To The Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Hannah L. Coffey entitled "A Drama of Discourse: Competing Narratives in the Book of Job." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of English, with a Major in Literary Study, Criticism and Research.

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A DRAMA OF DISCOURSE:
COMPETING NARRATIVES IN THE BOOK OF JOB

A THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN ENGLISH
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, CHATTANOOGA

Hannah Louise Coffey
November 2009

ABSTRACT:

This study engages the biblical Book of Job, subsequent medieval commentaries, and literary sources from the 15th through 20th centuries that use the language and motifs canonized in the Book of Job. This thesis is primarily concerned with the multiple stylistic elements used in the work and how they constitute a discourse of their own, or as has been sometimes asserted by critics, "competing narratives." This discourse then finds voice in the usage of the Joban motif by other authors in works of ambiguous genre, lending credence to the complicated and multifaceted nature of the Book of Job's genre and message`. Particularly, it speaks against the traditional interpretation of the Book of Job as either a pedagogical lesson in suffering and temperance, or as an examination of tragedy, since multiple sources from Dante, to Chaucer, to Milton create dissonant discourses that leave the book emotionally and philosophically open. It remains an unfinished document endorsing only the redemptive nature of creation and creative acts both through its multiple discourses and G'd's marvelous visual narrative at the end.

N.B. The practice of writing or inscribing G'd's name in anything ephemeral or potentially subject to damage (let alone dealing with a religious or philosophical subject) is inappropriate for this author as a practicing Jew. I have avoided this by using the Judaic convention of substituting an apostrophe for the vowel "O." This applies only to the author's own words, not those she may quote who choose to represent the word in its full form.

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Sanabilibus aegrotamus malis,

nosque in rectum genitos natura,

si sanari, velimus, adiuvat.

- Seneca. *De ira,* II:13:I

CHAPTER I:

THEIR DAY IN G'D'S COURT: FOUCAULT AND BAKHTIN ON JOB

It needs to be said at the outset of any work with the Book of Job, however

obvious, that the hermeneutic communities which house the scholarship on it are fairly

disparate, that of the theologian and that of the literature critic. For this reason the

communities serve us well as two tangential points of departure for work that seeks to

understand and come to some commonality on the obvious conflicts in the narrative while

maintaining a *light* philosophic grasp of the work's purpose. Put succinctly by Fridolin

Stier in *Das Buch Ijjob: Hebräisch und Deutsch:* "It is inappropriate ... to try to limit the

problem of Job to a theological question."[1] With that caveat, it is the very space between

the two communities in the literature that I wish to put pressure on. If any text does

justice to what is at stake in the Book of Job, it is Michel Foucault's lectures on

"Security, Territory, Population" delivered at Collège de France from 1977-1978. They

are so relevant and acutely perceptive because they describe what might be called the

biblical *Great Escape* complete with a Steve McQueen substitute filling the epic or tragic

role (depending on how you view it).[2] Like *The Great Escape*, the Book of Job attempts

to place the protagonist in a "false unity" - Foucault's terms - from which he must escape,

or at least "prove" false even if no escape is possible (à la McQueen). This "false unity"

or false solution is Job's refusal to subjugate the dialogue to a governing discourse

between him, his comforters, his wife or even with G'd; it works to criticize

"internalization" of the narrative or an "inner truth" as Foucault would describe in

Discipline and Punishment.[3] These discourses are reflected in choices of genre (whether

forensic, lament, elegy, epic or drama), systems of logic (those of the comforters'

assumptions of guilt), and G'd's ultimate rebuttal of human understanding in the court of

Nature. For Foucault, such discordant "discourses" are capable of subverting power

structures (be those state governments, the pastorate, or petty personal regimes), or

alternately when such "discourses" are mandated, labeled and subsequently internalized,

they are capable of enforcing government (whatever it is governing and on whatever

scale).

This refusal to internalize a specific discourse is similar to Bakhtin's descriptions

of "dialogic truth." For Bakhtin, this is "the intense interanimation and struggle between

one's own and another's word."[4] This multi-voiced nature to discourse resists totalitarian

order and official culture, often using multiple genres in its discourse or as Bakhtin

described their methods: "grotesque realism, parody or the absurd."[5] He asserts that

between any word and its active engaged "dialogue partner" there is "an elastic

environment of other, alien words about the same object and this dialogically agitated

tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgment and accents" create discourses

that enable free will and individual freedoms. These dialogues, or "dialogic truth" as it

has come to be known by critics, inherently must have multiple parties, in order to resist a

single "monologic" truth, what Foucault would simply call a "false unity."

Both Bakhtin and Foucault's theoretical frameworks have radical implications when we read Job through them (though this also poses restrictive problems for a work that ultimately seeks to defy restrictions through its own creation). Both would have us see that the ultimate act of G'd at the conclusion of the Book of Job is to simply point externally to the dialogue and to G'd's creation, thus rewarding Job and the reader with the "how" but not the "why" to reason through a painful world with. The antagonism of the discordant discourses mirrors the antagonism G'd displays in his creation. The conflicting discourses themselves point outside the supremacy of the text (or at least a governed, internalized text) just as G'd points outside of dialogue to a entropic and stunning visual creation that is beyond Job's (and thus man's) capacity to vocalize.

When Job enters (non-vocally) in 1:11 he is a wealthy man, ensconced in his community and prepared to toe the internalized party line, represented by the fear "in his heart that his son's may have sinned." His fear is reasonable as it is explicitly linked to the possibility of losing "the work of his hands" and how "his possessions have increased in the land."[6] When these comforts are arbitrarily stripped away, Job realizes what Judith Butler describes as the revelation to those who step outside any social paradigm and are "guilty" of discordant social discourses: "That reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse." Put another way, Job realizes his security and place in society was a fabricated one, made up of a false interior essence, supported by public and social discourse. Butler's insight is further applicable to Job in that "the public regulation of fantasy through the surface

politics of the body... so institutes the 'integrity' of the subject."[7] The fantasy in this case is that of Job's success and its direct correlation to his liturgically impeccable life, a whole and successful body being the direct "surface politics" that reinforce the comforters' coming equation "if you have suffered you must have sinned." The subsequent disintegration of Job's physical body in Chapter 2:4-7 and affliction "with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" may actually catalyze his textual movements toward externalization. Job is forced to look outside himself since there is little of himself (as it was originally presented in the text) remaining. His very "identity," as Butler would describe it, has been stripped away along with his success and health. With this social construct removed, Job is freed from Foucault's false unity and may engage in a dialogic exercise with the exterior world.

CHAPTER II:

MULTIPLE DISCOURSES: REACHING FOR KANT'S SUBLIME

This externalization can be viewed through different lenses, one of which is

Foucault's false unity and Bakhtin's monologic truth; the other, a slightly earlier

approach, lends itself to understanding the externalization's "end game" perhaps a little

better: Emmanuel Kant's language of externality and the sublime. To perceive the

sublime according to Kant, one must transcend one's immediate environment by

becoming largely independent of circumstance. Through beauty and art, we seek out

eternal and varied truths and come closer to the sublime. In Job's push to transcend his

suffering he is ultimately forced to acknowledge the beauty and the sublime in G'd's

creation which is fundamentally beyond his understanding. This inability to comprehend

the creation breaks the monologic discourse and allows for the freedom to transcend the

false unity on the purposiveness of suffering and evil.

Foucault and Kant make a happy marriage for creating a reading that, while no

more comforting than medieval conceptualizations of the "purpose" of suffering, offers

us a release from the need to impose our own structure and logic on the horrific

experiences of Job, the same release I will argue that Job experiences. This release is

tantamount to Mikhail Bakhtin's freedom from "monologic truth," a truth that creates a

dead end in any dialogue and arrests the free will in the Book of Job that the Creator (I

believe) argues so strongly for through his servant Job's mouth. This lack of a specific or

single "truth" echoes the sentiments expressed by Carol Newsom in her 2003 work "The

Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations" in which she describes the Book of Job in

Bakhtin's "polyphonic" vocabulary. The release reiterates Job's dialogic purpose, not a systemic and monologic one (which would be composed of separate thoughts where propositions are referential and are capable of being spoken by a single voice).[8] She admits the problem for any work in text form is that is it not a conversation and that for Bakhtin, one of the most important aspects of dialogic truth is that it is always open, i.e. not finalized, while anything that is not a conversation is necessarily somewhat finalized. As Bakhtin puts it, "The ultimate word of the world and about the world has not been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future, and will always be in the future."[9] In this sense, The Book of Job is a conversation since it is not finalized if it is dialogic. It is a conversation *with* the future if it interacts with the eternal sublime and external transcendence. This freedom from the monologic will be accomplished through a freedom from delineated discourses and a move towards interanimation between multiple discourses. Not all of these discourses are in the Book of Job itself, but are in its tradition and reception.

The generic attributes of the Book of Job have been extensively debated by some of the best minds in philology and literature; these studies have been guided however, by a need to find a genre or genres to which the book belongs or by a need to find how these genres operate "culturally." This focus on specific genres has negated some of the dialogue the work is capable of having with itself and with other works that use it over time.[10] The "dialogue" between these disparate discourses and genres creates a discourse of its own, and in so doing, it asserts a supremacy of creative force over both man-made categories within and exterior to the text, and a supremacy over definitions that would

create a false unity. Perhaps it is not the patience of Job that is being tested, but our own, with our own limitations and with our inability to label, define, or encapsulate the many questions posed in the Book of Job with comfortable definitions. Bakhtin argues that, "in its structure Job's dialogue is internally endless, for the opposition of the soul to God - whether the opposition be hostile or humble - is conceived in it as something irrevocable and eternal."[11]

Its refusal to accept single discourse, or as Bakhtin might see it, accept a temporality, can be seen in the book itself, but equally well in the utilization of the motifs found in it among *other, later* authors. This refusal is used by subsequent authors such as Dante, Chaucer, Milton, and even Herman Melville to explore boundaries they either do not necessarily believe in or cannot effectively define. All three sources used in this study engage the Joban motif in vignettes that reflect this plurality of discourse and an escape from monologic truth. Those who would seek to separate the discourses from the moral or didactic message of the work would cut Solomon's baby in half, being fair to both interests but doing a great disservice to the work as a whole.

Much has been written about the messengers' responses when they arrive each in turn to deliver news to Job of each catastrophe in 1:13-19; some of the best analysis has been on Herman Melville's use of the messengers' simultaneously rehearsed and breathless rhetoric, "And I alone have escaped to tell you" in *Moby Dick.* For our purposes I would like to note that these four repetitions reinforce the single source of the "truth" which Job perceives (only one person escapes to tell him of each calamity and thus he receives only their single version and perspective on the events). After receiving

the news Job appropriately introduces his first response in the first person, "Let the day perish wherein I was born" (Job 3:3). Job then quickly follows this statement with the role of "night," night giving name to the moment at which he was conceived: "and the night which said, 'A man-child is conceived.'" In Job's initial response to what has happened to him, night is culpable for identifying him to the world, announcing his conception, assigning him a name and definition, but night does not engage Job or anything else in dialogue. These two statements, Job's first person wish not to have come into existence and the second statement concerning nature's role in this event, are immediately followed by "Let that day be darkness." This request is a simple and trenchant paradox, as clear in Aramaic as it is in English.[12] This straightforward introduction of three distinct roles, the individual (represented by Job's plea), an aloof nature uninvolved in the actual discourse, and a paradox (that light itself becomes dark) represents the three problems the poet will tackle in exploring man's perception of himself and his role in the universe.

Kant, in his only extended commentary on Job, says that Job "speaks as he thinks, and with the courage which he, as well as every human being in his position, can well afford; his friends on the contrary, speak as if they were being secretly listened to by the mighty one, over whose cause they are passing judgement and as if gaining his favour through their judgement were closer to their heart than the truth."[13] Kant elaborates on Job's "impudence" and how it opens the door into the freedom of G'd's creation:

> especially, its inscrutability. ... He allowed him glimpses into the beautiful side of creation, where ends comprehensible to the human being bring the benevolent

providence of the author of the world unambiguously to light; but also by contrast into the horrible side by calling out to him ... harmful and fearsome things, each of which appears indeed to be purposively arranged for its own sake and that of its species.[14]

Kant claims this inscrutability results in Job not "founding his morality on faith, but his faith on morality however weak this faith might be, yet it alone is of a pure and true kind, i.e. the kind that founds not a religion of supplication, but a religion of conduct in response to outside orders" (8:267). On the contrary, Job's friends claim to have an internal order, an order that dictates their fear of an eavesdropping G'd, as Kant so humorously observes. Even were they to witness (as we assume they must have) the striking creation that is displayed from chapters 42 onwards they would:

still declare themselves for that system which explains all ills in the world from God's justice, as so many punishments for crimes committed; and, although they could name none for which the unhappy man is guilty, they believed they could judge *a priori* that he must have some weighing upon him, for his misfortune would otherwise be impossible according to divine justice" (8:265).

Eli'phaz the Te'manite has the honour of the first response to Job's plea and question: "As I have seen, those who plant iniquity and sow trouble reap the same...The roar of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion, the teeth of the young lions are broken" (4:8-10). Continuing, Eli'phaz claims "As for me, I would seek G'd and to Elohim I will direct my speech" (5:8). This form of address to only "Elohim" by Eli'phaz seems to be a tactic for removing Job's dialectical input into the discourse. Eli'phaz also answers in the first person, but with a critical difference. He has not allowed nature even to speak, but

has simply used nature as a metaphor for man himself (in this case Job and his suffering); then, instead of a paradox, he creates an equation that must be answered and answers it himself exemplifying internal dialogue with no perception of a need for the external. He does not express a personal condition of his own, not even a simple acknowledgment of empathy or sympathy, but sets up equations and general conditional statements that are axiomatic or proverbial. These carry the weight of assumption, or general knowledge, as their unique grammatical structure indicates. Eli'phaz says "Recall now, who that was innocent ever perished?" (4:7), a statement which is constructed grammatically in the same way as "As I have seen those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same" (4:8). These assumptions of common truth (a false unity) are problematic since they are in no way similar to what Job established as the trajectory for the dialogue. Eli'phaz has answered a question with an equation: G'd determines man's condition in direct correlation to man's behavior. Human suffering is a direct response from G'd; there is nothing arbitrary about it. Even though Eli'phaz has utilized the first person in an attempt to relate to Job, his argument is impersonal, does not account for paradox, and places nature in a radically different relationship to the subject of the dialogue - Job's suffering.

In his discussion of the applicability of mathematical and Aristotelian logic to the Book of Job, Chaim Perelman states: "Rather than mathematics, which is demonstrative, dialectic seeks persuasion on the ground of generally accepted values, shared as premise both by speaker and audience, but is not demonstrative."[15] Job does not share Eli'phaz's premise, nor is he willing to work backwards from it. In his discussion on the pastorate in Security, Territory, Population, Foucault describes an entity (the Pastorate) that is eerily

similar to Eli'phaz's character, or to the three comforters taken as a whole. Foucault claims the exercise of the pastorate and its power:

> is defined in three ways. First it will be defined by a game of dissection that defines the balance, interplay and circulation of merits and faults at each moment. Let's say that this is not individualization by status, but by analytical identification. Second, it is a mode of individualization that is not brought about by the designation or marking of an individual's place in the hierarchy. Nor will it be brought about by the assertion of the self's mastery of self, but by a whole network of servitude that involves the general servitude of everyone with regard to everyone, and at the same time, the exclusion of the self, of the ego, and of egoism as the central nuclear form of the individual. ... Finally, third, it is a form of individualization that will not be acquired through the relationship to a recognized truth, [but] will be acquired instead through the production of an internal, secret, and hidden truth.[16]

Satan's ultimate goal was to have Job fail to toe the internalized party line of respect. He attempted this by daring G'd to "put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face" (1:11). Whether the requirement be that of Satan or one of the comforter, it is the same: to have Job answer to some unknown truth (through his unknown sin) by accepting a singular monologic problem set. Were Job to respond with a singular discourse or genre, he would inherently be using a monologic framework to restrict his own logic. But Job is not interested in his own logic per se, or that of the comforters. He repeatedly refuses to accept their "hidden truth" and so with it the

prelude to a governmentality through the constitution of a specific subject, of a subject whose merits are analytically identified, who is subjected in continuous networks of obedience, and who is subjectified (*subjectivé*) through the compulsory extraction of truth

as Foucault elaborates on in his lecture from the 22nd of February 1978 at the College de France.

Of the many competing discourses that Job employs, the most interesting conflict is between the apparently obvious question at hand - Why is Job suffering - and his preferred form - lament (a form he weaves with others).[17] Lament is fundamentally different from treatments of the problem of suffering. Lament does not arise out of mournful reflection on suffering; it is not by definition a logical and planned elegiac thought. It is a cry - an impetuous burst of emotion - which necessitates no rational requirement, yet Job frames his question regarding the reason for suffering with these laments as the modus operandi. It is also important that Job's friends' "consolations" backfire and are replaced by disputes: another conflict of claimed purpose of consolation and the form used. This dialogue with the comforters (chapters 4-27) is framed by Job's laments (chapters 3, and 29-31). Here, the dialogue stands within lament, placing the fundamental problem - Job's unknown sin - textually and logically inside the lamentation. The application of Job's lament is expanded to the realm of forensic oratory with his summoning of G'd in 31:35-37.

Because of these conflicts of form and the multitude of discernable discourses inherent in the Joban motif, it is not surprising that the literary tradition which receives said motif generates equally discordant and ambiguous voices.

CHAPTER III:

DANTE'S TORN BODY OF WORK: LIMINAL SINS, LIMINAL TEXTS

The only occurrences of Joban motifs in all of Dante are in the Purgatorio (and a debatable episode in the Paradiso). Dante's use of the Joban motif is most important in Canto XXIII of the *Purgatorio,* and while it has elicited commentary from only a handful of medieval and biblical scholars, it is unique among the Cantica in all three cycles of the Commedia.

The Joban inclusions situate themselves in the Purgatorio between the soul's two ultimate potentials: Heaven (Paradiso) and Hell (Inferno). The motif is introduced in XXII when Dante, Vergil, and Statius ascend the mountain and come upon a palm tree at 130-135. Here the Italian both paraphrases and directly quotes Gregory's *Moralia* on Job 29:18 describing the palm tree as a tree always in process. This "tree of progression" is a recurrent theme in medieval scientific and exegetical texts, but occurs only in the Books of Job, Jonah, and Ezekiel in the Bible.

The motif continues into XXIII where we experience an enigmatic and intense encounter between Dante and Forese Donati, the latter being among the gluttons of Purgatory.[18] (Dante admits to a personal bias for Forese Donati as well as a need for dialogue and engagement with him; indeed, he was one of the few individuals mourned by Dante in actual life.) As one of the most biblically resonant Cantica in the *Purgatorio,* the journey across the terrace of gluttons begins with Dante's comment that the fruit trees they pass are descendants of the original Tree of Knowledge. Those on the terrace hunger for their fruit but they may not eat from the tree; in fact, a voice admonishes them, saying

"This food shall be denied to you" (XXIII:141). The logic behind the trees is also made explicit: gluttony is a form of covetousness and greed, and therefore injustice is perpetrated by gluttons, although unintentionally.

These moral arguments become central to the Canto's use of the Joban motif. Job is confronted with a sin - gluttony - which he does believe he has perpetrated, though the sin is economically and socially successful to the point of great enjoyment. (Whether this qualifies in the medieval mind as "covetousness" raises questions which cannot be addressed here with respect to the development of a more modern mercantile system.) After having them stripped away, Job is "tormented" by his lack of financial success and social status by the very presence of those qualities in his socially stable and wealthy friends, as is implied by their names which betray their origins from tribes in the surrounding geographic regions.[19]

At first, Dante is not fascinated by the torment of gluttons in general; his initial reaction of child-like curiosity frames a dramatic contrast when his friend - with whom he will grieve and about whom he will worry - enters. Dante peers through the branches of the first tree wondering where the voice is coming from; Vergil encourages him forward but the episode sets a disarming tenor which Rinaldina Russell describes as a "friendly and trusting human exchange."[20] Dante does not recognize his friend due to Forese's ravaged flesh: "Ne li occhi era ciascuna oscura e cava, palida ne la faccia, e tanto seema che da l'ossa la pelle s'informava" (Purg. 23.22-24). Forese must speak to be identified; this calms Dante and they begin a familiar and (for the *Commedia*) low-key exchange.

Both the stylistic comfort and the ease of narrative are quickly interrupted as a group of spirits push their way towards Dante and Forese, shocking Dante again with their hollowed-out eyes and emaciated bodies. The language subsequently shifts to a frenetic pitch and includes unique lexical items from the Vulgate version of the Book of Job to describe the distortion and deformity of the surrounding human forms, consistent with Gregory the Great's medieval interpretation of Job as a "glutton."[21] In his essay "Dante's Forese, The Book of Job, and the Office of the Dead," Ronald Martinez points out how the wasting of flesh and the terms "scema" and "pellis" (vernacular "pelle" in Dante), along with the phrases "difetto di carne" and the emphasis on shriveling lips in "per fame a voto usar li denti" and "ov'el sentia la piaga / de la guistizia che si li pi-lucca" (ll. 28-39), are unique Joban inclusions taken nearly verbatim from the Vulgate editions.

Along with the vocabulary in XXIII, there are also physical descriptions that mimic the suffering of Job: the initial deprivation of property and things which the sinners cherish and the ultimate destruction of the body, particularly the skin. Also present is the most commonly quoted lament of Job in Gregory's *Moralia: "Quid est homo, quia magnifica eum?"*[22] *("Homo"* occurs with unusual frequency in the Vulgate version of the Book of Job in chapters 7, 14 and 19). This lament is made arrestingly visual by revealing the printed "OMO" on the facial bones of the gluttons as they are stripped of flesh (23.32).

Martinez deduces that these inclusions, especially those concerning the lips, emphasize Job's refusal to curse G'd with his mouth. This conclusion, however, fails to

draw the logical relationship between Job's potential sin of gluttony and his refusal to curse G'd with his lips. The ramifications of this unique motif appearance in the *Commedia* are missed, since Martinez fails to synthesize the content of this Canto with its style and register (of which there are many, a point of generic import).

The section concerning Forese's explanation of his penance is rife with language from the Vulgate's Job; a few examples include *faccia* (face)*, buccia* (skin), *becco (*beak)*, suama* (scurf)*,* and *scabbia* (scabs). After his long soliloquy, Forese examines his suffering at some length; he discusses his suffering in terms of enlightenment and refuses to fault G'd. Martinez and Russell also seem to ignore these Joban elements, although others have examined them as examples of the high style of Biblical prophecy - certainly not an accidental choice of style - that follows when Forese indicts fallen Florentine women.

Russell also highlights how the abrupt juxtaposition of the language of flesh and sorrow runs up against the prophetic language of suffering and anger, reminding us how critics have failed to "harmonize the shifts in stylistic register... and explain what they saw as discordant tonalities" (Russell 254). Viewing Forese and Dante as part of a Joban model makes interpreting Forese's speech in Canto XXIII, with its polarities of hope and dejection and condemnation and prophecy, much easier. While a pious man in a strict observational sense, Forese's sins include covetousness of beauty and supremacy in argument as rumours were rife about his personal life and his relationship with Dante (and their respective wives). However, it is not for his lasciviousness or potentially adulterous behavior that he is condemned, since this would have required his placement

in the Inferno; instead, Dante places him in Purgatory with the gluttons and uses his ambiguous reputation to approach a sin which is itself difficult to clearly define. From a psychologic viewpoint, greed is a sin of unverbalized or un-acted upon desire or appetite (as the sin of gluttony is described in Gregory's *Moralia* as simply the existence of greed, excessive hunger, or the desire for more, whether it is acted upon or not). To deal with this sin's ambiguous and liminal nature, Dante situates it within the Joban motif in several ways: through the interaction with an interlocuter in the form of a friend (Dante), the language of skin and decay, the question of suffering for a purpose, and the generic and stylistic vacillations in which Dante indulges to great effect.

To the consternation of many critics, the account of Dante's visit to the terrace continues through Canto XXIV. Dante leaves Forese by line 100, even though he has been the central figure in the discussion on punishment. Forese had not, however, been paramount to the discussion of poetry and prose that began in Canto XXII with their arrival on the terrace; he had been preceded by a more overarching frame to the gluttony episodes. This "center" and "frame" structure to the glutton narrative is unusual in the *Commedia,* more so because Canto XXIV does not form a complete narrative unit although it is formally complete. This structure is in accord with the utilization of Joban elements since the Book of Job was understood even by medieval scholars such as Aquinas and Gregory to have a center dialogue of poetry among men, framed by the philosophical and dramatic prose, prologue, and conclusion. This is its chief dissonantal feature and is one of the oldest and most established stylistic elements of the Book of Job.

These competing genres of poetry and prose are two discourses which create tension and which capture the reader in a liminal space between the two genres. The disparity between the frame and the center highlights potential disparities that exist in other philosophical or interpersonal issues mimic the abrupt structural junctions. Similar interpersonal issues play a critical role in the interaction between Dante and Forese by mimicking the frustrated lament and accusatory form found in Job and his friend's dialogue. Furthermore, it includes the language of debt and burden, as Job repeatedly asks the same question, framing and reframing his problem in pecuniary terms (as will be seen in Chaucer's use of it in the *Pardoner's Tale*) to clarify the nature of his offense and whether it can be made right (XXIV:72).

Nearing lines 82-87 in Canto XXIV, a stunning appearance causes Dante's dialogue to stumble and humbles him into near silence with its horror. Forese asks Dante his last question: "How long before I shall see you again?" and Dante, in a customary and comfortable manner, replies not soon enough, for he has grown weary of Florence. This disarms the reader before the appearance of the Beast of which Forese was aware of all along: "Do not be vexed, he said, for I can see the guiltiest of all [gluttons] dragged by a beast's tail to the valley where no sin is purged. At every step the Beast moves faster, always gaining momentum, till it smashes him and leaves his body squalidly undone" (82-87). This is an incomprehensible shock and is a uniquely horrific moment in the entire *Purgatorio* with equivalent shocks found only in the *Inferno*. The appearance of the Beast is often erroneously translated as "horse," but the Italian only defines it as "bestia;" Dante is quite specific when he wants to indicate a horse elsewhere in the *Commedia*. The

Beast's surprise appearance and the humble quiet that ensues is clearly reminiscent of

Job's quiet in the face of the Behemoth. Job has no verbal response to the awe and

confusion that the Behemoth - along with the rest of G'd's creation - inspires.

A shocking bestial creation, a series of compromised corporal forms, nebulous

sins, a conclusion with an argumentative and inherently unresolved narration: these Joban

elements occur in XXIII - and by default in the Purgatorio - and fit within the thematic

structure of the *Commedia* overall. The operating paradigm for the *Inferno* is Ovidian

metamorphoses; for the *Purgatorio* scholastic and scientific accounts of generation and

comprehension; and for the *Paradiso* biblical transfiguration.[23] The progression of

Cantica XXII-XXV is a rather scientific approach to understanding the relationship of

expression and form (poetry and prose) to that thing (in this case, the sin) being

expressed. Canto XXIII's individual attributes are also liminal, juxtaposed between the

problematic Cantica XXI-XXV.[24]

CHAPTER IV:

QUESTIONING THE RULE, NOT THE RULER: GENRE'S PLACE

Genre develops delineating and determining boundaries which are disrupted by the multiple discourses in Job; the ultimate defiance of genre comes from Job as his rhetoric vacillates - even in its generic form - between targeting G'd, the comforters, Nature, and even himself. When Job speaks as the sufferer, his speeches are longer than those of his friends (an aspect of forensic oratory in Mesopotamian "wisdom" literature) but they remain laments (21:34). This suggests Job's hope that eventually his friends will be persuaded to comfort him, rather than accuse him of an assumed sin. Their counsel to Job to end his suffering by identifying his sin is presented as "comfort," however, the reader knows this is a false supposition as we are privy to G'd and Satan's underlying wager.

Job's oratory is a strange hybrid of two seemingly exclusive genres: forensic and lamentation. Where friends should have extended consolation, disputation intrudes. Kohler expounds upon this aspect of the dialogue section but does he not resolve the two inherently incongruous sides of this disputation.[25] Job's speeches consist of forensic styles and framed laments, even though introduced as disputational or argumentative speech. While the disputation is encompassed by laments in Chapters 3, 29-31, this actually *dramatizes* the lament, since the only possible conclusion to draw necessitates Job disputing the lamentation, a relatively passive-aggressive tactic for a supposedly innocent man. Some scholars have noted similarities between this tactic and what appears in Psalm 41:9 and 51:11-13, where a lamenter grieves that his friends have become

enemies while passively attacking them. The important point is not that Job's speeches are soliloquy, as they are sometimes carelessly described, but that they are dialogues, and thus fundamentally remain what Bakhtin would call "open."

 Job's lack of adherence to the generic rules of either ancient wisdom literature or today's generic boundaries prevents us from drawing specific immediate moral conclusions (i.e. if the lament had an answer or provided solace or the argument had a winner), or as Foucault would have us call it, a false unity. This open (or dialogic) trajectory propels the narrative, while the multiple discourses that result from these unresolved conflicts maintain a creative, or generative sense to the dialogue.

CHAPTER V:

NARRATIVE'S GENERATIVE IMPULSE: CREATIVITY AND TRANSFORMATION IN MILTON

This "openness" introduces a requirement necessary to assess the Creation story

characteristics of the book. Sometimes referred to as a reverse Creation epic, it is well

known and is understood to occupy the place of Genesis at the beginning of the Prophetic

section of the Tanakh.[26] Nowhere is this violent, incomprehensible, and generative

impulse more evident than in Milton's use of the Joban motif in a work of controversial

genre, *Samson Agonistes* [*SA*]. This work features a problematic relationship between its

framework and the dialogue of its actions; this relationship is so troubling Dr. Johnson

claims it has no center, saying it has "a beginning and an end which Aristotle himself

could not have disapproved, but it must be allowed to want a middle, since nothing passes

between the first act and the last that either hastens or delays the death of Samson."[27]

Before discussing the use of Job in the *SA,* it is necessary to establish Milton's

underlying familiarity - if not preoccupation - with studies of Job. In *Milton's Rabbinical*

Readings, Harris Fletcher notes that Milton mistakenly substitutes the words "compasses"

or "circumference" in place of "circle." This small "mistake," which occurs both in

Paradise Lost and in *Samson Agonistes* (at 1475), can be traced to Milton's readings of

the Buxtorf Bible and its discussion of the relatively rare word for "circle" in the Old

Testament and to an extensive commentary by Ibn Ezra from his *Commentary on Job* that

accompanies it. It occurs as a noun in only two places in Hebrew besides a passage in

Proverbs (which itself is a paraphrase of Job); the first occurrence is in the Job 22:14

phrase "when he set a circle".[28] Buxtorf elected to print both Ibn Ben Ezra's and the

Rashi's commentary on Job at some length, as they agree that the use of the Hebrew form

for circle is interchangeable in its meaning *only* in the Book of Job as circuit or compass

(in Rashi's case in a Provencal equivalent, and in Ibn Ben Ezra's Ladino and Latin).

Milton repeatedly chose to use "Circumference" as he does in the words spoken

by the Son of G'd after having turned the compasses in the act of creation: "This be thy

just Circumference, O World" (*Paradise Lost*, VII:230). This tangential note illustrates

Milton's depth of acquaintance with Ibn Ezra's and Rashi's Joban commentaries.

Johnson's excellent critique helps lend credence to the profound use of Joban

motifs in *SA*. Samson stands alone at the beginning of the play but then plunges into a

despair so profound it leaves him without insight into what is taking place around him or

even into his own state of being. He laments:

> Ease to the body some, none to the mind, From restless thoughts, that like a
> deadly swarm, Of Hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone, But rush upon me
> thronging, and present, Times past, what once I was, and what am now. .... Why
> was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd" (*SA* 18-30*)*.

The entrance of a group of friends provides a choric background which highlights his

consternation and grief and shocks Samson's remaining stability thus enabling his

ultimate transformation.

Sanford Budick's work on the phoenix simile in *SA* yields a better understanding

of both the generative - though a more transformative impulse in *SA* - and the generic

problems in *SA*.[29] Previously dismissed by Wittreich and other scholars as a secular and

clearly tragic commentary on Samson's failed heroism, Budick sees the non-biblical

phoenix as a phoenix motif borrowed directly from the Book of Job. To see only one

genre or generic stance by Milton operating ubiquitously through *SA* is to hinder our ability to perceive multiple discourses operating simultaneously. Granted, there is difficulty in clearly separating the Samson narrative from Milton's use of Joban motifs since both stories deal with men who confront suffering, confusion, desertion, friends, and various revelations, however, the narratives conclude differently (one with the semi-voluntary death of Samson and one with the supposed, albeit altered, "restoration" of Job's world). They are conducted in radically different generic frames: one of wisdom literature and forensic dialogue, the other in dramatization of the parable form found in the Book of Judges.

Budick's deceptively simple observation that "the last thirty years of *Samson Agonistes* criticism has been polarized between the views of ... Radzinowicz who sees Samson... as the growth towards the highest ideals of humanity and on the other hand by Wittreich who sees Samson as a figure whose moral and spiritual stature Milton systematically subverts" betrays greater ramifications.[30] His comments demonstrate the ease with which we place Samson (and by extension Job) into a world of binaries, which neither the Book of Job nor the *SA* exist in. Both feature men who have conceptions of binaries and who are confronted with those binaries in the orthodoxies which surround them, Samson by himself and Job by his friends. These orthodoxies appear clearly when Samson and Job face their respected griefs for the first time: "Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they each one came from his own place to mourn with him and comfort him" (Job 2:11) and "We come... to visit or bewail thee, or if better, Counsel or Consolation we may bring" (*SA).*

At this point in their respective narratives, both men have first enjoyed prosperity, power, and happiness, only to have subsequently lost everything and be reduced to despair. Samson and Job are so changed by their losses that they are rendered nearly unrecognizable to their friends (paralleling Forese in Canto XXIII): "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off and knew him not" (Job 2:12) and "O change beyond report ... Can this be he?" (*SA* 124).

Milton has a far more perceptive and less binary view of human failings than the friends that served to introduce the Job motif verbally into the Samson narrative which he makes explicit in *De Doctrina Christiana*: "It is a human frailty to err, and no man is infallible here on earth. ... They mingle their implicit faith with many words of truth and mistaken doctrine." In Book 1 of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton sorts through the legalistic faith of his era and sees that the purpose of the Book of Job is to act as "equipment .. For the realities of mortal life." He is capable of enabling multiple discourses that would seem contradictory for a pragmatic purpose.[31]

These realities are both pleasant and unpleasant, and Milton reveals his more comprehensive understanding of how to deal with the dialogue of complaint through Samson's continual inversions of what seems rational to his friends and family. Echoing the reversal of form in Job, the natural outcomes of Samson's laments are inverted further as forensic form is not given a forensic core: i.e. he accepts Manoa's plans which ultimately only exacerbate his suffering, just as his day on stage ironically results in greater despair and suffering even though it is a relief from his imprisonment.

The forensic elements that permeate the story and laments of Job are also found in

the *SA* and they have particular applicability to Milton's preoccupation with what Joan

Bennett has termed "Liberty under the Law."[32] Bennett does not recognize that the story

of Samson does not lend itself to forensic inquiries, or to the place of justice in a *human*

system and for *human* understanding.

The Joban motifs which run as a subtext throughout the play satisfy the need for

the forensic. Read as a tragedy, *SA* represents a departure from a belief in a dianoetic

Creator, but the forensic elements arrest this tragic potential, poising the narrative on a

generic threshold. Samson's withdrawal from a corrupt world into an incomprehensible

one - death - signals a free and radical acceptance of a universe without his reason as

governance. The Chorus counters this potential by claiming: "All is best, though we oft

doubt, / What the'unsearchable dispose / Of highest wisdom brings about" (1746-1748).

The Chorus represents the entire Hebrew population and their affiliation with and

subscription to the ancient and rigid laws of Moses. Milton distinguishes between inner

power - that of the spirit - and what he termed the "carnal letter of the law" and this

distinction served as Milton's support of regicide and revolution in his later writings.[33]

Job wrestles with this interpretation of the aetiology of power in his laments,

repeatedly insisting on, and inquiring into, the input of a dianoetic Creator on justice. He

equates literal freedom with the process of inquiry when discussing "external" (à la Kant)

interpretation of the law as opposed to an internal, rigid governance to the letter of the law.

He quotes Psalm 119:45: "I will always walk in freedom because I seek your

commands."[34]

More difficult is the tension inherent in the genre as it effects humanism, i.e. the tragic or non-tragic view of radical liberty. It has been said that "the range and extent of irony in *SA* has seldom been equaled"[35] and that Milton achieves a fusion of disparate elements of genuine tragedy and taut but hopeful religious drama. That hope and tragedy are not considered mutually exclusive in *SA* might be Milton's greatest adaptation of the Joban motif. The injustice done to Job is not redressed emotionally (for though he is granted physical recompense, the question of his suffering and the irreversible cognizance of his pain are not addressed) nor is the tragedy eliminated in the heroic finale to *SA*. This leaves the question of genre poignantly suspended at the conclusion. The ambiguity or simple lack of Samson's own words parallels Job's own acquiescence to an unspeakable or non-definable paradigm. Samson says of his purpose: "Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds, / the deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the doer; / But they persisted deaf." (247-49) This suggestion - that actions speak for failed words - appears at the conclusion of Job when Job "hears" first hand through the witnessing of the Creator's deeds. These silent, or "darkened words" (Job 42:1) juxtaposed with the light and nearly blinding vastness of creation (or Samson's final, inverted creative act of self-destruction) questions the visual and the apparent in both texts.

In the *SA,* Milton makes the question of what is apparent or not explicit by the extensive discussions on dark, light, eclipses, and natural phenomena that echo Samson's literal blindness. Samson's blindness helps him make leaps of faith by freeing him from the concerns of the physical world, a redemptive outcome to a tragic circumstance. Some of the early lines of *SA* correlate with Job's confusion with the natural world and the

problems it poses to man: "O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon, Irrecoverably dark, total Eclipse/Without all hope of day! (80-82).

These questions of perception and the limitations and enlightenment afforded to man by the natural world are not lost on Milton. Though Job is astounded and brought to a measure of revelation by G'd's creation, he also complains that G'd is not perceivable in his creation: "I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand I seek him, but I cannot behold him, I turn to the right hand but I cannot see him" (23:8-12). Job's complaint has also been one of blindness, and in conclusion he claims to have made a transition from verbal arguments and his faith of hearing, to faith in sight: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee" (42:5). Similarly, Samson claims to have his "inward eyes illuminated" at his death. His destruction - and his acceptance of it - grants him a sight similar to Job's, a sight that transcends the vocalizations of the text. This final element of polyphony is the most "open" from a Bakhtinian-vantage point, since sight cannot be accurately defined (certainly not that of G'd in a whirlwind, deliberately obscured, or of a blind man at his death).

At the outset of *SA* Milton pointedly tells us that the story is modeled on Greek tragedy and that it should be read as such. Such an explicit instruction, however, sounds rather like the certainty behind the instructions of Job's comforters and thus should be considered equally questionable. The patterns of irony and sarcasm included in the *SA* are accompanied by reversals in the text such as noted by Douglas Bush that with each of "the four acts bringing about a result contrary to that expected by the interlocutor."[36]

There are further aspects of ironic humour that Milton includes based on a blind athletic hero, humour that would seem altogether inappropriate by and Greek tragic standard.[37] The conflict between the genre claimed by the author and his controversial stylistic choices - like the humour and sarcasm surrounding the athletic downfall of the hero - reinforce the discordant discourses created by Milton's interpretation of the Joban motif.

CHAPTER VI:

PARDONING FRAILTY: AMBIGUOUS DESIRES IN CHAUCER'S *PARDONER'S TALE*

When an Old Man of questionable origin meets the three drunkards in Chaucer's

Pardoner's Tale, he greets them with piety and with a nod to religious convention, saying

"Now, lordes, God yow see!"[38] In return, he is met with anything but equal restraint and

well wishes. While much has been hypothesized in regards to the identity of the Old Man -

that he possibly represents the plague, Satan, an embodiment of death, or that he is a

character from early Anglo-Saxon mythology - little scholarship addresses other important

aspects of his character, specifically his own desire for release through death, his grisly

appearance, his relationship to the *three* men who mistreat him for unclear reasons, and his

relationship to pecuniary matters in the tale. His maternal references to earth, as well as his

explicit reference to his vanishing flesh, blood, and skin, hint at the presence of a Joban

motif in these matters of wealth, bodily suffering, and in the question of relief from

suffering. Indeed, this particular tale, in its dealing with both with bodily suffering (at the

outset, the plague is identified as the motive for the three bandits' brazen behavior in a

perverse Carpe Diem ethic) and greed, demands that attention be paid to potential Joban

issues.

In the medieval mind, the loss of skin and/or flesh was closely associated with Job;

both Gregory the Great in his *Moralia* and Alfred the Great in his Commentary on Job cite

Job's suffering of the skin and flesh as penance for greed and gluttony (gluttony is

mentioned in the list of sins in lines 895-899 of the tale). Both Gregory and Alfred assume

the unknown sin which Job fears he or his sons have committed internally (Job 1:5) and

this leads to the use of Joban motifs in discussions of greed and gluttony, as well as of sexual sins of excess. These sins, not surprisingly, result in skin ailments similar to those described by Job as festering sores and decaying flesh in 2:7. In response to the youth's query as to hig age, the Old Man says:

> For I ne kan nay fynde / a man, though that I walked into Ynde / Neither in citee ne in no village, / That wolde chaunge his youthe for myn age; And therefore moot I han myn age stille, / As longe tyme as it is Goddes wille. / Ne Deeth, allas, ne wol nat han my lyf. / Thus walke I, lyk a resteleees kaityf, / And on the ground, which is my moodres gate, / I knokke with my staf, bothe erly and late, / And seye, 'Leeve mooder, leet me in! / Lo how I vanysshe, flessh, and blood, and skyn! / Allas, whan shul my bones been at reste? / Mooder, with yow wold I chaunge my cheste /That in my chambre longe tyme hath be, / Ye, for an heyre clowt to wrappe me!'/ But yet she wol nat do that grace / For which ful pale and welked is my face.

The youths' lack of recognition painfully reminds us of Job's initial request to his friends after they fail to recognize him, sitting with shriveled and deformed skin, lying upon the earth. In his first lament and soliloquy, Job wishes that the door to his mother's womb had been shut - a door through which he also wishes to return like our old man (3:10) - and follows quickly with his own discussion concerning the purposelessness of wealth of the kings, counselors, and princes who have houses filled with gold and silver (3:15). He goes on to ask: "Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hid treasure" (3:17). This representation of a man burdened with wealth actively wishing to dig into the earth - to return to a mother - for a welcome death is a clear use of a Joban motif. The Old

Man's use of traditional lament form (much like Job) further questions G'd's giving of life to those "who look for death." But to what end?

Most scholars do not identify Joban motifs in this *CT* location; quite correctly, many have likened the Old Man's quest to Apocalypse 9:6 and to Paul's lament in Roman's "Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24), while pointing instead to Griselda as an embodiment of the "patient Job" in the *Clerk's Tale* and as a more consistent representation of Boccacio's influence and his own preference for the patient Job over the querulous one. Job appears again, in pagan (and highly doubtful) garb, in the *Merchant's Tale* where a aptly named "Joab" is paired with Thiodamas, and a tangential reference to the righteous man compared to gold in the *General Prologue* "And this figure he added eek thero, That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?" (499-500) as in Job 23:10.[39]

Additional oddities of genre and dark humor present in the Pardoner's Tale are inextricably linked with the problem of a querulous Job embodied in the Old Man. While the demise of the three youths due to their greed at the end of the tale and the message it entails seem clear enough, the disappearance of the Old Man has been much discussed, albeit with little consensus. He leaves the tale after abandoning the youths to their much deserved "reward" at the base of an inverted Tree of Life under which Death sits and waits. He does not go to meet death with the youths thus leaving the question of his own release as unanswered as Job's. His liminal characterization, the ambiguity surrounding his purpose other than as a narrative ploy to send the youths on their death, and the humour surrounding the word play and tricks of the old man, all point to a continued use

of the Joban motif in problematic interactions and generic fluidity. Morton Bloomfield

finds the tale particularly interesting for its use of humor for such grim purposes; he also

perceives an offbeat sense of humor in *CT* at large, and the *Man of Law's Tale* in "A

Tragedy of Victimization and a Christian Comedy." The tale itself is rarely characterized

as truly tragic (as it has a didactic redemption) or as having a simply comedic structure (as

in the Miller's Tale), but it clearly incorporates more generic techniques than more

straightforward tales and it does so while employing the Joban motif in portraying the Old

Man.[40]

CHAPTER VII:

AN UNFINISHED BUSINESS: CREATION AS THE ETERNAL DISCOURSE

In spite of Job's refusal to assume the confines of generic tactics, the conclusion of Job's speech warrants examination to assist in deciphering Job's true views on G'd's ultimate authority in the text. Particular attention should be paid to the unique (at least in a biblical context) uses of sarcasm by Job and G'd and to the intentional ambiguity of Job's final words at the close of the dialogue and poetic portion of the book.

It is generally accepted that, and Gregory Parsons carefully accounts for, the use of irony as a literary device by the comforters and Job while sarcasm and its humorous polemic are reserved for the use of Job and G'd exclusively. While irony (ειρωνεία, or "dissimulation", i.e. ignorance feigned to provoke or confound an opponent) is a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of the literal sense of the words, sarcasm carries with it a malice or a maligning of the opponent's intent, and barely attempts to hide its feelings or intent in doing so.

Sarcasm is evident in Job's retort to the ironic prods of his friends when he says that his friends have such a monopoly on wisdom that it will die out with their own deaths. This intentional insult to their own characters and ignorance is, if not outright malicious, at least painful to witness. The speeches of G'd, particularly the first, are rife with sarcasm; when G'd asks Job if he was witness to the laying of the foundation of the earth, G'd says "surely you know" in reference to questions of the determination of its measurements (38:5). This sarcastic agitation of the Created by his Creator seems out of place given G'd's earlier acknowledgement that Job was without fault, nor has he cursed him, nor has

the question taken the place of a curse in any of the logic or illogic of the forensic debate thus far.

So why the sarcasm? The humor it elicits at the entire problem is not without its place. It speaks to G'd's acknowledgment of the situation's absurdity, as sarcasm is intended to do. But Job's response does not engage the intentionally antagonistic (if amused) creator; instead he tries to arrest the process he finds himself in: "I have spoken and I will not answer, but I will proceed no further" (40:5). But stopping an intensely dynamic process such as the dialogue or the firework display that is creation is not an option. That would imply that an acceptable resolution has been reached, and G'd's display is a monologic truth in Bakhtin's terminology. The sarcasm also suits this "interminable" process, much as a mother would claim "being sarcastic won't accomplish anything." The sarcasm is not intended to accomplish anything, it is merely an acknowledgment, a nod to a creator that has perhaps created something that amazes even Him/Herself.

Ultimately, Job's final expression of G'd's world and the logic that is so unapparent in it, is prefaced by the confusing statement "I had heard of Thee, but now my eye has seen Thee" (42:4). This visual reframing of a book that has so entirely revolved around speech and rhetorical tactics, seems to come as a bolt out of the blue. Yes, G'd has appeared out of a whirlwind (an intentionally obscuring and confusing phenomenon itself), but to place such an emphasis on the visual is reminiscent of Kant's justification of realities and the relevance of physical objects and events (be they art or didactic experience) and how they have some characteristics regardless of what we say, think, or

believe about them. These characteristics, empirical and transcendental realism, sometimes conflict, but for the purposes of reading Job's experiences we will distinguish between them only in so far as transcendental realism is what Job is striving for, and empirical realism is what he must engage to attain it. Kant has the aim, if not to overthrow strict Cartesian rules and algorithms, to at least show how they preclude "a critical method of thinking."[41] His problem with Hume and earlier philosopher's comprehension of man's progress is that it is embodied and explained solely in human terms. This is exemplified in the statement by the philosopher Quine, who re-interprets Hume and gives voice to Cartesian philosophies for the modern era when he says, "Save the surface of the sentient body and you save all."[42] As a respectable Cartesian, he prioritizes the interiority of experience over all when he says: "In experimentally equating the uses of 'Gavagai' and 'Rabbit' it is stimulations that must be made to match, not animals."[43] How this severe interiority in Hume and his followers translates into identifying our environment, events, and their relevance is precisely what Kant is concerned with, and as it happens, so is the poet of the Book of Job.

The point of Kant's transcendental empiricism is to show that some relationships must be established for us to think at all, and then to question whether and why these relationships exist. To demand first that we decide whether relationships exist at all is the Cartesian mistake of prioritizing our inner experience, requiring that we know what our language and thought are doing first, rather than addressing the actual problem at hand, which is to think about and know the world and environment, or at least portions of it.

So what would Kant do with the seemingly irregular and irrational world that Job is presented with? Job has already made it clear that he acknowledges the world outside of him, the natural world, and that paradox exists on a grand scale. In yet another of many paradoxes Job asks in 3:23: "Why is light given to a man whose way is hid?" But Satan has made it clear that he wishes to paint Job into the segment of an equation that requires Job to behave and believe himself to be or exist in a certain way, because of certain outcomes and not as the result of his own reasoning. Job's friends, namely Eli'phaz, have prioritized social assumptions and communal interiority rather than any autonomy on the part of man or the natural world. They have simply given a soliloquy to the two initial equations Satan put forth. Namely: that punishment and fear dictate Job's behavior, and that his human world (the acerbic and alliterative "Skin for skin!") will and should dictate his reasoning and judgement.

It should be noted that Kant did not seek conditions for the possibility of self-consciousness itself. He sought the conditions for the possibility of a self-conscious human experience. He acknowledged that any substantive epistemology must be pertinent to our human experience. Kant claimed that "transcendental reflection is a duty from which no one can escape if he would judge anything about things a priori."[44] Kant went on in KdrV to use counter-factual circumstances to show that "only under the presupposition of diversity in nature, just as it is only under the condition that its objects have homogeneity among themselves, are we at all capable of self-conscious experience."[45] Thus Kant sets as a condition for experience that the material of experience be given to us from the exterior. He also sets up the condition that if man is capable of self-conscious

experience it is in a world that must provide us with a degree of recognizable regularity and variety among the contents of our sensations. In a world that lacked this variety or regularity we could make no judgements and thus could not identity objects or events. Kant elaborates:

> If among the appearances offering themselves to us there were such a great variety - I will not say of (for they might be similar to one another in that) but of content, i.e. regarding the manifoldness of existing beings - that even the one with the most acute human understanding, through comparison of one with another, could not detect the least similarity (a case which can at least be thought), then the logical law of genera would not apply at all, not concept of a genus, nor any other universal concept, indeed no understanding at all would be, since it is the understanding that has to do with such concepts.[46]

In spite of the addition of the term 'genera' it is clear that Kant is suggesting that in extreme cases of homogeneity (regularity) or variety (chaos) there could be no human experience. This is the dichotomy that has been established in Job, which is also seen in the contrast between his initial prosperity and subsequent wretchedness. But Satan generates a series of exceedingly regular and simplistic equations in a false unification (to use Foucault's terms) to attempt to explain G'd's infinite variety of irregular and irrational experiences. These equations are proof for proof's sake in essence.

It is appropriate then, that experience, not a proof or a system to which Job must adhere, is advanced as G'd's final argument. Contrary to readings which stress either Job's infinite patience, or modern status as *The First Dissident*, neither is necessary to hear the poignant truth in the whirlwind. Job's experience is prioritized above all. G'd repeatedly *shows* Job the natural world, each time only saying "Were you here when ...", "See ...",

and repeatedly offering *visual* portrayals of an incomprehensibly violent world, from the ostrich who leaves her eggs and young to chance crushing in the sand "as if they were not hers" or to the hawk and their young sucking the blood of the dead from battle (39:30).

The repeated apathy associated with the animal kingdom and G'd's creation as a whole is a powerful argument in favor of removing oneself from the pain of the power structure that Job has been struggling with. He pursues wisdom and an analytic understanding of suffering, the same suffering that the ostrich does not "fear, because G'd has made her forget wisdom" (39:17) or the horse "laughs at .. And is not dismayed" (39:22). It is this same wisdom however, that G'd is attempting to overthrow in Job, and in so doing rejoin him to the creation that does not fear the same *perceived* evil which *man* does that is present in the world. But without fear of the natural world or the suffering it can bring, what has G'd done to this central character in his chaotic pastoral play? Much like Samson with his death and radical acceptance of a flawed world, this acceptance simultaneously signals his complete emancipation. Likewise, this emancipation is expressed as a freedom from material belongings and the desire for death that the Old Man in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale espouses. The Old Man is able to inhabit (though unwillingly) a flawed world that the three robbers were not.

Job's final words accept an ambiguity (if not an apathy) that is strikingly dissimilar to anything he has said to date. Though Job's final words are often read as a retraction and self-deprecation, there is more semantic ambiguity present in these few lines than just about anywhere else in the text, for all its problems and convoluted translation history. In Chapter 42 Job answers and says:

> I know that thou canst do all things, ... 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.. Hear, and I will speak; I will question you and you declare to me. I had heard of thee by hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes (42:1-6).

This authorized and most common variant implies a humiliation and self-deprecation, a reduction of Job to mere nothingness. The translation options, however, depend on prepositions and cases that would radically alter the meaning. Dhorme's Commentary to lines five and six leaves open the possibility that it may be rendered "Therefore I retract my words and repent *of* dust and ashes" (the symbols of mourning, and thus repenting of ever having grieved). It may also be rendered "Therefore I retract my words and have changed my mind concerning dust and ashes" which might as easily be read as he has altered his view of grief and suffering itself. Robert Sheindlin even renders it as "I take comfort in dust and ashes" a unique but not unfounded understanding of the verb.[47] The Oxford Annotated edition at least gives mention to the problem of the verb used and translated as "repent" here. It is not the usual verb for repentance of sins to also imply the utmost grief (implying that Job still perceives himself as innocent). The connotations to our translation as "repent" itself, even in all these variants, can be seen as quite inadequate. The verb also carries with it early meanings of "to melt" or "to sink down." The passivity implicit in the verb might render Job not so abjectly repentant, but having abandoned control of the dialogue and quite literally melting away into G'd's creation.

This radical ambiguity, a final distancing of the text from any pretense of a "monologic" truth, or single voice, is the "experience" that Kant said we must engage in, rather than a systemic explanation of evil in the world:

> As a work of G'd, the world can also be considered by us as divine publication of his will's purposes. However, in this respect the world is often a closed book for us, and it is so every time we look at it to extract from it G'd's final aim even though it is an object of experience (RwBMR 8:264).

It is just this experience of the creation that liberates Job. With that intent, we must not approach either the conclusion or the book in its entirety as a "doctrinal" statement but instead through our reason and experience. Such an understanding is different from the interpretation that the Book of Job "just as in legislating it commands absolutely without further grounds, so it can be considered as the unmediated definition and voice of G'd through which he gives meaning to the letter of his creation." In this fundamentally open and ongoing act "G'd then becomes himself the interpreter of his will as announced only through his creation."[48] Through this act both Job and the reader are relieved of the burden to exercise a finite reason or discourse. They are then free to experience and marvel at the multitude of voices in G'd's creation which we may never be able to prioritize or completely distinguish from one another by means of our own inadequate definitions.

CHAPTER VIII:

ENDNOTES:

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5. Bakhtin (8)

6. Oxford Annotated Bible. London, UK: OUP. 1977

7. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* (128) New York, NY. Routledge Press. 1999

8. Newsom, Carol. *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations.* (23-25) Oxford University Press: New York. 2003

9. Bakhtin, Mikhail *Dialogic Imagination*. (342-344)

10. Pechansky, David. *The Betrayal of God: Ideological Conflict in Job.* (3) John Knox Press: Louisville, KY. 1998

11. Bakhtin *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics.* (280)

12. For a far more comprehensive and detailed examination of the syntax of the dialogue in the Book of Job, see: Gitay, Yehoshua. "Religious Rhetoric" *Dialogue* (Hebrew) 1990, (16-19)

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14. Kant 25

15. Perleman, Chaim. *The Idea of Justice and the Problem of Argument.* (J. Petrie, Trans.) (18) New York: Humanities Press. 1963

16. Foucault 184

17. Cf. Volz: "The poet has not written a treatise but a lament" *Das Buch Hiob* (26)

18. For better context to the relationship of Dante and Forese see, "Dante and Forese" by Robert M. Durling, in *Purgatorio* ed. And tr. Robert M Durling, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003 612-14 and *The Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. Richard Lansing (New York: Garland, 2000) under *Forese*.

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20. Russell, R. "Reading Literary and Ethical Choices" (252-261) *Lectura Dantis: Purgatorio.* University of California Press, 2008.

21. Martinez, Ronald L. *Dante Studies* (120) 2002

22. Dhorme, Edouard. *A Commentary on the Book of Job.* Trans. Harold Knight. Thomas Nelson Publishers. New York. 1984. cxciii

23. Barolini, Teodolina. *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante.* (23-25) Princton, NJ. Princeton University Press. 1992

24. See Mandelbaum, A. *Lectura Dantis: Purgatorio: A Canto by Canto Commentary.* In particular the commentary essays by Christopher Kleinhenz and Lino Pertile on Cantica XXII and XXIV respectively. Their importance to the above argument for Canto XXIII's intentional use of the Joban motif and its generic and narrative liminality is evidenced by Kleinhenz's illustration of Canto XXII's transitional nature, its emphasis on thresholds themselves and a shift from philosophical prose to religious poetry at its conclusion. The very shift that the Book of Job itself engages in so many times. Pertile, concludes what I see as a Joban unit of Cantica XXII-XXIV, with an excellent discussion of a frustrating Canto, which though formally complete, does not form a complete narrative unit. This lack of resolution, I find to be an echo of the Joban narrative's lack of resolution, and a fitting conclusion to a series of Cantica that are often misunderstood or examined in discrete units without attention to a holistic pattern.

25. Kohler, L *Hebraische Vokabeln.* Zeitschrift fur die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (section "On Justice") pp 158-63 Volume 55. Berlin. 1937

26. Dhorme, ibid, Introduction: "Name and Place in the Canon" ix

27. Johnson, Samuel. *The Rambler. No. 139* July 16, 1791s

28. It occurs only one more time in the Old Testament in verb form, also in Job at 26:10 "He has made a circle on the face of the waters." with no other verb/adjectival or adverbial forms having been found to date.

29. Budick, Sanford. "Milton's Joban Phoenix in *Samson Agonistes"* Early Literature Studies. 11.2 September 2005

30. Budick, ibid. (224)

31. Norbrook, David "Euripides, Milton and Christian Doctrine." Milton Quarterly 29:37-41. 1995

32. Bennett, Joan. *Reviving Liberty: Radical Christian Humanism in Milton's Great Poems.* Harvard UP. Cambridge, MA 1989

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34. Milton, 344

35. Cump, Galbraith M. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Samson Agonistes* (12-15) Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968

36. Bush *John Milton*. New York: Macmillan, 1964 p. 197

37. A point carefully avoided in works like Parker, William Riley *Milton's Debt to Greek Tragedy in Samson Agonistes.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press. 1937

38. Chaucer *Canterbury Tales: Pardoner's Tale ll. 715*

39. Besserman, Lawrence. *Chaucer's Biblical Poetics* (165) University of Oklahoma Press. 1998

40. see also by Bloomfield "The Gloomy Chaucer." *Veins of Humor* ed. Harry Levin, (57-68) Harvard English Studies 3. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972.

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43. I owe a better understanding of Humean conflict and Kant and Quine's role in giving voice to it from the essay by Richard Creath, 'Every Dogma has its Day', *Erkenntinis* 35, 1991:347-389.

44. O'Neill, Onora, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*. (280-308) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, .

45. KdrV, A657-B685.

46. KdrV, A653-B680.

47. Scheindlin, Raymond P. *The Book of Job*. (155) W.W. Norton and Co. New York: New York. 1998

48. KdrV, A654-B290

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CHAPTER XI:

VITA

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