

Paper Proposal

This paper intends to show the ways in which *The Sinner's Lament* and *The Adulterous Foulmouth Squire* can be read as a debate between the body and soul when read in conjunction with one another despite their place outside the traditional genre of debate poetry. MS Ashmole 61's scribe Rate may not have intended this reading when he situated these texts side by side; however, on a larger scale, these two poems communicate the sins committed by the soul (as read in *The Sinner's Lament*) and the consequences suffered by the body (as described in *The Adulterous Falmouth Squire*). For a medieval audience familiar with more traditional debate poems having a resolute ending or balanced argument, like the one seen in *The Debate of the Carpenter's Tools*, the larger debate between the themes in *The Sinner's Lament* and *The Adulterous Falmouth Squire* requires more contemplation by the reader. This inner reflection allows the medieval reader to examine their own moral behavior on a much deeper level than traditional debate poems allow because there is no concrete resolution of the argument. That resolution is left to be worked out by the reader's meditation on his/her own behavior, the themes involved in the two texts, and the penance necessary to absolve any sinful behavior committed by the individual while recognizing the limitation and unexpected nature of time on a person's life. As mentioned before, these two texts collaborate to form a larger, more unresolved debate between the body and soul. It has been noted that balanced debate poems were more popular and effective because they offered a clear resolution; however, I would like to argue that the open-ended structure of both poems allows the reader to reach a state of affective piety and penance through this intimate connection formed between reader and text via deep introspection.