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Publication Details

D'Arcens, L, '"She ensample was by good techynge": Hermiene Ulrich and Chaucer Under Capricorn', Early Women Scholars and the History of Reading Chaucer, special issue of Philologie Im Netz, Beiheft, Supp 4/2009, 21-40.

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Hermiene Frederica Ulrich (later Parnell) is a significant but now largely forgotten figure in early Australian academic history, who is especially notable for her brief but vital contribution to the tradition of early female readership of Chaucer in Australia. Despite her exclusion from university teaching after a promising and vital early career, Ulrich/Parnell continued to figure in her contribution as a public medievalist. This essay argues that Ulrich/Parnell's contribution as an early woman reader of Chaucer has been overlooked because of three-fold feminization in which her gender, teaching career, and colonial status have all rendered her the antithesis of the masculinist ideal of intellectual 'eminence' within medieval studies. It argues in particular that the exclusively pedagogic nature of her career is strongly reflective of early Australian medieval studies, and points to the vital role in the colonial university of teaching and 'amateur' scholarship-practices which, because of their association with feminine dilettantism, have been occluded in the history of medieval studies. Finally the essay goes on to argue for the efficacy of developing a diasporic rather than Eurocentric or Transatlantic model of the discipline's development. This kind of model will enable us to reassess our criteria of scholarly value in such a way that we are able to acknowledge contributions that have hitherto been marginalized – and marginalized precisely because they have been feminized – within historical accounts of the discipline's development.

Hermiene Frederica Ulrich (later Parnell) is remarkable both for her significance as a figure in early Australian academic history and for the frustrating case she presents to anyone trying to evaluate her role in the tradition of early female readership of Chaucer in Australia.[1] On the one hand, Ulrich is a foundational figure — the only woman among the inaugural academics appointed in 1911 by the University of Queensland, and the first woman in the history of Australian universities invited to construct the curriculum for an entire course of study. On the other hand, her academic career, while vigorous for several years, lasted less than a decade, between 1911 and 1918, and might not have lasted even this long had WWI not taken male academics away from their primary duties, thus allowing married women such as Ulrich (after she became Parnell) temporary re-entry into academe.

After the war, she no longer enjoyed any form of academic status at the university, and, according to those close to her, she never forgave the University for its treatment of her. Nevertheless, her association with it continued grudgingly but dutifully in her capacity as wife of Thomas Parnell, lecturer and later inaugural University of Queensland Professor of Physics. As I will go on to discuss she did continue, despite her exclusion from university teaching, to have a role in Queensland public and cultural life as an activist and educator at least throughout

the 1920s, and Chaucer continued to figure in her contribution as an educator; but after this there is virtually no record of her activities despite the fact that she continued to live till late 1956.

In the discussion that follows I wish to analyse Ulrich/Parnell as a figure whose contribution to the development both of her field and her institution has been overlooked because of a three-fold feminization in which her gender, teaching career, and colonial status have all rendered her the antithesis of 'eminent'. I will examine first of all the impact of Ulrich/Parnell's gender on her career, and on the way in which she has been all but obliterated from the official memory of her institution and her discipline. After this I will move on to a discussion of what her career suggests about early Australian medieval studies, and especially about the vital role in the colonial university of teaching and 'amateur' scholarship – practices which, because of their association with feminine dilettantism, have been occluded in the history of medieval studies. In this part of the discussion I will argue for the efficacy of developing a diasporic rather than Eurocentric or Transatlantic model of the discipline's development. This kind of model, as I will go on to suggest, will enable us to reassess our criteria in such a way that we are able to acknowledge contributions that have hitherto been marginalized—and marginalized precisely because they have been feminized—within historical accounts of the discipline's development.

Magistra for a Day

In the introduction to *Congenial Souls*, her analysis of Chaucerian reading communities, Stephanie Trigg engages in a subtle analysis of the cover illustration of *The Riverside Chaucer*, which is taken from Lydgate's *Seige of Thebes* (BL, MS Royal 18 DII, f.148). Drawing out the numerous ways in which this image both invites and dramatizes the modern reader's fantasy of proximity and communication with the author of the *Tales* ("Place yourself in the company of Chaucer"), Trigg points to an obvious but important element of its composition: "as an image of an exclusively male company of pilgrims, it implies a male readership" (Trigg 2002: xvii).

The notion of homosocial literary community implied in this image is, according to Trigg, one of the difficulties that have had to be negotiated by Chaucer's modern readers (Trigg 2002: xxi). It is certainly a challenge that has preoccupied many feminist Chaucer commentators over the past three decades, who have, with no small success, strived to make gender-sensitive reading practices part of the mainstream of contemporary Chaucer reception.

Women Chaucer scholars have also, however, faced another, more concrete, form of exclusion. Despite noting the 'singular increase in numbers of women' in academic fields, Jane Chance, as recently as 2005, has said:

> What may not have changed, even yet, is the treatment of women within the male-dominated halls of academe … the institutional insistence on their silence, or voicelessness, may make them seem as if they do not in fact exist (Chance 2005: xviii).2

Chance's response to this continued discrimination has been to produce, with the co-operation of a large number of contributors, *Women Medievalists and the Academy*, a thick volume of short biographical entries paying tribute to women's many and varied contributions to the field of medieval studies. Some of this work had already been commenced, in the important volume edited by Susan Mosher Stuard (1987), and in the handful of entries devoted to women in the biographical volumes edited by Helen Damico and Joseph B. Zavadil; but Chance's volume in particular, by its sheer size, convinces us beyond any doubt of the extensiveness and quality of the academic contributions made by women to medieval studies in general, and to Chaucer studies in particular.

Trigg says of female readers' engagement with Chaucer:

> [i]t is a measure of Chaucer's reputation as a generalist, as a writer interested in women, if not, indeed, as an androgynous writer, that the absence of women [on the *Riverside Chaucer* cover] does not stand in the way of this appealing representation of the Chaucerian community and the welcome it seems to extend to the prospective reader or buyer, of the book and the academic and cultural capital it signifies (Trigg 2002: xvi).

In other words, women have continued to include themselves, despite homosocial prohibition, within the 'Chaucerian community' of readers and commentators. And indeed, recent work on women's participation in the discipline does seem to confirm that despite the privileging of male audiences over many centuries, Chaucer has continued to exert a pull over female scholars of medieval literature, who have made careers out of editing and interpreting his works.

In some cases, such as Mary Eliza Haweis, these careers were extra-institutional and involved the solitary undertaking of impressive yet also sometimes populist (and, ultimately forgotten) research and writing.[3] In other cases such as Caroline Spurgeon, Edith Rickert, and Elizabeth Salter, they were intellectually and institutionally pathbreaking and unarguably eminent.

Hermiene Ulrich/Parnell falls into neither of the above categories. Notwithstanding Chance's own acknowledgment of the limitations of her volume's ambit of inclusion,[4] it is clear that Ulrich/Parnell fails to meet the criteria of *Women Medievalists* on two counts. The first is her role in Australian studies of Chaucer, which renders her marginal within the volume's overwhelmingly Northern hemisphere emphasis. Chance's stated desire for inclusiveness is at times undermined by a limited (and occasionally alienating) tendency to narrate the path of American and British medieval scholarly associations as though their progress has been reflective of the global state of the discipline. She does, it is true, mention in her introduction that at least one of her women hails from Australia, but there is no acknowledgement of the contribution of female medievalists to the discipline's development in Australia or other Southern hemisphere centres. The second basis on which Ulrich/Parnell appears to warrant exclusion is the exclusively pedagogic nature of her career. Chance's introduction, which is focused on such questions as "when women are trained in research at university, can [they] speak with authority about a subject that has long been claimed by men?" (Chance 2005: xxv) makes it clear that her principal concern is with women's research contributions to medieval studies. Ulrich/Parnell,

on the other hand, was neither a prolific but excluded researcher, nor a woman whose institutional career exemplifies a successful negotiation or thwarting of institutional biases. Her contribution was, rather, that of a teacher and deviser of a curriculum, and her obscurity reveals that she is more representative of the many casualties of academic bias against women, as well as of the current bias against pedagogic contributions.

Before discussing her interactions with Chaucer, I wish to clarify that my discussion of Ulrich/Parnell is less an attempt to 'massage her CV' to argue for her unsung significance to Chaucer studies, than an appeal to the notion that we, as critics of our discipline, need to reflect carefully on the criteria for 'significance' and 'eminence' that we adopt, ensuring that they neither perpetuate old exclusions nor generate new ones. As I hope Ulrich/Parnell's case will demonstrate, defining early women Chaucer scholars' significance in terms of their research output runs the risk of undervaluing the vital role of 'minor scholars', especially those who were primarily teachers, in the formation of local scholarly traditions and reading practices.

While the biographical approach taken in the Stuard, Damico, and Chance volumes has been extremely valuable for tracing the careers of individual medievalists, its unreflective conflation of 'Great Medievalists' with researchers is, in my view, limited. I have featured the quotation "She ensample was by good techynge" (from l.93 of the Second Nun's Prologue) in the title of this essay because that is precisely, and exclusively, what Ulrich/Parnell was: a woman who taught Chaucer to the future literature teachers of Queensland.

Ulrich was born in 1885[5] of a German-born father, stock agent Augustus Charles Theodore Ulrich, and an Irish mother, Katherine (née Darling). She probably spent her early years at Ararat in Victoria, approximately 200 kilometres North-West of Melbourne. Her large family moved to Melbourne during her childhood for the sake of the children's education. It has so far proven difficult to discover where she was schooled, although an indication of her brothers' education at the prestigious Wesley College comes from the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry on her younger brother, Theodore Friederick (sic) Ulrich (Higgins 1990: 303).[6] She attended the University of Melbourne between 1906 and 1910. The second of Australia's universities, Melbourne University had opened its doors some fifty years before Ulrich entered, having been founded in the boom years following the South-East Australian Gold Rushes that enabled Melbourne to evolve rapidly into a great late-Victorian city. By the time she arrived there, it had a fully-developed curriculum based, as was characteristic for Australian universities, on a combination of English, Scottish, and continental models. Among her Modern Language studies, she undertook Honours in English, the curriculum of which featured Chaucer strongly. Her undergraduate exposure to Chaucer was at the hands of the venerable Australian scholar Walter Murdoch, after whom Murdoch University in Western Australia is named. Still a young man in his Melbourne years, Murdoch was more a reader of modern literature, and so taught Chaucer somewhat grudgingly, eschewing philological approaches for a more 'literary' one.[7] Ulrich, however, also studied Comparative Philology, and at the upper levels her language subjects, particularly French and English, balanced literary approaches with philological study. In her final honours examination in February 1909, Ulrich achieved first class honours and

tied for first place in her course. She then went on to an M.A. in Modern Languages over the next two years, completing in 1911, the year she began teaching at the University of Queensland. This was followed later by a Diploma of Education, completed in 1913. Throughout this period, she capped these achievements by winning three scholarships.[8]

Thus when she applied in 1911 to teach Modern Languages at the about-to-be-formed University of Queensland, she was at least as qualified, or even more qualified, than many of the male candidates who had secured lectureships in the Australian universities that had formed over the previous sixty years.

Impressive qualifications were needed, since Ulrich was required to assemble at speed a comprehensive three-year course of study in English, French, and German; this was because the University's inaugural first year student intake would be supplemented by a body of local upper-level undergraduates who had been compelled before 1911 to commence their studies at Sydney or Melbourne but who could now study in their home State. And yet in spite of the weighty curricular undertaking entrusted to her, Ulrich was only appointed at the level of Assistant Lecturer, on the understanding that the curriculum she developed could be completely revised when the School gained a professorial appointment. In 1911, under the authority of Faculty Chairman J. L. Michie, Ulrich took sole leadership of the department, assisted only by one other temporary assistant lecturer. The curriculum she put into place was, unsurprisingly, reflective of the studies she had undertaken in Melbourne, but with an emphasis on the premodern history of theatre that appears to be her own. Calendar records, especially those detailing examination questions, indicate the centrality of the *Canterbury Tales* within the curriculum, and reflect the combination of philological-linguistic and literary approaches that had been a feature of Ulrich's undergraduate training.

1912 brought with it the professorial appointment the University had been seeking; and thus Ulrich's star seemed to commence its decline almost as soon as it had risen. In 1912 Jeremiah Joseph Stable took over the Chair of Modern Languages, effectively ending Ulrich's leadership of the department. However, despite the fact that official histories of the University of Queensland make much of Stable's comprehensive overhaul of the Modern Language curriculum, a close reading of the set texts and examination questions detailed in the university calendars reveals this to be something of an exaggeration, generated in all probability by institutional memory of Stable's forty-year tenure in Modern Languages and, later, the English Department of the University. A comparative reading of the curricula and examination questions from 1911–1912 and the following few years reveals that apart from a slight reduction in philological content, much of what Parnell/Ulrich originally put in place remained largely untouched for many years by Stable's 'overhaul'.

Her staff records show that, in accordance with Queensland Government policy, her forthcoming marriage to Thomas Parnell forced her to resign from her duties at the University of Queensland on January 1, 1913. However, the records also show that a month after this resignation, she was re-employed for the rest of 1913 as an Assistant Lecturer. She appears not to have been employed in 1914, but by 1915,

she had been brought back to teach across the School, as one by one the male staff of Modern Languages had joined the war effort. Her appointment continued until the end of 1918. It is noteworthy that, in a telling typographical error that might be seen as an instance of institutional parapraxis, she is listed in the University Calendar for 1916 as 'Mr Parnell'.

This masculinizing error seems even more pronounced when we consider that Ulrich/Parnell's principal assistant throughout this period was Hilda McCulloch, the first student, male or female, to gain first class honours in English at the University of Queensland. Alumni lists from between 1923 and 1935 indicate that a notable number of the students who passed through the Modern Languages department under Ulrich/Parnell's (and McCulloch's) tutelage went on to hold prominent positions, including English Literature teaching positions, in a number of the major schools and colleges of Queensland and New South Wales, thereby disseminating what they had learned to new generations. So although Ulrich/Parnell's reign was brief, her impact was far wider and more enduring than might initially be supposed.

A compelling portrait of the vital impact a non-researching teacher can have on students is offered in Paul Zumthor's vivid recollection of his teacher Gustave Cohen. In a wonderful interview with Helen Solterer, Zumthor presents Cohen as a kind of cult figure at the Sorbonne in the 1930s, teaching medieval drama to a spellbound group of undergraduates and directing a student theatrical company, the Théophiliens (Solterer 1997: 595–640). While he acknowledges that Cohen was 'a mediocre scholar", Zumthor' stresses

> everyone who was his student was passionately taken by the Middle Ages … he was not among the first-rate critics, but he communicated something profound to his students … Later on, one can always train young people, equip them for research. But to begin with, one must empassion them. The material must seduce them; and the material comes to them by way of the teacher's action: he [sic] must enthral them. (Solterer 1997: 617)

Thus Cohen's teaching and staging of medieval plays, despite his colleagues' conviction that it "wasn't serious … research or university work" (Solterer 1997: 605), made him in Zumthor's assessment "truly a man of influence" (Solterer 1997: 627) whose performance vocabulary and poetic sensibility deeply affected Zumthor's own influential critical idiom and approach as a scholar for many years to come.

Clearly, the scope of Ulrich/Parnell's influence at the fledgling University of Queensland cannot be fairly compared to that of Cohen at the Sorbonne; yet his is a salutary case for reminding us of the undeniable, if diffuse, impact of pedagogic scholars, especially those with a forceful intellectual passion and oratical presence, both of which Ulrich/Parnell is documented as possessing. As mentioned earlier, the curriculum she developed was largely typical of the courses of study offered throughout Australian Modern Languages departments at the time.

Furthermore, like many of her time in Australia and elsewhere, she was perforce a polymath, teaching literature of all periods in English, French, and German (although the latter became unpopular during the war). Nevertheless her English honours curriculum points to a strong predilection for early English literature, and in particular Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, his short poems, and *Troilus and Criseyde*. The exam questions recorded in the academic calendars for 1916–18, the years she ran the department in the absence of Jeremiah Stable, indicate an especially sharp increase in the study of early English, with an approach that incorporates both literary and linguistic elements but is essentially strongly philological in its bent.

While these exam questions suggest a conventional but sophisticated knowledge of the history of early English, Ulrich was, by all accounts a compelling and influential lecturer. It is true that the records of her lecturing prowess come from contexts outside of the University, it seems fair to assume that she brought the same qualities to her teaching. During WWI, while holding Modern Languages together, she also found time to make a name for herself on the Brisbane public-speaking circuit, being described by Sir John Latham (1877–1964), former Chief Justice of the High Court, as among the most powerful speakers he had heard.[9] While so far none of these speeches has been found, their anti-war position can be generally inferred from an entry in the journal of Margaret Thorp, an English Quaker who was active in the peace movement in Brisbane. In November 1915 Thorp records meeting Ulrich/Parnell when hearing her speak at the Brisbane Theosophical Society, and comments that she was impressed by the latter's non-nationalistic, 'international' and pacifist response to the war, praising in particular her call for reasoned assessment of the danger posed by Germany (Summy undated: 42).[10] The fact that Thorp, who was secretary of the Brisbane Women's Peace Army, enrolled in one of Ulrich's undergraduate courses after hearing her speak not only confirms Justice Latham's evaluation of her powers as a public lecturer, but very probably also points to Ulrich/Parnell's commitment to women's issues. She was the first president of the University of Queensland Women's Club, and, along with fellow University of Queensland academic and renowned women's advocate Freda Bage, played a vital early role in the establishment of the Women's College at the University, serving on the Standing Committee formed to raise funds for the College (Brotherton 1973: 9–12, Raymont 2001: 565). Outside of the University she was also a member from 1914 of the Brisbane Women's Club, which had begun in 1908, growing out of the Queensland Women's Electoral League (est. 1903). While the Club's core activities involved fundraising and lobbying for women's issues, it also promoted cultural activities for the women of Brisbane. Ulrich/Parnell was convenor of its Literary and Dramatic coterie in 1916–17, the meetings of which frequently focussed on women writers before Jane Austen.[11] She was also a foundational member of the Brisbane women's literary club the Scribblers Society (est. 1911).

Her work at the Queensland branch of the Worker's Educational Association (W.E.A.) also reveals her interest in taking Early English literature outside of the privileged confines of the university. W.E.A. archives suggest that throughout 1917

and 1918—that is, while she was still teaching at the University— Ulrich/Parnell ran lecture courses and reading circles, as well as delivering occasional lectures, on English literature.[12] The extant lecture scripts in the W.E.A. archives for the courses 'Life and Literature' and 'Literature Ancients and Moderns' make it clear that Chaucer was a strongly featured writer on the Worker's Education curriculum, with attention being devoted not only to *The Canterbury Tales* but to *The Romaunt of the Rose*, the dream visions, *The Legend of Goode Women*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*. Although these scripts are anonymous, so cannot be immediately assumed to be Ulrich/Parnell's, there are a number of details in them that indicate an approach to Chaucer that is remarkably similar to that revealed in the University of Queensland examination questions written by Ulrich/Parnell.[13] Shared characteristics include the division of Chaucer's *oeuvre* into stages according to the level of Continental influence discernible in his texts, the inclusion of a number of the same key quotations, and a preoccupation with the relationship between tragedy and humour. There is also evidence in the W.E.A. lectures of the intellectual and ideological cosmopolitanism for which Ulrich was renowned and which gained her the admiration of Margaret Thorp: while the lectures certainly claim kinship to Chaucer as one of "our English poets", and stress the quintessential Englishness of his humour, they also stress both the eclectic continental influences in his work and his love of common humanity.[14] While these lectures are clearly of an introductory nature, and thus offer us only an inkling of how Ulrich/Parnell might have approached Chaucer's work in the more intensive environment of a university Honours course, they are important for demonstrating that, unlike some of her more imperialist peers in other Australian universities during WWI, she eschewed the practice of offering Chaucer to her students as an exemplum of British cultural and linguistic superiority. The paucity of documentation means that her pedagogic voice is a faint one; but it is one of unmistakable dissent.

In 1924–25 Ulrich/Parnell was President of the Brisbane Lyceum Club, which had been formed in 1919 by women who wished to share discussion on cultural and social themes. She appears, however, to have withdrawn from this role a year later, possibly because of the birth in 1925 of her son, Thomas Meredith Parnell, who would also go on to become a prominent figure at the University of Queensland, later becoming Professor of Electrical Engineering. Records concerning her life become scant after this time, although family recollections of her suggest an ongoing association with the W.E.A., including participation in debates.[15] There is one final record from 1948, in the form of a letter to the University thanking them for forwarding her a sum of money after her husband's death; then there is nothing till the record of her own death on October 11, 1956.[16]

It is understandable that there would be some difficulty in uncovering records of Ulrich/Parnell's life and activities from after her retirement from public life. What is genuinely disturbing in piecing the Ulrich/Parnell story together, however, is the virtual completeness of her erasure from the institutional memory of both the University of Queensland and the W.E.A. Indeed, as I have already indicated, this erasure, at least of her gender, had already begun at the time she was actually teaching at the University. This erasure continues in an ongoing failure to acknowledge adequately her contribution to the University. One of the most public ways in which the University of Queensland has memorialized its early teachers is its

scheme over many years to adorn its Great Court with gargoyle caricatures of them. As is the case with the quadrangles of all of Australia's early universities, the University of Queensland's Great Court precinct is a remarkable and complex instance of spatialized institutional and cultural memory. Strolling through its medievalist colonnades and cloisters, built from distinctive local sandstone and forming a loose semicircle around a large gumtree-shaded lawn, one is struck by the convergence of the Australian and European architectural styles; the government-hired architects who designed it described it as "original in conception, monumental in design and embodying the Australian spirit of art with English culture" (University of Queensland 1979/1992: 2). Studding the upper walls of the cloisters are the gargoyles, along with a range of friezes and coats-of-arms of universities and colleges from all over world (but mostly the British Commonwealth). A large haute-relief sculpture of Geoffrey Chaucer flanks the right of the large stone arched Arts entrance. Not far away, Ulrich/Parnell's successor J.J. Stable takes his place among grotesques of medieval scribes, monks, and even a crusader. One of the five buildings in the precinct is named after her husband Thomas Parnell. Her long-term comrade Freda Bage, who went on to become one of the most prominent women in the University's history, is also memorialized affectionately as a gargoyle, depicted clutching the steering wheel of her car—a clear and, in the context of this discussion, poignant symbol of her relative emancipation as an academic woman whose career was not derailed by marriage. Hermiene Ulrich/Parnell, however, has received no such memorial, despite her momentous place in the history of university women in Australia, her foundational role in the formation of the University of Queensland's Arts curriculum, and her vital nurturance of the embryonic Modern Languages department through the interruptions of the Great War. She receives scant (and inaccurate) attention in the four publications devoted to the early history of the University of Queensland, all of which under-reckon her time at the University and present her contribution as ancillary,[17] and is, moreover, completely absent from the only comprehensive account of the W.E.A. in Queensland (Murnane 1969).[18]

This oblivion is, of course, by no means unique to Ulrich/Parnell. As was discussed earlier in this essay, the marginalization of women medievalists in the early decades of the twentieth century was commonplace, and often manifested itself in their exclusion from academic institutions (Hanawalt 1987: 1–24). What is surprising about it is the fact that, unlike many of the women discussed in the Stuard and Chance volumes, Ulrich/Parnell was, at least for a short time, a foundational figure within the University institution. However, as Elizabeth Scala's biographical entry on Edith Rickert in *Medieval Scholarship* suggests, this was the fate even of women Chaucerians of the highest scholarly and institutional standing (Scala 1998: 297–311).[19]

While Ulrich's career was thwarted, almost certainly by social forces beyond her control, her case points to the importance, when investigating the history of early women readers of Chaucer, of acknowledging those many women whose promising engagement with Chaucer was cut short by patriarchal forces that included not only sexist labour laws but also more nebulous (yet compelling) social expectations that they would adopt other, more traditional, roles than that of scholar. In 'The

Networked Life', her inspiring essay in Chance's volume, Jo Ann McNamara remarks that "no one can tell how many [women scholars] lost their purchase on a career altogether" as a result of laws that forced married and pregnant women out of academic life (McNamara 2005: 906). Hermiene Ulrich/Parnell is one such woman. If we are to achieve a comprehensive representation of the paths taken by women in the history of reading Chaucer, we must be conscious of the dangers of overlooking women like her, and thereby reproducing masculinist notions of what constitutes a significant academic contribution, without extending due sensitivity as to what conditions enable the nurturing of a 'legitimate' and 'eminent' academic career.

Finally, far from being merely a historical consideration, acknowledging this legacy of women such as Ulrich/Parnell is directly relevant to how women can understand their ongoing practice as readers, writers, and teachers of Chaucer. It is vital that women academics, especially those whose roles as carers have an impact on their research productivity, continue to reassert their right to research careers, rather than being relegated to the 'nurturing' role of teaching. Nevertheless, we must proceed with caution if we are to avoid acquiescing to the culture of individualistic research achievement that increasingly operates both in the service of economically rationalist imperatives, and at the expense of upholding the teaching traditions in which women like Hermiene Ulrich/Parnell played so a valuable part.

Teachers and 'Amateurs': A Colonial Legacy

Parnell's is an interesting and representative case on a number of levels. She is on the one hand an excluded figure within the history of Chaucer reception in Australia who perfectly exemplifies how the impact of homosociality and partriarchal social and legal structures militated to produce a masculinist institution in Australia. Yet in other ways, as I have already signalled, Parnell is a representative Australian medievalist, in that her case goes to the heart of the issue of specialization and amateurism, and the distinctive ways this relationship was articulated in colonial and early federal Australia.

In a recent article "Enthusiast or Philologist? Professional Discourse and the Medievalism of Frederick James Furnivall", Richard Utz has usefully suggested that the origin of the professional / amateur distinction in Western thought can be found in the Platonic dialogue *Ion*. In this dialogue Socrates the philosopher and Ion the rhapsode engage dialectically on the subject of what constitutes true knowledge (Utz 2001: 188–212). While the rhapsode asserts that his poetic and intuitive interpretation of Homer grants him understanding of all of the areas of knowledge covered in Homer's verse, the philosopher rejects this, arguing instead for the superiority of specialist knowledge, and informing Ion that although his inspired interpretations of Homer may give pleasure to audiences, they do not fall into the category of rational thought, and offer no insight into Homer's knowledge.

In his reading of this dialogue Utz adds an early chapter to the genealogy of an epistemological and practical distinction that has been crucial to the shape our discipline has taken. This distinction has received increased attention over the past

twenty years as the discipline has reflected on the historical and ideological conditions of its emergence and its institutional consolidation. As this reflective scholarship has developed, there has been a discernible shift in the way the value of non-professional medievalism has been assessed. In 1967 Hans Aarsleff openly regretted the damage wrought on nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon philology by Antiquarian enthusiasts and by the English resistance to the truths of German philology (Aarsleff 1967). Work produced since the 1990s has, by contrast, offered a more sympathetic and, in my view, more nuanced appreciation of the vital contributions made by so-called amateurs. As just one of many examples, F. J. Furnivall, subjected for many years to dismissal as an 'enthusiast', has been reevaluated by scholars such as Utz, Trigg and others for the vitally important scholarly contribution he made as an academic 'outsider'. In a complementary move, others have taken stock of how the discipline's drive toward scientific method has sidelined valuable scholarship of a more 'romantic' bent.

Again, as just one example, David Hult has described Gaston Paris's affectionate dismissal of his father Paulin's legacy as a constitutive moment in the nineteenth-century "demotion of an effeminate and worldly dilettantism in favor of a masculine professionalism" (Hult 1996: 206). Perhaps the most conspicuous indication of the extent to which recent medieval studies has reconsidered its own practices of exclusion can be found in Kathleen Biddick's bold assertion in *The Shock of Medievalism* that the separation of professional medieval studies from non-professional medievalism has involved an act of "epistemological violence", an "amputation" that has left the field wounded and melancholic (Biddick 1998: 4).

Secondly, and this is more central to my discussion today, the received narrative of disciplinary professionalism calls out for revision because it continues to posit the European narrative as the norm. Even a number of American accounts measure their own disciplinary development against the European model of achievement, a point also criticized by Biddick. One conspicuous example, discussed by Norman Cantor, is Charles Homer Haskins's creation of a graduate training regimen to rival the prestigious programs of L'Ecole des Chartes and the German Monumenta Institute (Cantor 1991: 253-54). It is certainly vital, in order to understand its biases, to grasp that the privileging of expertise is fundamental to Western thought; but this genealogy needs to be supplemented by an account that recognizes the ways in which the relationship between medievalist specialism and amateurism has altered in response to contact with the world beyond Europe, as a result of imperialism. This has been acknowledged by the editors of *Decolonising the Middle Ages*, a recent special issue of *JMEMS*, in relation to Iberomedievalists, who "often feel that they work under a double colonization" which is both historical and disciplinary, "arising from the dominant role of Northern Europe, especially France and England, in the colonization of the discipline of medieval studies" (Dagenais and Greer 2000: 439–440). I believe a different but comparable double colonization has led to the exclusion from the history of the discipline of early work undertaken in former British and European colonies.

What is needed, then, is a diasporic narrative of the discipline that can engage in what Stuart Hall has called the "centring of marginality" (quoted Bromley 2000: 10).

This is not a banal inversion where we attempt to enforce a new norm, but an acknowledgment of the simple yet significant fact that that many of us read the Eurocentric disciplinary narrative from a resistant antipodean perspective, and that this is an important and legitimate alternative reading position. Tracing a diasporic narrative offers a range of advantages. First of all, it offers an alternative to what Roger Bromley calls the "rather tired formulations of cultural imperialism" (Bromley 2000: 9) that tend to treat colonial medieval studies as simulacral as well as an ideologically distasteful instrument of cultural imperialism. This does not involve a disingenuous denial of the role of imperialism in establishing medieval studies internationally; rather, it legitimates the practices of non-European medieval studies by insisting that its particularities do not make it aberrant or substandard.

In this respect a diasporic account differs from those narratives of trans-Atlantic rivalry that ultimately accept the normativity of Eurocentric pedigrees and practices.

As I have argued elsewhere, when dealing with early Australian scholars of the Middle Ages, it is important to take into account that the massive workloads under which they toiled meant it was virtually impossible to find time to conduct research (D'Arcens 1998). While a number of them managed to produce important studies, the pressures of single-handedly running under-funded and rudimentary departments often honed their teaching skills but strongly militated against eminent research careers. Thus the conventional assumption that a discipline develops as a result of the influence of powerful and high-achieving scholars is not applicable to colonial environments such as Australia, where the early disciplinary development owed far more to teachers.

Focussing on the teaching accomplishments of early Australian medievalists does appear, however, to present complications for an examination of their expertise. Reading their lectures, for instance, seems at first to bracket off the question of specialization, for—as we have seen with Ulrich/Parnell—they are written for undergraduate or university extension courses, or else for public forums aimed at an interested public who might be educated, but among whom no expertise could be assumed. Plus this medium further introduces the demands of oratory, which exerts a 'populising' force on the subject matter. This means that the lectures are not promising documents for illuminating the expertise of these medievalists. They leave us, rather, with an undeniable sense of their amateurism.

Yet this conclusion seems unsatisfying. Let us approach these lectures, then, by considering why amateurism was so central to the practice of early Australian medievalists. An obvious answer is that they were distant from their archives and from the field, factors that led almost all Australian medievalists to seek training abroad for many decades. Another is that their expertise lay elsewhere. But these are not the only or even the main reasons. I want to suggest that their status as amateur medievalists is in many ways attributable to what I want to call the diasporic nature of their careers. By this I mean that they took themselves to be first and foremost public intellectuals, whose role in Australia was one of cultural mediation, a kind of pastoral duty not simply to inculcate British culture in Australia, but also, as I will go on to briefly demonstrate, to interpret Australia and Australianness for the local

population and, in some cases, for the British audiences who read their published lectures. As Ulrich/Parnell's case has demonstrated, this is apparent throughout their careers as they involved themselves not only in university extension and Workers Education programs, and overseeing public education policy, but also in public commentary on domestic and international politics.

So theirs is a kind of determinedly public amateurism in which medieval subjects were used to broaden the cultural horizons of their local audiences by pointing to links between medieval and modern Australian societies. In this sense they are the antithesis of figures such as Bishop William Stubbs, whose appointment as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford in 1866 went hand-in-hand with a withdrawal from public life, a move that, as Biddick reminds us, should not be confused with ideological disinterestedness, but that firmly situates the ideological work of the professional scholar within the walls of the university (Biddick 1998: 5–9). So the kind of amateur public activity associated elsewhere with 'marginal' enthusiast figures like Furnivall was determinedly undertaken and, indeed, embraced by the colony's most senior scholars.

Lest these scholars' work seem simply colonialist rather than diasporic, it should be stressed that the images of medieval Europe found in their lectures are not straightforward colonial fantasies of a centre that beckons them home, but evocations of a place that is no longer home, corresponding with Avtar Brah's notion that for the diasporic subject "home [is a] mythic space of desire and … in this sense … a place of no return, even if return literally is feasible" (Brah 1996: 192). Ulrich/Parnell's perorations on medieval themes in her lectures intersect with, and reflect, her perception of Australia as both proximate to and displaced from England. As I will go on later to discuss more fully, her lectures on Chaucer demonstrate a consummate example of a diasporic reading practice, as we see the way in which her lived experience of Australia guides her reading of the General Prologue and the mythic space of Chaucerian London, and not the other way around. For her, there is little desire to preserve Chaucer's place in the crucible of English literature: his interest lies, rather, in the extent to which he belongs to living Australian culture as well as to the imaginary landscape of the English past. The notion of Ulrich/Parnell's and other early Australian scholars' work as diasporic is attractive because it avoids the anachronism involved in describing their ambivalence toward Empire as proleptically post-colonial. Yet thought still needs to be given the use of this term here, lest we create a romantic narrative that disavows the ways in which these scholars' work also participated in the less appealing ideological work of colonial nationalism.

What name, then, do we give to these early Australian medievalists? It is clear that to claim them as 'professionals' in the mould favoured by our discipline is both inaccurate and ideologically problematic. But recent revisionary work notwithstanding, can they be described as amateurs or populists without attracting ridicule and dismissal, or without reanimating the assumptions about colonial amateurism that were directed at them by their British contemporaries?

In attempting a renaming of their practice, I am partly inspired to return to Zumthor's discussion of Cohen, whose performative and pedagogic approach to the Middle Ages Zumthor calls a "poetic" medievalism. Zumthor describes poetic medievalism as a legitimate alternative hermeneutic driven by "an intelligence … that works principally by analogy" rather than the scientific intelligence that "acts through reduction". Analogy, according to Zumthor, is a vital strategy because it brings a literary energy to historical thought "that animat[es] the past … [and] has the power to persuade" (Solterer 1997: 618).

The persuasive power of analogy is clearly engaged in the Ulrich lectures discussed above. In one of her discussions of Chaucer's General Prologue, she attempts to engage her audience's interest by likening the Canterbury pilgrims to the jaded city-dwellers of Brisbane:

> The descriptions of the Springtime in the opening lines is like a refreshing breeze on one's face and temples. We feel we too want to be out of doors; to get away from stuffy old London or Brisbane, and ride at an easy amble … be it over the Weald of Kent or over our own glorious Downs and open plains" (*Life and Literature* Lecture 16: "England", 6).

Given the desire to create a sense of proximity between contemporary Brisbane and fourteenth-century London, it is ironic that the lecture's representation of April, with its "refreshing breeze" beckoning us away from "stuffy Brisbane", does not reflect the burgeoning Spring described by Chaucer, but rather the Australian understanding of this month as the early Autumnal cooling that comes at the end of the long, oppressive Brisbane summer. Despite its dubious success as an analogy, it is clear here and elsewhere that the lecture relies on this as a technique of persuasion for her non-expert audience. This same quality of analogy is found in many other lectures by early Australian medievalists, and is a direct by-product of their public orientation, so in this respect they can be described as poetic according to Zumthor's definition. That being said, in this case the term "poetic medievalism" should be used with some reservation, insofar as its elevation of the poetic does not ultimately dismantle the amateur/expertise dichotomy, but reinvokes the terms of the Platonic dialogue, coming down on the side of the rhapsode. I want, then, to suggest "public medievalism" as a term that reorients this by reflecting the role of "poetic" medievalism as a communicative strategy in a larger program of social education aimed at a general audience. Despite what can too easily be called their amateurism, early public medievalists such as Hermiene Ulrich/Parnell not only deserve to be acknowledged as medievalists within the Australian narrative, but to be granted transnational citizenship in our intellectual diaspora that is our discipline.

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Notes

[1] This paper is developed out of a conference paper read *in absentia* as part of the "Early Women Scholars and the History of Reading Chaucer" roundtable at the 14th Biennial Congress of the New Chaucer Society, University of Glasgow, July 15–19, 2004. My sincere thanks also to Megan Lyneham of the University of Queensland Archives for her kind and astute assistance throughout the preparation of this paper.

[2] For another recent account detailing the continuing institutional marginalization of women medievalists, see Jocelyn Wogan-Brown (2004).

[3] See Mary Flowers Braswell, "The Chaucer Scholarship of Mary Eliza Haweis (1582–1898)", *The Chaucer Review* 39:4 (2005), 402–19. Braswell speaks of Haweis's liminal relationship to the "male-dominated Chaucer Society, to which she clearly worked in parallel, a group who never admitted her into its ranks, but who could not entirely shut her out" (403).

[4] I regard Chance's volume as an extremely valuable resource, and do not wish to single her out among those who have produced 'Northern-centric' histories of the discipline. I use her as an example, rather, because her volume despite aiming for greater inclusiveness, reproduces the terms in which scholarly inclusion is still reckoned today: geographical 'centrality' and research productivity.

[5] Date of birth listed in University of Queensland staff record for Hermiene Ulrich/Parnell, University of Queensland archives.

[6] *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (1891–1939, Vol 12: 303) The information about Ulrich's parents and possible birthplace is also taken from this source.

[7] Murdoch's teaching interest and literary tastes, especially as documented in the '"Books and Men"' columns he wrote for the Melbourne newspaper *Argus* under the pseudonym 'Elzevir', are discussed in John La Nauze (1997:27–44).

[8] University of Melbourne Student Records, University of Melbourne archives.

[9] Given at the time Ulrich gave this speech, German residents in Australia were being impounded, and, furthermore, that Ulrich's own father was German, her anti-xenophobic plea is both personally and ideologically understandable.

[10] Minute Books, Brisbane Women's Club. My warm thanks to Jean Stewart, President of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland and former President of the Scribblers Society (2003–04), for providing me with a copy of the unpublished talk she delivered in November 2004. Most of the above details of Ulrich/Parnell's club memberships come from Stewart's talk.

[11] Minutes of the central council of the Qld W.E.A., held John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

[12] The lectures' headings also indicate that they had been written for University of Queensland tutorial groups, which also suggests a link to Ulrich as someone who is known to have taught for both organizations.

[13] "Ancients and Moderns: Lecture 9. Chaucer", p.9. Lectures (Life and Literature: Lecture 16, "England" and Literature – Ancients and Moderns: Lecture 9, Chaucer) held in W.E.A. papers, in Trades and Labour Council archive, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

[14] Jean Stewart's talk includes this detail from her phone communication with Professor Thomas Meredith Parnell on August 28, 2004.

[15] Letter in Personnel Files, 75th Anniversary History of the University of Queensland Project, University of Queensland Archives S279. Again, my thanks to Jean Stewart for drawing my attention to this letter. Date of Ulrich/Parnell's death recorded in Queensland Death Records, 1956: Registration No: B016532.

[16] The years of Ulrich/Parnell's teaching contribution are under-reckoned in both University of Queensland (1923: 28) and (1935: 61), while Malcolm I. Thomis (1985) devotes two sentences to her. Helen Gregory (1987) does not include an entry on her. The entry devoted to her husband, Thomas Parnell, mentions her in a single sentence of the final paragraph.

[17] Mary Murnane (1969), held at the Fryer Library, University of Queensland. This account fails to mention Ulrich/Parnell's contribution, even though it mentions other teachers of English literature, and even leaves her out of Appendix I, which consists of a list of those tutors for the Qld W.E.A. who also worked as lecturers at the University of Queensland.

[18] See especially Scala (1998: 307–308), where Scala points to the now commonplace habit of referring to the Manly and Rickert edition of The Canterbury tales as "Manly".

[19] In Australia, as elsewhere, Federal government funding models are increasingly favouring research productivity over effective teaching.