Walter Charleton and the Matron of Ephesus: Chaucerian Parody in the Seventeenth-Century Anti-feminist Controversy

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The occurrence of Chaucerian quotations in two ambiguously anti-feminist narratives, *The Ephesian Matron* and *The Cimmerian Matron,* is a curiosity which suggests that Chaucer had a reputation in the seventeenth century as a controversial writer about questions relating to women. The passages selected are chiefly from *The Book of the Duchess* and *The Legend of Good Women*, and could be construed as favourable; there are also, however, quotations from *The Wife of Bath's Prologue, The Merchant's Tale* and *The Shipman's Tale* which may hint at a different point of view. Chaucer's authority is used to endorse the authors' satire; the irony that it does not always do so is part of the joke.

Walter Charleton (1619-1707 is best remembered today for arguing that Stonehenge was a Danish coronation site, thanks to Dryden's commendation of him in his verse epistle "To My Honour'd Friend Dr Charleton" (1663 .[1] He deserves better than to have his reputation rest on speculations about Stonehenge that are now known to be absurd. The *DNB* lists some 29 works of his (there are 48 items by or referring to him in the British Library catalogue , and comments, "In religion he was a high Churchman, in philosophy an epicurean, and in politics one of the last of the old royalists."[2] (As the author of a work on the immortality of the soul, he in fact refutes the epicurean doctrine of its corporality in a digression in his *Ephesian Matron.* He was also a physician and a member of the Royal Society. Dryden's panegyric associates him with the leading scientists of his day.

But in 1659, in more diverting mood, he retold, in Euphuistic prose, Petronius's satire on the Matron of Ephesus,[3] a high-born widow who yielded typically but too readily to a common soldier who found her mourning over her husband's coffin in his tomb, and soon put an end to her sorrowing. In an ingenious mixture of satire and defence, Charleton pretends to excuse her on the grounds that sex is natural and that women are particularly prone to it. In 1668 a friend, P.M., Gent., published a somewhat new version of Charleton's text, with a commendatory critique, and a rather more grossly anti-feminist sequel, *The Cimmerian Matron,* translated from the *Comus* of Erycius Puteanus (Henri Dupuy, 1574-1646 .[4] Both narratives contain apposite quotations from Chaucer; but those in *The Ephesian Matron* may have been inserted by P.M, since there are none in Charleton's first edition. It is therefore possible that Chaucer's

relevance to his satire never occurred to Charleton; he may, on the other hand, have approved or even suggested the insertions for P.M.'s reprint.

Achsah Guibbory, in the introduction to the Augustan Reprint Society's reprint of Charleton's *Ephesian Matron* (without P.M.'s sequel , concentrates on the author's debt to Hobbes's *Human Nature* (1650 for his view of love as an "imperious Passion" derived from man's animal rather than "rational" nature. Guibbory castigates this as a "totally reductive argument" that "obliterate[s] the hierarchical distinctions between human passion and animal appetite."[5] The resultant anti-feminism that Guibbory sees as merely one aspect of Charleton's satire on human nature in general was gleefully exaggerated by P.M., in a manner that makes it all the more interesting that he should wish to drag in Chaucer, whom Gavin Douglas called "all women's friend."

Both stories are amusingly grotesque examples of the *fabliau* genre in which Chaucer wrote some of his best tales. In Chaucer's *fabliaux* the woman whose husband is deceived escapes unscathed, whereas all the men involved receive more or less painful punishments.[6] But she is not the chief instigator of the trickery, except perhaps in *The Shipman's Tale*. In both these seventeenth-century versions, however, the woman is actively bent on securing her own sexual satisfaction, at whatever cost to propriety. She is partially exonerated in Charleton's story, and triumphantly and most undeservedly so in P.M.'s. The authors of this combined publication have produced an anti-feminist joke, which in its contemporary context may be considered either innocently diverting, or scandalously malicious.

Antiquity had its heroines, of course, but showed little compunction when it saw fit to denigrate women. Petronius's anecdote is a case in point. Nor were the Middle Ages more charitable. In the mid-twelfth century John of Salisbury needed only to copy Petronius almost verbatim into his *Policraticus* in order to illustrate the fickleness of women: how easily they fall in love, on what trivial grounds they turn to hatred, and how quickly they forget their natural affections even for their own children.[7] Jacques de Vitry, in the first half of the thirteenth century, summarizes the story in his preachers' manual of *exempla* (illustrative anecdotes and concludes with the antifeminist moral: see how quickly this woman changed when another man turned up, so that she didn't only forget her love for her former husband, but even took his body out of his coffin and hung him up on a gibbet. *Varium et mutabile pectus femina semper habet*. A woman's heart is always a changeable and unpredictable thing.[8] According to the English version of *The Seven Sages of Rome*,[9] she was even willing to mutilate the body of her husband, so that it would look more like that of the robber stolen from the gibbet which the soldier was supposed to be guarding while he was making love to her in her husband's tomb. When he finds the lengths she's prepared to go to in order to preserve his life, the soldier decides "Þat sho was cumen of vnkind blode" (3008 and wants no more

to do with her. There is absolutely no sense of irony in the fact that his incompetence, cowardice and deceit incur no blame, and her generosity receives no praise: in fact, in some versions he cuts her head off, in what we are to understand is well-deserved disgust.

By the more respectful seventeenth century, it had become fashionable for misogyny to tease rather than attack the victims of its satire. George Chapman's *The Widow's Tears* (1612 is a comedy illustrating the unfaithfulness of women (following male trickery .[10] Acts IV and V utilize Petronius's story of the Ephesian matron; but here the soldier is the supposedly dead husband returned in disguise to see if his wife's vaunted devotion can be corrupted. He succeeds only too well, and returns the next night to "split her wesand," but by now she's been warned by his brother, who was party to the plot; and, pretending she and her maid knew him all the time, she denounces him as "a transforméd monster, / Who to assure himself of what he knew,/ Hath lost the shape of man" (V v 81-3 . He gets, in other words, his well-deserved come-uppance. In the end all is forgiven. The comedy therefore concludes with the (moral punishment of the man for his antifeminist demonstration of his wife's sexuality: in the end her forgiveness proves her constancy in spite of all his slanders and cruelty.

The play appeared at a time when the joke was wearing thin, and antifeminism provoked a heated controversy chiefly in response to an anti-feminist treatise by Joseph Swetnam. His *The Arraignment of Lewde, idle, froward, and vnconstant women: Or the vanitie of them, choose you whether* (1615 , went through ten editions by 1637 and at least six more by 1880. Rebuttals with equally wonderful titles soon appeared: first Rachel Speght (a clergyman's teenaged daughter wrote *A Mouzell for Melastomus* [A Muzzle for Black Mouth], *The cynical Bayter of, and foule mouthed Barker against Evah's Sex; or, An Apologeticall Answere to that Irreligious and Illiterate Pamphlet made by Io. Sw. and by him Intituled "The Arraignment of Women"* (1617 ; then Ester Sowernam (whose name may be a male's pseudonym, punning on Swe[e]tnam extended Speght's defence of women with *Ester hath hang'd Haman; or, An Answere To a lewd Pamphlet, entituled, The Arraignment of Women. With the arraignment of lewd, idle, froward and vnconstant men, and Husbands* (1617 ; and thirdly the obviously pseudonymous Constantia Munda lashed out with the vituperative *Worming of a mad Dogge; or, A Soppe for Cerbervs the Iaylor of Hell,* also in 1617. All these had to be content with but one edition. Sales did not accord with merit. Women's faults were evidently more popular than men's.

As Linda Woodbridge points out,[11] the formal controversy was a genre and a literary exercise, in which defenders looked for historical and literary examples with which to rebut the latest witty slander upon womankind. The forces of fertility were on the side of women; misogyny represents the wintry intruder Sterility, who is ultimately driven away with contumely.

But centuries of slander must affect women's self-respect, and the response to Swetnam suggests that, by the seventeenth century, there were women emancipated enough to object that the joke had gone too far.

As might be expected, there is only the faintest implication of satire in Jeremy Taylor's retelling of the story at the end of his extensive religious manual, *Holy Dying*. He uses the Ephesian Matron as an *exemplum* of the brevity of immoderate emotion. "Those greater and stormy passions do so spend the whole stock of grief, that they presently admit a comfort and contrary affection," he begins, and concludes by remarking that the soldier, having hanged the husband's body, "escaped the present danger to possess a love which might change as violently as her grief had done."[12] But, in contrast, Charleton, whose dedication "to a Person of Honour" (his friend P.M. evinces or pretends a fear of feminist censure, was deliberately playing with fire. He (or P.M. for him emphasizes the sorrows of the mourning widow by quoting three times from the Man in Black's affecting laments in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess,* but then praises her submission to the soldier, on the grounds that the reader must be anxious for her survival.

It was great wonder that Nature
Might suffer any creature.
To have such sorowe, and she not ded;
Full piteous pale, and nothing red.
She said a lay, a maner songe;
Without note, withouten song;
And was this, for full well I can
Reherse it, right thus it began.
I have of sorrow so great wone,
That joy get I never none;
Nowe that I se my Husband bright,
Whiche I have loved with all my might,
Is fro me deed, and is agone.
And thus in sorowe left me alone,
Alas Dethe, what yeleth the,
That thou noldest have taken me?

(*Book of the Duchess,* 467-82, from Thynne's 1532 edition, with feminine pronouns and "Husband" for "Lady." Thynne's line 480 is spurious. With similar alterations of pronouns, P.M. subsequently inserts lines 509-18, referencing the passage "As Reverend Chaucer in his Dream", and later the three lines 529-31. The passages add little to Charleton's extended portrayal of the gradual submission of the lady to the blandishments of the Soldier and the enflaming effect of the wine he uses to resuscitate her. Charleton concludes:

> And while they are busie at their silent devotions [they are making love on the dead husband's coffin], let us have recourse to the Oracle of Reason, and there consult about the powerful Cause of this great and admirable Change in our Matron, who (you see is no longer either Mourner, or Widow.
>
> To charge this suddain and prodigious Metamorphosis, upon the inherent Mutability and Levity of Womans Nature; though it may have somewhat of Philosophy in it, yet cannot have much of wisdom; as importing more Reason, than Safety. For, albeit, it be well known, that the softness and tenderness of their Constitution is such, as renders them like wax, capable of any impressions, and especially such as correspond with those their inclinations, that Nature hath implanted in them as goads to drive them on toward that principal End, for which it hath made them: yet, who is so rashly prodigal of his life, as to incense that Revengeful sex, by calling in question that Constancy in affection, which every Woman so much boasteth of, and is ready to defend even with her blood, and whereof every day produceth so many notable Examples?

Apparently, women are capable of anything, including revenge on men who say women are capable of anything. Charleton argues that neither "the Levity of Womans nature," nor the wine she drank, accessory to her recovery though that certainly was, can account for the widow's change of heart, which he puts down simply to the power of love. In time-honoured fashion, he adduces classical examples of this power, particularly those of Solomon, Appius Claudius, and Antony. Ironically, these are men, and they were all ruined by yielding to a weakness supposedly typical of women. The anti-feminist game seems to boomerang. Charleton may have taken the examples of Appius and Antony from Bacon's essay *Of Love;* Bacon deplores love as an unworthy passion incompatible with statesmanship. Charleton, however, praises it precisely because it is excessive: "Being once in love, we believe our desires cannot be noble, untill they are extream; nor generous, unless they be rash." The widow is to be excused because the soldier's importunity was irresistible, and because the chance he offered her was one she could not afford to miss:

> For the Souldier hath ikneled so
> And told her all his love, and all his wo,
> And sworn so depe to her to be true,
> For well or wo, and change for no newe;
> And as a false Lover so well can plain,
> The selie Matron rewed on his pain;
> And toke him for husbond, and became his wife
> For evermore, while that hem last life.

(*LGW, Dido,* 1232-9, with "Souldier" for "Eneas", and "Matron" for "Dido"

"Why then," Charleton asks, "should this Woman be accused of extream Levity, only for taking occasion by the Foretop, and, at first Encontre, making sure of what, perhaps, she otherways might have lost."

When the soldier realizes that, while he was making love to the matron in the tomb, the corpse of the felon he was supposed to be guarding has been stolen, he proceeds to "vomit out blasphemies against women" (1668 says "belch out", since "vomit" comes later : "Man who otherwise would be more than half-*Divine;* onely by being obnoxious to the corrupt temptations of Woman, is made lesse than half-*Human.*" (Here "obnoxious" has its now obsolete meaning of "liable." Then, since Charleton's satire is not entirely gender specific, the soldier has the grace to vomit accusations against himself. Cleverly, the woman proposes that he mutilate her husband's body to make it look like the hanged felon's (she is not so abandoned as in some versions where she does the mutilating herself , and he obeys, remembering the proverb, "Women are always more subtle and ingenious at Evasions, in suddain Exigences, than Men." P.M.'s 1668 publication inserts at this point, "Here I cannot but cry out with Father *Chaucer,* in his Ballad of the *praise of Women*, Lo what gentillesse these women have," commencing two rhyme royal stanzas of perhaps ironic praise. The poem, included in early editions of Chaucer, is now recognized as apocryphal.[13] While not obviously ironic itself, its insertion here clearly is. The line "How busie thei be us to keepe and save" applies well to the matron's concern for her new lover, but says little for her loyalty to the memory of her former husband, whose mutilated body must be publicly suspended for the sake of the object of her changed affections. Finally, as the lovers heave out the husband's corpse, Charleton wryly comments that their ruse provides the first example of the proverb, "A woman's Wit is alwayes best at a Dead-Lift."[14]

Charleton's satiric vindication of women is a quite brilliant example of condemnation through pretended praise, or, alternatively (for the treatise is nothing if not paradoxical , of praise that condemns not the usual objects of anti-feminist censure, but the unjustified excesses of such censure itself.

P.M., Gent.'s sequel begins with a letter to Charleton, explaining why he has dared to publish *The Ephesian Matron,* which Charleton had sent him, but which, in his 1659 preface addressed "To a Person of Honour," he had coyly asked him to keep to himself. "Imprison her in your private Cabinet, so that she may be seen by no eyes but your own ... for fear she meet with *affronts* from the Ladies, who will never be reconciled to a Woman that is so weak, as to betray the *frailties*, and lay open the *secrets* of her own sex. Besides that, she is a professed enemy to their darling, *Platonick Love.*" The female affectation that women may love without sexual desire is a

primary target of Charleton's satire. In response, P.M. loses no time in quoting "our great Moralist, and beloved Author, Chaucer" (perhaps anticipating his own satiric intentions by choosing to refer to the Wife of Bath, who would certainly have given short shrift to the concept of platonic love , though only to show that Charleton would have been too niggardly if he denied his work the freedom of publication.

P.M. argues that to imprison women, as he facetiously calls not publishing *The Ephesian Matron,* is inhumane to them and, especially if they are handsome, uncomfortable for the Men deprived of their society; moreover, it is difficult, and counter-productive, as sure to provoke them to get loose somehow. Although some Ladies may feel slandered, Charleton, he contends, praises feminine virtues, shows that Love is a universal tyrant, and includes the soldier's reproaches of the compliant widow only by way of delineating his rough character; others, accordingly "will vindicate you from the infamy of a Woman-hater." In this last phrase, P.M. turns back upon Charleton an accusation he had himself predicted P.M. might incur if he published the tale, smugly confident that both he and Charleton will be able to survive any feminist counterblast.

Determined, indeed, to share any obloquy that Charleton's text may provoke, P.M. promises to tell the story of

> a trick that pass'd for no less than a Miracle. Having found the Novel in the *Comus sive Phagesiposia Cimmeria* of that witty and erudite Noble Italian, Erycius Puteanus; and out of his elegant Latin translated into plain English; I now bring it as a Handmaid to wait upon the Ephesian, at least, if you think it worthy of that honour.

In turning this elegant Latin into plain English, however, P.M. allows himself considerable license of expansion. The anecdote in Puteanus's *Comus* begins:

> Matrona quedam, ait, in finibus Cimmeriorum agebat, danistae non ignobilis uxor; si formam spectes, omnibus simulacris luculentior; si famam, pudica. Sed quam multae saepe maculae in occulto latent![15]

This is rendered

> On the Confines of Cimmeria, there not long since lived a certain Gentlewoman, of shape more exact than a Statue formed by all the rules of Leon Battista Alberti; of features and complexion more sweet and delicate than those of Venus her self; of reputation as clear and immaculate as Diana. Wife she was to one, whom Usury had made Rich, and Riches eminent; with whom she enjoy'd all the pleasures of conjugal Love and Fidelity; not so much as dreaming of any content but in his indulgence and embraces.

> But, ah! how mutable are humane Affections! how many faults doth time discover, [&c]

The Cimmerian Matron's trick, or miracle, was certainly ingenious, if extremely implausible. Though happily married, she falls for a soldier and employs a bawd to bring him to her house when she expects her husband to be away. The jealous husband, however, returns before the soldier can get in, angrily strips his wife and ties her to a pillar on the verandah, and goes peacefully to bed. Finding the outer gate locked, the disappointed soldier goes back to the bawd, who has a key. She releases the wife and allows her to tie her up in her place so that the wife can sneak out to meet her lover. P.M.'s admiration is breathtakingly amoral:

> 'Twas a bold and adventurous Act this, for a Woman so lately surprized, so cruelly treated, so miraculously delivered; nay, not yet delivered from danger of greater torments, and perhaps of death; thus to throw her self into the Arms of her Adulterer, to force, even destiny it self to give way to the satisfaction of her desires. But Love inspires Audacity and Contempt of all perils into the Weakest and most timorous hearts.

Wakening from a dream of his wife's infidelity, the furious husband rushes out with a razor and slashes off what he thinks is his wife's nose, but of course the bawd is now tied up in her place. Then he goes back to resume his slumbers. The wife returns, unties and consoles the bawd (noselessness being as much a badge of honour in her profession as a soldier's wounds would be in his , and is tied up again in her place. The bawd goes off to find a surgeon, and the wife prays loudly to Diana to release her from the tyranny of her jealous husband. He overhears, as he is meant to. Then he hears her thanking Diana for vindicating her by a miracle. He comes down and is terrified to discover that the goddess has indeed restored his wife's nose as if it had never been cut off. Fearing judgement, he begs forgiveness, and all is well. "Thus, blest be the God of Love! Our witty Matron, hath at once recovered three most precious things, her Nose, her Honour, and her Husbands Love."

In typical *fabliau* fashion, the amorality of the conclusion helps to remove the characters from the real world of accountability and so reinforces the joke. Literature sometimes enjoins not only a willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, but also a willing suspension of moral responsibility.

P.M. commences the anecdote by quoting lines from Chaucer's *Legend of Dido* that shortly precede those with which Charleton celebrated the Ephesian Matron's marriage. The sight of the soldier bathing naked inflames the Cimmerian Matron exactly as Dido was by Eneas;

> "Yet be not too severe in condemning the passion of a frail Woman, You, who know how strong and quick assaults Cupid

> often makes upon Forts so weakly man'd, and with what unresistable Artillery he is provided."

Charleton also justified the Ephesian Matron by referring to the irresistible power of Love. P.M.'s justification, however, is qualified by the emphasis on female frailty. This frailty is more than made up for, however, by skill in repartee, for due acknowledgement whereof P.M. concludes his anecdote by quoting Proserpina's lines from *The Merchant's Tale,* in which she promises that a woman caught *in flagrante delicto* by her husband as May was will always be able to talk her way out of trouble.

In his appended sections entitled "THE Mysteries and Miracles of LOVE," P.M. uses again the *Legend of Dido,* this time to prove that, far from languishing, love may grow stronger by the possession of its object: "and our friend Chaucer therefore wisely fixes the Epoche of Æneas and Dido's love on the Jubile they celebrated in the Cave". Subsequently he quotes

> a pertinent Stanza of that incomparable Critique in Love, old Chaucer: who in most lively and never-vading colours painting the surprize and astonishment of Troilus, (till then a Woman-hater at first sight of the fair Creseide, in her mourning habit, sparkling like a Diamond set in Jet; saith thus.
>
> Lo, he that lete him selven so conning,
> And scorned hem that loves paines drien,
> Was full unware that love had his dwelling
> Within the subtel streams of her eyen;
> That sodainly him thought he felt dien,
> Right with her loke, the spirit in his herte.
> Blessed be love, that thus can folke converte.
>
> (*Troilus & Criseyde,* I, 302-8

Thus he disarms adverse criticism and prepares the way for his conclusion in which he and Charleton, free of the charge of being Woman-haters, enjoy the pleasures of unruffled friendship. Disarmingly, he asks for indulgence in the words of "our dearly beloved Don Geffrey," quoting again from *Troilus:*

> Beseeching every Lady bright of hewe,
> And every gentil woman, what she be,
> Albeit that our Matrons were untrue,
> That for that gilte ye be not wroth with me.
> Ye may in other Bokes their gilte se.
> And gladder I would write, if that ye leste,
> Penelopes truth, and faith of good Alceste.
>
> (*T&C* V, 1772-8, with "Matrons" for "Criseyde"

He adds also the next stanza, and some lines from *The Legend of Thisbe (*LGW 910-11 and 920-1 , commending the superiority of women's

affections to men's. P.M. ends astutely with the bawdy conclusion of *The Shipman's Tale:*

> Thus endeth now my tale, and God us sende
> Taling enough unto our lives ende —

where the accounting metaphor "tallying" is also a sexual pun, "tailing." There is also an obvious pun on "taling" in the sense of telling tales. Both "tallying" and "tailing" fit the *Shipman's Tale,* which is about a cuckolded Merchant, but only the latter the *Ephesian* and *Cimmerian Matrons.* The Cimmerian husband is a "hard-hearted usurer," but Puteanus's anecdote shows little appreciation of the equation of sex and money that underscores Chaucer's tale.

The question remains why, in the later seventeenth century, with all the Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline love poets to hand, to say nothing of classical and European authors, Charleton and his friend should have found Chaucer so congenial a love poet that they should wish to appropriate his work in their anti-feminist *jeu d'esprit.* (I assume that Charleton approved of the insertions, even if he may not originally have been responsible for them. Though John Fisher says that "The seventeenth century is the low point in Chaucer's reputation, when knowledge of his language and prosody had been lost, and he was regarded as antiquated and barbarous,"[16] for P.M. he was "that incomparable Critique in Love" whose poetic descriptions were painted "in most lively and never-vading colours". His and Charleton's names should be added to those collected by Caroline Spurgeon in her monumental three-volume work *Five hundred years of Chaucer criticism and allusion, 1357 - 1900*.[17] They show considerable familiarity with his work, being able to find apposite quotations in a wide range of poems, including the dream visions, *Troilus,* the lyrics, and certain of *The Canterbury Tales.* It is true that, by placing Chaucer's lines in a satiric context, they misrepresent a writer who is not unjustly described by Gavin Douglas as "all womanis frend," and that chiefly because of his pity for Dido, whom Douglas correctly saw Virgil and his Roman audience disapproved.[18] If Chaucer was all women's friend, he was responding to the widespread idiocies of antifeminist diatribes in a world that must be peopled. Douglas was thinking primarily of Chaucer's compassion for Dido, deserted by the heartless Aeneas, but we might more readily think of how characters like the Wife of Bath expose the illogicalities inherent in the adoption of militant positions in the conflict between the sexes. Charleton's and P.M.'s chief motive, however, seems to have been to have fun at the expense of the opposite sex.

Chaucer also wrote, of course, some of the cleverest and funniest stories in the language. Even if the seventeenth century in general regarded him as antiquated and barbarous, Charleton and P.M. recognized his authority as an astute commentator on the place of women in home and society.

They appreciated his comic verve and were alive to the genuinely affecting pathos of apposite passages of his writing, which they utilized in contexts that mirrored, satirically and jovially, the outrageous fun which the greatest comic writer of the Middle Ages expressed so capably.

NOTES:

[1] *The Poems of John Dryden,* ed. John Sargeaunt (Oxford UP, 1910, rpt 1952 , p. 160.

[2] "Walter Charleton," in *Dictionary of National Biography,* ed. Leslie Stephen. (London: Smith, Elder, 1887 , pp. 116-9.

[3] Petronius Arbiter, *Satyricon*, 111-12, ed. Evan T. Sage, rev. Brady B. Gilleland (New York: Irvington, 1982 , pp. 95-8.

[4] Henri Dupuy (Van de Putte , 1574-1646, who Latinized his name as Erycius Puteanus, lived in Italy and died in Louvain. See *Biographie Universelle* 18 (1814 , 322-4: "Dupuy était un homme d'une vaste lecture, mais de peu de jugement."

[5] Achsah Guibbory. *Introduction, The Ephisian Matron*, facsimile, Augustan Reprint Society (1975 . The matron's behaviour is only human and natural, but Charleton's critique suggests a contempt for human nature: "Charleton could just as easily be describing dogs or horses. He has not only dismissed the differences between all kinds of heterosexual love as non-essential; he has obliterated the hierarchical distinctions between human passion and animal appetite."

[6] There is a good account of Chaucer's *fabliaux* in Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (London: Routledge, 1985 , pp. 166ff. The defining characteristic, he finds, of Chaucer's comic tales is the assumption, shared by narrator and reader, "that there are no values, secular or religious, more important than survival or satisfaction of appetite" (p. 167 . A very similar view underlies *The Ephesian and Cimmerian Matrons*.

[7] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, VIII, xi, ed. Clemens C. I. Webb (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909 , II, 301-4.

[8] *The Exempla or Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques de Vitry*, ed. Thomas F. Crane (London: Nutt, 1890 , No. 232, pp. 96-7 and 228-9.

[9] *The Seven Sages of Rome*, lines 2811-3028, ed. Killis Campbell (Boston: Ginn, 1907 , pp. 96-103, with over sixty analogues listed at pp. ci-cviii.

[10] George Chapman, *The Widow's Tears*, ed. Ethel M. Smeak (London: Arnold, 1967 .

[11] *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984 . For the formal controversy, see pp. 13-136, for Swetnam, pp. 81-7, and for an anonymous play portraying the controversy Swetnam provoked, *Swetnam the Woman-Hater Arraigned by Women* (c. 1618 , see pp. 300-22.

[12] Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667 , *Holy living and dying: together with prayers containing the whole duty of a Christian* . . . (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851 , pp. 516-8.

[13] See Albert E. Hartung, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, vol. 4, p. 1083.

[14] *OED* s. v. "dead lift": "The pull of a horse, etc., exerting his utmost strength at a dead weight beyond his power to move;" hence, figuratively, "a hopeless exigence" (Johnson's definition . This now archaic phrase was very common in the seventeenth century. For the proverb, see M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1950 , W669: e.g., "No wit comparable to a woman's at a dead life" (Braightwaite, 1640 , and, from Howell's polyglot collection of proverbs, *Paroemiographia* (1659 : "A Woman's advice is best at a dead lift." Charleton wittily applies the proverb both literally and figuratively, and so brings his treatise to a neat conclusion.

[15] Erycius Puteanus, *Comus sive Phagesiposia Cimmeria de luxu somnium* (Louvain, 1610 , pp. 100-118: quotation from p. 100.

[16] *The Complete Prose and Poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. John Fisher (Rinehart, 1977 , p. 953.

[17] Cambridge UP, 1925.

[18] Gavin Douglas, prologue to the first book of his translations of the *Aeneid*. On this, see Richard Firth Green, "Chaucer's Victimized Women," SAC 10 (1988 : 3-21, especially pp. 17-18.