THE IMPRISONMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND CREATION OF HERESY THROUGH MONASTIC LIBRARIES AND THE PAPAL AUTHORITIES AS MANIFESTED IN THE WRITINGS OF UMBERTO ECO AND JOHN LYDGATE

Albert Alexander Bereznay II

A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2013

Committee:

Erin Labbie, Advisor

Dr. Kristine Blair, Reader
ABSTRACT

Dr. Erin Labbie, Advisor

My thesis, *Canonicity and Medieval Heresy: Ideological Rifts and their Potentialities*, addresses the way that medieval monasteries produced and protected canonical knowledge. The medieval church deployed monastic libraries to shape and conform the spread of knowledge selectively as shown within the pages of Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*. Monastic hermeticism and esoterism also enabled the production of many religious writings that became canonical medieval texts. The religious writings of John Lydgate, whose literary texts focused mainly on the lives of saints and historical figures, illustrate one example of the way that Christian canonicity was perpetuated and disseminated.

In this thesis I establish how the canon is created and in turn how it creates its own heresies. Next, I reflect on the way that John Lydgate’s monastic writings about saints were written with a cultural bias used to sway the readers into a particular mindset about different historical and saintly figures. Finally, Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* will be used as a meta-fictional and meta-historical example of the Church’s imprisonment of knowledge during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Eco’s text not only illustrates and explicates medieval monastic library history, but also shows the way that a hermetic approach to canonical knowledge produces the category of heresy.

The firm assertions of the dogmatic hegemonic canon of the church find their “other” in heresy. If the two remain opposed, conflict ensues; however, if they find an intellectual union through the dialectical procedure, then synthesis creates a new way of
viewing what becomes the “law of literature” embodied by the early formations of the literary canon. If the state of conflict remains within the scene of dialogue, then we do not arrive at a dialectical engagement. Rather, one assertion becomes foundational and the other is reactionary; both see themselves as ways of achieving truth.
This thesis is dedicated to Alex, Beth, Bobby, Chris, Emily, Eva, Matt D., Mike, and of course my office-mate Pete. These were my peers that grew to become my friends and ended up being family. Thank you all for your guidance and support through our years together. I appreciate all of you and what you've done for me more than you'll ever know.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, my sincerest gratitude goes to my advisor Dr. Erin Labbie for her kindness, inspiration, and most of all her patience throughout this endeavor. Nothing I’ve accomplished over the last few years of my academic career would have been possible without her. I would be amiss to not properly recognize the incredible staff and professors within Bowling Green State University’s English Department that have worked hard guiding all of us within the program. Special thanks goes out to my mother for support and constant faith in me as well as my father who over the last year became my editor, research assistant, and peer. Finally, I am indebted to my friends and brothers for maintaining my sanity by reminding me that even when cloistered away no one is truly left alone.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORY OF CANONICITY AND THE PRODUCTION OF ANTHOLOGIES ................................................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERSTANDING THE CANONICAL PROCESS THROUGH SMIOTICS, CANONICAL THEORY, AND THE POWER OF LANGUAGE 4

Creating A Familiarization with Canonical Logic and Hegelian Dialectics ............. 5
Differentiating Between Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Heresy ............................... 6
Gaining Cultural Symbolic Power through the Legitimization of Language .......... 11
The Creation of aCanonized Legitimate Language .................................................. 17
The Formation of the Bible through the Necessity of a Legitimized Language ...... 21
The Values of Canonization........................................................................................ 27

CHAPTER II. THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CORRUPTION AND IMPRISONMENT OF KNOWLEDGE THROUGH MONASTIC LIBRARIES, SCRIBAL TRANSMISSION, AND THE WORKS OF JOHN LYDGATE ................................................................................... 38

The Corruption of Knowledge through Monastic Politics and the
Inconsistency of Scribes ............................................................................................ 38
Lydgate’s Depiction of Scribal Biases....................................................................... 45

CHAPTER III. IMPRISONING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE AUTHORITY OF LIBRARIANS AND CONTEMPORARY DISSEMINATION OF IDEAS AS EXEMPLIFIED IN UMBERTO ECO’S THE NAME OF THE ROSE........................................................... 52

The Authority of the Librarian to Protect, Imprison, and Destroy Knowledge........ 53

The Imprisonment of Knowledge through Monastic Libraries as Represented
by Umberto Eco’s the Name of the Rose................................................................. 57

CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSION: ............................................................................. 65

The Evolving Problems of Canonization and the Corruption of Truth from the Middle
Ages to the Present and Future ........................................................................... 65

WORKS CITED ..................................................................................................... 69
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure/Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algirdas Greimas’s Semiotic Square</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION: THE HISTORY OF CANONICITY AND THE PRODUCTION OF ANTHOLOGIES

A vast collection of knowledge has been recorded over the millennia. Countless texts have been written, rewritten, lost, and destroyed as societies attempt to educate their people in the most comprehensive manner possible. Knowledge gained through discovery, while effective, consists of a time consuming process that hinders one's ability to gain culturally relevant knowledge with ample time to put it into practice. If possible, imagine a world where each individual had to teach oneself what we consider common knowledge. Although E.D. Hirsch set up a paradigm in which common knowledge is a form of educational acquisition that could be achieved, it is also culturally and temporally determined.¹

Canons set up the possibility for access to knowledge and the restrictions of knowledge. Common knowledge consists of different things depending on one's culture. It is passed down in the educational format where students learn from teachers/instructors/family members/mentors. Those with scholastic authority are in charge of teaching like material in similar ways in order to allow for educational continuity. For a society to function properly, its citizens must be able to communicate with one another and comprehend information in a uniform manner. Therefore, instructors often took material and bound it into an anthologized format in which a single text could consist of all the knowledge to teach a particular subject. Whether the anthology revolved around Ancient Roman History, Eighteenth Century American Romanticsm, Post-Colonial Literature, etc, it could be taught to many different students from different regions while all gaining the same information. Although anthologies are effective in condensing a massive amount of knowledge into more comprehensible segments, they are constantly at risk of being

challenged or altered to fit the ever-changing needs of an evolving society. However, some anthologies are considered so accurate and sacred that their teachings are permanently preserved through the canonization process so their authority can no longer be challenged.

Originally, the word canon referred to both law and religious texts. Etymologically it is derived from the word for “rod” or “bar” reflecting discipline and extending to disciplinarity. In secular and lay terms it was the composition of texts that made up a religious ideology as well as the laws those texts imposed upon its followers. In the Middle Ages, the canon is most notably associated with the dominant and dogmatic ideals of the dominating Church structures. While a canon is widely associated with religion and the clerical transmission of religious texts, it applies to all areas of knowledge that must be unified as a means of widely teaching certain material. Therefore, the Oxford English Dictionary’s more general definition of a canon as “a general law, rule, principle, or criterion by which something is judged” is applicable to this thesis. The focal point of understanding this definition revolves around the concept of judgment. More importantly, it is the application of those criteria in regards to judging an object’s legitimacy within a canon. The question of legitimacy is central to the question of canonization. Objects classified into a specific category must contain a common denominator that binds all of those objects together for them to be legitimimized. From a religious standpoint, these canonized criteria establish a proper methodology for worship.

The canon was a means of spreading the laws within Christian philosophy throughout the known world. Obeying these laws classified followers as Christian and how well these laws were followed determined a person’s virtue. Due to the religious connotation that revolves around the canon, the dictionary continues by more specifically defining a canon as a “Church decree or law” as well as referring to it as the “collection or list of sacred books accepted as genuine”
(“Canon”ii). The canon is both the compilation of sacred texts and the moral laws that those texts imbue upon its congregation.

The canon is related directly to the construction of religious ideological powers and structures. I will be referencing the term canon throughout my thesis as the principles in which authentic religious worship will be judged as expressed within the collection of “sacred texts” used by Christianity to make up the Bible. Since canonized literature is that which is accepted as “genuine,” scholars must consider how these texts were declared authentic and who was in a position of authority to make these declarations. Those possessing this authority had the ability to influence which texts were accepted into the canon thereby establishing the ideological structure based upon those texts. These unified Christians, under a set of moral values, guide proper behavior through their religion’s principles. Canonized religious texts create a dogmatic reality that Christians must accept as “truth” in order to accurately follow selective ideological principles. Those with the authority to canonize the Bible gain the power to establish a biased truth that favors their specific ideology thereby controlling the values and mindset of their followers.

---

CHAPTER I: THE DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERSTANDING THE CANONICAL PROCESS THROUGH SEMIOTICS, CANONICAL THEORY, AND THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

Creating a Familiarization with Canonical Logic and Hegelian Dialectics

One way to understand canonical truth and the formation of a unified religious ideology is through the concept of Hegelian dialectics. The Church’s ideological function is to establish itself as central and to repress, oppress, or punish ideas that run counter to its central dogma; indeed, its power is determined by the exclusion of ideas that challenge it. The firm assertions of the dogmatic hegemonic canon of the church find their “other” in heresy. If the two remain opposed, conflict ensues; however, if they find an intellectual union through the dialectical procedure, then synthesis creates a new way of viewing what becomes the “law of literature” embodied by the early formations of the literary canon. If the state of conflict remains within the scene of dialogue, then we do not arrive at a dialectical engagement. Rather, one assertion becomes foundational and the other is reactionary; both see themselves as ways of achieving truth. In Hegel’s words, “What is other for it is an unessential negatively characterized object. But the ‘other’ is also a self-consciousness…” (631). The “other” is seen as being “negatively characterized” or is viewed pejoratively because it is the complete opposite of the newly developed concept. The presumption of dualism that is at the heart of dialectical thinking also has the potential to lead to a synthesis; if the established order is dominant, it renders itself orthodox and in so doing it renders the other, its opposite, transgressed, and heretical. Literary analysis has the potential to synthesize these extremes and render heresy a viable form of ideological belief, and also to see the flaws in dogmatic thinking.
While the dualistic logic is one base of the canonical production of heresy, it is also a logical system that is then mutated into a flattening view of knowledge. The dominant dogmatism of the Catholic tradition of scribal transmission as the law of God renders its negation broadly; this means that anything not written with the authority of the Church is deemed heretical (or different from the presumed and given Word of God that is supported by the Church). Heresy becomes a broad category for that which is not Church ordained; it is not that which is thought of independently, but rather it is the reaction to an orthodoxy already created. Orthodoxy is that of the correct opinion or gathering of ideas that a group of people consider to be the proper belief structure. Anything that does not fall inside of that ostensibly correct opinion is thus considered to be heresy; not because of the belief structure of the heretical views, but simply because these heretical opinions are not orthodox.

In a closed logical loop of pure ideological hegemony and tautology, the Church maintains its authority through its own orthodoxy. Similarly, heresy maintains its difference through its potential for alternate views. These two views have a direct relevance to the process of exegesis and literary analysis. Once these viewpoints are firmly established, there still remains a gray area that is left that includes a possibility for numerous variations of both orthodox and heretical viewpoints. This concept introduces heterodox beliefs and adds further complications when determining which viewpoints are those that explicitly oppose orthodoxy to create heresy or slightly vary from both orthodoxy and heresy to create heterodoxy.

**Differentiating Between Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and Heresy**

Orthodoxy is the approved form of any doctrine (spiritual or secular) that creates a conformist belief structure that dictates certain viewpoints as being the correct standards for proper acceptance into the canon. Orthodox beliefs help to signify a specific ethos that governs
the governmental and social regulations for a society. It also acts as a blueprint for later
generations to follow that defines proper behavior and rituals necessary to accurately follow
these beliefs. Religion uses orthodox literature and textual canonization to create a foundation in
which to base its ideology. By clearly defining orthodox ideological viewpoints, religious
doctrine can analyze which literary texts and personal behavior properly align with that doctrine.
However, this creation of orthodoxy and its establishment of historical/intellectual truth through
literature bring into question the integrity of the canon when one analyzes how biased viewpoints
are used to influence the creation of orthodoxy. This question arises when attempting to
distinguish between which texts are accurate, those that have evidentiary support, and which
have been altered to create a prejudiced version of history. This predetermined “truth” is one that
is based off of an acceptance of certain information as being true and possibly neglecting any
scholarship that clarifies or challenges these presuppositions.

Those presuppositions are challenged when orthodoxy is created because at the same
moment so is its heretical counterpart. Referring back to Hegel, self-consciousness exists only to
be acknowledged by another (630). In this manner, orthodoxy only survives as long as it has
heresy to help define it; in much the same manner that heresy was not created until the orthodox
views were established. Orthodoxy sees itself as an “other” to heresy and views heresy as the
“individual.” Since the individual and the other oppose one another, each desires to gain more
authority and individuality through the other’s destruction. The orthodoxy desires to “supersede”
heresy because by superseding its other it supersedes its own limitations cause by its co-
dependent relationship to the other. The relationship is the same between the heresy as it views
itself as the “other” and the orthodoxy as the “individual.” Each defines itself as “not being” its
counterpart, so it is up to the society to determine which viewpoint will be distinguished as orthodox or heterdox and it is up to the individual to determine which ideology to follow.

Heresy is more than the belief in something that opposes orthodoxy, but rather is the conscious and willing choice to believe in anything not officially ordained. A person cannot unknowingly be a heretic. A religion must clearly establish criteria that distinguish between orthodox and heretical ideology as well as make the effort to explain to others what makes up those criteria and why one ideology is better than another. Besides being taught the difference, someone must be mentally capable of understanding what constitutes orthodox beliefs and then willingly decide to believe that which opposes those beliefs to be considered a heretic. While the criteria for establishing orthodox and heretical beliefs can be thrust upon society, each individual is responsible for choosing to abide by a particular ideology.

Heterodoxy, like heresy, is an ideology that goes against that orthodox structure, but it either deviates slightly as to not completely oppose orthodox ideas or it is the inability of followers to understand the reasoning for why their principles differs from orthodoxy. It does not threaten orthodoxy by opposing its fundamental beliefs, but rather alters them slightly as to become more comprehensible by its followers. Heterodoxy borders the line separating acceptable from heretical beliefs because by definition heterodoxy goes against orthodoxy in some way so it is heretical; however, it is not necessarily a conscious or willing decision to oppose orthodoxy. If a person, group, or culture would not be educated enough in orthodox beliefs or unable to understand the differences between orthodox and heretical viewpoints, then it would be the Church’s responsibility to teach and persuade them to alter their beliefs; or teach and condemn them as heretics if they willingly chose to disregard orthodox ideology. The fact
that an orthodox belief structure is concretely defined creates confusion when attempting to state anything against that finite interpretation as heretical.

Instead of being considered a negative concept in an either/or scenario, heresy can more appropriately described as a choice among multiple eventualities stretching across a spectrum of assertions and negations associated between polar opposite terms. By breaking this either/or scenario and allow for a wide variety of possibilities, religions can allow for the introduction of heterodoxy. Heterodoxa can be more logically explained by examining Algirdas Greimas’s semiotic square (Figure 1) and analyzing conjecture from the semiotician Daniel Chandler regarding this concept. “[The Semiotic Square is] a means of analyzing paired concepts more fully by mapping the logical conjunctions and disjunctions relating key semiotic features in a text” (Chandler, 197). This square allows the viewer to understand how binary terminology allows one term to relate to its counterpart. By viewing the squares four corners and crafting their labeling: Assertion (S1), Negation (S2), Non-Assertion (S̅1), and Non-Negation (S̅2), we can add in to these slots any binary relationship and analyze how one term relates to the other. Through the process of understanding the semiotic relationship between orthodoxy and heresy, the corners will be filled up with: Orthodox (S1), Heretical (S2), Non-Orthodox (S̅1) and Non-Heretical (S̅2). Opposed to going over every single pathway that describes how these terms relate with one another, I will describe the issue with the semiotic square that is more pertinent to my argument. While the extreme opposite terminologies accurately portray the relationship between these four terms, the complimentarily relationship causes a conundrum revolving around varying degrees of orthodoxies and heresies. That is to
say, can something not be orthodox and without being considered heresy; or along the same lines be considered not heretical without being orthodox?

This quandary allows for a debatable gray area that scholars use to freely interpret and reevaluate texts. Ideologies already established can be redefined to create new trains of thought. Chandler answers this question by analyzing the opposite terminologies beautiful and ugly. “This initial pair is not simply a binary opposition because something which is not beautiful is not necessarily ugly and something which is not ugly is not necessarily beautiful” (Chandler, 107). Through Chandler’s example it can be agreed upon that the individual/other relationship does not create one’s definition and sole existence upon the other. Although the creation of heresy is still established at the moment an orthodox belief structure comes into existence, so are the degrees between these two terms in which there is middle ground. Here people can combine both orthodox and heretical thoughts to create a new system of beliefs in an entirely different structure undefinable as either of these two terms. However, with a religious governing body like the Christian Church whose power derives from its number of followers, a middle ground allowing for opposing religions was not tolerated. By creating a religious canon, the Church put everything that didn’t fall underneath the term “orthodox” into the heretical realm and an “us” versus “them” mentality that dictated how religion and history would be viewed and heretics handled through the following centuries.

Heresy comes with the negative connotation of being “against” or “anti-”orthodoxy. Since the orthodox views are those that are widely accepted by the people of that faith, heresy is viewed not as a concept that is equal in merit to that of orthodoxy, but rather an abject idea that must be destroyed and considered wrong because of its opposing viewpoints to that same
orthodoxy.iii The abjection of heresy causes it to be expelled by orthodoxy, which not only causes a greater schism between the two varying viewpoints, but also increases the desire for orthodoxy to get rid of, if not completely destroy, heresy. The formation of an orthodox belief structure requires the expulsion of the heretical or “alien” elements that it once contained. The problem with expelling the heretical elements is determining which elements are despised enough to be classified as heretical and which are close enough to the individual to be considered heterodoxa.

Orthodoxy and dogmatic thinking are not developed simply or quickly. There is not one moment of clarity in which all aspects of religious dogma make sense, but rather a process that must go through many different phases in which: 1.) the orthodox belief can be structuralized and finalized, and 2.) is shown to be a part of as well as a response to the dogmatic views of the Catholic orthodoxy dominating scribal powers in the middle ages. Many theories and processes go into developing orthodoxy and through that orthodoxy comes the birth of heresy. However, despite how heresy is developed or which orthodoxy it is countering, heretical viewpoints are determined to contradict what has already been established as proper dogma and authority. Further, these modes of dominance have the potential to fluctuate in different historical epochs and different geographical regions. An author’s culture designates a text’s importance until future scholars review that same text, sometimes centuries later, and analyzes it through their own cultural lens. Texts that were once negatively regarded might be viewed more positively in the future. Due to ever-changing cultural values, texts that are considered heretical by one generation might become acceptable by the next.

---

iii The concept of the abject is most thoroughly addressed in Julia Kristeva’s *The Powers of Horror*. It is rendered political in the manner I am using it by Judith Butler, who, in *Gender Trouble*, explains that the abject is an alien element which the body expels; this alien element is established as the “not me” in which the alien elements become the counter of the body (2494). (Now put this all in proper citation please)
Gaining Cultural Symbolic Power through the Legitimization of Language

As a means of preventing the spread of non-orthodox ideas orthodoxy must produce a specific language that will separate itself from all others. This language will be used as the basis for spreading conventional ideology and setting up the “one” versus “other” relationship between languages as described earlier by Hegel. By creating an ideological language, religion clearly establishes a unified linguistic reference for an orthodox belief structure. Pierre Bourdieu in his work *Language and Symbolic Power* refers to this language as the legitimate language defining it as “a code, in the sense of a cipher enabling equivalences to be established between sounds and meanings, but also in the sense of a system of norms regulating linguistic practices” (45). This language is considered an “official” language constructed to govern the manner in which people communicate by empowering one language with more supremacy than any other. It can be the language that a particular region speaks or the language used by tradesmen and scholars that shows an understanding of their craft. Different regions may have dialectal changes to the legitimate language, but the population of a united society must have a standardized vocabulary, grammatical structure, and understanding of language to communicate with one another. For this reason, countries usually have one or sometimes multiple languages that are typically used or at least understood by all of its citizens. The same principle is used within academia to coordinate a distinctive language within a particular field of study that unifies scholars in their endeavors to enhance collaborative understanding. Whether political or academic, a society cannot function efficiently without the creation of a standardized language allowing for effective communication.

The legitimate language works both as the manner in which information can easily be sent to others and received by them. As Nietzsche states in *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral*

---

*The language of scholarship is referring to the vocabulary and means in which scholars of any nation can communicate amongst one another regardless of regional and cultural linguistics. The language of the craft opposed to the language of the people.*
Sense, “that which is to count as ‘truth’...becomes...a way of designating things...which have the same validity and force everywhere” (876). Laws are ineffective if only a handful of individuals can actually read and understand them. The same goes for moral laws such as those presented in religious texts. Despite how true or compelling the story, if people cannot read the texts due to their inability to understand the language, then the story fails to spread its message thereby failing at its principle reason for existence. By defining objects and ideas with a legitimate language, a group can distinguish one thing from another by designating names and concepts for a communication system that do not falter on semantics or regional semiotics. That is to say, laws require the creation of a legitimate language to effectively spread their authority.

Therefore, the establishment of a legitimate language requires an authoritative body to use its governing influence to spread that language throughout society. Bourdieu refers to the governing body for a legitimate language as the “state” or more precisely those with the authoritative power over others to dictate the language’s “genesis” and social uses. The state dictates the construction, origins, and proper usages of the official language, thereby reaffirming control over society through regulating language: “To speak of the language...is tacitly to accept the official definition of the official language of a political unit” (45). Acceptance of a legitimate language does not have to be stated forthright because the acceptance of language comes from its use and actions helping to spread the language. As a society uses their language, teaches it to their children, and writes books using that language, that society is silently showing their acceptance of that language as their legitimate language. Through societal acceptance of a legitimate language, the state gains supremacy over society due to their control of language. In this manner, the state gives authority to the legitimate language as the “official” language as acceptance of that language gives more authoritative power to the state for creating the widely
accepted language. The state and legitimate language cyclically give power and authority over others through cultural acceptance.

While showing favoritism of one language over another doesn’t disallow the existence of any other language, it does greatly diminish the usefulness of illegitimate languages. When dealing with multilingual societies, declaring a legitimate language creates a unification of languages deeming one as the official language that must be used for communication. The effect of legitimate language on society is based upon “…the policy of linguistic unification would favor those who already possessed the official language as part of their linguistic competence…” (6). Not only does an official language legitimate one language over another, but it also gives partiality to those that already use that language in their daily lives. Favoritism is dealt out by the state to its citizens that already speak the newly appointed official language. Not only do they not have to learn a new language, but they have the authority to teach their language to others giving them superiority to others in their society.

Favoritism is only one form of a legitimate language’s symbolic power. Bourdieu explains symbolic power as “a subordinate power, transformed i.e. misrecognizable, transfigured and legitimated form of the other forms of power” (170). Symbolic power neither contains nor creates its own power. It only has as much power over individuals as they place into it. Symbolic power comes from people and places of authority, such as Bourdieu’s “state” or other governing body, that imbibes power into the symbol. A governing body is only effective if it has obedient followers that recognize its authority to govern. “Symbolic power…is a power that can be exercised only if it is recognized, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary” (170). For symbolic power to be effective, its functions must be understood by its producers of dominant culture and misunderstood by subordinate cultures as being of little consequence. Symbolic power must hide
its true motives of heteronomy through the guise of autonomy. By seeming less than threatening, those controlling that symbolic power can use it to create a belief structure based upon their ideologies that can be reproduced easily by their subordinates. This ideological reproduction is done through the dominant culture’s legitimate language emphasizing its supremacy over other subcultures. “The dominant culture contributes to the real integration of the dominant class (by facilitating the communication between all its members and by distinguishing them from other classes)...” (167). The dominate culture separates itself from the subordinate classes through the use of their own official language thereby establishing an understood hierarchy between class structures. Bourdieu further clarifies, “The dominate culture produces this ideological effect by concealing the function of division beneath the function of communication: the culture which unifies...is also the culture which separates...and which legitimates distinctions by forcing all other cultures...to define themselves by their distance from the dominant culture.” (167) The dominant culture creates a cultural hierarchy first by establishing themselves from the rest of their society. They bring their official language to spread to the others, putting them at an advantage because they control the language. By becoming the teachers of this language, they gain authority and power over their subordinates who rely on them for knowledge. Different hierarchal class structures derive from each group’s distance from the dominant normative culture. The more of a difference between one culture and the dominant one, then the farther down the hierarchy of societal power does that culture fall. All of these sub-cultures must now define their importance by comparing themselves to the dominant culture thereby legitimizing their subordination.

Not only must a subculture define itself through comparison to the oppressive culture, but their own power and culturally hierarchal position is delegated by power granted to them through
their oppressor’s legitimate language. “The power of words is nothing other than the delegated power of the spokesperson, and his speech is no more than a testimony of the guarantee of delegation which is vested in him” (107). The power that comes from words is delegated to the individual by an institution, or place of authority, that gives the speaker credibility as a bridge between the listeners and the institution. This power is the acknowledgement that an institution (religious, political, etc.) allows the spokesperson to speak on behalf of their organization. The spokesperson only has as much authority as is delegated by the institution and can only act as a conduit of information. Their language acts as a testament to the authority of the institution bestowing its power upon the speaker. “There is a rhetoric which characterizes all discourses of institution…the official speech of the authorized spokesperson expressing himself in a solemn situation, with an authority whose limits are identical with the extent of delegation by the institution” (109). Authority is delegated to others by sources of higher power. Clergy are given authority from those higher than them in their religious hierarchy. The Church cannot spread its message through one individual from one local, so their power has to be spread to others within their religious order to extend their ideology to the public. Different people with the Church’s organization are given different amounts of authority ranging from God to pope to priests and everything in-between.

Each tier gets less authority given to them by a higher ranked group, but never given one hundred percent of the higher group’s authority. “The symbolic efficacy of words is exercised only in so far as the person subjected to it recognizes the person who exercises it as authorized to do so…” (116). The authority of a religious text only has power over those that believe in its writings. It is only an effective if the person exposed to the ideology recognizes the authority of the person introducing the material. A clergyman, more specifically a priest, who has been
ordained by the Church to spread their message, has more power infused to his language because
his power stems from the Church’s authority. Without people recognizing the authority of the
Church, a priest’s words would be no more meaningful than anyone else’s. The power of
language is proportionate to the amount of the authority one person gives another. An individual
has to acknowledge another person as being an authority figure to give power to that other
person. Since authority is delegated to others by sources of higher power, clergy are given
authority from those higher than them in their religious hierarchy. A person is only allowed to
speak with as much authority that is given by another and limited to the power stemming from
the institution that created that authority.

Canonization is a literary form of legitimate language in which scholars (the state) work
cohesively to determine a specific way to package together language and texts to keep a society’s
literature alive. “The legitimate language no more contains within itself the power to ensure its
own perpetuation in time than it has the power to define its extension in space” (58). A legitimate
language’s existence only lasts as long and spreads as far as societies allow it to spread.
Languages are lost to history when people refrain from using them in their daily lives. However,
academics can revive these dying or dead languages by studying them and spreading their
existence through their contemporary works. Experts will work with one another and present
their concepts of a canonical language for a specified topic until academic peers accepts one
language as legitimate. At this time, this newly created legitimate language will be spread to
others in academia to collectively create a finite way of understanding, writing, and teaching
various materials. As academics attempt to contribute to a particular genre, they contribute to the
perpetual existence of the legitimate language they created/revived. “The struggles among
writers over the legitimate art of writing contribute, through their very existence, to producing
both the legitimate language, defined by its distance from the ‘common’ language, and belief in its legitimacy” (58). This causes not only the legitimate language to be spread, but also reaffirms its acknowledgement as an official language.

**The Creation of a Canonized Legitimate Language**

The symbolic power of a legitimate language described by Bourdieu requires a language to be created and to be declared “official.” A language is more than syntax and phonemes. It is the culmination of how a culture uses syntax and phonemes and more importantly how that language was created in the first place. As languages become obsolete within societies, academics must at times reconstruct how a language was used and modernize the understanding of that language along with its texts. To exemplify this idea, the creation of Middle English as a scholarship and its public distribution will be clarified as a basis for establishing the biases that are integrated within the re-formation of a language as well as the texts that derive from that language. David Mathews focuses on this exact correlation between the creation of language and the study of that language within his book *The Making of Middle English, 1765-1910*. The focus of the creation of Middle English and its study emphasizes scholastic stature and superiority through writings and reworking of texts. Mathews introduces the hindrance that public appeal and vanity has on scholars when recreating a language. This section will use Mathews as an aid to explore how the biases of scholars can corrupt the creation of a language along with the destruction vanity has on the scholastic integrity of recreating texts.

Creating a language involves a group of people with the authority to specify on the requirements that dictate proper communication and scholarship of that language. Usually this group is composed of specialists in a particular field that are well versed and can speak with authority on the given topic. In regards to Middle English, this would be any academic that had
proven a viable authority on the literature and culture of that time period. It is difficult to prove
scholastic authority when the subject in question has not yet been established as a field of study.
Therefore, it becomes necessary for someone to verify knowledge/authority through some other
means. Often, a person can abuse his understanding of capital to create a sense of authority even
if there is no actual foundation for such a claim. “…drawing on the capital—symbolic and
cultural—deriving from literary and historical tradition…carving out of a social place…using
tradition to establish origins…that in turn can fuel further traditions” (Mathews, 5). Through
understanding the weight symbolic power holds, a person can abuse that power by altering one’s
own history in attempts to create a more favorable identity. Mathews introduces a literary scholar
who takes on the noble name of Percy through the creation of a fictitious lineage. By changing
his last name to Percy, he was able to give status and credibility to his work. “Readers were not
judging the inherent value of the material itself, but the taste and discretion of the person who
made it suitable…” (8). For many consumers, the status/brand is everything. When purchasing
clothes, music, and in Percy’s case literature, people are more concerned with the name attached
to the item they are buying than the object itself. Thus, Percy created an entirely new persona
that was a more marketable conduit for his literary works. “Percy rewrote, expanded, and
conflated…as to bring about a complete generic shift” (10). He had the ability to fill in missing
or ruined pages with his own words and sometimes make such grandiose changes that the entire
theme of the text would be altered. In a sense, Percy became the author of the texts that he edited
recreating an entirely new story/poem from the works of past writers.

As author and editor, Percy was able to rewrite history to fit his own vision and dictate
how others would view the Middle Ages. “Percy developed a romantic, conservative Middle
English designed to cement the relations between the ruling class and a certain type of aesthetic
persona created by a literary-scholarly work on the self” (23). Thus, Percy romanticized the works of the Middle Ages focusing on the positives of nobility and courtly love while leaving out the derogatory and offensive language that could offend those in high society. After completing his anthology of Middle English poems, the *Reliques*, Percy requested that the Countess of Northumberland, Elizabeth Percy, allow her name to be used in the dedication. On her acceptance, “[Percy] purged some of the more bawdy poems and brought a new gentility to others by the changing of [certain] expletives” thereby once again altering the *Reliques* and trading the historical integrity of the texts in exchange for the acceptance of the nobility.

Modifying texts for public or personal appeal is not something unique to Percy as it was done for centuries through the oral tradition of bards and minstrels changing poems and stories to better suit the audience and locale of their performance. “They [minstrels] have a special class location: without being of the aristocracy, they are nevertheless favored by the aristocrats, whose martial ideology they promote” (16). Through the modifications of his writings, Percy associates himself with the minstrels of the past. As he rewrites their rewritings of historical events, truth is farther removed from the texts and their integrity overshadowed by contemporary patronization.

Taking a cue from Percy, Sir Walter Scott took the art of the modern minstrel a step further. By romanticizing the chivalric tones in the different manuscripts he edited, Scott was able to distort how readers would view the Middle Ages. As editor, Scott took advantage of the opportunity to cross the line between editor and author allowing him to alter texts to his preferences. “Scott had described this part of the tale of Tristram, as told by Thomas [of Erceldoune]. Now he took it a further step, writing as Thomas” (69). It is not uncommon for editors to make notations or editions to the works they are editing; however, as the original manuscript of *Sir Tristrem* was unfinished, Scott actually completed the text by taking on the
persona of Thomas and adding an ending to the text without noting the change in authorship. Scott desired his life to be more like that of Thomas, so he actually took on that identity for a while altering the same text he used as a basis for his romanticized chivalric ideologies.

Scott’s work on *Sir Tristrem*, from the Auchinleck Manuscript, “can be considered a foundation text in the study of Middle English” (57). Like Percy, Scott focused on the romanticism that could be found in the Middle Ages and made sure that *Sir Tristrem* embodied the emotion and passion that readers found exciting about that era in hopes of gaining social acceptance and eventually some sort of patronage. This text along with others that Scott edited focused on the “lawless” border region between England and Scotland and the raids that coincided. By claiming their origins within the borders, Scott was able to proclaim these texts to be both Scottish and English depending on which declaration suited his needs. As the study of Middle English was just beginning to take shape, Scott could easily alter these texts and interpret them as relevant to this new scholarship. Scott and Percy were able to deviate from their source material to alter not only the texts, but their own lifestyles through patrons and benefactors as they continued their work. Together they helped to lay a foundation for the spread of Middle English and its study, but it would be a foundation built around patronizing revisions that reduced, if not completely removed, the authenticity of their texts.

The authenticity of a text definitely comes up for debate when patronage is in any way involved. Although without it, authors and editors would most likely not have been able to spread their texts to others. Middle English would not have become scholastically popular in the manner it did without the help of benefactors. Joseph Ritson was known for his confrontational opinions on the harms of patronage and the proper method for translating and editing medieval texts. Ritson’s more widely known writings focused more on attacking other literary figures of
the time and berating their misinterpretations or historical errors (37). His constant criticism gave him a poor reputation and the acceptance or relevancy of his work suffered because of it. “It was the man, the self, of Joseph Ritson that his contemporaries rejected, and as long as that self was sufficiently notorious to have existence beyond the works, the works were treated as an extension of that self and accordingly rejected” (51). This is unfortunate because Ritson’s editorial practices largely concentrated on removing the editor from the text as much as possible. Ritson did not seek any form of patronage/dedication and even removed his name from his work as to not take away credit from the original author. However, this left him without any means of making his scholarship “acceptable or desirable.” Therefore, Ritson was able to keep the integrity of his texts intact, but lost out on the ability to disperse his work to a large number of people.

Patronage acted as the double edged sword that potentially could have destroyed the integrity of Middle English, but was also its salvation. As a result, the conundrum arises between favoring textual integrity versus distribution. The overall procedure of creating a language and its scholarship is the beginning of the canonization process. For a legitimate language to occur, a language must be created and a means of distribution established. By understanding that the creation of Middle English was due largely to sponsorship and the aspiration of authors/editors for positive recognition, this process can be paralleled to other similar situations in which the canon’s textual integrity may be brought into question.

**The Formation of the Bible through the Necessity of a Legitimized Language**

The struggles to create a language such as represented in Mathews’ work are similar to the difficulties the clergy had when attempting to create a Bible as a source of consolidated religious ideology. As a language is pointless without others to speak or write it, so is a religious
text meaningless if it is not being used. The Bible cannot fulfill its primary function of spreading its creed if the public does not believe in its message or the ability to spread that message. Therefore, as time moved forward, the teachings of Christ had to adjust from a foundation of oral tradition revolving around the apostles to one of textual rhetoric. With religion having such a powerful influence upon its followers, this textual rhetoric needed to move towards a religious canonization as to avoid conflicting moral and ideological principles deriving from alternate interpretations of the same material. Thus, how and why texts were specifically chosen to be textually bound to one another is crucial to understanding the canonization process. The culmination of the Bible is the necessary movement towards canonization; however, as shown through Bourdieu and Mathews, the creation of a legitimate language always coincides with bias tendencies that potentially alter truth as a substitute for overall acceptance.

Scholars divide texts between genuine and spurious texts. Spurious texts are those “rejected” as genuine by scholars. These “false” texts are not to be acknowledged in the same sense as the genuine or “true” texts; therefore, they cannot be canonized within the same structure as genuine texts. A third terminology “doubtful” is used by scholars that are unable to definitively prove that a text is not genuine, but at the same time do not have enough information to declare it as authentic. “Doubtful” texts rely on other scholars to double check the genuineness of texts. The legitimacy of doubtful texts may take generations before enough information has been discovered to make a claim to their authenticity. Determining the genuineness of a text relies on a scholar’s ability to prove its pedigree through the text’s historical relevance and credible authorship. In terms of separating genuine from spurious religious texts, scholars attempt to distinguish proper authenticity from source material closely related to the primary

---

v These three terms and definitions were taken from David L. Dungan’s Constantine’s Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament (37).
text. Unfortunately, the majority of Christian primary texts are orations given by Christ and the apostles leaving the actual transcriptions to be written and rewritten at much later dates for posterity. Due to the potential generational gap between the primary orations and transcriptions, the dispute of textual authenticity involves understanding the evolutionary process of oral tradition into written text.

While the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ led to the foundation of the Christian faith, it was not until Christian ideology was solidified and a precisely written discourse needed that any thought to an addition testament was considered. According to Neil R. Lightfoot’s *How We Got the Bible*, “When the Church of Christ was first established, it had no thought of a New Testament” (156). In the early stages of Christianity there was no need for a written testament to the teachings of Christ because Christians had the Old Testament and the actual words of Christ to base their faith upon. The first generation to be influenced by Christ was still alive and they could teach the next generation or two about their personal experiences with these new religious ideals. As explained by William Barlcay in his book *The Making of the Bible*, “So long as the original apostles survived there was no need for written records of the life and words of Jesus. The apostles were the eyewitnesses who knew” (47). It wasn’t long until those with first hand encounters with Jesus began to die off. The apostles who were known for being the voice of Christ after death left a void within oral tradition that could not be filled by any other living person, so it became necessary to replace the voice of man with something more permanent. “The time of oral tradition was bound to end with the death of the apostles…something had to be found to take the place of ‘the living and abiding voice’, and that something could not be anything other than a written record...[compensating] for the loss of the living voice of the apostles” (49). The apostles acted as a beacon for Christians to look towards as a guiding light
for their moral compasses. As long as they lived, believers could use them as physical proof and credibility to their religious beliefs. While their bodies would eventually decay, the names of the apostles would still be the greatest form of authentication for religious texts. The written word of these apostles and those closest to them would have to become the new foundation on which Christian ideology would be based.

Even the most accurately transcribed written document, including that which was written by an apostle, lacks an important element that can only be found in interpersonal oration; “…they needed also interpretation, and it was that authoritative interpretation that the apostles alone could supply” (48). As lessons were taught using metaphors and explaining concepts relevant to the orators time period, observers had the ability to question and require elaborations as to proper meaning behind what was being said. As these orations became transcriptions, the ability to clarify or question interpretations was no longer available causing generational gaps in interpretations and understanding. These writings were never thought to last more than a few years because as Barclay further explains: “Christians of that time did not believe in the necessity for books because the Second Coming was predicted to be imminent and fast approaching; so Christianity spread through oral traditions and was focused more around the conversion of individuals then individualizing a particular orthodox structure” (48). With conversion taking precedence over conservation of ideology, faith has been placed into what written works have been discovered and that the depictions of important historical events in Christianity are accurate. Charles Merrill Smith notes in How the Bible was Built that “Bible scholars believe that somewhere along the line someone—maybe many people—wrote down lists of things that Jesus had said and taught. [However,] All of this…is speculation. No such document (or documents) has ever been found” (33). These stories can range from firsthand
accounts to others writing about what they heard through multiple retellings of the same or similar tales. With each verbal retelling the chance of the orator adding or forgetting material increases risking harmful alterations to the accuracy of the story.

The sources of these retellings are also questionable because they too could have been altered to make the stories seem more reliable. When determining textual authentication, “…the test of the Church for any book, as we have seen, was apostolicity, and no one was quite sure who had written these books” (Barclay, 86). The gospels were attributed to certain authors such as Mark and Luke who could trace their ideological lineage back to the apostles Peter and Paul respectively; however, there is no official mentioning within the texts that dedicate authorship to anyone. Barclay explains that “anonymous” texts were attributed authors among those closest to Jesus’ life as a means to get them accepted into the canon. These were no longer miscellaneous texts, but considered important works simply through the addition of reputable authors. Giving authorship to the Gospels seemingly authenticates these works and provides a sense of credibility. Through this authorship authentication, these texts become more believable, because their intellectual and spiritual heritage can be traced back to the apostles. It also fulfills a criterion by which the Church can accept these works into their religious canon. “A book becomes a canonical book by the tradition, the authority and the decision of the Church” (89). The fact that a certain book had been widely used adds to its credibility and gives it more authority thereby becoming a more likely candidate for religious canonization.

With the concept of a written documentation becoming necessary for Christianity to thrive, religious scholars had to review both oral and transcribed manuscripts in an attempt to create a non-verbal foundation for their religion. The Bible became an important milestone in that it brought back a physical, more tangible referential source that had been lacking since the
death of the apostles as well as fortified the Christian faith by creating an orthodox ideology through canonization. Canonization functions as a limiting process that separates preferred texts from the vast amount of texts that exist. Dungan clarifies, “A canon results when someone seeks to impose a strict boundary around a smaller subset of writings or teachings within the larger, slowly evolving “cloud of sacred texts” (1). Its purpose is to clearly define the boundaries in which texts will be encompassed. With specific reference to the Bible, it is the creation of rules and regulations that will dictate how the multitude of sacred texts that exist will be condensed; weeding out unnecessary, unauthentic, and unappealing texts to create a set of writings that embrace religious ideology. This daunting task was a long and presumably tedious process as clerical scholars waded through as many of the religious texts as they could find searching for those that best depicted their religious beliefs. “In terms of the history of Christianity, a canon of scripture…did not appear until church officials, acting under the guidance of the highest levels of the Roman government, met together on several specific occasions to create a rigid boundary around the approved texts, forever separating them from the larger ‘cloud of sacred texts’” (3). These boundaries are determined through multiple debates and conferences between church officials given authority by the dominating society. Returning to Bourdieu’s view on Symbolic Power, it becomes significant to understand that the power to canonize literature did not come from the church itself, but the Roman government that imbued the church with the authority to do so. The church only had as much power to canonize religious texts as the government was able to give to it. Therefore, the church’s authority to canonize only becomes possible through the government’s guidance and perhaps even patronage. By using this authority to differentiate between sacred texts, church officials created a canonized religious doctrine that elevated the
importance of certain religious texts rather than discounting the relevance of the others that were not canonized.

The Values of Canonization

The trick to properly objectively viewing a canon is to differentiate between the common misconceptions that a canon is synonymous with truth and the canon’s true purpose of restricting interpretation. A canon sets up guidelines that will establish a hierarchy. To canonize something is to give higher value over that which is left out of the canon. Academic anthologies are made up of texts declared “more important” than the texts that have not been included by the author, editor, publisher etc. Therefore, when a canon is created, it solidifies the criteria in which literature can be judged against one another. Depending on what is being canonized and whether the canon can be considered “open” or “closed” determines the value of the texts within the canon.

There is not a universally established value on literature. Value is something that varies depending on cultural ideologies. Each culture uniquely evaluates literature allowing the cultural value of a canon to be dictated through the importance or relevance to their society. Religious texts, for example, only hold their value for people that are a part of or dominated by that religion. John Guillory expands on Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of “cultural capital” in his book aptly titled, Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation. His book explains that cultural capital consists of the skills and knowledge that are valued within a society that as being held in a higher regard. In other words, it is that which encompasses the value of a person or thing thereby declaring it as a “higher” hierarchal class. With regards to the cultural capital of literature and canonization, it is the criteria used to examine how a text represents a particular group of values.
The capital that the Church holds to control the spread of knowledge and create their own idea of truth that benefits its religious beliefs is only as strong as the amount of capital it holds over the public. That is to say, the Church is only strong and influential if it holds more capital than the other governing/state bodies that challenge its authority over the general populace. If knowledge wasn’t imprisoned and left to the interpretation of the state governing bodies or even the masses themselves, then not only would the Church lose its authority as a governing body that is the single entity that holds most of the world’s knowledge, but it will also allow for multiple interpretations of its texts to exist causing confusion between scholars and those trying to gain capital to control others as a state or governing body.

In Richard Ohman’s, *The Shaping of a Canon*, he describes the process literature has to go through to become a member of a canon. Ohman describes how literature must first be evaluated by a publisher, agent, or editor to determine its ideological value. Most often, these assessments are made by scholars well versed in a particular area since their familiarity with the material adds to the text’s credibility. Afterwards, the text must gain enough popularity within the general public to confirm through mass readings how the text represents that culture. If literature does not find acceptance within society and gain credibility, then its cultural value would not be high enough for canonization. Although the introduction of a text as a candidate for canonicity comes from scholars, the acceptance of the text and the canon’s guidelines must occur before a true canon can be produced. The canon cannot precisely depict cultural value unless the society agrees to its accuracy.

The evaluation of a text breaks it down into values that can be quantified. The text is judged not only by its contents but also on how well the content is presented to the reader as well as its ability to abide by specific cultural ideologies. In this manner, literature is divided into
different categories of classification thereby being subjugated to the standards of each class. “[Literature] cannot be contained in a hierarchy…on the contrary (or precisely), its subversive force in respect of the old classifications” (Barthes, 1471). Classifications place a hierarchal context on literature ranking them in a sense between subjective ideas such as “good” or “important” literature. Even classifying a text as a specific genre limits the influence of the text on other areas. There is a predisposition to reading a text for the content that its classification favors disregarding the reader’s ability to form personal opinions and connections within the text. The reader does not discover, but is told how the text must be viewed and restricts its interpretations by specifying which particular genre it fits in discounting its ability to cross genres. Rarely, if ever, does one text focus solely on a single topic and can only be classified and deconstructed as fitting into a singular genre without any debate regarding other possible classifications.

Classifications are placed upon texts by individuals whose personal, intellectual, and cultural values grant them the authority to determine the most suitable limitations to place upon the text: “the Text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination” (1472). The actual reading of the text is the passageway to the reader’s personal interpretation of the material. This presumably allows for a number of different interpretations equivalent to the number of readers of the text; so potentially unlimited. The low literacy rates caused a lack of potential readers during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries leaving the responsibility of interpretations up to scholars, teachers, and other literate sources. Therefore, those that were illiterate had to resort to listening to these other interpretations of texts instead of creating their
own and were unable to contradict or question these interpretations because of their lack of personal connectivity with the text.

Religion was able to exploit this to minimize the rise of other ideologies and stabilize its own censored interpretation. Often, it is the orthodox interpretations of religious ideology that are being taught by the clergy. With less people to dispute a religion’s ideology, there was less threat of religious usurpation or challenges to religious doctrine. “Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic”\textsuperscript{vi} (1490). While a governmental body may use physical force to prove dominance and maintain its authority over subjugating others, the Ideological State Apparatuses hides its violence within its belief structure. Taking Christianity as an example, it’s censorship towards other ideologies and restrictive cultural beliefs dictate limitations upon its followers threatening penalties such as excommunication and hell to control behavior. Instead of using threats of physical harm, ISAs threaten to attack that which is intangible and cannot easily be defended. By threatening someone’s place in the afterlife or social status amongst a community, the Church can use its ideology to subjugate its followers without fear of the “state” because their boundaries and limitations do not coincide with one another. As the “state” can only function within the borders of its nation and control the physical bodies of its subjects; the ISAs are not limited to one nation or to physical form, so it can spread its ideologies to people of every nation focusing on governing their mental and spiritual values.

Althusser’s ISA can be equivocated to Bourdieu’s version of the “state” in which the church embodies the powers given to it by its legitimate language. Due to the church’s ability to

\textsuperscript{vi} As described by Althusser, the Ideology State Apparatus (ISA) consists of things such as Churches, Literature, political systems, etc. Each with their own structure and ideological functions.
maintain its own political structure, it is allowed to create literature based upon its dominating ideology. In this manner, the foundation of the biblical canon is based upon specific values favored by the church. “In this context of representation, the ‘values’ according to which works were canonized could themselves be called into question or declared to be simply incommensurable with the ‘values’ embodied in the subordinate cultures” (Guillory, 19). To understand the importance value plays in canonization, one must understand the role of judgment placed upon the text being considered for canonization. All texts to some extent have measurable value, but it is the unique judgment based upon particular ideologies that separates canonical text from the rest. “Canonical texts are the repositories of cultural values…expressed in a work with the value of the work” (22). Through representation of the dominant ideology, these texts are symbiotically given value to the simple fact they expressed the value of the dominant culture. “This is why the critique of the canon has always constructed the history of canon formation as a conspiracy of judgment, a secret exclusive ballot by which literary works are chosen for canonization because their authors belong to the same social group as the judges themselves, or because these works express the values of the dominant group” (28). Scholars judging the canonicity of texts use criteria based upon the desired values in which the canon will reflect. Each canon has a specific purpose as to why it is being created. Therefore, texts being judged for canonical inclusion must verify the canon’s purpose as well as support the creator’s ideology.

The combination of a canon's purpose and the criteria established for judgment can be scrutinized to determine a canon's accuracy and usefulness. Depending on the type of canon, different criteria are valued as important when initiating a canon's construction. By comparing the texts that make up secular and religious canons, one can conclude as to which values were favored. Religious canons tend to focus on including texts that reaffirm a proper moral judgment,
while "[a secular] canon was selected according to the criterion of truth" (72). Secular scholars use canons as a way to widely express universally accepted truths about academic subjects to others. These canons were more reliable because the facts within them could be validated through experimentation and further research. However, when it comes to a religious canon, its information cannot usually be verified because its historic validity is based upon faith. “There is indeed real and irresolvable discrepancy in the relation between the historical specificity of works and the factitious universality of the canonical form…” (61). For this reason, it is important to consider which group of people is in the position of authority to evaluate texts for canonization and reevaluate these ideological judgments to challenge the inclusion of canonized material.

While a canon includes texts that incorporate specific cultural values, these values will most likely change between generations. That is why most literary canons are considered to be “open” or able to be altered. Texts will be discovered, created, or reinterpreted that will cause a reevaluation of a canon’s representation for that time period. Eliot proposes that “existing monuments” or the current texts that make up a complete canonized group can be altered if new works are created that fit into the original group of texts.

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new…work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted’ and this is conformity between the old and the new. (392)
More simply put, as new texts are created or old ones reinterpreted, these texts must be appraised alongside the older texts already reviewed. These texts must be constantly judged amongst one another to make sure that the proper texts are placed within the proper canon. While Eliot’s idea works well when considering most forms of literature, it loses some effectiveness when considering the canonization of religious texts. These texts usually contain religious elements coinciding with historical events. This causes the evaluation of a text to be a difficult process because the lines between historical accuracy and the creative licenses of authorship are blurred. A religious canon is usually considered to be “closed” because its basic values will not alter much over the years to require a complete rewrite of religious texts. Also, this would cause a problem between consistencies of religious teachings if their primary texts were constantly being altered. Since religious texts dictate proper behavior, altering these texts also alters the way of life and beliefs of its followers.

These belief structures are how many people define themselves. People categorize themselves by race, gender, nationality, and religion (among other things). Calling oneself a certain religion allows others to know what that person believes and has a certain connotation to help define that person in the eyes of others. These classifications vary not only between regions, but also are dependent on both the time period and culture in which a person lives. Catholics differ in their beliefs from Protestants, twentieth century Catholics differ from fifteenth century, and the masculine views of religion will differ from that of a feminine viewpoint. However, these are influenced by the manner in which a person is receiving religious information and how credible that source is to society. Religions and even historical events, although usually keeping within the same textual influences, do evolve over time; however, it is each generation’s
interpretation of these texts that result in a unique understanding of a specific religion or allow for questioning and greater understanding of what actually occurred within a historical event. It is necessary to understand that this evolution is inevitable since interpretations and the manner in which people view documents change. Yet, when dealing with religious canonization, the importance to understanding this process revolves around the knowledge of how a particular generation of scholars created a canonized work and its influence on society.

According to Guillory, the traditions that come with religion and the expectation that the clergy are the authoritarian figures of the proper interpretation of the Bible leads to favoritism over tradition as opposed to literary scholarship.

The Substitution of “literary sensibility” for “religious belief” always implied the substitution of literary culture for the clergy. But the very uneasiness with which we have to contemplate this conventional historical mortif betrays how inappropriate are the terms by means of which the substitution has been apprehended. For it is not a case of simple substitution, for the same reason that the substitution of sensibility for belief was not simple (and could not be simplified by letting tradition stand surreptitiously for orthodoxy)…If the clergy may be said to have been the organic intellectuals of the feudal order, their displacement by literary culture in the early modern period never represented the simple displacement of one set of organic intellectuals by another (Guillory, 153).

Guillory’s major point is that far too often, people will view the Bible not as a literary text, but as something more. This “something more” is viewed more on a basis of tradition and faith in the
authority of the clergy instead of as literature that must be analyzed and understood. More precisely, texts such as the Bible are accepted more on faith and the interpretations of the religious leaders of a community because that is the “traditional” way of understanding literature. He explains that people substitute personal understanding and literary scholarship through analysis to be taught in the traditional method in which their ancestors were taught. Even during the early modern period in which the Renaissance took place, literary culture could not upset the hold that the clergy held on the analysis of the Bible and tradition still held on as the main interpretation of this canonical text.

The tradition of thinking about the Bible through the church’s teachings comes from the fact that the clergy represents proper judgment and morality, two of the main criteria for establishing a text’s worth and inclusion into their religious canon. Immanuel Kant in *Critique of Judgment* further explains these ideas of morality and judgment by breaking them down into objective and subjective concepts. "We present a subjective principle for judging the beautiful as universal, i.e., as valid for everyone, but is unknowable through any universal concept... [morality we] declare to be knowable through universal concept " (Kant, 535). The difference between subjective and objective judgments mutually depends upon that which is being quantified. The subjective focuses on the personal judgments based solely on experiences unique to the individual. For this reason, the subjective judgment cannot be universally appreciated the exact same way between two people; however, subjective judgment can be explained and understood by another without conforming to that judgment. Referring to Kant’s use of subjective judgment of “beautiful”, someone can accurately determine something is beautiful without anyone else agreeing. In the same sense a person can understand that another thinks something is beautiful despite disagreeing with them. Objective judgment on the other hand is
based upon facts that can be reviewed and scrutinized thereby depriving it of individual interpretations. Hence, it is a concept that can easily be widely spread between different cultural groups since ideas such as morality and orthodoxy can be universally understood and abided.

“canonical works do not all by themselves reproduce cultural values, it is significant—to the real social process of reproduction that they are thought to do so.” (56) Canonized works, like any form of legitimized language, need wide acceptance within a particular culture to be effective. Canonized cultural values act as a virus hopping from host to host altering or reinforcing a particular ideology through each person’s acceptance.

The problem with strictly differentiating between subjective and objective judgment occurs when the facts on which objective judgment is made are derived from texts subjectively written. As previously referenced, literature and its respecting authors are often altered to better fit the time period of the different editors that handle and transcribed these texts. Literature as a whole is subjectively written to provide an individual's unique outlook regarding a particular topic. Therefore, it is difficult to argue for a text's objectivity. Even books supposedly based on historical fact are subject to the personality of the author, politics of that era, and the interpretations of readers. Canonization is the closest thing literature gets to objectivity because it is established by a group of people determined to be authority figures on a particular topic. To accept a Canon is to accept the judgments made by the authority figures in the formation of that Canon as well as the values they used in judging the worthiness of texts of canonical inclusion. Religious canons take this concept one step farther by using the objectivity of moral values to dictate an apparent universally accepted judgment. Thus, religious morality can be used as the

---

vii The word authority here is being used not as a specific authoritarian figure, but rather to describe whichever person has the power to control a specific culture, their laws, and more importantly decide which texts are important enough to be canonized whether it be a particular version of the Christian Bible as discussed here, a canonization of early American literature, or anything in-between.
basis for the Church's Canon as well as the excuse for censorship of literary material deemed not
fit for secular consumption. This process separates literature between orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and
heresy based upon subjectively written religious material instead of an absolute truth deeming
everything not aligning with the canon to be universally understood as objectively immoral.
CHAPTER II: THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CORRUPTION AND IMPRISONMENT OF KNOWLEDGE THROUGH MONASTIC LIBRARIES, SCRIBAL TRANSMISSION, AND THE WORKS OF JOHN LYDGATE

The Corruption of Knowledge through Monastic Politics and the Inconsistency of Scribes

The general purpose of any library is to have a singular location in which knowledge can be stored and easily accessed by the people that need it. It is a place to catalogue information to be used by the current and future generations in hopes of making life easier. The focus and function of libraries as they are presently viewed differ greatly from those of the late middle ages. Libraries have evolved significantly from the fourteenth/fifteenth century shifting from a place to cloister knowledge from the general public to a public place where knowledge is only temporarily stored until someone desires it. The 14th and 15th century monastic libraries focused less on lending out books to everyone who desired to read (or could read as the literacy rate was quite low) and concerned themselves more with hoarding collections of texts. With books being so scarce and taking so long to make, books were a valuable commodity that gave its holder a type of power that only comes with the authority to control knowledge. These books were not only fragile physically, but also contained knowledge that was delicate and possibly both beneficial and dangerous to the ideological beliefs held by the monasteries.

Monastic esoterism and hermeticism played a major role in protecting the Church’s ideologies from dangerous literary material. Religious philosophies dictated that hermetic knowledge should be isolated from secular groups, so any influx of heretical knowledge could be prevented. While keeping the influence of heretical knowledge away from secular readers, monasteries were able to spread preferred religious esoteric texts throughout their regions. Luc
Benoist describes an esoteric text as one that “stems from the difference between the minds and from the de facto inability to understand on the part of the audience” (8). Normally, esoterism is considered somewhat “secretive” and its symbolic power comes from only being available to a selective group that can comprehend it. Religious texts still contained the esoteric aspect of which Benoist wrote; however, instead of excluding those who are not a part of the “select” group, religion uses the allure of selectivity to persuade people to join their theology. It is this combination of hoarding texts to isolate and copying favored texts for distribution that allows for monasteries to protect their ideology from heretical influence.

When a monastery first began collecting books for their library, the monks focused on the books that were most important to those living within its walls. Karl Christ’s *The Handbook of Medieval Library History* further explains this concept by introducing that “Liturgical tracts and other books pertaining to the religious life comprised the basic stock of a cloister library and newly founded houses received such core collections from their mother houses” (28). The mother house would have materials copied and ready to distribute to their offspring monasteries that would give them direction as to proper lifestyle for daily living and religious texts for study. These religious texts dictated the behavior of the monks and would be copied frequently. These copies were crucial because these texts were loaned out to friars and others that would spread their religious doctrine to illiterate secular groups. Thus, a newly formed monastic library was responsible for the copying and distribution of religious material based off of its benefactor’s ideology, in this instance that of the mother house. While the philosophies of a monastery and its mother house would not necessarily differ greatly from one another, the source material for structuring religious beliefs was enforced upon the monastery by the authority of the mother house; depriving the monastery the chance of creating its own guiding principles that could vary
from the teachings of the mother house and that of the Church it represents. It should be noted
that these texts are copied by the mother house and then given to its monastic “offspring” so that
a particular language is used. These are then copied by the scribes within the monastery and
given/lent to friars and priests once again forcing this language upon others legitimizing it
through the authority of religious benefactors.

Mother houses and religious benefactors were not the only means by which a monastic
library could gain more texts. Other books that a monastery would receive came through
donations from the secular community as well. “It was a common practice for new monks,
among them as occasional university professor, to surrender their private book collections to the
monastery” (28). When new monks joined the monastery, they could either join the ranks of the
monastic order or simply study from the monastery’s library following a scholastic life. Books
would be used as payment in exchange for the privilege of joining the monastery as a monk or
simply as payment for use of the library. Scholars would either leave behind a book to reimburse
the scriptorium for any materials or supplies used during the scholar’s stay. Travelers and other
clergymen would also leave books behind as compensation after staying at the monastery for a
night or more to rest while on their journeys. The majority of non-religious texts came from
donations from noble and wealthy houses (28). Many times benefactors made large contributions
of books to these libraries, so their interests had to be taken into consideration when
controversial books arrived to be copied. Spreading the works within a politically slanderous text
or contradicting a nobleman’s values could hinder future support to the abbey, both in regards to
its library and its general survival.

Monastic libraries created not only a place to store texts, but their scriptorium allowed
many scribes to copy multiple copies of books for distribution to other monasteries. With so
many monks working at one time as copyists Frederick Kilgour’s *The Evolution of the Book* notes that “the cost of maintaining scriptoria and libraries was considerable, perhaps the largest part of it being the maintenance of scribes who were not tending fields to produce sustenance” (70). Being a scribe was a full-time job for one living in the monastery, so others had to work harder to provide food, clothing, and proper shelter for the scribes. Not only did copying stop scribes from helping in other duties, but the cost of materials for producing new books was quite high. Book donations became extremely important both in expanding libraries and limiting the veracity of scribal copies. Scholars and scribes from other monasteries would have to travel to different libraries and ask the librarians to make copies of books for their own use. Sometimes this would require a book to be traded both parties making copies of texts to increase each other’s collection. Lending for long periods of time would be a rarity since a book couldn’t easily be replaced if lost, stolen, or destroyed. Librarians had to be extremely protective of their texts as they were usually solely responsible for their upkeep.

Although Monastic libraries were most notably known for keeping religious texts, they remained open to copying all types of literature for use in future trading. Books could be thought of almost the same way as currency in which a rare book would be worth more to copy than a more common text of which many libraries have at least one copy. By copying multiple types of books, scribes could help the librarian increase their library’s value. Before a text was copied, its value had to be determined so the monks could use their limited resources wisely. Copying random books would increase the quantity of books the library had, but if the quality was insufficient, then the library would not gain recognition amongst its brethren. “Only the abbot had the authority to decide that a copy should be made, a scribe could write only with permission from the director [or librarian], and scribes could not exchange assignments; also, no monk
appointed to write could refuse to do so” (71). Once the abbot decided on what types of texts should have priority to be copied, the librarian would take the responsibility of delegating the act of copying to scribal monks who theoretically were supposed to make the most indistinguishable copy possible. However, accuracy was often forgiven for more preferred alterations. In Nomran Blake’s The English Language in Medieval Literature, he explains: “Scribes deliberately altered the texts they were copying either to bring their language more into line with their own dialects or for literary reasons” (25.). The scribes would attempt to alter the wording of the texts so that it was friendlier to those in their region. Languages might have needed to be translated or illegibly/unfamiliar words conjectured into the most plausible definition. The monks’ desire to efficiently spread knowledge circumvented their accountability towards accuracy. In this manner knowledge unaccustomed to one constituency could be spread to another.

There had to be a definitive way in which the scribes would copy these texts including proper spelling and grammatical usages. “The regulations [for proper copying of texts] repeatedly state that the librarian was to tend to the grammatical improvement of the text and that he alone was allowed to change the grammar or make judgments about punctuation and accents” (27). The librarian, as head of the library and its contents, gained the knowledge and reputation of being extremely competent when it came to understanding the books in his care and the language in which they were to be copied. Of course the librarian couldn’t manage every single error that occurred in every text copied in the scriptorium, so the scribes were divided into different groupings that would help solve minor errors while leaving larger mistakes to the librarian. “Large monasteries had four types of scribes: (1) those who did the common copying work of the house; (2) those trained in calligraphy, who copied fine book manuscripts; (3) the “correctors,” who collated and compared a finished book with the exemplar from which it had
been copied; and (4) the rubricators and illuminators” (Kilgour, 71). These different types of scribes were each responsible for a job that the librarian oversaw. Since the books the scribes copied from were handwritten, sometimes in different languages, the scribes would have to make judgment calls as to the identity of less legible words and make such determinations as to what was a punctuation mark, e.g. comma or period, and what was simply a drop of ink that was accidently dripped on the page. “Intelligent individuals were required as correctors and proof readers, but presumably a scribe did not have to be able to read the text he was copying any more than a twentieth-century typesetter had to be able to read a Latin text to see it” (71). Scribes were not able to make these calls as to proper copying of texts because then there would be multiple interpretations and different standards to differentiate between punctuation and spelling, so by allowing the librarian to have sole authority these books could be copied with one ideology of grammar in mind and have a scholarly basis for the decisions made during their replication.

The scribe’s job was to copy and not distinguish between different regional dialects or historical context. The purpose for which a particular text was written did not affect the scribe’s ability to copy the text. Unfamiliar words would occasionally be guessed at and filled in with the best option at the scribe’s disposal. “…they also made unintentional errors…even today some passages in medieval texts defy all attempts to explain them, and these shortcomings probably arose through faulty copying” (Blake, 25). This was not a scribe showing a malicious disinterest in copying; instead, it was one of the downsides to the ability to read not being a requirement for scribal work. If an overall gist of the proper meaning of a text could be understood when reading the copy, then the scribal intentions of that replica were successful. However, this made it difficult for future scribes trying to duplicate this replica because some changes may have altered the primary text’s meaning. “The scribe is faced with new problems because what seemed clear
to his fellow scribe twenty years earlier may no longer seem so to him; there was no memory or continuity in copying” (78). Scribes did not always copy primary sources. Often they would copy texts that were copies made by earlier scribes. This posed problems with continuity if the earlier scribes made errors in their copies or made assumptions about facts widely known during their time, but this knowledge was less obvious or disproven decades later.

Texts were copied for their content and for the “now.” These textual reproductions were not created to last for centuries or even decades because copies could always be made of the primary text. The motivation of creating these facsimiles revolved around creating copies that concentrated on the content within the pages. Things like authorial intent or regional biases were not considered because to the scribes these would only hinder the material from being academically fulfilling. “In general the efforts of scribes were directed to making the text they copied less unique and more traditional. They rarely considered what was appropriate for a particular author or text” (78). While presently, some scholars can spend years debating about authorship and its importance in the creation of a text, the scribes removed any such debate so that the focus can solely be on the text itself. Without worrying about authorship or creativity, copies would be less distinguishable from one another. This allowed multiple copies to spread information to others without concern for variances. “The scribe is intent on the general meaning of the work without too much concern about retaining the original features of linguistic usage” (77). Scribes copied texts methodically so they could be easily read by those within their community. The texts would be written in the official language of that region forgoing accuracy of translation regarding each individual word and focusing on accuracy of message. “A medieval scribe who noticed [a difficult to understand passage] would simply rewrite the passage in the way that seemed best to him, which is why the intelligent scribes produced the least useful texts
for modern editors: their language is furthest away from the original” (78). With language differing so much from the original on occasion, it would be difficult to trace certain texts back to their origins for reference.

On occasion, particularly talented scribes would be hired by other abbeys or noble households to transcribe a specific document or create an entirely new text from scratch. When being commissioned, a scribe had to take into consideration not only historical and written accuracy, but also the satisfaction of the patron. Further blurring the line between authorship and textual authentication, these scribes are given the opportunity to alter history and dictate a new role for the scribes: no longer nameless transcribers, but recognizable authors in their own right available for hire.

**Lydgate’s Depiction of Scribal Biases**

John Lydgate, who lived and wrote within Bury St. Edmund’s Abbey, is an example of a scribe and author responsible for writing multiple texts about historical figures, as well as his contemporaries within the fifteenth century. His writings significantly focused on influencing secular opinions and appeasing patrons rather than attempting to preserve textual integrity and historical knowledge. Through texts such as *Lives of Ss. Edmund and Fremund* and *Serpent of Division*, Lydgate’s writing style exemplifies how scribal authority and authorship manifested various representations of historical figures to create more appealing and even divine characters. He would occasionally leave out information from primary sources when inscribing commissioned works, showing favoritism to patronage and religious moral standards over the perpetuation of historical accuracy.

Lydgate’s alterations of different texts were based upon the political, cultural, and social situations of his era. “Literary History is a story of Influence… no one writes alone, that all
writers derive originality by precedence, creativity through imitation, and distinction from established structures… The fallacy of literary history lies in chronology…history appears to march according to the clock and calendar, to be the story of progressive change” (Kuskin). Considering the authority held by influential groups of that period, such as the Crown in Britain and the Church, it was crucial for authors to refrain from upsetting either governing body too harshly. Since books were written for the current time period, authors would use pertinent legends and cultural/historical references to that era.

Making alterations to literature transformed some of Lydgate’s historically based texts to propagandist stories. His texts were written to both educate and persuade the opinions of readers regarding these religious figures. Maura Nolan describes in John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture that Lydgate’s writings were, “[an] animated and deployed…cultural or literary form for a distinct, often propagandistic purpose” (240). Lydgate uses deliberate alterations of his as a means of persuading his audience to think about the Church in a specific way. “It is not particularly unexpected that a Benedictine author should promote the concerns, teachings, and powers of the spiritual above those of the secular order” (Mortimer, 131). By altering truth to create a more exciting and culturally relevant tale, the negation of the search for historical truth is possible.

History is altered when it becomes a part of literature and has a metamorphosis into something new; it becomes partially truth and partially an author’s interpretation of that history. “As history seeps into the novel, it becomes transformed into something else, into what might be called history-in-the-novel,” (Howe, 1539). Although Howe is specifically talking about the novel, the basic premise of his words rings true in the case of Lydgate and especially his non-narrative/poetic works such as Lives of Ss. Edmund and Fremund. While this work is in verse
form and doesn’t necessarily have the same skeletal structure as a novel has, both Lydgate’s texts and novels have the shared primal structure of telling a story and within that structure Lydgate’s texts are not written to be placed into a fictitious section of the library, but rather written as an actual historical text to be spread as fact throughout the civilized world. History is corrupted within novels and poetry because it is an interpreted history that is changed by the views and belief structure of the author (not to mention is only as accurate as the primary sources being used).

Lydgate had to take his own liberties to create a more fantastic tale that would become more persuasive and effective in reaching the goal of him writing that piece. “Lydgate was engaged in writing the ‘Legend of St. Edmund and Fremund’ at the command of Abbot William Curteys” (Bergen). When Lydgate was requested to write this story by his own Abbot, Lydgate had to spin the legend of the martyr so that it was pleasing not only to the public, but more importantly to the man that requested the story. Lydgate would almost be forced to make any alterations about Saint Edmund’s martyrdom that would alleviate any of his negative characteristics demeaning the saint who is the name sake of the abbey in which both Curteys and Lydgate lived. Lydgate used this opportunity to advocate for acceptance of his religious ideology as well as his love and admiration for Saint Edmund. “It is in the form… in these particularly functional texts that historicity declares itself, as that which solicits and demands not simply an instrumental response-pure propaganda- but also an aesthetic surplus…” (Nolan, 29). Historical authenticity within a text is purposeless if the knowledge it entails is not being passed on to the reader. If not entertained enough to become engaged with the text, readers will often fail to grasp important information, so authors are at times required to make texts more enjoyable by
embellishing details or adding entirely new sections. The preservation historical accuracy is put aside for the overall "betterment" of imposing knowledge on to the reader.

John Lydgate had the used his opportunity to write to two distinct audiences: the Church and the Crown. Much of his writings focused on introducing and explaining the concept that behind a famous ruler (such as King Henry VI in Lives of Ss. Edmund and Fremund as well as Edmund and Fremund themselves) and how that person became distinguished as “great” through the power of God and the spiritual world. “Lydgate dramatizes a cooperation between Church and Empire which enhances the dependence of the secular order on the spiritual” (Mortimer, 116). Lydgate purposely fixates on Henry VI throughout this text because of Henry’s status in Europe. By connecting Henry VI with the protagonists of his text, Lydgate connects his book with someone of cultural renown allowing for readers to associate themselves with the story. Relating religious figures with political ones allows for readers to use literary comparison as a means of understanding their importance. Lydgate’s emotional feelings towards the saint of his own abbey tend to corrupt the writing and use more favorable rhetoric and adaptation to the historical narrative than perhaps should be given to this story.

The noble story to putte in remembrance
of saynt Edmund, martir, maide, and kyng…

His glorious lif, his birthe, and his gynnyng.

And be discent how that he that was so good

Was in Saxonie born of the roial blood. (Bale, 36, 1)

Lydgate begins his Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund not only calling Edmund’s tale “noble,” but also already informs the reader that he is both “good” and “roial.” Lydgate continues to write of Edmund’s “grace” and how he was remarkable. It gets to the point where
the story becomes less about Edmund’s exploits and more about how delighted Lydgate is to be writing about St. Edmund and how unworthy is he for this task. With someone so clearly enamored with subject, it becomes hard to trust the author as being objective when writing a life story about the saint as well as easier to accept that this story becomes a biased narration that totally pushes truth aside and creates a new history that is approved more by the Church than perhaps the original. Lydgate to this “noble” story’s Latin origins as a way to introduce himself as translator and gain credibility for his interpretation.

The noble story to translate in substance

Out of Latyn aftir my kunnyng… (Bale, 38)

In this manner, Lydgate acts as a precursor for Percy and Scott to using the author’s own texts to support one’s credibility. Lydgate’s primary texts were not widely or easily read by the commoners, so he took the chance to altering these texts to better fit his benefactor’s point of view about social, cultural, and historical events

Lydgate’s work *Serpent of Division* put some focus onto Julius Caesar’s life and death as to show how kings and all those in a place of extraordinary power should behave. “*Serpent of Division* is an antiquotidian text; its world is a world in which the extremity of events must be digested and remade in mythical terms” (Nolan, 35). Lydgate’s liberties taken within this text helped to create more of a mythological Caesar that was more characterized into an abstract form that depicted a particular version of the emperor than one that was more historically accurate, but less intriguing to the reader. There are many different versions of Caesar throughout historically accurate texts, fictional works, as well as television, movies, and other forms of media. Each of
these Caesars, as it is for any celebrity, is altered to fit the audience’s predispositions and stereotypes of the person and time period because it is often that which the general public is more comfortable with than the actual person. “The myth of Caesar and the reality of textualities held together by the powerful capacity of form to contain as well as sustain the forces of historical contradiction” (Nolan, 35). Caesar’s life has become that of a myth because of the many different interpretations of it and is held together by multiple texts and other forms of media that focus on telling the story of the myth opposed to the historical truth. This causes the myth of Caesar, created by authors like Lydgate who took liberties with history, to become more popular and because of that popularity become more important to the public than the truth.

These stories are more entertaining so they are widely and quickly spread, thus are the norm or considered true since it is more common knowledge than the other stories that are less entertaining, but more accurate. The *Serpent of Division* focuses not so much on giving a historically accurate biography of Julius Caesar, but rather focuses on a ruler that had an unfortunate end and acts as foreboding to current and future rulers. “On the one hand Lydgate’s goal is to write an exemplary narrative in which Caesar serves as a warning to ’lords and prynces of renowne;’ to this end, he invokes an economy of sin and punishment…as a way of inserting Caesar in a moralized tragic narrative” (Nolan, 35). Lydgate’s purpose was not solely to write an account of Caesar’s life and death, but rather a moralistic narrative that would help to conform the future “lords and prynces of renowne” to a certain way of behaving to avoid unfortunate circumstances that will surround their life and most importantly their possible mutinous death(s). “…it [Serpent of Division] is the only lengthy treatment of Caesar’s life in Middle English...” (37). While other authors mentioned Caesar before, it was Lydgate that truly wrote about Caesar’s life with substance. It’s easy to see how this would become widely accepted as
“historical truth” for those that would read this text, because nothing else in Middle English was as complete as this text. Likewise, the perception of “truth” is clearly warped since Lydgate’s goal was not to tell an historically accurate narrative surrounding Caesar’s life, but rather a “warning.” Since the primary function was not to give an accurate history, but rather educate “prynces of renowne”, it is understandable that Lydgate would take liberties to make his story more appealing to his audience as well as more foreboding to those in power; however, this style of writing causes truth and knowledge to be kept hidden through Christian writers because their goals of persuading others to become more “Christian” and “proper” overrides their authorial obligation towards historical texts to remain as truthful as possible.
CHAPTER III: IMPRISONING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE AUTHORITY OF LIBRARIANS AND CONTEMPORARY DISSEMINATION OF IDEAS AS EXEMPLIFIED IN UMBERTO ECO'S THE NAME OF THE ROSE

My analysis of heretical and orthodox religious beliefs will be broken up into two parts throughout this chapter. First of all, I will scrutinize the working of medieval librarians focusing on their ability to imprison knowledge and corrupt the idea of “truth” into a one that is religiously biased. Then, Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* will be used to present a literary aid in unraveling the mysteries behind how the Church, through its monasteries, were able to imprison knowledge and keep it away from the general public. Texts considered to be considered heretical or simply unpopular by the opinions of the Church, abbot of the abbey, or librarian could become misplaced, destroyed, or simply hidden from scholars seeking information about certain topics.

Eco’s novel takes a particularly in-depth look into the scriptoriums to allow the reader to see not only how the monks lived, but how their lives as scribes were controlled by the librarian, among others, to copy certain books and allow specific knowledge to be read, created, altered, and of course hidden from public consumption. “I conducted long architectural investigations, studying photographs and floor plans in the encyclopedia of architecture, to establish the arrangement of the abbey, the distances, even the number of steps in a spiral staircase” (Eco, 513). Eco’s attention to detail and intense research into the medieval time period (both for the novel and his own research as a medievalist for other works) brought the characters and story to life through its historical accuracies. “One element of my world was history, and that is why I
read and reread so many medieval chronicles…more reading ensued, with the discovery that a fourteenth-century Franciscan, even an Englishman, could not ignore the debate about poverty, especially if he was a friend, follower, or acquaintance of Occam” (514). The fourteenth century was the only suitable time period for this novel and Eco took so much time studying the time period to make it historically accurate because, “it is only between Bacon and Occam that signs are used to acquire knowledge of individuals” (Eco, 514). Eco needed Occam’s teachings to be readily available and known by the monks within the walls of the monastery because Occam’s philosophies, specifically Occam’s razor, had to have been established for Adso and William to properly deduce the murders within the abbey.

The time period was such a huge factor to Eco’s desire and self-declared main focus of this novel: to kill a monk. Eco explains in the Postscript that the library alone took him months to create and his work was so precise that he used measurements and syllabic count to determine an accurate portrayal of what can be said from one point of the scriptorium to another. While the characters and main plot are from Eco’s head, the mannerisms, belief structure, and concepts revolving around monasteries, their libraries, and the power librarians held over knowledge were created through diligent study and understanding of the time period. Further looks into the historical practices of these scriptoriums shows exactly how far the librarian and his assistant, normally the only two who knew which books were in the library, were able to imprison certain types of knowledge as well as establish what the scribes could copy and pass on to other monasteries. These librarians molded the way that knowledge spread and dictated what knowledge that was to be shared with others thereby creating their own form of history and truth through using and possibly even abusing their power as human catalogs for the texts within the monastery’s walls.
The Authority of the Librarian to Protect, Imprison, and Destroy Knowledge

Each scriptorium put into place a librarian that would be in charge of copying procedures and protecting the texts within the library. The scribes’ daily writings were more a task than a “labor of love” and they were closely managed by the librarian. The demand for books was high and the librarian was responsible for maintain a productive scriptorium to support this. “There was a considerable need of such a large number of new manuscripts because of the misfortunes which the library [in Bologna] suffered” (Thompson, 165). Things such as fire and raids caused the need for so many scribes to be continuously copying the different texts within the library. Fire was one of the leading causes of manuscript destruction because of the wood buildings and easily flammable paper used. “The ravages caused by fire were possibly greater than those produced by war, many of the collections have been kept in wooden buildings” (164). Whether it was an accidental fire, a tame fire that went out of control, or an attack on the monastic buildings, the end result was usually the same; books were destroyed and knowledge was lost to the ashes. “The fact that so many manuscripts have escaped destruction by fire and flood, and have been saved from ravages of invading pagans or of contending Christians seems indeed to be a good presumptive evidence of the enormous activity of literary production in the monastery scriptoria during the centuries between 429 and 1450, the date of the founding of Monte Cassino, and that of the invention of printing” (165). With the endless threat of these travesties, potentially destroying entire libraries, a scriptorium had to constantly copy and recopy important material to fill these literary voids. Thus, a librarian had be placed in charge of the scriptorium to maintain productivity and become the authority figure for scribal transmissions.

The librarian fulfilled multiple roles such as planning the written assignments for the scriptorium, equipping the rooms with proper materials for copying, and maintaining the library
and scriptorium by keeping the inventory, regularly inspecting its holdings, and regulating their use (Christ 27). Christ further clarifies that due to the wide range of responsibilities held, “The office of librarian was the only one of all the monastery posts which required a person who had been brought up in the cloister as a youth and was well acquainted with the regulations and inner works of the monastery” (27). Due to the significance of the librarian’s job, those raised within the Abbey’s walls from a young age are more familiar with not only the workings of the library but also abbey’s ideological principles. Since one of the major responsibilities of the librarian is to choose which texts are viable for copying, a librarian that has been molded from a young age to fit that role will most likely choose to copy texts that exemplify the proper moral values and reaffirm Christian beliefs. Librarians used these values to protect favored texts and hide or destroy those that were dangerous to their ideologies.

One of the harder tasks for the librarian was to obtain the proper materials for transcription. Parchment was very expensive until the thirteenth century and it was hard to obtain, especially by monastic scribes whose wealth was more in the knowledge they transcribed than their pocket books. Because parchment was so costly, “it was not unnatural that, as a result of this difficulty, the monastic scribes should, when pressed for material, have occasionally utilized some old manuscript by cleaning off the surface, for the purpose of making a transcript of the Scriptures, of some saintly legend, or of any other religious work the writing of which came within the range of their daily duty” (Putnam 71). Due to the authority the librarian had, he made the decision of which old manuscript would be destroyed. These were usually determined by his evaluation of the book and whether or not its contents are worth concealing.

The librarian not only impacted the book selection by deciding what to destroy and reuse, they also could change the texts being copied a little or a lot. “The regulations [for copying
texts] repeatedly state the grammatical improvement of the text and that [the librarian] alone was allowed to change the grammar or make judgments about punctuation and accents” (Christ, 27). Grammatical changes could alter the language of the text changing the sentences meaning. If there are no checks and balances for the librarian then no one is responsible for stopping him from changing the content of texts to better suit his ideals. For example, religious texts were translated into different languages, so alterations to the content occurred because certain words may not translate completely thereby altering the stories and creating new beliefs. These beliefs could differ greatly from the original religious text causing heterodox and heretical ideologies to form.

Librarians also made decisions on manuscripts that could take away the readers understanding of who the author was or even the time period it was written in. Some manuscripts were copies of entire texts that contained one story or were a group of stories written by the same author or belonged together encompassing the same major theme. Others were thrown together with less care. The pages within a manuscript could have a similar theme or tone to them, but could have been written by different authors of different countries or even different eras separated by decades or even centuries. The importance of a manuscript was to contain the copies of the scribes so that they could be recorded. Having them put into the most logical groupings was a secondary thought that sometimes was impossible considering texts would lack an author in which to refer their origins. Who is the author if the librarian makes changes to a text? Does it still belong to the original author with these corrections, or does authorship change to that of the librarian for making alterations and possibly changing meaning.

Librarians had strict rules from the church as to what books should not be lent out, but they also were able to use their own prejudices in this area. “We [Council of Paris] desire that
the books of a community should be divided into two classes, one to remain in the house for the use of the Brothers, the other to be lent out to the poor according to the judgment of the abbot” (Putnam, 158). The abbot’s judgment controlled the books that were spread to the poor, but also to those that were to remain within the abbey for the personal use of the Brothers. This knowledge that would be allowed to the monks is in danger of being skewed. The first opportunity to skew this outsourcing of knowledge is by the abbot’s discretion as to which books are appropriate for the poor and those to which the Brothers are allowed access. The second regards the librarian’s ability to hide knowledge from the abbot and others. They could create their own form of history by singling out specific texts to copy, lend out, and teach so that their ideology is given an advantageous bias against less appealing knowledge. By imprisoning the knowledge within the library, the monastic libraries create not only a jail for that knowledge, but a tomb for the books if proper care is not taken into consideration.

**The Imprisonment of Knowledge through Monastic Libraries as Represented by Umberto Eco’s the Name of the Rose**

Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* is a meta-historical-fiction novel that focuses on a corrupt librarian’s aspiration to imprison undesirable knowledge as well as the murders and other historical occurrences within an Italian 14th century abbey. While a fictitious novel, Eco took great care to establish a setting that was extensively researched both in the lifestyle of monks living within the monastery’s walls as well as the historical context of that particular time period. The monastic libraries are the focal point of Eco’s novel in which he emphasizes the librarian’s ability to lock away particular knowledge within the library as a way to potentially imprison texts that may be “harmful” to others. Eco’s novel can be used as an entertaining journey into the heart of corruption that could easily occur within monastic libraries, regarding the controlling of
literature, which would eventually lead to a biased canonization of literature. Before going more in-depth into the particular monastic library that Eco wrote about and its library/labyrinth used to imprison knowledge, first an understanding must be made that encompasses the creation and function of a monastic library from that era along with the responsibilities/authorities of the librarian in regards to controlling knowledge throughout the abbey and the secular society. As it will be further established, by controlling the spread of particular knowledge, the librarian’s influence stretched beyond the abbey walls becoming instrumental in the spread of a religious legitimate language and through that language a canonized orthodox ideology is created.

As the last section focused on explaining the duties of the librarian and the authority that position held, this section will focus on how Eco’s novel illustrates the means by which librarians could abuse that authority to imprison knowledge within monastic libraries. By denying access to numerous volumes of work, librarians corrupted the canonization process through limiting available texts for determining canonization. This corruption of authority is best analyzed through the description of the abbey’s purpose and how well that purpose was executed by the librarian. Severinus, the monastery’s herbalist, explains to William, “the abbey is first and foremost a community of scholars, and often it is useful for monks to exchange the accumulated treasures of their learning. All conversation regarding our studies is considered legitimate and profitable, provided it does not take place in the refectory or during the hours of the holy office” (Eco 68). While William is told that the abbey is a place for scholarly learning, it isn’t long until both William and the reader discover that most of the texts are locked away within the library/labyrinth. This means that these scholarly monks can only fulfill the abbey’s main purpose of academic enrichment by conversing only during specified hours of the day and can only learn what the abbot and librarian allow them to learn. As a result, topics of conversation
would mostly revolve around orthodox religious ideals and other issues that are deemed acceptable. Eco uses the second volume of Aristotle’s Poetics as these monks’ version of the “forbidden fruit” that dangles within reach, but, like Eve’s apple, has dire consequences for anyone who gains the knowledge within its pages.

The literal danger of Aristotle’s work is the murdering that follows its use. However, it is the figurative knowledge that the librarian fears the most. According to the rules of the abbot and the teachings the monks lived by, “Scurrilitates vero vel verba otiosa et risum moventina aeterna clausura in omnibus locis damnamus, et ad talia eloquia discipulum aperire os non permittimus” (131). Laughter is banned from Eco’s abbey because of Abbot Fassanova’s belief that monks must suffer as Christ suffered. Thus, the text in which Aristotle praises laughter and comedy contradicts the abbot’s authority. Returning to Bourdieu’s explanation of symbolic power, the abbot gains his authority from those of higher status within the Church who granted power to him, so any contradictions to Christian teachings that hindered the Church’s authority would thereby reduce the abbot’s authority as well. “Every word of the Philosopher, by whom now even saints and prophets swear, has overturned the image of God. If this book were to become…an object for open interpretation, we would have crossed the last boundary” (473). Jorge feared the power knowledge held would potentially alter Christianity’s status in the world’s religious hierarchy. This fear caused his dissent into homicidal madness taking upon the role executioner as well as “judge” and “jury” to keep the authoritative powers of the monastery resilient.

As the former librarian, Jorge was no longer the main person in control of the library; as a result his authority to keep knowledge safely imprisoned had diminished, but his influence

---

viii Translation: “But buffoonery or words which are useless and provoke laughter—these we condemn on all occasions with a perpetual ban, and the disciple is not permitted to open his mouth for such conversation.” (White, 119)
remained. Although he was still only one of a few that were able to navigate the library’s
labyrinth, the new librarian was able to grant others access and allow the second volume of
Poetics to be revealed bringing Jorge’s fears into light. The abbot explains to William that “the
librarian protects them not only against mankind but also against nature, and devotes his life to
this war with the forces of oblivion, the enemy of truth” (38). The irony of this statement is that
according to the abbot the librarian is the supposed protector of knowledge from the evils of
mankind and nature, but at the same time he is the only person that knows which books are in the
library and where they are located. As a part of the mankind that is attempting to harm truth, the
librarian (in this case Jorge) is one of the few with the knowledge and opportunity to destroy
unwarranted texts.

Eco uses Jorge to depict three different and somewhat drastic methods of imprisoning
knowledge. To effectively imprison knowledge and the spread of unorthodox (or heretical) ideas,
one must imprison the text to hide the unwanted knowledge it contains, censor those that have
read “improper” texts to prevent their spreading of unwanted knowledge, or completely destroy
the text so that the knowledge is wiped from existence. Jorge demonstrates these methods by: 1)
imprisoning the Aristotle’s book within the labyrinth; 2) poisoning the pages of the book to
censor (kill) its readers; and 3) setting the book, library, and himself on fire so no one can learn
its “dangerous” knowledge.

Eco’s library ironically imprisons knowledge by flooding William and Adso with a
grandiose display of texts. William’s and Adso’s first experience with the labyrinth found them
inanely wandering through seemingly endless corridors and rooms full of texts as they futilely
sought one particular book. “The library dates back to the earliest times…and the books are
registered in order of their acquisition, donation, or entrance within our walls…It is enough for
the librarian to know them by heart and know when each book came here. As for the other monks, they can rely on his memory” (75). The library’s twists and turns made it nearly impossible to navigate the shelves without prior knowledge as to how the books were catalogued. Still, the greatest difficulty involved the flood of knowledge that came when William and Adso found all of the books hidden within the labyrinth. Since there wasn’t a universal organizational system (i.e. DDC) only the librarian(s) knew where the books were located, which meant that those unfamiliar with the library would get lost in the chaos. It wasn’t until William and Adso were able to understand the mysteries behind the labyrinth before they could navigate the library and find the knowledge for which they were searching.

Aside from imprisoning knowledge with the library’s labyrinth, Jorge takes it upon himself to stop Aristotle’s work from spreading by murdering those that read from the book. Jorge’s actions create a paradox between the purpose of the book (a tool to spread knowledge) and the purpose of the librarian (protecting that knowledge until it can be shared). William explains this contradiction to Adso thusly:

The good of a book lies in its being read. A book is made up of signs that speak of other signs, which in their turn speak of things. Without an eye to read them, a book contains signs that produce no concepts; therefore it is dumb. This library was perhaps born to save the books it houses, but now it lives to bury them. (396)

Without someone to actually read a book it loses its fundamental purpose and becomes practically worthless. Therefore, a type of contract forms between book and reader in which the former passes on its knowledge, hidden within its pages, while the latter learns that knowledge once again giving the book a purpose. This “contract” is what Jorge preys on when selecting his victims. Most notably, he targets on Adso’s curiosity to get him to read the poisoned book. Adso
listens to William read from the recently reclaimed second volume of poetics and is able to auditorily gain the knowledge it contains.

Nonetheless, because Adso is not personally interacting with the text, he has to trust that William’s oration is accurate. It is quite unlikely that William would lie to Adso when reading aloud to him, but trust comes into play in any teacher/student relationship where one is entrusted with accurately passing on knowledge to another. The only way for students to unquestionably know that their teachers are correctly teaching them is through independent study and interacting with academic material first hand. Jorge puts this notion of trust to the test by forcing Adso and all those who want to know what’s within Aristotle’s Second Volume of Poetics to make a choice. They can accept that the book doesn’t exist as Jorge claims, they can trust what others say about it without question, or they can read the book to gain the knowledge it contains and then die for their transgression against the abbey and the laws of the Church. While it is an extreme situation, the venerable Jorge’s attempts at murder (both successful and unsuccessful) were his way of imprisoning knowledge that he deemed unfit for wide spread consumption.

Jorge’s last chance at protecting the world from Aristotle’s book was to completely destroy it. At first glance, this appears once again to be an action that conflicts with the librarian’s purpose of protecting knowledge. Jorge uses his influence to make his prerogative the decision as to which knowledge will be protected. He defines his purpose and that of the work of the monastery as:

…the work of this monastery…is study, and the preservation of knowledge….because the property of knowledge, as a divine thing, is that it is complete and has been defined since the beginning, in the perfection of the Word…it has been defined and completed…from the preaching of the prophets to
the interpretation of the fathers of the church. There is no progress, no revolution of ages, in the history of knowledge, but at most a continuous and sublime recapitulation. (399)

Even though Jorge describes the monastery as a place to “study” and “preserve” knowledge, the knowledge that is being protected is that which follows along the ideology of the Christian faith. In his mind, history is simply the summation of important events that represent his religion and not something that has a life or timeline of its own. Jorge goes on to say, “I am He who is, said the God of the Jews. I am the way, the truth, and the life, said our Lord. There you have it: knowledge is nothing but the awed comment on these two truths” (399). Jorge’s view of knowledge is based upon his faith in the divine and sees any form of heretical thinking that goes against Christianity as a falsehood. The only defense Jorge had to protect his version of truth from being muddled was to destroy those texts, namely Aristotle’s, which conflicted with his ideology.

Assuming that William and Adso were able to prevent Jorge’s destruction of the library and its texts, they would still find themselves in a losing situation if they attempted to share the library’s books with the world. A sudden influx of knowledge released to the public would cause an academic uproar. Scholars would experience the same overwhelming sensation that William and Adso felt when they entered the library’s labyrinth and were bombarded by a seemingly endless amount of texts. It would become problematic to designate which texts should be used for academic or entertainment purposes. When seeking out the “truth” behind a particular subject, scholars would have to examine the credibility of each book to distinguish the most appropriate text. Whether these texts are kept secret or let out into the populace all at once, the general public will have troubles distinguishing between what constitutes accepted knowledge
and that which has already been disproven. They would once again be forced to look for
guidance from well-read scholars and the religious organizations that have studied these texts to
determine which should be read/taught and which should be ignored. The only difference is that
once knowledge is released into society from the libraries it cannot be secluded again.
CONCLUSION: THE EVOLVING PROBLEMS OF CANONIZATION AND THE CORRUPTION OF TRUTH FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

Through a greater understanding of the canonization process, it becomes harder to differentiate between those that are universal truths and those that have been altered to create a more culturally pleasant history. As shown by the librarian’s ability to imprison knowledge and textual alterations through scribal transmissions, “truth,” as well as history, is a relative concept dependent on a dominant culture enforcing its ideology on an accepting subordinate culture. Truth is only meaningful if society effectively uses it and society will only accept truth on the credibility of the sources that support its claim. For the majority of truths in the world, a second thought is rarely given, especially when it is learned from a credible academic source. It would be impossible for someone to experimentally verify every culturally recognizable truth; so certain amount of faith needs to be given to parents, teachers, and authority figures that what is being taught is accurate. However, faith can be a tricky thing, because as a deep trust placed in someone or something that does not necessarily require evidentiary support. A child puts faith in a parent to not stick the prongs of a fork into an electrical outlet when told it is dangerous to do so, just as that same child puts faith into religious ideology looking for spiritual protection from danger. The difference being that the first scenario is based off scientific fact that has been hypothesized, experimented, and reevaluated by peers before gaining general acceptance, while the latter is based off beliefs spanning multiple cultures over millennia that cannot be challenged or scientifically/historically proven.
Although it is impossible for certain ideas, like religious ideology, to irrefutably be proven, the lack of proof does not necessarily refute any religious claim. Christianity evolved for centuries after the death of Christ to continue to finalize its ideology until the Bible was canonized. Combining the two earlier definitions taken from the Oxford English Dictionary a more precise way of defining a canon can be established. It is the church’s decree, law, or criterion by which something is judged. While the criteria may be impartial and judiciously analyze the value of text considered for canonization, the fact that the church is the entity judging texts based on criteria focused on its own ideology forces scholars to view the Bible as a prejudiced document.

The construction of a prejudicial orthodox canon also creates a religious hierarchy. As the Church formulated an orthodox ideology, it placed an emphasis on certain values that were deemed more important than others to create a “proper” Christian belief structure based upon a particular interpretation of the Bible. By using their papal authority, the clergy were able to create a legitimate language to differentiate between orthodoxy and other religious variants. Authenticating one Christian ideology as “correct” forces all other interpretations to be considered “wrong” (i.e. heretical). Therefore, the creation of the Bible and its orthodoxy separated the Christian faith into multiple factions that would challenge one another for supremacy or perhaps their very existence.

As time went on, fighting broke out amongst the various Christian societies causing followers of the same Savior to slaughter one another in the name of their alternate ideology. Scribes living through the monasteries worked diligently to transcribe biblical texts to aid the clergy in spreading the “true” rendition to others. Nevertheless, the inevitable scribal errors would intently cause misinterpretations from the priests and the followers thereby creating more
heretical or the very least heterodoxical religious variances. It would not be until the errors of scribal transcription could be eliminated that Christianity could hope for a consistent dogmatic orthodoxy.

The mid-fifteenth century introduced Gutenberg’s printing press which allowed for exact replicas of both religious and secular texts to be created and distributed. Sidney Louis Jackson explains within the pages of Libraries and librarianship in the West: a brief history that “The desired classics were appearing in versions far more reliable than their predecessors…and far more stable in print than anything the manuscript age could have produced” (112). Although this prevented future alterations to texts that inevitably occurred during the manuscript process, religious texts were already written centering on cultural and social biases. The printing press permitted the faster and less expensive production of books; however, it did not allow mistakes that were already in the scribal manuscripts to be amended. Without texts being rewritten and linguistically updated to better suit later generations, some literature was at the risk of being lost or forgotten. Thus, the creation of the Middle English language and the textual adaptations of Percy, Scott, and Ritson became necessary.

Despite the multitude of inventions and strategies for maintaining textual accuracy, the existence of a universal truth is still debatable. Whether primary texts are altered during the manuscript phase before distribution or modified hundreds of years later to more properly meld with the time period, the integrity of historical literature must be reevaluated and its accuracy judged by analyzing the influence of authority figures in charge of imprisoning or spreading knowledge. The most recent hurdle that canonization will have to overcome involves the twenty first century’s propensity to use the Internet to spread an innumerable amount of data around the world. While the monastic librarians, such as the one Eco’s novel illustrates, were able to
imprison knowledge and hide its content from the populace, the opposite is now occurring and knowledge, despite accuracy or credibility, is available at a large portion of the world’s fingertips. Any form of contemporary canonization will result in tedium due to the internet’s lack of credentials and scholastic assessments before information can be spread worldwide. Between the varieties of social media that exists (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, et.al), future historians will potentially have more trouble trying to wade through all of our generation’s written and electronic texts than we had trying to locate, read, and understand that which was left behind by our ancestors. Assuming an ultimate truth exists, it is once again being imprisoned, but this time within a hodgepodge of electronic data. Therefore, scholars wishing to canonize our contemporary culture will have to find the criteria to pass proper judgment when credentials, authority, textual accuracy, and authorship can all be fabricated.
WORKS CITED


