

# Essays on the Medieval Period and the Renaissance



# Essays on the Medieval Period and the Renaissance:

*Things New and Old*

Edited by

Ágnes Matuska and Larisa Kocic-Zámbó

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## PREFACE

Editors are oddly reminiscent of the Old Testament scribe whom Christ likens to a householder bringing “forth out of his treasure things new and old” (Mt 13:52), especially when putting together a compilation of essays on the Medieval Period and the Renaissance. Increasingly, the challenge is to find innovative approaches that would not only justify a continued fascination with ‘things old’ but prove alluring and engaging to the reader despite the familiarity of the topic. Hence, our principal guideline was that of the early modern *imitatio*: the emulation rather than the mere repetition of scholarship. Additionally, the selection of papers has been based on the timeframe they deal with, starting with fifteenth-century devotional texts, traversing Tudor interludes, Shakespearean plays and their adaptations, and ending in Milton. The essays embrace three centuries of the history of English literature, and offer not only a variety of methodological approaches and disciplinary perspectives, but also highlight converging problems within this broad field crystallized around three main topics of scholarship and constituting the three thematic parts of the volume.

The first part entitled “Medieval and Early Modern Experiments with Genre” offers a set of readings that interpret texts in the light of their generic and thematic innovativeness, be it through devotional texts contributing to the late medieval idea and the guarantees of correct exegesis (Péri-Nagy), Shakespearean plays interpreted through space imagery, a rhetorical use of topography and the ways these can introduce innovative stage representation and pave the way of a new genre of romances (Gellért), a comparative study of *Doctor Faustus* and *Macbeth* exploring the master-servant paradigm set within the framework of the supernatural and, thus, accommodating various discourses on power relations, identity issues, ethics and beings (Hargitai), or early Tudor drama texts, displaying a level of self-awareness about the ambiguity of their medium usually attributed only to plays enacted in commercial theatres (Matuska).

Attesting to the multiple ways Shakespeare is made our contemporary, the second part, “Shakespearean Texts and Adaptations—Our Contemporaries”, is comprised of essays on contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare and renaissance theatre, taking the term “adaptation” in a broad sense, including not only theatrical and operatic versions (Bernáth), but also the implications of electronic publications (Almási) and the influence of research targeting renaissance theatrical practices on 21<sup>st</sup>-century acting styles (Oroszlán).

The contributions in the third part of the volume, “Perspectives on Milton”, all focus on John Milton’s grand epic highlighting debates or underrepresented discourses in Milton studies. Thus, Péti offers a supplementary reading of two emblematic scenes from *Paradise Lost* tracing Milton’s representation of laughter to its reworked classical (Homeric) roots, while Itzész argues for the substantial incorporation of Michael’s visions into reconstructions of the epic’s chronology. Bató suggests a reading of the allegory of Sin and Death in *Paradise Lost* that differentiates between metaphorical, metonymic and demotic understandings of death, and last but not least, Kocic-Zámbó explores the different understandings of what constitutes a paradigm within Milton studies.

As individual papers, these studies are insightful as close readings of devotional, dramatic, theatrical or epic texts, highlighting considerations that result from up-to-date phenomena, such as electronic publishing or contemporary critical or theatrical practices. Apart from the period and the topics discussed within each part, what connects the papers of the volume as a whole is the reinterpretation of traditional critical assumptions through innovative methods including viewpoints integrated from other disciplines and discourses, such as theatre studies, digital humanities or social sciences. The editors hope that the readers of the collection will find that these texts contribute to debates beyond the boundaries of English studies within Hungary, and that implicitly or explicitly they address the relevance of both traditional and innovative topics within English studies in a contemporary academic context.

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**PART ONE:**

**MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN  
EXPERIMENTS WITH GENRE**



# CHAPTER ONE

## EXEGESIS AS A KEY TO MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE: THE CASE OF LOVE'S *MIRROUR*

ZSUZSANNA PÉRI-NAGY

Nicholas Love's *Mirroure of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* was primarily meant and translated as a manual for meditation for the use of laity. It also exerted its influence as anti-Wycliffite propaganda. This paper claims that Love used these two characteristics of his work to strengthen each other. Being written as a mediated scriptural text and encouraging a further imaginative work of the readers, the work asked for a hermeneutic activity. Love regarded correct exegesis and loyalty to orthodoxy as the main prerequisites which enable mystical experience. Moreover, with him, contemplative gifts become signs of a successful hermeneutical interpretation.

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Nicholas Love, a Carthusian monk living in late-medieval England wrote the following lines in the preface to his freshly finished work: “in þis boke bene contynede diuerse ymaginacions of cristes life [...] it may not be fully discriuede as þe lifes of oþer seyntes, bot in a maner of liknes as þe ymage of mans face is shewed in a mirroure” (Sargent 2005, 11). These lines testify to the fact that Love was conscious of the nature of the text he wrote, namely that it is an intermediary medium which only reflects the divine light: the life of Christ of the Scriptures. Love also tried to endow his readers with advice and means by which they could access this image most effectively. The present paper will investigate these instruments of his, provided for a successful hermeneutical activity of a predominantly lay readership to which Love offered and dedicated his work.

The text which Nicholas Love translated into Middle English was the *Meditationes Vitae Christi* (Distelbrink 1975), the great Franciscan work of meditation. He finished his work by 1410 and entitled it *Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ* (Sargent 2005). The work was written at a time when John Wycliff's ideas about rendering the text of the Bible accessible

for all to be interpreted freely already caused general interest. Wycliff also produced his translation of the Bible into the vernacular, together with his new concepts about the Sacred Text and how to interpret it. The reaction of the official Church rapidly followed, and one such response was formulated by Love in his *Mirroure*. By this work he aimed at providing the laity, the “simple souls”, so strongly favoured by the Wycliffites, with a text which presented the narration of the life of Christ in a different way than the Wycliffite Bibles. The *Mirroure* itself had a double aim: it was a manual for meditation, but at the same time it presented a systematic campaign against the Wycliffite tenets, and this double aim was acknowledged and praised by Archbishop Arundel, who gave his authorization to the dissemination of the work. Love transmitted a manual of meditation which showed the way to attain higher levels of spiritual illumination based on the narratives of the Gospel, using the method of imaginative process. He, by translating, reworked his source text to a great extent to fit his aims, and thus consciously assumed the challenge which meant offering a scripturally based text to secular interpretation, eventually even to pious housewives.

As opposed to the *Meditationes*, which was written for a Clarisse, and was originally used in clerical circles, Love’s audience was primarily lay. Love encouraged his readers to take an active role in this imaginative amplification of the canonised narrative of the Gospels and added to his text numerous inclusions of further authoritative theological commentaries. Thus, he encouraged the complementing of an exegesis of controlled, clerical and corporate nature with a personal one exercised individually by seculars. Kantik Ghosh in his seminal book on Lollard exegesis notices that Love made attempts “to counter a heterodox hermeneutics by an uncertain, but conscious application of certain fundamental Lollard hermeneutic principles” (Ghosh 2002, 58–61). I attempt to complement Kantik Ghosh’s studies about the ambiguities in Love’s hermeneutic principles, and I conclude that we can detect further similarities between his and Wycliff’s exegetical methods; thus, we see Love fighting his adversary using similar weapons.

Love’s complex doctrinal and polemical purposes defined the way he treated the inherited affective scriptural methodology of the *Meditationes*. Being a mediated scriptural text, a distanced, modified narrative, both its Latin original and Love’s translation demand a different form of hermeneutic methodology than real texts of the Scriptures would. The *Mirroure*, providing reading material transposed from the Gospel and encouraging a largely unlimited imaginative work on it by the laity, calls for a redefinition of the questions about an exegesis transformed from controlled, clerical and corporate nature into a personal one exercised

individually by seculars. Among other arguments, Ghosh states that Love adapted more of the terminology Wyclif used in expounding his exegetical theory, mainly the concepts "open" and "reasonable", which Love also used in senses different from those given to them by Wycliff, and fashioned them to serve his own orthodox theory. He also noticed the similarity between the layout of Wycliffite manuscripts and those of the *Mirroure* reflecting a Lollard influence on Love's textual scholarship.

However, Ghosh does not treat another common factor which both Love and Wycliff share. They both count on the same agent to guarantee the correctness of such an exegesis: the direct inspirational work of the Holy Spirit, which Love usually (and traditionally) denotes as the work of grace. Wycliff, in his *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae* (Buddensieg 1905) exposes his views on the nature of the Bible and also on his hermeneutical principles. He describes the process of creation of the spiritual exegetical meaning postulating that this happens through an infused action of "grace", namely of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who defines the "intencio" of the Scriptures, and also helps uncover this "intencio auctoris". But whereas Wycliff dwells rather on the first activity of the Holy Spirit as determining the content, form and message, what is more, the *being* of the Scriptures, Love focuses on his role in the hermeneutical process of decoding this *intencio*.

Love's key concept is thus the direct action of the Holy Spirit as empowering the laity for an interpretation of the scriptural text, through which "devoute imaginacion", meditation and contemplation become a way of scriptural exegesis. The Wycliffite theory postulates that the Holy Spirit is a direct agent who enables exegesis for the common, but pure souls. Love also endows his readers with "hermeneutic authority" without putting any restrictions as regards the moral quality of these readers. Another difference between them is that with Love not only the purified naked scriptural text is acceptable but also a mediated one, which may enhance the exegetical activity of the reader in the form of imagination.

The various occurrences of the concept of grace with various meanings are all determining factors also in the *Mirroure*. Grace is named as an agent that helps the exercise of imaginative interpretation; finally, it assures the genesis of actual contemplative experiences. In this respect Love's work represents the orthodox tradition. In his view a special grace is needed for the imaginative process, and mostly in cases when one is faced with such subjects for the imagination which are leading from meditation towards contemplation, from beholding the "manhode" of Christ towards contemplating his "divinitee", as this meditative-contemplative activity implies exegesis: "principally beholding his blessedde face, if þou kynne ymagine it, þat semeþ to me, most harde of alle opere, bot as I trowe it is

most lyking, *to him þat haþ grace þerof*" (italics mine) (Sargent 2005, 78). Moreover, this extrapolation of the clause "to him þat haþ grace therof" suggests that in such cases one cannot undertake a meaningful and successful exegetical activity without being endowed with a special grace. Love wrote a lengthy passage of his own, the exposition of the *Pater Noster*, in which he reflects on his views about the way the Holy Spirit reveals the 'obscure' spiritual meanings of the prayer *par excellence*, the prayer with absolute scriptural authority: "For as we mowe wel suppose as to þe first, þat is þe fruyt therof, not only þei vnderstonde it after þe lettur, bot also þerwiþ þei hadden þorh his grace þe gostly vnderstandyng of ech peticion þerof" (Sargent 2005, 84). As Ghosh demonstrates, Love uses Wycliffite terms of exegesis (Ghosh 2002, 147–173) as "after the lettur" to emphasise that the activity of the Holy Spirit will reveal deeper layers of the Scriptures than an 'open text' would yield.

In fact, Love implies that the activity of infused grace will bring much more, even surprising gifts to a mind humbly and ardently questing after the meanings of the text of the Revelation. Thus Love creates an original concept of his, an important contribution by stating that the sign of veracity of correct hermeneutics is the sensual feeling of sweetness. Not only the Apostles, but everyone may have access to the savours of spiritual fruits: "And so hauen *alle* þei þat þorh grace felene þe gostly fruite & þe swete tast þerof" (italics mine) (Sargent 2005, 85).

Some lines later in the exposition of *Pater Noster* Love connects a spiritual understanding of Scriptures to attaining contemplative states:

haþ an inwarde desire to þe gostly vnderstongyng þerof,... he shale þorh grace by processe of tyme finde so miche comfort þerinne, þat þere is none opere praiere so sauory & so effectuele... And so shale he fynde in his soule whan god wole 3ife his grace with gret likyng diuerse vnderstondyng þerof most pertynent to his desire & þat opere þan is writen in þe comune exposicion þerof, or perantere þan he can telle! (Sargent 2005, 86)

Consequently, feeling the sweetness is a guarantee and sign of right understanding, of correct exegesis, which may even surpass the traditional interpretations of this text of utmost importance. These lines testify to Love's boldness in granting the possibility of enriching "official", authoritative exegetical tradition by a private exegetical interpretation done by a lay person. Naturally, the correctness of such an interpretation is assured by the working of the Holy Spirit, named as "grace", but this infusion of a new spiritual meaning happens directly, without the mediation of the official authority of the Church. Later in the *Treatise* the same idea is elaborated more fully.

The same notion reappears in the scene of Transfiguration. Here Love explicitly alludes to reaching higher stages of contemplation. The scene of the Transfiguration is a suitable *locus* for acceding to contemplation for the chosen ones, as it exhibits the person of Christ in his transfiguration from his humanity into the manifestation of his divine glory. The reader has the possibility to follow the narrative of the text and, through a partaking imaginative activity, guided by the interaction of divine Grace, to explore and participate in a deep-or-high spiritual understanding of the hidden meanings of the text, that is, the secrets of Christ's divine essence. A correct exegesis of the meditated scriptural text, through an additional grace of the contributing Divine Person, is secured by an understanding of spiritual realities in a transcendental state, a state "above kynde", where the cognitive faculties work also in modified ways. Cognition happens through the senses, as the classical contemplative theories describe:

This is the processe of the gossell in the whiche whoso hap grace of gostly vnderstandyng and swetnesse may see many good notabilitees stirenge to lowynge and despisyng of man hym self and to feruent deuocioun and loue of god and specially he that hath felynge abouen kynde zeuen by special grace may taste and haue myche goostly comforte: that he graunte vs parte of Jesu crifte. Amen. (Sargent 2005, 113)

The last line evidences Love's supposition that all (himself and all his readers) may have part in such contemplative experience, they may all reach the apogee of divinely inspired personal exegesis.

Later, in his narration of his own personal experience in the passage about the Last Supper, Love presents a broad display of different versions of "grace", "his hize grace", "his speciale zifte of grace". When describing the state of mystical contemplation, the phrase is almost always coupled with feeling, as in: "he þat feleþ þat gracious zifte of grace" (Sargent 2005, 154). In such instances grace always designates the infusion of the Holy Spirit, who reveals hidden mysteries of the sacrament of Eucharist, that is, the divine presence of Christ, by the creation of a bodily sensation of this presence.

## The Treatise on the Sacrament

To present the orthodox Eucharistic doctrine, Love wrote a lengthy *Treatise* of his own, with a masterly argumentation and rhetoric. The *Treatise* on the Sacrament is Love's original work, and it is a great piece which attests to his excellent skills as thinker and rhetorician. Although it was written with the single aim to expose the orthodox doctrine on the Eucharist, it is of

considerable length, eighteen manuscript pages. It consists of theoretical elaborations and of the narration of numerous exempla, that is, stories of Eucharistic miracles. Notwithstanding the extreme complexity of the text, Love succeeded in creating a compelling unity of content and style, thus revealing his outstanding talent of prose writing. All the more surprisingly, the *Treatise* has attracted scarce critical attention yet. Elisabeth Salter, discovering Love's excellent style, deals also with the *Treatise* besides the main text of the *Mirroure*, but only minimally (Salter 1974). Michael Sargent offers a detailed description of its content, sources, and some of its Anti-Wycliffite pronouncements, but leaves ample room for a more thoroughly applied close reading (Sargent 2005). Felicity Maxwell devotes a whole chapter to it in her unpublished MA thesis on the *Mirroure*, but she focuses mainly on the narrated Eucharistic miracles (Maxwell 2008, 76-94). Kantik Ghosh makes sporadic references to parts of the text but does not undertake a systematic study of it (Ghosh 2004, 53-66).

Nonetheless, the text of the *Treatise* would deserve such a study. In the present subchapter, I will limit my investigations to one aspect: the way in which the *Treatise* presents Love's endeavour to treat the complex issue of divinely inspired personal exegesis which accedes to the heights of contemplation. In the *Treatise*, just as in the expositions attached to the Last Supper scene, Love creates a direct connection between such contemplative experiences and orthodox belief, positioning the latter one as an absolute prerequisite of the first.

Love builds up his whole endeavour on the interpretation of carefully chosen scriptural passages. Accepting the Wycliffite challenge on the theory of transubstantiation, he chooses the concept of "commemoration" from the Last Supper scene. The word designating the idea of commemoration in Middle English is "mynde". Wyclif's critique of the Eucharistic presence also revolves around the interpretation of the same word in its scriptural context (Loserth 1966), and he decides for a limited, "literal" interpretation of it. Love leads an accentuated exploitation of the semantic richness of the same word, thus presents its doctrinal multivalence, which defines the orthodox Eucharistic doctrine itself. This way he counters his opponent using the same weapon as him.

The notions of "miracle" and "bread" or "food" dominate the whole discourse of the text from the beginning to the end, deploying a full scale of their semantic and doctrinal richness, creating a web of intertwining meanings of unusual intricacy. The introductory locus already presents a summary of the work, at the same time it provides a typological foundation of the Eucharistic doctrine. Love continues with implementing the other pillars of his discourse in his text: David prophesied thus about the



Eucharist, long before the Incarnation, says Love, before translating his quotation into English. Then, he expounds the meaning of “mete” by identifying it with the Eucharistic bread, and states that this bread is meant for those who “trewly dreden him as hir lorde god, by whiche drede, þei kepen hem out of deadly sinne, & mekely standen in þe steadfast byleue of holi chirch” (Sargent 2005, 223). Thus, already at this early phase, the identification of the sacrament of the Eucharist takes place in relation to the heretics, who do not submit themselves to the teaching of the Church. Connecting the sacrament and “merveille” follows, where Love alludes to the priest’s words during the consecration. The reference to the priest and to the canon of the mass strengthens the orthodoxy of the exposition, as both the necessity of the ordained priesthood and of the act of consecration were criticised by Wyclif. The extraordinary accumulation of the word “miracle” serves an important rhetorical aim. In one long sentence Love condenses his conception of the essentials of his doctrinal message: the sacrament of the Eucharist, just as all the deeds of Christ are miracles, and the *Mirroure* is destined to testify to it.

And þis gostly mete he ȝiueþ, & haþ made þerebye a special mynde of hees merueiles, þat is to sey as þe preeste reherseþ in þe canone of þe messe in mynde of his merueylous & blessed passion, & of his merueilous Resurrexion & of his merueylous & glorious Ascension & generally in mynde of alle þe merueilous werkes & dedes of him in his blessed life here in þis worlde, þe which is tretede in alle þis boke before written.

(Sargent 2005, 223)

This over-abundance of the key word is paralleled and prepared by the passage in the Last Supper where Love writes about the “gracious, wonderfule, and myraculouse worchyng of Jesu in his bodily presence.” The *Treatise* will consistently keep this verbal proliferation throughout the whole text. Love continues by identifying Christ’s body present in the sacrament with the same body which was miraculously incarnated, miraculously born, and did “merveilleuse words and dedes”, thus using the classical credo-like formula of Eucharistic expositions.

Love uses a varied vocabulary denoting the miracle: “miracle”, “merveille”, “vision”, “fair vision”, and “revelacion” are named. The extensive usage and play with the multivalent meanings of one word are stylistic devices which Love applies also in the case of his other key concepts, namely of “mynde”, and “fele.” Thus he creates a real masterpiece of allusions through spiralling structures of re-occurring concepts which carry the first meaning, and in their second occurrence they are already endowed with a new meaning as well. Thus they grow richer and richer in

their semantic filling, and bring an ever-growing set of allusions to their previous meanings.

Love uses the word “mynde” in its meaning of remembrance, but also signifying understanding, and several other concepts in his text.<sup>1</sup> His choice of this exact word as a central one for his *Treatise* was surely not accidental. Wyclif’s critique of the Eucharistic presence also revolves around the interpretation of the same word in its scriptural context (Wycliff, 1966), and Wyclif decided for a limited, “literal” interpretation of it. By an accentuated exploitation of the semantic richness of the same word, resulting in the presentation of its doctrinal multivalence which has a consequence on the Eucharistic doctrine itself, Love counters his opponent on similar grounds.

After this long play with the various meanings of “mynde”, finally, in the presentation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, Love replaces the word by the *terminus technicus* of Eucharistic theory: by “sacramentale commemoracion”, interpreting the scriptural passage par excellence, of “þis doþe 3e in mye mynde” (Sargent 2005, 224). The explanation of it follows, now in a blend of common, everyday speech and of a special, philosophical-theological terminology: “he is verreyly & bodily present wip us under an opere fourme but sobely in his owne proper substaunce verrey god & man” (Sargent 2005, 224). In a next step Love makes “mynde” of how in the Eucharist the divine and human presence are united, switching to the terminology used by the manuals on contemplation: “not only by þe gostly presence of his godhead bot by þe bodily presence of his manhede,” etc. Thus a correct exegetical interpretation of scriptural passages and their key concepts denoting the mystery of the sacramental presence will lead to the mystical experiencing of the taste of spiritual sweetness: “þis is þat precious gostly mete & special mynde of oure lord Jesu, in þe whiche is hade alle gostly lyking, & þe sauour & taste of alle sweetness,” as the sacrament is the “swete memoriale and hy3est 3ift” (Sargent 2005, 224).

At this point Love introduces another original invention. In the *Treatise*, just as in the expositions attached to the Last Supper scene, Love creates a direct connection between such contemplative experiences and orthodox belief, positioning the latter one as an absolute prerequisite of the first.

The next sentence again sums up what has been said before, emphasising repeatedly that this gift is given for the faithful, thus implying the exclusion of the unfaithful heretics: “þus oure lorde Jesu of his grete mercy haþ made a lyking mynde of hees merueiles in þis gostly mete, þe which is moste merueile of alle merueiles, 3iuyng þis mete specially to hem þat dreden him” (Sargent 2005, 224). In the following, Love names four categories of

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<sup>1</sup> For the variety and changes of meaning of the word “mynde” in Old and Middle English literature, see Ágnes Kiricsi’s dissertation (Kiricsi 2005).

believers. Those who have a servile love of Christ receive a simple sustenance of their faith, but those with a genuine affectionate love are gifted with a mystical experience of spiritual comfort and sweetness.

Those who do not feel the sweetness are thus sinners or heretics. "Fele" in this way becomes the criterion of belief or unbelief, of being in truth or error, ultimately, of being in grace or out of grace, which is expanded to such extremes as being saved or damned, belonging to Christ or the Antichrist. Love proceeds with a detailed presentation of the error of the Lollards.

Love also constructs an antagonism of sight, naming the bodily eye in opposition to the "goostly eye". Those who rely on their own bodily wit will be denied transcendental understanding; those who seek bodily sight will be denied the spiritual sight of the true nature of the Eucharist, of Christ himself. Again, the working of the spiritual capacity of mystical recognition serves as a prerogative of embracing the right doctrine.

Love explicitly points to Wyclif, who is named as "þe forseide master of Lollardes" (Sargent 2005, 237), and as "hir maistere þe which þorh his grete clergy and kunnyng of philosophye was deceyuede" (2005, 236). Love expounds his theory that those who rely merely on their intellect and are, thus, trapped by the confines of Aristotelian rationalism in their interpretation of Christ's words founding the mystery of the Eucharist, like Wyclif, will be denied both a spiritual understanding and a mystical enjoyment: "many grete clerkes, þe which leuen so miche vpon hir owne kyndely reson, & þe principales of philosophy, (...) þat þei wole not leue þe trewe feiþ taught by holy chirch of þis blessed sacrament, & þerfore þei *fele not* þe soþfast confortable effecte of þe merueiles & miracles before seide neiþer opune nor priuely touching þis holy sacrament" (Sargent 2005, 237).

Love attributed the lack of the mystical experience of the sacrament to another reason as well. Whereas Wyclif was positive about the infinite possibilities of personal exegesis (and did not try to dissolve the problem of the recognized "obscure meanings"), Love set limits to the practice of lay hermeneutics in certain cases for two reasons. The first was an acute sense for preserving the veracity and 'reasonable' character of the scriptural texts. The second factor was a fear of error in special cases, when an interpretative speculation fails, transgressing into domains where individual human reason cannot guide the exegesis, even if aided by grace. In these cases, a special divine revelatory agency was needed, he argued, granted to a corporate interpretative authority, to assure a correct hermeneutical interpretation. Love was conscious that "holy writte may be expounet & understonde in diuerse maneres" (Sargent 2005, 11), but in passages of high doctrinal delicacy, such as that of the Trinity and Eucharist, he barred the

imaginative freedom and strictly sent his readers to accepting the doctrine built on the interpretation guaranteed by the Church, which, being corporeally inspired by the Holy Spirit, ensured correct exegesis: “And þerfore when þou herest any sich þinge in byleue þat passeþ bi kyndly reson, trowe soþfastly þat it is soþ as holy chirch techeth and go no ferþer” (Sargent 2005, 23). Love inserted his second great speech of restriction which parallels with the one written in the Incarnation-Trinity section in his exposition of the Eucharist:

þerfore it is grete foly & gostly perile to seke curiously in ymaginacion of reson þe merueiles of þis worþi sacrament. Bot it is moste sikere namely to a simple soule, & suffice to sauacion touching þe forseide merueiles & alle oper of þis blessed sacrament, to þenke & fele in þis manere, þus hauen holy doctors tauht, & holi chirch determined, and þerfore þus I trowe & fully byleue þat it is in soþenes, þouh my kyndely reson azeyn sey it.  
(Sargent 2005, 23)

Here Love answers the problem of reason leading to error by applying a personal voice. The usage of first person singular heightens the sense of paradox: attaining mystical reward may demand the denial, and thus the transcending of one’s own natural reason. Finally, Love utters the last word on Lollards repeating his main tenet in very precise terms: “þe false lollardes þe wech hauen neiþer trewe drede nor parfite loue of oure lorde Jesu, & þerfore þei fele not þe gostly swetenesse of þis heuenly mete of his precious body, ne þe lyking mynde of hees meruiles shewede in þat blessed sacrament” (Sargent 2005, 237).

Consequently, notwithstanding his concerns born of a heightened consciousness and anxiety for scriptural authenticity, Love encourages his lay readers to an imaginative personal interpretation of biblical narratives and thus he gives proof of his audacity. This courage allies him with the Wycliffites, who also vociferate for a personal reading and interpretation of the Bible by the laity. The other common factor between Love and Wyclif here is that they both count on the same agent to guarantee the correctness of such an exegesis: the direct inspirational work of the Holy Spirit, which Love usually (and traditionally) denotes as the work of grace.

Decisive differences emerge, though: whereas Wyclif is positive about the infinite possibilities of such personal exegesis, although he himself demands a saintly life of his flock, Love sets other limits to the practice of lay hermeneutics. The limit is imposed in cases of doctrinal issues of great importance, such as the Trinity or the Eucharist. Love is guided by his fear that in these cases the interpretative speculation may fail, transgressing into domains where human reason cannot guide the exegesis, even if aided by

grace. In these cases a special divine revelatory agency is needed, thus only the doctrinal authority of the Church, being corporeally inspired by the Holy Spirit, ensures correct exegesis. He formulates his theory in terms of who is worthy or not of the divine grace which grants a transcendental spiritual understanding of the true essence of God's mysteries, encoded into the Scriptures, and also a "lyking" pleasure in tasting the spiritual sweetness, the "jouissance": those who practice a correct hermeneutical activity, and "zeue more credence to þe trewe dotrine of holi chirch" (Sargent 2005, 237). Thereby Love presents private, secular exegetical interpretation as a springboard to mystical experience, which is nuanced further also in the light of Love's program to combat Wycliffism. The *Mirroure* is the first work which puts thus an ancient and rich monastic tradition of attaining spiritual advancement by entering into scriptural texts in the service of late-medieval ecclesiastical and spiritual battles.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### “A SPACE FOR FARTHER TRAVEL”: *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA* IN SHAKESPEARE’S “SPACIOUS MIRROR”

MARCELL GELLÉRT

From the suffocating spatial confinements of the radical tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Lear* and *Macbeth*’s self-enclosed labyrinths of the mind, in *Antony and Cleopatra* we are invited into the spacious, to all directions open and expanding world of the Roman Empire. *Antony and Cleopatra*, the most “liberal” tragedy of Shakespeare, through its thematic abundance, loosely-woven epic composition, extended horizontal view, measured stylistic perfection, covert fine-artistic plasticity and decorative lyricism, opens up new dimensions for the Jacobean theatre paving the way toward the mythopoetic world of the romances, the crowning achievements of artistic freedom in stage representation. Even by Shakespearean standards a highly irregular piece—as odd for a Roman history play as for a romantic tragedy—*Antony and Cleopatra* represents a radically reformed concept of the genre, which is most apparent in the play’s organic spatial design. Its unique space-dramaturgy is Shakespeare’s primary strategic force of according the diverse worlds of history and mythology, fact and fiction, epic and dramatic representation, the public and the private spheres of the play’s world, the placial and the spatial domains in his “imperious show.”

In the opening scene of *King Lear*, Cordelia, the most loving and beloved daughter of the aged king says “nothing” in answer to her father’s provocative question: how much she loves him. Her stubborn denial, that notorious “nothing” becomes the cause of everything to come, triggering the action of Shakespeare’s most painful, moving and majestic tragedy, the mightiest of the “Great Quartet”.

In another opening scene in Shakespeare’s next tragedy of passion, it is Cleopatra who provokes her lover with a similar question: “If it be love

indeed, tell me, how much” (1.1.14).<sup>1</sup> Antony too, refuses to give the expected answer and—like Cordelia—gives his reasons as well: “There is beggary in the love that can be reckoned” (1.1.15). Cordelia measures her love by the depth of her emotions that lie *inside*, so deep that she “cannot heave” her heart into her mouth. Antony’s measure is exterior, it lies *outside*, around and above, beyond the confines of measurable space, so vast that Cleopatra should “find out new heaven and new earth” “to set a bourn how far to be loved” (1.1.16–17).

This is exactly what Shakespeare does by remapping the world of the stage for his lovers, the greatest stars of the globe, or rather two globes: the spacious globe of history—the world of the Roman Empire in 30 B.C.—and its local mirror, the Globe of London in 1606. The answer to the opening question in both cases is the play itself, which turns nothing into everything on the stage “where we see the fancy outwork nature” (2.2.211).

*Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare’s third Roman play was written roughly two years after *King Lear* and one year after *Macbeth*, the most “radical” tragedy of the great ones, yet the two plays are as far from each other in every respect as their subjects in terms of space and time, i.e. Scotland in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and the Roman Empire from 40 to 30 B.C.

Despite the global renown of its titling characters, the legendary status in cultural memory granted to the emblematic representatives of heroic love, the lovers’ lasting monument erected by Shakespeare for the Globe is ranked neither by critical measure nor by stage popularity among the Bard’s greatest tragic achievements. It is devoid of true dramatic power, serious conflict, profound moral crises, the metaphysical depth of damnation, purely good or evil characters, the hellish dimensions of human nature, the “high seriousness” (Wilders 2006, 48)<sup>2</sup> of the great tragedies, the unity of action, dramaturgical consistency and compositional coherence—to mention only a few of the most often voiced critical objections. The play’s first censorious critic, A.C. Bradley in his *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* even warns us not “to regard this tragedy as a rival of the famous four”, since “it cannot possibly excite the same emotions” (1909, 284). Any such straight comparison with the great tragedies, however, is utterly misleading, since *Antony and Cleopatra* is a play of a different kind, which doesn’t necessarily mean—as opposed to Bradley’s suggestion—that it is inferior. Neither a radical tragedy nor a pure Roman play, it is a unique product of its author’s restless experimentation with established genres, searching for

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<sup>1</sup> All parenthesised and textual references to the play are given according to the 2006 Arden edition.

<sup>2</sup> John Wilders, in his editorial introduction to the play, aptly rephrases Bradley’s main objections.



new ways of stage representation. *Antony and Cleopatra* with its extended time-span, vast space of action and memorial reflection, epic scope of historical coverage, mythopoetic stance and diction, scenic variety, stylistic perfection and artistic complexity forecasts rather the coming romances. Written for a stage with a "new heaven and new earth", it is a more "spacious mirror" of the medium itself, a piece of "excellent falsehood" that finds—like its titling stars—the greatest delight in self-reflection.

In comparison with its great tragic predecessors, the most strikingly different feature of the play is its space-world. In no other play does Shakespeare endow space with such potent power of dramaturgical agency, casting space for so many roles in stage representation. The space-world of *Antony and Cleopatra* is unique in its extension, in its elaborate topography as much as in its figurative complexity that covers the whole range of the play's great chain of being from "Nilus' mud" to the "tuned spheres". It is a composition of concentric spheres ranging from the planetary through the natural to the human, covering with ever-shifting focuses the mythical and the historical, the fictional and the factual dimensions of its world. It is evoked in its "infinite variety"—the cardinal aesthetic virtue of *Cleopatra*—as if it were the spatial projection of its titling characters, a global extension of their very being. Its remotest region is the planetary sphere, the astrological space of mythic topography inhabited by its presiding deities: Jove, Mars, Neptune, Venus, Osiris and Isis, invited to the stage to display the lovers' superhuman stature and heroic qualities. Beneath spreads the geographical zone, the Roman Empire in its physical reality mapped in rich detail by its various locations: names of points of the compass, climes and countries, regions, cities, seas and rivers. This is the spatial domain of history and its geo-political constituents, the realms of its rulers and the locations of its decisive events—in itself a split sphere of two contrary worlds: west and east, Rome and Egypt. The former is the world of political power-relations, military force, conquests, pragmatic reason, sheer calculation, possessions, interests and deals, duty, order and discipline—the world of the masculine imperial ethos. In sharp contrast to Caesar's Rome stands *Cleopatra's* Egypt, the sublunary sphere of nature: the fertile realm of femininity, seas and rivers, "fish, flesh and fowl", the *carpe-diem* world of the senses, of unbounded passion—the metaphorical habitat of the lovers.

Without any scenic autonomy, palpable placial presence, the space-world of the play, vast as it is in extension, is created mostly by the lovers themselves in their mutually reflective verbal mirrors that they set up for each other and themselves to magnify the passion of "such a twain" who "stand up peerless" for the world, fully aware of their legendary status, which is repeatedly voiced by their advocates and foes alike all through the

play and is, in the end, acknowledged even by their mightiest opponent, the “sole sir” of the Roman Empire, when bidding farewell to them and their play:

She shall be buried by her Antony.  
No grave upon the earth shall clip in it  
A pair so famous... (5.2.337)

The primary quality of the play’s space-world is its *immensity* with each of its constituents oversized by the hyperbolic stance of the lovers. It is generated as much by their passion as their boundless pride, the all-pervading sense of their own greatness.<sup>3</sup> Antony in Cleopatra’s “spacious mirror” is the Herculean Roman, the Jove-like “lord of lords”, the ultimate masterpiece of nature “past the *size* of dreaming”. The oversized portrait she draws to Dolabella of her lost lover is the most complex image of the whole play. Through the figurative fusion of cosmological, elemental, natural and political imagery, she places Antony at the top of the great chain’s cardinal classes:

His legs bestrid the ocean; his reared arm  
Crested the world; his voice was propertied  
As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;  
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,  
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,  
There was no winter in’t; an autumn it was  
That grew the more by reaping. His delights  
Were dolphin-like: they showed his back above  
The element they lived in. In his livery  
Walked crowns and crownets; realms and islands were  
As plates dropped from his pocket. (5.2.81)

Antony is no less generous in the appraisal of his partner in greatness. “The day of the world”, “My Thetis”, “great Egypt herself”, is the worthy mate of one who thinks of himself as “the greatest prince o’th’ world, the noblest” of all alive (4.15.55–6). Tragedy on Shakespeare’s reformed stage is in no need of unspeakable horrors, bloody deeds, the agency of vice or the presence of evil in human shape. Such a boundless pride *acted out* is

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<sup>3</sup> Immensity—a term widely used in aesthetic and phenomenological theories of space—according to Gaston Bachelard is rather a psychological than a phenomenological category. “Since immense is not an object, a phenomenology of immense would refer us directly to our imagining consciousness... It is often this inner immensity that gives their real meaning to certain expressions concerning the visible world” (1964, 185).

enough to call for just retribution in the name of tragic justice that sets things right through the final displacement of the transgressors. Antony's fall, the process of his descent through successive steps of humiliation is also represented in spatial terms. Step by step he loses everything that has made him great: first his reputation, the token of his greatness in Rome, due to Caesar's machinations, then his share of the empire, the countries he has conquered after his first defeat at Actium, then his allies and troops, and finally his living space when his request, reported by the Ambassador, is denied by Caesar:

Lord of his fortunes he salutes thee, and  
 Requires to live in Egypt; which not granted,  
 He lessens his requests and to thee sues  
 To let him breathe between the heavens and earth,  
 A private man in Athens...  
 CAESAR. For Antony,  
 I have no ears to his request. (3.12.11–20)

The lovers, however, gain such paramount status not only through each other's emotionally overheated eulogies. Their hyperbolic glorification by spatial measure is the accepted norm in both hemispheres of the Roman Empire. Antony is a "world-sharer", "the triple pillar of the world", a Jove-like "mine of bounty" for his Roman followers, while Cleopatra is "Isis", goddess of the Moon, "Thetis", goddess of the sea and the "Eastern Star" for her train. In the play's world, spatial relations are the universal measure of all its constituents, impersonated by the characters themselves. Their position and possessions, worth and reputation, the virtues and vices of being Roman or Egyptian in the public sphere; their personal qualities, emotions, attachments, attributes of manhood and femininity in the private sphere—all the qualifiers of their character are defined in spatial terms. Imagery serves definite dramaturgical ends through organizing the space-world of the play around its twin centres, the "Sun" and the "Moon" of the lovers' Empire.

The spatial stance of representation, the lovers' spatial state of being is, to a great extent, rooted in the all-pervading *division* of the play's world, the manifold *opposition* of Caesar's Rome and Cleopatra's Egypt. The divided state of the world is represented also by the play's "spatialized" composition, by its great scenic variety, the frequent, often rapid changes of scenes, the kinetic dynamism of the plot, the alternating movement between the two geographical poles of the action. Scenically *Antony and Cleopatra* is the most divided play of Shakespeare's. It is a loosely-woven composition of 11 different locations presented in 42 scenes of varying length (only three

exceed 200 lines, eight are shorter than 20, while the rest contain less than 50 lines).

The dramaturgical agents of the two spheres' dynamic interplay are the messengers who restlessly come and go from Egypt to Rome and back all through the play. They add *voice* to sight, no wonder that the emotionally heated conflicts are ignited by the news they bring from the other side. By their constant movement (while Antony is away in Rome, Cleopatra sends a messenger to him every day) they generate the play's *hodological* space.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, it is the spatial medium of communication between the two poles: East and West, on the other, the natural habitat of Antony, the space-bound *Hermetic* hero, who has given up his Roman identity to gain a new one at the cost of his life in the world of his *Hestial* lover, the place-bound queen of Egypt, whose natural and political bodies jointly define her spatial position.<sup>5</sup>

To the extent *space-imagery* shapes the characters themselves, *spatial relations* drive the plot. In the repetitive sequence of dramatic action much depends on Antony's position: his being *here*, in Egypt—the grounding *place* of spatial perspective—or *there*, in Rome, whether he is *near* or *far*, present or absent. The main source of conflict in both spheres is his absence. His leaving or being away is the cause of Fulvia's attack upon Caesar, Pompey's turn, Caesar's ever-growing hostility, the decisive defeat of the Egyptian fleet at Actium, and, most of all, Cleopatra's fake suicide report, the final blow that seals her lover's fate. Antony is always at the wrong place, never where he is most needed. In spatial terms, from the beginning to the end, he is in the ever-changing state of *displacement*. He is constantly displaced in both body and mind, physically, mentally and emotionally

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<sup>4</sup> The term, introduced by Kurt Lewine into the discourse of topological psychology for the description of a person's "life-space" in his *Principles of Topological Psychology* (1936) is applied to architectural and anthropological space theory by O. Bollnow in his *Human Space* (2011), translated from *Mensch und Raum* (1963). The reference is to a chapter in *Readings in Existential Phenomenology* where parts of Bollnow's book are reprinted under the title: *Lived-Space* (1967, 178–187). In Bollnow's interpretation it refers to the space created by movement, and as such aptly describes an aspect of the play's space-world represented by Antony's constant movement, his being on the way all the time. Bollnow's definition—"All live movement in space occurs as a going away or a coming back" (180)—throws some light on this feature of the play's unique topography.

<sup>5</sup> The two terms, widely used in phenomenological space theories (see Edward Casey's seminal work: *Getting Back to Place* (2009), refer to the two contrasted modes of dwelling as well as the two ways of bodily being in spatial terms. *Hestial* refers to one with a definite placial identity, as opposed to the *Hermetic* being, who is "lost" in space (1993, 145).

*without*, in the geo-political space of the Empire, and *within*, in his mind-space by his constant hesitation, his inability to decide where he belongs. Antony's identity-crisis—the core of the play's dramatic material—takes shape in spatial terms by his *double displacement*. As a Roman in Egypt and an Egyptian in Rome he is lost in between the two worlds. Without true *implacement*,<sup>6</sup> which is indispensable for him to create a *lived-in* private space for himself, he remains an outcast in both worlds.

Displacement, however, affects not only Antony's career. It is the symptomatic spatial constituent of the play's space-world and the main mover of the plot itself. As the principal rule of the Empire's formation, it determines the state and the future of both Rome and Egypt, the plural social spheres of the play. Pompey, the rebellious claimant and Lepidus, the third and weakest member of the second triumvirate, get displaced from outside by the political and military forces that remove them from their position. Enobarbus, Antony's closest companion follows the "Roman way", and after betraying his master—an act of self-imposed displacement—he commits suicide paving the plot's way toward the deadly conclusion. The balance of tragic payments, that give dramatic weight to the play at the end, is six lives taken by suicide equally divided between the representatives of the two worlds. The self-imposed deaths of the supporting characters—Enobarbus and Eros from Rome, Iras and Charmian from Egypt—are acts of taking side with their superiors by rejecting the alternative world of Caesar's Rome.

The unique space-experience of the play is granted by Shakespeare's special dramaturgical strategy which simultaneously *divides* and *unites* the contrary spheres of the play's world. It is divided by the marked opposition of Rome and Egypt and united by the constant *heterotopic* interplay of the *on-stage* and *off-stage* spheres. In the Egyptian scenes Rome is the main concern: Caesar, Fulvia, Pompey and Octavia are the subjects of all talk, whereas in Rome the favourite topic is Antony's second life, Cleopatra and her Egypt: the land of love, art and freedom, exotic beasts, pageants and non-stop feasting. It is the heterotopic *duplicity* of the physical and mental placing of the characters that produces the unique spatial effect. We are more in Rome when in Egypt, and more in Egypt when in Rome, as if the whole play were the spatial projection of Antony's divided mind. If Caesar impersonates Rome and Cleopatra embodies Egypt, then Antony represents both, being the "spacious mirror" in which even the triumphant Caesar can see himself: "When such a spacious mirror's set before him, / He needs must see himself" (5.1.33–4).

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<sup>6</sup> Implacement, in Casey's interpretation, is the state of "modal location", when a person is rooted in a place which defines his/her identity (1993, 66).

The priority of space as the dominant medium of stage representation is ensured also by the overt metatheatrical design of the play. The “love-plot”—devoid of any intimacy—is a loosely connected sequence of impassioned scenes where love is displayed, *acted out* and always with onlookers around. The lovers are left alone only once in the whole play and, even then, only for a few seconds in the scene of their bitterest quarrel after Antony’s second defeat (4.12.30–39). The audience is invited to take a metatheatrical stance at the very beginning of the play when Philo and Demetrius—the expositors of a latent induction—introduce the leading characters. Philo, one of Antony’s followers in Egypt, informs Demetrius, a newcomer from Rome, of the present state of political and love affairs. His report—a ten-line-long summary of Antony’s strange metamorphosis—is concluded with a warning addressing both audiences: the one *inside*, on stage, represented by Demetrius, and the other *outside*, surrounding the stage:

Look where they come!  
Take but good note, and you shall see in him  
The triple pillar of the world transformed  
Into a strumpet’s fool. Behold and see. (1.1.10–3)

Fitting the regular choreography of inductions, they are given another half-dozen lines to comment on the opening of the show, then, their task done, they melt into the background never to reappear on the stage.

Yet, it is neither the framed opening, nor the manifold divided spatial composition that determines the play’s self-reflective character. *Antony and Cleopatra* is metatheatrical primarily through the stance of its titling characters, by the way they relate to each other and act out themselves, by the overt *theatricality* of their roles and their repetitive cross-reflections. Antony, in his opening oration, leaves no doubt about their placement in the play’s world:

Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch  
Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space!  
Kingdoms are clay! Our dungy earth alike  
Feeds beast as man. The nobleness of life  
Is to do thus, when such a mutual pair  
And such a twain can do’t, in which I bind,  
On pain of punishment, the world to weet  
We stand up peerless. (1.1.34–41)

Cleopatra’s flippant answer—“Excellent falsehood! / Why did he marry Fulvia and not love her? / I’ll seem the fool I am not. Antony / Will be