UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

My Voice Shall Fill the Woods: Lydgate, Poetic Authority, and the Canonization of Philomela

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
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by

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The Thesis of Mary Elizabeth Gillespie is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

Chair

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DEDICATION

For my mom, Marianne Harris, whose emotional and spiritual support has lifted me through times of despair and who encouraged me, above all, to use my voice.

EPIGRAPH

And why should I speak of the nightingale? The nightingale sings of adulterate wrong.

William Shakespeare

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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In this thesis, I discuss the figures of Philomela and the nightingale as they originate in Ovid, and in representations of them in medieval English poetry as separate entities. The bird who migrates to England each spring serves as a positive symbol for springtime love, but her connections to Philomela as a victim are always present, producing literature that continues to silence her suffering and removing the nightingale from the woman who sought justice. I begin the discussion with a reading of Chaucer's

The Legende of Good Women, where we see the male narrator becoming "infected" by that which he reads, and then re-enacts the silencing of Philomela by cutting her story short. This is followed by a discussion of Sir John Clanvowe's *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, where we encounter the nightingale independent of Philomela, where she serves as a source of relief for the troubled, lustful narrator.

Lydgate's poem "The Nightingale" continues the written tradition of separating the two figures while drawing upon their past. Lydgate even lures his readers with a promise of content similar to that of previous tales as a template for learning mental and physical constraint. "The Nightingale" explores the human cognitive process and the function of readers as interpreters, assigning the nightingale a role of heightened importance to elevate her above sexist representation. His poem creates a complex relationship between the nightingale as a highly sexual pagan character, as a symbol of springtime love, and as a religious reminder of Christ's suffering.

Introduction and Background

Migrating to Northern Europe and England each spring, the nightingale fills the woods with song, beautiful and spontaneous to the ears of many listeners. The figure of the nightingale has similarly made a literary migration from the harsh world constructed by Ovid where she encounters the depths of human sorrow and despair. Emerging in Britain as a symbol of springtime love and joy, the nightingale's song can be heard throughout the day and even into the night ("Royal Society for the Protection of Birds"). Much of the literature produced in the nightingale's springtime home presents the bird as a happy reflection of the surrounding world budding with new life. The nightingale's song becomes a joyful celebration of the winter's end, yet each year, at summer's end, the bird will leave her temporary home, once again fleeing from the hardships of winter. Throughout the past two millennia the nightingale's song has crossed geographical and temporal boundaries, appearing in literature originating from many different countries. In the context of her Ovidian origin, the nightingale's song carries a heavy literary tradition with which successive authors work. The use and elaboration of previously established literature creates a dialogue between authors, necessitating consideration of the specific works the new authors choose. John Lydgate's poem, "The Nightingale," exemplifies the necessity of such scholarship in the field of medieval English literature, particularly in regard to authors who set the standards for many literary traditions from that period.

Lydgate was an English poet and priest born in 1370, who wrote throughout his life until the year of his death in 1451. Born 27 years after the birth of Chaucer, Lydgate's name is frequently tied with the latter's in the field of academia. Lydgate was

"acknowledged in his own time as the principle inheritor of the Chaucerian poetic tradition, he had enormous influence on other writers well into the sixteenth century—establishing traditions, dictating styles and creating a vocabulary for poetry more ample and eclectic than Chaucer's" (Pearsall 9). A professed admirer of Chaucer, Lydgate sought to befriend him, and imitated Chaucer's writing in several of his works. Such influence can be found in the "reverent and touching tributes to his 'master' with passages that do not exaggerate Lydgate's obligations to the 'well of English,' exemplified through the themes of his poems traced to Chaucerian sources" (Jokinen). Lydgate is a uniquely brilliant writer, however, whose talent has more recently been recognized by scholars. There has been a revival in the study of his works, independent of viewing him as an imitator of Chaucer:

> Though Lydgate's contemporaries considered him Chaucer's equal, perhaps even his superior, generations of nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics dismissed him as a failed Chaucerian and a Lancastrian sycophant. The new millennium is seeing something of a Lydgate revival, as scholars are appreciating the subtlety of Lydgate's politics along with the complexity of his poetics. (Winstead)

This recent revival in the study of Lydgate's works, within the last century, has focused greatly on his larger works: *The Seige of Thebes, The Temple of Glass, The Fall of Princes,* and *The Troy Book*. In fact, many collections of Lydgate works exclude his "minor poems" altogether, an unfortunate omission of valuable literature (Frankis 77). "The Nightingale" is one such poem worthy of scholarship, which exemplifies Lydgate's poetic ability as well as his contribution to medieval English literature.

Through a close reading of "The Nightingale" as well as comparisons to poems similar in genre and style from Lydgate's contemporaries, I intend to illuminate the importance of this small work in the larger context of the change that Philomela and the nightingale underwent at the hands of medieval English authors. Appearing as a phenomenon of the Middle Ages, "the most striking fact about the poetic use of the nightingale is its sudden popularity, a tradition seemingly created out of nowhere… in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries poets all over Europe are stimulated to use it as a theme, and with a strange unanimity in the handling of it suggests some source more fixed than merely personal reaction" (Shippey 46). Working with classical literature written centuries earlier, Lydgate and others undertook a bold task when they chose to write characters that already had a well-established literary history familiar to the writers and their audience. "The Nightingale" has not been given much academic consideration, yet is important for understanding how medieval English writers interacted with and processed representations of figures from antiquity, modifying their representations to better conform to what was then a modern Christian worldview.

I The Manuscript

Lydgate's "The Nightingale" appears in two manuscripts. The first is MS. Cotton Caligula AII found at the British Library dated the second half of the fifteenth century. In this manuscript, the poem extends from fol. 59a-64a; folios 1-139, comprising the entire manuscript, are written in one hand (Glauning xii). The contents of this manuscript are highly religious in nature, grouped together as *carmina*, or songs, suggesting that Lydgate's text was perceived first and foremost as a religious work. Preceding "The

Nightingale" is a "paraphrastical poem on the ten commandments" and is followed by the short poem, "Deus in nomine tuo salvum me fac," which can be read as a prayer to God for protection (British Library). This manuscript provides the version of the poem that is used in this paper.

The second manuscript is MS. Corpus Christi College, Oxford, 203, and is also dated to the second half of the fifteenth century. The poem extends from fol.1-21 and is also written throughout by the same hand; the first two lines of the poem and the preface from this manuscript are included in the version discussed in this paper (Glauning xiii). The first page of this manuscript is badly damaged by dirt, but an invocation of the Virgin Mary is decipherable. This manuscript does not provide the basis for transcription of the version of the poem I reference due to the damaged first page and because there is no title; a more recently inserted index entitles the work and attributes it to Lydgate. From this manuscript, the first two lines of the poem, as well as the preface, are included in the version discussed in this paper as they are absent in MS Cotton Caligula AII (Glauning xiii).

In MS Cotton, "The Nightingale" is embedded within a heavily religious context, as nearly all of the poems in the manuscripts are either dedicated to God or Jesus, or are spiritual meditations. Another of Lydgate's works, "The Chorle and the Bird," which is a moralizing tale, but not necessarily religious in nature, is presented early within the manuscript (British Library). As a priest, Lydgate's works seem to have been produced with an expectation of poetry that is religious in nature, which is reaffirmed by the presence of his poem in the context of other highly religious literary works. In the preface

to Lydgate' poem, he calls for a lusty audience who desires to hear an amorous tale, as will be mentioned further on. Lydgate's poem, however, was ultimately not included in a manuscript containing romances; the poem is highly religious and the spiritual element becomes of heightened importance. The beginning of Lydgate's poem calls for an audience that would like to hear a story of lust and romance, but the reader of this manuscript is aware that what they are reading will ultimately be religious in nature. The request for such an audience may seem out of place, but ultimately serves to reflect the intentions of the poem as will be argued in this thesis: to have the reader approach the poem with an expectation of romance and lust that will be transformed into a spiritual contemplation.

II The Source of Philomela and the Nightingale

The Ovidian source that Lydgate, Chaucer, and other medieval writers draw upon is *The Metamorphoses*. Ovid's original tale of "Tereus, Procne, and Philomela" provides the foundational story of the characters Philomela and the nightingale. In this tale, the Thracian king Tereus has married Procne, and after years of marriage the latter asks the king to travel to Athens and bring her younger sister, Philomela, to visit. Upon arriving in Athens and viewing Philomela, the Thracian king undergoes the first metamorphosis of the tale when he is transformed by his lust:

> When he first saw her, Tereus caught fire
> as instantly as ripe grain or dry leaves,
> or as hay stored in a barn goes up in blazes.
> Her beauty surely justified such passion,

but he was driven by an innate lust
a bent that Thracians have for lechery:
he burned with his and his nation's heat" (Ovid 6: 208-209)

Here, "lust" is translated from the Latin "*libido*," which refers to desire and lustful wantonness; reference to a more general desire that reveals itself to be sexual will be seen in Lydgate's poem as well. For Tereus, lust is not simply a passing emotion, but something that changes the very person who experiences it. Upon viewing Philomela, Tereus is described as a part of the natural world: if a flame is held to dry leaves or grain, it is expected to ignite and burn. Rather than encountering a rational human being, a king even, Tereus is now no more than a part of the natural world, hence subject to its laws. In Lydgate's poem lust is also presented as something that controls the one who experiences it, and accountability seems to disappear for men who are under the influence of such desire. Accountability is further removed from Tereus as he is reduced not only to the dry grains of the earth, but to a negative stereotype regarding the country of his origin. His nation's heat is originally described as its "*vitio,"* its crime or defect, and Tereus is no longer the glamorized king of a civilized country as he burns with a lust that is the product of his "defective" lineage. "*Vitio*" is also related to the idea of defiling or debauching someone, particularly women, which complicates Tereus' lineage; Ovid hints that by his very nature, Tereus is prone to sexually immoral behavior, prone to enacting sexual violence. In Lydgate's "The Nightingale," similarly presents lust as a force that controls the one who experiences it. Thracians are not present within Lydgate's poem, however, and instead such a vice is presented as a *vitium* of the male sex in general.

In Ovid and the medieval English dream poetry in which Philomela appears, spoken language plays an important role in the human cognitive process. Illustrating the importance of language upon one's actions, Tereus "locks [Philomela] in and openly admits / his shameful passion and his wicked plan, / then overwhelms the virgin all alone" (Ovid 211, 751-753). Description of the crime becomes a part of the *act* of rape, when the speaker's language presents the crime in the reader's mind before it takes place in the text. Tereus uses his linguistic abilities to discern between consensual and forced sex even before it occurs, illustrating the power of the mind that can make the decision to commit rape, which in turn causes the body to act. The importance of thought processes and their influence on one's actions can be seen in many medieval dream visions by narrators who approach the nightingale with what are revealed to be preconceived notions heard from others. These "rumors" ultimately guide the mind that hears or reads them and we encounter narrators who approach the nightingale with expectations based upon her association with lust. Lydgate's narrator, too, enters the woods speaking of his expectations regarding the nightingale, but his poem illustrates that the malleability of the mind allows for alternate perceptions, which yield different courses of action. Acts such as rape become preventable, then, when one's mind has disciplined itself in order to rethink one's intentions toward a sexually alluring female figure.

Remaining silent until Tereus' enacts violence upon her, Philomela bursts forth with a strength all her own-- she becomes an active character using her abilities to communicate to define what has happened to her as wrong. She becomes quite assertive at the end of her dialogue and proclaims her power:

> I'll cast aside my modesty and speak
> of what you've done; if I escape this place,
> I'll go among the people with my tale;
> imprisoned here, my voice will fill the trees
> and wring great sobs of grief from senseless rocks! (Ovid 6: 212, 785-789)

Philomela reaffirms that the act as rape has been committed though her description of it. While the reader has been aware this act since Tereus first announces his intentions, Philomela has remained a silent victim. Through language, she reemerges as an active figure when she counters Tereus' words with her own. Knowing that she may not return to her own home, Philomela directs her plea for pity to the natural world, to what Tereus has been reduced to in the passages discussed above. As long as she can speak, Philomela will attempt to reveal to Tereus the horror of his actions, to inspire mercy in what is otherwise a heart of stone, a "senseless rock" no more humane than the dry grain to which he is earlier compared.

Philomela does not express desire for revenge, but cries out for that which will comfort her soul: pity. She wishes for someone to hear her story; the marks on her body may disappear, but her words are the best evidence she has against Tereus and he is well aware of this. Philomela's initial metamorphosis is one of a silent Princess to a vessel for the spoken word: her body is ultimately transformed and she is reduced to a bird that dwells in the forest, whose song is heard by the natural world. In the medieval English dream visions that will be discussed, Philomela is encountered as a disembodied voice; we no longer see the human girl who stirred so much desire in the base heart of Tereus, we encounter the voice that was determined to share her sad story with the world. When

this voice is encountered by the dream vision's narrators, it has maintained reference to her original sexually potent character and she is viewed as a symbol of springtime love. In the dream vision's narrator, we encounter the mind of a male, a *Thracian* as presented in Ovid, who still finds her irresistibly alluring. Lydgate's text differs from other renderings of the nightingale as he acknowledges her association with lust, and then overwrites this perception by creating another metamorphosis in which the nightingale becomes a figure of Christ, elevating her far above the natural world and out of the lustful minds of men.

After Philomela claims that she will share her story with the world, the power of language is once again reinforced as it is her words, more than anything, that cause Tereus to become afraid and angry. Tereus realizes that her spoken words will have a destructive force equal to his own, and "such words provoke the savage tyrant's wrath / and fear in equal measure" (Ovid 6: 792-793). Tereus' fear is equal to his anger, a reflection of the fear and anger of Philomela, but he shows no such power with words. Instead, he reasserts his physical dominance when he:

> Spurred by both [fear and anger],
> he draws the sword he carried from its sheath…
> [Philomela] for whom the sword had given hope of death
> eagerly offers him her throat, but he,
> with a pair of pincer, takes her tongue instead. (Ovid 6: 793-4, 796-99)

The blade is welcome to Philomela as it represents death rather than shame, but what Tereus does is far more terrible. He destroys her only source of power and hope for

agency that would rectify some of his wrong-doings. Philomela has metamorphosed from a human being who shows power and hope through her ability to speak to a female vessel incapable of speech, dehumanized to the point of extreme vulnerability. After cutting Philomela's tongue off, Tereus "continued / to violate her mutilated body," so that the violent rape occurs now with no hope for an end, and no hope for Philomela to receive help, or even pity (Ovid 6: 810-11). The "her" that describes Philomela becomes de-personalized as she becomes the object that Tereus defines her as and she is simply a body—and a "damaged" one at that.

Philomela's humanity is returned to in Ovid when she shows the depth of human creativity and the will to persevere by weaving her story into a tapestry. Retrieving the power of language by a new means (visual representation) allows her to seek revenge. Her sister Procne, Tereus' wife, recognizes the injustice of rape, and even more so of depriving one of the ability to tell his or her tale: "And why does this one babble pleasantries, / While that one's silent?" (Ovid 6: 914-915). For Philomela, an emphasis on language again appears when she uses her body to show Tereus that he has just eaten his son: "and never more than then did she desire / the faculty of speech, so that she might / most fittingly express the joy she felt!" (Ovid 6: 956-58). For Philomela, the murder of Tereus' son does not fully satisfy her need for revenge—to be able to tell Tereus that he did not destroy her as he had hoped would give her more satisfaction than to see his own suffering. Later medieval English writers offer Philomela this voice through interpretation of the nightingale's song, but upon closer inspection many of the

tales can be read as defense of the force of lust that ultimately drove Tereus to his actions, as will be revealed through analysis of two medieval English dream visions.

The end of Book VI of *The Metamorphoses* is where we encounter the transformation of Philomela into the nightingale. Tereus becomes enraged at Procne and Philomela for feeding him his own son and chases the two women, who suddenly transform into birds. Philomela becomes the nightingale, who flies back to the woods in which she was held captive, and Procne becomes a swallow who flies to the roof-top and "even *now*, the signs of what they did / are visible in marks upon their breasts / and in the bloody stain upon their plumage" (Ovid 6: 970-72, emphasis mine). Writing Philomela into the future, the figure of the nightingale will carry the story of Philomela with her whatever the time or location. Tracing her appearance in literature, we see the nightingale emerge in medieval English poetry and her story is again silenced by male interpreters who fall victim to their own lust, as the authors who write them continue to be drawn to the idea of unrestrained male lust.

When she becomes the nightingale, her human body is exchanged for an animal one, but her voice is returned. When we encounter this voice as birdsong in medieval English dream visions, she sings of springtime love and lures restless males out of their beds. Philomela's metamorphosis does not occur in definitive stages as authors continue to carry the history of her past into the future use of her character and name. Lydgate's text finally transforms her into a spiritual being worthy of pity and untouchable by man.

III Dream Visions

If writing and poetry provide the conduit for the nightingale's transformation, then the form that the author chooses is important for understanding how and why the change occurs. In *The Metamorphoses*, Ovid provides a flexibility of subject matter, inherent in the very metaphors surrounding the transformation of the tale's characters. Authors in the Middle Ages begin to rework Ovid's tales, capitalizing upon the fluid nature of the source text. We being to see the forging of a tradition in which the dream vision emerges as tool authors can use to explore concepts of metaphor and change. Seth Lerer discusses the establishment of such a tradition in his work *Chaucer and His Readers*, emphasizing the dynamic foundations of medieval English literature:

> The genres of the dream vision, pilgrimage narrative, and ballad…were taken up by fifteenth century poets, not simply out of imitative fealty to Chaucer but instead largely because they were the rules for the formation of poetry. They defined a literature in English, and anyone who would aspire to be a poet would necessarily have to write according to those rules. (Lerer 11)

When Lydgate and Clanvowe write within the current standards expected of medieval English poets, they are not only writing according to the literary conventions of the time, but solidifying the creation and establishment of a tradition. When drawing upon a figure such as Philomela, the authors further strengthen their connection to other poets, creating a common thread throughout literature that simultaneously write into literary traditions of the past while integrating them into those of the future. The malleability of the subject matter in *The Metamorphoses* provides an excellent template for such a transition as Ovid's characters are constantly undergoing transformations within a single text.

The dream vision as a "genre," however, is a recently constructed idea as "no medieval writer ever used the term 'dream vision or discussed this kind of poem. Chaucer refers to his dream visions either as 'books' or 'things,'" but the medieval writer was well aware that they were creating this kind of poem (Russell 1, 3). Creating a sense of unity with other genres, the dream visions share a common element—their role as "books." In his work *Medieval Dream Poetry*, A.C. Spearing comments on the literary aspect of dream visions: "Medieval literature is highly bookish… The fact is that there has existed in the West, too, a written literature of spiritual adventure alongside and even within the more prominent tradition of physical adventure" (Spearing 7). The poet who explores intangible worlds is also closely tied to his craft and the dream vision provides a conduit for expressing the unknown. In turn, entering an arbitrary and ambiguous space of the psyche allows the reader to surrender to the unpredictable text at hand. Imagination, perception, and mastery of the craft of writing together create a vision of the natural world out of which much knowledge can be acquired, knowledge that is handed to the reader through an art form (the tangible poem itself). The degrees of separation between reader, writer, dreamer, the vision's narrator, and the imagined world that is encountered create a complex materiality that blurs the lines between the reality of pen and paper, the natural world, and the psychological space of a dream world.

The dream vision provides an excellent template for engaging with "The Nightingale," a poem that explores the human cognitive process. Dream visions often draw upon the medieval dream psychology that some types of dreams communicated wisdom to the dreamer. The source of a dream vision was attributed to God (a *visio*), the

devil, or other natural causes that provoke "a special, intense kind of altered consciousness, in which the dreamer is made the recipient of God's word, while at the same time telling us that state of altered consciousness has been achieved" (Brown 38). This particular genre appears to be a phenomenon for the Middle Ages as it died out by the Renaissance, suggesting dream visions held a special place in medieval literature. Spearing illustrates the relevance of the dream vision as a satisfying genre for the non-realistic subject matter contained in much of medieval literature that "belong to the world of the mind, could not be part of anyone's objective experience, and might therefore appropriately be framed in dreams" (Spearing 2). Medieval authors working with *The Metamorphoses* encounter a surreal imagined world for which the dream vision provides an appropriate template in which to unfold and elaborate upon Ovid's characters and their transformations. Playing upon the malleability of the psyche while in a dream, Lydgate's narrator undergoes an intentional mental transformation that allows him to redirect his thoughts. The narrator's ability to control his thought processes takes place within a dream setting, suggesting one can learn to control one's mental perceptions that are otherwise viewed as arbitrary and unpredictable as a dream.

Interpretation, in dreams and otherwise, is often arbitrary, a quality upon which Freud comments *The Interpretation of Dreams*, stating that "most of the artificial dreams contrived by poets are intended for some such symbolic interpretation, for they reproduce the thought conceived by the poet in a guise not unlike the disguise which we are wont to find in our dreams" (Freud 70). When writing a dream vision one must decide how the dream should be interpreted, how to best convey or conceal the intended message, and by

whom such interpretation should be performed. An author has a choice when deciding who he or she will write about, and how that character will behave; the reader's task is to figure out *why* a particular figure is chosen and how it functions within the text. When writing of Philomela and the nightingale, medieval English authors encounter a bird that exists in the natural world as well as Ovid's tale of how that bird came to be. What better format for exploring the potential of this bird than a dream vision that allows for a combination of the surreal and real? The complexity of the dream vision's form creates layers of meaning for the reader to unfold, participating in the process of interpretation.

Reader involvement in interpretation is encouraged at the very beginning of the dream vision when the reader is drawn into the reality of the speaker. Frequently, the poem begins by introducing a narrator who has trouble sleeping because of inner turmoil. In Sir John Clanvowe's *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, the narrator claims: "I am so shaken with the feuers white, / Of al this May yet slept I but a lyte," after which he recalls a rumor that hearing the nightingale's song is beneficial for sleepless lovers (41-42). Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight* mentions a similar struggle with hopes that the morning will "bidde lovers out of hir sleepe awake, / Ans hertes hevy for to recomforte / From dreriheed of hevy nightes sorowe" (7-9). At the beginning of dream visions, springtime birds are almost always present as well. For example, in *The Complaint of the Black Knight,* the narrator encounters the nightingale who "So loude songe, that al the wode rong / Lyke as it shuld shiver in peces smale…/ [the nightingale] With so gret mighte her voys gan out-wreste / Right as her herte for love wolde breste" (Lydgate, *Complaint* 45-46, 48-49). The nightingale's song is described as a force powerful enough

to shatter the trees in the forest, not to mention her own body. Surreal images are common within the dream vision, particularly in regard to animals that are often "preternatural and described in realistic, emblematic, or allegorical terms, opening up the possibility for readers of multiple interpretations of character choice" (Russell 6). The reader becomes eyewitness to a dream occurring in the narrator's mind and such voyeurism gives the reader freedom to actively interpret the poem as events unfold. "The Nightingale" presents a complex unfolding of the levels of interpretation that can occur within a single text, as will be explored further on.

Another aspect of the dream vision that encourages the reader's interpretative abilities can be found in the poem's end, which often presents "something within the dream [that] causes the dreamer to awaken before the full significance of the dream can be explained, though the audience is left with a few highly likely choices which are likely to stimulate debate about important cultural values that are in contention or undergoing change" (Sanders). Dream visions, then, are not necessarily poems strictly about love, but debates that allow the audience reflection of what they have just read. The ending of a dream vision reminds the reader that what has just been read is a creation of the narrator's mind, and has been constructed from a fictional character's experience. Dream visions were, however, also very powerful in that they supposedly came from God, the devil, or natural causes, as previously mentioned, and are therefore not necessarily solely a product of the narrator's imagination. Such powerful sources give credibility where there may be skepticism about the validity of the narrator's experience. Lydgate's poem "The Nightingale" gains further credibility as the subject matter clearly reflects the supposed

origin of the vision—the nightingale sings about love for Jesus and a remembrance of his suffering, creating a heavy religious bent to what could otherwise be disregarded as trivial or arbitrary. The nightingale also undergoes a great transformation into a Christ-like figure, imbuing this figure with a new role that alters her gender and purpose, and will be discussed in great detail.

Essential for interpretation of Philomela and the nightingale's song is the presence of the forest that is frequently encountered in dream visions. For Tereus, the forest provides a secret space in which he can continue to enact violence free of repercussions. In fact, in *The Metamorphoses* and in many medieval English dream visions, the forest serves as a private location that meets the needs of those entering it and "Ovid presents the motif of the 'ideal mixed forest' in an elegant variation: the grove is not there from the beginning, it comes into existence before our eyes… Chaucer, Spenser, and Keats follow his example" (Curtius 194-95). The forest constructed throughout so much medieval poetry creates a haven into which the narrators of dream visions flee upon entering the dream state and, in the poems I will be discussing, it is where the nightingale can be found.

Despite the similarities in the setting (the forest) of Ovid, Chaucer, Lydgate, and others' poems, only the medieval English poems present the nightingale as a symbol of springtime love. How she has come to symbolize this rather than the secret captive kept as a sexual slave is problematic. Her character recalls her origin in Ovid, yet her role changes. She becomes a symbol of love whose cry is often described as "ocy! ocy!," or "kill! kill!," representing both love and death, particularly through a passionate and

violent murder. The maintenance of this cry, coupled with the erasure of her origin, presents a dilemma for the poet: should this figure become entirely independent of her violent origin? Maintain the connection but alter the reasons that she speaks of both love and death? Perhaps both? In the case of the latter, such a combination provides an account of a disturbing transformation of rape into love, a conflation of what it means to be a passive victim or an active figure who understands the evils of violating one's love and trust. The intention cannot be known, except through the evidence the texts give us regarding what the nightingale will ultimately transform into and how it does so. What better symbol for such transformation than a bird—a bird who migrates, but who will always return to sing the same song, but not necessarily the same message.

IV The Nightingale in Lydgate's Dream Vision

A vast amount of scholarship is yet to be done on Lydgate's "The Nightingale," a poem that illuminates the ways in which Greek and Latin poetry influences, and is in turned manipulated by, medieval English writers. In "The Nightingale," as in other works from this period that will be discussed, the nightingale has been separated from her original Ovidian source. Philomela becomes a martyr rather than an active force who sought her revenge; the nightingale a bird whose value lay in the beauty and strangeness of her song, interpreted by a male narrator who frequently does so in a dream-state. Roughly 1400 years after Ovid's *Metamorphoses* introduced the characters of Philomela and the nightingale, medieval scholars and readers were still familiar with his work. Considered master writers themselves, Chaucer and Lydgate re-wrote the nightingale into their current society's literature, and the works they produced suggest that a woman

betrayed by the sexual allure of her body will remain an object of lust for men. Rape becomes justified as unfortunate, but ultimately physically uncontrollable, and therefore worthy of either pardon or, even more conveniently, of silence.

Lydgate's "The Nightingale" is a dream vision that begins with a narrator who has a difficult time sleeping. While lying restless in bed, he imagines he hears the nightingale calling him, bidding him rise and come to her in the forest. The narrator enters the forest and at the moment when he makes contact with the nightingale, the poem's tone changes. Rather than singing of love and springtime, the nightingale begins to sing of Jesus' death, relates stories of the Bible, and presents a sermon on the importance of abstaining from sin through several Biblical examples. Lydgate's poem follows many of his contemporaries' conventional use of the dream vision and the nightingale, except the transformative element associated with the nightingale is visible within the poem itself. The nightingale initially recalls her roles as sexualized object and bird of springtime, but undergoes a sudden and drastic transformation shortly after the poem begins, becoming a religious vessel for God's word. The narrator describes the transformation, calling attention to the mental processes that are responsible for the way in which a well known figure is contextualized and possibly reconstructed by the one who encounters it.

"The Nightingale" comes from a common source, which Lydgate makes clear to his readers: "This brid, of whom y haue to you rehersed, / Whych in her song expired thus and deyede, / In latyn fond y in a boke well versed" (Lydgate 106-8). Although Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* certainly could fall into the category of a Latin book "well

versed," Lydgate chooses a poem written more than a century before his own birth that was still quite popular in the Middle Ages, written by the English archbishop John Peckham—a religious man and poet just like Lydgate (Glauning xxxix). Lydgate has still selected a source from the past, which itself *does* maintain a reference to Ovid as the poem of inspiration was entitled "Philomena," the Latin word for "nightingale" and whose temporal locality creates a timeline upon which the figure of Philomela and the nightingale change; he doesn't undertake the task of altering Ovid, and instead chooses a somewhat more contemporary source. Although "The Nightingale" is considered an attempt to translate Peckham's poem, Lydgate expands upon "Philomena" by creating a new role for the figure of the nightingale. William Hodapp touches upon some important differences between Peckham's poem and Lydgate's rendering of it, commenting that the nightingale in Peckham's poem functions "as a figure for the devout soul seeking Christ in mystical prayer," and all of her discourse is addressed to God (Hodapp 77). In Lydgate's poem, the nightingale directly addresses the narrator, who then relates her words to us. As a "translator" of Peckham, Lydgate's poem draws attention to the arbitrary nature of interpretation, reminding the reader that the "true meaning" of an author's poem or a bird's song is subjective, but that one can be influenced and guided by the author's rhetoric. This awareness of active and arbitrary interpretation becomes a crucial element in the narrator's own transformation and the nightingale's eventual metamorphosis into a figure of Christ.

In Peckham's poem, "the soul meditates on the life and passion of Christ, living through a mystic day before dying of love as the nightingale dies through the passion of

her song" (Gardham). Unlike "The Nightingale," Peckham's poem is not a dream vision and therefore does not have the surreal quality of the imagined forest or narrator who is drawn into that space. Instead, Peckham's poem begins with a description of the nightingale as having a religious function as she flies to the tree-tops "to sing more loudly to the glory of God; / Thus does the wood resound with its song" (Baird 63, 8-9). Choosing this as the source for his poem, Lydgate maintains the association of the nightingale as a religious figure, while integrating the sexuality and violence associated with Philomela. Lydgate's narrator is drawn to the nightingale for her association with lust, and her role becomes religious when the perception of her is actively altered within the narrator's mind. In Peckham's poem, the narrator recognizes the religious element of the nightingale's song and then states that "this song / Can fittingly be applied to our salvation" (Baird 65, 13-14). The nightingale in Peckham is a conduit for religious belief and an example of a devout Christian. In Lydgate's text, when she sings at the hours of liturgy, it is not a participation in the Christian practice, but a re-enactment of it, transforming the nightingale's identity into a Christ-like figure. A crucial difference between the two poems, Lydgate goes beyond the established religious use of the nightingale in order to offer her a final metamorphosis that will align her with Christ, removing her from her Ovidian origins and rewriting her as a Christian bird not because she is devout, but because she *becomes* Christ.

Despite the important transformation the nightingale undergoes in "The Nightingale," there are very few critical works on the poem. Albert R. Chandler, in his article on the nightingale in classical poetry briefly mentions Peckham's poem and

Lydgate's reworking of it in terms of the piety that was attributed to the bird by members of the clergy:

> According to these Latin and English poems, the nightingale knows when the day of her death has come. She begins to sing at dawn and her song at different hours celebrates the events of religious history from the creation of the world to Christ's passion. She gradually exhausts herself and at the hour corresponding to the death of Christ she breathes her last. To the mediaeval clergy the whole visible world was a system of symbols of religious truth, and the nightingale found her honorable place in that system. (Chandler 83)

Why the clergy chose the nightingale specifically as a messenger for Christ is an important question. Referencing such dynamic figures as Philomela and the nightingale, and considering Lydgate's importance in his own time and his influence on future writers, this "small" poem cannot be ignored and is indeed important in medieval scholarship.

William Hodapp provides a comparison between Peckham and Lydgate's poems, calling attention to the differences in poetic structure. Peckham's poem is composed of eighty-seven four-line stanzas, following the Goliardic measure of thirteen syllables with a mono-rhyme while Lydgate's poem is composed of fifty-nine stanzas in rhyme royal; the difference in structure "lies primarily in amplification afforded by the formal demands of the meter and rhyme royal stanzas" (Hodapp 76). The importance of the difference in structure is reflected in the role of Lydgate as "translator": "in the Middle Ages, theorists and poets often considered translation to involve both a text's movement across linguistic boundaries and its amplification through the translator's creativity" (Hodapp 78). Given the freedom to expand upon Peckham as a creative pursuit, Lydgate's poem not only includes many important elements of "Philomena," but assigns

new meaning and importance to the events that take place. Rather than encountering a bird who sings of devout Christian love, Lydgate's poem explores the human cognitive process, the function of readers as interpreters themselves, and assigns the nightingale a role of heightened importance. He creates a work that is derivative in that it involves a spiritual understanding of the nightingale's song, yet wholly innovative as he creates a complex relationship between the nightingale as a highly sexual pagan character, as a symbol of springtime love, and as a religious reminder of Christ's suffering.

In Lydgate's "The Nightingale," we have an example of how the nightingale is approached years after Ovid, Peckham, Chaucer, and others have left their impression upon Lydgate's society through literary works. In several medieval English poems, which will be mentioned shortly, Philomela is erased from the nightingale's past. By the time these poems have appeared, readers are familiar with the bird's odd cry of *ocy!* and several interpretations of it. This paper attempts to offer insight regarding the nightingale's transformation from a pagan female symbol of love to a male Christian symbol of martyrdom. An understanding of this short work illustrates the ways that medieval English literary works were in conversation with one another, as well as with literatures of the past. Before I present a close reading of Lydgate's poem, I will discuss two other poetic works by his contemporaries, Chaucer and Sir John Clanvowe; both poems illustrate that although the nightingale and Philomela are presented as independent entities, the Ovidian source can still be found within the literature of this time.

Chapter One: Representations of the Nightingale as Victim and Seductress in the Work of Geoffrey Chaucer and Sir John Clanvowe.

I Philomela in *The Legende of Good Women*

An important medieval English work in which Philomela appears is *The Legende of Good Women*, which will be discussed in greater detail shortly. A dream vision, this work presents a series of women from antiquity whom Chaucer praises, for better or worse, as being "good." A decade after *The Legende*, John Lydgate befriends both the author and his son. Apart from the importance of a friendly personal relationship, the written dialogue between these men is important when understanding the ways in which medieval English literature, its form and content, would have a significant impact on future literature and literary audiences. In "The Nightingale," Lydgate exemplifies his skills in writing, his playfulness and creativity in dialogue with his contemporaries, and the power that comes from becoming a master of one's own trade.

Lydgate's audience would be very much the same as Chaucer's and familiar with classical literature. Ovid had "been admired all through the Middle Ages, but admired for his subject matter, on which [medieval people] put their own interpretation," clearly exemplified through the use of such Ovidian characters as those in *Metamorphoses* (Thomson 170). When considering character of the nightingale in John Lydgate's works, there are a few important things one must consider. "The Nightingale" was written 5 years before Lydgate's death and 46 years after Chaucer's, and an audience familiar with both authors would likely have read Chaucer's works prior to this particular poem. When

Chaucer's audience read *The Legende,* they encountered a figure from antiquity who underwent a metamorphoses in Ovid, and then undergoes subsequent transformation in more contemporary literature. In Lydgate's work, they confront the bird, the transformative symbol of Philomela's escape, in a new setting independent of *her* original Ovidian role. Whether or not Chaucer's writing erased Philomela's fate or the nightingale's tragic history from the minds of his readers cannot be known. What is important, however, is the written evidence left to us by one of Chaucer's most important readers, Lydgate.

The Legende of Good Women is a dream vision that praises women in a successive account of historical female figures who have undergone wrongdoings at the hands of men, or who themselves have committed acts viewed as evil or unacceptable by Chaucer's society. Although this sounds like a proto-feminist text, the poem is frequently considered satirical in nature, exemplifying the ways in which information and related tales can be manipulated to create the desired perception- in this case, martyrs and other innocent women receive the praise expected of all audiences who have read them. Women such as Medea, however, are included in *The Legende*, causing one to question whether a woman's individual actions should be factored into an account her overall character. For Philomela's character in Ovid, action play a key role in the perception of her, as she is the victim of a violent act, takes action to remedy her situation, and transforms into a bird whose actions are limited to singing in the trees. Never in a state of stasis, Philomel and the nightingale are complicated characters who cannot be reduced to

terms such as “good” and “bad.” Chaucer breaks apart Ovid’s tale, intercepting Philomel’s metamorphosis before it occurs, in order to portray her as wholly “good.”

Chaucer’s presentation of Philomel references Ovid, yet alters and deletes key aspects of the original tale, a practice that is seen throughout the *Legend*. Chaucer begins with a lament to God for having created a man such as Tereus:

> Thou yevere of the formes, that hast wrought
> This fayre world, and bar it in thy thought …
> Why suffrest thou that Tereus was bore,
> That is in love so fals and so forswore,
> That fro this world up to the firste hevene
> Corrumpeth, whan that folk his name nevene? (Chaucer 2228-29, 34-37).

While wrong-doings at the hands of women are forgiven in the *Legend*, male actions are blamed upon God who created men that way. According to the story of creation, however, God did not create multiple men, he created one man out of whom two offspring are born, two characters who come to represent the “good” and the “bad.” God becomes accountable for man’s actions because he has created man with the potential to do evil-- it is simply a trait inherent within the being, a predisposition based on sex. Men and women are both presented as products of their sexes whose actions are deplorable or forgivable based on the reader’s bias. Beginning his tale with a deferral of guilt and a pardon for Tereus, the narrator wonders why God would create such a monster, but also why he allows such an “inherent” evil quality of men to be used to harm women. The speaker claims that Philomela is a good woman, one who experienced violence at the

hand of a duplicitous man, but who does not actively seek revenge. The narrator pities her as a victim, but decides that she is a "good" woman for accepting the evil that God created, the potential for evil in all men—the act of rape is presented not as an intellectual or moral decision, but as an uncontrollable and inherently physical need, as was seen in the earlier discussion of Tereus' lust.

In addition to lamenting the existence of Tereus', Chaucer states that the former's name is a disease. This comparison suggests that literary transmission is infectious, becoming a good that will inspire others such as Chaucer or a disease that will forever affect the bearer of such knowledge. Chaucer himself states that he cannot read the tale for when:

> I his foule storye rede,
> myne eyen wexe foule and sore also
> Yit last the venym of so longe ago,
> That it enfecteth him that wol beholde
> The storye of Tereus, of which I tolde. (Chaucer 2239-43)

The story is initially described as Tereus', which causes negative emotional and physical reactions as the narrator's own body (his eyes) become similar to that which he despises in the story. He tells us that such a venomous tale, although ancient, will still infect the "him" who will read it. The narrator does not refer to a multitude of readers that would react this way, as "hem" (them) would be used instead. Being both masculine and singular, "him" most often refers to males although it is sometimes used for women as well (who would most likely be referred to as hir(e)). Here, however, women have been

excluded and the narrator addresses a single "him," a male mind that will become infected. Although the narrator suggests that he may show disdain for the story, he never clearly states *how* he becomes infected. Perhaps his eyes and his perception become sick at what they are they are seeing, but the physical transformation suggests that the narrator becomes foul like Tereus and his story.

The fluid nature of the original Ovid allows transformation of the whole tale, so that it becomes *Tereus'* tale, which in turn causes Chaucer to undergo a transformation when he internalizes what he is reading. Presented not with the original Ovidian tale, nor the narrator's own account, the audience receives "the story of Tereus," Not surprisingly, the tale omits Philomela's revenge and she remains his victim, a product of not just Tereus' lust, but the lustful evils that all men have the potential to enact. Philomela is condescended to as being a good woman by remaining his victim, his passive captive, one who is forced to accept man as he was "created." Another interesting side effect occurs when the author becomes infected by Tereus' story and then refers to it as his own; Tereus has truly infected his body and mind and they become one and the same author. This transformation illuminates the ways in which literature and other works of art become a part of our selves and of our own reality. Transmission becomes not only necessary to preserve certain works, it also creates an ever-evolving masterpiece whose message may "infect" the author with its meaning, but also one whose transmission is based on arbitrary interpretation.

Chaucer has shown that although a great deal of a character's perception can be found in the text's representation of him or her, equally important is the reader's own

interpretation, in this particular case—a male reader. The introduction to *The Legende* includes a dedication to the Queen, and gender begins to play an important role into how one perceives, and in turn, represents characters; if the Queen is to read through male eyes, perhaps she will view these women as good, an ironic twist to his intentions for writing the poem. Chaucer's reading of Philomela in the *Legend* is sexist in its content and approach, yet portrays women in a positive light. Reading through the lens of gender produces a biased interpretation whether or not it appears to be sympathetic to women. *The Legende of Good Women, The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* (to be discussed shortly), and Lydgate's "The Nightingale," present similar arguments that it is a *male* body that has been built with the flaw of unrestrainable sexual urges; because of this, the erasure of Philomela's transformation from the end of Chaucer's re-telling is not surprising. Capitalizing on the possibilities for a malleable character, Philomela's metamorphosis does not occur when she becomes the nightingale, but in her subsequent interpretation as a woman of honor, a victim, a nightingale.

Tereus' presence is key when presenting Philomela as a victim, either as a man or in his metamorphosis as a hoopoe, and in some retellings-- an eagle. *The Legende of Good Women* mentions the eagle once in a manner appropriate to Ovid's Philomela, when she shakes with fear "Ryght as… / the culver that of the egle is smiten" (Chaucer 2318-19). Philomela's interaction with Tereus is initially described in predator-prey terms, likening her to an innocent dove. The metaphor, however, is made quite apparent ("ryght as") and ends there. As the prey of an animal, Philomela becomes a victim at the very beginning of the tale in both *The Metamorphoses* and *The Legende*. In Ovid,

however, she ceases to be a victim the moment she uses her intellect, creating a voice for herself by weaving her story into a tapestry. Chaucer prefaces this act with an indication of Philomela's literacy: "And coude eek rede, and wel y-nogh endyte, / But with a penne coude she nat wryte; / But lettres can she weven to and fro" (Chaucer 129-131). Philomela can read and weave letters into a tapestry, but she cannot write them with a pen; Sheila Delany discusses the modern reader's reception of these lines and our tendency to equate literacy with the ability to write, but reveals that writing with a pen during the Middle Ages was a highly specialized skill (Delany 218). However, the image of Philomela laboriously constructing the tapestry as her only hope for escape is a pitiable image because "her weaving is not one of many forms of communication available to her, but a real transcendence of silence (Delany 220). Expanding upon Ovid's original work in this part of the tale, yet deleting events that are essential to the re-telling of Ovid heightens its importance. Chaucer's text lingers upon the image of Philomela as an imprisoned victim who is diligently, but not vengefully, working towards her rescue. She is pitied within this text, but only because she is a victim for those twelve months, which continues into eternity when Chaucer omits the original ending of the tale.

When Philomela has completed her "story," Procne's reception as a reader recalls Chaucer own "infection," his transformation, upon reading Ovid's tale. Procne receives the tapestry sent by Philomela, and when she views it: "No work she spak, for sorwe and eek for rage" (Chaucer 2374). The narrator's transformation at what he reads is described as an infection that causes him to read the story as if it were Tereus'; Procne's transformation is similarly into that with which she identifies: the female, and she

embodies the silence of her sister. Mark Amsler, in his article "Rape and Silence: Ovid's Mythography and Medieval Readers," discusses Procne as a reader of Philomel: "Recalling Ovid's version, Progne's voiceless response to Philomela's text empathetically identifies Progne with her violated and lacerated sister" (Robertson 89). Gender is not necessarily constructed in this text, and is rather an active force that causes certain mental and physical reactions. Attention is drawn to the construction and limitations of gendered perception when Procne represents female readers who identify with the female characters in the story. Further solidifying the idea that male reactions to lust are somewhat uncontrollable, the male narrator identifies with Tereus, ultimately viewing and writing the tale through his eyes.

In addition to the weaving of the tapestry that tells her story, Philomela is further empowered, in Ovid, when she and her sister Procne enact a violent revenge on Tereus. While Ovid's tale is the source for Chaucer's own, this particular character is not, at least not after the point where she ceases to be a victim. And perhaps our narrator had no "choice," but to end the story here, considering he has been infected by and writes "Tereus' story," carefully crafting the text to remove aspects from Ovid that Tereus' would no doubt look unfavourably upon. Mark Amsler comments that in regard to the purpose of *The Legende of Good Women*, "Chaucer's narrator presents the severed text as a rumination on rewriting one's stories and on representing and reading sexual violence" (Robertson 91). When re-writing Ovid's tale, Chaucer encountered the nightingale not only as a symbol of a woman wronged, but a woman who refused to remain a victim and actively sought revenge on her attacker. When the story is re-written through the eyes of

one who identifies with Tereus', Philomel ceases to be good when she refuses to remain his victim.

In Ovid, Philomela's metamorphosis is complex and occurs in stages when she transforms from princess to victim, to an active force seeking revenge, and finally into a nightingale; such stratification allows room for subsequent authors to re-view these metamorphoses and the change of Philomel's character at different points in the tale. A fragmented presentation of Philomela and the nightingale, as seen in *The Legende*, is common, and Lydgate's poem similarly recalls Ovid, yet presents the nightingale independent of Philomela. When presented with such carefully chosen aspects of a particular character, consideration of what the author simultaneously omits and references is necessary in understanding how the character is constructed and what this reveals about the poem in its entirety.

II The Nightingale in Clanvowe's *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*

Sir John Clanvowe was a contemporary of Lydgate and Chaucer who writes of the nightingale in his dream vision *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, dated 1403, which was attributed to Chaucer until the late nineteenth century (Scattergood 14). A.C. Spearing comments that this poem "indicates a sensitive reading by Clanvowe of Chaucer's dream-poems… looking back to the *Roman de la Rose,* with its opposition between love and reason, and its offering to the Dreamer of an insight into the true nature of Love's service" (180-181). Addressing issues of "love" and "reason," the dream vision provides a suitable template in which the poet can address such issues outside the bounds of reality. This poem also provides another instance of the nightingale's presence within

medieval English literature, its relevance to the ongoing dialogue, and an interpretation of the nightingale's song to which Lydgate's own can be compared. In *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* a male narrator in a dream-state becomes witness to a debate between a cuckoo and a nightingale; the former argues against love due to the pain and sorrow it can cause while the nightingale defends the positive aspects of love and pledges allegiance to the God of Love (Cupid). The nightingale is finally overcome with sorrow because of the cuckoo's words and the narrator comes to her rescue by throwing a stone at the latter. The nightingale is grateful and tells the narrator to ignore the cuckoo's words and follow her own advice in regard to love.

The poem is included in *Bodley 638*, a fifteenth century manuscript comprised of allegorical love visions and courtly love complaints; these works are all similar in genre and similar enough in style to be originally attributed to Chaucer (Robinson xxxvii). The style and subject matter of Lydgate's "The Nightingale," could certainly find a suitable place in the context of the themes of love and visions in *Bodley 638*. The religious component of the poem, however, bears great weight on the manner in which the poem was received, as is evident from its inclusion in MS Cotton that is comprised of literary works with a heavy religious bent. The importance of the appearance of Clanvowe's text in *Bodley 638* for the purpose of this thesis is simply to call attention to the way that dream and love visions produced at this time follow the foundations laid by Chaucer, whose love visions and courtly love complaints "began to inspire more and more works in the same genre by other poets" (Robinson xxxv). Hence the "tradition" of writing the nightingale within the context of a romantic dream vision, out of which Lydgate breaks;

his transformation of the nightingale into a Christ-figure ultimately removes his work from other dream visions at this time, while simultaneously drawing upon the very literary foundations that produced the dream vision as an appropriate tool for writing of the nightingale.

Clanvowe's dream vision provides a tangible encounter with nature and a forest, and the less tangible representations of thoughts and imagined spaces. The imagined forest conflates the reality of one's environment with the more abstract idea of how one perceives and interprets such an environment. The nightingale is a very real bird, but any philosophy that she offers comes strictly from the mind of a narrator who gives speech and meaning to her song. In addition to the historical origin of Philomela and the sexuality associated with her tale, "the nightingale and, in fact, all birds and particularly songbirds are recognized as highly potent sexual symbols" (Pfeffer 158). The violent rape and misuse of lust within Ovid's tale is combined with the sexuality symbolized by birds. When presented with the association of lust and sexuality, one must question if and where there is a place for the rape, revenge, and metamorphosis of Philomel that we encounter in Ovid. Although Clanvowe's tale begins as a story of love and the joyful lust that enters many hearts during spring, the violent tale from which the nightingale originates cannot be ignored.

When encountering polar opposites of the victim Philomela, as seen in my discussion of *The Legende*, and the romantic bird of spring, the reader is presented with a complex symbol to decode: "associated with the ancient story of rape and revenge, the bird sings a lament; associated with the spring and the May morning, the nightingale

sings simply of happy love" (Goldin 1). The drastically different interpretations of the nightingale's song present a problem when attempting to reconcile such opposites. Love and lust are conflated within this text, and although the Nightingale professes knowledge of the "rules" of love, her arguments throughout the text expose the fact that anyone can claim to be a servant of love through his or her own interpretation of how the God of Love wants people to act. The speaker of *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* transforms the ancient symbol of the nightingale by creating an unwavering allegiance between this bird and the God of Love, while subtly maintaining its connection to Philomela. Through this allegiance and ignorance of its past (literally and figuratively), the nightingale represents happy love, with beliefs that contradict the original experience of Philomela, the character from whom her symbolic existence stems.

An interesting point within this tale suggests a remembrance of the literary origin of the nightingale. The Cuckoo calls into question the Nightingale's cry of "ocy! ocy!," which the former deems incomprehensible. The bird's call independent of its meaning is a "question of sound, and although the birds are speaking in order to debate, the reader is reminded of their real nature" (Pfeffer 195). Drawing attention to the birds' roles as beasts, their debate may not seem as sophisticated as the rest of their rhetoric. "Oci" represented the cry of the nightingale in Old French, and is the imperative form of the verb *ocir*, which means "to kill." The Nightingale's song becomes not just a manner of communicating her tale of woe, as originally thought, but a command for others to kill the enemies of love. She initially states that she directs her cry towards those "That menen oght ayen love amys" (Clanvowe 130). Clanvowe's Nightingale wishes to bestow

a shameful death on all those who misuse their concepts of love, just as Tereus abused his feelings of lust in a destructive manner towards Philomela. The Nightingale, however, then abuses her own self-prescribed authority to condone murder by expanding her list of people to kill and includes all those "That thenke not her lyve in love to lede" (Clanvowe 132). To an audience familiar with the nightingale's violent history, this idea is less irrational than her previous justifications of murder. Philomela did not lose faith in the loyalty that can be an integral part of love, demonstrated through her laborious work on the tapestry and faith that her sister, a person who loves her a great deal, will rescue her. Clanvowe's nightingale not only pledges full allegiance to the God of Love, but wishes death and shame on those who reject or abuse the varying aspects of love. Clanvowe creates an image of a rape victim whose desire for revenge is equated with an irrational desire for all who disagree with her to suffer an unjustifiable death. The events leading up to the murderous revenge of Philomela are ignored, and only the violent outcome is addressed, so that Philomela transformation becomes one of a vengeful woman into an irrationally vengeful bird. Rape is presented as a crime not worthy of justice, lessening the severity of the act and humiliating its victim by presenting desire for revenge as irrational.

When the speaker of *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* goes away from the bed of his home "But in to a wode that was fast by, / I wente forthe allone priuely," he enters a scene similar to the prison in which Tereus kept Philomel: "a lodge in distant woods" (Clanvowe 58-59, Ovid 181). Clanvowe's speaker has fevers that he claims arise from Love's dart and while he lays at home occupied by his "suffering," he remembers "That

hit wer good to her the nyghtyngale / Rather then the leude cukkow syng" (Clanvowe 49-50). The desire to satisfy or come to terms with lust draws both of these men into the woods; Tereus is drawn to Philomela, while Clanvowe's speaker wishes to hear her song. Upon entering the wood, the speaker undergoes his own transformation when he falls into a hypnotic state "Not al on slepe, ne fully waking-- / And in that swowe me thought I herde singe / That sory bridde, the lewede cukkowe" (Clanvowe 88-90). Expecting to hear the nightingale's song, the narrator enters the forest hoping to sooth or relieve his troubles, and is surprised by the voice of the Cuckoo. Manipulating the audience's perception of the bird through its introduction as "lewd," the narrator suggests its songs are associated with ignorance and wickedness (MED). An example of the ability of interpretation to form (or re-form) a character is evident in the narrator's presentation of these birds in a manner that will influence how the reader perceives them. In this case, the impending argument between the two birds is swayed in favor of the Nightingale who the speaker hears next: "I herde, in the next busshe me beside, / A nyghtyngale so lustely singe" (Clanvowe 97-98). In contrast to the Cuckoo, the Nightingale sings of pleasure and delight. However, "lust" and "lewd" are not polar opposites as are the arguments presented in their songs. The difference lies in their argumentative abilities: emotion (lust) vs. reason (or the lack thereof, as associated with lewdness). Philomela's original metamorphosis into the nightingale becomes complicated when the song she carries in her new form is irrational, causing one to question what is unreasonable about her desire for revenge, and how it is connected to her desire for love.

As the Nightingale's opponent, the Cuckoo has a vehement opposition to love, and his reasons are practical. He demonstrates this by offering examples of the possible negative outcomes of love: "For ther of cometh disese and heuynesse, / Sorow and care, and mony a grete seknesse" (Clanvowe 171-172). Although the Cuckoo is introduced as ignorant, his arguments are practical and measured in terms of knowledge. The poem ignores the Nightingale's ability to reason and describes her song in emotional terms. She offers opinions on love that relate to emotion and more abstract spiritual beliefs, "For Love his seruants euermore amendeth, / And fro al euel tachches him defendeth" (Clanvowe 191-192). She defends and promotes the positive aspects of love through belief in the intangible God of Love and faith in his ability to protect his followers. Their battle is not one of wits, but one that appeals to an audience who sides with emotion and ignores reason. Given the voice Philomela once lost, the Nightingale does not move the woods to pity, and instead plays a foolish advocate for love to those drawn to the place of her captivity in hopes of finding release for insatiable lust.

As the cuckoo and the nightingale argue about how one should approach love, one is aware that these are birds that must choose a mate in order to procreate rather than having sex because of lust and desire. A key factor in deciding upon a mate for humans, however, resides in the feelings and perceptions one has regarding love and lust. As mentioned in the introduction, Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* describes Tereus' physical reaction to lust as an uncontrollable force that transforms him. Ovid presents sexual drive as a dangerous precipice upon which an unstable heart or mind (emotion and/or reason) can become a destructive force. Clanvowe's narrator interprets the Nightingale's song as

lusty, suggesting it may be misinterpreted by the lewd mind that hears her, just as Philomela's dance unknowingly creates dangerous lust in her observer's mind; this places the narrator in Tereus' situation. In *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, the Nightingale sings of the lust lovers feel in their hearts, but attributes it to a different cause: "For love his seruants… fro al euel tachches him defendeth, / And maketh hem to brenne as eny fire / In trouthe and in worschipful desire" (Clanvowe 191-194). Upon first glance, this fire may seem nobler than the one that ignited Tereus' lust as if he were a dry piece of grain. The Nightingale creates an irrational and undying allegiance to the God of Love, causing the one who experiences such desire to acquire that which he or she lusts after. The purely emotional experience of love that the Nightingale professes ignores the negative aspects of such desire, and can be viewed as a validation or disturbing justification of Tereus' actions.

While professing her undying allegiance to the God of Love, the Nightingale addresses a new issue for lovers who feel powerless regarding the outcome of love: "For he that truly loue's seruaunt ys / Wer lother to be schamed then to dye" (Clanvowe 159-160). Perhaps also addressed to those against whom love is misused in an ill and "shameful" manner, the Nightingale presents a single-minded alternative to following the God of Love: death. Although she may have no other choice, Philomela follows this belief in *Metamorphoses* after she has been raped by Tereus when she gladly offers her throat to Tereus' sword. Rather than receiving the death for which she hopes, Philomela's second physical violation occurs when Tereus silences her. As a nightingale, she may be able to sing her song of woe, but it is then interpreted according to her listener's desire.

Philomela's situation introduces another problem as to what should be done when one can neither follow nor deny the God of Love, and becomes instead a tortured victim of it. Philomela follows the parameters of love that the Nightingale offers, but for her this results in further torture. Tereus' desire, in turn, can be viewed as an allegiance to the God of Love. Loyalty to the "rules of love" is subjective to each person who believes, which leaves room for self-justification on the part of those who "menen oght ayen" or abuse love. Transforming into a bird, Philomel became a creature who could voice her story to the woods, but in a body even more vulnerable to abuse, doubly so because of a language barrier that allows room for misinterpretation of her song.

Towards the end of *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, the Cuckoo reveals the Nightingale's ignorance in her allegiance to the God of Love: "For he is blynde and may not see. / And when he lyeth he not, ne when he fayleth; / In this court ful selde trouthe avayleth, So dyuers and so wilful ys he" (Clanvowe 202-203). The Cuckoo exposes the subjectivity of this love by recognizing that although good may come of the Nightingale's beliefs, an equal amount of bad may come as well. With this statement the Cuckoo appears to have mastered and won the argument. The Nightingale continues her emotionally-based argument, admitting her failure and dramatically lamenting her birth: "I can for tene, sey not oon worde more;' / And ryght with that she brast on forto wepe" (Clanvowe 209-210). Like her predecessor Philomela, the Nightingale is silenced; Philomela, however, wished to expose the truth while the Nightingale wishes to profess ignorance through unquestioning belief in following one's desires. In both situations, Philomela and the Nightingale are victimized and dependent upon others to come to their

rescue. In Ovid, Philomela's sister accepts the truth and rescues her, while the Nightingale in Clanvowe relies on the semi-conscious narrator who makes an allegiance to the God of love and sides with her perspectives on love and lust: "…at the cuckoo hertely I cast, / And he for drede flyed awey ful fast" (Clanvowe 218-219). The conclusions of both Ovid and Clanvowe's tales have no definitive end in that the problem within the text is never fully resolved, and there is no death that ends the character's existence. Philomela becomes the Nightingale whose image will continue to change and whose story of woe may be forgotten, while Clanvowe's Nightingale will continue to profess words of ignorance—in relation to lust and love, as well as ignorance of her own origin.

The Cuckoo and the Nightingale provides another disturbing example of the ways in which medieval English literature manipulates the ancient character of the nightingale through what she comes to symbolize—springtime love. Clanvowe creates an image of a nightingale whose only hope for becoming a symbol solely of happy and romantic love is through ignorance of its own violent history. One must question this ignorance, however, as the author makes many connections between his own tale and Ovid's. The ending in *Metamorphoses* turns Tereus into a hoopoe or eagle, depending upon interpretation, whose outward appearance expresses his inward mind: "Fixed on his head, the rested plumes appear, / Long is his beak, and sharpen'd like a spear" (Ovid 457-458). The troublesome imagery is heightened in Clanvowe's tale when the Nightingale declares: "And ther at shall the egle be our lorde" (276). Is it the author's intention to recreate these ancient symbols, or to condone rape? The narrator hears this declaration in his state "Not

al on slepe, ne fully wakynge" after he has entered the woods (88). Perhaps the speaker is in Tereus' shoes as the latter entered a wood where he kept Philomela as a sexual slave; our speaker enters the wood due to insatiable feelings of lust as well. If this is the case, Clanvowe's story offers a glimpse into the irrational mind of a man justifying rape as his own form of allegiance to the God of Love.

III Will Philomela Remain a Victim in and of Literature?

Whether depicted as Philomela in *The Legende of Good Women* or the Nightingale in *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, the association of this female character with irrational emotion seems to prevail in many representations of Philomela and the nightingale in medieval English literature. The separation of the nightingale from Philomela's tale may seem appropriate when constructing love poetry associated with spring, especially when considering that the nightingale migrates to Western Europe at the end of each April. The connection between the two, however, seems to recur subtly throughout each of the texts that refer either to Philomela or the nightingale, suggesting an inevitable relationship between the two. This is further supported by the wide-spread knowledge of Ovid by the readers of these texts. A negative judgment of Philomela and the nightingale recurs, however, calling the authors' intentions into question. After her metamorphosis, Philomela is represented by all nightingales, spending an eternity expressing her sorrow in birdsong, yet continuing to be an object of torture through literary representation. Through texts such as these, Philomela's disrespectful violation continues, but John Lydgate's poem "The Nightingale" offers a new role for the nightingale that references and ultimately overrides his contemporaries' portrayals.

Chapter Two: "The Nightingale"

John Lydgate's "The Nightingale," will be the focus of the remainder of this work. As mentioned in the introduction, this poem continues the portrayal of Philomela and the nightingale as separate entities, as we have seen in the *Legende of Good Women* and *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*. Although separate, the characters maintain a connection through subtle hints regarding their Ovidian history of rape and transformation. Lydgate's work is a dream vision and one that demonstrates influence from other authors of his time, particularly those in the Chaucerian canon, such as Clanvowe and Chaucer himself. Dated 1446, roughly 66 years after *The Legende*, and 43 years after *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, we see echoes of the form and content of these prior works. These earlier poems, as previously analysed, define and exemplify Philomela and the nightingale's ever-evolving metamorphosis and what she ultimately came to symbolize in medieval English literature: romantic love and lust. It is necessary to have a familiarity with and an understanding of these works before approaching Lydgate's poem "The Nightingale," as this thesis seeks to prove that although the nightingale may seem to be separated from Philomela, her Ovidian source is not completely erased and is present in the culture and literature of the time.

The dream vision, as previously mentioned, is a formal choice that functions as an exploration of psychology and the ways that our minds can create our own realities, and likewise influence the permeable minds of others. The dream vision provides an ample metaphor for this as we are literally taken into the mind of a narrator who presents his imagined world, his unconscious, as the truth. *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* presents

the figure of the nightingale, whose song is interpreted by a narrator in a dream-state. She becomes a mirror into which the narrator looks to see, and hear, what he wants, and his unconscious imagination determines what this figure will represent. Lydgate and Chaucer's audiences were familiar with Ovid and Philomela as a victim of rape and the nightingale as a symbol of her transformation. These two qualities are an influential aspect of how these characters come to be portrayed in a setting seemingly unrelated to Ovid.

Through the act of reading, we are able to enter a new space that offers information that can be integrated into our own psyche, our subconscious. While these authors present literature that is unique in many aspects, they also illustrate the ways in which all minds that create works of art are inevitably influenced by another source, resulting in similar genres, style and subject matter. For these authors, Philomela is Ovid's character, and although she may be presented anew in Chaucer, Clanvowe, and Lydgate's texts, her origin can almost always be discerned. One sees the authors' struggle in creating her as a new figure when she is almost always associated with love and/or lust. It is not the creation of a new character, then, that becomes important, but the way in which her story of origin relates to her new role. In the authors' works mentioned above, we enter the subconscious, the dream, of male narrators for whom the dream vision is a template for exploring the human cognitive process. We are able to see what the mind can do with the information it receives—how it can condone or justify evil, and even cause the body to commit acts of evil such as rape. While reading, our minds are able to integrate the ideas presented and, knowingly or unknowingly, our mental perception is

affected. The form of the dream vision draws us into the subconscious of a narrator who at first seems to be simply a passive observer, who then becomes one controlled by what his mind tells him.

Throughout the rest of this paper I intend to argue how Lydgate, in his poem "The Nightingale," again reaffirms the connection of one's mental processes and their effect on the body's actions. Lydgate illustrates another force, however, that can ultimately overpower the desires of both the mind and the body, which is a solution to uncontrollable male lust for sexualized objects such as Philomela. This force—religious belief—allows Lydgate to control what his mind perceives, stifling his mental and physical desires. Religion plays a key role in this text, as it does in the fourteenth century *Ovide Moralise*, a French work that moralizes the 15 books of *The Metamorphoses*, transforming them into allegories for the incarnation of Jesus, so that Ovid's books are applicable to the Christian belief in Jesus' own metamorphoses (Levine). It has been argued that "allegorizing Ovid was a popular activity during the Middle Ages, partly because it gave men license to read and write about sex and violence, often in abhorrent shapes, and partly because their remarks about pagan texts would not be subject to the kinds of scrutiny routinely given to commentaries on the Bible" (Levine). Using a classical text gives authors such as Lydgate, Chaucer, and Clanvowe the freedom to create complicated texts that can make radical statements through non-Christian figures, but only Lydgate's text encourages us to read such tales in a Christian context.

While Chaucer and Clanvowe had only literary authority, Lydgate's literary *and* religious authority as a priest integrated a strong social influence into his writings. The

original tale of Philomela may be in the minds of those who read Chaucer, Clanvowe, and Lydgate, but the Catholicism of medieval English people is an equally present and influential force of this time period. There is recognition within the poem, however, of the force of lust that is equal to, if not stronger, than Christian beliefs, and Lydgate therefore suggests it is necessary for a man to actively draw upon his Christian beliefs before submitting to his bodily desires. In an act that become another type of metamorphosis, religious morality must be intentionally retrieved by a male mind that is inherently weaker than, and heavily influenced by, its bodily desire. Evident within the poem, this is a weakness of the *male* sex, and Lydgate, as a male religious leader, exercises his authority in instilling his fellow sex with these morals.

Lydgate calls for an audience of lusty men, as will be explored in more detail shortly, suggesting it is difficult for a male audience to relate to the power of spiritual and moral discipline. Within the poem, such discipline is something that must be repeatedly called upon, as our narrator illustrates when he must contemplate his own perception before being able to alter his thought process. The lust associated with the nightingale is turned into love—for God, and the death and suffering in Ovid's tale represents another death: Jesus'. Controlling and actively interpreting one's own thoughts can cause the body to restrain itself from acts such as rape, as well as change the type of thinking that can later justify such acts. The poem suggests that in order to control one's body, physical desire must become spiritual desire, a transformation from the corporeal to the intangible. Although we never hear Philomela's full story in these medieval texts, she finally appears in a work that does no injustice to a woman's great suffering by realizing

the universality of human suffering; her cry is finally compelling her audience, male or female, to pity.

Lydgate's poem "The Nightingale," presents the reader with a prose introduction *not* attributed to Lydgate, but rather to an unnamed scribe (Glauning xl). One paragraph in length, the introduction does not begin in a manner exclusive of other works, but as a continuation of a conversation, suggested by the lack of capitalization in the initial sentence: "it is seyd that the nyghtyngale of hure nature hath a knowleche of hure deth" (Lydgate, Introduction 1). Addressed directly, the audience becomes a participant in the ongoing conversation that tells us what has been said anonymously about the nightingale in general. As the source of the poem is entitled "Philomena," which itself calls upon the tale of Ovid, "The Nightingale" at its very beginning reminisces upon, and creates a dialogue with, previous works upon a similar subject.

The introduction begins the degrees of separation from the original tale by telling us that the poem will contain a particular aspect of the nightingale—her knowledge of her own death, about which she sings a song of lament: "lyke as / the swan singeth Afore his deth, so sche… / syngeth…A lamentable note" (Lydgate 2-3, 5). While Philomela and the nightingale are undoubtedly associated with a mournful topic in the reader's mind, here she becomes a kind of prophetess—one who sees the future and sings to us of the death she will experience, not the death and pain associated with her (literary) past. We become even further removed from her original tale when she flies to a tree top during the canonical hours of prayer, beginning generally around 6am and ending at 3pm. This time frame is interesting considering the nightingale's association with night-time singing,

when her song is at its loudest and clearest (Mead). Instead of a connection to day or night, her song becomes associated with the Catholic Church, the hours of day time prayer, and knowledge of her death. Her songs are "moralysed vn-to Cryste An[d] in-to euery crystyn sowle, that schuld remembre the ourys of Cristys passyoun" (Lydgate 1). Transitioning from the nightingale's own knowledge of her death and even her ordinary animal behavior, she becomes a religious vessel open for interpretation through a Christian lens; the speaker's prayers become intertwined with that of the nightingale's song. Before the poem actually begins, the introduction over-writes the nightingale's commonly known behavior and recalls her literary history on a superficial level (the name), and particularly the sorrow associated with her character. It is clear, however, that she serves a new purpose and has a new role in such contemporary literature.

Although Lydgate's poem focuses greatly upon the male mind, his audience is mixed in gender, appropriate for a tale that is professed to be one of religious aims. He begins with a dedication to the Duchess of Buckingham, beseeching her to "take, of hure noble grace / Amonge hyre bokys for the Asygne A place" (Lydgate 2, 6-7). The dedication does not mirror those of other literatures that praise a sponsor as the inspiration for the text, and instead asks for someone in a position of authority to assign a place for his work within her noble library. He asks that his work be read in the context of other great literature, suggesting this will not necessarily become a definitive work on the nightingale, but one that holds a place within a broader structure of poetry. He hopes that the duchess will "*Luste* for to call vn-to hyr high presence / Suche of hyre peple, that are in *lustynesse*… / *Desyrous* for to here the *amerouse* sentensce / of the nyghtyngale"

(Lydgate 2, 9-10, 12-13, emphasis mine). The poem's dedication begins with a desire for a place within a noble-woman's library and then for circulation amongst other nobility, particularly appealing to those who desire to hear a lusty or amorous story, suggesting a romantic subject matter (MED). At this point the Duchess can anticipate a story of the nightingale and a tale of lust and love. Lydgate then proceeds to tell the *purpose* of the desired circulation of his text, after the Duchess has acquired an audience expecting such a lustful text: "Commandyng theym to here with tendernesse / Of this your nightingale the gostly sense[:] / All loue vnlawfle, y hope, hit will deface / And fleschly lust out of theyre hertis chace" (Lydgate 15-16, 20-21). He expects the Duchess to inform her audience, who were enticed to read a lustful poem, of the true interpretation of the nightingale's song and its spiritual meaning, and to remove unlawful and fleshly lust from their thoughts. With knowledge of the nightingale's history, and Tereus' violent use of his lust, Lydgate draws a connection between the horrors of "mis-used" lust as well as the spiritual motives for removing it from oneself.

The poem's beginning contains many of the foundational elements of previously discussed dream visions, and Lydgate mentions one important detail while still within the proem: the season in which lust arises: "When fresh[e] May in kalendes gan apere / Phebus ascending, clere schynyng in hys spere, / By whom the colde of wyntyr is exiled / and lusty seson thus newly reconciled" (Lydgate 25-28). Echoing prior dream visions and other medieval English texts that suggest May as the season of youth and lust, Lydgate calls to the reader's mind other dream visions and contemporary authors' use of this trope. Phoebus is the Greek god of light, taking us further back to Philomela's own time,

and recalling the Ovidian origin of the nightingale. Introducing lust as an important element in the tale about to be told reinforces the sexual element associated with the nightingale.

In addition to his desire for a lusty audience, the narrator asks for an audience well familiar with the works of his contemporaries as well as classical literature, asking for a place among them in the library of royalty. He does not intend to draw readers in with religious belief, but rather romance, lust, and tales of old. These expectations will be overridden as Lydgate replaces the sexual component of Philomela's identity with religion. He will not, in fact, be offering us the "true" interpretation of the nightingale's song, but one that seeks to override those of the past. Philomela's voice has an inherent power that is returned to again and again, a tool that medieval English authors are using to craft their own literature and to assert their authority as authors by once again severing the tongue of our original authoress and deciding what she will say. In Ovid, she expresses how powerful one's words can be, and that with such a tool she will: "cast aside my modesty and speak / I'll go among the people with my tale; / imprisoned here, my voice will fill the trees / and wring great sobs of grief from senseless rocks!" (Ovid 6: 212, 785-789). Unfortunately, Philomela's words reached only Tereus' and the reader's ears, an audience who will continue to translate, and transform, her voice and story within the parameters of their own interpretation.

After reading such a convoluted introduction to Lydgate's poem, as well as the scribe's preface, the reader approaches the actual poem wondering how the figure of the nightingale will be used—either from an historical or contemporary standpoint. Lydgate

has called upon readers who feel great lust and who are drawn to such stories, but tells us that he intends to alter their desire as he has a more noble purpose for the nightingale, whose song "to here it is a second heuen" (Lydgate 41). Interpretation, as with all dream visions, also becomes a key factor in approaching the tale as the narrator claims that he will be able to offer an accurate "translation" of a bird's cry in a surreal imagined world where humans can not only understand an animal's "language," but also the deeper message being conveyed. We therefore approach the poem with the influence of our own historical or contemporary knowledge, an expectation of a romantic tale for those drawn to desire and lust, and for a more spiritual text that intends to illuminate the purpose of spiritual poetry that draws upon previous literature. By the time the poem begins, Lydgate moves away from directly addressing the audience and we are drawn into the surreal dream world of the narrator, in a space that allows for an unpredictable experience and, ultimately, a metamorphosis of the mind. The poem will be discussed chronologically in three distinct phases as they unfold within the poem, each presenting an important change for the nightingale's character.

I The Nightingale as a Springtime Symbol of Love

The poem begins, much like the prose introduction, with what seems to be a continuation of another poem or work: "And, on a nyght in Aprile" (Lydgate 43). Why Lydgate begins his poem in this manner is quite important, particularly when one considers the purpose of reader reception and circulation, as well as the book's intended place in a noble library. Our narrator is unnamed and unremarkable in any sense, and could easily be the narrator of *The Book of the Duchess* who is restless on a Spring night

and reads the book of Ceyx and Alcione to ease his troubled mind and help him fall asleep; *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* is also recalled, as the narrator similarly cannot escape his lust and troubled mind in a Springtime setting. This opening line also echoes that of *The Canterbury Tales*, which begins: "Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote" (Chaucer *CB* 1). Not only could Lydgate's poem be a continuation of the other dream visions, but an extension of a poem about a religious pilgrimage. Lydgate draws upon the readers' memories of various texts, suggesting that this will be somewhat of a replica of previous dream visions.

In Lydgate's poem we are also immediately confronted with a springtime setting and an emotionally troubled narrator who lies in bed "Wery of sleep & of my bed all-so,… / My herte with mony a thought was ouer-go /Ande with this troblus worlde sore agreued, / But, as god wold, in hast y was Releued" (Lydgate 44, 47-49). As far as originality, a reader familiar with Chaucer and other contemporaries is encountering nothing new. The story becomes unique when the narrator tells us that he is quickly relieved of his troubles and we are left wondering why and how. The solution lay in the nightingale who:

> So thorghly my hert raueshed had and persed
> Ryght with hir longyng notes, hye and clere…
> Ymagyning that she by my proper name
> Me calde ande sayde: 'A-wake & Ryse, for shame,
> Oute of thy slombre-bed of slouth and sleep,
> Remembring the vpon this lusty seson'. (Lydgate 52-53, 55-58)

There is ambiguity in Lydgate's language, particularly the words "ravish," "longing," and "lusty." Although "lusty" can refer simply to something pleasant, enjoyable, and tempting, it also has a sexual connotation that becomes entwined with the reference to ravishment. Ravishment carries a sexual connotation, particularly a violent one, so when the narrator's heart has been ravished we recall Philomela's own "ravished tongue unable / To tell of ravish" (Ovid 150, 32-33). "Ravish," when applied to a woman, connotes rape, and more generally something that has been taken away or stolen (MED). Philomela's body was subjected to rape, and her tongue was violently taken from her. Now we hear the voice that she regained through birdsong; she does not necessarily speak of rape or ravishment, but is able to use it in a similar manner as a tool of violence to take a man's heart (MED).

The other important ambiguous word in the above lines is "longing," which comes after ravish and before our most importantly ambiguous term "lust." The Middle English Dictionary states that "longing" is first and foremost used as a term for desire, and second as a sensual and sexual desire. "Lust," "ravish," and "longing" all have a material quality in definition, suggesting there is a physical object that becomes the focus of these feelings and actions. Although these terms may be read somewhat ambiguously, they all carry a potential sexual connotation that is further strengthened by their proximity to one another, as if each word is necessary to describe how the author experiences such desire without necessarily being vulgar. The connection between the audience who lusts for a romantic tale and the lust of Tereus and his ravishment of Philomela, further establish the narrator's use of these terms as having a sexual meaning.

Once the narrator claims to be ravished with longing, he also tells us that he *imagines* that the nightingale is directly addressing him, a word that refers to one's ability to form a mental picture of something, combining the reality of her song with his own imagined space; for him, what may be simply a bird's song, becomes a sexualized and personal speech. Despite Lydgate's spiritual intentions for the nightingale's song, her role in the poem up to this point perpetuates those of previously established dream narratives, where she is a symbol of romantic springtime love. Why a tongue that wishes to speak of ravishment become alluring to a male listener suggests that, for a male audience, ravishment becomes sexually alluring regardless of the violence with which it is associated.

The nightingale continues to call the narrator to her, telling him to come out of sleep, a previously questionable state of the former; it is unclear whether we are in an experience of reality or one of the dream world. What we do know for certain is that her address to him is being formed within his imagination and that we are still within the parameters of a dream vision. Finally, the nightingale ends her beckoning with a request for him to come out of his bed with remembrance of the lustiness of the season-- the physical, and perhaps sexual, pleasure one associates with Spring. In regard to a spiritual interpretation, the poem up to this point reads as a highly sexualized dream vision that centers around the pursuit of sexuality (violent, consensual, or as otherwise interpreted by one's imagination) as a solution to mental and physical suffering and longing. Philomela may not be directly mentioned with this tale, but the violence, lust, and sex of her origin are certainly present, as well as her role in previous medieval dream visions. One

anticipates a similar fate for our narrator: an entrance into the forest where the nightingale will offer a resolution to the narrator's problems. In *The Legend of Good Women*, the audience encounters a similar genre, but these exists a disconnect between the victim Philomela, who never receives her revenge or voice, and the nightingale, whose voice simply replaces the body that was so desirable to Tereus. She remains a highly sexualized character, in body and voice, a disturbing transformation that maintains Tereus' reaction and his own satisfied lust. Reading Lydgate's poem until this point, one wonders if the definitive features of both the nightingale and Philomela are the recollection of superficial sexuality and victimization; she is now a figure that lures lustful men with her voice long after her body has been annihilated, but also one that will transform as the poem progresses.

The narrator begins his poem telling us that he is "wery of sleep & of my bed all-so," conjuring a somewhat ambiguous image of a man who is either weary from sleeplessness or the inability to fall asleep, or else weary from having slept and wishing to do so no more (Lydgate 44, MED). Either case suggests he is not in a fully conscious state because he lies there consumed with his troublesome thoughts, a situation more probable in one who cannot fall asleep than one who is ready to be awake. Clanvowe's own narrator is in a similar state in *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* when he is described as "not al a-slepe, ne fully waking," a state of mind that allows one to be conscious of one's thoughts, and to be influenced by the dreams over which one does not necessarily have control (Clanvowe 88). Lydgate's narrator continues to elaborate upon this ambiguity when he tells us that he is *imagining* that the nightingale speaks to him, yet his

response is physical: “Ande right with that oute of my bed y leep, / Thenking in my conceyt, she seide me reson, /Ande walked forth—she yaf me gret encheson” (Lydgate 59-61). The narrator imagines he is being called and we enter his mind, so that when a sudden physical leap is introduced, we picture him doing just this within our own imagination; the narrator’s world, mental and physical, become one and the same. We are reminded, however, that the mental faculties are an important influence as he confesses that he is still thinking within his *conceyt*, or frame of mind, where she has bid him to rise and awaken (MED).

We know that this man is not fully conscious as he admits to imagining this scenario, and must question his sense of agency. The narrator knows that what the nightingale tells him is created by his own imagination, but attributes his actions to her commands. The narrator begins to walk and again the nightingale reinforces her control over what he does by claiming that she gave him great *encheson*, or reason. The rhyme scheme has brought attention to two words that interplay in an interesting manner—she has bid him to *rise* from his bed, and he does so because she gave him a *reason*. The rhyme emphasizes the relationship between his action and the motivations for doing so. *Encheson* is also used in medieval English as a “specious reason for doing something; an excuse or pretext,” so that the narrator surrenders responsibility for his actions, claiming that the nightingale is luring him with her argument and beauty (MED). He excuses himself, creating defensive language before anything questionable or worthy of defense has occurred. Both the narrator and the nightingale’s intentions are cast with a suspicion that something potentially disputable is about to occur. Before any potentially violent

crime has been enacted, the narrator asks for a pardon due to his helplessness at the hands of a seductive female figure whose sexuality is based on the superficial qualities of beautiful words that have a strong influence upon the male mind. The reader enters the mind of a male narrator justifying his actions before they have even taken place, recalling previous literature that presents male behavior as uncontrollable, and therefore worthy of pardon.

Despite the suggestion that the narrator seeks pardon of his actions on behalf of the nightingale's power over him, the narrator surprises us with his ability to overcome his previously over-powering thoughts. When he comes to the nightingale, instead of a direct interaction between the two, the narrator illustrates his new-found mental control as he "romed vp and doun, / Expelling clerly all wilfle negligence" (Lydgate 64-65). By walking back and forth, a symbol of deep thought, the narrator shows great self-discipline as he attempts to get any worldly thoughts, or those encouraged by mere physical will, out of his *heart*—to quell these physical urges rather than the thoughts he may be having. Through physical restraint, he has the ability to channel his thoughts to a new arena, to alter his mode of thinking. While he may not be able to ignore completely his lustful thoughts, he can use another powerful force to replace them—religious and spiritual belief, which dominates the rest of the poem.

II Active Reconstruction of the Nightingale's Character within the Narrator's Mind

There is a shift in subject matter when the narrator takes control of his thoughts, and from this point on the poem focuses on the re-creation of the nightingale's identity and purpose. Her role is no longer that of a sexual object who can help resolve the

narrator's troubles, particularly his lust. Instead, the poem now focuses on the narrator's reconstruction of the nightingale's gender in order to recast her not as an eroticized female, but as a more gender-neutral spiritual being who offers relief from personal troubles through religious belief. This transformation occurs within the narrator's mind, beginning with his physical restraint as he halts himself in contemplation.

Once the narrator has controlled his own body, he can also control his lustful thoughts by replacing them with spiritual ones. Still in a semi-conscious state, the narrator exercises the power of his imagination when "sodenly conceyued y this sentence, / Hough that this brid, a-mong hir notes glad, /Right of hir deth a note of mornyng made" (Lydgate 68-70). While pacing and attempting to replace his potentially lustful and harmful thoughts (implied by his request for pardon and laying the blame upon the seductive nightingale), the narrator conceives of a new reality, a new way to relieve his desire and troublesome thoughts. Making no claims to know the truth of the nightingale's song he offers an alternative, and one that recalls Philomela and the death of her person, as well as the notes of the nightingale that replace her once-lost voice. Philomela can now proclaim what has happened to her, and, while she may be perceived as an alluring character from which men cannot restrain their desire, she also recalls the sorrow and evil enacted upon her. A sense of morality is regained and the narrator begins the more spiritual reading that Lydgate has promised; just as the latter requests a lustful audience for his poem, the nightingale's song initially appeals to a man seeking similar satisfaction. Neither the narrator nor the intended audience are necessarily portrayed as evil and they are actually given great importance, perhaps to emphasize the extremes of

literary interpretation that can result in a portrayal of Philomela, such as she is presented in the *Legend of Good Women*. Although one may not have control over one's actions initially, moral and religious institutions are in place for such situations—as a refuge from worldly pursuits and sources of constraint one might not otherwise have.

When we hear from the nightingale again, she no longer seems to be luring our narrator, nor speaking directly to him. The narrator's words are more universally addressed and heard from her place high within a tree. She offers the reason for her mournful song claiming "My curious note ne shall noght me a-vayle, / But mortall deth me sharply will a-saile" (Lydgate 75-76). The nightingale does not emphasize the aesthetic quality of her notes, but the fact that she has carefully crafted them to be meaningful. She also suggests that she intends to have an audience and that her words are not for her own benefit, as suggested by *a-vayle* (MED). The poem now suggests a purpose beyond the reconciliation of the narrator's troubles and lust, and the nightingale has a perceptive audience, which satisfies Philomela's desire for others to hear her story. Despite the nightingale's claim that she is not necessarily benefiting from what she says, she hopes to overcome a mortal death. In a somewhat cryptic statement, the nightingale sings her notes and crafts her language so that her *words* affect others but do not necessarily offer an internal psychological benefit. Instead, she achieves a triumph over mortality. Philomela escaped a mortal death because she was transformed into another body, another vessel for her to continue her message through a new medium. She has been given language that is up for interpretation as no one can really understand what a bird "says." She cannot return to her original form, but she can attempt to craft her

"language" so that others will listen and gain a personal benefit from her wisdom and experience.

With such a sexually potent character, arbitrary interpretation can be dangerous, as suggested by the narrator's initial reaction. Lydgate seems to be aware of this, but offers an escape: he suggests that although a male body may be incapable of sexual restraint, mental discipline can allow morality to intervene and overcome uncontrollable male lust such as Tereus'. The purpose of Philomela's transformation appears to be lost and her song is left as an arbitrary mystery. Lydgate, however, illustrates the ways in which we can alter such perception of a figure from antiquity that sides with the melancholy bird and maintains her dignity. With no mention of Ovid, Lydgate reinforces not necessarily the erasure of Philomela, but the ability to create a new character from antiquity-- a remix of the metamorphosis so to speak-- in the hands of new authors. He uses his authority to give this figure a higher purpose to deter those drawn to the well-known figure of the nightingale by lust to a more moral, or "spiritual," perception of her.

After the poet has decided upon a new interpretation of the nightingale's song, he lets her finish her lament with little interruption for him to include his interpretation. Although we now understand her song to correspond with the hours of Catholic prayer that correspond with the passion of Christ, a hint of her literary past is again introduced as she cries " 'Ocy, ocy,' / Whech signified, me thought, that she shuld dye" (Lydgate 90-91). This cry has been previously discussed in regard to its presence in *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* as the cry of the nightingale in Old French and as the imperative of the verb *ocir* (to kill). Here, the narrator returns to his role as interpreter telling us that he

believes this means she will die. As Lydgate does not ultimately refute the influential nature of past literature on our minds, he again summons a reminder of Philomela's presence within the nightingale, and calls our attention to his active reconstruction of this character within his own mind. It seems peculiar that a figure who cries out a command to kill would be discussing her own death, except in the context of her song's topic: Jesus' death, his murder. The nightingale's character is masculinized through an association with Christ, and although we recall Philomela's revenge on Tereus, we are beginning to forget her rape and her role as a female sexual object as she becomes identified with not only a male character, but a holy Christian one.

The last words of the nightingale's song are "'Ocy, Ocy, o deth, well-come to me!'" (Lydgate 98). She makes this cry at the hour of "sext," the hour of the Catholic liturgical prayer that corresponds to Jesus' passion. As her song correlates with these hours of prayer, one might expect to hear her song in the format of a prayer as one would read from a book of hours. Rather than a prayer, however, there seems to be a self-identification of the nightingale with Jesus. At the hour when Jesus would undergo torture, the nightingale welcomes her own death. We must remember, though, that the narrator is the one conveying this message to us, that he is the one interpreting what she says. Her life and death as Philomela are no longer what troubles the Nightingale and she is removed from her classical past and placed instead into a Christian one. She becomes not a female victim of rape, and not a pagan woman who seeks revenge for her wrong-doings, but male and Christ-like as she mimics the original Christian martyr. We no longer see the nightingale in her original context and her sexuality is erased. As male

actions driven by lust have been somewhat excused, as mentioned previously, we see a similar justification from another perspective—when influenced under the power of torture, it is Christ-like to accept such treatment. As discussed in chapter one concerning the *Legende of Good Women,* men may be pardoned for acts such as rape because God has created them that way, and it is Christ-like to accept such acts. Although the Nightingale may cry out for murder, she is doing so within our male narrator's mind whose thoughts are guided by his Christian beliefs. Christian law is controlling his mind and actions, and the nightingale will not undergo harm at our narrator's hands. She *is* disrespected, however, through the interpretation of her words as being accepting of the evil act (rape) that she endured, and by the suggestion that such acceptance is "good," even Christ-like.

The nightingale's identity is becoming increasingly complicated and the last we see of her is at her death when "Her song, hir mirth, & melodye was done / Ande she expyred aboute the oure of none" (Lydgate 104-105). The sex of the nightingale is emphasized at this last moment as *her* song, mirth and melody are over. We are reminded that the bird who sings is gendered and her silence again recalls Philomela's silence. The narrator also recalls the beginning of the poem when the nightingale calls to him in a pleasant manner that lures him to her, as he refers to her song in positive terms of joy suggested by "mirth." Why the narrator now refers to her song in a positive and happy light is bewildering. After his personal act of contemplation, the nightingale's song became one of sadness and death, and joy can be found in her death only because it is welcome to her. Despite the narrator's attempt to discipline his perception through his

religious belief, we are faced with a startling reminder that no matter how greatly we think we have controlled our minds, the knowledge and experience of our pasts will always be present; interpretation is a constant process, not an end goal.

The "hour of none" at which time the nightingale dies, corresponds to the hour of Jesus' death. This again creates an interesting complication of her gender and identity. The nightingale shows some identification with Jesus when she wishes for death at the hour corresponding to his passion and then dies at the same moment. No longer participating in the liturgical prayers, she is re-enacting them; a character whose identity is under constant metamorphosis is now a figure of Salvation and the earthly death of a spiritual being. This recalls Ovid's tale and an absence of mortal death for Philomela, who was instead transformed into a different being, the nightingale. The narrator compares her to Jesus, complicating her gender so that she is not simply a female victim, but a symbol of an innocent human's suffering. If previous authors defend male action by blaming their creator, then what do we make of a figure who suffers this same injustice, yet is also the very God that allowed it to happen? Christian belief is the solution the narrator offers in a duplicitous manner—yes, evil is inherent in mankind, but we are also capable of controlling ourselves and preventing such mistakes by recalling a story of torture that is unforgivable, for which all Christians offer their lives. Philomela becomes intertwined with Jesus, and it is this association that finally allows her to be identified as an innocent victim at the hands of what can now be *imagined* as an unforgivable evil.

When Philomela becomes a Jesus-like figure, her gendered identity is complicated, but she does not transform from a female to male figure. Instead, an

association with male-ness simply lessens the image of her as a woman, as a sexual object with a sensual appeal that becomes irresistible to men. Her cry no longer becomes one associated with Philomela's revenge, but with religious persecution. She embodies the male savior (Jesus) and becomes a more abstract symbol of human sacrifice and unjust suffering. In order for our narrator to change his approach to his interpretation of the nightingale's song, he transforms not only her words, but her gender in order to remove all sexual association. A mental formation of who this character is becomes necessary for our narrator, for without first transforming his lustful drive into a spiritual pursuit, he is unable to offer the interpretation of her song promised in the prologue.

After the nightingale transforms into a more gender-neutral being and then dies, the narrator reminds us once again of her origin. He tells us that the bird of which he is speaking "In latyn fonde y in a boke well versed, / And what in morall sense it signified, / The whech in englysh y wold were notified / To all that lusty are it for to here" (Lydgate 108-111). As mentioned in the introduction, the source for Lydgate's poem is a short Latin poem entitled *Philomena*, written by John Peckham, a poem that was of great popularity in the Middle Ages (Glauning xxxix). Lydgate's reference to the poem recalls the original title, and after we have encountered a new figure transformed within our narrator's mind, we abruptly return to Ovid's character's original name, clearly a woman, whose tale is well-known to his audience. Again relying on the popularity of other well-known works of literature, the narrator does not implicitly mention the woman who became the nightingale or her story, encouraging the audience to think about the books they have read that could possibly be a source for this poem. Of course, the most famous

of Latin sources that contains the nightingale is Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*. Despite the narrator's careful crafting of the nightingale into a gender neutral-spiritual being, a simple reference to previous literature can instantly become prevalent in one's mind.

In this same stanza, the narrator again uses the somewhat ambiguous term "lusty" to describe his readers. This may simply refer to those who desire to read this poem in English, but it also recalls the more sexual connotation of the word that was used to entice this same audience. By returning to the language with which he begins the poem our narrator once again establishes confidence in his talents as an interpreter rather than as a translator, considering that Lydgate's poem does not bear great resemblance to its model (Glauning xxxix). The theme of interpretation, and who has the authority to do so, is returned to time and time again within this poem, suggesting that although a character and story will be read and shared by many, what that story and character represent is ultimately up for debate. Our narrator's intention is to offer us a way to channel our interpretations toward a spiritual purpose, important because of the dangers of unguided perception, as seen in *The Legende* and *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale.* Our narrator illustrates just how important such interpretation is when he must literally stop in his tracks and consciously alter the thought process that can lead one to act in an uncontrollable manner. Philomela has become a sexualized symbol in medieval English literature, and the nightingale recalls this when she beckons to lovers as a provocative character. The poem's readers now approach "The Nightingale" with a promise of content similar to that of previous tales, but Lydgate then uses this previous knowledge as a template for learning mental and physical constraint.

Lydgate continues with his interpretation of both the nightingale's song and the poem of the "latyn boke," by strengthening the image of the nightingale as Jesus. William Hodapp similarly states that the nightingale becomes Christ and the Christian soul in this poem, yet his article presents the most essential line for such a perception out of context. When describing this transformation, Hodapp writes: "the bird 'Is Crist hym-self and eury cristen-man / Soule…'" (Hodapp 77). The poem does not, however, state that the nightingale is Christ in such an obvious manner; instead the transformation is much more subtle and presented in somewhat ambiguous terms: "Be this nightingale, that thus freshly can / Bothe wake and singe, as telleth vs scripture, / Is Crist hym-self ande euery cristen-man / Soule vnderstande" (Lydgate 113-16). We are recalled to the beginning of the poem and the nightingale's ability to awaken the sleeping, yet here she becomes a spiritual, rather than erotic, force. The structure of the poem is very clever as it creates a dual purpose of the nightingale. She can be viewed as an allegory for the Christian soul, as she is in Peckham's poem, when we are told that *be*, or "by", the nightingale, every Christian soul can come to understand Christ's message (OED, Glauning 5). It is plausible, however, that these few lines write the nightingale into the bible as the power to "wake and singe" is clearly one that the nightingale has in this poem, which we are now told is in scripture. She then becomes (literally "is") "Christ hym-self ande every cristen-man;" her identity is doubly masculinized as she is reinforced as Jesus as well as all Christian *men*. Of course, there is no end-stop, otherwise the next line of "soule undertande" would stand alone. The reader is therefore once again drawn back to the allegory of the nightingale as the Christian soul. Such ambiguity is a brilliant example of the way that Lydgate repeatedly complicates the nightingale's identity, never forgetting

that hers is a powerful character. Lines such as these are a reminder that one must be continuously constructing the nightingale's new Christian identity and, in fact, must be aware of how one processes all characters from antiquity when they are presented in a new context.

In this same stanza, the beginning of the poem is again recalled and offered a new meaning: "Out of the sleep of synne to a-wake, & ryse, / Ande to remenbre, ande fully aduertise," (Lydgate 118-19). After the narrator has established a new identity for the nightingale, he returns to his initial encounter with the nightingale so that from the very moment he first hears her song she becomes connected to, if not the actual embodiment of, Jesus. Now he rises not because of an alluring bird, but in order to rise above sin and remember Christ's passion and to advertise… What must be advertised, or given attention, is never specified. Clearly it may refer to the next stanza, suggested grammatically by the comma, but it may also be an incitement to simply pay attention, and to be an active participant in what the mind is reading and processing, which is an important message of the poem in general (OED).

III The Nightingale Delivers Her Message as a Religious Vessel

Once the nightingale's gender and identity have been complicated, there is a drastic change in the poem's focus. Previously, we saw the narrator pause, after which there is a switch in the poem's focus on the nightingale as a beckoning female figure to a more gender-neutral one whose purpose becomes preaching the word of God. From this point on, reference to the figure of the nightingale is maintained, mainly through an association with lust.

In the remainder of the poem the narrator offers us the nightingale's song, which traces the Biblical stories of Adam, Noah, and Abraham, always returning to Christ's passion in between each story. Her song is about holy men and moments of mankind's weaknesses, times when the earth was full of "sin." The nightingale herself is only present intermittently, reminding us that she is preaching to us, in a sense, and all before the hour of her death. In *Gender and Jewish Difference from Paul to Shakespeare,* Lisa Lampert discusses the character of Cecilia in Chaucer's *Second Nun's Tale*, who is raised as a Christian and devoutly preaches the doctrine even while dying. The nightingale, too, preaches while approaching her death, and is therefore the "ideal Christian that is full of understanding and learning, a woman who converts through preaching and teaching until her very last hour" (Lampert 86). As a good Christian, an allegory for the Christian soul, and the figure of Christ himself, the nightingale's image and history have been sufficiently transformed so that for the remainder of the poem, she maintains this new identity. Fully Christianized, the text has erased her origin and the only connection back it is that she remains a nightingale and chastises her audience as sinners, reminding them at all times that those who commit evil will go to Hell, and the death of innocents such as Christ should be continuously mourned and repented. Philomela's cry for pity has now played upon Christian guilt, a powerful and clever tool for erasing her role as a sexual object to be used as male lust desires.

When the narrator begins his interpretation of the nightingale's song, Genesis is recalled: "That be Aurora is vnderstonden right / The first begynning of this world of noght" (Lydgate 120-1). The nightingale begins her sermon with the creation of the

world, taking us to a time before her own character's creation by Ovid. She sings of the fall of Lucifer, and then explains that because of his folly, we should behave well and fear a similar fate. Then she speaks of Adam and Eve, and their fall as well again reminding the listener of his or her connection to the former as sinners: "Thenk well that fall is to thi-self extended / Ande, nade Crist died, it had not yit been amended!" (Lydgate 139-40). The pattern of mentioning figures in the Bible who succumbed to sin and were then punished for it becomes a common trope throughout the rest of poem, suggesting the audience is assumed to be one in need of repentance. What sin has been performed is unclear; it is only suggested by the fact that she speaks to our narrator, and in turn the audience, who have been drawn to her through feelings of lust. The nightingale addresses her listeners directly, echoing Lydgate's address to a noble audience in the proem: "O welthy pepyll in your prosperite / Thenk euery morowe how þat your worldly wele / More lykly ys, safe grace, to hyrt then hele!" (Lydgate 152-54). The nightingale's authority to cast such judgment and to behave as a religious authority is based solely on the interpretive abilities of the narrator who has established her as a Christ-like figure. Reading up to this point in the poem, one may forget the nightingale entirely, as each stanza reads as a reminder of the punishment one can expect for committing sinful acts.

After seemingly admonishing the audience Lydgate has called for, the narrator then returns abruptly to the source of this sermon, and to the present, declaring that he no longer has the great interpretive ability earlier established: "forther to declare in speciall / Thi oure of morowe, yf þat y connyng hade / And hogh this brid thus song with voice mortall" (Lydgate 176-178). Suddenly, we are reminded of the hours of liturgy,

specifically in the morning, as we listen to a "mortal voice." The nightingale's Christ-like status is not necessarily erased, but we are reminded that she is not, in fact, a spiritual being, but a mortal representation of one. Our narrator even discredits his own authority by telling us he does not feel that he is either skilled or knowledgeable enough to translate her song during the morning hours, an interesting time of day as "morning prayers were focused on the Risen Messiah" (Powell). At the moment when the nightingale sings of the risen Christ, our narrator is suddenly unsure of his interpretive abilities. What we next hear from the nightingale perhaps requires a bit more thought than her previous admonishments for sin when the narrator reminds the audience of the importance of actively contemplating what one reads through direct address: "Konnyng and langage in me are so fade, / That nedes y mvst in hvmble wyse exhort / You that are konnning, with pacience me supporte. (Lydgate 180-182). No longer subtle in his plea for an audience who actively participates in their mental processing of information, the narrator calls upon his readers to question and interpret for themselves what they are about to read.

As the poem progresses through several of the Bible's stories, we return to the nightingale only occasionally. We hear tales of male figures from the Bible who were all alive during times when "evil" was a powerful presence on the earth, or who were remarkable for their devotion to God: Adam and his fall, Noah and the flood, Abraham and the covenant. Punctuated by the return to Jesus' suffering, each of these figures' presence in the poem compares to the suffering and sanctity of Christ. For instance, after we hear of Noah and the flood, the narrator explains God's promise to Noah: "Thagh that

hym lust of mercy and pite, / A for a tyme, hi vengeance to differe, / Sith with hys precious blod vpon a tre / Hath boght oure soules…" (Lydgate 218-221). Here, lust becomes used in a manner independent of the sexual connotation it previously had in the poem. Now in a religious text, the term expresses desire in a religious sense: God defers vengeance on the world because he desires to show mercy and pity. The reason for this change returns the reader to the function of Christ within Christianity as well as in the poem—Jesus will buy our souls with his blood so that we will no longer need to be punished for our sins.

The use of male Biblical characters is interesting considering the nightingale's newly complicated gender. She now sings of male figures who were not sinners, but who were instead followers of God's word-- exactly what our narrator seems to be attempting. Our narrator once again speaks of Jesus in terms that intertwine his identity, his "blood," with that of our subject who sits upon a tree. Crucified on the rode-tre, as the cross is often referred to in Middle English, Christ's blood is associated with absolution of sin. The nightingale was the victim of a bloody and violent crime, and she enacted an equally bloody revenge before fleeing to the trees. Lust that was associated with desire for an eroticized nightingale becomes lust for the mercy of God to forgive humans their sins. The blood associated with violence against an innocent becomes a symbol for the figure of the cross. The nightingale in her tree may recall a violent history associated with Tereus, but she is now ultimately a figure of sacrifice whose presence should awaken a desire for Christian devotion and repentance.

After this brief interlude, the nightingale continues to sing of Noah before returning once again to Jesus' passion and martyrdom. At this point in the poem, the reader finally encounters a very didactic and sermonizing address: "O lusty gaylauntes in youre adolescens, / Let not this oure of prime fro you deseuer! / When ye be sterede to wanton in-solence, / Retreyene your-self…" (Lydgate 267-270). The term lust once again becomes important as its definition and use can be so ambiguous. The use of the term prior to this stanza has been discussed in its religious and non-sexual function in reference to God's desire to show mercy to humankind. Once again returning to the possible sexual connotation, or at least the over-zealous desires of *men*, lust is associated with male-ness and youth (MED). The narrator warns them to remember the nightingale's song and the religious messages that one hears at the hour of prime-- at the very beginning of the day. Religion becomes necessary for these young men to overcome their wantonness—their lustful desires and lack of self control (MED). The narrator speaks to the audience he calls upon in the proem; he has lured a lusty audience with the promise of the nightingale and has illustrated the ways in which one must enact mental self-control in order to alter the image of a victim of rape and eroticized female into a figure who is less sexualized. Here, the narrator directly tells his audience the purpose for which he feels they should use spiritual belief and practice—to stop the uncontrollable forces of lust. This belief and the act of prayer can restrain an uncontrollable physical and mental desire, and are, in fact, what our narrator has used to change the nightingale from an object of desire into a symbol of Christ's suffering and a call for repentance.

The narrator continues his sermon before once again clearly revealing his intention—to offer Christian belief as an antidote to uncontrollable human desires. He tells his readers: "Call to your mynde for speciall remedie / Oure lordes passion, his peyne, & pacience / As medycyne chefe & shelde of all defence" (Lydgate 328-329). Religion's purpose is that of a tool for humans to overcome their sinful desires. Our narrator now explicitly explains the "moral" of the story, so to speak: when one is inclined to sin, Christian belief must be called upon to replace one's thoughts in order to prevent oneself from committing acts of evil. The poem's content is an effective conduit for its message as the narrator himself must first restrain his own lust and desire using his religious beliefs; this process is what leads him to the message he so didactically relates to his audience.

The end of the poem again addresses the unified identities of the nightingale and Jesus:

> Thus hath this brid, thus hath this nyghtyngale,
> Thus hath this blessed lord þat all hath wroght…
> Vpon a crosse oure soules dere y-bought
> Ande yeuen vs cause in hert, wyll, & thought,
> Hym for to serue & euer loue and drede. (Lydgate 393-94, 395-98)

The bird, the figure of the nightingale, and the lord, all become one within this stanza, a beautiful conflation that reinforces the nightingale's transformation into a Christ figure that has taken place within the poem. A reminder of the sacrifice strengthens the need for the nightingale to be respected and approached with reverence. The conflation of identity

and the roles associated with a Christ-like figure appear within the same stanza and sentence, strengthening the identity in a figurative and literary manner—on the page and within the readers' minds, the nightingale is now associated with Christ more so than Philomela. The narrator's words, as well as their form, illustrate the lessons that can be gained from the suffering of the nightingale and Jesus, lessons that require not just religious belief but a dedication of the heart and *mind*. Love and fear combine so that love does not become associated with the romance and lust with which Lydgate lures his audience, and instead functions as a source of reverence for one who has endured such pain and suffering.

The reaffirmation of the nightingale's new role is followed by a description of the ascension of Christ and the sacrament as established by the Holy Ghost. He tells us that we should be thankful to appear before Christ in this world and in heaven and that when we die "In Ioye eternall with hym ther to perseuer. / Amen. .;. / Explicit" (Lydgate, 412-414). The afterlife is eternal, so life has no true end if one serves Christ; although the poem may end, its content is eternal and can be returned to by its readers. When considering the religious dialogue, the prayer that the poem becomes suggests a transformative quality in literature that is always a continuation of, a prelude to, and in conversation with other works. Ovid, Peckham, Chaucer and others have influenced and ignited Lydgate's own contribution to works concerning Philomela and the nightingale, and as a literary authority he will no doubt have similar influence over artists who read his work. The poem begins inconclusively and ends with a contemplation on eternity, reminding the reader that what one reads and how one interprets begins not with the start

of the work itself, but with the mind that listens, processes, and influences the user of this great tool.

Conclusion

This thesis has illustrated the importance of the nightingale's transformation from her Ovidian origins to the medieval English dream vision. Beginning with Chaucer's *The Legende of Good Women* and Clanvowe's *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, a strong background of dream visions that contain the nightingale, with which Lydgate was in dialogue, has been established. These texts illustrate the continuity of the nightingale's connection to Philomela in medieval English literature, and exemplify the disturbing suggestion of the nightingale's new role as a potent sexual symbol. Such troublesome representation causes one to consider the authors' reference to Ovid's tale and character, particularly insatiable and misused lust. Ovid presents a character who, as a victim of rape, actively sought justice; in the texts mentioned above, Chaucer and Clanvowe manipulate her story by producing a character who remains a victim and, more disturbingly, a symbol of love and source of relief for the insatiably lustful.

Lydgate's "The Nightingale" has received little scholarship, yet is an important work when considering the perpetuation of Philomela's character as a female martyr and victim. Analysis of this poem makes apparent Lydgate's dialogue with previously established literature, echoing Chaucer and Clanvowe's use of dream vision and the figure of the nightingale. Lydgate's subtle references to Ovid's Philomela are most apparent in the source poem's title "Philomena," and in her perpetuation as a romantic love symbol. Lydgate calls for an audience who expects a tale similar to the *The Legende of Good Women* and *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, illustrating consciousness about the tradition from which and into which he writes. Lydgate's poem, however, takes a

radical turn after initially establishing the nightingale as a sexual symbol and means to a troubled mind's end. The remainder of the poem shows literary mastery and talent by writing anew the nightingale's purpose.

The nightingale's role becomes actively re-written within the poem: she remains a symbol of love, but becomes a spiritual symbol for Christ-like love. She still speaks of death, but not her own; lamenting for Christ's death she re-enacts his passion, claiming she feels death's pains corresponding with the hours of the liturgy. Most importantly, Lydgate finally transforms the nightingale completely as she becomes masculinized. Acknowledging and then erasing her role as a symbol of female sexuality, the nightingale becomes a Christ-like figure. Lydgate's poem concludes with Philomela no longer a pagan sexual symbol associated with rape and violence. Re-written as a more gender-neutral figure, the nightingale becomes a conduit for Christ's voice and a symbol of passion calling upon her listeners for pity and reverence. In Ovid, before being silenced, Philomela cries out that her voice will fill the woods, moving others to pity. In Lydgate's poem, the nightingale eventually completes her song and is silenced, but this time not by the male sword or phallus; her death is a reenactment of Christ's death and martyrdom, moving her audience to reverential pity.

This work on Lydgate's "The Nightingale" has potential for further research in a number of directions. To expand upon the argument presented in this thesis, the religious elements could be considered more thoroughly. During Lydgate's time, as mentioned in the introduction, "visions" within one's dreams were considered to come from the devil or were otherwise considered messages from God. There is a very fine line between these

distinctions, raising questions of how one would address such a religious vision that contains multiple pagan elements, including references to a character from Ovid and conversing with animals. Lydgate may be making a profound statement in his positive representation and integration of pagan elements as a divinely inspired Christian "good;" its implications are certainly worth further exploration.

Appendix

Transcription of the poem from Otto Glauning's book: Lydgate's Minor Poems. The Two Nightingale Poems, printed by the Early English Text Society extra series, 80. 1900.

"The Nightingale"

[Prose introduction, not by Lydgate: see Glauning xl.]

[MS. C.C.C.O. 203, P.1] *Assit principio sancta Maria meo. Amen.*

it is seyd that the nyghtyngale of hure nature hathe A knowleche of hure deth. And, lyke as the swan syngeth Afore his deth, so sche, in the day of hure deth, Assendyth in-to the top of the tre and syngeth In hora matutina A lame[n]table note; and so aftyre, by mene degrees Aualynge lowere, hora prima, hora tercia, hora sexta, et hora nona, tyll sche com doun in-to the myddys of the tre. And there, in hora nona, sche dyeth. This ys moralysyd vn-to Cryste An[d] euery crystyn sowle, that schuld remember the ourys of Cristys passyoun. And allso by 'hora matutina' ys vndurstonden the begynnynge of the world, and the gret fall of owre ffadure Adam, and the natyuite of euery man, And 'patris sapiencia' declared; and in like wyse 'hora prima, Crucifige, hora sexta, And hora nona' declared wyth the Ages of the worlde in tyme of Noe and Abraham, And so forthe brefly touched the Resurectioun, the Ascencyone, pentecost, And Corpus Cristi day et cetera.

[Proem. The Dedication.]

(1)
Go, lityll quayere, And swyft thy prynses dresse,
Offringe thyselfe wyth humble reuerence
Vn-to the ryght hyghe and myghty pryncesse,
The Duches of Bokyngham, and of hur excellence
Besechinge hyre, that, of hur pacyence
Sche wold the take, of hure noble grace
Amonge hyr bokys for the Asygne A place,

(2)
Vn-to the tyme hyr ladyly goodnesse
Luste for to call vn-to hyr high presence
Suche of hyre peple, that are in lustynesse
Fresschly encoragyt, as galantus in prime-tens,
Desyrous for to here the amerouse sentensce
Of the nyghtyngale, and in there mynde enbrace,
Who fauoure moste schall fynd in loues grace,

[MS. Cott. Calig. A ii, f. 59]

(3)
Commandyng theym to here wyth tendernesse
Of this your nightyngale the gostly sense,
Whos songe and deth declared is expresse
In englysh here, right bare of eloquence,
But notheless considred the sentence :
All loue vnlawfle, y hope, hit will deface
And fleschly lust out of theyre hertis chace,

(4)
Meued of Corage be vertu of the seson,
In prime-tens renoveled yere be yere,
Gladyng euery hert of veray reson,
When fresh[e] May in kalendes gan apere,
Phebus ascendyng, clere schynyng in hys spere,
By whom the colde of wyntyr is exiled
And lusty seson thus newly reconciled.

(5)
To speke of sleep, hit nedes most be had
Vnto the norishing of euery creature,—
With-oute whech braynes must be mad,
Outragesly wakyng oute of mesure,—
Excepte thoo that kyndely nature
Meueth to wach, as the nyghtingale,
Whych in her seson be slep[e] set no tale.

(6)
For sche, of kynde, all the someres nyght
Ne seseth not with mony a lusty note,
Wheder his be dry or wete, derk or lyght,
Redly rehersyng her leson ay be rote—
Gret mervell is the enduryng of hir throte—
That her to here it is a second heuen,
So melodiouse ande mery is her steuen.

[The Poem.]

(7)
And, on a nyght in Aprile, as y lay
Wery of sleep & of my bed all-so,
When that the kalendes entred were of May
(Whech of hir nature neither loueth of thoo),
My herte with mony a thoght was ouer-go
Ande with this troblus worlde sore agreued,
But, as god wold, in hast y was Releued.

(8)
Thys blessed brid, of whom y you rehersed,
As fer as that y godely myght hir here,
So thorghly my hert raueshed had and persed
Ryght with hir longyng notes hye and clere,
Long of the day[e]-rowes can a-pere,
Ymagynyng that sche be my propre name
Me calde ande sayde: "A-wake & Ryse, for shame,

(9)
Oute of thy slombre-bed of slouth & sleep,
Remembering the vpon this lusty seson"—
Ande right with that oute of my bed y leep,
Thenking in my conceyt,she seide me reson,
And walked forth—she yaf me gret encheson—
Til that y come ther as my hertis queene
Ryght freshly sang vpon a laurer grene.

(10)
Entendyng, as y romed vp and doun,
Expelling clerly all wilfle negligence,
Hir clere entoned notes and hir soun
For to perceyue with all my diligence,
And sodenly conceyued y this sentence,
Hough that this brid, a-mong hir notes glad,
Right of hir deth a note of mornyng made.

(11)
Ande in Aurora, that is the morowe gray,
Ascending vp into this tre full hye,
Me thoght she syngyng sayd this same day:
"For all my myrthes ande my melodye,
As nature will, about none shall y dye.
My curious note ne shall noght me a-vayle,
But mortall deth me sharply will a-saile."

(12)
Contynving so vnto the oure of prime,
Vpon the bogh she euer sat and songe,
But, doun descending, she sayde in hasti-tyme:
"My lyfe be kynde endure shall not longe."
But notheless thorgh-oute the wode yt ronge—
Hir notes clere—so merily and so shryll,
The wych enchesoned me tabide there styll,

(13)
Till that hyt dogh forther of the day,
Aboute the oure of tierce, right as y gesse,
That euer y-lyke with notes fresh ande gay
She cesed not, whech y can not expresse
So delitable, replet with all swetnesse,
But eueramong she song: "Ocy, ocy,"
Whech signified, me thoght, that she shuld dye.

(14)
Ande after this, when Phebus in his spere
Ouer all the world had sprad his bemes bright,
Cavsynge the cloudes dym for to be clere,
Ande derk[e] mystes enlumyned with his lyght,
Aboute the oure of sixt then she a-lyght
Ande singynge seet in myddes of the tre:
"Ocy, Ocy, o deth, well-come to me!"

(15)
Thus, fro the morowe to myddes of the day
Ande all the nyght a-fore, with open eye,
This bryd hath songen as ye haue herd me say,
Rehersyng euery tyde with melodie,
But at the last, she shright—and sodenlye,
Hir songe, hir myrth, & melodye was done
Ande she expyred aboute the oure of none.

(16)
This brid, of whom y haue to you rehersed,
Whych in her song expired thus ande deyede,
In latyn fonde y in a boke well versed,
Ande what in morall sense it signifiede,
The whech in englysh y wold were notified
To all that lusty are it for to here,
Yf that my conny[n]ge suffycyent ther-to were.

(17)
Be this nyghtingale, that thus freshly can
Bothe wake and singe, as telleth vs scripture,
Is Crist hym-self ande eury cristen-man
Soule vnderstande, whech oweth of nature
Ande verray reson do diligence ande cure,
Oute of the sleep of synne to a-wake, & ryse,
Ande to remenbre, ande fully aduertise,

(18)
That be Aurora is vnderstonden right
The first begynny[n]g of this world of noght,
Ande how grete god, of his endles myght,
Hath heven and yerth formed with a thoght,
And in six dayes all oder thynges wroght,
Ande hogh gret noumbre of angels bright & clere
Fell doun for pride to helle with Lucifere.

(19)
Hygh or lowe, wheder-so-euer thow be,
Enprinte that fall right myndely in thy hert
Ande arme the surely with humylite
Ayen all pride, yf thou wylt lyue in quert!
Saue thy soule or elles shalt thou smerte
For all thy wor[l]dly pride ande veyne desyre,
Ande euer in hell be brent with endles fyre!

(20)
Muse on this morow further, and conceyue
How that oure fader Adam ande also Eue,
Whom that the sotell serpent can deceyue
Of pure envye and caused to mischeue,—
Ande let theyr smert thi herte perse & cleue:
Thenk well that fall is to thi-self extended
And, nade Crist died, it had not yit be amended!

(21)
Before whos deth the gret Infyrmyte
Of that offens, cleped originall,
Thorogh-oute the world infecte had vch de-gre,
That, when they deyed, streyght to hell went all,
Tyll fro the trone a-bofe celestyall
Crist, consyderyng the gret captyuyte
Of all man-kynde, cam doune of pure pite.

(22)
This hygh forfet whych Adam sone had don
Was grounde & cause of oure mortalite
And paradise made hym for to voide Anon:
Oo sely appell, in your prosperite
Thenk euery morowe how þat your wor[l]dly wele
More lykly ys, safe grace, to hyrt then hele!

(23)
Ande in Aurora further to procede,
Be-thenke thy-self, hough porely þu was born
Ande, as kynde will, þu nedes mvst succede
In pyne ande wo, lyke other the be-forn:
Deth cometh in hast, he will not be for-born,
For in the oure of thy natiuite
He entered first &manaced the to sle.

(24)
In-to the wor[l]de what hast thou broght with the
But lamentation, wepyng, woo, & crye?
Non other richesse, safe only lyberte,
With which god hath endowed the richly,
Ande byddeth the frely chese to lyue or dye:
Fro one of tho ne shall thou not deseuer,
In Ioie or wo to liue or dye for euer.

(25)
Be nothyng prowde thy byrth thus to remenbre,
Thou hast thy youth dispended folilye,
Ande vsest with othes gret thy lord dismenbre,
Ande other-wyse yit lyuest thou viciously.
Call to thy mynde these thinges by & by,
Ande euery morowe, thogh thou lust to sleep
Ande softly lye, a-wake, a-ryse, and wep!

(26)
But, fortherto declare in speciall
This oure of morowe, yf þat y connyng hade,
Ande hogh this brid thus song with voice mortall
Ande in hire song a note of mornyng made,
Konnyng and langage in me are so fade,
That nedes y mvst in hvmble wyse exhort
You that are konning, with pacience me support.

(27)
Oure lorde Ihesus, the fadres sapiens,
The well of trewth & sothfastnes diuine,
The lombe vnspotted, the grounde of Innocence,
That gyltles for oure gylt lust to declyne,
This oure of morow, cleped matutyne,
Falsly be-trayed, and with þe Iewes taken,
And of hys o[w]ne disciples sone for-saken:

(28)
O synfull man, this oure the aght remord,
That standest exiled oute fro charite,
To thenke howe that thy maker & thy lord
So lowly suffred this reprefe for the,
Yevyng the ensample, that with humilite
Fro morow to nyght thou folow shuld his trace,
Yf thou in heuen with hym wilt cleyme a place.

(29)
Fro morow to nyght be-tokenes All the tyme,
Syth thou wast born streyght tyll þat thou dye.
Thus endyth the first oure and now to prime.
Ande be this oure, what we may sygnifie,
In whych this brid thus songe with melodie,
The seconde age ys clerly notyfied
When all the world with water was destryed,

(30)
In tyme of Noe whom for hys ryghtwisnesse,
And with hym seuen, all-myghty god reserued;
And elles all oder for synne ande wrechednesse,
Of verey rygour, ryght as thay had deserued,
In that gret flood were dreynt and ouer-terved.
Except viij soules, all perysched, lesse and more,
And they preserued, this world for to restore.

(31)
This oure, to thenke that with the water wan
Noght all the world was ouerflow for synne,
Aught for to exite euery maner man,
That vice ande vertu can discerne a-twynne,
All vice to eschew and vertuosly be-gynne
Oure lord to plese, thenkyng furthermore,
He hateth synne now as he dud be-fore,

(32)
Thagh that hym lust of mercy and pite,
As for a tyme, his vengance to differe,
Sith with hys precious blod vpon a tre
Hath boght oure soules—was neuer thyng boght derre:—
Ley to thy sore, & let no-thyng lye nerre
Then this same salfe, to hele with thy smert:
Full glad ys he, when so thou wilt conuert.

(33)
For of the synner the deth he not desireth,
But that he wold retorne to lyfe a-yeyn.
For, whosoeuer in dedly synne expyreth,
Ther is no pardon that may abregge his payne.
This to remembre aught cause the to restreyne
Fro euery synne þat wyll this lord displese
And for to vse that hym may queme & plese.

(34)
Ande on this oure to thenke furthermore,
When all the flood aswaged was and cesed,
They, not considryng the gret vengaunce afore,
The seed of Now, whych gretly was encresed,
But vn-to vice on vch syde ran and presed,
For which they pvniched were with plages sore,
As in the byble more pleynly may ye here.

(35)
O thow, that hast thus past the oure or morow
Ande newly entrest in the oure of prime,
Aught to be war to here of woo and sorow
Which in this worlde hath be a-fore thy tyme,
And of the fend, that redy is to lyme
Thy soule wyth synne & cach the in his snare,
Yif he in vertu the bareyne fynde and bare.

(36)
Ande namely now, sith thou of Innocence
Ande of thy tendre age art past the yeres,
In which god the hath keept fro violence,
In all thy youth fro Sathan and his feres,
Dispose the nowe to sadnes and prayeres,
Remembryng specially vpon this oure of prime,
Hogh Crist acused falsly was of Cryme,

(37)
Taken ande lad afore the presydent,
Pounce Pylat, that Iuge was of the lawe,
His handes bounde, his nek with boffettes bent,
On euery syde to-togged and to-draw.
He, ffull of pacience, suffred all & sawe
Hogh that the Iewes, fals and voide of grace,
There all defouled with spet his blessed face.

(38)
Se, hogh this lord that all thing made of noght,
To saue mannes soule, wold suffre this repref,
That myght haue staunched & cesede with a thoght
The Iewes malice & put theym to myscheef,
To oure ensample, þat we shuld suffre grefe
Aftir oure desert and paciently hit take
For hym that all wolde suffre for oure sake.

(39)
O lusty gaylauntes in youre adolescens,
Let not this oure of prime fro you deseuer!
When ye be sterede to wanton in-solence,
Restreyne your-self & in your herte thenk euer
How Salomon sayde; he cowde perceyve neuer
The waunton weyes & dyuers of your youth,
For all the prudent wisdom that he kowth!

(40)
Thoure of pryme fynysched thus & ended,
This brid all-wey perseuereth ande a-byt,
Doun on the tre a-valed and descended,
Thoure of tierce clerely syngyng yit.
The third age of the world be-tokeneth hyt,
In whech thoo folk that doun fro Noe came
Gretly encresed in tyme of Abraham,

(41)
Which in his daies perfit was ande stable,
Dredyng oure lord and lyuyng perfytly;
To whom god swore, lik sterres in-nvmerable
His seed he wolde encrese and multiplie.
But, notheles, moch peple viciously
Were in this age dampnably demeyned
Ande thorgh theire vice destreied sore & steyned.

(42)
Their filthi synne abhominable stank
Ande so displesed the blessed Trinite,
That doun to hell sodenly ther sank
Sodom, ande Gomor, and oder cites thre,
Ande now is there but the Ded[e] See.
Alas the while that euer they wolde do so!
Vnkyndly synne was caue of all their woo.

(43)
This for to here aght cause your herte to colde,
That are enprinted aftyr the ymage
Of god, and to considere and be-holde
This gret vengaunce, taken in þat age.
And namely ye that are in the third age
Of your lyfe ande passed morow & prime,
Aght euer be war to vse vnkyndly crime.

(44)
The fende, youre enmye, lying in a-wayte,
Goth fast a-boute, your soules to deceyue,
Leying hys lynes and with mony a bayte
Wsynge his hokes, on theym you to receyue,
The which thus lygh[t]ly ye may eschewe & weyfe,
This oure to then hogh Iewes lowde and hye
Gan: "Crucifige, crucifige!" Crye,

(45)
Takyng oure lord and, of derisioun,
In cloth of purpull clothing hym in scorne,
Ledynge hym forth, as childre of cofusioun,
And on his heed a sharpe croun set of thorn;
Vpon his blessed shulder the cross was born
Vnto the place of peynes, Caluarie:
Lo, what he suffred, thi oule fro peyne to bye!

(46)
Thenk on this oure, thou wrecched synfull man,
That in this age hast reson, strenght, and hele,
(Yf thou asayled or hurt be with Sathan),
To salf thy sore and thi wonde to hele:
Mark in thi mynde this oure for woo or wele,
Hogh that thy lord suffred for thy gylt,
To saue thy soule, whech elles had be spilt.

(47)
Ye myghty prynces and lordes of a-state,
In honoure here that are exalted hye,
Beth ware & wake, deth knokketh at your yate
And woll come in; be sure that ye shall dye!
Call to your mynde for speciall remedie
Oure lordes passion, his peyne, & pacience
As medycynce chefe & shelde of all defence.

(48)
A myghty prince, lusty, yonge, & fiers,
Among the peple sore lamented ys:
The duc of Warwyk; entryng the oure of tierce
Deth toke hym to whom mony sore shall mysse.
All-myghty Ihesu receyue his soule to blisse!
Both hye & lowe, thenk well that ye shall henne,
Beth wyll you trise, ye wot not how ne whenne.

(49)
Aftir the oure of tierce this nyghtyngale,
Synging euer with notes fresh and gay,
To myddes of this tre can doun avale,
When that yt drogh to myddes of the day:
Sygnyfinge all the tydes, soth to say,
Whech that haue be fro tierce vnto syxt.
In which dayes, whoso woll rede the tyxt

(50)
Of the byble, he may haue revth to here
Hogh dampnably in mony a sondry place
Of the world that folk demeyned were,
Destryed for synne and destitute of grace.
O synfle Dathan, the yerth in lytyll space
Opened & swolowed bothe the and Abyron,
And sodenly with yow sank mony a synfle mon.

(51)
Lo, in all ages, be freelte of nature,
Thorgh all the world peple had delite
The fend to seruewith all theire besy cure,
Which for theire seruyce no-thyng wil hem quite
But endles deth. Allas, what appetite
Haue folkes blynde, such a lord to plese,
That noght rewardeth but myscheef & desese.

(52)
And in speciall, ye of perfyt age,
This oure of sixt, in myddes of your lyfe,
Aught to be war and wayte aftir þe wage
That Crist rewardeth with-oute werre or stryfe,
Wher endles Ioye and blysse are euer ryfe.
Entendeth duly this blessed lord to serue,
That, you to saue, vpon the rode wolde sterve.

(53)
Vnto the crosse, thoure of syxte, was nayled
Oure lord Ihesus, hangyng ther with theves,
And for the thrist of tormentes, that hym ailed,
Eysell and gall in scornes and repreues
They offred hym—oure crym & olde mescheues,—
Doyng a-way this lambe thus crucified:
The manhed suffred, the godhed neuer died.

(54)
We aght ryght well compassion haue and reuth,
For to remenbre his peynes and repreues,
To thenk, hogh he whych grounde is of [all] trewth
Was demed to hange amyd to fals[e] theues.
O blessed lord and leche to all oure greuesm
So of thy grace graunt vs to be so kynde,
To haue this oure of sixt well in oure mynde,

(55)
Thus heng oure lord nayled to the tre,
Fro the oure of sixt vnto the oure of none,—
Ande also longe was in prosperite
Oure fader Adam, tyll tyme that he had don
That high forfet for which he banyshid sone
Was in-to yerth to lyue in langour there
Ande all his o[f]spryng,—till Longens with a spere,

(56)
The oure of none, as Iewes hym desyred,
Thirled and persed thorgh his hert & side.
He, seyng then: "Consummatum est," expired
And heed enclyned the gost yaf vp þat tyde
Vnto the fader. The sunne, compelled to hyde
His bemys bright, no lenger myght endure
To see the deth of the auctor of nature.

(57)
Thus hath this brid, thus hath this nyghtyngale,
Thus hath this blessed lord þat all hath wroght,
That doun to yerth fro heuen can a-vale,
Vpon a crosse oure soules dere y-bought
Ande yeuen vs cause in hert, wyll, & thought,
Hym for to serue and euer loue and drede
That, vs to saue, wold suffre his blod to shede.

(58)
Hell despoiled, & slayn oure mortall foo,
Oure lord vpryse with palme of hye victorie,
Ascended eke ayen there he come fro,
The holy gost sent from the see of glory
His precious body to vs in memory,
With holy wordes of dewe consecracioun
To be receyued to oure hele & sauacioun.

(59)
Who may be glad but all thoo, at lest,
That worthy are, in this lyues space,
For to be fed here, at this glorious fest,
Ande after, in heuen, with bryghtnes of his face,
Whom of his godhed be-seche we ande his grace,
That, fro this worlde when so we shall deseuer,
In Ioye eternall with hym ther to perseuer.
Amen. .;.

Explicit.

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