

Paper Proposal Abstract

Emma Woodhouse

"Great Ventriloquists: The Emergence of Women's Voices in the Romance"

In this paper, I propose to analyze the evolution of the heroine's silence and speech in traditional romance. I will focus on Charicleia in *An Ethiopian Romance*, Dorotea in *Don Quixote*, and Maud Bailey/Christabel Lamotte in A. S. Byatt's *Possession*. Using a feminist and new-historical approach, I want to examine how each of these women uses speech and silence as a tool for female agency in her particular historical and cultural circumstances. I also hope to connect the evolution of these characters' voices with the evolving sense of the romance as genre, especially as the genre of the novel develops. My interest in this topic has developed from reading Modleski's *Loving with a Vengeance*, Radway's *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, and Harry Quiñones' work on Dorotea. I anticipate that the finished paper will be approximately 15-18 pages in length, exclusive of notes and documentation.

Finished Paper Abstract

Lindsey Smith

"Too Many Toms: Questions of Authorial Identity in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*."

My essay argues that the figure of the author of *Le Morte Darthur* is a construct, as much created by Caxton's *Preface* and colophons and Eugene Vinaver's editorial apparatus as he is by historical fact. Most critics focus on Malory as being nostalgic for a bygone era of chivalry, reinforcing aristocratic standards of behavior and downplaying mercantile/bourgeois ideologies. Using the research of P.J.C. Field, Thomas J. Hanks, and Elizabeth Pochoda, I argue that reliance on Malory's being a "knight-prisoner" has led critics to impute chivalric motives and attributes to his work that are not actually there. I focus specifically on the Balin/Balin and Mordred/Agravaine relationships in making my case, looking specifically at his descriptions and language choices, and concluding that the Malory who emerges from his text was actually more interested in subverting chivalry than supporting it.

Conference Paper Abstract

Title: Wrapped Up in Books: The *Palla* and its Significance

Abstract submitted for "Medieval Women and their Relationship to Sacred Objects," International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo 2005

Jo Koster (address, contact info)

Both in late medieval literature and in Northern European medieval art, the representations of women reading suggest that women must treat books, no matter what their nature, as a particular class of sacred object. Almost all depictions from the period of women with books show them with their books wrapped in a *palla*, held through the fold of a garment, or otherwise separated from their physical control. By contrast, men are frequently shown with books open on desks, clutched in their hands, or otherwise in physical contact with the book itself. Only a very few representations—usually of women authors such as Hildegard of Bingen and Christine de Pizan—are exempt from this tradition. This separation of women from books—a separation that is not imposed on men—suggests the existence of strong cultural presuppositions about the relationships of literacy and gender.

In my presentation I would like to interrogate these relationships by comparing texts about book ownership for men and women written in the late middle ages with representations of book possession in late medieval art. My focus will be on the *palla*, the quasi-liturgical protective drape that prevents sacred objects from being profaned by human hands. My examples will include letters, wills, monastic regulations, and selections from didactic and imaginative literature in

English, Latin, and French; the art will come from late fourteenth and early fifteenth century manuscripts and paintings from England, France, Italy, and the Low Countries. The presentation can be given in 20 minutes; I will bring a laptop but will require the use of a projector to show PowerPoint slides.