he similarly posits that the text involves autonomy by being in complete possession of intepretation and meaning. Even when discussion performance, Martin argues that we define it in terms of its effects on the individual, not the audience as a whole.

¹⁰ The essential place to begin in New Historical readings and performance theory is the Dollimore/Sinfield volume.

¹¹ For an exhaustive account of *koinonia*, see Kittel, Vol. 5. For an excellent review of *koinonia* and all its uses in Greek life, see Liddell and Scott.

¹² Performance theorists often take initial steps toward fostering fellowship only to retreat.

Hodgson argues that performance is a "public project that re-places the play within a theatrical space" (58). But Hodgson never returns to this idea and merely seeks to justify the methodology of performance theory as compatible with textual criticism. Of a more hopeful note is Miriam Gilbert who argues for seeing productions multiple times as they help her to be "less insistent on 'my' reading, more able to accept what the actors and director were showing me about the play" (610). Gilbert leaves many of these issues up in the air and never really engages the role of the audience in creating meaning, but she does at least try to relinquish power to other elements of the performance.

¹³ All selections are from the Oxford *Complete Works of Shakespeare*.

Notes to Chapter 4

¹ For a good introduction to New Historical thought and ideas, see Morris and Thomas.

² See Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets."

³ While Greenblatt remains the master of the Opening Anecdote, others have followed in his wake, among them Dollimore. Among the most creative is Jeffrey Knapp. See especially his use of tobacco in the New World as a metaphor for Elizabeth, Raleigh, colonialism, and literature. Knapp states, "A brief consideration in the Timius and Belphoebe passage [of *The Fairie Queene*] helps to begin explaining how the English could accommodate tobacco's representation of their own inadequacies" (136). Paul Brown uses John Rolfe's request to marry Pochahontas as a metaphor for the construction of *The Tempest* and the ambivalence toward the colonial project. See also *Political Shakespeare*.

⁴ Dollimore uses much of his introduction to *Radical Tragedy* to explain how he wrote the book and later submitted it for his dissertation. He had to remove the cover and bind it in

a uniform way like all other dissertations. Dollimore uses the incident as a testimony to his own subversion of the academic system.

⁵ Barroll complains that many New Historicists themselves fall into conservative approaches as well: "many of the the narratives presented by new historicists are disturbingly unself-conscious and static, constricted by old narratives that tell a traditional story of the drama" (461). Barroll's comments are instructive. He attempts to isolate even his fellow heretics by declaring they parrot the orthodoxy that must be abolished. There is also a suspicion of the "traditional" for no other reason than the fact it has been previously uttered.

⁶ Dollimore in my mind totally misrepresents the idea of essentialism in his discussion of racism. To equate one race's essence as superior to another race's destroys the argument. Either humanity has one essence or it does not; no racial categories apply.

⁷ The question may naturally arise as to whether the insistence on community reduces individuals to the same generalities. But while heretical New Historicists seek descriptions that apply to the masses, community respects the individuality and uniqueness of all individuals while calling them to corporate responsibility as the greatest means to achieving both personal and societal fulfillment. Each individual has a unique contribution to make to the community that cannot be generalized.

⁸ Bevington has suggested that some recent New Historians may have found a way out of the trend to generalize by appealing to Pragmatism. Bevington finds this encouraging since Pragmatism refuses "to posit any single inevitable historical process" (82).

⁹ Fish makes these comments in reference to David Norbrook's commentary on *Comus*.

¹⁰ See Greenblatt's "Invisible," Howard, Dollimore's *Radical*, and Tennenhouse.

¹¹ Fish's new work *Professional Correctness* goes so far as to suggest that influencing politics is now impossible as the academy has become too far removed from the corridors of political power. No meaningful connection exists between literary critics and policy

makers to imagine even the most strident political theory in criticism exerting influence.

But Fish goes on to argue that politicians should stop witch-hunting academics since any theory from that quarter has no power to impact the political process.

¹² Bevington also suggests that instead of looking for subversion, New Historicists should document the ways society always makes things work in the end (82).

¹³ A perfect example of this objection exists in a document found in the State Papers (Domestic) entitled "Analytical Abstract in Support of the Charge of Treason Against the Earl of Essex." A passage from the document reads as follows:

Essex's own actions confirm the intent of this treason. His permitting underhand that treasonable book of Henry IV [by Sir John Hayward] to be printed and published; it being plainly deciphered, not only by the matter, and by the epistle itself, for what end and for whose behalf it was made, but also the Earl himself being so often at the playing thereof, and with great applause giving countenance to it. (Ure lviii-lix)

Although it appears most likely this discussion took place in 1600 during Essex's first trial for treason upon his return from Ireland, Albright gives it a 1601 date and surmises that the Earl was going to see *Richard II* and the prosecutor mistook it for a dramatization of Hayward's book. Albright then relates this statement to the performance of February 7. Heffner counters this argument by dating the document to 1600 and noting the play was performed "often" with the Earl present, neither of which is true of the February 7 performance. For a complete account of this dispute, see the articles of Albright and Heffner listed in the Works Cited.

¹⁴ Barroll, for instance, declares all comments on Essex and *Richard II* as emanating from a "time-honored and traditionally tendered narrative about the earl and his connection with Shakespeare's drama" (443). Barroll pursues a new avenue of heresy by turning his

attention to Essex and John Hayward's book.

¹⁵ For all biographical matter, see the studies of Harrison, Strachey, and Lacey.

¹⁶ Essex's secrecy about his deal with Tyrone came back to haunt him at this trial as rumors reached the point that evidence was entered into record that

from the report of sundry Rebels in Ireland, it appears that Essex was generally esteemed by the rebels in Ireland as their special friend; that secret intelligences passed between him and Tyrone, and that they had combined together that the Earl should be king of England, and Tyrone Viceroy of Ireland. (*Calendar* 454-5)

While the usual rhetoric of the time is manifested here, it is interesting to note both how far rumors of Essex's designs on the crown had gone, and how much latitude he was allowed since the charges against him were dropped.

¹⁷ When Lambard replied that "Such a wicked imagination was determined and attempted by a most unkind Gent. the most adorned creature that ever your Majestie made" in an apparent reference to Essex and his rebellion, Elizabeth replied, "He that will forget God, will also forget his benefactors." She then complained of the influence the playing of the Richard II story may have had on the rebellion: "this tragedy was played 40th times in open streets and houses" (*Progresses* 552). Elizabeth seemed to see in retrospect that the drama may have spurred Essex and his followers to action.

¹⁸ Cecil used the connection between Richard II and Essex often, drawing the comparison constantly in the Star Chamber: "He would have removed Her Majesty's servants, stepped into her chair, and perhaps had her treated like Richard II" (*Calendar* 555). Cecil would use the same tactic in Essex's trial (*Calendar* 584).

Notes to Chapter 5

¹ The use of Eve in heretical feminist work can take several different approaches. Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the first to recognize the poem as a sight to engage feminist issues, which she did in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. For a complete outline of her argument, see Blakemore. Katherine M. Rogers argued for Milton's misogynistic depiction of Eve as early as 1966, contending that "It is because Adam does not maintain his due authority over Eve that he falls. Eve's inferiority is insisted on from her first appearance" (152). While most writers focus on Eve as emblem of patriarchal oppression, some locate Milton's misogyny elsewhere. Valbuena affirms Adam's choice to stay with Eve in *Paradise Lost* but claims Milton "implicitly reverses" that choice in the divorce tracts (115). Here Milton's true hostility to women emerges: "to win the reader's heart and mind Milton must awaken a longing for divorce from whatever may be associated with the feminine" (115), and "Divorce means freedom from the tyranny of enslavement to any woman . . . or way of thought that would restrict masculine self-determination" (134). Here we have one of the odd instances where Eve is the only construction of Milton that is positive toward women, according to Valbuena.

² Riggs sees Eve's problem as deriving from being "created in response to Adam's erotic need" (368); therefore she is not equipped to deal with the pressures of temptation and even living in the world.

³ One fascinating example of this bandwagon cheering occurs in an exchange between Christine Froula and Edward Pechter in *Critical Inquiry*. Froula uses Milton as an occasion to champion feminist criticism and to undermine the canon, claiming that "The Blank Page" is female and asks for silence to speak ("When" 343), necessitating the need to abandon the masculine texts of the canon. Pechter responds by calling Froula's methods

into question, complaining that any appeal to Virginia Woolf mystifies her criticism, and supporting male readings of Milton. Froula responds again this time by calling Pechter's manhood into question and declaring all resistance to her ideas as sexist: the "woman's voice threatens to discredit that masculinist culture upon which Mr. Pechter has modeled his identity" ("Pechter's" 178).

⁴ See also Davies, 243.

⁵ Farwell echoes Lewalski's support of Eve's autonomy to make decisions: "[Milton's] picture of Eve--and by implication, of womankind--allows her the positive possibilities of individuality, separateness, and, at times, independence" (16). Swan also argues that Eve "recognizes her role and responsibility in the Fall" because of her independence (64).

Langford believes Eve "represents an alternative realm which, though officially in subjection to the masculine paradigm of heaven, doggedly manifests its independence" (120).

⁶ After recognizing Eve's part in the Fall, Swan contends that "like the Son, and radically unlike Adam, she is willing to take on all of the punishment" (64). Ferry sees Eve as "the instrument of grace in man's restoration" (129), and Lim asserts that "She is . . . the first to reconstruct the rupture that had taken place between herself and Adam, and between them both and God" (125).

⁷ Landy responds to Lewalski in "A Free and Open Encounter: Milton and Modern Reader." While the argument remains the same, the sophistication of Landy's case and use of feminist jargon are interesting to note.

⁸ I will examine Gilbert's work as it appears in *Madwoman in the Attic* since this book has had the greater impact upon literary studies as a whole.

⁹ Notice especially the rhetoric of New Critics in Chapter 1, Leavis in particular.

¹⁰ Gilbert quotes *Wife to Mr. Milton* by Graves, and then refers to Woolf, Bloom's

Anxiety, and de Beauvoir as the basis for her argument.

¹¹ Pechter's call for a re-assessing of the canon echoes this argument.

¹² See especially Wittreich's acknowledgement of Gilbert while at the same time calling her methods into question (*Feminist*, see especially the Introduction).

¹³ The question for this study is not whether Gilbert is right. The focus is on heretical methodology and the purposes of her criticism.

¹⁴ Another fine article that anticipates Shullenberger's is Joan Webber's. She tackles Gilbert's methodology and offers an Eve that anticipates twentieth-century women, offering the delightful suggestion that "Eve may be a prototype for the modern woman who fulfills her profession and is expected to do the dishes as well" (15).

¹⁵ Shullenberger has a special perspective on this issue as he teaches at Sarah Lawrence.

¹⁶ As Eve begins to emerge as the dominant force in the epic, a new heresy may have begun to assert itself: Adam as oppressed. Langford argues that "the sympathy and love she [Eve] finds in her world are actually within herself" and Adam finds no such peace as he has been co-opted "by a patriarchal authority which . . . ideologically structures his subjectivity" (120). Adam has no choice but to accept the patriarchy which God foists upon them, while Eve can fight against it and discover her own identity.

¹⁷ Others who emphasize Eve's redemptive role include Ferry, Swan, and Lim. See note 6.

¹⁸ Adam in many ways mirrors the response of Paul to the law in the book of Romans. Paul demonstrates that strict adherence to the law can produce only death. Only a redemptive relationship to Christ offers any hope. See Romans 2-5. See also Rosenblatt.

Notes to Chapter 6

¹ Peperzak serves as more of a paraphrase of Levinas than an interpretation, so I exchange the two freely.

² All quotes are taken from *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* unless otherwise noted.

³ For an exhaustive and definitive account of the evolution of *logos* in Greek thought, see Gerhard Kittel who demonstrates how *logos* continues to accumulate greater and greater importance in Greek philosophy until it becomes synonymous with correct reasoning and the height of philosophic expression. Kittel also recognizes and demonstrates the Christian appropriation of *logos* as God's expression and will as manifested in the Son:

The Word is not just the revelation mediated through the speaking and teaching Jesus. It is the fact of Christ as such There is an unmistakable material tendency to regard Jesus Himself as the One who gives and is this Word, not only in His addresses, but in His whole, earthly manifestation. ("*Logos*" 4:127, 129)

For Kittel this use of *logos* is unique to the early patristic writers and represents an innovation from Greek usage of the term. It is this precise connotation Derrida chooses to return to over and over, the word as containing both sign and signified in perfect unity, which makes all his writings essentially and wholly theological.

⁴ For a thorough account of the word *edah*, see Gensinius. The word takes as one of its roots "a heap of stones" and traces back to the earliest moments which testified to God's presence among the Hebrews (729).

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2

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