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Steven R. McKenna

Drama and Invective:
Traditions in Dunbar's "Fasternis Evin in Hell"



The two traditions of medieval drama and invective which inform the three segments of William Dunbar's Hell-vision, "Fasternis Evin in Hell,"¹ are not discussed in any depth, if at all, in the critical corpus. These two traditions fundamentally do not treat the complexities of human psychology, and neither does Dunbar's poem. Rather, these traditions, and oral traditions as a whole (upon which the drama and invective are based), portray life in the realm of action and struggles, and rarely in Dunbar's canon do we find poetry of such pageant and high-spirited abuse as we find in "Fasternis Evin in Hell."²

¹The title of this series of three poems is provided by *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, 1979). In Mackenzie's older edition (Edinburgh, 1932) and in the critical corpus these poems are usually referred to individually as "The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Sinnis," "The Turnament of the Tailliour and the Sowtar," and the "Amendis to the tel[y]ouris and sowtaris." All references in this essay are to Kinsley's edition. I have substituted [y] for the "yogh" character, and in the text I refer to the three parts individually as "Dance," "Tournament," and "Amends."

²On this point, see Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London & New York, 1982), pp. 42-5, and for a detailed analysis of the oral habit of turning abstractions into situational frames of reference, see Ong, pp. 49-57.

Mock tournaments and satiric tongue-lashings such as the "Tournament" and "Amends" are intentionally and inevitably comic. Similarly, folk traditions regarding the devil tend to portray him in comic, hence less threatening, terms.³ This particular comic element is immediately apparent in the "Dance" segment of "Fasternis Evin in Hell." What at first appears to be the beginning of a common medieval allegorical or religious dream vision quickly devolves into satire and burlesque:

Off Februar the fyiftene nycht
 Full lang befor the dayis lycht
 I lay in till a trance;
 And than I saw baith hevin and hell:
 Me thocht amangis the feyndis fell
 Mahoun gart cry ane dance
 Off schrewis that wer nevir schrevin
 Aganis the feist of Fasternis evin
 To mak thair observance;
 He bad gallandis ga graith a gyis
 And kast up gamountis in the skyis
 That last came out of France.
 (ll. 1-12)

In place of the Judeo-Christian Devil we find the traditional devil of satire—Mahoun, or Mohammed—calling for a dance in the latest French fashion. The stanza moves quickly and deftly from the serious to the comic and satiric. This movement is further facilitated by the same trotting rhythm in the verse form as that used by Chaucer to such a supreme comic effect in the "Tale of Sir Thopas" (though Dunbar varies the Chaucerian rhyme scheme).

The tradition of a comic devil has deep roots in folklore, usually manifesting itself by portraying the devil as foolish and powerless.⁴ Dunbar's Mahoun (especially in the "Tournament"), though lord of Hell, is really a figure out of slapstick comedy with no apparent effect beyond his own sphere. He is a figure with whom and at whom we can laugh.⁵ Furthermore, there exists the habit in folk cultures to give the devil nicknames—such as Mahoun (Mohammed, the "false prophet"). This ten-

³The folklore surrounding the devil in medieval times is well-covered in Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1982), pp. 62-91.

⁴Russell, p. 63.

⁵Even Dante's devil, though not essentially a comic figure, is finally pathetic and powerless, as his physical entrapment in the ice suggests.

dency has strong psychological benefits because it helps neutralize the fear engendered by the traditional, orthodox portrait of the Judeo-Christian arch fiend. In naming is power. To name, or rename, the devil is to exercise a measure of control over him. The name Mahoun itself domesticates the devil's cosmic significance by linking him to an earthly, agonistic dimension—Mohammed, Islamic threats to western Europe, the holy wars, prejudices of race, nationalism, culture, religion and so forth.

This intermix of comedy and fear is implicit in the nominal setting for the poem on Shrove Tuesday. As Baxter and other subsequent commentators have noted, the "Dance" is part of the more general comic and festive atmosphere at carnival time just prior to Ash Wednesday and the onset of Lent.⁶ The catharsis offered by this sort of comedy and revelry has at its base the human fear of death. The nervous laughter in and around the "Dance," to borrow Tom Scott's phrase, is "the humour that laughs because it is afraid."⁷ The *Danse Macabre* tradition which informs Dunbar's "Dance" had as its chief impulse just such a deep-seated human fear of death, though by the late fifteenth century the grotesque elements of the *Danse Macabre* tradition were losing their emotional and spiritual potency.⁸

As Huizinga notes, the *Danse Macabre* tradition had implicit within it the idea of death as the great social equalizer.⁹ Death offered a general leveling of all social ranking, and Hell's punishments were portrayed as non-discriminatory.¹⁰ Because of Dunbar's presumably aristocratic audience, the element of social satire in his "Dance" is, as Watson argues, potentially reducible to court satire, since the sinners and the seven sins themselves are types, the embodiments of actions that Dunbar no doubt

⁶J. W. Baxter, *William Dunbar: A Biographical Study* (Edinburgh, 1952), p. 157.

⁷Tom Scott, *Dunbar: A Critical Exposition of the Poems* (New York, 1966), p. 233.

⁸Johan Huizinga's discussion of the *Danse Macabre* tradition in his *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Garden City, NY, 1954), pp. 144-51, offers a valuable overview.

⁹Huizinga, p. 146.

¹⁰For a more detailed analysis of the social implications of the *Danse Macabre* tradition see Jean Batany, "Une image en negatif du fonctionalisme social: Les Danses Macabres," *Dies Illa: Death in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jane H. M. Taylor (Liverpool, 1984). He sees the tradition as being used in part as a way of quieting social unrest. Dunbar raises this issue of social equalization in "Timor Mortis Conturbat Me."

encountered at court.¹¹ Though I would caution against so reductive a reading precisely on the grounds that the sins and sinners are types for all humanity, nevertheless the court is mentioned once in the "Dance" as a comment on the followers of Envy (the flatterers, backbiters, and liars): "Allace, that courtis of noble kingis / Of thame can nevir be quyte" (*ll.* 53-4; cp. Dunbar's "To the King" nos. 44 & 45). Indeed, Mahoun is the king of Hell and calls for a court-like entertainment. The element of court satire is of course present here. But a view of Hell as representative of the entire human world, which view of necessity encompasses the courtly realm, meshes more neatly with the intents of the *Danse Macabre* tradition as outlined above.

This sort of Hell-vision in Christian tradition was an outgrowth of mystical visions, and over the course of many centuries developed into dramatic enactments and representations (of which Dunbar's poem comes near the end of tradition). In her analysis of the English mystery plays, Rosemary Woolf traces the development of the Hell-vision from mystical vision to medieval drama.¹² Briefly, in its earliest form the vision centered on the Last Judgement wherein the damned served as the tragic actors. This tradition, begun by Paul (1st century) and continued by Tertulian (ca. 155-ca. 222), led to two closely-related didactic lines of development: 1) the spectacle offers an implicit contrast with virtue; and 2) the basis of the spectacle lies in the torment of the damned. This second line of development is at the heart of the dramatic element of the Hell-vision, for in it is the element of entertainment of the righteous by the sinners. Later in the tradition, the damned explicitly entertained the devils, often by re-enacting their sins.¹³

As the portrayal of Hell developed into dramatic enactments the problem of how to characterize the fallen angels arose. A glance through the *Ludus Coventriae* shows that God only once refers to himself as having a body, even though on a stage He would be represented by an actor.¹⁴ Conversely, the solution to the problem of characterizing the devils was to depict them as having bodies—particularly bodies prone to flatulence and

¹¹Roderick Watson, *The Literature of Scotland* (New York, 1985), p. 62.

¹²Rosemary Woolf, *The English Mystery Plays* (Berkeley, 1972), pp. 31-2.

¹³The "Doomsday" segment of the *Ludus Coventriae*, ed. K.S. Block, EETS, e.s., no. CXX (London, 1922), concludes with a parade of sinners, each embodying one of the seven deadly sins, in the following order: Pride, Covetice, Wrath, Envy, Sloth, Gluttony, and Lechery (pp. 376-7). The ordering of sins will be discussed subsequently.

¹⁴"I am þe trewe trenyte / here walkyng in þis wone ..." (p. 17).

excessively loose bowels (as in the "Tournament"). This anality became a traditional way of portraying Hell, as can be seen in the medieval plays and even in the paintings of Bosch.¹⁵ A related problem of characterization arises in connection with the seven deadly sins themselves—how to portray an intellectual abstraction. The solution was to have characters portray the physical manifestations of each sin. For instance, Gluttony in drama and later in the poetry (such as Dunbar's "Dance") was portrayed as a rotund drunkard rather than as a mere intellectual abstraction.¹⁶ In addition, the seven sins were frequently associated with specific animals—as Dunbar does by describing Sloth as coming "lyk a sow out of a midding" (l. 68) and Lechery "Berand lyk a bagit hors" (l. 80).¹⁷

The affinity between Dunbar's poem and dramatic tradition can be summed up by several general characteristics of dramatic comedy. The emphasis on bodily matters and physical punishment in the drama and in Dunbar's "Dance" says little or nothing overtly about the psychological or ethical, potentially tragic dimension of damnation (as in contrast to Milton's Satan for example). The symbolism tends not to be overbearing, but rather tends to be subsumed into the richness of details and images which are characteristic of the "Dance." And finally, there is a pronounced emphasis on action and movement.

In addition to the dramatic traditions associated with Dunbar's Hell-vision, there is another tradition, often neglected by commentators, which the poet drew on for the formal organization of the "Dance"—namely the order in which the sins appear. The early Church recognized up to nine (and sometimes, though very infrequently, ten) cardinal sins: the nine are *Superbia* (Pride), *Vana Gloria* (Vain Glory), *Invidia* (Envy), *Ire* (Wrath), *Tristitia* (Sadness), *Accidia* (Sloth), *Gula* (Gluttony), *Avaritia* (Avarice), and *Luxuria* (Lechery). As a general rule, *Vana Gloria* was subsumed under *Superbia*, and *Tristitia* was likewise incorporated into *Accidia*, thus leaving a total of seven deadly sins. Two major traditions of ordering the sins developed very early in the Middle Ages:¹⁸

¹⁵See Woolf, p. 111.

¹⁶See Woolf, p. 33.

¹⁷For a detailed list of the animals associated with each of the sins see Bloomfield, Appendix One and *passim*.

¹⁸Bloomfield, pp. 105-6 gives a detailed account of the ordering of the sins.

Gregorian (6th C.)	Cassianic (5th C.)
<i>Superbia</i>	<i>Gula</i>
<i>Ira</i>	<i>Luxuria</i>
<i>Invidia</i>	<i>Avaritia</i>
<i>Avaritia</i>	<i>Ira</i>
<i>Accidia</i>	<i>Tristitia</i>
<i>Gula</i>	<i>Accidia</i>
<i>Luxuria</i>	<i>Vana Gloria</i>
	<i>Superbia</i>

The Cassianic order recognizes the biological necessities inherent in Gluttony and Lechery, i.e., the physical survival of the individual and the species. Thus, Cassian thought that the carnal sins were the most difficult to remove. For this reason they appear at the top of the list. In contrast, the Gregorian order places spiritual sins as the first ones on the list and reserves the last ones in the order for carnal sins. During the Middle Ages, Pride, because of its association with the fall of the angels, came to be seen as the worst sin, indicative of Satan-like arrogance of the mind. Thus, the Gregorian order gradually assumed dominance in the later Middle Ages and served as the basic ordering principle of Dunbar's "Dance".¹⁹

Gregorian	Dunbar
<i>Superbia</i>	Pryd
<i>Ira</i>	Yre
<i>Invidia</i>	Invy
<i>Avaritia</i>	Avaryce
<i>Accidia</i>	Sweirnes (Sloth)
<i>Gula</i>	Lichery
<i>Luxuria</i>	Gluttony

In both the Gregorian order of the sins and in Dunbar's "Dance" the progression of sins is increasingly physical, showing a movement from the purely spiritual to the purely carnal. Dunbar merely reverses the order of the last two carnal sins, Lechery and Gluttony. As Scott notes, given the

¹⁹It should be noted that Dante, Chaucer, Gower, the *Ludus Coventriae*, Langland and Marlowe use variations on the Gregorian order. Spenser, however, uses the Cassianic order.

nominal setting of the poem on "Fasternis Evin," Gluttony would be the sin most directly affected by Lenten fasting.²⁰

Each of the orderings of the sins envisioned the interconnectedness of one sin with the next. The dance of sins provides a concrete image via a physical sequence for the abstract relations between sins, and at one point Dunbar even has "Lythenes" (Laziness, or Sloth) lead Lechery, though whether or not "Lythenes" is the same character as "Sweirnes" (Sloth) is not made clear in the poem.

The comic traditions behind the "Dance" bear directly on this segment's last stanza and on the following two parts—the "Tournament" and the "Amends." The tradition of a comic devil began to develop in drama in the eleventh century because of the infusion of religious drama with folk motifs. This sort of comic relief was filled by the *rusticus* in classical drama and in renaissance drama especially by the fool.²¹ Dunbar's "Dance" illustrates such a widening movement away from purely diabolic comedy by passing from the seven deadly sins to the "Heleand pad[y]ane" with its subsequent satire of the "Erschemen" and their gibberish. The appearance of the minstrel (*ll.* 103-8), who forms a bridge between the dancing sins and the "pad[y]ane," is linked with a sin—murder. But the highlanders who appear shortly after are not associated with any particular sin (except perhaps the sin of being highlanders). The poem here moves beyond the realm of sins and into the realm of social satire. Makfad[y]ane is a generic highlander, and Dunbar's attitude toward the highlanders is generally quite similar to that mood found in flyting tradition—comic, even grotesque, exaggeration and vituperation.²² In fact, the tone and attitude in the "pad[y]ane," "Tournament" and "Amends" function broadly to create flyting poetry, but flyting with only one voice—invective without response. The spirit of invective and verbal abuse is in fact one of Dunbar's stocks in trade.

Dunbar's contempt for the "Erschemen," their language aside, displays itself in two points. The first is that Makfad[y]ane (or Macfadden) is the

²⁰Scott, p. 233.

²¹Russell, p. 259.

²²Kurt Wittig in his *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh, 1958) points out that Celtic literature is noted for its grotesque exaggeration and tends to represent the gruesome as grotesque. He argues that the absurdity, insolence and gusto of the "Dance" and "Tournament" are closer in spirit to Gaelic traditions than the traditions which portrayed vices as abstractions. The result is that Dunbar supplies no "moral yardstick" (pp. 71-3). Scott, pp. 231-2, sees the "pad[y]ane" as being a separate poem with no clear connection to the "Dance."

name of William Wallace's enemy in Blind Harry's nationalistic epic poem, *The Life of Schir William Wallace* (ca. 1478). As such, Makfad[y]ane is a stock enemy of the spirit of Scots nationalism as it is embodied by Wallace. Makfad[y]ane thus fittingly dwells in Dunbar's Hell. Secondly, Makfad[y]ane dwells "Far northwart in a nuke" (ll. 111). North, in medieval folk traditions, is the devil's direction.²³ This "pad[y]ane" is not exactly a direct insult to any one person since the "Erschemen" are a generic group, and the form of the poem is not dialogic as it is in traditional flyting poems such as "The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie." Nevertheless, the terms of abuse and general tone of the "pad[y]ane" place it close in spirit to the flyting tradition, which reached its peak of popularity in Scotland in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.²⁴

The dramatic element of Dunbar's series carries over from the "Dance" to the "Tournament" in that the "Tournament" continues the hellish entertainment of the devil by the inhabitants of Hell. Also, the verse form in the "Tournament" is the same as that of the "Dance," and the transition from the "pad[y]ane" to the mock tournament is easy and natural: "Nixt that a turnament wes tryid / That lang befoir in hell wes cryid / In presens of Mahoun..." (ll. 121-3). These lines hark back to Mahoun's original call for a dance, and they also convey the sense of passive helplessness, the lack of choice, that the tailor and cobbler experience, which is an integral theme in this mock tournament. In addition, two important elements of continuity here have not to my knowledge been previously noted. The first is that the "Erschemen" of the "pad[y]ane" appear "with tag and tatter" (l. 115). Their disheveled appearance anticipates the arrival of those whose trade, as we later see in the "Amends," is founded on manipulating and repairing appearances—the tailor and the cobbler. Secondly, and more importantly, especially for the theme of passivity, the tailor and cobbler are in part the embodiments of sin in action, particularly the sins of Pride and Sloth (the first and last sins in the Gregorian order of the deadly sins). Upon being knighted, "The tail[y]eour hecht hely befoir Mahoun / That he suld ding the sowtar down..." (ll. 145-6). The vain boast is balanced at the end of the "Tournament" by the tailor's and

²³The basis of this tradition goes back to Isaiah 14:13 where Lucifer is described as setting up his throne "in the sides of the north"; see also Job 26:7 and Jeremiah 1:14 ("Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land").

²⁴In his "Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie," Dunbar says to Kennedy, his opponent in the verbal duel: "Iersche brybour baird, vyle beggar with thy brattis, / Cuntbittin crowdown Kennedy, coward of kynd..." (ll. 49-50). This sort of anti-highlander sentiment is typical of the age.

cobbler's preference for being "harlottis," servile cowards, rather than bearing "ony armes" (*ll.* 214-6). Indeed, the passivity of many of the verbs used to describe the tailor and cobbler helps set up the larger issue of cowardice, so essential to the mock tournament genre, behind their willing acceptance of humiliation and deprivation of their knighthood. Both warriors are "convoyit" onto the field of battle (*ll.* 128 & 158). The devil bestows knighthood upon them (*ll.* 142 & 176). And finally, the devil drives them into a dungeon and takes their knighthood away (*ll.* 211-6).²⁵

As Edmund Reiss notes, the reason for the tournament is not made clear, but the implication is that the winner would be the one who is best able to play the role of a knight.²⁶ This theme is at the core of the mock tournament genre because the mock tournament has as one of its aims a parody of chivalric romance. Chivalric romance and chivalry itself are based on concepts of an ideal hero and an ideal code of heroism, for without those ideals knightly activity is nothing but a brutal playing out of the seven deadly sins.²⁷ By making knights of two scoundrels, Dunbar's "Tournament" effectively strips away the ideas of chivalry in order to show the not-so-savory reality behind knightly conduct—the arrogance, ineptitude and fear common to all mortals.

In the Scots tradition, the mock tournament was very closely related to brawl poetry, whose two prototypes are the fifteenth-century masterpieces "Christis Kirk on the Green" and "Peblis to the Play," both believed to have been written by James I of Scotland (1394-1437). Some of the more salient characteristics of this "Christis Kirk" tradition, as traced by Allan MacLaine,²⁸ are applicable to the mock tournament genre as a whole and to Dunbar's "Tournament" in particular. Briefly the "Christis Kirk" tradition portrays lower class life by means of a swift, kaleidoscopic picture of peasant activities that generally devolve into a brawl marked by cowardice and ineptitude. All the while, the narrator/poet remains aloof and slightly amused. The "Christis Kirk" tradition, up until the time of

²⁵Priscilla Bawcutt, "The Art of Flyting," *SLJ*, 10 (1983), 9 demonstrates that the humiliation inherent in flytings reflects the civic penalties imposed for creating public nuisances through verbal abuse. The element of public punishment and public penance is involved.

²⁶Edmund Reiss, *William Dunbar* (Boston, 1979), p. 84.

²⁷For a good discussion of this see Huizinga, pp. 39-40, 69, and especially 77-80.

²⁸Allan H. MacLaine, "The *Christis Kirk* Tradition: Its Evolution in Scots Poetry to Burns," *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 2 (1964), 3-18, 111-24, 163-82, 234-50.

Fergusson and Burns, generally satirizes rustic lower classes; similarly, Dunbar's "Tournament" satirizes the lower class urban tradesmen.

Yet, the spirit of Dunbar's "Tournament" is also quite similar in tone and effect to flyting poetry, as we have seen was the case with the "pad[y]ane" which ended the "Dance" segment. The action of the "Tournament" is the physical manifestation of ideas that could fit quite well into a flyting poem—ideas of each character's arrogance, ineptitude, and cowardice. Bawcutt argues, quite justifiably I believe, that the narrative elements of flytings tend to be the most amusing and most effective.²⁹ In fact, some of the language of flytings derives from the language of tournaments.³⁰

Tailors and cobblers were in the late middle ages traditional targets of stinging satire. Chaucer's Host, in the prologue to the Reeve's tale, says, "The devel made a reve for to preche, / Or of a soutere a shipman or a leche" (A 3903-4). And in the Bannatyne Manuscript (compiled in 1568) there is a poem, very similar in tone to Dunbar's "Tournament," entitled "The flyting betuix þe sowtar and the tail[y]or." The invective opens with the tailor emphasizing the cobbler's oily nature:

Thow leiss loun thow leiss
 [Y]one are sowttaris þat thow seiss
 Law kneland on thair kneiss
 Be sanct garnega þat grym gaist
 To heir thair hairsness in haist
 off moltin tauche [tallow] thay tak a test³¹

The tailor continues in this vein for two more stanzas. Dunbar too focuses on the cobbler's oiliness, particularly when the cobbler exudes oil as he rides into battle: "Full sowttarlyk he wes of laitiss, / For ay betuix the harnes plaitis / The uly birstit out" (*ll.* 166-8). Another similarity between the characterizations of the cobblers in Dunbar and the flyting poem is the association of these characters with black leather dye. Corresponding to Dunbar's line, "he [the cobbler] about the Devillis nek / Did spew agane

²⁹Bawcutt, p. 18.

³⁰Bawcutt, p. 11.

³¹*The Bannatyne Manuscript*, ed. W. Tod Ritchie, STS, 2nd. series, no. 26; (Edinburgh, 1930), p. 22. The poem's colophon reads "Qt. stewart" (p. 26). Bawcutt, pp. 10-11, points out that there is a tendency in the flyting tradition to utilize judicial images and phrases such as "Thou leis" (which Dunbar himself uses in "The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie" [*ll.* 86-8]).

ane quart of blek" (*ll.* 178-9), is the tailor's remark in the "flyting" that "Sum [cobblers] of vly spewis ane quairt Off fowll sowttar blek" (*III*, 22). A further similarity is the mention of "sanct garnega" ("Sanct Girnega" in Dunbar, line 164). This "saint" is a traditional patron demon who aids cobblers in battle³² and is mentioned four times by the tailor in the Bannatyne flyting poem.

Tailors fare no better in these two poems. Both poets emphasize the traditional associations of tailors with deceit and lice. Dunbar uses a stock Scots name for a tailor—a "pricklous" (*l.* 125)—and says of tailors in general that "...quhill the Greik sie flowis and ebbis / Tel[y]ouris will nevir be trew" (*ll.* 137-8). The tailor's banner is in fact made out of stolen pieces of cloth (*l.* 136). The "flyting" poem of the Bannatyne Manuscript has a similar sentiment:

ffy on the tel[y]our þat nevir wes trew
 ffra claith weill can thow clyth ane clowt
 off stowin stommokis baith reid and blew
 ane bagfow anis thow bur about
 Thay fallowit the wt cry and schowt
 ha hald the theif þat stall the claith
 Thow wilbe hangit haif thou no dowt
 ffor mony presumptouss forsworn aith
 (p. 23)

Dunbar's portraits of the tailor and cobbler are very closely allied with traditional attitudes towards these two trades, and he constructs these portraits by utilizing three closely related traditions of Scots poetry—the mock tournament, the brawl poetry, and the flyting tradition.³³

The "Amends," though integrated into the satire against the tailor and cobbler, is not of a piece with the "Dance" and the "Tournament." At the end of the "Tournament" the narrator laughs so hard in his dream that he wakes up. The "Amends" offers a second dream vision, which is tacked onto the first as a nominal apology to tailors and cobblers.³⁴ The break in

³²See Kinsley's note to lines 164-8 of Dunbar's poem.

³³That Dunbar's "Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie" predates the Bannatyne Manuscript's "The flyting betuix þe sowtar and the tail[y]or" (see Kinsley's note to Dunbar's "Flyting") and that there are many verbal similarities between the Bannatyne flyting and Dunbar's "Tournament" would indicate the likelihood that the author of Bannatyne poem knew, directly or indirectly, Dunbar's "Tournament."

³⁴MacLaine gives a brief analysis of the affinities between the "Amends" and the "Christis Kirk" tradition (p. 16).

continuity is immediately evident because of the change in verse form to a four-line stanza composed of tetrameter couplets—Dunbar's commonest verse form, whose trotting rhythm is particularly well-suited to the fast pace of satiric and comic themes.

The first stanza of the "Amends," like that of the "Dance," gives the initial impression of being a typical dream vision of religious import:

Betuix twell houris and ellevin
 I dremed ane angell came fra hevin
 With plesand stevin sayand on hie,
 Tel[y]ouris and sowtaris, blist be [y]e.

But by the end of the second stanza we see the emerging irony:

In hevin hie ordand is [y]our place
 Aboif all sanctis, in grit solace,
 Nixt God grittest in dignitie;
 Tail[y]ouris and sowtaris, blist be [y]e.

The poem gradually moves from the plausible to the ridiculous. These two tradesmen are praised for their ability to mend what God "mismakkis," as if God *could* mismake. Of course, the nature of the tailor's and cobbler's ability to mend is really their ability to hide that which is mismade—like "illmaid feit," swollen toes, a "brokin bak," and the "cruke and lame." The ultimate ironic inversion in the poem is that God Himself is created in the tradesmen's image—as a fashioner and a maker whose defective wares need repair by the apparently more skilled tailors and cobblers. They are so skilled, in fact, that "In hevin [y]e salbe sanctis full cleir / Thocht [y]e be knavis in this cuntre" (ll. 38-9).³⁵ The satiric element in this poem is likewise closely akin to the flyting tradition, though this poem too is invective with only one voice.

Kurt Wittig,³⁶ echoing Baxter,³⁷ argues that Dunbar's grotesque treatment of the social inferiors (such as tailors and cobblers as well as merchants in "To the Merchantis of Edinburgh" and various craftsmen in "Renunce thy God and cum to me") is reflective of Dunbar's social contempt for the lower classes. This may in fact be true, since Dunbar was a

³⁵There are similarities between these lines of Dunbar's poem and the last lines spoken by both the tailor and cobbler in the Bannatyne Manuscript's "The flyting betuix þe sowtar and the tail[y]or" in that they raise the issue of future rewards.

³⁶Wittig, p. 54.

³⁷Baxter, p. 158.

member of James IV's court in Edinburgh. But an element of the "Tournament" and the "Amends" consistently overlooked³⁸ is that these shrewish tradesmen are necessary for the very social order that allows Dunbar to look down on these tradesmen and which provides a vehicle for the comedy in the "Tournament" and "Amends." The tailors and cobblers are less than ideal types, but they provide an essential service that all people want—the material with which to create an appearance that covers the reality (of unsightly physical characteristics) and which is itself a mark of social distinction:

And [y]e tail[y]ouris with weilmaid clais
Can mend the werst maid man that gais
And mak him semely for to se;
Tel[y]ouris and sowtaris, blist be [y]e.
(ll. 21-4)

Nowhere does Dunbar even imply that the demand for the tradesmen's goods be halted. The passivity of the tradesmen in the "Tournament" is a reflection of their professions as being and providing services which satisfy some form of social demand, either in Hell or on earth. They exist for the pleasures and pretensions of others. The tradesmen's seemingly active participation in fixing God's mistakes paradoxically shows their own impotence in having to provide a service for the demands of what can easily elevate itself from simple necessity into hypocrisy. Dunbar's satiric treatment of these lower class workers is in fact an integral element in the broader satire of the whole social spectrum. In this regard, Dunbar's "Fasternis Evin in Hell" is finally a satire of all human behavior and pretensions, regardless of social class.

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³⁸The exception is Reiss, 84.