"Saint" Anne Frankford : Thomas Heywood's Adaptation of the Catholic Saint Tradition

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Using elements from popular saint legends allowed Elizabethan authors to benefit from the audience's familiarity with emblems, literary conventions, and the overt moral didacticism of the legends. The adoption of Catholic literary traditions would necessarily entail some modifications during the Reformation so the contemporary audience would find the work palatable ; consequently, in some works one recognizes many elements that are similar to, but not exact parallels of, saint legends. This study focuses on one play, *A Woman Killed with Kindness* by Thomas Heywood (1603). To develop Anne Frankford, the central female character in the play, Heywood utilizes many elements prominent in the saint legends.

Martha Tuck Rozett, a noted Elizabethan scholar, developed a premise of literature with relation to audience which underlines the present study. She claims that

> popular art forms always address issues of current public interest and debate in one way or another.....This, of course, may be an aspect of popular art of which the artist is not wholly conscious, for the presence of topical issues in the text need not be intentional. Rather, it may result from an influence so subtle and oblique that neither playwright nor audience recognizes it at the time. [1)]

1) Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton UP, 1984) 5.

Drawing from this theory allows the literary critic to focus on the text and still discover societal applications. In *A Woman Killed* Heywood uses many popular elements that increase the audience's identification with the play such as hawking, a country dance, popular songs, landed gentry, and peasants. Since, as Barbara J. Baines has pointed out, the characters "are designed to meet the moral concerns of a common audience," [2] Heywood also uses a common element of the once-popular saint legends, the morally instructive example.

Heywood initially characterizes the title character, Anne Frankford, through the dialogue of other characters. Sir Charles calls her "beauty and perfection's eldest daughter" (i, 23), [3] while Sir Francis, her brother, refers to her as "[a] perfect wife already, meek and patient" (i, 37). Anne possesses the saintly qualities of chastity, beauty, and humility. Referring to herself as an "imperfect beauty" (i, 30), she feels uncomfortable with the praise of others. These lauds are sprinkled throughout the play, placing Anne in a didactic role of a model wife. Even though she will commit adultery, her function as an example will not shift ; the moral lesson changes, not Anne's function. Of course, every saint legend displays this didactic function, which also appears in many other types of stories, but in *A Woman Killed* a specific Christian context emerges that unites the play with the legends in theme as well as function.

Anne appears as moral example in many places, but the most explicit occurs when she cries out directly to the audience :

O women, you that have yet kept

2) Barbara J. Baines, *Thomas Heywood,* (Boston : Twayne, 1984) 99.

3) Thomas Heywood, "A Woman Killed with Kindness," *Drama of the English Renaissance I : The Tvdor Period,* eds. Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin (NY : Macmillan, 1976). All citations from the play will be from this edition and noted within the text.

Your holy matrimonial vows unstained,

Make me your instance : when you tread awry,

Your sins like mine will on your conscience lie. (xiii, 141–5)

Spoken in an extreme emotional moment of recognition, Anne's pleas should affect the audience. Since she remains on the stage with only Nicholas, Anne directs her lament to the audience, an obvious attempt at moralizing by Heywood but one that probably would have been effective considering the contemporary heinous view of adultery. She also perfcrms this didactic role when Frankford tells the maid, "Go bring my infants hither" (xiii, 116). Laura G. Bromley mentions that Anne is a "model of disobedience," [4] hence the children *should not* be exposed to this negative example : "[H]er adult'rous breath may blast their spirits / With her infectious thoughts" (xiii, 126–7). However, this negative model does serve the audience well. The *adult* spectator's awareness of the extreme gravity of adultery would be heightened by the suffering that Anne must endure to atone for this transgression.

The saint legend, while displaying the morally constructive example, captured the medieval audience's imagination primarily through the use of emblems. Most saints had recognizable objects or symbols that enabled the audience to identify them quite easily. St. Lucy carried her eyes on a dish, St. Catherine had a wheel and a sword, and St. Agnes had a lamb by her side, to name just a few. These visible emblems allowed the chronicler of the legend to easily and quickly establish communication with his audience. In addition to the individual emblems, the hagiologist drew on established conventions through which the female saint [5] must endure : rejection of suitors, attempts to

4) Laura G. Bromley, "Conduct in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Stvdies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 26 (1986) :267.

5) Since Heywood applies the devices to a female character, this study will be confined to the emblems and conventions of female saints.

retain or regain virtue, and physical torture.

Specific images and symbols complement the direct moral didacticism which pervades *A Woman Killed.* Anne states, "Oh, to redeem my honor/I would have this hand cut off, these my breasts seared,/Be racked, strappadoed, put to any torment" (xiii, 134–6). Consciously or not, Heywood alludes to an entire history of saint legends in this statement. Because she has lost her honor, Anne repents ; to prove her contriteness, she feels she must perform some manner of penance. She lists methods of torture common to the medieval saints, and she even alludes to some specific legendary images. When Anne mentions the dismemberment of her hand, she recalls the famous legend of St. Wilfrida. Pursued by King Edgar, St. Wilfrida was overtaken by him at the church door "where he seized her hand and he sought her to marry him, but she left her hand in his, and, it is said, fled into the church without it." [6] Horrified, Edgar left her alone, but he did make donations to her abbey. St. Wilfrida flees to save her honor, but she does fulfill the request of the king in an eerily literal fashion. She retains her honor by losing part of her body ; in the same manner Anne recognizes that her honor can be recaptured by sacrificing part of her body.

The succeeding physical images that Anne uses in her lament recall other legends. Eamon Duffy writes that St. Agatha, after rejecting a pagan suitor, is "tortured on the rack, has her breasts twisted off, and [is dragged] naked over red–hot broken potsherds." [7] These horrible tortures are not confined to one legend. St. Barbara, a virgin who is also pursued for sexual ends, rejects her pagan father who subjects her

6) Kathleen Parbury, *Women of Grace : A Biographical Dictionary of British Women Saints, Martyrs and Reformers* (Boston : Oriel, 1985) 88.

7) Eamon Duffy, "Holy Maydens, Holy Wyfes : The Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth–and Sixteenth Century England," *Women in the Church,* eds. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood. (Cambridge, MS :Basil Blackwell, 1990) 181.

to "the usual stripping and scourging, as well as burning with lamps, and, of course, she has her breasts cut off." [8] Duffy's tone in this quote reinforces the proliferation of these incidents, especially the mutilation of women's breasts. Anne states her willingness to endure this type of torment when she specifically refers to her own breasts as "these my breasts seared" (xiii, 135). She identifies herself with the saint figure, which causes the audience to view her in the same context. Duffy also stresses that the female saints were immensely popular in medieval England, and their popularity was "increasing up to the very moment of Reformation." [9] The English people had prayed to the saints and listened to their tales for centuries. Even though the Protestant Reformers effectively removed the highly visible saint image from society, the tradition of venerating saints was deeply instilled in the Englishmen's lives ; consequently, the popular mind remained familiar with the saints and their conventions.

In addition to the images noted above, Heywood bestows upon Anne a symbol to be forever remembered by the audience as her own, the lute. The lute connotes male sexuality, and when Anne commands that Nicholas "[g]o break this lute upon my coach's wheel" (xvi, 73), she symbolically severs her marriage that was already literally destroyed. Frankford moans about the lute also, and when the audience considers these words in a sexual context, a new meaning is revealed:

> Her lute! O God, upon this instrument
> Her fingers have run quick division,
> .....
> These frets have made me pleasant,.....
> Oft hath she made this melancholy wood,

8) Duffy 181.
9) Duffy 185 n.

> Now mute and dumb for her disastrous chance,
> Speak sweetly many a note, sound many a strain. (xv, 13–4, 17–20)

Frankford does go on, but the point should be clear. The symbol that represents their marriage is not only now inactive, but soon it will be shattered against the wheel of the coach. Of course, this musical instrument carries more than just a sexual meaning ; Spenser uses a similar tactic when Colin Clout, frustrated in love, despairs. He "broke his oaten pype, and downe dyd lye." [10] In that Elizabethan poem, the pipe was Colin's means of expression and showed the harmony of his spiritual state. Heywood uses the lute in a similar, but altered, fashion. Along with sexual pleasure, the lute soothed and, in combination with Anne's "ravishing" voice, comforted Frankford. The loss of the music (a common communal activity) mirrors the broken communal bond of marriage.

Additionally, when Anne cries for the breaking of the lute, she specifically mentions the wheel of the coach. The coach carries Anne to the manor and to physical torture. She even draws a causal relationship between the coach and her death, as she laments, "So now to my coach, then to my home,/So to my deathbed" (xvi, 1022–3). Her comment about the wheel recalls another saint, in fact, one of the most famous female saints, St. Catherine of Alexandria. In this legend St. Catherine confronted the Emperor about the worshipping of pagan idols, and , after other events, she was tortured on a "spiked wheel... but fell to pieces and she was unhurt." [11] Anne's wheel also is directly related to her

10) Edmund Spenser, "The Shepheardes Calendar," *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmvnd Spenser*, eds. William A. Oram, et al. (New Haven :Yale UP, 1989) 32(ln. 72).

11) Donald Attwater, *The Pengvin Dictionary of Saints*,Second Edition (NY : Penguin, 1986) 78.

physical discomfort, but this wheel does not break ; indeed, the fragile lute, here a symbol of marriage, will break against the wheel, a symbol of Anne's necessary penance. Previously, Anne had hoped to keep the lute intact, stating that her "lute shall groan ; /It cannot weep, but shall lament my moan" (xvi, 32–3). Unfortunately, the lute cannot even play a mournful tune, so it certainly could not break a symbol of her torture. Baines notes that the lute is "an emblem of Anne herself, and as such it carries the *in bono* and *in malo* significations relevant to her former state of harmony, to her present state of discord, and to her future death." [12] Cecile Cary reinforces this idea, stating that the lute is an "emblem of marital concord and... has been thrown aside as carelessly as Anne's marriage." [13] The lute, then, becomes Anne's emblem in the same manner as the wheel belongs to St. Catherine. If Heywood had created Anne's character in a Catholic context, her identifying image would have been that lute, for it neatly symbolizes the central confict with which she is involved.

Anne's character also echoes the important medieval role of an *inclusus*. Michael Wentworth points out that "[e]arly Christian saints... voluntarily withdrew from society for purposes of contemplation, mortification, and penance." [14] Anne does not remove herself from the world, but she does submit to Frankford's punishment. However, Wentworth does not really develop the parallels between Anne's hermitage and medieval anchorites. If he had done so, he would have noticed some im-

12) Baines 102.

13) Cecile Williamson Cary, "'Go Breake This Lute': Music in Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," *Hvntington Library Qvarterly*, 37 (1974) : 120.

14) Michael Wentworth, "Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed witn Kindness* as Domestic Morality," *Traditions and Innovations* (Newark : U of Delaware P. 1990) 158.

portant differences. Ann K. Warren writes, "[M]ost anchorites lived in cells or narrow little homes attached to parish churches. Encouraged, applauded, and supported by society and church, they undertook their solitary life by encamping in the heart of the community." [15] Heywood transforms this penitential lifestyle. Frankford exiles Anne to his manor "seven mile[s] off" (xiii, 165), not in the middle of a community that supports and encourages her situation. Anchorites were also "free of monastic obedience, subject only to a higher authority," and "they were asked only their prayers by the communities on whom they relied for support." [16] Conversely, Anne is not free of an authority, and no one in the community seems to admire or support her until she is about to die. Actually Anne's situation more closely parallels an allegedly mythical form of punishment in the Middle Ages, immuring, or the walling up of a living person. Immuring was actually a "solitary confinement... that was a punishment." [17] Regardless of the final outcome of the main plot, Anne's exclusion from the community is not voluntary ; rather, Frankford forces it upon her. However, Heywood does use the final scene to echo the common role of the *inclusus*, and before Anne dies the community does encourage, applaud, and support her. Heywood does not mention the church, but the Protestant shift away from church sanctions necessitates the exclusion of an institutional church. So Anne does use the exile for penitential purposes, but, as noted, her *inclusus* status differed quite a bit from the medieval anchorite.

As can be seen in the examples above, most feminine saint legends possessed an emphasis upon the body. Baines writes that

15) Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons in Medieval Englad* (Berkeley : U of California p. 1985) 7.

16) Warren 9.

17) Warren 92.

"Heywood's treatment of Anne's fall exemplifies the Renaissance assumption that women, however virtuous, are more susceptible to passion than are men." [18] This popular assumption is important to acknowledge, but Heywood's treatment also stems from the corporeal emphasis of the saint legends. He combines this medieval preoccupation with the female body with Renaissance mores and ideas about women.[19] Elizabeth Robertson focuses on this corporeal emphasis of the legends. She writes that "the life explores the saint's sexual temptation by the devil, her endurance of physical torture, [and] her identification with Christ's suffering." [20] Robertson notes that both male and female saints endure these types of suffering, but in the feminine legends the physical nature is central. Heywood incorporates these three qualities in *A Woman Killed* and makes them central to Anne's life.

First, most scholars of *A Woman Killed* interpret the characters symbolically : Frankford as Christ, Anne as Eve, and Wendoll as devil/ Judas/ Cain. Whether Anne had sufficient motivation for committing adultery, as many scholars like to debate, "becomes a null point if one assumes that Heywood was not so much interested in how Anne fell as he was with the necessity that she fell." [21] Since Heywood needs to have Anne perform a didactic role, as Eve did, he follows one of the saint legend patterns when he has Wendoll tempt Anne. After Anne submits to the sexual temptation of the devil–figure, she equates Wendoll

18) Baines 90.

19) Marilyn L. Johnson, *Images of Women in the Works of Thomas Heywood* (Salzburg : Institut fur Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1974). Johnson gives a comprehensive view of the Renaissance treatments of women in Chapter I : "Renaissance Controversy over Women."

20) Elizabeth Robertson, "The Corporeality of Female Sanctity in *The Life of Saint Margaret*," *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Evrope*, eds. Renate Blumenfeld–Kosinski and Timea Szell (Ithaca : Cornell UP, 1991) 268.

21) Wentworth 154.

with the fiend : "O for God's sake fly ! / The Devil doth come to tempt me ere I die" (xv, 108–9). As stated, Anne has already been successfully tempted ; she merely tries to resist any further sin which would hinder her chances for eternal salvation. Still, the emphasis of the play centers on Anne's adulterous act or, for our purposes, the sexual temptation of Anne by a devil–figure.

Although saints traditionally resisted such temptations, Anne's fall into sin does not prohibit her from achieving a saintly status. The saint legends documented many once–sinful saints like Anne, so the presence of grave sin did not prohibit the eventual sainthood of an individual. Both St. Helena and St. Theneva began their lives in heretical states ; the former was a pagan concubine, while the latter "became pregnant by a beardless youth." [22] In the sexual temptation of Anne, Heywood draws upon both biblical and saintly models to establish a communication with the audience.

The second quality of the saint's life that Robertson lists, an "endurance of physical torture," also appears in the play. Even though Anne is not subjected to harsh penalties, she does attempt starvation, a form of mortification. Robertson writes, "[The female saint] can overcome that sexual temptation only through her body, primarily by countering her physicality with her endurance of extreme physical torture." [23] Initially, Anne exhibited a reluctance to physical punishment ("mark not my face/Nor hack me with your sword" [xiii, 98–91]), but she later accepts penance willfully ; indeed, she commits suicide in a slow, tortuous manner. By mortifying her flesh, Anne replicates the staunch actions of the female saints who endured bodily pain to maintain their chastity. Anne cannot completely regain her chastity, but can

22) Parbury 83.

23) Robertson 269.

redeem herself by enduring physical pain, When Anne cries for the searing of her breasts and the loss of her hand, she recognizes the just measures she must take to achieve final salvation. Heywood recognizes that Anne, according to popular medieval perceptions of adultery that still persisted in Renaissance England, must perform some extreme sacrificial action in addition to her verbal repentance.

Finally, and most importantly, Anne's ultimate function parallels both the saints' and Christ's function as mediators. The saint intercedes between man and Christ, while Christ reconciles man with God. Both serve as unifying agents. Anne's tears have the power to "[wash her] black soul white" (xvi, 106) and to renew the sacrament of marriage ("thy repentant tears/ Unite our souls" [xvii, 106－7]). The baptismal effects of her "miraculous" tears complement her larger role as unifier of the communitv. The reconciliation is not, as Baines comments, "painfully incomplete"[24] ; on the contrary, the community recognizes the extent of Anne's sacrifices. She realizes the importance of salvation, and she does everything within her earthly power to achieve that state.

Her effectiveness as a moral example is made explicit when the entire cast, with the exception of Nicholas, joins together at Anne's deathbed, and they exclaim, "So do we all" (xvii, 98) in reply to Frankford's wish to die with her. Leonore Lieblein accurately notes that "in other plays repentance and forgiveness are matters between the sinner and God; in *A Woman Killed* the pardon comes first from communitv."[25] The reconciliation between the individual and God appears in saint legends, since all of these stories concerned themselves with the saint's dedication to God. This Protestant adaptation involves more than the

24) Baines 86.

25) Leonore Lieblein, "The Context of Murder in English Domestic Plays," *Stvdies in English Literature, 1500—1900* 23 (1983) : 194.

individual ; the salvation of the entire community becomes of paramount importance. Miracles of the saint's sanctity serve as a mediating force between God and man, but Heywood writes in a Protestant context which de-emphasizes contemporary miracles, so Anne must reconcile the community in a different manner. The final scene's importance lies in the didactic function of Anne ; her sincere contriteness forces the community into a position of humble forgiveness.

The character of Anne, then, draws upon common images and practices with which the audience would have been familiar. Heywood tempers the medieval models by reducing the explicit references to sainthood and the hagiographical tradition. He does give the audience some explicit indications of the material from which he is drawing. Wendoll implores Anne to "Sigh not, sweet saint" (vi, 155), Frankford says, "I'll not martyr thee" (xiii, 153), and, while the group plays cards, Anne asks, "Husband, shall we play at saint ?" Frankford, under some emotional duress, replies to both the audience and to Anne, "[Aside] My saint's turned devil ; --[To her] / no, we'll none of saint. You're best at new-cut, wife" (viii, 154-6). According to the OED, they are referring to a card game called "cent" ; however, Frankford explicitly rejects the saint figure because they would be "playing" at it,as if the saint figure were merely an imaginary person. This perception no doubt echoed the popular Protestant idea of the Catholic martyrs. The Catholic saint was now something unreal, inaccessible, and idolatrous. Besides, Frankford's saint, as well as all good Englishmen's saints, has "turn'd devil." He does not want to martyr her, which reflects the hesitancy of the general Protestant public to create more saints. Once an integral part of worship and the Church, the saint figure in Elizabethan and Jacobean England was becoming synonymous with the "false" Catholic Church.

The influence of the saint legends does not negate nor reduce the

other influences from which Thomas Heywood drew ; in fact, Heywood "both reflected and reinforced the beliefs of the English middle class, who particularly wanted their reading matter to be morally constructive." [26] The beliefs of this class, though, were influenced not only by their immediate surroundings, but also by Catholic traditions that they were slowly abandoning. Some elements of the saint legends remained acceptable, even desirable, and Heywood took advantage of the familiar medieval images and adapted them for his Protestant audience. The saint legends are, at the most simple level, morally instructive. When Heywood capitalizes on different elements from the legends, he addresses the needs and desires of his audience.

26) Johson 161.