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**THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION AND THE ENGLISH AMATORY
SONNET SEQUENCE: SEEKING SALVATION IN LOVE POETRY**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

LITERATURE

by

Lauren Shufan

June 2017

The Dissertation of Shufan is approved:

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ABSTRACT

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION AND THE ENGLISH AMATORY SONNET SEQUENCE: SEEKING SALVATION IN LOVE POETRY

Lauren Shufan

When he described poetry as that which should “delight to move men to take goodnesse in hand,” Philip Sidney was articulating the widely held Renaissance belief that poetry’s principal function is edification. Scholars have tended to observe a tension between Sidney’s description and the English sonnet sequence, as though didacticism and love poetry are fundamentally in opposition. But Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*—from which these sequences derive—is a conversion narrative; and the perceived opposition between amatory poetry and didacticism dissolves when we read English Petrarchism as a conversion genre. This dissertation begins with the suspicion that the theological infrastructure of these sequences is underplayed in the criticism. It is interested in what happens when we encounter these collections awake to the historical fact that Petrarchism and the Protestant Reformation came to England at the same time.

A.E.B. Coldiron has described Sidney’s historical moment as one marked by both the “problem of how to establish a productive relation with the literary past” and “the problem of making poets, not versifiers in England.” English Petrarchans, I argue, were compelled to write poems in this vein to assert the legitimacy of English lyric from within a genealogy that enthusiastically embraced the literary accomplishments of the Italian poet. But the poets’ employment of Protestant tropes

in these collections asserts an explicitly *English* lyric authorship: at once legitimized by its embeddedness in a literary tradition *and* morally eclipsing that tradition through recourse to right (Protestant) religion.

When the *Canzoniere* arrived in England, its lover was ripe for comparison with the “spirit-versus-flesh” Paul. Taking a cue from this resemblance, English poets turned to Paul’s Epistles not only to recast Petrarch’s moral instruction (Paul, too, was a convert), but also to legitimize carnal love as a serious—and ineluctable—topic. Amatory poetry proved remarkably amenable to accommodating reformed, Pauline teachings on human will (and thus works, grace, and predestination). Sonnet sequences by Edmund Spenser, Thomas Watson, Sidney, Fulke Greville, Mary Wroth, and Shakespeare testify to an extensive effort among English love poets to offer a Protestant English literary exemplum to rival Petrarch’s Catholic one.

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INTRODUCTION

By the time *Shake-speares Sonnets* was published in 1609, there was a strain of English Petrarchism well underway—indeed, its moment nearly finished—that this study argues was distinctly “Protestant.” Our received wisdom about sonnets and sonnet sequences is that they are comprised of some combination of the following: unrequited love; a beloved who is cruel, but necessarily so, because she is virtuous; (thus) a fervent, impetuous, and miserable lover who must accept his pain even as he complains about it; the fluctuations of the lover in the face of the beloved’s steadfast refusals; superlatives and hyperbolic praise; lascivious play; an interest in beauty and how poetry augments it; an interest in time and how poetry extends it. Indeed, these are all aspects of the Petrarchan lyric sequence that Shakespeare inherited, and they are the conventions most regularly emphasized in scholarship on the genre. This study begins with the suspicion that the theological infrastructure of these sequences is underplayed in the criticism. It is interested in what happens when we encounter these collections awake to the historical fact that Petrarchism and the Protestant Reformation came to England at the same time.¹

The reader will forgive me for opening with what is probably the most recognized description of poetry from the sixteenth century. In his *Defence of Poesie*—the first work of literary criticism in English—Philip Sidney defined “right Poets” as those poets who:

¹ Stephen Hamrick, “*Tottel’s Miscellany* and the English Reformation” in *Criticism* 44.4 (Fall, 2002), 329.

[I]mitate both to delight & teach, and delight to move men to take that goodnesse in hand, which without delight they would flie as from a stranger; and teach to make them know that goodnesse whereunto they are moved.²

For Sidney, the purpose of poetry was fundamentally didactic: not only should it teach men what goodness *is*; it should also teach them to desire it for themselves, and then move them to take it. Sidney's best friend Fulke Greville—less famously but no less significantly—later wrote in his biography of Sidney that his friend's "end [in writing] was not vanishing pleasure alone, but morall Images, and Examples (as directing threds) to guide every man through the confused *Labyrinth* of his own desires, and life."³ Both the *Defence* and the *Life of Sidney* exemplify the widely held Renaissance belief that poetry's principal function is edification. Both poets also dedicated substantial portions of their lives to writing love poetry. Scholars have tended to observe what appears like a tension in these bodies of work—particularly in Sidney's—as though love poetry and instruction are necessarily in opposition. But Petrarch's *Canzoniere*—from which each of the sequences in this study derives—is, significantly, a conversion narrative. And it is in part by reading English Petrarchism as a "conversion genre" that the opposition between amatory poetry and didacticism is dissolved.

A.E.B. Coldiron has located Thomas Watson's *Hekatompathia* (1582)—written contemporaneously with Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, and the focus of Chapter 2—at

² "The Defence of Poesie" in *The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat. Vol. 3: *The Defence of Poesie, Political Discourses, Correspondence and Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1923), 9-10.

³ Cited in Richard Hillyer, *Sir Philip Sidney, Cultural Icon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 48.

a historical moment in England marked by both the “problem of how to establish a productive relation with the literary past and the literary Other” and “the problem of making poets, not versifiers in England: how to assert the status, value, and legitimacy of lyric and lyric authorship.”⁴ Indeed, this is one of the fundamental questions that Watson’s sequence of love poems appears to be asking; and its answer rests, in no small part, in the catalogues of classical sources and allusions in the headnotes that precede each sonnet, as well as in its many references to Petrarch.

But at the same time, Watson’s employment of explicitly Protestant tropes (tropes that each of the poets in this study takes up, though to varying ends) permits the assertion of a particularly *English* lyric authorship: at once legitimized by its embeddedness in a classical literary tradition, *and* morally eclipsing that tradition through its recourse to *right* (Protestant) religion. Similarly, while Sidney’s poetic persona announces he is dispensing with literary heritage in the first poem of *Astrophel and Stella*, the collection’s pronounced Petrarchisms belie his claim. Sidney, too, was compelled to write poems in this vein to assert the legitimacy of English lyric from within a genealogy that enthusiastically embraced the literary accomplishments of the Italian poet. But Sidney’s transformations of the sequence—specifically, as we will see, his employment of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans—transfigured the genre to offer a Protestant English literary exemplum to rival Petrarch’s Catholic one. In both sonnet sequences, subtle claims to right religion assist an English bid for *literary* superiority to both Petrarchan and classical

⁴ “Sidney, Watson, and the ‘Wrong Ways’ to Renaissance Lyric Poetics” in *Renaissance Papers 1997*, ed. T.H. Howard-Hill and Philip Rollinson (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1997), 51.

predecessors by way of *religious* preeminence. What Coldiron calls “the status, value, and legitimacy of lyric and lyric authorship” was thus, I argue, evidenced by two concerns in English Petrarchism: its relationship to a literary genealogy, and its *recourse* to a scriptural one.

In his work on the figure of the prodigal in Elizabethan literature, Richard Helgerson argues that:

Unable to ignore the suspicion that poetry was morally harmful, and equally unwilling to forgo it, [Elizabethan poets] had to prove again and again that it might be made beneficial. They were thus forced to argue that their work, rightly understood, warns against the very wantonness it portrays.⁵

Helgerson’s introduction to his study registers a tension similar to the one out of which this study claims English Petrarchism arose. Sidney, Greville, Mary Wroth, and the other sonneteers considered here recognized they could not dispense with love poetry if a newly developing “English” literature was to be broadly legitimized. But I argue that English Petrarchism is doing something much more nuanced than “warning against the wantonness” it depicts. Indeed, Paul’s Epistles reverberate in these sequences; and the characterization of man as struggling between spirit and flesh—“being justified and a sinner at the same time,” as the reformers described it—is more predominant in the English genre than is a complete rejection of the sin of incontinence.⁶ When Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* arrived in England, its lover was already ripe for comparison with Paul. Taking their cue from this resemblance, English poets

⁵ *The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976), 5.

⁶ Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 219.

turned to the apostle's Epistles not only to recast Petrarch's moral instruction (Paul, *too*, famously experienced a religious conversion), but also to legitimize carnal love as a serious—and ineluctable—topic (Rom. 7; Gal. 5:17).

More than just a site for witty troping of theology in a profoundly insincere vein, then, amatory poetry was employed as a narrative device for writers to analyze the moral and doctrinal matters most pressing for them and their readership—even if true goodness (or real certainty) could never be attained in this life. The relationship between works and grace, the assurance of predestination, and the Pauline struggle as it was understood to play out in the elect are all, I argue, fundamental concerns of the sequences that follow. While each of the following chapters locates its lyric collection in what I see as its particular theological and didactic concerns, it serves this introduction briefly to locate these Petrarchan sequences in what was the biggest religious controversy of their moment.

The relationship of grace to free will has been called “the most heated theological debate of the late 1580s and early 1590s”—the decades in which the majority of the sonnet sequences examined in this study were composed.⁷ One could say, broadly speaking, that the difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism was that the former understood postlapsarian man to maintain some remnants of free will—weak as it was—through which he could cooperate with God's grace through good works; while the latter accepted that the loss of free will as a result of The Fall was complete, and man's salvation dependent upon God's grace

⁷ William J. Kennedy, *Authorizing Petrarch* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), 251.

alone—a grace with which man had no capacity either to prepare for, or to cooperate with.⁸ Yet to organize the debate along Catholic-Protestant lines is to oversimplify it; and the contested status of free will is likely one of the reasons it held the attentions not only of theologians, but also of laymen—and particularly, I propose, of love poets.⁹ For instance, some prominent English Protestants such as Richard Hooker (1554-1600) maintained that the fallen will indeed preserved some ability to cooperate with God’s grace; and the Reformation’s two strongest proponents of the will’s total bondage—Martin Luther and John Calvin—both drew heavily upon Augustine’s later writings in order to make their claims.¹⁰

⁸ See James Schiavoni, “Predestination and Free Will: The Crux of Canto Ten” in *Spenser Studies* 10 (1989); 176, 180; Richard Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1997), 27-8.

⁹ As Robert E. Stillman observes, “arguments about the freedom or bondage of the will provoked many of the most divisive theological debates of the century, both between Catholics and Protestants and between rival camps among the Reformed” (*Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism* (Abingdon: Ashgate, 2008), 132).

¹⁰ Richard Mallette observes that such “moderate Protestant defenses of the will [as Hooker’s]... ru[n] as an undercurrent in 16th-century English Reformation thought” (*Spenser and the Discourses*, 173-4). James Schiavoni writes that “Calvin singles out Augustine among all the Church Fathers as the most lucid exponent of the enslavement of the will” (“Predestination and Free Will,” 177). One need only skim through *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* to witness the extent of Calvin’s borrowing: “Also in book 13 of the *City of God* [Augustine writes]: ‘The human will takes the initiative in doing evil, but in doing good it is the will of the Creator which takes the initiative...’ In the second book on *The Merits and Forgiveness of Sins* [Augustine writes]: ‘People toil to discover in our will what good of our own there is, and I do not know how any can be found.’ Also in the fourth book to Boniface [Augustine writes]: ‘And how can anyone have a good purpose unless the Lord first has mercy on him, since a good will is precisely one which is prepared by God?’” (John Calvin, trans. G.I. Davies, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 104-5). Kiven S.K. Choy writes: “Luther argues that the mature Augustine supported him in following biblical expression to call the fallen human will ‘a bound choice’ (*servum arbitrium*). Already in *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), Luther quoted an important line from Augustine’s *Against Julian*, 2.8.3: ‘You call the will free, but in fact it is an enslaved will.’” And “In *Defense and Explanation of All the Articles* (1521), Luther makes a historically groundbreaking interpretation of Augustine. Luther argues, ‘St. Augustine changes the term, ‘free will,’ in his work *Against Julian*, II, and calls it ‘a will in bondage’ [*servo voluntatis*]. Luther repeatedly used this quote in *Against Julian* to support his argument for the bondage of the human will” (“Calvin’s Defense and Reformulation of Luther’s Early Reformation Doctrine of the Bondage of the Will” (Dissertation: Calvin Theological Seminary, 2010), 92-3).

Further, while the canons on justification in the Catholic Church's Council of Trent were unequivocally resolved on the matter of man's cooperation, Elizabeth's Church of England could not resolve itself accordingly.¹¹ John Whitgift's Lambeth Articles of 1595 embodied the Calvinist consensus that election occurs only by "the will of the good pleasure of God" and without any reference to man's will, cooperation, or works; but Elizabeth swiftly suppressed them out of fear that their radical predestinarianism would discourage English subjects from pursuing "good works."¹² Indeed, the final clause of the Church of England's most codified statement "Of Free Will"—Article 10 of the Thirty-nine Articles—exemplifies Elizabeth's unwillingness to wholly embrace Calvinism:

The condition of man after the fall of *Adam* is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.¹³

While the article initially maintains man's utter depravity and total dependence upon God, its final claim that grace "work[s] *with* us" subverts the very necessity it first

¹¹ "Canon IV. If any one saith, that man's free will moved and excited by God, by assenting to God exciting and calling, nowise co-operates towards disposing and preparing itself for obtaining the grace of Justification... [or that the will] does nothing whatever and is merely passive; let him be anathema. Canon V. If any one saith, that, since Adam's sin, the free will of man is lost and extinguished; or, that it is a thing with only a name, yea a name without a reality... let him be anathema" ("The Council of Trent" in *Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West: A Sourcebook*. Vol. 1 (New York: Columbia UP, 1960), 772).

¹² Article 2 of the Lambeth Articles read: "The moving or efficient cause of predestination to life is not the foreseeing of faith, or of perseverance, or of good works, or of anything innate in the person of the predestined, but only the will of the good pleasure of God" (cited in Peter White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 108). On the Lambeth Articles, see Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525-1695* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1982), 67; *Authorizing Petrarch*, 251.

¹³ *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 676.

asserts. Elizabeth's Church of England thus "resolved the debate, insofar as it could be resolved, by not resolving it, by insisting upon both predestination and free will."¹⁴

Thus, while Elizabeth's subjects were awake to the fact that—as Luther wrote to Erasmus earlier in the century—the question of free will is “the question on which everything hinges,” “the vital spot,” “the real issue,” and the most “reverent or serious or useful” thing for man to know,” they were offered little in the way of doctrinal certainty about the degree to which free will, indeed, existed.¹⁵ Moreover, the question of free will held early modern attentions with such urgency because it was a matter of real justice—or rather, of real apparent *injustice*. For if men were not only elected by “the will of the good pleasure of God,” but were also reprobated by that same “good pleasure,” then Protestantism raised the terrifying specter of an unjust and arbitrary tyrant-God. Both Luther and Calvin struggled to repress such frightening interpretations; but their defenses demanded a blind faith that could hardly have been gratifying.¹⁶ Luther writes:

We must not ask the reason for the divine will, but simply adore it, giving God glory that, since he alone is just and wise, he does no wrong to anyone and can do nothing foolishly or rashly, though it may seem far otherwise to us... This is the highest degree of faith, to believe him merciful when he saves so few and damns so many, and to believe him righteous when by his own will he makes us necessarily

¹⁴ J.L. Simmons, “Shakespeare and the Antique Romans” in *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth*, ed. P.A. Ramsey (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1982), 85.

¹⁵ “Luther: On the Bondage of the Will” in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 333, 113.

¹⁶ Calvin, for instance, concedes that “to devote to destruction whomsoever [God] pleases, more resembles the caprice of a tyrant than the legal sentence of a judge”; and yet this does not give men “reason to expostulate with God, if at his mere pleasure men are, without any desert of their own, predestinated to eternal death.” Rather, “if at any time thoughts of this kind come into the minds of the pious, they will be sufficiently armed to repress them, by considering how sinful it is to insist on knowing the causes of the divine will, since it is itself, and justly ought to be, the cause of all that exists” (*Institutes* 3.23.2).

damnable, so that he seems... to delight in the torments of the wretched and to be worthy of hatred rather than love... It has been regarded as unjust, as cruel, as intolerable, to entertain such an idea about God [who reprobates according to his own pleasure]... I myself was offended more than once, and brought to the very depth and abyss of despair, so that I wished I had never been created a man, before I realized how salutary that despair was, and how near to grace.¹⁷

“With these words,” Brian Cummings writes, “Luther willingly threw Christianity into crisis.”¹⁸

This is not a study about religious belief in the love poems of Shakespeare’s period so much as it is a study about what happened when the separate crises of Petrarchism and the Reformation collided. On the one hand, amatory poetry—a genre in which the will *already* played an enormous, if ambiguous, role—proved remarkably amenable to accommodating the Reformation’s moral teachings on human will (and thus works, grace, and predestination) and playing them out, in order to “move men”—in Sidney’s words—“to take that goodnesse in hand.” Perhaps, too, it was because the Petrarchan lover was destined to pine unrequited for the beloved until the end of the sequence that English sonneteers saw in it an analogue for predestination. The lover’s “reprobation,” that is, was predetermined: he or she would not—as a matter of generic convention—obtain the beloved (Spenser’s sequence is, in this sense, an anomaly). Indeed, the analogy, in which the lover is “ordain’d” or “doomed” from the beginning, is repeatedly deployed in Petrarchan sequences of the period.¹⁹ What

¹⁷ “Luther: On the Bondage of the Will,” 137-8, 244.

¹⁸ *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 183.

¹⁹ In his sonnet sequence *Diana* (1592), Henry Constable’s lover laments “the death to me assign’d,” noting his beloved’s “lips... my judges be, / Pronouncing sentence of eternall ‘No’” (Sonnet 25 of “Diana: Or, the Praises of his Mistres in Certaine Sweete Sonnets” in *Diana: The Sonnets and Other Poems of Henry Constable, B.A.* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1859), 17). Richard Linche’s

occurs between this recognition of reprobation (or the posited conjecture about election) and the end of the sequence are the same soteriological questions about reason, faith, grace, constancy, and will that plagued Protestants in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In this sense—because the analogies were readily available—the Protestant Reformation helped drive what was already in crisis in amatory poetry. On the other hand—as I observed above—love poets were simultaneously appropriating Reformation theology to address *another* crisis: that of literary, and generic, authority.

Each Petrarchan sequence below takes these matters up to distinct instructive ends. The varying approaches presented here suggest a broad range of responses to what I outlined briefly above as English Protestantism’s contestatory discourses around free will, grace, and predestination. But gathering these texts together in this way—despite their divergent theologies—testifies to an extensive effort among English Protestant Petrarchans to use theological debates to transform the genre, and to think in new ways about the social, aesthetic, and didactic functions of literature.

lover wrote to his beloved that he was “ordayn’d by heauens to dote vpon thy faire,” explicitly evoking the language of divine preordination (“Sonnet XXXV” in *Diella, Certaine Sonnets, adioyned to the amorous Poeme of Dom Diego and Gineura*. By R.L. Gentleman (London: Printed for Henry Olney, 1596), fol. D3). Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia, likewise, concedes to Love that “thou hast all, for now thou hast me made / So thine, as if for thee I were ordain’d” (PA 46). In his 1604 *Aurora*, William Alexander’s lover laments that his beloved has “vow’d not to reuoke / [His] fatall doome” and so his “fate” is “[e]nregistered eternally in th’annales of disgrace” (Sonnet 91 and “Elegie III” of “Aurora” in *The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, &c.* Vol. 1 (Glasgow: Maurice Ogle & Co., 1870), 91, 98). And in his *Wittes Pilgrimage* (1605), John Davies’ lover refers to “the court of LOVES Elect” (“The picture of Formosity” in *The Complete Works of John Davies of Hereford*, ed. Alexander Grosart. Vol. 2 (Lancashire: Printed for private circulation, 1878), 31). Further, at least one of Petrarch’s commentators alludes to predestination in his headnote to sonnet 346, “Li angeli electi,” referring “to the doctrine of election and ‘Determinatione del Petrarca’ – ‘Petrarch’s determination as a member of God’s chosen sainthood.’” As William Kennedy notes, the sentiments of Ludovico Castelvetro’s commentary “would have found timely agreement with the Protestant sympathies of England’s Elizabethan sonneteers” (*Authorizing Petrarch* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), 79).

A brief note on chronology: the middle chapters of this study (Chapters 2-5) examine Thomas Watson's, Philip Sidney's, Fulke Greville's, and Mary Wroth's lyric sequences, in that order. I have chosen to order these chapters according to dates of composition rather than dates of publication. I have done this because, while Greville's *Caelica* didn't appear in print until 1633 (over a decade after Wroth's 1621 *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*), much of his sequence was written in what has been called "companionable competition" with his friend Sidney.²⁰ What I see unfolding in the Sidney → Greville → Wroth ordering is a narrative in which each successive poet attempts a moral/theological revision or modulation of the sequence that came before it. I begin this study with the *Amoretti* because Spenser both *perceived* and *forged* an affinity between theology and Petrarchism long before I did; and his use of the Church of England's liturgical calendar as a structuring device for his sequence offers a convincing lens through which to view the sequences that follow. Finally, I close with Shakespeare because he is the apple to my study of oranges. While it was published prior to Wroth's and Greville's collections, the *Sonnets* has neither the theological underpinning nor the subtle religious doctrine that I see in the other sequences in this study. The best I have been able to do with Shakespeare is to offer two sonnets that I read as critiques of the ways English Petrarchans before him took up theology in their love poems. In this way, Shakespeare confirms what the first five chapters contend.

²⁰ *The Literary Culture of the Reformation*, 300. See also J.M. Purcell, "Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* and Greville's *Caelica*" in *PMLA* 50.2 (June 1935); Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995), 161-2. The title page of the 1633 edition of Greville's works describes them as having been "written in his youth and familiar exercise with Sir Philip Sidney."

Chapter 1 argues that one of the fundamental negotiations in Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti* (composed 1594; published 1595) concerns the roles that works and grace play in the beloved's requital—a requital with analogues in theological debates about justification, the means by which a man's sins were absolved and he was declared righteous before God. I show how Spenser's lover struggles with works-righteousness (the Catholic "belief," as it was formulated by reformers, that presumes works merit salvation or requital); and I show how Spenser distinguishes himself from his poetic persona, betraying Protestant thought about the inadequacy of works even as his lover insists upon them. Spenser's lover fails repeatedly in his labors until grace comes to him—unlooked for and *unwilled*—in a moment of concession and exhaustion. The lover's amorous works *afterward* become meaningful—but only according to the reformed understanding by which good works follow grace. Still, a doctrinal line cannot be impeccably drawn, since both Spenser and his lover are extraordinary Petrarchans who successfully effect requital through poetic labor. I propose this irresolution is a consequence of Spenser's attention to Paul's Epistles in his lyric composing: Spenser follows Paul in periodically affirming the usefulness of Law despite an overwhelming insistence on grace. The *Amoretti* is thus doing much more than simply echoing liturgical language. Its lover's courting process is a poetic negotiation with soteriological doctrine, and a meaningful instruction to its readers about the right perception of works.

Chapters 2 and 3 read Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (composed c. 1580; published 1591) alongside a now rather obscure sequence by Sidney's

contemporary Thomas Watson (*Hekatompathia*, composed c. 1580; published 1582). Both collections, I claim, are engaged with the prevailing theological debates about will and reason, and the extent of their postlapsarian corruption. Chapter 2 concentrates on Watson's sequence, which I see as engaging in a syncretic approach to the "reason versus passion" *topos*. The collection's conversion narrative abounds with classical allusions; yet in the midst of these, Watson subtly suggests that his lover's eventual turn to reason is available only through divine grace. By writing grace into the classical *topos*—and by making grace the sole basis for his persona's eventual attainment of right reason—Watson introduced a theological logic into his amatory collection that delicately admonished readers not to trust their own good will or good reason—in matters of love, or otherwise. But the "Protestantization" of the Petrarchan sequence in Watson exceeds this grace-event: the *Hekatompathia*'s conversion sonnet is printed in the shape of a "Pasquine Piller," alluding to a genre traditionally enlisted to denounce papal Rome. Further, while Watson translates Petrarch's antepenultimate and penultimate *canzoni* in his sequence (both of which are petitions for grace), he conspicuously ignores the *Canzoniere*'s final sonnet—a turn to the Catholic Church's mediator. Thus, the *Hekatompathia*—England's first Petrarchan sonnet sequence—transforms the genre by offering a Protestant English literary exemplum to rival Petrarch's Catholic one.

While Sidney's *Astrophel* experiences the same struggle between his reason and his will that Watson's lover does, *Astrophel and Stella* concludes without anything like the *Hekatompathia*'s recantation—although it *does* reenact a fall-before-

grace narrative common to Sidney's age. Chapter 3 examines how the "erected wit" and "infected will" of Sidney's *Defence* transfigured the classical concept of *akrasia*—weakness of will, or acting against one's better judgment—for reformed ends, and how this infection of the will (synonymous, for the reformers, with the heart) plays out in Sidney's love poetry. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and Ovid's Medea were juxtaposed repeatedly in reformed commentaries on *akrasia*. As Sidney positioned his Astrophel at the dialectic of "erected wit" and "infected will," looking as much like Medea as he looked like Paul, he felt obliged by virtue of his conviction that poetry serves didactic ends to distinguish Astrophel from the pre-Christian reprobate. Thus, self-knowledge about his postlapsarian corruption—realized by "look[ing] in his heart, and writ[ing]" (*AS* 1.14), and resonant of Paul's self-diagnosis in Romans 7—becomes Astrophel's predominant quality as he repeats The Fall throughout the sequence. Through these repetitions, the lover illustrates reformed claims that self-knowledge of our corruption *is* the very precondition for grace (a grace the lover indeed receives in Sonnet 69). By stressing Astrophel's Pauline character, Sidney could more confidently offer his poetic persona as an example of the kind of instructive value he claimed poetry possesses in the *Defence*—even if *Astrophel and Stella*'s instructional purpose is only to remind its readers that even regenerate man is perpetually sinning "after the like maner of Adam" (Rom. 5:14).

Chapter 4 contends that Fulke Greville's *Caelica* (composed c. 1580-83; published 1633) plays on "election" as both a theological and an astrological term. In doing so, the collection points to a pressing astrological debate of Greville's time:

whether God's will—and God's will for the individual, including his soteriological status—could be discerned in the stars. Reading *Caelica* alongside the astrological texts of Greville's day, I show how Greville's lover initially serves as a parody of the penitent who "climbs into the heavens" for signs of his election, as theologians perpetually cautioned against doing: the answer, they stressed, could only be found by looking within. It is not until the latter portion of the sequence's conversion narrative, when the upward-looking lover becomes the inward-looking penitent, that self-knowledge—and "signs" of his salvation—becomes available. Greville's lover plays the astrologer (Philocell, lover of the *entire* sky) to Sidney's Astrophel, who gazes ceaselessly at *one* star (Stella). It is not until the lover looks into the "wildernesse" (*C* 83.83) of his heart, and—like Astrophel—observes his own corruption, that his "farewell" (*C* 84.1) to Cupid is possible. But it is at also this moment that Greville's sequence is emptied of the despair that the earlier, amatory poems are characterized by. For Greville, self-knowledge involves more than man's understanding of his present, postlapsarian dilemma; it also concerns his assurance of his salvational status. I read *Caelica* as a theological corrective to Sidney's collection, which closes on a "despairing" Astrophel (*AS* 108.7). For Greville—as for the reformers—while despair is a necessary *step* toward such assurance, it should only be a temporary one.

Chapter 5 reads the labyrinth as a specifically predestinarian trope employed by reformed theologians to negotiate the matter of free will in election and reprobation. When we read Mary Wroth's labyrinthine "Crowne of Sonetts dedicated to LOVE" (*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, composed c. 1616?; published 1621) in light

of this common this theological metaphor, Pamphilia becomes a figure for how best to navigate what Calvin called the “labyrinth” of predestination, from which we can only extricate ourselves through Scripture (with “the word [to] serve us as a thread to guide our path” (*Institutes* 1.6.3)). I contend that as soon as Pamphilia takes up the “thread” in Sonnet 1 of the crown, a string of theologically suggestive consequences follows. The lover is immediately able to ascertain certain signs intimating she is among the “elect,” “prouing” herself as Paul admonished the Corinthians to do (2 Cor. 13:5). However, these signs are tempered by the redeployment of figures such as the hemlock of Sonnet 11 and the return of “Iealousie” (C 14.11) as the corona comes to a close. Both figures were used in the Scriptures to admonish the Israelites for their *overassurance*. Wroth’s is thus quite possibly a corrective to Greville’s sequence, which may have appeared overconfident about its lover’s soteriological status. (Indeed, Greville claimed in his “Treatise of Religion” that man is “lost in all thinges but Election,” intimating that his salvational status was the one thing man *could be* certain of).²¹ Reading the “Crowne” alongside Paul’s Epistles and the Old Testament’s Israelites, we see Pamphilia walk the fine line reformed theologians appealed to: balancing her perception of signs of her election with a warning against what Calvin called “presumptuous security.”²²

Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* is the outlier of this study. Its first five chapters show how English Petrarchans employed the amatory sequence to didactic—and to

²¹ “A Treatise of Religion” in *The Remains: Being Poems of Monarchy and Religion*, ed. G.A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965), 213, 17.

²² *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets. By John Calvin. Now First Translated from the Original Latin by the Rev. John Owen. Vol. 2: Joel, Amos, Obadiah* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1846), 321.

specifically Protestant—ends; but moral edification is more difficult to locate in Shakespeare. Rather, what *Shake-speares Sonnets* does for this study is to bolster its argument for theology in Spenser’s, Watson’s, Sidney’s, Greville’s, and Wroth’s collections. Chapter 6 focuses on just two of Shakespeare’s sonnets—57 and 58, which I read as “Will sonnets” (a term that has generally been reserved for sonnets 135 and 136). Through these lyrics, I show how Shakespeare perceived the theological underpinnings I have argued for in his predecessors’ sequences, and redeployed their theology—and not just their Petrarchisms (as in Sonnet 130)—to parodic ends. Both sonnets are sardonic in tone, spoken by a lover-“slave” who claims to have *no* will, and address a beloved who is figured as the embodiment of *free* will—and who is clearly emptied of his divinity. As such, Shakespeare parodies the Protestant figuration of the “bound will” in the Petrarchan tradition: Spenser’s lover’s description of the beloved as “my lower heauen” “whose will my love doth sway” (*Am* 46.7-8); Astrophel’s “I willing run, yet when I runne repent” (*AS* 19.4). Sonnets 57 and 58 may, indeed, be critically commenting on the apparent injustice of double predestination. But they are also critically commenting on the conventional employment of theological language to describe the beloved, and on what had become, in English Petrarchism, the conventional employment of predestinarian language to define the love relationship. In responding to theology’s overwrought quality in English Petrarchism, Shakespeare confirms what my first five chapters contend.

**“Till I in hand her yet halfe trembling tooke”: JUSTIFICATION
IN EDMUND SPENSER’S *AMORETTI***

MY loue is lyke to yse, and I to fyre;
how comes it then that this her cold so great
is not dissolu'd through my so hot desyre,
but harder growes the more I her intreat?
Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
is not delayd by her hart frozen cold:
but that I burne much more in boyling sweat,
and feele my flames augmented manifold?
What more miraculous thing may be told
that fire which all things melts, should harden yse:
and yse which is congeald with sencelesse cold,
should kindle fyre by wonderfull deuyse.
Such is the powre of loue in gentle mind,
that it can alter all the course of kynd.¹

There are few sonnets in Edmund Spenser’s *Amoretti* (c. 1594, p. 1595) more Petrarchan than Sonnet 30. Playing on Petrarch’s familiar “icy fire” paradox, Spenser’s lover isolates two antithetical qualities—qualities that conventionally coexist *within* the lover—in the distinct bodies of lover and beloved.² Though the antitheses are separated, a paradox survives: both lover and beloved resist being “tempered” by the other; and by “wonderfull deuyse” their opposition only heightens, so that the couple is further estranged even as they come together. Indeed, scholarship has often remarked upon this sonnet’s recapitulation of a Petrarchan convention, and upon

¹ All citations of Spenser’s sequence and its accompanying *Epithalamion* taken from *Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti and Epithalamion: A Critical Edition*, ed. Kenneth J. Larsen (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997).

² See, e.g., Petrarch’s canzone 134, “I fear and hope, and burn and am of ice” (*Petrarch’s Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, trans. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976), 272).

Spenser's "imitative and adaptive abilities."³ But little has been said about the complexities of the final couplet, which includes a gesture towards Scripture that advances what I suspect is one of the sequence's fundamental negotiations: the roles that "works" and "grace" play in the lover's obtaining, and maintaining, the beloved.

While the first three quatrains of Sonnet 30 *do* simply—though cleverly—relocate Petrarch's "fire and ice" in two bodies rather than in one, the final couplet ("Such is the powre of loue in gentle mind, / that it can alter all the course of kynd") confounds the sonnet's logic. In the first place, because the beloved has been neither "gentle" (as personal quality or as the demeanor indicative of one of a high social status) nor "lou[ing]" up to this point in the sequence—and these are understatement—the "gentle mind" can only be the lover's.⁴ Yet given the lover's outright failure to effect requital, the "powre[ful]" love that resides in this "gentle mind" *can't* be his, either. In the second place, "alter[ing] all the course of kynd" would suggest

³ William C. Johnson, *Spenser's Amoretti: Analogies of Love* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 1990), 127. Earl B. Fowler, who observes Spenser's tropological deviation in separating "yce" and "fyre," concludes his commentary of Sonnet 30: "[t]his adaptation of the convention is Petrarchan" (*Spenser and the System of Courtly Love* (New York: Phaeton Press, 1968), 32). W.L. Renwick remarks, "[t]his... ice and fire is everywhere among the Petrarchans" (*The Works of Edmund Spenser: A Variorum Edition*, ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al., vol. 7 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1947), 429). Peter M. Cummings writes: "the poet returns to his hopeless courting with one of the most traditional similes of the sonnet tradition" ("Spenser's *Amoretti* as an Allegory of Love" in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 12.2 (Summer 1970), 170). Donna Gibbs suggests that by the time of the *Amoretti*, the "icy fire" convention had become something of a "generic law" (*Spenser's Amoretti: A Critical Study* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990), 69). See also *Edmund Spenser's Amoretti and Epithalamion*, ed. Larsen, 160; *Analogies of Love*, 127.

⁴ She has been a "Tyranresse" who makes "massacres" and takes "captiues" with her eyes, making the lover's "pain her sport" (Sonnet 10); she has been a "cruell warriour" who "renew[s]" battle and "make[s] vnpiteid spoile" of the lover's life—even as he "sew[s] for peace" (Sonnet 11); she has "ambush[ed]" him as he presented himself "disarmed" before her in hopes of "mak[ing] a truce" (Sonnet 12); she has accused him of insincerity and has "turne[d] hir selfe to laughter" in the face of his weeping (Sonnet 18); she has acted more "saluage[ly] wylde" than a lion, putting her foot in his neck and "tread[ing his] life downe in the lowly floure" (Sonnet 20); she has daily undone the "weau[ing]" of his work of wooing (Sonnet 23); she has deliberately misinterpreted his gift of the laurel leaf "with disdainfull scorne" (Sonnet 29).

reversals—not intensifications—in both the lover’s and the beloved’s constitutions.

Spenser’s use of the word is infrequent; but when a Spenserian body “alters,” it invariably becomes its inverse.⁵ So how is the “course of kynd” “altered” here? And *whose* “powre[ful] loue” *and* “gentle mind”—if neither the beloved’s (since her mind is not gentle) nor the lover’s (since his love is not powerful)—is doing this “altering”? We can’t rely on Petrarchan conventions to answer the questions this couplet poses. So how do we construe what appears as either a dissolution of the lyric’s logic, or as a Spenserian infusion of a word (“alter”) with new meanings?

Ever since Alexander Dunlop’s 1969 “Calendar Symbolism in the *Amoretti*,” which first posited a correspondence between Spenser’s sequence and the Church of England’s liturgical calendar, studies of the *Amoretti* have confirmed that Spenser was closely attending to the church liturgy while working on his amatory sequence.⁶ Dunlop recognized the placement of four sonnets in Spenser’s sequence that could be identified with distinct days on the church calendar: in particular, Sonnet 22 (“This holy season fit to fast and pray”) refers to Lent, and Sonnet 68 (“Most glorious Lord of lyfe that on this day, / Didst make thy triumph ouer death and sin”) to Easter. From this, Dunlop concluded, “each of the forty-seven sonnets [from 22 to 68] has a date

⁵ In *Muiopotmos*, “morning faire may bring fowle evening late, / And least mishap the most blisse alter may” (219-20), and “white streight legs [are] altered / To crooked crawling shankes” (349-50). In *The Mutabilitie Cantos*, “all the worlds faire frame... [Mutability] alter[s] quite; and made them all accurst / That God had blest” (VII.vi.5.5-8), and “Mercury, who though he less appear / To change his Hue, and always seem as one; / Yet, he his Course doth alter every Year, / And is of late far out of order gone” (VII.vii.51.1-4). In these Spenserian “alterings,” “faire” becomes “fowle,” “streight” becomes “crooked,” “blest” becomes “accurst,” “[on] course” becomes “out of order.”

⁶ In *Notes and Queries* 214 (January 1969), 24-6. See William C. Johnson, “Spenser’s *Amoretti* and the Art of the Liturgy” in *SEL* 14 (1974); Carol V. Kaske, “Another Liturgical Dimension of ‘Amoretti’ 68” in *Notes and Queries* 24.6 (December 1977); *Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti and Epithalamion*, ed. Larsen.

corresponding to a day in the Lenten season of 1594, from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday.”⁷ More recently, Kenneth Larsen broadened the extent of this

correspondence: *all* eighty-nine sonnets of the *Amoretti*, he claims, “correspond with consecutive dates” from January 23 to May 17, 1594, as well as with the “readings... prescribed for those dates by the liturgical calendar of the Church of England.”⁸

Larsen’s critical edition of Spenser’s sequence includes a table of the scriptural readings prescribed by the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) for the three-month period in 1594 with which the sonnets correspond; and the resemblances in “conceits, themes, ideas, imagery, words, and... rhetorical structure” between each sonnet and the scriptural readings specified for the day it corresponds to are, indeed, striking.⁹

Dunlop’s discovery opened a door for more theological interpretations of the *Amoretti*; but the field remains an open one. Larsen’s edition is probably the most comprehensive offering of the sequence’s scriptural echoes; but as is evident from his reference to “conceits, themes, ideas, [and] imagery,” the edition’s interest lies more in identifying *where* Spenser transferred scriptural language to the amatory poem than in the possibility that Spenser was actually working out theological inquiries in his love poems. Spenser *was*, of course, doing a lot of things at once in these lyrics: courting Elizabeth Boyle; considering Queen Elizabeth and his experiences in Ireland; referencing classical texts and mythologies as well as his own epic and the Petrarchan tradition out of which these poems, in part, arose. And this list is only

⁷ “Calendar Symbolism,” 25.

⁸ *Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti and Epithalamion*, 3-4.

⁹ *Ibid.* 3.

partial. My intervention here is to take scholarship on the relationship between the *Amoretti* and the Church of England's liturgical calendar one step further, and offer that the sequence is doing more than simply appropriating the language and motifs of the days' readings. It is also, through analogy, working through real theological questions about justification—the means whereby a man was made or accounted righteous by God. Though situated in the Petrarchan tradition, there is a sophisticated soteriological conceit which underlies Edmund Spenser's sonnet cycle.

The *Amoretti* contains eighty-nine sonnets, the first sixty of which characterize the beloved as the “cruel fair” (“fayre cruell,” *Am.* 49.1) of Petrarchism. In these sixty lyrics, the lover pleads, pines, protests the beloved's pride, sues for peace, and offers truce to the very “Tyrannesse” (*Am.* 10.5) he courts. But the collection turns around Sonnet 63, ushering in what Carol Kaske describes as “the triumphant 60's.”¹⁰ Sonnet 62 is a New Year's sonnet, expressing the hope that, with the “chaunge of weather,” the couple can “chaunge... [their] myndes” (5-6). In Sonnet 63, the lover “descr[ies] the happy shore” after the “long stormes” of courtship (5, 1); in 64 the lovers kiss, and the following lyric is a rhetorical display in which the lover contends that marriage is not a loss of one liberty, but a “gayn[ing]” of *two* (3). These lead up to Sonnet 67—the poem I understand as the turning point of the sequence—in which the beloved-deer approaches the lover-hunter of her own accord and is “tyde” by “her owne goodwill” (12). After a few celebratory lyrics, however, the couple is suddenly absent from each other, and the cycle closes on this separation. The

¹⁰ “Spenser's ‘Amoretti and Epithalamion’ of 1595: Structure, Genre, and Numerology” in *ELR* 8.3 (Autumn 1978), 273.

sequence has been described as “return[ing] to complaint, albeit about lesser grievances,” and “end[ing] abruptly in misunderstanding and separation.”¹¹ Those who, like Larsen, attend to the *Amoretti*’s relationship with the church liturgy claim this theme of separation is prompted by the events leading to Pentecost, for which the final sonnet of the sequence was written.

Spenser must have suspected something about what the amatory sequence could hold when he decided it was a fit genre to pair with the liturgy—and a liturgical calendar whose scriptural readings frequently returned to the matter of justification. The Petrarchan sequence was, after all, about the real futility of poetic labor; and the futility of “works”—or, at least, the error of “works-righteousness”—was among the Protestant Reformation’s greatest contentions. Indeed, Spenser had already written a pastoral engaged with ecclesiastical questions (the *Calender*’s shepherds “represen[t] two formes of pastoures or Ministers, or the protestant and the Catholique”); and he was at work on an epic that accommodated reflections upon religious doctrine even as he wrote the *Amoretti*.¹² But while the women of *The Faerie Queene* are often interpreted as “agent[s] of higher authority” and “agents of grace”—and while the grace they offer is often understood to lead “to a kind of temporal redemption” within

¹¹ *Ibid.* 273; A.C. Judson, *The Life of Edmund Spenser* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1945), 172.

¹² “Maye,” in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram et al. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989), 87). The literature on theology in *The Faerie Queene* is immense. For book-length studies, see John N. King, *Spenser’s Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990); Linda Gregerson’s *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995); Richard Mallette, *Spenser and the Discourses of Reformation England* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1997); Carol Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999); Darryl Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); and Joseph Campana’s *The Pain of Reformation: Spenser, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Masculinity* (New York: Fordham UP, 2012). On Spenser’s own references to the contemporaneity of these two projects, see *Amoretti* 33 and 80, and *FQ* IV.Proem.1.

the confines of the epic—scholarship on Spenser’s love poems (and on the Petrarchan sequence generally) overwhelmingly reduces “grace” to a euphemism for sex.¹³

I suggest we miss out on a lot by reducing the *Amoretti* to a less nuanced work just because such terms resurface in an “amatory” genre. Giving the BCP’s liturgical readings a more centralized place in Spenser’s archive of sources—not just pointing out the way the *Amoretti* echoes them, but asking how their claims about justification inform the poems’ thinking—introduces a great deal of nuance into Sonnet 30’s couplet: a nuance grounded as much in reformed discourse as the lyric’s three quatrains are in Petrarchism. The sonnet’s strange *volta* is, I believe, one of many “turns” the *Amoretti* attempt to make from Old Covenant to New, and from a soteriology (a theory of salvation—and, by analogy, a successful amatory suit) determined by works to one at the mercy of grace. This is a turn the sequence as a whole cannot fundamentally sustain. The nature of the *Amoretti*’s “soteriology,” that is, is finally unresolved, reflecting the Scriptures’ apparent ambiguity on the subject.

Sonnet 30 was written for February 21, 1594. The readings prescribed by the BCP for the day’s Evening Prayer included Galatians 4, a text that comments on the transition from Old Covenant to New—from Jew to Gentile—through the metaphor of

¹³ *Interpretation and Theology*, 64-5; *Spenser and the Discourses*, 133. One “grace” as a euphemism, see Richard A. Lanham, “*Astrophil and Stella*: Pure and Impure Persuasion” in *ELR* 2.1 (Dec. 1972), 102; Margreta De Grazia, “Lost Potential in Grammar and Nature: Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*” in *SEL* 21.1 (Winter 1981), 27; Anne Ferry, *The “Inward” Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1983), 232; Marion Campbell, “Unending Desire: Sidney’s Reinvention of Petrarchan Form in *Astrophil and Stella*” in *Sir Philip Sidney and the Interpretation of Renaissance Culture*, ed. Gary F. Waller and Michael D. Moore (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1984), 86; Chris Stamatakis, *Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Rhetoric of Rewriting* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 181.

“adoptive” or spiritual filiation.¹⁴ Christ was sent forth, Paul claims, to “redeme them which were vnder the Law, that we might receiue the adoption of the sonnes” through grace.¹⁵ This “adoption” makes every Galatian a spiritual successor of Christ, no longer “a seruant,” Paul announces, “but a sonne... [and] the heire of God through Christ” (v. 5-7). Maintaining the opposition between servanthship and sonship, Paul then makes a metaphor of his allegory:

For it is written, that Abraham had two sonnes, one by a seruant [Ishmael, born of Hagar], & one by a fre woman [Isaac, born of Sara]. But he which was of the seruant, was borne after the flesh: and he which was of the fre woman, was borne by promes. By the which things another thing is ment: for these mothers are the two Testaments, the one which is Agar of mounte Sina, which gendreth unto bondage... [the other] Jerusalem, which is aboue, is fre... For it is written, Rejoyce thou barren that bearest no children... for the desolate hathe many... children... brethren, we are after the maner of Isaac, children of the promes (v. 22-8).

One can see why reformers would have been drawn to this passage. The “two Testaments” of Galatians 4—and its pronounced preferment of the New—could be interpreted as privileging Protestantism (“after the maner of Isaac, children of the promes”) to Catholicism (associated with the ceremonial and judicial laws received on “mounte Sina”): indeed, reformed commentaries on the Scriptures often made them relevant to contemporary debates by aligning Protestants with Gentiles and the works-centered Catholic Church with the ceremony-centered Jews of Paul’s age.¹⁶

¹⁴ The BCP prescribed daily readings for both Morning and Evening Prayer. The readings on Sundays also included an Epistle and a Gospel; feast days and holy days had their own special readings as well. For more on this see *Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti and Epithalamion*, ed. Larsen, 5-7.

¹⁵ All scriptural citations, unless otherwise indicated, will be taken from the 1560 Geneva Bible (*The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007)).

¹⁶ William Perkins comments on this very passage: “the Galatians... supposed that the very observation of the lawe... did give life and justifie. This ignorance was to the Jewes as a vaile before

The passage reprioritizes narratives of succession, from “flesh” to spirit (“promes”), distinguishing, as Lisa Freinkel puts it, “between two principles of inheritance: one based on birthright and generation; the other understood in revisionary and figurative terms”: between the Old Covenant’s “fleshly” Law, and the New Covenant’s “promise” of grace.¹⁷

But the reformers’ dilemma was that the revised succession narrative of Galatians 4 is not a clean genealogical transfer. There is, of course, the glaring fact that Isaac, too, was a direct descendant of Abraham; and his biological Jewishness precluded an absolute analogy between Gentile and Protestant causes. The solution to this apparent inclusiveness was to focus not on God’s promise that Abraham would father many nations (Jews *and* Gentiles), but on Abraham’s faith in God’s promise *over and above* his works, and on that promise as *miraculous* in light of Sarah’s barrenness. Paul himself makes Abraham an exemplary figure of faith-above-works in matters of justification: “For if Abraham were justified by workes, he hathe

their eies... And this ignorance hath blinded the Papist at this day: for he supposeth that the Gospell is nothing els but the lawe of Moses.” And later, “[t]he Papist ascribes his conversion not wholly to grace, but partely to grace, and partly to nature, or the strength of mans will helped by grace. And thus are they borne after the flesh as Ismael was” (*A commentarie or exposition, vpon the five first chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians*. (Cambridge: Printed by John Legat, 1604), 341, 349). These analogies were not limited to Pauline interpretations. In his commentary on Matthew, Calvin observes that “[t]he Jewes flattered themselues almost with the same pretense [that the “couenaunt of God” could be “satisfied”], which the Papists at this day do insolently chaleng to themselves” (*A harmonie vpon the three Euangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke*, trans. Eusebius Paget (London: George Bishop, 1584), 116). Luther “can make no better comparison than to say that it was the same in the old Jewish priesthood as now in the Papal priesthood” (*The Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), 165). Thomas Cooper (1517-1594) writes, “Suche in tymes paste, were the Phariseyes among the Jewes, and suche in these dayes are Monkes, Freers, and others in the Church of Roome, which pretende misliking of the Gospell, because it teacheth that al men naturally are sinners and the children of wrath” (*Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Printed for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1864), 10).

¹⁷ “The Name of the Rose: Christian Figuralty and Shakespeare’s Sonnets” in *The Sonnets: Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 243.

wherein to rejoyce, but not with God... [rather,] Abraham beleved God and [that belief] was counted to him for righteousnes” (Rom. 4:2-3).¹⁸ Commentators used Paul’s Abraham to bolster the doctrinal argument for *sola fide*, *sola gratia*—even going so far as to separate Abraham into two Abrahams—a “working Abraham” and a “believing Abraham”—only the latter to whom God makes his promise.¹⁹ These commentaries also consistently took up a rhetoric of the natural and unnatural—not in order to oppose natural, biological genealogy to “gracious,” “supernatural,” or spiritual adoption (since Ishmael and Isaac were both biological sons), but to oppose the possible to the miraculous. As William Perkins writes, “In the birth of Isaac we see the vertue of the promise of God, when it is mixed with our faith: for then it makes things possible, that are otherwise impossible.”²⁰

Calvin clarifies that the miracle was not simply “that Abraham *begat*... Isaac: but that he did it by power from heaven, bycause his body was already withered and as good as half dead”; further, Sarah “had bin barrein all the foretime of hir life, & was full fourscore & ten yeres old.” Thus, God’s promise wrought a “*miracle... not*

¹⁸ Each time Paul mentions Abraham, he imputes the patriarch’s righteousness to faith alone. See Rom. 4:9, 4:13, and Gal. 3:6-7.

¹⁹ Luther argues that Paul “putteth a plain difference between Abraham and Abraham... As if he said: There is a working, and there is a believing Abraham... the world was promised” to the Abraham who “believed,” and not to the one “which is a worker, is circumcised, and keepeth the law” (*A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, ed. Rev. Erasmus Middleton (London: Printed by James Cundee, 1807), 161-2). William Perkins argues that “[i]t is true that [Abraham] was concerned with “the multiplication of his posteritie,” but this should not be contrasted... with his true faith, a “working” with a “believing” Abraham” (cited in *Galatians Through the Centuries*, ed. John Riches (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 163).

²⁰ *A commentarie or exposition*, 344.

after the common order of nature.”²¹ In another sermon on Galatians, he writes, “we bee Abrahams children, and the true Israell of God, as if we were discended of Jacobs race... [becoming] by free adoption, which we be *not by nature*.”²² Perkins observes: “thus was Isaac the child of promise, in that he was borne to Abraham, *not by the strength of nature*, but by Gods promise. And Paul opposeth the children of the promise to the children of the flesh, which were borne *by naturall strength*.”²³

This rhetoric, it appears, was significant enough to influence the marginal notes in later editions of the Geneva Bible. While absent from the 1560 edition, the phrase “the common course of nature” appears three times in the 1590 glosses to Galatians 4.²⁴ While the church used the Bishops’ Bible for liturgical purposes, Larsen has made a compelling argument for Spenser’s use of the Geneva Bible alongside both the Bishops’ and Great Bibles as he “observed the widely recommended devotional practice of privately reading the *Book of Common Prayer*’s daily offices”—and, of course, as he wrote his love poems.²⁵ I am in agreement with Larsen; and the echo between the Geneva’s marginal notes to Galatians 4 and the

²¹ *Sermons of M. John Calvine upon the Epistle of Saincte Paule to the Galathians*, trans. Arthur Golding (London: Imprinted by Lucas Harison and George Bishop, 1574), 215, italics mine.

²² *Ibid.* 224, italics mine.

²³ *A commentarie or exposition*, 360, italics mine.

²⁴ See Gal. 4:21, 4:23, and 4:29. *The Bible: That is, The Holy Scriptures Contained in the Olde and Newe Testament: Translated According to the Ebrew and Greeke, and conferred with the best translations in diuers languages* (London: Imprinted by Christopher Barker, Printer to the Queenes most excellent Maiestie, 1590).

²⁵ *Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti and Epithalamion*, 13. Larsen enumerates: “For his reading Spenser has in the first instance used a Geneva version of the Bible and in the second the psalms from the *Book of Common Prayer*... Whenever Spenser has established in his sonnet a correspondence with a day’s second lesson, he has used the Geneva Bible in preference to the Great Bible or Bishops’ Bible... As well, Spenser has frequently had recourse to the particulars of the Geneva version’s marginalia—a feature absent from other bibles” (*Ibid.* 14-15). For examples of linguistic resemblances between the Geneva text and its marginal notes and the *Amoretti*’s sonnets, see pp. 15-17.

couplet of Sonnet 30 (“course of kynd”) is one of many demonstrations of such concord.

Spenser would have observed the Geneva’s repetition of the marginal phrase “the common course of nature” as he wrote Sonnet 30. Each time it is employed, “natural” birth and inheritance through “the common course” (the fruitful body of Hagar) are unfavorably compared to “unnatural” and miraculous birth through “promise and grace” (the barren body of Sara). “All men,” as verse 23 and its marginal notes assert, are born “after the flesh” and “by the common course of nature.” But the “true seede” is born “by vertue of the promes,” disrupting biological filiation and engrafting a new, spiritual, kinship.²⁶ “Course,” then, is a word applicable only to fleshly succession; there *is* no “course of grace” in the Geneva’s commentary on Galatians because grace is an unnatural, miraculous interruption of the “natural course” of mankind. “Course of nature” and “course of kind” were interchangeable phrases for Spenser: where it is found in the literature of this period, both refer to biological genealogy and its concomitant inheritance.²⁷

When the lover begins writing his *Amoretti*, he does so with brash confidence

²⁶ *The Bible: That is, The Holy Scriptures Contained in the Olde and Newe Testament* (1590).

²⁷ A.C. Hamilton, in his edition of *The Faerie Queene*, footnotes “course of kind[e]” as “course of nature” each of the three times it occurs in the poem (*Edmund Spenser: The Faerie Queene* (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2001). III.vi.38.7, IV.vi.30.5, and VI.viii.36.5). The *Oxford English Dictionary* substantiates the history of the phrases’ synonymity and linguistic drift, observing that “*course of nature*” was “formerly *course of kind*” (“course, n. 20” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press). Vice is an inheritable character trait in Joseph Hall’s *Virgidemiarvm*: “if the Syre be ill inclin’d / His faults befall his sonns by course of kinde” (*Virgidemiarvm. The three last Bookes. Of byting Satyres* (London: Imprinted by Richard Braddocke, 1598), 27). Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville’s *Gorboduc* opens with Videna grieving that her husband should cause “So great a wrong... against all course of kinde” (I.i.10-11) by dividing the kingdom’s inheritance between his sons (*The tragedie of Gorboduc* (London: William Griffith, 1565)). Spenser himself uses “kind” as referring to biological inheritance later in the *Amoretti*, when he notes that his mother “[his] being to [him] gaue by kind, / from mothers womb deriu’d by dew descent” (Sonnet 74).

in the efficacy of “works” (a remarkable confidence indeed, given that failure is fundamental to the genre), assuming an absolute correlative between labor and reward: “the harder [the beloved’s love is] wonne,” he conjectures, “the firmer [it] will abide” (*Am.* 6.4). He aspires to ever “more and greater” “woes and wrecks,” so that “greater meede at last may turne” to him (*Am.* 25.11, 13-14). This works-centered logic is grounded in the “natural laws” of the material world: in Sonnet 18, he reasons that his tears must ultimately soften the beloved’s heart because “[t]he hardest steele” and “the firmest flint” are eventually worn down by “[t]he rolling wheele” and “drizling drops” (1-4). Similarly, the “playnts and prayers” with which he “beat[s]” on her “wit” will have the same effect as an “andvyl,” which eventually “mollif[ies]” even “the hardest yron” (*Am.* 32.7-8, 2).

But the lover is confronted, in Sonnet 30, with a situation that runs contrary to the laws of the natural world: ice that “harder growes” in the presence of fire; fire that “burne[s] much more” in its contact with ice. It is a set of circumstances as miraculous as a barren woman giving birth, as paradoxical as a fruitful woman giving birth to a line of spiritually barren children. Indeed, the lover’s question—“What more miraculous thing” *is* there “that fire... harden[s] yse: / and yse... kindle[s] fyre,” thus “alter[ing] all the course of kynd”—echoes Calvin on the spiritual succession of Galatians: the unnatural grace through which Sarah bears Isaac is a “miracle... not after the common order of nature.”²⁸ Man under grace is not subject to the same “natural” laws of the material world; for grace—like the “powre of loue” in Sonnet 30—

²⁸ *Sermons of M. John Calvine upon the Epistle of Saincte Paule to the Galathians*, 215.

“alters all the course of kynd.” The 1590 marginal notes to Galatians 4:27 interpret Paul’s privileging of Sara to Hagar as “foreshewing the casting off[f] of the Jewes, and calling of the Gentiles”: “alter[ing] the course of [man]kind,” indeed.

The New Covenant reduced the laws and ceremonies of “mounte Sina” to a single commandment: “loue one another: for he that loueth another, hath fulfilled the Law” (Rom. 13:8). Spenser’s lover refers to this radical abridgment himself in the sonnet written for Easter Sunday (“let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought, / [since] love is the lesson which the Lord us taught” (*Am.* 68.13-14)). Paul’s genealogical revision from children-of-the-Law to children-of-faith would appear to resound, then, in Spenser’s “course of kynd,” “alter[ed]” because of the “powre of love” maintained by the New Covenant. And while Spenser’s “gentle” already conjures a multiplicity of meanings, we might add a further theological resonance to the final couplet in recalling that “gentle” and “Gentile” were interchangeable modifiers.²⁹ A theologically attentive interpretation of Sonnet 30’s couplet, then, might read something like: “Such is the powre of loue (the New Covenant of grace) in *Gentile* (as opposed to the Old Covenant, works-righteous) mind, / that it can alter all the (salvational) course of [*man*]kynd.” While our lover complains that all his loving labor makes requital less likely—and the beloved more cold—the final couplet intimates a second “covenant”—one that does not compel labor at all.

²⁹ In the 16th-century text with perhaps the most *gentle-Gentile* play, Shakespeare’s Gratiano punningly calls Shylock “a gentle and no Jew” (*The Merchant of Venice*, ed. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968), II.vi.51). Thomas Morley’s 1595 songbook—one of many early English texts dedicated to “gentile” gentlewomen—opens with a dedication “To the Most Vertvous and Gentile Ladie, the Ladie Periam.” (*Of Thomas Morley the first booke of canzonets to two voices* [London: Thomas Este, 1595]). And Spenser’s E.K. glosses the “lythe” “Bullocke” of “February” as “soft and gentile” (*The Yale Edition*, 49).

I do not imply an interpretative hierarchy here; rather, I offer this theological rendering to be admitted alongside the poem's already well-established Petrarchan signalings. In its particularly scriptural ripple, the sonnet's *volta* marks the turn from an Old Covenant failure to make the Law work in favor of the laboring lover, to the New, and the possibility of "altering the course" of his works-centered courting. The *Amoretti*, more broadly, depicts this same turn, indicating that Spenser understood the power of grace could transform not only the lover of his sonnet sequence, but also the sonnet sequence—as a literary genre—itsself. It is not a turn Spenser's lover can yet wholly envision (since the experience of grace cannot be imagined beforehand); and when the collection's "volta" *does* occur, at Sonnet 67, the turn—for reasons we will see—cannot be complete. But the couplet registers the prospect of "gentle/Gentile" "loue"—a love that doesn't "flatter" itself, as Calvin would say of the papists, with the "pretense" that the "couenant of God" could ever be "satisfied," or with the pretense that a labor of writing could ever be enough to win a beloved who is also a figure of the divine.³⁰ As such, Spenser's amatory sequence—which in the end gives its hard-working lover the gift of the beloved—also registers as a caution to its readers against what reformed theology understood as the Roman Catholic arrogance of works-righteousness.

SOTERIOLOGICAL CONTEXTS FOR THE *AMORETTI*

³⁰ *Harmonie*, 116. The beloved's beauty is "heavenly" (*Am.* 8); there is "nought on earth" that resembles the light of her eyes, and she is thus most like "the Maker selfe... whose light doth lighten all" (*Am.* 9); she is the lover's "lower heaven" (46), though "lykened... best" to the *higher* one (*Am.* 55); she is "divinely wrought" (*Am.* 61), "borne of heavenly seed" (*Am.* 79), "matchable to none" (*Am.* 66), his "hevens blisse" (*Am.* 72). And she is *graced*, is *entreated* for grace, and *grants* grace on any number of occasions (*Am.* 2, 13, 20, 21, 25, 31, 40, 57, 64, 74, and 82).

The liturgical readings for the period corresponding to the *Amoretti*'s poems included all thirteen Pauline Epistles.³¹ The BCP prescribed a Pauline text for every Evening Prayer, and Sundays included an additional excerpt from the Epistles. That the days' liturgical readings were among the *Amoretti*'s principal source texts means that Spenser was reading at least one Pauline text for every sonnet he wrote. Indeed, Paul's conversion narrative (Acts 9, 22, and 26), through which Paul revised his soteriological position, is a source text for *Amoretti*'s Sonnet 3, which was written for January 25, 1594—the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul.³² When Paul was blinded on the road to Damascus, he was irreproachably “just,” outperforming his brethren in observance of Mosaic Law: “touching the righteousness which is in the Law,” he claims, “I was unrebukeable” (Phil. 3:6). But his Epistles are written as the “new Paul,” who now understands justification to be a matter of faith and love, rather than of the Law's perfect observance.³³ Still—as we will see below—even the “new Paul” cannot dispense with the Law entirely; and we will watch the lover (who relentlessly sues for “justice” early on (*Am.* 12.14, 43.10, 48.8)) undergo a doctrinal conversion that mirrors Paul's, revising his ideas about the source of justification while still

³¹ *Fourteen* if one counts the Epistle to the Hebrews, which many reformers believed was written by Paul. See *A Companion to Paul in the Reformation*, ed. Ward Holder (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 94, 250, 256, 273).

³² The BCP prescribed Acts 9:1-23 for its Epistle, Acts 22:1-21 for Morning Prayer, and Acts 26 for Evening Prayer (*Edmund Spenser's Amoretti and Epithalamion*, ed. Larsen, 127). “[S]uddenly there shined rounde about him a light from heaven... He [was] bothe trembling and astonied... The men also which journeyed with him, stode amased... [and] he was thre days without sight...” (Acts 9:3-9). Compare Sonnet 3: “the light [of her] hath kindled [such] heavenly fyre... That being now with her huge brightnesse dazed, / base thing I can no more endure to view: / but looking still on her I stand amazed... [and] when my tounge would speak her praises dew, / it stopped is with thoughts astonishment.”

³³ See Eph. 4:22-24, Col. 3:9-11.

holding “works” meaningful, in an ongoing way, to sanctification, wherein man is “renewed... after the image” of God (Col. 3:10).

The framed device that opens the 1595 *Amoretti* may offer evidence about what Spenser’s publisher, William Ponsonby—or his master printer, Peter Short—imagined Spenser’s sequence to be doing in salvational terms.³⁴ At the least it causes us to ask why Ponsonby thought *this* the most appropriate frontispiece. The device contains the motto “ET VSQVE AD NVBES VERITAS TVA,” taken from Psalm 57:10, “For thy mercie is great unto the heauens, and thy trueth unto the cloudes”—a verse the Geneva glosses: “Thy mercies do not onely apperteine to the Jewes, but also to the Gentiles.” Larsen notes this emblem has “an exact precedent in [Geoffrey] Whitney’s *A Choice of Emblemes*, 166,” which—like Spenser’s—depicts a hand reaching through the clouds, holding a pair of dove’s wings, which in turn hold a book on which is inscribed its motto. Whitney’s accompanying verse reads “the Lorde doth giue such lighte, / That... those, that are so happie for to looke, / *Saluation finde*, within that blessed booke.”³⁵

Like the Geneva’s gloss of Psalm 57 (“not onely... to the Jewes, but also to the Gentiles”), Whitney’s poem interprets the image as a symbol of inclusive soteriology: anyone who chooses to read can access salvation. Ponsonby’s choice of motto may have given an early modern reader pause: why would an amatory

³⁴ Printers, not authors, normally designed frontispieces, as was the case for *Amoretti and Epithalamion*. Indeed, Peter Short had used the design once before, in 1592, for Thomas Tymme’s *A plaine discoverie of ten English lepers*. Larsen writes of Short: “that he has chosen a device whose principal significance was scriptural inspiration and truth for Spenser’s volume may indicate that he was aware of *Amoretti*’s own scriptural inspiration” (*Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti and Epithalamion*, 121). I attribute, here, a specifically soteriological awareness to Short as well.

³⁵ *Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti and Epithalamion*, ed. Larsen, 121.

sequence (*Amoretti* means “little loves”) open with a Scripture about the all-inclusive breadth (“unto the cloudes”) of God’s mercy? To situate the collection within such a soteriological framework would certainly have been to broaden the possibilities of readerly reception.

What may have been doubly striking to the reader is the placement of the device just below the collection’s title: *Amoretti and Epithalamion*. The success of the *Amoretti*’s suit, that is, is given away before the suit is even begun; and there are soteriological analogues to the courtship’s concluding with a wedding: in reformed writing and scriptural exegesis, marriage was frequently employed as a metaphor for election.³⁶ The sequence is thus “introduced”—by way of its frontispiece—with a fragment of a psalm that conceives of an inclusive soteriology (“Thy mercies do not onely appertine to the Jewes”), and is succeeded by a nuptial ode. Framed as such, the sequence appears to operate as a kind of middle space for readers to imagine a correlation between soteriological doctrine and earthly marriage, and the sequence as

³⁶ William Perkins employs marriage as a figure for “effectual calling, wherby a sinner being seuered from the world, is intertained into Gods familie.” “The like we see in wedlock,” when “the husband saith, this woman is my wife, whom her parents have giuen vnto me, so that... I may both haue her and gouerne her” (*A golden chaine, or The description of theologie* (London: Adam Islip, 1595), 186-7). Heinrich Bullinger’s *The Christian State of Matrimony* names David, who “commendeth the state of mariage as a singuler blessing of God, which hee sendeth to *them... whome he loveth*”; Bullinger’s translator, Myles Coverdale, repeatedly uses the word “election” where Bullinger instructs his readers on how to choose a spouse (*The Christian state of Matrimony*, trans. Myles Coverdale (London: Imprinted by John Awdeley, 1575), fols. E2, G2-G8, italics mine). Anne Lok’s speaker—in the first English sonnet sequence and a paraphrase of Psalm 51—requests that Christ “hold my faith from ruine and decay / With fast *affiance* and assured stay,” a pun that registers the synchronicity of faith and betrothal (“A Meditation of a penitent sinner, vpon the 51. Psalme” in *Sermons of Iohn Caluin, vpon the songe that Ezechias made after he had bene sicke* (London: John Day, 1560). fol. H7). See, conversely, The Catholic Church’s Council of Trent, Twenty-Fourth Session, Canon X: “If any one saith, that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity, or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity, or in celibacy, than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema” (*The Canons and Decrees of the sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, ed. and trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 195).

a salvational analogue.

In what follows, I will show how Spenser's lover struggles with works-righteousness, the Catholic "belief"—as it was construed by reformed theologians—that presumes works "justly" merit salvation (and, in the lover's case, requital). In contrast to the majority of scholarship on the *Amoretti*, which readily conflates Spenser's lover with Spenser himself and his beloved with Elizabeth Boyle, I propose that the poet frequently distinguishes himself from his "Catholic" lover, who appeals repeatedly, in the early part of the sequence, to expressions of pardon, purchase, and remission; and who is subtly likened to the "Pharisaical" Jews of the Scriptures. The early poems in the sequence thus quietly admit a Protestant repudiation of works even as Spenser's lover insists upon them. The poet meant for his readership to detect this works-wariness, even as they sympathized with the laboring lover, apparently pious in his love.

Spenser has his lover fail repeatedly in his labors until grace comes to him, unlooked for and unwilled, in a moment of exhaustion and concession. The lover's "works" become meaningful thereafter—but only according to the reformed understanding by which good works come *after* faith. The analogy is imperfect—these are, after all, also love poems through which Spenser *was* courting Elizabeth Boyle; and the role of works in justification *was* doctrinally complex. But the over-arching narrative I offer here indicates that Spenser was doing more than simply echoing liturgical language; the courting process is also a real poetic negotiation with soteriological doctrine, and a meaningful instruction to its readers about the right

perception of works.

SPENSER'S LOVER AND THE FAILURE OF WORKS-RIGHTEOUSNESS

The early sonnets of the *Amoretti* are poetic labors as fruitless for the lover as works-righteous doctrine was for the reformers. In the opening sonnet of the sequence, the lover announces the objective of his writing is the "heauen[ly] blis" he expects he will experience when his "rymes," received and read by the beloved, "please" her (12-13). So far, so conventional—we need only recall *Astrophel and Stella*'s inaugural sonnet to observe that this correlation between the lover's poetic labor, the beloved's pleasure in the *fruits* of his labor, and the expectation (or, at least, the hope) of "grace" is nothing new.³⁷ But we are quickly offered the prospect that the lover simultaneously perceives the real inadequacy of poetic works. Sonnet 2 first alerts us to this anxiety. It is addressed to the lover's "vnquiet thought"—one he "bred" himself, of "th'inward bale of [his] love pined hart" (1-2). This thought has, in time, grown too big for him; and so the lover urges it to:

Breake forth at length out of the inner part,
in which thou lurkest lyke to vipers brood:
and seeke some succour both to ease my smart
and also to sustayne thy selfe with food.
But if in presence of that fayrest proud
thou chance to come, fall lowly at her feet:
and with meeke humblesse and afflicted mood,
pardon for thee, and grace for me intreat.

³⁷ In Sonnet 1, Astrophel claims that he writes in order that Stella "might take some pleasure of my paine: / Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know, / Knowledge might pittie winne, and pittie grace obtaine" (*The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat. Vol. 2 (Cambridge: U of Cambridge P, 1922), 243)

The exact nature of this “vnquiet thought” is not given us—though a reader might have heard echoes of one of the more famous lines of Augustine’s *Confessions*: “our heart is unquiet until it rests in you” (1.1.1).³⁸ What we *do* know is that the “vnquiet thought” resembles “vipers brood” and has been “bred of bale,” and thus originates either in the “fire” the beloved “kindles” in the lover’s heart (*Am.* 3.3), or in something more malicious.³⁹ There are two other “unquiet thoughts” in the Spenser canon. “An Hymne in Honour of Love”—one of “Fowre Hymnes” published a year after *Amoretti and Epithalamion*—might shed some light on the nature of Sonnet 2’s unquiet. The hymn offers a catalogue of love’s effects on lovers, which includes—not unexpectedly—a preoccupation with securing the beloved’s grace. Spenser presents this scenario of the hypothetical every-lover whose “hart” has been “pierst” by Cupid’s “empoised dart”:

Forth he casts in his vnquiet thought,
 What he may do, her favour to obtaine;
 What brave exploit, what perill hardly wrought,
 What puissant conquest, what adventurous paine,
 May please her best, and grace unto him gaine.⁴⁰

What makes the “Hymne’s” thought “unquiet” isn’t simply that it is an active and ongoing contemplation: it is, more pointedly, that it is a meditation on works (“what he may *do*” to “obtaine” the beloved’s “favour”). And yet, there may be something more explicitly scriptural about this “unquiet” works-righteous thinking.

³⁸ “...inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.” Thanks to Carla Freccero for this reminder.

³⁹ “bale, n.2., n.1.” *OED Online*.

⁴⁰ *The Yale Edition*, 696-7, 701 (lines 121-123, 218-21).

“Unquiet” is a *hapax legomenon*—insofar as it appears only once in this form—in the main text of the 1560 Geneva Bible. In Psalm 42:5, David speaks to his soul as the lover of Sonnet 2 speaks to his thought: “Why art thou cast downe, my soule, and unquiet within me? waite on God: for I wil yet give him thanks for the helpe of his presence.” Twice more in the psalms that follow, David poses a similar question (“why art thou disquieted?”) and answer.⁴¹ Indeed, the Office of Morning Prayer in the liturgical calendar for the day corresponding with Sonnet 2 included Psalm 116. Spenser would have observed that the editors glossed the “soule” of Psalm 116:7 (“returne vnto thy rest, o my soule”) as “[that] which was vnquieted before”—referring a reader back to Psalms 42 and 43. In these earlier psalms, the Geneva’s marginal notes stress David’s solution to his unquiet (“waite on God”), emphasizing both his faith and its constancy.⁴² But reformed commentaries tended to focus more on David’s initial question than on his resolution. David laments his “unquiet,” they observe, in the moments *before* he recalls his faith. And this temporary faithlessness is inextricable from works-righteousness.

Luther argues that David’s “unquiet” issues from Satan, who “maketh us to thinke of our owne worthynes or unworthynes, of our good or evill desertes” and forget our faith in “the body and blood of Christ, the grace, the favour, and the mercie

⁴¹ Psalms 42:11 and 43:5.

⁴² “Thogh he susteined grievous assaltes of the flesh to cast him into despaire, yet his faith grounded on Gods accustomed mercies, getteth the victorie” (42:5); “Dauid did not overcome at once: to teache vs to be constant for asmuche as God wil certainly deliuer his” (42:11); “Whereby he admonisheth the faithful not to relent, but constantly to waite on the Lord, thogh their troubles be long & great” (43:5).

of God.”⁴³ For Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), David’s unquietness is of the kind that occurs when “men by a natural kind of Popery seek for their comfort too much in sanctification... relying too much upon their own performances.” Sibbes claims the only way the “soul is quieted” is that we hold “faith... as a shield” against works-righteous thinking.⁴⁴ “Unquiet” elsewhere in the Scriptures was interpreted in a like manner: in William Baldwin’s translation of the Song of Songs (1549), the speaker argues that the New Covenant of faith “bryngeth unto rest / Unquiet myndes” that are “at stryfe, / Through want of wurkes, wherein they put theyr trust.”⁴⁵

No doubt, then, Spenser understood “unquiet” within a context of works-righteous thinking: he suggests as much in his own hymn, and the relationship was readily available to him in both the Scriptures and its commentaries. It seems the lover of Sonnet 2 is caught in the first phrase of the Davidic mantra: his “unquiet thought” about what works will win him (“seeke her to please alone”) has yet to cede to the faith David emphasizes in the second half of the Psalms’ verses (“waite on God”)—a “fayth” (*Am.* 65.13) the lover will discover as the *Amoretti* proceed.

We might, now, be better able to understand the lover’s charge to his “vnquiet thought” to “intreat” for two explicitly distinct petitions: “pardon” for itself and “grace” for the lover. A pardon, or indulgence, was a relaxation of temporal penalty through the communal “treasury of merit” accumulated through the good works of all

⁴³ *A commentarie upon the fiftene Psalmes, called Psalmi Graduum*, trans. Henry Bull (London: Imprinted by Thomas Vautroullier, 1577), 266-7.

⁴⁴ *The soul’s conflict with itself: and victory over itself by faith. Being a treatise of the inward disquietments of distressed spirits... The firth edition* (Glasgow: Printed by R. Urie, 1768), 44-5.

⁴⁵ *The canticles or balades of Salomon, phraselyke declared in Englysh metres* (London: William Baldwin, 1549), fol. L2.

Christians.⁴⁶ Reformers accused Catholics of using pardons to make satisfaction for sins; the reformed position was that only Christ satisfies and only God justifies. Luther's 1517 *Disputatio pro declaratione virtutis indulgentiarum*, commonly known as his 95 *Theses*, was written foremost—as its Latin title suggests—against the practice of granting indulgences. The theses repeatedly refer to *veniae*, rendered in most English translations as “pardons.” While not in opposition to them absolutely, Luther warns of the consequences of trusting these purchasable “letters of pardon” to secure salvation: pardons, he insists, are no substitute for God’s mercy.⁴⁷ Protestant writings on pardons ranged from comic to caustic, but were always critical of man’s entrusting his salvation to them.⁴⁸

In spite of this collective disparagement, the lover of the *Amoretti*’s early poems appeals repeatedly to what reformers interpreted as Catholic convictions about pardon, purchase, and remission. He asks, “[i]s there no meanes for me to purchase peace, / or make agreement with her thrilling eyes” (*Am.* 36.5-6)?⁴⁹ He claims he

⁴⁶ See Elizabeth C. Tingle, *Purgatory and Piety in Brittany, 1480-1720* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 208; “pardon, n. 1a” and “indulgence, n. 3a,” *OED Online*.

⁴⁷ See theses 32-55. “32. They will be condemned eternally... who believe themselves sure of their salvation because they have letters of pardon”; “49. Christians are to be taught that the pope’s pardons are useful, if they do not put their trust in them; but altogether harmful, if through them they lose their fear of God;” “52. The assurance of salvation by letters of pardon is vain.” (*Works of Martin Luther*, ed. Adolph Spaeth et al. Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman Company, 1915), 32-5).

⁴⁸ Johannes Sleidanus laments “that the ignorant people should be so far abused as to put the whole trust of their salvation in pardons” (*A famous cronicle of oure time* (London: Jhon Daye, 1560), fol. 4). Without the saving grace of Christ’s blood, William Tyndale warns his readers, they will “perish,” though they have “a thousand holy candles about [them], a hundred tons of holy water, a ship-ful of pardons... and all the ceremonies in the world and all the good works” (cited in David Daniel, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994), 168). In the next century, “Indulgences, dispensations, pardons, [and] bulls” will become “[t]he sport of winds” in *Paradise Lost*, “upwhirled... [i]nto a limbo... called / The Paradise of Fools” (III.492-6) (ed. Alastair Fowler (New York: Routledge, 2013), 197).

⁴⁹ The use of the term “making agreement” across reformed scriptural translations indicates there is only one figure who *can* “make agreement”: in Tyndale’s 1526 translation, God “sent his sonne to

would yield his life to the beloved in order to “assoyle” his “sorrows” (*Am.* 11.9), as though he could absolve himself of an ecclesiastical sentence; he alleges the “paine” of his “verse” can “purchas” her immortality (*Am.* 27.12, 14), as though the lyric could be a work of supererogation.⁵⁰ He determines to make her “absens” his “penaunce” and her “presens” his “meed” (*Am.* 52.13-14), undergoing a theologically-inflected ritual of discipline for the prospective “merit” of her company, and evoking what the Thirty-nine Articles considered one of “those five commonly called Sacraments” of the Catholic Church (penance) that Protestants deemed superfluous.⁵¹ In reformed terms, Spenser’s lover is obviously in need of doctrinal instruction. And yet, that he would tell his “vnquiet thought” (the “work” of the poem) to beg “pardon” for *itself* and “grace” for *him* indicates an attention to reformed claims about doctrinal difference. If “pardon” cannot save the meritorious “work” of his poems, that’s one thing; but the stakes are much higher when the

make agrement for oure sinnes” (1 John 4:10); in the 1535 Coverdale Bible, Christ, taking on the flesh, becomes “a faithfull hye prest... to make agrement for the synnes of the people” (Heb. 2:17). “No man,” the Coverdale claims, “may delyver his brother, ner make agrement for him unto God (Psalms 48:7).

⁵⁰ “Assoil” was a theological term synonymous with “absolve” (v.l.a. “To absolve from sin, grant absolution to, pardon”). See John Hamilton, *The catechisme* (1552): “The wordis of absolution... I assoile the fra thi synnis”; *Penitential Confession* (1638), “God remitting whomsoever the Priest assoileth” (“assoil, v.” *OED Online*). Gregory Mellema explains: “[t]he principle underlying the idea that the purchase of an indulgence can lessen the penalties for sin was that Jesus Christ and the saints had, through their exemplary lives on earth, built up a treasury of *good works*. Since this treasury can be of no direct benefit to these individuals, the scheme of indulgences was devised to enable others to benefit... through the purchase of indulgences it was believed possible for a measure of the accrued merit of Christ and the saints to be applied to their account” (*Beyond the Call of Duty: Supererogation, Obligation, and Offense* (Albany: State U of New York P, 1991), 44-5). In Sonnet 27, Spenser’s lover, too, has built up a treasury of “good works”—works whose “merit” he wants to transfer to the beloved—“purchasing” her eternal life *for* her, through his “paine” (“but what this verse, that neuer shall expire, / shall to you purchas with her thankless paine”).

⁵¹ See Article XXV: “Those five commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel” (*The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 680).

salvation of the lover is on the line. And so he is unwilling to trust his own salvation to a “pardon”—just as the reformers cautioned against—but petitions, instead, for grace. Of course, even this is a convoluted distinction: for the lover doesn’t “seeke and sew” (*Am.* 20.1) directly for grace; he seeks it through the work of the poem. While he would appear to privilege grace, he in fact privileges works as a *means* to grace.

The Pharisees—the New Testament’s “vipers”—committed precisely this sin.⁵² “When god had promised the people a savioure to come and... saue them from their synnes,” William Tyndale (c. 1494-c. 1536) reminds his readers, “the phareses [instead] taught to beleue in holy workes to be saued by.”⁵³ Théodore de Bèze (1519-1605) proposes that Paul called the Pharisees “enemies of the Crosse of... Christ” because nothing is “more contarie unto the grace of God, then the opinion of being able to doe any thing which... meriteth and deserveth any thing at Gods handes.”⁵⁴ Three of the four times that the Gospels’ Pharisees are referred to as a “generacion of vipers,” the Geneva Bible offers these qualifying glosses: “Or, broodes” (Matt. 3:7 and 12:34), “Or, vipers broodes” (Luke 3:7). These marginal notes supply further proof that Spenser was attending to the Geneva Bible as he wrote the *Amoretti*; for a “vipers brood”—which appears in no other scriptural gloss in Spenser’s period—is precisely what the lover likens his “vnquiet thought” to.⁵⁵

⁵² Matt 3:7, Matt. 12:34, Matt. 23:33, Luke 3:7.

⁵³ *An answeare unto Sir Thomas Mores dialoge made by Willyam Tindale* (Antwerp: S. Cock, 1531), fol. D3.

⁵⁴ *Master Bezaes sermons upon the three chapters of the canticke of canticles* (Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1587), 188.

⁵⁵ Psalms 116-18 and Matthew 22-23 were the liturgical readings for Morning Prayer on January 24, 1594, the date that corresponds with Sonnet 2. The “vipers” are referred to in Matthew 23:33.

Commentaries on these “vipers” emphasized not only their misguided confidence in works, but also the distinction between their internal impiety and their outward shows of righteousness. Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) describes the Pharisees as those who “appeared outwardly and boasted themselves to be the Church of God,” though they were, indeed, nothing but “painted tombs.”⁵⁶ Calvin describes them as “deceiv[ing] themselves and others” in “outward shew[s] of holiness,” noting John the Baptist attacks them in the Book of Matthew for “vaine shewe[s]” and “dissimulat[ing]... repentaunces.”⁵⁷ Thus it appears that the first two sonnets of the *Amoretti* immediately infuse doctrinal tension into Spenser’s amatory collection: Sonnet 1 offers an amatory analogue to works-righteousness, while the subsequent poem appears to caution against such an attitude, going so far as to intimate a relationship between the lover and the vipers of the Gospels. Sonnet 3 then employs the language of Paul’s conversion, perhaps proposing—early on in the sequence—the middle ground that the collection will eventually conclude on.

It would initially seem that the lover deserves a few more sincerity-points than the Gospels’ vipers do; but Spenser subtly links him with the “outward shewes” of pharisaical ceremony in two later sonnets—likely a complex issue for the poet, given that the liturgy itself was a kind of ceremony. In Sonnet 18, the lover grieves that the beloved’s heart cannot be softened no matter how extravagant his shows of anguish. Rather, “when I pleade, she bids me play my part, / and when I weep, she sayes teares

⁵⁶ *The Remains of Thomas Cranmer, D.D. Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. Rev. Henry Jenkyns. Vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1833), 156-7.

⁵⁷ *Harmonie*, 114.

are but water: / and when I sigh, she sayes I know the art” (9-11). Sonnet 54 takes the theatrical conceit—the beloved as cruel audience to the lover’s “playing his part”—further: in “this worlds Theatre... My loue lyke the Spectator ydly sits, / beholding me that all the pageants play, / disguising diuersely my troubled wits” (1-4). Her reception is ruthless as ever: “when I laugh she mocks, and when I cry / she laughes, and hardens evermore her hart” (11-12). Both responses to the lover’s performances seem, at first glance, rather callous. But Sonnet 54 is a virtual confession of pretense, even as it bemoans the beloved’s distrust: in these “pageants” (performances intended to deceive), “Sometimes I joy when glad occasion fits, / and mask in myrth lyke to a Comedy: / soone after when my joy to sorrow flits, / I waile and make my woes a Tragedy” (5-8).⁵⁸

The lover rejoices when the occasion is “fit” for joy rather than when he feels it; he “disguises” his wits; he “masks” himself in mirth (again indicating disguise—though probably also a play on the court masque); he “makes” his woes into a tragedy, crafting them to fit a performative genre. The whole thing smells of ceremony in its prescribed, external, and empty form. And indeed, the days’ liturgical readings for *both* Sonnets 18 and 54 make reference to the tabernacle, a figure that played a considerable role in reformed typologies (from the “material tabernacle” to the “spiritual tabernacle”) linking Old and New Covenants.⁵⁹ The Epistle for the day

⁵⁸ “pageant, n.1c.” *OED Online*.

⁵⁹ Luther writes of Hebrews 9, “the epistle treats of a twofold priesthood. The former priesthood was a material one, with material adornment, tabernacle, sacrifices and with pardon couched in ritual... [while t]he new order is a spiritual priesthood, with spiritual adornments, spiritual tabernacle and sacrifices.” The difference between Christ and the priesthood, he continues, is that “Christ sacrificed not goats nor calves nor birds; not bread; not blood nor flesh, as did Aaron and his posterity: [instead]

corresponding to Sonnet 54 was Hebrews 9:11-16, which examines the typological fulfillment and supplanting of the first tabernacle (the place of priestly worship) by the second (Christ, the “greater and... more perfite Tabernacle” (9:11)). What linked old and new tabernacles was the *topos* of blood sacrifice: in the first, the “blood of goates and calues” (9:12) was an acceptable sacrifice for atonement; the second compelled only faith in “the blood of Christ, which... purge[s] your conscience from dead workes” (9:14). If Paul did not write Hebrews, its message certainly echoed his.⁶⁰ While the supercession of one tabernacle by another is not as explicit in the day’s readings for Sonnet 18, they, too, distinguish the second tabernacle—Christ—from the first by the fact that the second tabernacle is “not made with hands” (2 Cor. 5.1, Heb. 9.11), but “*given*” (2 Cor. 5.1).⁶¹

As Larsen observes, by the “theatre” image we might infer that Spenser was attending to the *koiné* σκηνή (*skēnē*) in both days’ readings. The Greek σκηνή was rendered as “tabernacle,” but was also a wooden stage on which actors performed.⁶² Further, a “pageant” was not only a spectacle but was also the stage on which that spectacle was represented; thus, the Greek σκηνή, Vulgate *tabernacula*, and English “pageant” all would have pointed to the convergence of religious ritual and theatrical

he offered his own body and blood, and the manner of the sacrifice was spiritual” (“Christ our Great High Priest” in *The Sermons of Martin Luther*. vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 163-4).

⁶⁰ See footnote 29.

⁶¹ For sonnet 18, see 2 Cor. 5:1, “For we knowe that if our earthlie house of this tabernacle [σκήνους] be destroyed, we have a buildyng given of God, that is, an house not made with hands, but eternal in the heauens.”

⁶² *Edmund Spenser’s Amoretti and Epithalamion*, 183

performance.⁶³ The sense of the lover's wooing as a works-righteous "performance" in both sonnets is palpable: he resembles the pharisaical "vipers" as he performs works on the stage/in the tabernacle which was initially a place of priestly works of remission. And he insists on using his "hands" (taking his harp "in hand" (*Am.* 44.9); writing her name with two "hand[s]" (*Am.* 75.3); the handwriting of the poems themselves), in spite of New Testament claims that the second tabernacle is "not made with hands," but built of faith in the saving blood of Christ. Perhaps, then, Spenser's beloved—described as "gentle" ("Gentile?") eleven times over the course of the sequence, as opposed to Stella's once—is not so much the lover's cruel spectator as she is an unyielding mentor in New Covenant soteriology.

But if the lover is still oblivious to the reasons for his ongoing failure to effect requital, Spenser certainly isn't. Each time the poet carries over the day's liturgical readings, he aligns his lover with the Scriptures' figures of disbelief, works-righteousness, and insincerity. He has caused his lover to ask for "pardons," "purchases," "assoilments," and "agreements"—all echoing alleged Roman Catholic belief. And the lover's resemblance to the papists is implied repeatedly. We must look to Spenser's earlier work to fully appreciate the "Catholic" resonances of Sonnets 6 and 56.

In Sonnet 6, the lover reasons with himself in the face of the already-apparent failure of his courtship, insisting he ought not to be "dismayd" that the beloved's mind remains "vnmoued." In fact, he reflects, it's *better* that the courtship be labor-

⁶³ "A stage or platform on which scenes were acted or tableaux represented"; "a play on a religious theme" ("pageant, n. 1a, n. 2a." *OED Online*).

intensive, since “The harder [love is] wonne, the firmer [it will] abide” (4). His self-instruction in the couplet is a natural extension of this reflection: “Then thinke not long in taking litle paine / to knit the knot that ever shall remaine.” It’s a logic we’ve seen before, a presumed ratio between work and merit. But the lover uses a significant metaphor for “harder wonne” love in the second quatrain:

The durefull Oake, whose sap is not yet dride,
is long ere it conceiue the kindling fyre:
but when it once doth burne, it doth diuide
great heat, and makes his flames to heauen aspire.

The oaks of Spenser’s early poems served as symbols of the Catholic Church. In Sonnet 28 of his *Ruines of Rome*—a translation of Joachim du Bellay’s 1558 *Antiquitez de Rome*—Spenser describes a “great Oke drie and dead,” still “clad with reliques of some Trophees olde”; she is “halfe disboweled,” and her “trunke [is] all rotten and unsound.” Despite the oak’s foulness, “of the devout people [she] is ador’d, / And manie yong plants spring out of her rinde.”⁶⁴ Margaret Ferguson observes the antipapal resonance of Spenser’s poem, distinguishing it from the sentiment in du Bellay: his “tree has [a] moral unsoundness... absent in the [original]; and he suggests... the devotion symbolized [by the “yong plants”] is an error that springs directly from the “rinde” of the old tree of Rome.”⁶⁵

Ferguson elucidates no further; but “rinde” is certainly the decisive word here, as it was frequently used as a metaphor to distinguish Protestant inwardness from the outward shows and ceremonies of Catholicism. The Geneva Bible distinguishes “the

⁶⁴ Joachim du Bellay: *Antiquitez de Rome*. Translated by Edmund Spenser as *Ruines of Rome*, ed. Malcolm C. Smith (Binghamton: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1994), 75.

⁶⁵ *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990), 186.

number of the faithful” who “atteine to the pith and substance” from those who “onely staye in the outwarde rinde and barke” (Mark 4:11 and marginal note). The rhetorician Thomas Wilson (1524-1581) argues that “the Gospell resteth... not in the outward rynde, but in the very hart”; for the preacher Edward Elton (c. 1569-1524), men like “[t]he Pharises” “rest in the outward rinde and barke of the law of God, [and] see not the pith and marrow of it.”⁶⁶ That the “yong plants” of Spenser’s oak spring from its “rotten” “rinde” suggests their “devout” acts are but *acts*, lacking the “pith and substance” of the faithful.⁶⁷ It is perhaps of note, then, that the inward “sap” of the oak in Sonnet 6 must be fully “dride” (practitioners of Catholicism must turn inward, to “the very hart”) before its “flames [can] to heauen aspire” (5, 8).

Spenser is more explicit about the oak-papacy analogy in “Februarie” of his *Shepherd’s Calender*, published a decade after *Ruines of Rome*. Like the oak in *Ruines*, “Februarie’s” oak is but a shadow of the dignified, opulent, and hallowed tree it once was. Though “often crost with the priestes crewe, / And often halowed with holy water dew,” it is now a “faded Oake, / Whose bodie is sere, whos braunches broke,” whose “toppe [is] bald, and wasted with wormes,” and whose “honor [is] decayed.”⁶⁸ E.K., the *Calender*’s annotator, instructs the reader to associate “the finall decay of this auncient Oake” with “the popishe priest [who] used to sprinckle and hallowe the trees from mischaunce.” E.K.’s gloss is specifically about the futility of

⁶⁶ *The rule of reason, conteinyng the arte of logique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1551), fol. D5; *The complaint of a sanctified sinner answered* (London: G. Eld, 1622), 292.

⁶⁷ Malcolm C. Smith also notes a shift in grammatical tense in Spenser’s translation: while du Bellay’s Rome “est le plus honnoré,” Spenser’s rewriting “place[s] esteem for Rome in the past” (*Joachim du Bellay: Antiquitez*, 75).

⁶⁸ *The Yale Edition*, 47, 45.

the priestly blessing of trees; but the preservation of the oak-papacy analogy in the ten years that separated *Ruines of Rome* and *The Shepheardes Calender* suggests it was a powerful one for Spenser. Of course, the oak of “Februarie” is more complex than a straightforward stand-in for the failure of “works righteousness”: it remains crucial to the briar’s protection, after all, and its destruction is also the briar’s ruin. But that it serves as the dominant metaphor in a sonnet insistent on “har[d] wonne” love—and on the belief that the “litle paine[s]” will win him entrance to “heauen”—suggests those nuances are still there in the *Amoretti*.

Fifty sonnets later, Spenser is still having some fun at the expense of his doctrinally-flawed lover. Each quatrain of Sonnet 56 presents a miniature episode of destruction: a “Tygre” “oppresse[s]” a “feeble beast” it encounters while “hunt[ing] after blood”; a “storme” finds “a tree alone all comfortlesse” and “beats on it strongly” to bring it to ruin; a “desolate” ship “suffer[s] wreck” when it crashes into “a rocke amidst the raging floods.” The sonnet closes by compressing these episodes into a single analogy: “That ship, that tree, and that same beast am I, / whom ye do wreck, do ruine, and destroy.” These blighted figures—prey, ship, and tree—are all derived from Petrarch’s *canzone* 323; and it would be easy to dismiss Spenser’s sonnet as another instance of purely Petrarchan translation. But this was not the first time Spenser translated *canzone* 323. Jan van der Noot’s 1569 *Theatre for Worldlings* contains his earliest adaptation. The *Theatre* is a Calvinist diatribe; and Van der Noot arranged Spenser’s translations in such a way that they could only be interpreted as longing for the destruction of present-day Rome and the papacy. Spenser’s translation

of *canzone* 323 was followed by his translation of Du Bellay's "Songe," a series of dream-visions about Rome's fall; then followed four sonnets interpreting the events in the Book of Revelation as the eradication of the Catholic Church. These "Visions from Revelation" were likely written by Van der Noot himself; but nothing separates the last of Spenser's translations from the first "vision." The decline of classical Rome and the apocalyptic destruction of the Roman Catholic Church thus become, in the *Theatre*, two significant moments of a single history.

Whether or not Spenser had anything to do with the placement of his translations in the *Theatre*, he surely recognized Van der Noot's intentions once the poems were published. In having the *Amoretti*'s lover in Sonnet 56 assume the very roles Van der Noot turned into metaphors of the papacy's demise, Spenser evokes their earliest theological sentiments. The sonnet reiterates the "prophecy" of Roman Catholic demise by repeatedly "wreck[ing]," "ruine[ing]," and destroy[ing]" the works-righteous lover.

Spenser's scriptural allusions are certainly much quieter for us than they would have been for his contemporaries, many of whom were following—even if occasionally or irregularly—the readings prescribed by the Church's liturgical calendar. But they are worth lingering on because they offer more than echoes: they offer a gathering of cautions against the very over-assurance that the Pharisees represent; against placing salvational security in "Catholic" means such as pardons; against ignoring Paul's injunction to place faith before works. Spenser's is a subtle transformation of the genre; but his employment of liturgical readings has the effect

of turning the *Amoretti* into instruction against what Calvin called the “flattery” of thinking one could “satisfy” the law oneself.⁶⁹ The oak of Spenser’s “Februarie,” we saw, serves as an ambiguous figure—problematic yet crucial to the survival of other forms of life. In a similarly equivocal fashion, the spectacular religious rituals performed in the Pharisees’ tabernacles were troubling to Spenser, although he willingly subscribed to the Church of England’s liturgical rites. We will see that—after the reception of grace—the lover, too, discovers a middle space between the external works represented by the oak and the tabernacle, and his new faith. But in the lyrics prior to Sonnet 67, Spenser worked diligently to remind his readers that works before grace are works performed in vain.

This is the provocative irony in the analogy the early poems of the sequence sustain: one in which every effort at “good works” achieves the very “woes and wrecks” (*Am.* 25.11) the lover experiences. From the Petrarchan perspective, these “works” are the pains the lover suffers for the beloved; the undesirable effects are a matter of some combination of the beloved’s cruelty and chastity. From the reformed perspective, too, the consequences of works are “woes and wrecks.” This is particularly the case for works performed prior to justification, insofar as such labours are not simply failed attempts at righteousness: they are sins. Article 13 of the Thirty-nine Articles (“Of Works before Justification”) asserts as much: “Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God... for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not

⁶⁹ *Harmonie*, 116.

but they have the nature of sin.”⁷⁰ Foolish assurance in the merit of one’s good works, that is, invites the “woes and wrecks” of spiritual ruin. Thus from both Petrarchan and reformed points of view, “works” and “wrecks” are frequently indistinguishable. The difference is that, according to the reformed perspective, divine grace has the power to convert those “wrecks” into lasting “works.” The *Amoretti* presents this grace-conversion in Sonnet 67.

REFORMED JUSTIFICATION: GRACE AND REGENERATION

Prior to his conversion, Paul stands fearless in the face of God’s justice because he believes himself just according to the Old Covenant of works-righteousness (“touching the righteousness which is in the Law, I was unrebukeable” (Phil. 3:6)). Similarly, the doctrinal position that the penitent could be “justly” recompensed for his work is, early on, an irresistible draw for Spenser’s lover: he even sues for “justice” on three occasions (12.14, 43.10, 48.8), apparently oblivious to the reformed opinion that man’s justification “*exclude[s]* the justice of... [his] works.”⁷¹

In the first of these, the lover determines to “make a truce” and come to “termes” with the beloved’s “hart-thrilling eyes”; thus he “disarm[s]” himself and stands “fearlesse” before her, so that “iustice [he] may gaine” (*Am.* 12.1-3, 5, 14).

Given the Council of Trent’s affirmation of God’s “justice” in the face of “every good

⁷⁰ *Book of Common Prayer*, 677.

⁷¹ The Council of Trent reminds adherents of the Catholic Church to “abound in every good work, knowing that your labour is not in vain... *for God is not unjust*, that he should forget your work” (“Sixth Session, Chapter XVI” in *Canons and Decrees*, 42, italics mine). Thomas Cranmer, on the other hand, writes: “the grace of God doth not exclude [His] justice... [but] excludeth the justice of... our works” (“The Second Part of the Sermon of Salvation” in *Certain Sermons or Homilies*, 22).

work,” we can understand why the lover would approach the beloved with such confidence.⁷² But a reformed reader would have taken pause at this fearlessness. The Pauline admonition, after all, was to “make an end of your owne saluation with feare and trembling” (Phil. 2:12), a “feare and trembling” that reformed expositors—however paradoxically—associated with faith.⁷³

The “trembling” of Sonnet 67—the turning point of the *Amoretti*, in which the beloved (in the figure of a deer) comes to the lover (in the figure of a hunter) of “her owne [good]will”—thus seems to me the most crucial word of the sonnet. Here is the sonnet in full:

LYKE as a huntsman after weary chace,
 Seeing the game from him escapt away:
 sits downe to rest him in some shady place,
 with panting hounds beguiled of their pray.
 So after long pursuit and vaine assay,
 when I all weary had the chace forsooke,
 the gentle deare returnd the selfe-same way,
 thinking to quench her thirst at the next brooke.
 There she beholding me with mylder looke,
 sought not to fly, but fearelesse still did bide:
 till I in hand her yet halfe trembling tooke,
 and with her owne goodwill hir fymely tyde.
 Strange thing me seemd to see a beast so wyld,
 so goodly wonne with her owne will beguyld.

⁷² See footnote 68.

⁷³ Calvin writes of a “fear and trembling, which, so far from impairing the security of faith, tends rather to establish it; namely, when believers... [in] view of their own inherent wretchedness, learn their entire dependence on God” (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 369. 3.2.22). For Thomas Wilcox, “feare and trembling” is “alwayes adjoyned with faith, and is opposed not to doubting... but to carnall securitie and carelesnes.” While men “suppose that faith and feare cannot stand together,” Wilcox asserts, “they are deceived: for the faithfull... feare and believe also” (*A discourse touching the doctrine of doubting* (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legat, 1598), 50-51).

William Johnson observes that Spenser draws together Christ's final words here ("My God, my God, why hast thou *forsaken* me"; "I *thirst*"; "Father into thy *hands* I commend my spirit"); Christ's ultimate act of justifying grace for man thus resonates in the hunter's experience of "grace" from the "deare" beloved.⁷⁴ Anne Lake Prescott has proposed another source in the sixth lyric of Marguerite de Navarre's 1547

Chansons spirituelles. Prescott's rendering is worth quoting at length:

A young hunter asked a happy and wise woman if the chase he was looking for could be found in that forest, and he said he had plenty of heart to win this venison by... merit and reason. She said to him, 'My lord, it is indeed the season to take it, but you are a bad hunter. It is not to be taken by the chase... What you seek is in the woods, where no faithless person goes'... the hunter... said, 'You speak with great ignorance: I must turn and rouse the deer... and must chase it; yet you expressly tell me it cannot be caught by my effort'... [she said] 'If you would please to sit and place yourself on the edge of a spring, and rest your body and spirit... indeed without your taking other pains the deer would come straight to you, and to take it would require only the net of your humble heart...' 'My lady, I do not believe one... gets anywhere without work or with only loving and believing...' The lady said, 'you will be lord and owner of Earth and Heaven if Faith opens your eyes—but you are a bad hunter.'⁷⁵

Spenser would surely have been taken by Marguerite's poem. Indeed, Prescott claims elsewhere that "Marguerite makes it clear that the deer in her witty evangelical allegory is the crucified Christ," and observes that "the next song in [Marguerite's] volume is, like *Am.* 68, a Resurrection poem."⁷⁶ For Spenser to simply use the liturgical calendar as a daily prompt, or constraint, or in a game of generic crossover in his love poems would have been one thing; but that he appears to have turned to

⁷⁴ *Analogies of Love*, 58, italics mine.

⁷⁵ "The Thirsty Deer and the Lord of Life: Some Contexts for *Amoretti* 67-70" in *Spenser Studies* 6 (1986), 69-70.

⁷⁶ "Allegorical Deer and *Amoretti* 67" in *Edmund Spenser's Poetry: Authoritative Texts and Criticism*, ed. Hugh MacLean and Anne Lake Prescott (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 810.

other lyrics reflecting upon similar soteriological issues underscores the argument that his poetic project was more centered upon real theological inquiry than it was engaged in play. The “happy and wise” woman’s insistence on a “chaseless” faith in the woods where only “faithful” hunters go, against the hunter’s rejection of “loving and believing” for “merit” and “effort,” plays out precisely the debates about justification that the Reformation ushered in (for readers concerned about Marguerite’s hunter, he is, in the end, converted). Further, while the hunter of Marguerite’s *Chansons* believes he must “rouse” the deer, frightening it out of its hiding place, the woman’s depiction of the deer implies it cannot be frightened: it “will come to [him] through love”; “it will let itself be taken” by first “taking” *him*. Marguerite’s deer is so fearless, in fact, that once it is caught, it will “teach [the hunter] to eat its flesh and blood.”⁷⁷

Kenneth Larsen writes of Spenser’s qualifier “halfe trembling” that its “antecedent remains open, implying mutuality.”⁷⁸ Spenser’s grammar certainly lends itself to this reading; but when read as a translation of—or a commentary on—Marguerite’s lyric, the *substance* of the sonnet does not. We know that Spenser’s deer “bide[s]” “fearelesse” by the brook; and while Larsen proposes that “the shaking” might be “a continuing after-effect” of the chase, the deer “still” bides—suggesting either that she is motionless (thus not trembling) or that she has been there for some time (long enough to dispel any “after-effects”). Further, she “return[s] the selfe-same way”—knowingly—to the site at which her life, just moments ago, appeared threatened.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Edmund Spenser’s *Amoretti and Epithalamion*, 200.

Why would the deer return, if not fearless—and thus, not trembling? On the other hand, the huntsman is “weary” enough to need rest, his hounds are “panting,” and he is in a state of wonder, perhaps shaken by the “strangeness” of the event. All of this suggests the “halfe trembling” figure is more logically (if not more grammatically) the huntsman—working out his salvation, as it were, “with trembling.” While this doesn’t disentangle the final couplet for us entirely, it does offer a reformed approach to justification: an unanticipated conversion-event not unlike Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus. That the deer is “wonne” “with her owne will”—and neither by the lover’s will nor his works—strongly suggests a turn from Old Covenant to New.

At this point, I propose, an early modern reader preparing soon to turn the page to the *Epithalamion* would have anticipated that the remainder of the *Amoretti* would unfold according to the *ordo salutis*, the Pauline “order of salvation” the reformers adopted from Romans 8: “For those which [God] knewe before, he also predestinate to be made like to the image of his Sonne... Moreouer whome he predestinated, them also he called, and whome he called, them also he justified, and whome he justified, them he also glorified” (29-30). The sequence of events in the *ordo* is certainly not rigid (some of its stages could be experienced simultaneously, for example); but no scriptural text was more cited in Protestant soteriology than Romans 8, and the Thirty-nine Articles themselves virtually systematized these phases of salvation.⁷⁹ A reader reading the sequence with a view to soteriology (the

⁷⁹ John Spenser Hill, *Infinity, Faith, and Time: Christian Humanism and Renaissance Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1997), 143; D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), 35. William Perkins’ 1591 *A golden chaine, or the description of theologie: containing the order of the causes of*

title page, its device, the lover's failed works despite his desire for "heauen[ly] blis" (*Am.* 1.12), the evident "grace event" of Sonnet 67) would have expected Spenser's lover's reception of grace to be followed by something resembling sanctification ("to be made like to the image of [God's] Sonne").

And indeed, that reader would have gotten what he anticipated. For Paul and his commentators, justification "is joynd with" regeneration, which the Geneva Bible also called "sanctification."⁸⁰ Reformed descriptions of the terms suggest there was a great deal of overlap between these two processes: both refer to the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness; both have to do with something approximating "works."⁸¹ The mirror trope was also employed for both: in regeneration and in sanctification, we are "form[ed]... anew [in] the image of God." Calvin cites Paul in summarizing regeneration, wherein we "with open face behol[d] as in a glass the glory of the Lord, [and] are changed into the same image."⁸² Shortly after Sonnet 67's passage from the Old Covenant (works) to the New (grace), Spenser offers one outstanding echo of this mirror trope, a "likeness" that announces the

salvation and damnation is probably the most comprehensive text on the *ordo*. The Thirty-Nine Articles took it up straightforwardly in Article 17: "they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, [are] called according to Gods purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works: and at length by Gods mercy they attain to everlasting felicity" (*Book of Common Prayer*, 678). George Herbert's "Prayer After Sermon" at the close of *The Country Parson* reads, "Thou has elected us, thou has called us, though hast justified us, sanctified and glorified us" (*Herbert's Poems and Country Parson*, ed. Isaac Walton (London: Printed for W. Baynes, 1824), 338).

⁸⁰ "Christ... justifies no man without also sanctifying him," because "[t]hese blessings are joined by a perpetual and inseparable tie" (*Institutes* 3.16.1); Rom. 6 head note; Rom. 6:1 marginal note.

⁸¹ Perkins defines sanctification as the process "whereby such as beleeve, being deliuered from the tyrannie of sinne, are by little and little renued in holinesse and righteousness" (*A golden chaine*, 203); Calvin defines regeneration as the process by which "God abolishes the remains of carnal corruption in his elect, cleanses them from pollution, and consecrates them as his temples" (*Institutes* 3.3.9).

⁸² *Institutes* 3.3.9; 2 Cor. 3:18.

lover's regeneration. In Sonnet 78, the lover laments having already lost the deer he just so "fyrnely tyde" "with her owne goodwill" (*Am.* 67.12). He has since undergone a metamorphosis:

Lackynge my love I go from place to place,
lyke a young fawne that late hath lost the hynd:
and seeke each where, where last I sawe her face,
whose ymage yet I carry fresh in mynd."

The "young fawne" searches "bowre" and "field" and cannot locate his love, though both "bowre" and "field" are "full of her aspect" (7-8). Each time he directs his eyes outward, they only return to him—until he instructs them, in the final couplet, to "[c]easse then... to seeke her selfe to see, / and let my thoughts behold her selfe in mee."

Sonnet 78 is the *Amoretti*'s ultimate introspection sonnet: sight becomes insight; the "ymage" of the beloved is now within. But what is particularly significant to a soteriological reading here is that the lover is no longer the deer's *hunter*, but her *offspring* ("lyke a young fawne"): he carries both a mental "ymage" of her "in mynd" and her physical "ymage"—her "aspect"—in his face. Spenser appears to be taking up two distinct tropes for justification and regeneration here. The first carries us back to Galatians: the hunter has been spiritually (and "unnaturally") "adopted" into a cervine genealogical line through the grace-event of the deer's return, reflecting Paul's claim that "we might receiue the adoption of the sonnes" through a revised succession narrative (Gal. 4:5). But he also appears to be taking up Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians as his lover/fawn looks out upon a world full of the "aspect" of the beloved/hind, looking *like* her *as* he looks upon objects that *reflect* her ("we all

beholde as in a mirrour the glorie of the Lord with open face, and are changed into the same image” (2 Cor. 3:18)). That the fawn’s eyes “returne to [him]” each time he sends them out “to see theyr trew object” implies that the lover’s sanctification has begun: his “aspect” and his “ymage” are “the same” as the beloved’s, such that he not only *resembles* her, but he also *sees as she sees*.

The liturgical readings for the day corresponding with Sonnet 78 (Sunday May 5, 1594) included James 1:22-24 as its Epistle. Spenser would have read: “be ye doers of the worde, and not hearers onely... For if anie heare the worde, & do it not, he is like vnto a man, that beholdeth his natural face in a glasse. For when he... goeth his way, [he] forgetteth immediatly what maner of one he was.” One can see why reformers were suspicious of James; the Epistle’s emphasis on works is substantial. Even as Calvin endeavors to refer back to the *sola fide* and *sola gratia* of Paul’s Epistles, citing Corinthians and Galatians in his commentary on James 1, he cannot help but slip into a discourse of works: “faith is comprehended by James, along with other works”; “[James] means that happiness is placed in actual doing, and not in colde and lifeless hearing.”⁸³ Sanctification and regeneration, after all, troubled the notion that works and the Law were entirely inconsequential. By definition, the elect—now renewed in God’s image—manifested their regeneration outwardly, *through* works: this was the tension at the site at which *sola fide* met Paul’s mirror-image metaphor. The question that remains, then, is how the *Amoretti*—which appears, in Sonnet 67, to privilege grace over works and “feare and trembling” over works-

⁸³ *Calvin’s Commentary on the Epistle of James* (Aberdeen: Printed by J. Chalmers and Co., 1797), 27-8, italics mine.

righteousness—deals with the more complex discourses about the role of works in the life of the regenerate *after* his justification.

POETIC WORK, WORKS-RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND DOCTRINAL IRRESOLUTION

Much has been written about the apparent ambivalence with which the *Amoretti* conclude.⁸⁴ While Sonnet 84 appears to substantiate the lover's salvational status ("Onely behold her rare perfection, / and blesse your fortunes fayre *election*"), it simultaneously serves as an admonishment to "[l]et not one sparke of filthy lustfull fyre / breake out"—an acknowledgment of the ever-present possibility of backsliding (13-14, 1-2). The final four sonnets are a response to some slander that has apparently "stirre[d] up coles of yre" in the beloved (*Am.* 86.8); a meditation on how time has been protracted since the lover "le[ft] the presence of [his] love" (*Am.* 87.1); a complaint about the darkness that envelops him as a consequence of this separation (*Am.* 88); and a comparison of the lover to the "[c]ulver" who, "disconsolate" and "desolate," "[s]its mourning for the absence of her mate" (*Am.* 89.1-2, 5, 7). Granted, these sonnets are liturgically associated with the period following Christ's Ascension and leading up to the Feast of Pentecost, so the *topos* of absence is, at this point,

⁸⁴ Alexander Grosart writes: "it is simply impossible to go beyond Sonnet 85... Pity that ever the Poet gathered together the [sonnets] that follow. They seem to... [have] been inspired by a different object and under wholly different circumstances" (*Variorum*, 452). J.W. Lever tries to make sense of the end by offering an analogue in *The Faerie Queene's* Blatant Beast of Slander, who "has escaped and at the close of the book is still at large" (*The Elizabethan Love Sonnet* (London: Methuen & Co., 1956), 128). Noam Flinker finds an explanation in Baldwin's *Canticles*, when the beloved can't find her lover because she "fail[s]... to open her door [to him] immediately" (*The Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature: Kisses of Their Mouths* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), 83). Kenneth Larsen notes "[t]he final three sonnets... are marked by their sense of absence, their comfortlessness, and their 'expectation'" and reads them as references to Expectation Week (*Edmund Spenser's Amoretti and Epithalamion*, 11). While these analogues help gather Spenser's sources or reveal his ongoing concerns, none fully explains why the *Amoretti* would conclude so unsettlingly—especially given the *Epithalamion* that follows it.

predictable. But an additional cause of this “unquiet” conclusion may point to the real failure of doctrinal consensus about the role of works on the other side of justification.

If Spenser’s lover, in other words, had simply stopped producing lyric “works” after Sonnet 67, we would have a clean-and-easy analogue to a salvation theory in which works are altogether irrelevant. But even Paul, our *sola fide* / *sola gratia* apostle, called the Law “holie, and the commandement... holie, and just, & good” (Rom. 7:12). Carol Kaske notes that “[i]n Spenser’s time, the Protestant Bible was more contestatory of Paul’s... emphasis on grace because it still contained the deuterocanonical books, and so did the lectionary.” “Ecclesiasticus,” for example, “is very works-righteous, placing the burden of salvation entirely upon man.”⁸⁵ The New Testament’s James—as we have seen—made matters worse for reformers, who strained to find a way around its apparent message of justification by works: James 2:24 was even cited in the Council of Trent as proof that works contribute to justification and sanctification.⁸⁶ Reformers consented on two things: 1) there could be no good works without grace; and 2) faith *necessarily* leads to good works (sanctification follows justification); the Thirty-nine Articles maintained both doctrines.⁸⁷ But readers have perhaps seen all along where the complications lie.

⁸⁵ *Biblical Poetics*, 146.

⁸⁶ Sixth Session, Canon XXIV.

⁸⁷ “Works done before the grace of Christ... are not pleasant to God, [for]... they spring not of Faith in Jesus Christ”; “Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins... yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God... and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith.” Articles 13 and 12, respectively (*Book of Common Prayer*, 677).

To begin with, if good works perforce followed justification, there remained a question about the degree to which the elect were to labor for their ongoing *sanctification*. Further, while Article 12 affirmed that good works “necessarily” follow justification as a tree “necessarily” brings forth fruit, some theologians were not so convinced of that necessity. Richard Hooker stresses that—although all good actions are God’s—man must be industrious in his own sanctification: “For lett the Spiritt be never soe prompt, if labour and exercise slacken, wee faile.”⁸⁸ Perkins takes Hooker’s “labour and exercise” a step further, arguing that the elect must “presse on to the straight gate with maine and might, [and] with all violence lay hold on the kingdome of heauen.”⁸⁹ One can imagine a reader wondering if the “violence” by which he ought to “lay hold of the kingdome” was his *own* or was a gift of grace: does grace, after all, bestow violence? He might also reasonably be confused by Hooker’s claims in *A Learned Discourse of Justification* that “We are justified by faith *alone*, and yet... without good works we are not justified.”⁹⁰

John Spencer Hill observes that as a consequence of divisions some reformers made between “first” and “second” justifications (the first awarded on the basis of faith alone, the second on the believer’s works), “it was usual for Protestant texts on dogmatics to be divided, like Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana*, into two sections: the first on faith, the second on ethics,” surely prompting a reader to wonder why he

⁸⁸ *The Folger Library Edition of The Works of Richard Hooker*, ed. John E. Booty. Vol 4 (London: Belknap Press, 1982), 112.

⁸⁹ *The workes of that famous and vvorthie minister of Christ, in the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, M.W. Perkins*. Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legate, 1608), 361.

⁹⁰ *A learned discourse of justification, workes, and how the foundation of faith is overthrowne* (Oxford: Printed by Joseph Barnes, 1613), 27, italics mine.

would need a handbook on ethics if the good works that sanctified him were imparted to him through God's extra-textual grace.⁹¹ One might answer this question by observing that the "Homily of Good Works" lists two other reasons (beyond their being "declarations and testimonies of our justification") why "St. Paul teacheth, that we must do good works": "to shew ourselves obedient children" and "that others, seeing our good works, may... be stirred up... to glorify our father which is in heaven."⁹² But did this mean a man uncompelled by grace—or, worse, certain he was among the reprobate—ought to *do* good works anyhow, for the sake of those "others"? Wouldn't that be cheating the work of grace? Darryl Gless observes that "[c]ursory readings or partial recollections" of reformers such as "Bucer or Zwingli could lead... to contradictory conclusions: either that they believed in justification by faith, or that they believed sinners can in some sense be justified by works."⁹³ While works were only supposed to be "the most evident *tokens* of election," we see how easy it would have been for them to take soteriological precedence.⁹⁴

Indeed, Prescott notes (with some amusement, I think) that even scholars of the *Amoretti* "who recognize that for Protestants there is no justification by works" inadvertently end up "insist[ing] that the lover *earns* the lady." Alexander Dunlop, for

⁹¹ *Infinity, Faith, and Time*, 150.

⁹² *Certain Sermons or Homilies*, 292.

⁹³ *Interpretation and Theology*, 14. The speaker of one of Milton's sonnets appears to accept the latter when he writes to his deceased friend of her entrance into heaven that "Thy Works and Alms and all thy good Endeavour, / Staid not behind... [but] Follow'd thee up to joy and bliss for ever." Catherine merits "joy and bliss" because her "Works" and "good Endeavour" (*rather than* her faith, whose role as a mere "hand-maid" is to "clad them o're" and "point" them toward the judge) "speak the truth of thee on glorious Theams / Before the Judge, who thenceforth bid thee rest" (*Poems, &c. upon several occasions* (London: Printed for Tho. Dring, 1673), 58).

⁹⁴ Perkins cited in R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979), 75, italics mine.

example, “rightly says *Am.* 67 and 68 show that ‘True love is... ultimately a gift of grace,’ but in the next sentence says the ‘bond of love’ depends on ‘the proven worth of the lover.’”⁹⁵ Scholars such as Gless, Kaske, and James Schiavoni have suggested that amid doctrinal (and, apparently, scholarly) irresolution—“the aporias inherent in these topics... [the] disagreement of authorities, and tensions of ecclesiastical politics”—Spenser “could not make up his mind” about justification.⁹⁶ For Schiavoni, this explains why, despite *The Faerie Queene*’s general insistence upon *sola gratia*, a figure like Guyon can state “But after death the tryall is to come, / When best shall be to them that lived best.”⁹⁷ For Kaske, it explains why Una’s “Protestant advice” to Redcrosse (“In heavenly mercies hast thou not a part? / Why shouldst thou then despire, that chosen art? / Where justice growes, there grows eke greter grace”) is neutralized by the passage “describing the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy as part of ‘the way, [Redcrosse’s] sinfull soul to save.’”⁹⁸

These studies concentrate on Spenser’s epic. But if *The Faerie Queene*—Spenser’s coincident project—vacillated on the question of justification, might we not expect his amatory verse do the same? Why does Spenser’s lover keep writing “works” even *after* the beloved has been “tyde”—and grace granted—“with her owne goodwill” (*Am.* 67.12)? Why does he repair to “Catholic” language two lyrics later, relishing in “[t]he happy purchase of my glorious spoile, / gotten at last with labour and long toyle” (*Am.* 69.13-14)?

⁹⁵ “The Thirsty Deer,” 72.

⁹⁶ Kaske, *Biblical Poetics*, 154.

⁹⁷ “Predestination and Free Will: The Crux of Canto Ten” in *Spenser Studies* 10 (1989), 183.

⁹⁸ *Biblical Poetics*, 101.

Sonnets 76 and 77 might prove surprising sites for that answer. Both poems—derivations on Torquato Tasso’s sonnet “Non son sì belli i fiori onde natura”—celebrate the beloved’s breasts; they are the only two sonnets in Spenser’s sequence to do so. Sonnet 76 presents a short catalogue of metaphors for the beloved’s “fayre bosome” (it is “[t]he neast of loue,” “the bowre of blisse, the paradise of pleasure”) before narrating an episode in which his “frayle thoughts [are]... led astray,” display “theyr wanton winges” and “rest themselues” “boldly” “twixt” the beloved’s “paps” (1-2, 6, 11-12, 9). In Sonnet 77, the lover witnesses a vision of an ivory table spread with “iuncats,” whereon “twoo golden apples of vnualed price” lie in a “silver dish” (3, 6, 5). The couplet deciphers the image for us (in case we needed deciphering): “Her brest that table was so richly spredd, / my thoughts the guests, which would thereon haue fedd.” How did Spenser think two consecutive sonnets about the beloved’s breasts would serve an amatory sequence so clearly concerned with liturgical—and, by extension—salvational matters? Why translate Tasso *twice*? And why are *these* the two poems to immediately precede what I have just described as the “regeneration” sonnet, in which the fawn becomes the mirror-image of the hind, the lover a mirror-image of the divine beloved, a “doe[r] of the worde, and not [a] heare[r] onely” (James 1:22)?

When William Ponsonby published Spenser’s *Complaints*, he understood Spenser to have written much more than what appears in the 1591 collection (“he

besides wrote sundrie others”, including “*Canticum canticorum* translated”).⁹⁹ These lost translations of “*Canticum canticorum*,” alongside what we know about early modern enthusiasm for Solomon’s *Song*, imply that Spenser took interest in the translations and expositions of the text so abundant in the sixteenth century.¹⁰⁰ Explications of the beloved’s breasts across these commentaries are remarkably consistent: Thomas Wilcox writes, “Many understand by the *two brestes*, the two Testaments, which have mutuall respect one to an other, neither can one of them well easely be understood without an other.”¹⁰¹ Antonio Brucioli (c. 1498-1566) writes, “the two breasts... signifie the old Testament and the New, the doctrine of the Prophets, and the doctrine of the Apostles”; Solomon “calleth them *twinnnes*, because it is the selfe same God and father, which is the author and father of both Testaments.”¹⁰² For Henry Finch (c. 1558-1625), the beloved’s breasts “are full of all good nourishment of the sincere milke of the word of God, that flowes as from a strame out of both her brests of that olde and the new Testament.”¹⁰³ In fact, William Baldwin is the only commentator who appears to privilege the New Testament in his

⁹⁹ “The Printer to the Gentle Reader” in *Complaints. Containing sundrie small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie* (London: Imprinted for William Ponsonbie, 1591), fol. A2.

¹⁰⁰ Spenser’s period was one in which “metrical renditions of... Scripture, and especially... ‘The seven Psalmes,’ *Ecclesiastes* and the *Song of Songs*—virtually gushed from the pens of England’s poets” (Israel Baroway, “The Imagery of Spenser and the ‘Song of Songs’” in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 33.1 (Jan. 1934), 23). See also *The Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature*; George L. Scheper, “Reformation Attitudes toward Allegory and the Song of Songs” in *PMLA* 89 (1974); Elizabeth Clarke, *Politics, Religion, and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

¹⁰¹ *An exposition vppon the Booke of the Canticles, otherwise called Schelomons Song* (London: Printed by Robert Waldegrave, 1585), 92.

¹⁰² *A commentary upon the Canticle of Canticles*, trans. Th. Iames (London: Printed by R. Field, 1598), 129-30.

¹⁰³ *An exposition of the Song of Solomon: called Canticles* (London: Printed by Iohn Beale, 1615), fol. E4.

translation of (both) the beloved's breasts as "charitie."¹⁰⁴

Old and New Testaments are of equal significance in the majority of these exegeses; commentators regularly remind readers of the relationship ("twinnes") between physical and soteriological symmetry.¹⁰⁵ Neither does Spenser's lover privilege one "testament" over another (as it would, indeed, be strange to prefer one of the beloved's breasts to another): his thoughts rest "*twixt* her paps," favoring neither; both breasts make up "vertues richest treasure" and "the sacred harbour of that heavenly spright" (*Am.* 76.9, 1, 4); both apples are of "vnualewd price," and the lover's thoughts "would... have fedd" on both had they been given the chance (*Am.* 77.6, 14). It is conceivable that the theologians' insistence on the "twinne" testaments guided Spenser's decision to take a single sonnet of Tasso's contemplating the beloved's "real seno" and translate it twice.

Paul's affirmations of the usefulness of Law in the liturgical readings for the days corresponding to both sonnets may, too, have caused Spenser's lover to linger on "both testaments." Spenser would have read Romans 2 and 3 while composing Sonnets 76 and 77, and—in the midst of an Epistle otherwise emphasizing grace—would have encountered such verses as "[God] wil rewarde euerie man according to his workes" (2:6); "the hearers of the Law are not righteous before God: but the doers of the Law shalbe justified" (2:13); and "Do we then make the Law of none effect

¹⁰⁴ *The canticles or balades of Salomon*, fol. F4. In her survey of literary deer that may have served as sources for Sonnet 67, Prescott also notes Proverbs 5:18-19 ("Let [thy wife] be as the loving hinde and pleasant roe: let her breasts satisfie thee at all times, and delite in her love continually" ("Allegorical Deer," 811)).

¹⁰⁵ For instance, Wilcox: "*That are twins* that is of equall bignes and proportion" (*An exposition vppon the Booke of the Canticles*, 92).

through faith? God forbid; yea we establish the Law” (3:31). Paul’s Epistles insisted that *both* testaments—“Agar of mounte Sina” and Sara of “Jerusalem,” “flesh” and “promes”—matter after all. By including Sonnets 76 and 77 in the collection, Spenser subtly aligns himself with the view that the Old Testament focus on works remains wholly pertinent to salvation—as well as to requital.

I don’t disagree that the *Amoretti*’s uneasy conclusion is a consequence of Spenser’s having had to finish his sequence, for whatever reason, even as he remained faithful to the project of observing the calendrical readings—which would have meant writing his final sonnets just before Pentecost. But scholarship that reads the sonnet cycle’s conclusion in light of this holy day focuses on the culver of Sonnet 89 as a figure of “the coming of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly comforter,” suggesting that “[w]hile the lover “mournes” the absence of his love, he... is sustained by... [his] association with the dove and... [with] the Holy Spirit, promising the beloved’s [Christ’s] return.”¹⁰⁶ That is, scholarship focuses on the *Christian* holy day, which has its origins in Acts 2, when the apostles, who had gathered “all with one accorde in one place” on “the day of Pentecoste,” hear “a sounde from heauen,” witness “clouen tongues, like fyre,” are “filled with the holie Gost, and beg[i]n to speake with other tongues, as the Spirit [gives] utterance” (2:1-4).

Christian Pentecost, however, has its origins in Jewish Shavuot, for which the apostles in the Book of Acts had assembled when the Spirit descended.¹⁰⁷ Shavuot

¹⁰⁶ Edmund Spenser’s *Amoretti and Epithalamion*, 224; *Analogies of Love*, 253.

¹⁰⁷ See David Ewert, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1983), 102-8; Karen B. Westfield Tucker, “Pentecost” in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 529-30; *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. Edward Kessler and Neil

was an agricultural festival marking the end of the grain harvest; it was also a celebration of God's covenant with Israel and Moses' reception of the Law on Sinai ("mounte Sina"). The narrative in Acts was understood typologically to recapitulate the Law's reception in Exodus with its "thunders & lightnings" (19:16) and its heavenly revelation, with these differences: while the first Law was "written by the hand of God on tables of stone," the second law—observes Calvin—was given by "the Spirit, whose work is to write the Law in our hearts."¹⁰⁸ And while the Old Testament revelation to Moses is reserved for the people of Israel, the New Testament revelation—in which "euerie man heard [the apostles] speake his owne langage" (Acts 2:6)—was all-inclusive. There are two things to emphasize here: 1) While the advent of the Holy Spirit in Acts was understood as Christ confirming a New Covenant with his disciples—one involving a message of faith they were to spread to the world—the holy day had a long history of affirming God's *first* covenant, Mosaic Law; and 2) The "other tongues" of Acts implied that this ministry would include *more than* Jews.

What I am suggesting here is that as Spenser was composing the final sonnet of his sequence he was cognizant of the history out of which Pentecost emerged—a suggestion substantiated by the "unspotted pleasauns" and the "bared bough" of Sonnet 89 (12, 1). If this is the case, the inclusive soteriology ("other tongues," first *and* second Laws) of Pentecost sustain the inclusive soteriology of the device that opens Spenser's 1595 edition: "ET VSQVE AD NVBES VERITAS TVA," "For thy

Wenborn (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 339, 403; John D. Garr, *Christian Fruit-Jewish Root: Theology of Hebraic Restoration* (Atlanta: Golden Key Press, 2015), 330-31.

¹⁰⁸ Calvin's *Commentaries: The Acts of the Apostles 1-13*, ed. David W. and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), 49.

mercie is great unto the heauens, and thy trueth unto the cloudes” (along with the Geneva’s gloss: “Thy mercies do not onely apperteine to the Jewes, but also to the Gentiles”). More than proposing a substantial connection between the sequence’s final sonnet and the collection’s title page, it would offer the prospect that even the closing sonnet of the sequence holds space for both adherence to Law (the “work” of sacrifice) *and* reformed doctrine—or, in amatory terms, both poetical works *and* the beloved’s “grace.”

In the feast of Pentecost as described in Leviticus, the Israelites are enjoined to offer “a sheafe of the first frutes of [their] haruest[s]” and bidden to “prepare a lambe without blemish... for a burnt offering” (23:10-12). Christians understood the lambs of Leviticus 23 as types fulfilled by the single “sacrificial lamb” of Christ crucified—in the same framework of fulfillment and supercession we saw in discussing Sonnets 18 and 54, where Christ was understood as the second, “spiritual” tabernacle, figuring the passage from the “dead works” of sacrifice to grace (Heb. 9:10, 14). Paul offers as much when he calls Christ “our Passeouer... sacrificed for vs” (1 Cor. 5:7). In the third quatrain of Sonnet 89, the “disconsolate” dove laments that nothing “can comfort me, but her owne joyous sight: / whose sweet aspect both God and man can moue, / in her vnspotted pleasauns to delight.” The descriptors in that final line echo the Levitical mandate (23:11) that the Pentecostal sacrificial lamb be “without blemish” (Spenser’s “vnspotted”) “that it may be acceptable” to God (Spenser’s “pleasauns”). Sonnet 89 thus subtly holds space for both the works of sacrifice (“a lambe without blemish”) and the Christian belief in Christ’s fulfillment

of *all* sacrifice (the dove that remains the central figure of the poem).

The gathering of the “first frutes of... haruest” for the Jewish celebration of Pentecost may have been joined by another text Spenser read for Sonnet 89, which corresponds with the liturgical readings for May 17, 1594. In Matthew 15:13, Christ tells his disciples that “[e]uerie plant which mine heauenly Father hathe not planted, shalbe rooted up”—a verse the Geneva cross-references with John 15:1-2, “I Am the true vine, and my Father is an housband man. Euerie branche that beareth not frute in me, [God] taketh away: & euerie one that beareth frute, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth the more frute.” The metaphor is one of grafting—the arboreal analogue to the “unnatural” spiritual adoption of Galatians 4.¹⁰⁹ Spenser’s culver sits “on the bared bough.” It is May, so we can’t attribute the bough’s bareness to winter. Further, the bough is “*bared*” rather than “bare”: *made* bare, where it once was not. I think Spenser is playing, here, with both the gathered “first frutes” required of Jewish penitents in Leviticus and the “purged fruit” of John 15. Both passages suggest there is “more frute” to come. And while the former promises this “more” as a consequence of works (the ceremonial gathering and sacrifice of “first frutes”), the latter promises it through grace (God, who purges man that he may “bring forth the more”). Once again, the language of the sonnet is spacious enough to accommodate both testaments.

Sonnet 89’s “bared bough,” in Levitical and Johannine terms, is presently

¹⁰⁹ The marginal note to John 15:4 offers that man “bring[s] forth the no frute” unless “ingrafted in Christ.” Calvin’s commentary on this passage returns us to the rhetoric of “unnatural” spiritual lineage we saw in regards to Galatians: we are “by *nature*, barren and dry, except in so far as we have been engrafted into Christ”; grace is not “implanted in [us] by *nature*” (since “no man has the *nature* of a vine”), but by Christ himself (*Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, trans. Rev. William Pringle. Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2005), 62).

“bare” because the lover’s first-fruits—his poems—have been “purged” by God (or sent to the beloved, as the lover resolved to do in Sonnet 1) “that [he] may bring forth more fruit” in the future. The gathering and the sacrifice of these firstfruits (the poems, the harvest) are precisely what make room for a second harvest, a “bring[ing] forthe [of] more frute.” After the branch has been “purged,” resulting in the “bared bough” of Sonnet 89, the lover—now the bridegroom of the *Epithalamion*—asks Juno to send the newly-married couple the “timely fruit” that will bring forth “fruitfull progeny” (390-404). It is not until the beloved “purges” the “firstfruits” of the lover’s courtship by receiving and reading them—sonnets that seemed “fruitlesse” (*Am.* 23.14) until they bore the “early” but “sweet” “fruit” of assurance in Sonnets 76 and 77—that the bough “may bring forth more fruit”—this time as the bough of a family tree.

It is only reasonable that a poet working through doctrines of justification—particularly in the genre of amatory poetry, in which the writing-work is *done* in the hopes of requital—would maintain the relevance of the Old Testament along with the New. Both Spenser and his lover are extraordinary Petrarchans who *do* successfully effect requital through poetic labor. Thus there *is* no hard and fast theological doctrine opposed to works-righteousness in the *Amoretti*, beyond the conviction that grace must precede good works: in part because reformed theology made recourse to works in spite of its aversion to them as salvational guarantees; in part because if a *sola fide* / *sola gratia* analogue were to be sustained, Spenser would have had to stop writing poems after the “will” of the deer (or of Elizabeth Boyle) was revealed in the grace-event of Sonnet 67. Nonetheless, the *Amoretti* demonstrates a sustained attempt by an

English Protestant poet simultaneously to establish a productive relation with the literary past through Petrarch, and to re-imagine the Petrarchan sequence as a site of religious instruction.

The other sequences this study examines don't carry the same overt liturgical resonances the *Amoretti* does; but Spenser's transfer of the "practical piety" of daily liturgical readings to the "poetic piety" of daily petitions to the beloved opens a compelling theological lens through which to approach other Elizabethan Petrarchan sequences. Spenser's sequence is indebted, of course, not only to Petrarch and to the Scriptures, but also to the "English *Petrarke*" and "*Petrarch* of our time" Sir Philip Sidney; and we will see, in Chapter 3, how Sidney's subtle redeployment of Paul's Epistles in *Astrophel and Stella* may very well have provoked Spenser—who was already interested in calendrical structures—toward the liturgy.¹¹⁰ First, I consider a sonnet sequence by Thomas Watson—the poet who, in spite of his current relative obscurity, is acknowledged for having written England's first Petrarchan sonnet sequence. The turn that occurs in Watson's collection signals that conversion—and in particular, a "Pauline" grace-event from Old Testament to New—held a central place in English Petrarchism from its beginnings. Watson's sequence is engaged in the syncretic project of merging the classical and Petrarchan "reason versus passion" *topos* with the reformed doctrine of grace. England's first sonnet sequence thus offers the context of a broader literary effort through which to read *Astrophel and Stella*:

¹¹⁰ John Harrington's *Orlando furioso*, cited in Gavin Alexander, *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney 1586-1640* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 204; Sir Walter Raleigh, "An Epitaph Upon the Right Honorable Sir Philip Sidney, Knight" in Edmund Spenser, *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (London: Printed by Thomas Creede, 1595), fol. K3.

one in which the sonnet sequence serves a moral and didactic purpose without dispensing with the very tropes and gestures so crucial to grounding it in a literary tradition.

THOMAS WATSON'S *HEKATOMPATHIA*: REFORMED GRACE AND THE REASON-VERSUS-PASSION *TOPOS*

In 1582, Thomas Watson published his *Εκατομπαθία or Passionate centurie of loue* (hereafter *Hekatompathia*), making it properly the first Petrarchan sonnet sequence published in England. Its subtitle informs its readers that the collection comprises something of a conversion narrative: this “centurie” of one hundred poems, Watson writes, is “diuided into two parts: whereof, the first expresseth the Authors sufferance in Loue: the latter, his long farewell to Loue and all his tyrannie.”¹ Given this division, England’s first amatory sonnet sequence resembles Petrarch’s more than it does Spenser’s—or, as we will see, Sidney’s. Indeed, while Sidney’s *Astrophel* refuses to participate in the generic reiteration of “old *Petrarchs* long deceased woes” (*AS* 15.7; a claim belied by the sequence’s evident borrowing from its Italian predecessor), a commendatory sonnet that opens Watson’s volume claims that the stars were “fixt” in the same celestial positions during Petrarch’s and Watson’s births and maintains that the muses gave to Watson the “very same” “fatall vaine” that Petrarch had, implying a resemblance in the two lovers’ amatory and spiritual destinies.² It has been suggested that the collection—which is a veritable palinode—was inspired by Watson’s own religious conversion. If this is the case, then the turn the

¹ *The Hekatompathia or Passionate centurie of loue* (London: Imprinted by John Wolfe, 1582). title page.

² All citations from *Astrophel and Stella* taken from Albert Feuillerat’s edition (Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1922)). *Hekatompathia*, “A Quatorzain, in the commendation of Master Thomas Watson, and of his Mistres, for whom he wrote this Booke of Passionat Sonnetes.” In Sonnet 97, the lover calls his beloved “My *Laura*.”

collection takes marks a double conversion: Watson's from Catholicism to Protestantism, and his lover's from love to reason.³

The collection is comprised of one hundred "sonnets" or "passions," most of them eighteen lines of iambic pentameter organized in three sestets, each with an *ababcc* rhyme scheme. Eight of its poems are either direct translations of, or are "borrowed from," Petrarch. The sequence makes no secret of its sources, and Petrarch is only one of many figures in an impressive literary archive that Watson's lover gestures to throughout: the collection acknowledges over thirty classical authors and over twenty French and Italian ones. Five of the *Hekatompathia*'s poems are composed in Latin, and the remaining ninety-five are in English, though there are passages in Greek, Italian, and French throughout. Watson's collection is, indeed, "an extreme of polyglot metatextuality."⁴ Perhaps the most prominent feature of the collection—a feature absent from all other English Petrarchan sequences—is that each

³ Donna B. Hamilton writes, "[t]he publication of *Hekatompathia* in 1582 places it after [the Earl of] Oxford [to whom it was dedicated] had defected from Catholicism in December-January 1581 and also after the December 1581 execution of [the Catholic Edmund] Campion." Thus, "[w]hile the reader is allowed to consider this love [that the speaker finally renounces] as love of a woman, a more likely conclusion is that Watson is using this imitation of Petrarch to announce his renunciation of his preferred Catholic religion" ("Religion" in *A Concise Companion to English Renaissance Literature*, ed. Donna B. Hamilton (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 38-9). Dana F. Sutton cites Cesare G. Cecioni, who "argued that this Passion was written as an expression of repentance when Watson turned away from the Catholicism of his youth"

(<http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/hekatompahia/notes.html#note1>). An earlier manuscript edition of the *Hekatompathia* contains—as Hamilton and others have noted—only seventy-eight poems; that the turn the sequence takes occurs just at the point Watson returns to working on it may suggest an alignment of his lover's "conversion" with Watson's. On the other hand, Stephen Hamrick argues that Watson's collection was "an apology for the (sometime Catholic) Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere," and that the sequence "asserted the possibility of being both Catholic and loyal to the Tudor ruler" (*The Catholic Imaginary and the Cults of Elizabeth, 1558-1582* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 13). See ALSO Donna B. Hamilton, *Anthony Munday and the Catholics, 1560-1633* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 34-35.

⁴ A.E.B. Coldiron, *Printers Without Borders: Translation and Textuality in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015), 183.

poem is preceded by a headnote that expounds the poem's classical allusions, identifies the sources of its themes, and guides the reader toward Watson's preferred interpretation of the poem. Here, for example, is Watson's paratext to Sonnet 7, a poetic blazon of the kind Shakespeare parodies in his Sonnet 130:

This passion of loue is liuely expressed by the Authour, in that he lauishlie praiseth the person and beautifull ornamentes of his loue, one after an other as they lie in order. He partly imitateth herein *Aeneas Siluius*, who setteth downe the like in describing *Lucretia* the loue of *Euryalus*; and partly he followeth *Ariosto cant. 7.* where he describeth *Alcina*: & partly borroweth from some others where they describe the famous *Helen of Greece*: you may therefore, if you please aptlie call this sonnet as a Scholler of good iudgement hath already Christened it αἶνη παρασιτική ["flattering praise"].⁵

The paratext claims the poems as contemporary iterations of an extraordinary genealogy. It has been suggested that Watson was "probably working under the influence of E.K.'s marginal glosses to *The Shepheardes Calender*" as he composed these critical prose pieces detailing his imitative practices; if this is the case, the didactic eclogues of Spenser's *Calender* may very well have influenced the moral narrative presented by Watson's sonnets themselves.⁶ Like the first sixty-six poems of Spenser's *Amoretti*, the *Hekatompathia*'s first eighty poems depict a Petrarchan lover pining under Cupid's thrall, "liu[ing] in seruile kinde" to the "sainte [he] serue[s]," vacillating "twixt hope and feare," "fear, and hope" as he praises the "sou'raign" beloved, whose "eyes.... are two heau'nly starres"—though they are also "the cause of [his] decay" (*H* 1.10, 7.1, 2.1, 40.2, 36.9, 21.12, 52.16). The overt didacticism does

⁵ For the translation out of the Greek, see Sutton's commentary notes at <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/hekatompethia/notes.html#p7>.

⁶ Jonathan Bate, "Ovid and the Sonnets; Or, Did Shakespeare Feel the Anxiety of Influence?" in *Shakespeare's Poems*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Sean Keilen (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), 41.

not enter the collection until Sonnet 81, when Reason finally conquers the passion of the first eighty “passions,” allowing the lover to say farewell to love and to dispense with his literary course as a Petrarchan lover. Notably, Watson’s collection is concerned with reason long before Sonnet 81; indeed, the paratext celebrates the intellectual faculty as sustained through scholarship and erudition. And—beyond marking an enthusiasm for the classical world—the collection’s title hints that a theological impulse more broadly underlies its “reason versus passion” *topos*: a *hecatomb* was a public sacrifice among the ancient Greeks and Romans, properly of one hundred oxen. Its usage extended to religious sacrifices of any sort in Watson’s time.⁷

The love/reason duel is of course a commonplace in both classical and early modern literatures: the first 89 lines of Book 4 of the *Aeneid* serve as one illustration of the struggle, just as *Astrophel and Stella* 5 and 71 exemplify its redeployment in the sonnet cycle. Love and Reason are also the two primary forces at work in the *Hekatompathia*; and while the former dominates the first, and longer, portion of the sequence, the latter secures sovereignty at Sonnet 81. Sonnet 81 is a farewell to love and to the beloved—the first of twenty such sonnets, as every poem that follows reiterates the departure (“his other Passions that followe are all made vpon this Posie, *My Loue is past*”) until the sequence concludes (*H* 79, headnote). What provokes this parting (“At / last, though / late, farewell”) is a sudden—and apparently inexplicable—strength in the lover’s reasoning faculty: Reason now “bids [him] leaue,”

⁷ “hecatomb, n.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

“enforce[s]” love “to flight,” and encourages the lover to “choose a path that / shall not leade awrie” (*H* 81.1-3, 61, 10, 18-19). And the new path the lover takes ultimately *doesn’t* lead awry: for the remainder of the sequence, Reason continues to “giu[e him] reliefe” and “good counsel,” by which he finds “the way from worse to better” (*H* 87.3 and headnote); it forces “will... to retyre” (*H* 88.16); its lessons become profitable (“did not Reason teache that care in vaine... cannot turn againe,” *H* 93.5-6). In Sonnet 95, the same Reason whose “guiding thrid” was once so weak as to break, getting the lover trapped in love’s labyrinth (*H* 55.7) now teaches his “mind / To stay the beast”—the minotaur of love—and make a swift exit (5-6).

Well enough; the *Hekatompathia* would appear to be a sweeping success for Reason. And yet it doesn’t take a particularly perceptive reader to recognize that Reason has been *attempting* to “bidd the lover leaue” all along; it has simply been powerless, until Sonnet 81, to do so. The breaking of Reason’s thread in the labyrinth of Sonnet 55 is just one instance of this:

But soone my guiding thrid by Reason spunne,
 Wherewith I past along [the minotaur’s] darkesome caue,
 Was broake (alas) by him, and ouerrunne,
 And I perforce became his captiue slaue:
 Since when as yet I neuer found the way
 To leaue that maze, wherein so many stray.

Prior to Sonnet 81, “no reason can remoue” his “deepe desire” (*H* 41.3); the lover’s heart is so oppressed with contrary “euils” that “reason can beare no swaye in the cause”; while it “striues to vanquish” his “wanton sight,” Reason strives “in vaine” (*H* 59.3-4 and headnote). By Sonnet 60, the lover has thrown his hands in the air to ask “what reason can prevaile” against the “maine force” of his love (6). In Sonnet 78,

Reason attempts to lecture the lover on the dangers attending those who “loue and follow *Cupids* car”:

He tyres their limmes and doth bewitch their minde,
And makes within them selues a lasting warre.
Reason with much adoe doth teach me this (14-17).

But Reason’s lessons prove ineffectual; the lover still “cannot mend what is a misse” (18). By “Passion” 79, Reason—apparently finished with efforting—simply “retyres” as pleasure arrives (9). Reason *is*, in fact, one of the most conspicuously available figures in the lyrics leading up to Sonnet 81; but while it is characterized by its discernment early on, it is also characterized by its respective weakness—and thus its inadequacy to govern the lover—in the face of love.

Given Reason’s consecutive failures and its general powerlessness—despite its clear-sightedness—in the first eighty sonnets of the sequence, its sudden dominance and the force of its persuasion from Sonnet 81 onward might seem to the reader incredible. So may the permanence of its newfound authority. Indeed, the lover’s surprising new capacity to wield reason in, and in the face of, his passions would appear to indicate that the *Hekatompathia*’s conception of reason accords with that of classical philosophy, which emphasized the systematic employment of reason in its struggle with the passions in determining how to live most virtuously.

Plato, for example, posited a tripartite soul, divided into reason (*logos*), spirit or passion (*thumos*), and appetite or desire (*epithumia*). Reason prevailed in the struggle, Plato claimed, in the best of souls. His *Phaedrus* contains the well-known allegory of the charioteer, in which the soul is likened to a pair of winged horses

(spirit and appetite) and a charioteer (reason), who struggles to restrain—or at least to properly guide—the unruly horses (246a-b). In *Timaeus*, the parts of the soul are associated with distinct parts of the body—reason with the head, passion with the chest, and the appetites below the waist—so that passion “is in direct communication with ‘the commands of reason’ to which it should submit.”⁸ Aristotle’s *Ethics*—to which we will turn in the next chapter—maintains that one becomes virtuous by habitually *acting* virtuously; these virtuous actions are a consequence of right reason. For both philosophers, the highest human happiness is a life lived completely and consistently in accordance with reason, which sees virtue clear-sightedly and—in an ideal soul—possesses the capacity to overcome and control the appetites.

Indeed, Dana F. Sutton, one of Watson’s editors, claims that the *Hekatompathia*’s is a purely “secular” and “philosophical” binary: at Sonnet 81, Sutton claims,

Love is definitively rejected by an act of the will far more decisive than a mere momentary aberration, and the lover escapes his predicament. Reason triumphs. In this context, it deserves to be added that the predicament in question is one of the mind rather than the soul. Watson’s reason appears to be the purely secular reason of the philosopher.⁹

Sutton’s analysis here is that—like Plato’s charioteer—Watson’s lover wills his conversion himself, through the right use of reason and its (eventual) triumph. One

⁸ Wayne P. Pomerleau, *Twelve Great Philosophers: A Historical Introduction to Human Nature* (New York: Ardsley House Publishers, 1997), 14.

⁹ “EKATOMPATHIA (1582)” in *Thomas Watson, The Complete Works*. The Philological Museum, 2011. <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/hekatompathia/intro.html>. Donna B. Hamilton cites Sutton, arguing that “Watson represented in... *Hekatompathia* the necessity of choosing obedience to secular law over continued declaration of a preferred spiritual identity.” Hamilton’s is another example of this insistence on the “secular” nature of Watson’s sequence (*Anthony Munday and the Catholics*, 34).

can certainly see why this interpretation would be irresistible. Watson's sequence nearly compels it, given the catalogues of classical sources cited in the headnotes that precede each lyric passion. The lover cites or translates Homer, Sophocles, Aristotle, Theocritus, Cicero, Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Seneca, Pliny, and a host of other early figures—beside only a handful of contemporary poets, none of them English—implying that Watson and his lover were more interested in classical than in contemporary thought, and in the literary authority the collection would garner by virtue of inserting itself into such a tradition. This broad swath of sources would thus suggest that the “reason versus passion” *topos* the *Hekatompathia* plays out (“reason” comes up thirty-five times over the course of a sequence made up of “passions”) is a classical, “secular,” and philosophical one.

And yet, Sutton's contention that Watson's lover's “act of the will” is “decisive” appears to me only partially accurate. The act *appears* decisive, yes (and even this is debatable: why draw out a goodbye over twenty consecutive poems when you could say it in one and have it done with? To whom is Watson's lover still *speaking* by the hundredth sonnet?). But this account of the will that wills decisively of its own accord—and spontaneously in agreement with reason—overlooks the ways the lover's will vacillates early in the sequence—along with his perception of who, exactly, moves it. This incertitude is evident early on when the lover asks, “If willingly I burne, how chance I waile? / If gainst my will, what sorrow will auaille?” (*H* 5.5-6). Sometimes the lover appears to move his will himself: love “enter[s] with [his] will” (*H* 14, headnote); he “swimme[s] at will” (*H* 60.16) and “encline[s] his

will / To liue in Loue” (*H* 61.17-18); he is like “the bird, that willingly / Choaseth a golden cage for liberty” (*H* 73.18); he “willfully followeth his owne hurt” (*H* 60, headnote). Yet amidst all this supposed self-willing, his “will hath made [him] a slaue” (*H* 5.11); his “brest” is “burnt” “against [his] will” (*H* 23.16); he has “lost both will and wit” (*H* 38.9); love is the “onely gouernour” and “the Lord and Signor of [his] will” (*H* 60.7 and headnote); his will is “bewitcht” (*H* 50.15), “betrayd” by “Fanci[e]” (*H* 69.3), and “ouermaster[ed]” by desire (*H* 79.4).

The lover’s eventual—and reasonable—“definitive rejection” of love, then, must have some source other than a self-moved, self-motivated will. Indeed, reformed theologians balked at the capacity that classical philosophers accorded to both will and reason. In the *Institutes*, Calvin writes of “philosophers”:

[They] maintain that reason dwells in the mind like a lamp, throwing light on all its counsels, and like a queen, governing the will—that it is so pervaded with divine light as to be able to consult for the best, and so endued with vigour as to be able perfectly to command... that the appetite, when it obeys reason, and does not allow itself to be subjugated by sense, is borne to the study of virtue, holds a straight course, and becomes transformed into will... that the intellect is endued with reason, the best guide to a virtuous and happy life... that, at the same time... [the] sense... can be tamed and gradually subdued by the power of reason. To the will, moreover, they give an intermediate place between reason and sense, regarding it as possessed of full power and freedom, whether to obey the former, or yield itself up to be hurried away by the latter (2.2.2).¹⁰

Calvin not only laments this classical position; he also deplores the way it was picked up by ecclesiastical writers, who followed too near the philosophers in “bestow[ing] on man more than he possesses... until the common dogma came to be, that man was

¹⁰ All citations from the *Institutes* taken from Henry Beveridge’s translation (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008).

corrupted only in the sensual part of his nature, that reason remained entire, and will was scarcely impaired... As if human nature were still in its integrity” (2.2.4).¹¹

Calvin was not alone in claiming that the philosophers were “unacquainted with the corruption of nature” (1.15.7) and bemoaning the ways this ignorance lingered in the Catholic Church. Philip Melanchthon writes that the “philosophers imagine that men may obtain the highest pitch of virtue by exercise and habit... attribut[ing] everything to human power, while the sacred writings represent all moral power as lost by the Fall.” He then correlates the philosophers with the papacy: “Who does not perceive that [the philosophers’] utter rejection of... the Spirit as the author of sanctification and everything good in man and [the papacy’s] shameless, arrogant assumption of human merit [both] obscure and lose the truth of Christ?”¹² Elsewhere, Melanchthon conjures Plato before offering a Christianized reading of the charioteer:

Some of the ancients thought that reason is conquered by passion.
Holding the reins in vain, the charioteer is borne on by the horses. Nor
does the team heed curb. Rather the passions shake off reason in the

¹¹ Calvin continues to harp on this distinction: the philosophers speak of reason “as if [she] also were not at variance with herself, and her counsels sometimes conflicting each other like hostile armies.” They “always presuppose in man a reason by which he is able to guide himself aright. From this method of teaching we are forced somewhat to dissent. For [the] philosophers [were] unacquainted with the corruption of nature, which is the punishment of revolt” (1.15.6-7). “Thus, in short, all philosophers maintain, that human reason is sufficient for right government; that the will, which is inferior to it, may indeed be solicited to evil by sense, but having a free choice, there is nothing to prevent it from following reason as its guide in all things” (2.2.3). In his *Commentary on Ezekiel*, he laments that the papists hold a similar position: “the sophists in the Papacy... feign that some part of the reason remains sound and entire, then that the will is vitiated only in part: hence it is a common saying of theirs, that man’s free will was wounded and injured, but that it did not perish.” In fact, Calvin claims, “the whole soul is vitiated, from reason even to the affections” (*Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, trans. Thomas Myers. Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1849), 375).

¹² Cited in Clyde L. Manschreck, *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 64. See also the *Loci Communes*, where Melanchthon describes the philosophers’ notion “that the will is able to conform itself to every precept of true reason; that is, the will can will whatever true reason... will prescribe” as an “impious and foolish idea” (*The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon*, trans. Charles Leander Hill (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 98).

same way that the horses of the sun's chariot did Phaethon. This power of sin is conquered by the grace of Christ alone.¹³

According to Melanchthon, only by the power of grace—and not by any capacity of the charioteer—can the horses, representatives of passion, acknowledge and respond to the bit.

The orthodox position that the corruption of man's reason, his will, and his senses had its origins in The Fall is so familiar that it hardly bears repeating. Postlapsarian reason in particular was understood to be “beclouded with great and varied ignorance”; its light “so smothered by clouds of darkness that it cannot shine forth to any good effect”; “too weake” and “too short to attayne to” the things of God; often “err[ing]” through “a false view of the good,” or going altogether unused (man “does not admit reason to his counsel, nor exert his intellect; but without reason, without counsel, follows the bent of his nature like the lower animals”).¹⁴ So where Sutton suggests that the *Hekatompathia*'s “predicament in question is one of the mind rather than the soul,” I propose the reverse: that this is where the theological nuances in Watson's sequence—and in his lover's conversion—bear turning to. For in the midst of its generous and explicit classical allusions, there are indications throughout the collection that Watson was engaging with reformed discourses about reason and will.

¹³ Cited in Gregory Graybill, *Evangelical Free Will: Phillipp Melanchthon's Doctrinal Journey on the Origins of Faith* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010).

¹⁴ Martin Luther, *Luther Still Speaking: The Creation: A Commentary on the First Five Chapters of The Book of Genesis*, trans. Henry Cole, D.D. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1858), 190; *Institutes* 2.2.12; Philippe de Mornay, *A woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion, written in French: against atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Jewes, Mahumetists, and other infidels. By Philip of Mornay Lord of Plessie Marlie. Begunne to be translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney Knight, and at his request finished by Arthur Golding* (London: Thomas Cadman, 1587), 362; Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: A Critical Edition with Modern Spelling*, ed. Arthur Stephen McGrade. Vol 1 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 60; *Institutes* 2.2.26.

One fact of Sonnet 81 we have yet to acknowledge is that it is a shape-poem whose very form has theological significance.

LXXXI.
MY LOVE IS PAST

A Pasquine Piller erected in the despite of Love.

A 1 At
 2 last, though
 3 late, farewell
 4 olde well a da : A
 m 5 Mirth or mischance strike
 a 6 vp a newe alarM, And m
 7 Cypria la nemica
 r 8 miA Retire to Cyprus Ile, a
 e 9 and ceafe thy waRR, Els must thou proue how r
 E 10 Reason can by charmE Enforce to flight thy e
 s 11 blindfolde bratte & thee. So frames it with mee now, E
 t 12 that I confesS, The life I ledde in Loue deuoyde s / t
 I 12 of resT, It was a Hell, where none felte more than I, I
 n 11 Nor anye with lyke miseries forlorN. Since n
 s 10 therefore now my woes are wexed lesS, And s
 a 9 Reason bidds mee leaue olde welladA, a
 n 8 No longer shall the worlde laughe mee
 i 7 to scorN: I'le choose a path that n
 r 6 shall not leade awrie. Rest i
 5 then with mee from your
 4 blinde Cupids carR r
 e. 3 Each one of
 2 you, that
 1 serue,
 3 and would be
 5 freE. H'is dooble thrall e.
 7 that liu's as Loue thinks best, whose
 9 hande still Tyrant like to hurt is prefte.

The poem that marks the lover's transformation is printed in the shape of "A Pasquine Piller" which is "erected in the despite of Love." The "Pasquine Piller" refers to an ancient statue discovered and exhumed in Rome in 1501, promptly

erected in the Piazza Navona, and named after a tailor whose shop sat opposite the excavation site, and who was apparently notorious for his searing wit. In the years following the statue's unearthing, a cardinal of the Roman church, Oliviero Carafa, held poetry competitions on St. Mark's feast day, the contending verses of which were attached to the base of "Pasquil." While the lyrics were initially harmless, by the second decade of the century the piazza had become a site of denunciation and dissent against the papacy. The verses attached to the statue came to be known as "pasquils," "pasquillades" or "pasquinades," and they "unite[d] a broad swath of Rome's population in criticizing the papal government."¹⁵ Collections of these pasquillades were published in Rome in 1512 and in 1544, and the verses were circulating in England by the early 1530s.¹⁶ Examples of these anthologized pasquillades include one "in which Christ and the pope are described in a series of antitheses," and one called the "'Third Gospel according to Pasquil,' which, in a parody of St Matthew's enumeration of the genealogy of Christ, narrates a genealogy of the pope which starts with the devil, moves through bulls and indulgences, and concludes with Antichrist."¹⁷

¹⁵ John M. Hunt, "The Pope's Two Souls and the Space of Ritual Protest during Rome's Sede Vacante, 1559-1644" in *The Sacralization of Space and Behavior in the Early Modern World*, ed. Jennifer Mara DeSilva (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 190-91. "Pasquinades," Hunt continues, "were the means par excellence that Romans used to censure the memory of dead popes and their families" (190). See also "Pasquinade" in John Ogilvie, *The Imperial Dictionary of the English Language*. Vol. 3 (London: Blackie & Son, 1883), 383; Donna N. Murphy, *The Mysterious Connection between Thomas Nashe, Thomas Dekker, and T.M.: An English Renaissance Deception?* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 16; Guido Ruggiero, *The Renaissance in Italy: A Social and Cultural History of the Rinascimento* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015), 471.

¹⁶ Helen Barr and Kate Ward-Perkins, "'Spekyng for one's sustenance': The Rhetoric of counsel in *Mum and the Sothsegger*, Skelton's *Bowge of Court*, and Elyot's *Pasquil the Playne*" in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 256.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

As references in sixteenth-century literature attest, English writers were familiar with this genre. In his *Pasquil the Playne* (1533), Thomas Elyot explains a “Pasquillus” as “an image of stone, sittinge in the citie of Rome openly: on whome ones in the yere, it is leful to euery man, to set in verse or prose any taunte that he will, agayne whom he list.”¹⁸ The 1566 *Pasquine in a traunce*—another of the century’s many satirical tracts whose protagonist was named Pasquil—promised to “discouer” to its readers “all the crafty conueyaunces of Antechrist,” and included “certayne questions... put forth by Pasquine, to haue been disputed in the Councell of Trent,” positing a relationship between the Catholic Church’s most prominent ecumenical council and the antichrist.¹⁹ In 1592, Thomas Nashe would describe Italy as “the academie of man-slaughter, the sporting place of murther, [and] the apothecary shop of poison,” adding that the pope “is nowe... a god made with [the king of Spain’s] owne hands; as it may appeare by the pasquil that was set up of him.”²⁰ Further, three tracts pseudonymously authored by “Pasquil” were written as part of the Marprelate controversy of the late 1580s, a pamphlet war that took place between the defenders of the established Church of England and a Puritan—writing under the pseudonym “Martin Marprelate”—who opposed the Anglican Church’s episcopacy.²¹

¹⁸ *Pasquil the Playne* (London: Thomae Bertheleti, 1533), fol. A2.

¹⁹ Celio Secondo Curione, *Pasquine in a traunce* (London: Imprinted by Wylliam Seres, 1566), title page. See also *Pasquil the Playne* (1533), *Pasquine in a traunce* (1566), *Pasquill of England* (1589), *Pasquils mistresse* (1600), *Pasquils fooles-cap* (1600), *Pasquils passe, and passeth not* (1600), *Pasquils jestes* (1609), *Pasquils night-cap* (1612), and *Pasquils palinodia* (1619).

²⁰ *Pierce Penilesse His Supplication to the Diuell* (London: Printed by Abell Jeffes, 1592), 38.

²¹ *A Countercuffe giuen to Martin Junior: by the venturous, hardie, and renowned Pasquill of England* (1589); *Return of Pasquil* (1589); *First Part of Pasquil’s Apology* (1590).

The “Pasquil” of the Marprelate controversy employed this initially anti-papal genre to make a denunciation of a different kind; but the censure maintained its theological aspect. That is to say, nearly every time Pasquil was taken up as a pseudonym in sixteenth-century literature, it was to make a denunciation on theological grounds. That Watson specifies the “Pasquine” quality of the pillar-poem that marks his lover’s turn from love to reason thus announces his intention that his reader register the conversion’s religious aspect. But why would Reason enter with such renewed potency in a pointedly theologized poetic form? Why would the lover suddenly have the capacity to fulfill that which he had been willing—but failing—to fulfill, *now*?

While Catholic and Protestant attitudes about postlapsarian will differed in fundamental ways, both stressed the role of grace—as opposed to human agency—in man’s capacity to will the good.²² According to Roman Catholic doctrine, man’s free will was still somewhat intact despite the fact that it had been weakened by The Fall; he could still willfully cooperate with divine grace and thus assist in his own justification.²³ For Protestants, man’s depravity was so total, and his free will so

²² The difference between Catholic and reformed convictions about the will are most explicitly seen in the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Council of Trent. The former states that “the condition of man after the fall of *Adam* is such, that... [he has] no power to do good works... without the grace of God by Christ preventing [him] that [he] may have a good will” (Article 10: “Of Free-Will” in *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 676). The latter, conversely, firmly denied “that, since Adam’s sin, the free will of man is lost and extinguished” (Chapter XVI, “On the fruit of Justification, that is, on the merit of good works, and on the nature of that merit,” Canon V, in *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, trans. J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848), 45).

²³ “If any one saith that man’s free will moved and excited by God, by assenting to God exciting and calling, nowise co-operates towards... obtaining the grace of Justification; [and] that... it does nothing whatever and is merely passive; let him be anathema” (*The Canons and Decrees*, Sixth Session, Canon IV).

eradicated, that grace was only ever passively received: cooperation of any kind was inconceivable.²⁴

Despite this difference touching cooperation, there was general agreement that God must, at the least, *initiate* the process of justification—man’s ability to will the good—through grace. Calvin writes that the will “cannot make a movement towards goodness, far less steadily pursue it. Every such movement [toward the good]... is entirely ascribed to divine grace.”²⁵ The Cambridge theologian William Perkins—who maintains that “man’s free will concurs with God’s grace, as a fellow or co-worker in some sort”—nonetheless concedes that although grace “and the willing of it in man go together, yet in regard of order, grace is first wrought, and man’s will must first of all be acted and moved by grace, and then it also acteth, willeth, and moveth itself.”²⁶ In his dispute with Luther on free will, the Catholic Erasmus similarly insists on grace as a precondition, even as he attributes some agency thereafter to man:

We oppose those who conclude like this: ‘Man is unable to accomplish anything unless God’s grace helps him. Therefore there are no good works of man.’ We propose the rather more acceptable conclusion: Man is able to accomplish all things, if God’s grace aids him. Therefore it is possible that all works of man be good.²⁷

In Sonnet 98 of the *Hekatompathia*, the converted lover retrospectively muses on his experience of love and offers a catalogue of love’s qualities. Among its

²⁴ This is certainly a reduction of a complex set of doctrinal differences (the unqualified Calvinist position on depravity, for example, was not shared by all sailing under the flag of “Protestantism”); but it serves our purposes for the claim of an elementary reformed theology in Watson’s sequence.

²⁵ *Institutes* 2.3.5.

²⁶ Perkins’ *Reformed Catholic*, cited in Darryl J. Gless, *Interpretation and Theology in Spenser* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 36.

²⁷ *Erasmus–Luther: Discourse on Free Will*, trans. Ernst F. Winter (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961), 78.

characteristics is that the “willfull thought” that is love “can not [be] moue[d]” by Reason. We have already observed Reason’s general powerlessness in the early poems of the sequence; the lover here confirms our observation. But if not Reason—which classical philosophy had ascribed the power of “mouement” to—then what has the lover’s will ultimately been moved by? The preceding sonnet offers that Reason’s apparent triumph, along with the lover’s newfound will to attend to Reason, is, in fact, gifted by grace.

The analogy Sonnet 97 posits is fairly convoluted, but worth examining because of its apparent juxtaposition of the classical and theological. The lover alludes “to the fable of *Phineus*, which is sette downe at large in the *Argonauticks* of *Apollonius*, and *Valerius Flaccus*” (headnote). Both texts retell the myth of the voyage of Jason and the Argonauts to Colchis to retrieve the Golden Fleece. As this portion of the tale roughly goes, the gods have punished Phineus for his prophetic powers; he has been blinded and is beset by the harpies, who constantly “ravage him, thieving his food from his very mouth.”²⁸ Phineus knows Jason’s arrival on his shore means this personal scourge will be dispelled; he goes down to meet the travelers; they sit down to a meal together; and when the harpies appear, two of Jason’s fellow travelers, the winged brothers Calais and Zetes, pursue them in chase—but only until “a voice [is] heard, [saying]: ‘It is enough to have chase[d] the goddesses so far; why strive ye farther in rage against the ministers of Jove?’”²⁹ In the *Hekatompathia*’s

²⁸ Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica*, trans. J. H. Mozley. The Theoi Classical E-Texts Library. <http://www.theoi.com/Text/ValeriusFlaccus4.html>.

²⁹ *Ibid.* See also Apollonius Rhodius’ *Argonautica*, trans. R.C. Seaton. Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/830/830-h/830-h.htm>.

rewriting of this tale, the lover is Phineus, his Petrarchan beloved (“My *Laura*”) the harpies, his thoughts and desires Calais and Zetes. However, the analogy unexpectedly sounds a particularly Christian note when “the voice of *Ne plus ultra* spoken from Heauen to *Calais* and *Zetes*” is compared to “the *Diuine grace*, which willed [the lover] to follow no further the miseries of a *Louers* estate, but to professe vnfaignedly that his Loue is past.” The moment “heau’nly grace” wills the lover’s thoughts and desires to “ceas[e] in following [his] *Dame*,” instructing him to “Leaue fond *Delights*, and say thy loue is past,” the lover is able to do the good that he has heretofore been unable to.

This is a fine example of the syncretism that was so fashionable in Renaissance literature, and of a kind we will see again in Sidney. Both sequences reference classical myth (and both reference Jason and the *Argonautica* in particular) even as they appear, more subtly, to take doctrinal positions (for Watson, there is no good will without grace). In the next chapter, we will see the ways reformers took up another aspect of the Argonauts’ epic—Medea, who “follows” her “worse” passions in killing her children and remaining with Jason despite “seeing and approving” the better, and who would certainly have been evoked by Watson’s reference to Phineus—to formulate doctrinal positions around will and reason. Medea would already have been on Watson’s reader’s mind, since she is named in Sonnet 60, in which the lover “witting and wilfully followeth his owne hurt, with such like words as Medoea sometime used” (headnote). The “such like words” are this lament: “I follow still the cause of my distresse, / My Hart foreseeing hurte, doth yet encline / To seek the

same” (2-4). The sentiment is resonant of *Astrophel and Stella* 19, when Astrophel laments that “I willing run, yet when I runne repent” (4). It is also resonant of Paul’s claim that “I do not the good thing, which I wolde, but the euil, which I wolde not, that do I” (Rom. 7:19), except for one difference: Paul does not “willfully” follow “his owne hurt”; he does what he “wolde *not*.” Through this variety of syncretism—an undercurrent of reformed theology in the midst of classical allusions—Watson and Sidney were transforming Petrarchism, granting it a social function through subtle religious edification.

As the classical allusions are conspicuously made, Watson’s lover—much less noticeably—hears a voice from heaven that bears him “grace” as he evokes Petrarch (“my *Laura*”), offering the possibility that this conversion is, indeed, “more of the soul than of the mind.” The lover promptly repeats what divine grace commands him to speak: “My loue is past I say” (*H* 97.13). And we are reminded that the first time the lover makes this claim is in the “Pasquine piller” of Sonnet 81—a declaration, as the reader might now retrospectively understand, only available to the lover through the strength of “heau’nly grace” (*H* 97.11). If love is truly, as Sutton claims, “definitively rejected by an act of the will” in Sonnet 81, then it would appear to be a will that is not self-moved, but moved by divine grace to adhere to the dictates of right reason. And we appear to be dealing less, now, with “the purely secular reason of the philosopher,” and more with a theologically-charged force that spurs the conversion. Watson’s choice, finally, to translate two of the final poems of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* toward the close of his *Hekatompathia* further suggests that, for the lover,

reason's capacity to prevail over passion *is* a matter of grace rather than of philosophy. In Christian terms, this grace is an aftereffect of Christ's sacrificial self-offering in the Crucifixion. Sacrifice is thus doubly intimated in the *Hekatompathia*: once through the collection's "pagan" title, and again through the grace-event of Sonnet 81.

The *Hekatompathia*'s lover marks his affinity with his Italian predecessor again and again over the course of the sequence: Sonnets 5, 6, 21, 39, 40, and 66 are all either imitations or translations (full or partial) of Petrarch's *canzone* included among the "pre-conversion" passions. But two other translations of the *Canzoniere* appear toward the close of Watson's sequence that strengthen the religious tenor of the "divine grace" of Sonnet 98. Sonnet 90 is a Latin translation of Petrarch's *canzone* 364 (Sonnet 313 in Watson's edition), "Tennemi Amor," a prayer of repentance for the years Petrarch spent "burning in the fire" of love. Robert Durling's modern translation reads: "Now... I reproach my life for so much error, which has almost extinguished the seed of virtue; and I devoutly render my last parts, high God, to You."³⁰ Both Durling's English and Watson's Latin translations carry over the metaphor of the lover as prisoner, who has neither the power nor the will to free himself: although the lover "recognize[s his] fault," it is God who must release him ("Lord who have enclosed me in this *prison*: draw me from it safe from eternal

³⁰ *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976), 572.

harm”; “Ergo, summe Deus, per quem sum clausus in isto / *Carcere*, ab aeterno saluum fac esse periclo”).³¹

As we will see at greater length in Chapter 6, the prisoner (alongside the servant and the slave) was a prominent figure in reformed writing on the bondage of the will; and one can see why the image might have struck a chord in the newly-Protestant Watson or his converted lover. For Luther, “‘Free-will’ without God’s grace is not free at all, but is the permanent prisoner... of evil”; Calvin corroborates that “the will is evil and held prisoner by evil until it is set free.”³² Perkins gives perhaps the most extended commentary in his 1598 *A Reformed Catholike*, in which the figure of the prisoner is employed to characterize the difference between Catholic and reformed beliefs about the will. In Perkins’ analogy, the Catholic Church supposes the prisoner “to lie bound hand and foote with chaines & fetters, and withal to be sicke and weake, yet not wholly dead but liuing in part,” for he still has the “abilitie and power to stirre.” Thus, “if the keeper come and take away his bolts and fetters, and hold him by the hand and helpe him vp, he can and will of himselfe stand and walke and goe out of prison.” Analogously, the Catholic Church teaches that “if the holy Ghost come and doe but vntie [the penitent’s] bands, and reach him his hand of grace, then can he stand of himselfe and will his owne saluation.” Reformed doctrine, on the other hand, holds that the prisoner is “not onely sicke and weake but *euen starke dead*; which can not stirre though the keeper vntie his boltes and

³¹ *Ibid*; italics mine.

³² Luther cited in R.C. Sproul, *Willing to Believe: The Controversy over Free Will* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 94; Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, trans. G.I. Davies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 105.

chaines... and if the said keeper would haue him to mooue & stirre, he must giue him not onely his hand to help him, but euen soule and life also.” Only once God has “come and put a newe soule into him” and “reuiue[d] him” with “the spirit of grace” can the prisoner begin to will the good.³³

Petrarch’s claim that—like the Paul of Romans 7— he can “recognize [his] fault” but must still be “drawn” by God from his prison would have been a compelling one for a poet considering doctrinal matters of reason and will.³⁴ In translating this particular sonnet, Watson’s lover is doing far more than repenting his prior inclinations and choices. He is dispensing with the classical philosophical position that man, through his own agency and by his own internal strength, can overcome his desire with his reason. In its place, he is embracing the reformed position—as articulated by Perkins—that neither reason nor desire can will the good without the prompting of divine grace.

Apparently not content with this single act of Petrarchan repentance—or with this single iteration of his own incapacity to will the good without God’s grace—Watson’s lover appends an “Epilogue to the whole worke” which is “more like a praier than a Passion: and is faithfully translated out of *Petrarch, Sonnet 314*” (*canzone* 365 in modern editions). Here, Petrarch begs God to “help [his] strayed frail soul”—he cannot mend himself—so that “if my sojourn has been vain, my departure at

³³ *A Reformed Catholike: or, a Declaration shewing how neere we may come to the present Church of Rome in sundrie points of Religion* (Cambridge: Printed by John Legat, 1598), fol. B1-B2, italics mine.

³⁴ *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems*, 572. In Romans 7:24, Paul exclaims—knowing full well the answer—“who shal deliuer me from the bodie of this death!”

least may be virtuous.”³⁵ Durling translates Petrarch’s prayer: “fill out with your grace all that [my soul] lacks”; Sutton translates Watson’s prayer: “aid my prostrate soul. And let Your shining grace make good every failing of my falling mind.”³⁶

Watson’s Latin, too, maintains the emphasis on grace present in the original:

Petrarch’s “tua grazia” becomes Watson’s “sua gratia.” As an epilogue to a collection in which the lover has wrestled with reason and will at length, it seems of no small significance that the collection closes with a petition for grace—despite the fact that grace was already ostensibly granted in Sonnet 81. The gift and reception of grace in the regenerate was understood to be more than a one-time affair. Luther writes:

Man is always in nonbeing, in becoming, in being, always in privation, in potentiality, in action, always in sin, in justification, in righteousness, that is, he is always a sinner, always penitent, always righteous... Therefore if we always are repentant, we are always sinners, and yet thereby we are righteous and we are justified; we are in part sinners and in part righteous, that is, we are nothing but penitents.³⁷

Even the justified and sanctified “new man”—who remained in the flesh and thus remained sinning—had to be continually upheld by God’s ongoing and sustaining grace. Watson’s decision to extend his lover’s “farewell” into twenty reiterations of “*My Loue is past*” may very well be a formal nod to this temporal quality of grace, and the need for God’s preserving hand, even in the life of the regenerate. Conversion was not the end of a life; it was the inauguration of a new wrestling between flesh and spirit, like the Paul of Romans 7 who “delite[s] in the Law of God, concerning the

³⁵ *Ibid.* 574.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, “THE Ἑκατομπαθία.”

³⁷ Cited in William Henry Lazareth, *Christians in Society: Luther, the Bible, and Social Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 78.

inner man: But I se another law in my members, rebelling against the law of my minde, & leading me captiue vnto the law of sinne” (v. 22-3). Neither could conversion, then, be the formal limit of a sequence that reproduces a religious conversion—even one reproduced in amatory terms.

Stephen Hamrick claims that Sidney wrote *Astrophel and Stella* “in part as a Protestant response to [Watson’s] poetry”; but it seems to me there is something already quite anti-Catholic about Watson’s amatory sequence.³⁸ His final poems are translations of the antepenultimate and penultimate poems of the *Canzoniere*—petitions for grace the “imprisoned” Petrarch addresses to the “high God” and “immortal King of Heaven.”³⁹ Indeed, in order to establish a productive relation with the literary past, and to assert the value of English lyric and lyric authorship—which Watson’s project is clearly invested in—the poet had to situate his collection in some relationship to Petrarch. But what Watson *fails* to translate—and it seems rather conspicuously so—is Petrarch’s *ultimate* poem, which is addressed not to God, but to Mary. The “Protestantization” of the Petrarchan sequence is thus complete in Watson: the *Hekatompathia* narrates a conversion impelled wholly by grace; references a genre that rejects—or at the least, criticizes—papal Rome; and, at its close, refuses a turn to the Catholic Church’s mediator. What it *doesn’t* refuse is the lover’s perception that the grace he has received must be ongoing: it is not his own will that

³⁸ *The Catholic Imaginary and the Cults of Elizabeth, 1558-1582* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 151. Jonathan Gibson notes that “several critics suggest that *Astrophil and Stella* was written ‘against’ *Hekatompathia*”; see his footnote 2 for a list of those critics (“Remapping Elizabethan Court Poetry” in *The Anatomy of Tudor Literature: Proceedings of the First International Conference of the Tudor Symposium (1998)*, ed. Mike Pincombe (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 108).

³⁹ *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems*, 572, 574.

moves him toward “the good,” but God’s continuing “*Diuine grace*” that allows his (right) reason to keep directing his will. A sixteenth-century reader of the *Hekatompathia* would thus presumably have interpreted Watson’s lover as undergoing a variety of religious conversion.

Watson was almost certainly familiar with Sidney’s sequence as he composed his own. The manuscripts of the *Hekatompathia* and *Astrophel and Stella* were circulating “at roughly the same time among roughly the same groups of people”; H.R. Woudhuysen points out a copy of the *Hekatompathia* in the British Library “which contains an interesting reference to Sidney... not present in the handwritten version”; and William A. Ringler notes that “Watson expressed the hope that his *Ekatompathia* might find a place in the book-chests of Sidney or Dyer.”⁴⁰ Watson later references “getle Astrophil” in his 1590 *Italian Madrigalls Englished*, published a year before the pirated edition of Sidney’s sequence.⁴¹ Given all this, why does Watson’s sequence deviate, in the end, so radically from Sidney’s—delivering a conversion narrative whereas Sidney’s lover remains (apparently) unredeemed?

⁴⁰ A.E.B. Coldiron, “Watson’s ‘Hekatompathia’ and Renaissance Lyric Translation” in *Translation and Literature* 5.1 (1996), 22; H.R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 93-4. Woudhuysen cites Katherine Duncan-Jones, whose “Melancholie Times” gives ample evidence of Watson’s familiarity with Sidney’s work. The reference is in Watson’s “Protrepticon” to his book, in which the author says he hopes both Sidney and Edward Dyer do not expect too much from his muse. See also “‘Melancholie Times’: Musical Recollections of Sidney by William Byrd and Thomas Watson” in *The Well Enchanting Sill: Music, Poetry, and Drama in the Culture of the Renaissance*, ed. John Caldwell, E. Olleson and S. Wollenburg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 175; *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. William A. Ringler, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), lxi. Conversely, there were “accusations” that *Sidney* imitated *Watson*: see “Melancholie Times,” 171-80; Peggy J. Huey, “Astrophil and Stella: Sonnet 74” in *The Facts on File Companion to British Poetry before 1600*, ed. Michelle Sauer (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), 60). It seems to me a most reasonable conclusion that the influence was two-way.

⁴¹ “When first my heedlesse eyes” in *The first sett, of Italian Madrigalls Englished, not to the sense of the originall dittie, but after the affection of the Noate* (London: Imprinted by Thomas Este, 1590).

It is possible that Watson heard echoes of prodigality in Astrophel alongside his persistent return to reason (the word occurs eighteen times in Sidney's sequence), and chose to have his persona surpass Astrophel by granting him the grace of right reason and something resembling "salvation," a conversion, a return. Indeed, as Richard Helgerson has argued, the Prodigal Son became a paradigm of rebellion and repentance, literary folly and recantation—particularly in the last quarter of the sixteenth century—on which writers patterned both their fictions and their authorial careers.⁴² Helgerson maintains that:

Unable to ignore the suspicion that poetry was morally harmful, and equally unwilling to forgo it, [Elizabethan poets] had to prove again and again that it might be made beneficial. They were thus forced to argue that their work, rightly understood, warns against the very wantonness it portrays."⁴³

Helgerson's claim resembles the claim this present project is making: that more than just a site for witty troping of theology in a profoundly insincere vein, amatory poetry was employed as a "narrative" device for writers to analyze the moral and doctrinal matters most pressing for them and their readership. The examples of Helgerson's literary prodigality are manifold; and—as he notes—Elizabethan poets often dramatized

⁴² "[Sir Walter] Raleigh first wrote of love in verse and then of history in prose... Likewise Sidney broke off his Arcadian epic of love in mid-sentence, turned to more worthy pursuits, and died condemning his looser lines to fiery oblivion, while [John] Lyly, regretting that he had "played the fool so long," stopped writing altogether more than a decade before his relatively early death" (*The Elizabethan Prodigals* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976), 6). See also Meredith Anne Skura, who observes that George Gascoigne's "*Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* calls attention to [Gascoigne's] life when it advertises him as a reformed prodigal" and discusses both Robert Greene and John Lyly as writers who worked with the story of the prodigal son (*Tudor Autobiography: Listening for Inwardness* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008)), 173, 209; Alan R. Young, *The English Prodigal Son Plays: A Theatrical Fashion of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1979).

⁴³ *Ibid.* 5.

this role outside of their works and in their own lives.⁴⁴ Poetic personae, therefore, became a fictional device with meaningful consequences in the phenomenal world, with texts themselves serving as sites of osmosis for instruction and admonition to pass back and forth between the writer and his persona. Poetic reformation indicated a desire for, if not a demonstration of, self-reformation. Sidney's own deathbed recantation—or the few of them, as recorded severally by Thomas Moffet, George Gifford, and Fulke Greville—is a prominent example of the real-life dramatization of the prodigal's return.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Barnabe Barnes, whose amatory sequence *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593) ended with the frustrated lover calling upon Hecate and seducing his beloved by magic, went on to write *A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets* (1595), in which the speaker promises to sing “[n]o more lewde laies of Lighter loues”; rather, he has made the Holy Ghost his muse, since “Cupids darts prefigure hell’s sting” ((London: Printed by Iohn Windet, 1595), fol. A4). Spenser’s *Fowre Hymnes* (1596) contained two hymns “of earthly or naturall love and beautie” and two recantations of the same. His “Hymne of Heavenly Love” confesses: “Many lewd layes... In praise of that mad fit, which fooles call love, / I have in th’heat of youth made heretofore... But all those follies now I do reprove, / And turned have the tenor of my string, / The heavenly prayes of true love to sing” (*The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram et al. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989), 690, 722). In Robert Tofte’s *Alba* (1598), the poet-lover spends the first three sections of the collection pining over his beloved, then turns to writing “Divine Poems”—a slight misnomer, since the section contains only one poem, which begins: “With Teares in Eyes, with drops of Blood from Hart, / With skalding sighs from inward griued Soule, / A Convertite, from Vaine Love now I part, / Whilst, for my Sinnes fore Heauen I do condole” (*Alba. The Months Minde of a Melancholy Lover* (London: Printed by Felix Kingston, 1598), fol. H4).

⁴⁵ Moffet, one of Sidney’s early biographers, records: “Enraged at the eyes which had at one time admired Stella’s so very different from those given by God... [Sidney] begged his brother... that not any of this sort of poems should come forth into the light” (Paul Allen Miller, “Sidney, Petrarch, and Ovid, or Imitation as Subversion” in *ELH* 58.3 (Autumn 1991), 505). Gifford, the physician who attended Sidney in his final days, reports that the poet confessed to him “a Vanitie wherein I had taken delight, whereof I had not ridd myself. It was my Lady Rich” (Janet H. MacArthur, *Critical Contexts of Sidney’s Astrophil and Stella and Spenser’s Amoretti* (ELS Monograph Series, University of Victoria, 1989), 63). And Greville writes in his biography of Sidney that when his friend’s “body declined, and his piercing inward powers were lifted up to a purer horizon, he then discovered, not only the imperfection, but the vanity of these shadows... [and that] beauty itself... was more apt to allure men to evil than to frame any goodness in them. And from this ground, in that memorable testament of his, he bequeathed no other legacy but the fire to this unpolished embryo [of the *Arcadia*]” (*Elizabethan Prodigals*, 127). Patricia Berrahou Phillippy believes Moffet’s report was “fictionalized,” and that it “reveals the period’s intriguing desire to attribute a palinode to Sidney, and further suggests the didactic uses to which Sidney’s life and death could be, and were, put” (*Love’s Remedies: Recantation and Renaissance Lyric Poetry* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1995), 136).

The *Hekatompathia* demonstrates how Renaissance syncretism—Watson’s constructing his “Pasquine Piller” in the midst of his assemblage of classical references—became a significant literary strategy through which to introduce real theological concerns into a literary tradition that writers could not dispense with, precisely because employing its tropes was crucial to asserting the value and legitimacy of lyric authorship. This syncretism was not limited to “secular” texts. Calvin’s *Institutes* refers to Plato twenty-four times (in fifteen places by name, and in nine other places by epithets). Laymen would have encountered Plato in the Elizabethan *Book of Homilies*, Heinrich Bullinger’s *Fiftie godlie and learned sermons* (also commissioned by the regime), and reformed tracts such as Philippe de Mornay’s *De la vérité*, “the first wide-ranging account written in England on the theological aspects of Plato’s thought.”⁴⁶ We will see reformed treatments of Aristotle in the following chapter. By writing divine grace into the classical “reason versus passion” *topos*—and by making grace the sole basis for his persona’s attainment of good reason—Watson introduced a theological logic into his Petrarchan collection that delicately admonished readers not to trust to their own “good will” or “good reason”—in matters of love, or otherwise.

Before turning to Sidney, it is worth summarily marking the leading difference between the *Hekatompathia* and *Astrophel and Stella*. Watson appears to

Helgerson, on the other hand, thinks Moffet’s and Greville’s testimonies “credible.” For his reasoning, see *Elizabethan Prodigals*, 152-3. See also Lisa Klein’s *The Exemplary Sidney and the Elizabethan Sonneteers* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998), 30-31, where Klein notes that “At the time of his death, [Sidney] was attempting a poetic self-reformation by translating the Psalms.”

⁴⁶ See Sears Jane, *Plato in Renaissance England* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 103-4, 107-8.

be observing what Helgerson deems the literary fashion of the time by turning his sequence into a commentary on prodigal grace. Philip Sidney may have performed the prodigal himself, as did many of the poets and personae of his time—but why does his Astrophel never “return”? Situating *Astrophel and Stella* alongside Watson’s (and Spenser’s) sonnet cycles alerts us to the fact that Sidney is doing something quite distinctive in refusing to allow Astrophel’s battle between “flesh” and “spirit” to come to a conclusion. There *is* no “Pasquine Piller” in *Astrophel and Stella*; nor is there—as there is in the *Amoretti*—a dovetail into an “Epithalamion” that can be similarly interpreted as a kind of conversion-event. This apparent rejection of a conversion narrative—as we will see—was Sidney’s particular approach to reformed theology, as was his use of the amatory sequence as a site to play out the ongoing struggle between “reason and passion,” even—and especially—in the regenerate.

AT WIT'S END: PHILIP SIDNEY AND THE POSTLAPSARIAN LIMITS OF REASON AND WILL

The usefulness of self-knowledge is a theme that runs through Philip Sidney's oeuvre. In a 1580 letter to his friend Edward Denny, who had requested that Sidney "tell [him his] minde of the directinge of [Denny's] studyes," the poet proposes a course of self-instruction, counseling that:

The knowledge of ourselves no doubt ought to be most pretious vnto vs, and therein the holy scriptures, if not the only, are certainly the incomperable lantern in this fleshly darkness of ours... They therefore are diligently, to be redd. To them if you will adde... some parts of morall philosophy, I thinke you shall doe very wisely... therefore may we seeke what i[t] is to be truly juste, truly vallyant, rightly temperate, & rightly friendly, with their annexed quallities and contraries. And therof are many bookes written; but to my pleasing Aristotles Ethickes passe.¹

That the Scriptures and the *Ethics* are the first two texts Sidney recommends to his friend is significant; the contents of this letter are, indeed, an archive for the kinds of syncretism discussed in the previous chapter. Sidney's concern for self-knowledge is given voice again in his *Defence of Poesie* (1595), when the poet insists that "the highest end of the mistresse knowledge... stands... in the knowledge of a mans selfe, in the Ethike and Politique consideration, with the end of well doing, and not of well knowing onely."²

The proposition in both Sidney's letter and the *Defence* is that self-knowledge ("well knowing") ideally leads to virtuous action ("well doing"). But as we will see in

¹ "Appendix 5: Sidney's Letter to Edward Denny" in James M. Osborn, *Young Philip Sidney, 1572-1577* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1972), 537-8.

² *The Prose Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat. Vol. 3: *The Defence of Poesie, Political Discourses, Correspondence, Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1962), 11.

Astrophel—who “look[s] in [his] heart” in order to “write” in the first sonnet of *Astrophel and Stella*—this is not necessarily the order of affairs man experiences “in this fleshly darkness of [his].” As a figure for self-knowledge, Astrophel is, rather, resonant of *The true knowledge of a mans own selfe* by the French Protestant Philippe de Mornay, Sidney’s friend and political ally, and a “favorite theologian” of his circle of ardent Protestants.³ Contrary to what Sidney appears to offer in his *Defence*—that the end of well-*knowing* is well-*doing*—Mornay’s treatise proposes that “looking within” serves more to help man discover his depravity than to teach him to do well. This depravity was, of course, occasioned by The Fall, when the “powers” of the soul—including the sensitive power, which contains the affections, and the intellectual power, whereby man reasons—were corrupted. The “self-knowledge” a reader would acquire through Mornay’s text is that his nature has been “disrancked and made unrulie, by the first offence cast generallie on all, [that] the affections are [now] not

³ “[Mornay] and his wife had been invited to England by Philip Sidney, who had met them in Paris in 1572. The Mornays arrived in London in May, 1577 and stayed until June, 1578. During that period Mornay completed” his *De la vérité de la religion chrétienne*; Sidney would leave behind an incomplete translation of this text when he died (Sears Jayne, *Plato in Renaissance England* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 107). See also Linda Gregerson, *The Reformation of the Subject: Spenser, Milton, and the English Protestant Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 97-8; Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 170. Sidney’s ardent Protestantism is well-known. See, for instance, Alan Sinfield, “Sidney and Du Bartas” in *Comparative Literature* 27.1 (Winter 1975), 20; Alan Sinfield, “The Cultural Politics of the Defence of Poesy” in *Sir Philip Sidney and the Interpretation of Renaissance Culture*. ed. Gary F. Waller and Michael D. Moore (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1984), 132; John N. King, *Spenser’s Poetry and the Reformation Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990), 11, 152-3; Alistair Fox, *The English Renaissance: Identity and Representation in Elizabethan England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 3). See also the correspondence between Sidney and his friend Hubert Languet. Languet refers to “[t]he hatred of the Papists which you speak of”; and, in a later letter, Languet appears to encourage his friend’s radicalism: “A meeting of Protestant princes is called at Magdeburg for the month of October, in which the question of religion will be discussed; why should not your most gracious Queen send some active agent to this meeting, to set before them the dangers which threaten all who have cast off their allegiance to Rome... and also to explain to them how the papists are encouraging these disputes among us?” (*The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet*, ed. William Aspenwall Bradley (Boston: The Merrymount Press, 1912), 47, 122).

moderated by judgement, deliberation, or honest counsell: [and that] the will, as mistresse of the affections... perpetuate[s] unreasonable or pernicious things.”⁴

Further, “if nature had continued in her first integritie, we should neuer have willed, but what of itself had been good & honest: but... [now] the vnderstanding is sometimes deceued in judging of things.”⁵

A reader who took up *The true knowledge of a mans own selfe* with the objective of self-understanding might have discovered enough about his own depravity to be incited to turn to God for pity, aid, and purification, as the text repeatedly counsels. For this was precisely why reformers stressed the negative view of human nature: consciousness of it was the starting point for grace.⁶ And if Mornay’s reader “looked in his heart,” he would have been looking at the very seat of his postlapsarian corruption: “our affections haue theyr seate... in the hart”; “*out of the hart procee[d] euill cogitations, thefts, blasphemies, murders, adulteries, lies, and such like other crimes. In this then it appeares most certainly, that by the hart is signified the vnderstanding and the will.*” Further:

The organe or seat [of the appetite] is the hart, & not any part of the braine at all, for oftentimes a man shal desire what hee knowes to be ill: as Ouid saide of Medea: *I see & approue the good, but I doe the euill.* And S. Paule: *I see another lawe in my members:* that is to say, the hart, *repugnant to the lawe of my understanding, & it holdeth me in captiuitie, under the law of sin and death.* In briefe, very often is judgement reprooued by affection, whereby then it is most cleer & euident, that our affections are not in the braine, where indeede is the certaine knowledge of thinges.⁷

⁴ *The true knowledge of a mans owne selfe. Written in French by Monsieur du Plessis, Lord of Plessie Marly. And truly translated into English by A.M.* (London: Printed by I.R., 1602), fol. H2.

⁵ *Ibid.* fol. J3

⁶ *Ibid.* fols. I6, J1-2, J4.

⁷ *Ibid.* fols. G8, I6, G6-7.

Mornay joins a long list of reformers for whom *heart* and *will* are synonymous. For Calvin, “the heart signifies the will,” since “Paul calls that the will which is the chief desire of the heart.”⁸ Philip Melanchthon asks: “what is the will if not the fountain of the affections? And why do we not use the word ‘heart’ instead of the ‘will’ since Scripture calls the heart the most powerful portion of man, and that in which the affections take origin?” “We would avoid such crass and stupid errors” of misunderstanding, Melanchthon argues, if we simply “use the word ‘heart’ as Scripture does, instead of Aristotle’s word ‘will.’”⁹ According to these theologians, to look into one’s “heart” *is* to examine one’s will.

For Mornay, the affections cannot have their seat in the brain because the brain knows and sees clearly (“the certaine knowledge of thinges”)—though he elsewhere insists upon the corruption of the intellectual power (the “vice[s] & defect[s] in the understanding”). Sidney’s *Defence* echoes this apparent contradiction in its well-known insistence upon “our erected wit” even as it reminds us of “that first accursed fall of Adam”—the very figure for the “infection” of all that was once upright in man, including his will.¹⁰ Both Mornay and Sidney attribute more, and then less, to reason, illustrating the real complexity of the subject. I am less interested in

⁸ *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*, trans. G.I. Davies (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 209; *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. Rev. John Owen (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1849), 265).

⁹ *The Loci Communes of Philip Melanchthon*, trans. Charles Leander Hill (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 76, 79. See also Randall C. Zachman, who notes that “Luther indicates the close relationship between the conscience and the will by using the term ‘heart’ (*cor*) as a synonym for the conscience on some occasions, while at other times he restricts the term ‘heart’ to the will and its affections” (*The Assurance of Faith: Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 22).

¹⁰ *The Prose Works*, Vol. 3, 9.

attempting to reconcile these claims than I am in examining how their “erected wit[s]” and “infected will[s]” transfigured the classical concept of *akrasia*—weakness of will, or acting against one’s better judgment—for reformed ends, and how this infection of the will/heart plays out in Sidney’s love poetry.

Sidney’s first texts of choice for Edward Denny are the Bible and Aristotle’s *Ethics*; Mornay posits a relationship between Medea and the Paul of Romans 7. Aristotle, Medea, and Paul were, indeed, all taken up in reformed commentaries about *akrasia* to answer fundamental questions about what remained of man’s reason and his will after “the first offence cast generallie on all.” While the *Defence* appears to speak confidently of a “well knowing” that might produce a “well doing,” *The true knowledge of a mans own selfe* suggests that man’s postlapsarian state is such that he often “knows well” *without* “doing well.” This is a state of affairs familiar not only to Ovid’s Medea, but also to postlapsarian Paul and to postlapsarian Astrophel.

As is the case with Watson’s *Hecatompethia*, Astrophel’s struggle between his reason and his passion in *Astrophel and Stella* has widely been interpreted in light of classical thought.¹¹ Indeed, Astrophel’s capacity to “see and approve the better”

¹¹ J.W. Lever, for instance, frames the “insurrection of sense against reason” that Astrophel experiences in Platonic terms: “[Sidney] was familiar with the Platonic psychology which divided the soul into three categories: the rational part which existed to serve truth; the spiritual part, promoting virtue... and the sensual, appetitive part which represented physical desire. Whereas in the good man, reason was king and governed his lower faculties through virtue, in the weak or wicked, sense rebelled against the higher categories of the psyche and set up its own tyranny. This concept of the insurrection of sense against reason and virtue was in close accord with Sidney’s own experience...” (*The Elizabethan Love Sonnet* (London: Methuen, 1956), 84). C. Stuart Hunter appears primarily interested in Sidney’s employment of Aristotelian *mimesis* in the struggle in his sequence (“Erected Wit and Infected Will: Sidney’s Poetic Theory and Poetic Practice” in *Sidney Newsletter and Journal* 5 (1984), 3, 8). Hallet Smith, Robert L. Montgomery, Janet H. MacArthur, and Roland Greene have all observed the “reason versus passion” *topos* in Sidney, but have either passed it over because of its familiarity, or concentrated on its classical sources. See Hallet Smith, *Elizabethan Poetry: A Study in Conventions*,

although he “follows the worse” (“I see my course to lose myself doth bend; / I see—
and yet no greater sorrow take / Than that I lose no more for Stella’s sake” (*AS* 18.12-
14)) sounds markedly like Medea (“*video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*,”
Metamorphoses 7.20-21). And Sidney was certainly interested in Medea as a figure,
as is demonstrated by her presence elsewhere in his works.¹² But when we consider
Sidney’s claims in the *Defence* that poetry serves a didactic function, and add a
theological lens to the existing classical lens through which to view Astrophel’s
struggle, he becomes a remarkable figure for the regenerate. In this light, the lover
reproduces Paul’s struggle between knowing and doing—the very *gnosis* and *praxis* of
Sidney’s *Defence*—in Romans 7: “For I delite in the Law of God, concerning the inner
man: But I se another law in my members, rebelling against the law of my minde, &
leading me captiue vnto the law of sinne” (v. 22-3); “Then I my self in my minde
serue the Law of God, but in my flesh the law of sinne” (v. 25).¹³

Meaning, and Expression (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1952), 154; Robert L. Montgomery, *Symmetry and Sense: The Poetry of Sir Philip Sidney* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1961), 103, 107; Janet H. MacArthur, *Critical Contexts of Sidney’s Astrophil and Stella and Spenser’s Amoretti* (Victoria, BC: U of Victoria P, 1989), 57; Roland Greene, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991), 92.

¹² Sidney comments upon “the sower sweetnesse of revenge in *Medea*” in the *Defence* (*The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat. Vol. 3 (Cambridge: U of Cambridge P, 1923), 15), and alludes to “what maner of countenance *Medea* kild her owne children” in the *Arcadia* (“The Last Part of The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia” in *The Complete Works*, Vol. 2, 19).

¹³ All citations from *Astrophel and Stella* are taken from Robert Kimbrough’s *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Prose and Poetry* (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1983). Sidney’s sequence circulated widely in manuscript beginning in the early 1580s and first appeared in print in 1591 in three unauthorized versions, two by Thomas Newman, and one by Matthew Lownes. An authorized version—printed by William Ponsonby and sanctioned by Sidney’s sister—did not appear until 1598. The 1598 version differs from the bad quartos insofar as it admits Sonnet 37, which riddles on the name Rich; eight additional stanzas of Song Eight, in which Stella confesses that she loves Astrophel; three additional—and frankly sexual—stanzas of Song Ten; and the entirety of Song Eleven. Furthermore, in the 1598 edition the songs are interspersed rather than grouped at the end, where they had been placed in the earlier editions. It is the authorized 1598 version that Kimbrough uses in his edition. For publication history, see Thomas P. Roche, Jr., “Astrophil and Stella: A Radical Reading” in *Spenser*

Composed contemporaneously with Watson's *Hekatompathia* (c. 1581-82), *Astrophel and Stella* is comprised of 108 sonnets and eleven interspersed songs.¹⁴ The sonnets are variations on both English and Italian forms, while the songs are composed in varying prosody. As one scholar has written, "the sense of structure has been felt by nearly all recent commentators on the sequence, but their lack of agreement on the exact disposition of the parts would also seem to indicate that Sidney may have been too successful 'in concealing the structure that makes it a whole.'"¹⁵ Despite this lack of consensus, there *is* a narrative arc of sorts that can be identified across the collection's 119 poems. The first 68 poems draw upon the Petrarchan sonnet tradition—belying their claim that they look to Stella, rather than to convention, for inspiration (*AS* 3, 15, 55). These poems praise Stella as the exemplar of virtue as well as for her beauty; they present the lover, perpetually at war with his reason, becoming ever more frustrated by Stella's refusals; they contain apostrophes to Cupid and allusions to both the God of Love and his mother, Venus, as well as to other classical figures. Of these 68 lyrics, the first 35 are primarily meditations on the nature of Astrophel's love. Sonnet 36 addresses Stella directly and initiates a series of poems that suggest Stella's increasing physical proximity; these poems shift from

Studies 3 (1982), 139; Michael Spiller, *Development of the Sonnet: An Introduction* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 1992), 106; Rudolph P. Almas, "Stella and the Songs: Questions about the Composition of 'Astrophil and Stella'" in *South Atlantic Review* 58.4 (Nov. 1993), 1-17; Patricia Berrahou Phillip, *Love's Remedies: Recantation and Renaissance Lyric Poetry* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1995), 137.

¹⁴ This interspersing is true of the 1598 edition, overseen by Mary Sidney Herbert. In the pirated 1591 edition, the songs are placed at the end.

¹⁵ Leonora Leet Brodwin, "The Structure of Sidney's 'Astrophel and Stella'" in *Modern Philology* 67.1 (August 1969), 25. Nearly forty years later, Margaret M. Simon writes: "Scholarly debates abound concerning efforts to ascribe a set plot to *Astrophil and Stella*, and little agreement exists on how to interpret the sequence's structure" (*The Facts on File Companion to British Poetry Before 1600*, ed. Michelle Sauer (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), 35).

contemplations to attempts to obtain her affections. A few of the lyrics in this “second section” imply that Stella may be married, which would explain her rejections of the lover’s advances (*AS 37, Fifth Song, Eighth Song*). Nevertheless, in Sonnet 69, Stella concedes to a reciprocal love for Astrophel—on the condition that this love is virtuous. Astrophel initially appears to want to abide by these terms: indeed, Sonnets 71 and 72 demonstrate the most heightened struggles between reason and desire in the sequence. But the lover breaks the terms of their love-covenant in the *Second Song*, when he steals a kiss from the sleeping Stella, provoking her virtuous wrath. After this kiss, Astrophel continues to struggle with his desire in the face of his enraged beloved, praising her lips, wishing he had “taken” more than the kiss (*Second Song 28*), and seeking consummation again in the *Fourth Song*. Only in the *Eighth Song* does Stella’s anger cool, and the couple reconciles before Stella departs. The remaining poems in the cycle lament Stella’s absence, and the sequence closes on Astrophel’s meditation on his despair.

Like Spenser’s, then, Sidney’s sequence concludes with the beloved’s absence; but while the *Amoretti*’s is an absence pregnant with hope, *Astrophel and Stella*’s is an absence charged with despair. The difference between Spenser, Watson, and Sidney, I propose, is that Sidney’s sonnet sequence is fully conscious of—and his Astrophel is playing out—the reformed position on postlapsarian reason and will (heart). That is, both have been so corrupted that even after the reception of grace, spiritual man experiences a struggle between the part of him that has been regenerated and the part of him that remains, in Sidney’s terms, “in this fleshly

darkness of ours.” In fact, Astrophel exemplifies the reformed attitude that regenerate man is *more* struggling than his reprobate counterpart. Luther, for example, claims that only spiritual man understands the extent to which he remains carnal: “No one will declare himself wretched [a word Astrophel uses to describe himself nine times] except one who is a spiritual man.”¹⁶ For Luther, only the ungodly are free from the kind of ongoing inner conflict Sidney’s lover experiences.

For Sidney, love poetry’s affinity with theology is that both begin by “looking in the heart” and discovering incontinence and concupiscence there. When Astrophel professes to dispense with literary convention, “looke in [his] heart, and write” (*AS* 1.14), what he discovers—alongside the image of Stella—is the corrupt nature of his postlapsarian heart/will, prompting the struggle between reason (wit) and will that he is characterized by for the remainder of the sequence. The heart—simultaneously the place where the Law is written (Rom. 2:14) and the seat of the will—is fundamentally an impure and divided heart; thus the lover/penitent who turns inward inaugurates the same ethically ambiguous struggle (“I delite in the Law of God... But I se another law in my members”) that Paul details. This is why Astrophel—unlike Watson’s lover—can neither make a perfect recantation nor write a perfect palindrome. And where Spenser’s sequence, too, reads like a conversion narrative, offering its readers an object lesson about the necessary precondition of grace for transformation and “good works,” Sidney’s interpretation of the effects of divine grace is much more complex and nuanced.

¹⁶ Cited in David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 112.

Sidney himself would appear to confirm this as an available reading of his persona. The *Defence* describes poetry as “that faining notable images of vertues, vices, or what els, with that delightfull teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a Poet by.”¹⁷ Much has been written about Sidney’s definition of poetry as it relates to his amatory poems; scholars have overwhelmingly concluded that Astrophel is meant to serve as an object lesson by way of a negative example (Sidney’s “vices”).¹⁸ Paul Miller Allen is almost alone in noting that Astrophel “is neither wholly unattractive nor wholly virtuous, and he is certainly never condemned within the confines of the collection.” Still, for Allen, Sidney’s own persona “is hardly in keeping with the *Defence*’s strictures on shunning ethical ambiguity.”¹⁹ But what is often overlooked in scholarship about Sidney’s position on the didactic ends of poetry is the “what els” in his phrase “vertues, vices, or what els” through which the poet “delightfully teaches.” Sidney also translated the Psalms, after all; and this “what els” was precisely the didactic role that David was understood to play. Calvin famously called the psalms “‘An Anatomy of all the Parts of the Soul,’ for there is not

¹⁷ *The Prose Works*, Vol. 3, 11 (italics mine).

¹⁸ See Robert L. Montgomery Jr., “Reason, Passion, and Introspection in *Astrophil and Stella*” in *Texas Studies in English* 36 (1957), 130-31; Ann Romaine Howe, “Astrophil and Stella: Why and How” in *Studies in Philology* 61.2 (April 1964), 156-7; Alan Sinfield, “Astrophil’s Self-Deception” in *Essays in Criticism* 28 (Jan. 1978), 1-18; Alan Sinfield, “Sidney and Astrophil” in *SEL* 20.1 (Winter 1980), 26; Thomas P. Roche, Jr., “*Astrophil and Stella*: A Radical Reading” in *Spenser Studies* 3 (1982), 141; *Critical Contexts of Sidney’s Astrophil and Stella*, 60-62; Elizabeth M. Hull, “All My Deed But Copying Is: The Erotics of Identity in *Astrophil and Stella*” in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38.2 (Summer 1996), 177; Peter C. Herman, *Squitter-Wits and Muse Haters: Sidney, Spenser, Milton and Renaissance Antipoetic Sentiment* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1996), 95-6; Alistair Fox, *The English Renaissance: Identity and Representation in Elizabethan England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 9-10, 40; Tom W.N. Parker, *Proportional Form in the Sonnets of the Sidney Circle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 46. By 1999, Chauncey Wood could write that “[t]here is today widespread... agreement that readers should discriminate between the poet Sidney and his creation... who is presented in a negative light” (“‘With Wit My Wit is Marred’: Reason, Wit, and Wittiness in Sir Philip Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*” in *Spenser Studies* 13 (1999), 245).

¹⁹ “Sidney, Petrarch, and Ovid, or Imitation as Subversion” in *ELH* 58 (1991), 507.

an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror.”²⁰

David was neither wholly virtuous nor wholly wicked; parishioners and penitents were enjoined to take him up as an example of the human struggle—not as an everyman, but as a recipient of God’s grace who continued to struggle. Re-emphasizing that third term in Sidney’s chain of instructive examples permits his lyric sequence to offer its readers an object lesson that is, likewise, a figure for neither “virtue” nor “vice,” but a more sympathetic figure for the “what els”: the Pauline struggle. Whereas Watson’s readers would have been edified by way of a poetic persona who exemplifies patient struggle with the passions *until* the arrival of grace, Sidney’s readers would have been edified by way of a persona who exemplifies the ongoing—and ineluctable—struggle of the regenerate, even *after* the reception of grace.

PAUL, MEDEA, AND *AKRASIA*

Aristotle discusses *akrasia* in Book 7 of his *Nicomachean Ethics*—the text Sidney cites second to the Bible in his recommended reading list for Denny. Aristotle’s reflections in the *Ethics* are in part a response to Plato’s *Protagoras*, in which Socrates objects to the view that it is possible for someone to think one course of action more virtuous than another, and still choose the course of action thought worse. No one *willingly* acts against what he judges best, Socrates claims; “it is not in

²⁰ “The Author’s Preface to the Commentary on the Psalms” in *Steward of God’s Covenant: Selected Writings*, ed. John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 164.

human nature... to wish to go after what one thinks evil in preference to the good.”²¹

In the *Ethics*, Aristotle frankly observes that Socrates’ view contradicts experience (“Now this theory is manifestly at variance with plain facts”).²² People in fact *often* act against their better judgment, Aristotle notes, and experience a difficult wrestling between reason and appetite as they do. The philosopher then distinguishes between *akrasia* (incontinence) and *enkrateia* (continence): both akratic and enkratic people experience the conflict of right reasoning while feeling passions that are contrary to their reason. Both figures, that is, “see” rightly.²³ But while the akratic person acts *against* his reason, the enkratic person is able to overcome his passion and act in accordance with it.

Sidney certainly had the *Ethics* in mind when he wrote, in the *Defence*: “as Aristotle saith, it is not *gnosis* but *praxis* must be the frute [of teaching].”²⁴ *Akrasia* correlates, after all, precisely with the distinction the *Defence* makes between “well

²¹ “Protagoras,” trans. W.R.M. Lamb in *Plato in Twelve volumes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1967), 357c, 358c-d. *Perseus*. See also James Warren, *The Pleasures of Reason in Plato, Aristotle, and the Hellenistic Hedonists* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014), 105-6; Paul Crittenden, *Reason, Will and Emotion: Defending the Greek Tradition against Triune Consciousness* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 117-19.

²² *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham, in *Aristotle in 23 Volumes*. Vol. 19 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1934), 1145c. *Perseus*.

²³ Though passion prevails over rational choice in the akratic person, Aristotle is careful to note that *akrasia* is not a vice—and it is precisely this clear-sightedness that makes this the case. The akratic person, after all, *understands* the good and thus possess virtuous principles, whether or not he acts in accordance with them: “although he errs willingly (for he knows in a sense both what he is doing and what end he is aiming at), yet he is not wicked, for his moral choice is sound, so that he is only half-wicked” (*Ethics*, 1152a).

²⁴ *The Prose Works*, Vol. 3, 19. Aristide Tessitore writes: “In a striking formulation, Aristotle asserts that the aim of ethical study is not knowledge (*gnosis*) but action (*praxis*). As he later explains, ethical inquiry, unlike other kinds of study, is not undertaken for the sake of theoretical knowledge (*theoria*) but ‘so that we might become good’ (*hin’agathoi genometha*)” (*Reading Aristotle’s Ethics: Virtue, Rhetoric, and Political Philosophy* (Albany: State U of New York P, 1996), 15). Aristotle writes: “We are studying not to know what goodness is, but how to become good men, since otherwise it would be useless” (trans. J.A.K. Thomson (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 33).

knowing” and “well doing.” So, too, were the reformers speculating upon Aristotle’s text. Luther lectured on the *Ethics* four times a week in his first year at Wittenberg, before finally recommending that it, along with other writings of Aristotle’s, “be altogether discarded.”²⁵ Luther didn’t leave room for an account of *akrasia* in his theology, primarily because he argued for a “whole man” against the claim that the mind could be divided into two autonomous powers of reason and appetite—an argument he frequently returns to in his commentaries on Romans 7.²⁶ Luther’s rejection of *akrasia* is especially interesting in light of recent claims that “the Lutheran Reformation plays a significant role in the interpretation history of *akrasia*” and “the Protestant interpretation history of *akrasia* is deeply dependent on Luther’s and Melanchthon’s formative teachings.”²⁷

Indeed, despite Luther’s general animosity toward the *Ethics* and his claim that there *is* no *akrasia*, his writings appear to have contributed to a reformed examination in which the majority of commentators were receptive to both; and Paul’s self-diagnosis in Romans 7 offered a remarkable case study for consideration

²⁵ Martin Luther, *Three Treatises* (Fortress Press, 1970), 93; “An Open Letter to the Christian Nobility (1520)” in *Works of Martin Luther*, ed. Lane Hall. Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman Company, 1915), 146. The reasons for Luther’s animosity toward Aristotle—namely, that the philosopher attributed more influence to human will than Luther was ever willing to grant—are more thoroughly expounded in his 1517 “Disputation against Scholastic Theology,” in which Luther claims that “We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds but, having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds. This is in opposition to the philosophers.” And thus: “Virtually the entire *Ethics* of Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace” (*Documents from the History of Lutheranism, 1517-1750*, ed. Eric Lund (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 11).

²⁶ “For one and the same person is spirit and flesh; thus what the flesh does the whole man is said to do”; “[Paul] does not say: ‘My mind serves the law of God,’ nor ‘My flesh serves the law of sin,’ but he says, ‘I, this whole man, this person here, stand in this double servitude’” (*Lectures on Romans*, ed. Wilhelm Pauck (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1961), 204, 208).

²⁷ Risto Saarinen, “Weakness of Will and the Gift of Grace: Martin Luther’s Contribution” in *Lo Sguardo* 10.3 (*La rivoluzione interiore*, 2012), 71; Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Renaissance and Reformation Thought*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 134. *Weakness of Will* is a mine of information on Medea and *akrasia*; it is my primary source for the discussion that follows.

of the latter. And while Aristotle never considers Medea in his reflections on *akrasia*, nearly every reformer who attempted to align his theology with Aristotelian thought invoked Medea, alongside Paul, as an illustration. Calvin—“the first Protestant author who consistently applies Luther’s insights to the Aristotelian issue of weakness of will”—explicitly remarks upon the problem of *akrasia* in his *Institutes*.²⁸ Calvin employs Romans 2—in which Paul claims that the Gentiles “haue the Law written in their hearts” (v. 15)—to contend against the *Protagoras*’ Socrates: “it is false,” Calvin claims, to say that [man] sins only through ignorance.” For while the human mind is assuredly corrupt, he concedes, it is not *so* depraved that it could ignore the good—failing to “open its eyes”—*permanently* (2.2.22).²⁹ Furthermore,

The turpitude of the crime sometimes presses so on the conscience, that the sinner does not impose upon himself by a false semblance of good, but rushes into sin knowingly and willingly. Hence the expression—I see the better course, and approve it: I follow the worse (Medea, of Ovid)... Aristotle [thus] seems to me to have made a very shrewd distinction between incontinence and intemperance (*Ethics* lib. 7).

This juxtaposition of Paul and Medea was a commonplace. The pairing reappears in the *Loci communes* of Luther’s student Melanchthon, the “Ethician of the Reformation,” whose project has been described as the attempt “to reconcile Aristotle and Christian doctrine.”³⁰ In the first edition of the *Loci* (1521), Melanchthon employs the Paul of Romans 7 to testify to the will’s ongoing servitude

²⁸ *Weakness of Will*, 164.

²⁹ All citations of the *Institutes* are taken from Henry Beveridge’s translation (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008).

³⁰ Ralph Keen, in *A Melanchthon Reader*, ed. Ralph Keen (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), 23. Keen writes later: “A major project throughout Melanchthon’s career... was to make classical philosophy, Aristotle in particular, positive and relevant for Christian thought” (179). See also *The Loci Communes*, ed. Hill, 39.

to the affects. There *is no* “new will” in the regenerate, Melanchthon claims, that can suddenly restrain the passions after the reception of grace. Regenerate man remains in the flesh, where his will “rules over [his] knowledge”: he can still, of his own nature, do nothing but sin.³¹ This analysis of internal conflict eventually extends to Medea: while “there is some remnant of good judgement even in sinful human beings, [and] they can to an extent behave rationally and... act in consonance with the external requirements of the law,” it remains the case that “the weakness of our nature, provoked by the devil, often overcomes this freedom. People are full of evil affects which overrule the right judgement, as is the case of Medea in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.”³²

The theologian Lambert Daneau invoked both figures in his *Ethices Christianae libri tres* (1577).³³ Here, Daneau reiterates the orthodox claim that “no one can reach this [excellent stage of perfect virtue] because the power and tinder of sin are active in us, even in the most perfect, as the Bible teaches in Romans 7.”³⁴ This is the case even in continent men, because while the spirit of God prevails in continence, the person still wrestles with harmful desires, and his will still remains repugnant to the good it *does* do. Examples of such “continent wrestling” include Jacob in his wrestling with the angel and the Paul of Romans 7. On the other hand, “when our harmful desire overcomes reason, it is called incontinence. Such is the

³¹ Cited in *Weakness of Will*, 135.

³² Cited in *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.* 189.

³⁴ Cited in *Ibid.* 191.

case of Medea in Ovid: ‘I see the better and approve it, but follow the worse.’”³⁵ For Daneau, while Paul and Jacob are examples of *enkrateia* (continence) and Medea is an example of *akrasia* (incontinence), *all* can experience wrestling. “This [wrestling] is the state of the elect [such as Paul] and, in addition, of some honest non-elect who can ascend from vice to *akrasia* [such as Medea], although not to genuine *enkrateia* because they lack the renewing Spirit.”³⁶

We see the “wrestling” that Daneau characterizes Paul by most clearly in the latter half of Romans 7, where the apostle sets out “the dangerous fight between the flesh & the Spirit.”³⁷ I have thus far quoted fragments, but it is worth excerpting at length:

For I once was aliue, without the Law: but when the commandement came, sinne reuiued... For we knowe that the Lawe is spiritual, but I am carnal, solde vnder sinne... for what I wolde, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I. If I do then that which I wolde not, I consent to the Law, that *it is* good. Now then, it is no more I, that do it, but sinne that dwelleth in me. For I knowe, that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to wil is present with me: but I finde no meanes to performe that which is good... For I delite in the Law of God, concerning the inner man: But I se another Law in my membres, rebelling against the law of my minde, & leading me captiue vnto the law of sinne, which is in my membres... I my self in my minde serue the Law of God, but in my flesh the law of sinne (v. 9-25).

The marginal notes to the 1599 Geneva gloss the coming of the “Law” that Paul writes of here (“when the commandement came, sinne reuiued”) as a transition from ignorance to knowledge respecting sin. The young Paul’s conscience, they maintain,

³⁵ Cited in *Ibid.* 194.

³⁶ Cited in *Ibid.* 196.

³⁷ Chapter headnote, verse 23.

initially “neuer troubled [him], because *it knewe not [his] disease*.”³⁸ The believing, post-conversion Paul of the latter half of Romans 7 now “knowes” that the Law is good and “wolde” follow it; but despite his newfound discernment and his apparent will to follow, sometimes does otherwise.

Commentaries insisting that the Paul who speaks in Romans 7 is a regenerate focused on his struggle as the testimony of his spiritual status: he “setteth himself, being regenerate, before us, for an example, in whom may easily appear the strife of the Spirit and the flesh.”³⁹ But one might see where fixation on Paul’s “wrestling” as the mark of his regeneration may have caused some anxiety in light of Medea. The commentators on *akrasia* were not all in agreement that Medea did *not* wrestle (Daneau, for example, argues she did); and even among those who claim that Medea could not have experienced the Pauline internal struggle, the language is often slippery enough to suggest otherwise. Melancthon’s Medea, for instance, maintains “some remnant of good judgement,” but her “evil affects” are “provoked by the devil” to “overrule [her] right judgement”: a process that certainly sounds (“provoking,” “overruling”) a lot like conflict. Any reformed readings of Medea that described her as wrestling, fighting, repugnant or conflicted would make her look, in other words, suspiciously like a regenerate figure. And so, now that they were juxtaposed, Paul and Medea needed to be distinguished.

Thus, for Calvin, while Paul’s and Medea’s conditions *appear* identical, the latter “approves” the good only “under constraint.” *Approving* the good is not the

³⁸ Marginal notes to v. 8-9, italics mine.

³⁹ Marginal notes to v. 15.

same as “cheerful[ly]” *willing* it: only the regenerate can will the good—and, of course, only then by God’s grace.⁴⁰ While Melanchthon is more willing to grant a struggle of sorts to the unregenerate—he argues that even non-Christians possess some natural light of reason and so can experience a conflict between reason and passion—he distinguishes between theological and philosophical *akrasia*.⁴¹ Medea is an example of the latter, as she illustrates the conflict that keeps her from “reasonably” obeying civic law. But while both Paul and Medea are *conflicted*, only Paul can properly be said to “wrestle,” since “wrestling involves a spiritual component,” and is thus unlike the struggle between reason and passion in the civil sphere.⁴² Daneau, rather, focuses on the *source* of the struggle: while both elect and non-elect can struggle against vice, the former does so through the regenerating force of the Holy Spirit, while the latter can do so only through “their conscience, reason, and sense of honesty.”⁴³

Sidney could not have been unaware of these discourses. He was reading the *Ethics*, yes; but he was also reading—or certainly had access to, and in some cases had dedicated to him—works by these theologians.⁴⁴ And we have seen the poet’s regard

⁴⁰ *Commentaries on the Epistle... to the Romans*, 266.

⁴¹ *Weakness of Will*, 136. Elsewhere, Melanchthon attempts to contrast the two by arguing that Paul experiences struggle in the opposition between his reason and his will, while Medea does *not* (“it is not the calmness but the wrestling of the faithful which shows that the Spirit is active in them” (cited in *Ibid.* 138)).

⁴² Saarinen writes: “The topic of wrestling (*lucta*) pertains primarily to the cases of cooperation with God” (*Ibid.* 136-7).

⁴³ *Ibid.* 195.

⁴⁴ On November 21, 1579, Sidney’s friend Hubert Languet wrote to him, “Lambert Daneau, the Geneva theologian, sent me two copies of a book dedicated to you, which he is calling the Poetic Geography.” Languet mentions in the same letter that a friend of his had once mentioned to him that Daneau once “had it in mind to dedicate to you [Sidney] a commentary on Paul’s second Epistle to the Corinthians” (*The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Roger Kuin (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010),

for the relationship between Aristotle's *gnosis* and *praxis*, "well-knowing" and "well-doing." Of course, Medea served Sidney's sequence insofar as her *particular* incontinence (*akrasia*)—as opposed to Paul's, which is "of the flesh" but remains indeterminate—is sexual in nature. But Medea could not serve an instructive purpose. I propose, then, that as Sidney positioned his Astrophel at the dialectic of right reason and human frailty, looking as much like Medea as he looked like Paul ("I see, my course to lose myself... I see: and yet"; "I willing run, yet while I run repent" (*AS* 18.12-13, 19.4)), he felt obliged—by virtue of his conviction that poetry ought to serve didactic ends—to distinguish his Astrophel from the pre-Christian reprobate.

While Astrophel spends the sequence pursuing his passions while clearly discerning that he ought to be doing otherwise—as do, in many commentaries, both Medea and Paul—the sequence offers several indications that Sidney wanted Astrophel's internal conflict to replicate the apostle's rather than the filicide's. In the first place—as we saw in the previous chapter—reformers argued that the philosophers (Aristotle included) attributed too much capacity to reason; and Astrophel misuses his reason in such a way that it looks more like the corrupted reason of the reformers than it does the relatively unmarred reason of the philosophers. Secondly, the sequence

939). On the likelihood that Sidney knew Melanchthon's work well, see *A Melanchthon Reader*, 19; James B. Osborn, *Young Philip Sidney* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1972), 47; Robert E. Stillman, *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism* (Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Ashgate, 2008). Stillman traces the ways Melanchthon's work specifically influenced Sidney's. Sidney himself suggests in his letter to Denny that Denny read "Phillip Melanths Chronology" (*Young Philip Sidney*, 539). On Sidney's desire to translate the work of the Lutheran Joachim Camerarius—who was not discussed above, but who also wrote on *akrasia*—see Robert E. Stillman's abstract on *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Roger Kuin (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010) in *The Renaissance Society of America's Annual Meeting Program and Abstract Book* (27-29 March, 2014), 82; *The Correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney*, 838. It seems fair to assume that Sidney's eagerness to edit Camerarius' commentaries means he knew them well.

recapitulates The Fall—the very source of this corrupted reason—figuring Astrophel as a second Adam who must acknowledge his postlapsarian state. And yet (and thirdly), Sidney does more than revisit The Fall. The sequence accommodates the whole of a very common fall-before-grace narrative: Astrophel becomes the recipient of grace *as* he writes, epitomizing the reformers’ claims that self-knowledge is the precondition for such grace. The grace Stella grants Astrophel in Sonnet 69 may indeed be the reason the lover’s internal struggle appears to intensify mid-sequence. Finally, Astrophel’s attention to “grammar-rules” (*AS* 63) intimates that the new grammatical potential of Sidney’s century—and the ways it served to differentiate man’s will from God’s—was not lost on him. In stressing Astrophel’s Pauline-rather-than-Medean character, Sidney could more confidently offer his poetic persona as an example of the kind of instructive value he claimed poetry possesses in the *Defence*.

Again, I do not imply an interpretative hierarchy in this interpretation of *Astrophel and Stella*. Rather, I offer a theological reading to be admitted alongside the sequence’s received Petrarchan signalings. Like Spenser and Watson, Sidney was doing a lot of things at once in these lyrics: speculating upon the relationship between amatory courtship and political courtiership; considering international politics; playing on matters such as horsemanship and muse-hating as metaphors; exploring ways of punning on Lord Rich’s name; referencing classical texts and mythologies as well as the Petrarchan tradition out of which these poems arose. My intervention here is to take scholarship on the reason/passion *topos* in *Astrophel and Stella* three steps further, and to offer that the sequence is doing more than simply appropriating a

classical and Petrarchan motif. It is also: 1) registering that the “reason-versus-passion” struggle is inextricable from The Fall, which is its point of origin; 2) demonstrating that individual acknowledgement of the corruption that *causes* that struggle that is the origin of grace; and 3) working through the Protestant experience of regenerate concupiscence as one iteration of that ongoing struggle, *after* grace. Though situated in the Petrarchan tradition—and though the sonnets are “about” love and not “about” theology—there is a sophisticated theological conceit that underlies the collection. Sidney went to such great lengths to recapitulate The Fall in his amatory sequence, I think, to remind his readers of the scriptural origins of the “reason-versus-passion” *topos* so central to Petrarchan poetry.

“BENDING” WIT TO WILL: ASTROPHEL’S POSTLAPSARIAN REASON

Over a third of the first twenty sonnets of *Astrophel and Stella* could be said to be registering the tension between “well knowing” and “well doing,” “erected wit” and “infected will,” *gnosis* and *praxis*, spirit and flesh.⁴⁵ Take Sonnet 5:

It is most true that eyes are form’d to serve
The inward light, and that the heavenly part
Ought to be king, from whose rules who do swerve,
Rebels to nature, strive for their own smart.
It is most true, what we call Cupid’s dart,
An image is, which for ourselves we carve,
And, fools, adore in temple of our heart,
Till that good god make church and churchmen starve.
True, that true beauty virtue is indeed,
Whereof this beauty can be but a shade,
Which elements with mortal mixture breed.
True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,

⁴⁵ Sonnets 2, 4, 5, 10, 14, 18, and 19 are examples of such—though surely arguments could be made for some of the others.

And should in soul up to our country move.
True, and yet true that I must Stella love.

The catalogue of religiously-inflected “truths”—at least those truths that precede the “truth” of the poem’s final line—exhibits Astrophel’s “erected wit.” He discerns that in not observing his “heavenly part” he is choosing his own suffering; that Cupid is an idol of man’s own making and that we are sacrilegious “fools” who worship him; that earthly beauty is but an inferior version of heavenly beauty; that we are only “pilgrims” temporarily on this earth, and so ought to invest our time here gazing toward the “country” our “soul[s]” will soon return to. But the virtuous logic of the sonnet dissolves in its concluding line, with a resolve as surprising for its change of tone in the middle of the couplet as it is for its apparent rejection of all the truths Astrophel has just detailed: admittedly, all these things *are* “true,” and yet it is (somehow) *also* “true that I must Stella love.”

We have two competing truth claims here, couched in the verbs “ought” (3), “should” (13), and “must” (14). The “ought” and “should” that govern the majority of Sonnet 5 give initial precedence to reason (the “inward light” that perceives—among other things—that “the heavenly part / Ought to be king”). In these first lines, that is, the lover illustrates the classical model of the soul in its ideal state, wherein reason reasons well and then moves the will to comply with its judgments. But Astrophel’s will, in that startling final line, emerges to contend otherwise: the lover *of necessity* loves Stella. What occurs in the poem’s closing is a reversal of optimal cause-and-effect: where reason “ought” and “should” preside over the lover’s will, his will instead convinces his reason to justify (“must”) what it desires.

It may appear an altogether meager closing pronouncement, though we might invoke Romans 7 as proof that Astrophel's "must" is, in fact, genuine. Elsewhere in the sequence, Astrophel exhibits a remarkable capacity to "reason" faultily in service of his will. Indeed, one characteristic of postlapsarian reason was that—far from being too weak—it was too potent: powerful enough, that is, to reason *against* itself. *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion*—the 1587 translation of Mornay's *De veritate religionis christianae liber*, begun by Sidney and completed, after Sidney's death, by Arthur Golding—laments that fallen reason is often *worse than* ignorant: when it knowingly urges a course against itself. Men, Mornay admits with Socrates, only "runne with all their harts after the thing which they suppose to be good for them." But he parts with Socrates where the philosopher argues that man only ever rejects the better course of action as a matter of ignorance. For Mornay, rather, when a man's will settles upon something that it wants, his reason "bewitche[s]" itself until he "knowe[s] it [is good] or thinke[s] himself to knowe it" so that he might continue to "yeeld [his] will unto it." Men are thus "deceyftfully driuen to choose the euill for the good" by reasoning with themselves that evil *is* good.⁴⁶ Reason, which is "earnestly bent and occupyed about the things that it liketh of," then knowingly concludes "contrary to... [the] information" the senses provide it, so that the will can have what it desires.⁴⁷ Mornay concludes: "Therefore we may well deeme of our reason, as of an eysight that is either impayred or inchaunted. It

⁴⁶ *A woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion, written in French: Against Atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Jewes, Mahumetists, and other Infidels. Begunne to be translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney Knight, and at his request finished by Arthur Golding* (London: Imprinted for Thomas Cadman, 1587), fol. D7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* fol. P3.

hath the ground of sight still; but... onely to beguyle [man] by false images and illusions.”⁴⁸

Richard Hooker, likewise, laments that “instead of framing their wills to maintain that which reason [teaches],” men “ben[d] their wits to find how reason might seem to teach that which their wills were set to maintain.”⁴⁹ Nigel Voak summarizes Hooker’s position:

The will fails to reject the inordinate desires of the appetite, and is instead itself persuaded to desire in accordance with them. The will then directs the reason to find arguments for why this object of desire should be chosen, which the reason proceeds to do. Sensitive desire unreasonably influences intellectual desire, and intellectual desire distorts the reasoning process. The result, as Hooker describes it, is that ‘wee study to deceive ourselves,’ assiduously finding arguments for things we want to believe.⁵⁰

This reformed perception of reason resurfaces in both the philosophical and religious poetry of Sidney’s time. John Davies describes the postlapsarian condition in his *Wittes pilgrimage* (1605):

When Will doth long t’effect hir own desires
She makes the Wit (as Vassall to the Wil)
To do what she (how ere vnright) requires,
Which Wit doth (though repiningly) fulfill.⁵¹

John Hall, in *The Court of Virtue* (1565)—a text Hall hoped would serve as a moral alternative to the amatory poetry of his contemporaries—laments that “when gods worde byds [men] amende, / With reason they their vyce defende.”⁵²

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* fol. T4.

⁴⁹ *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: A Critical Edition with Modern Spelling*, ed. Arthur Stephen McGrade. Vol 1 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 225.

⁵⁰ *Richard Hooker and Reformed Theology: A Study of Reason, Will, and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 84.

⁵¹ *The Complete Works of John Davies of Hereford*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart. Vol. II (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1878), 17.

This is precisely what Astrophel does over the course of Sidney's sequence. We see him "assiduously finding arguments for the things [he] want[s] to believe" as early as the second sonnet, when the lover claims that he "now employ[s] the remnant of [his] wit / To make [him]self believe that all is well" (12-13); we watch him more explicitly misuse his reason in service of his will in Sonnet 67 when he says to Hope: "I am resolved they error to maintain" (13). It is this that distinguishes Astrophel from Watson's lover, who neither "bewitches" nor "deceives" himself: his reason (which reasons honorably) is simply not powerful enough to move his will to the good. Astrophel's early depiction of his reason, which "knee[ls] and offe[rs] straight to prove, / By reason good, good reason [Stella] to love" (*AS* 10.13-14) ought, in this sense, to be the interpretative lens for much of what the lover demonstrates in the sequence.

The closing lines of Sonnet 4, for instance, threaten Virtue about the "perils" she will expose herself to if she attempts to arrogate reason to herself, and away from its reciprocal relationship with his will:

But if that needs thou wilt usurping be
 The little reason that is left in me,
 And still the effect of thy persuasions prove,
 I swear, my heart such one shall show to thee
 That shrines in flesh so true a deity
 That, Virtue, thou thyself shalt be in love.

Astrophel here employs the "little reason left" in him to dismiss Virtue in the interest of his will. He is not interested in the rational "proo[fs]" or "persuasions" that Virtue

⁵² "The Prologue" in *The Court of Virtue* (1565), ed. Russell A. Fraser (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1961), 12.

has to offer him; in fact, it is Virtue's attempt to reason *well* with him in this hypothetical scenario that causes him to present his heart (will) to her in resistance. And the admission of his heart/will into the poem is precisely what introduces a new (though faulty) kind of "reasoning," a threat preposterous in the most literal sense, for if Virtue were to fall in love with Stella's image in the same way Astrophel has, it would *no longer be* Virtue. And yet, if Virtue *loves* Stella, this would demonstrate that loving Stella is a virtuous undertaking, thus "reasonably" justifying the lover's loving. Astrophel could then, indeed, "runne with all [his] har[t] after the thing which [he] suppose[d] to be good for [him]," having rationalized his loving through a corrupted and faulty intellectual power.

The lover explicitly concedes that this is what is happening in Sonnet 18, when he finds himself in "reason's audit":

With what sharp checks I in myself am shent
When into reason's audit I do go,
And by just counts myself a bankrupt know
Of all those goods which heaven to me hath lent;
Unable quite to pay even Nature's rent,
Which unto it by birthright I do owe;
And, which is worse, no good excuse can show,
But that my wealth I have most idly spent.
My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toys;
My wit doth strive those passions to defend,
Which, for reward, spoil it with vain annoys.
I see my course to lose myself doth bend;
I see – and yet no greater sorrow take
Than that I lose no more for Stella's sake.

Astrophel's reasoning faculties are in full force in this poem: he sees *clearly* that he reasons *badly*. The discernment with which the lover distinguishes between his reason and his will ("I see... I see – and yet") is explicit in the sonnet's third quatrain, where

he perceives his reason justifying the desires of his will (his wit “striv[ing]” in service of his “passions”). This is no Socratic ignorance. Further, he *knows* that reason is a virtuous force: it is a divine “good” on loan to him; it reckons fairly (“just counts”). The lover’s clarity that he is a “bankrupt” in this economy of temporary-gifts-to-be-wisely-used confirms that his perception of the good remains unimpaired. But right *perception* doesn’t lead to right *performance*; and the admission that his reason has been “idly spent” in “striv[ing]...to defend” his passions—rather than instructing his will on what it *ought* to desire—distinctly echoes Hooker and Mornay. Indeed, in the following sonnet, Astrophel does precisely what Hooker warns of, “ben[ding his] wits to find how reason might seem to teach that which [his] will [is] set to maintain”:

On Cupid’s bow how are my heart-strings bent,
That see my wrack and yet embrace the same?
When most I glory, then I feel most shame;
I willing run, yet while I run repent;
My best wits still their own disgrace invent,
My very ink turns straight to Stella’s name,
And yet my words, as them my pen doth frame,
Advise themselves that they are vainly spent.
For though she pass all things, yet what is all
That unto me, who fare like him that both
Looks to the skies and in a ditch doth fall?
O let me prop my mind, yet in his growth
And not in Nature, for best fruits unfit.
“Scholar,” saith Love, “bend hitherward your wit.” (AS 19)

Love summons Astrophel to *bend his wit* love-ward, in the direction that the lover’s “heart-strings” (his *will*) are already “bent” (14, 1). Again, the cart is following the horse—passion driving reason, rather than the reverse. And again, Astrophel clearly discerns that he is not employing his reason as he ought to (“my best wits still their own disgrace invent”). The very language that emerges from the lover perceives its

true nature (“my words... advise themselves that they are vainly spent”). Further, Love belies his own intimation that he has knowledge fit for the “scholar” when he asks Astrophel to “bend” his wit toward Love (an echo of “I see my course to lose myself doth bend” (*AS* 18.12)), suggesting that the best Love can offer is a kind of *erring* through which the lover will, indeed, reason poorly.⁵³ Surely Astrophel recognizes that his “wits” could be better used.

Sonnet 19 also offers an indication that Astrophel’s struggle is to be perceived as Pauline rather than Medean. “When most I *glory*, then I feel most *shame*,” Astrophel self-diagnoses; then: “I willing run, yet while I run repent” (3, 4). Line 3 evokes Paul’s description of those who attend to earthly things (including all Stellas) as men “whose *glory* is to their *shame*” (Phil. 3:19). Line 4 corroborates the evocation: the runner was one of Paul’s most well-known and frequently-reiterated metaphors (“So then it is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runeth, but in God that sheweth mercie” (Rom. 9:16); “Knowe ye not, that they which runne in a race, runne all, yet one receiue the price? So runne, that ye may obteine” (1 Cor. 9:24); “Ye did runne wel: who did let you, that ye did not obeie the trueth?” (Gal. 5:7); “that I may rejoyce in the day of Christ, that I haue not runne in vaine” (Phil. 2:16)). The akratic Astrophel, reasoning against his better judgment, aligns himself decidedly in this sonnet with the regenerate believer who continues to experience concupiscence of the flesh, rather than with the unregenerate.

Repeatedly, we see the corruption of Astrophel’s reason is hardly a matter of

⁵³ “bend, v. 15.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

what Socrates ascribed to ignorance. Nor is it a matter of Watson's weakness. It is, rather, a matter of reason's clear-sighted, calculated service to his will. In Sonnet 93, as Astrophel is exiled from Stella and the sequence begins to come to a close, the lover once again emphasizes that his choices have not been matters of ignorance. Astrophel laments not only that Stella is "vexed," but also that he is the cause of her vexation ("through me—wretch me—even Stella vexed is"). He then explicitly admits his "fault" was of a clear-sighted nature: the "truth," he professes, is "that my foul stumbling so / From carelessness did in no manner grow, / But [from] wit confus'd with too much care" (5-8). That is, Astrophel *carefully* failed to distinguish between his reason and his grief—or his reason and his regard for Stella, or his reason and his desire for her. Precisely what "care" means here matters less for our purposes than does the acknowledgment that he erred ("missed") in the most "foul" manner—by thoughtfully (*not* carelessly) employing his reason in accordance with his will.

As he confesses it, Astrophel recognizes that it is a "vain 'scuse"; and yet the confession confirms his self-diagnosis of "too much wit" in Sonnet 33 ("to myself myself did give the blow / [with] too much wit," 9-10). The entire sequence thus indicates not a *deficit* of reason in the lover, but a kind of excess whereby reason has the capacity to reason even for the "unreasonable" passions. Indeed, there is a strong resemblance here to Sidney's *Arcadia*, when Pamela (who serves a function similar to Stella's—a theologically beneficent influence in a "non-Christian" treatise with deep Protestant propensities) argues with her aunt Cecropia, who claims that "mans witte" should be "h[e]ld... in well doing" *even as* she wickedly employs her "mischieuous

witte” to “reason” with and “perswa[de]” Pamela to approve “her croked bias” and marry her son. In “vertuous anger,” Pamela replies to her aunt that she is a “foolish woman, and most miserably foolish, since [her] wit” is precisely the thing that “makes [her] foolish.” Pamela then proceeds to repudiate the idea of “chaunce” and argue for divine providence in the face of the “atheist” Cecropia.⁵⁴ While much more work could be done on this scene in light of *Astrophel and Stella*, the juxtaposition of Cecropia/Pamela and Astrophel/Stella suggests that Sidney was engaging with these theological positions on postlapsarian reason across his “secular” oeuvre.

“With wit my wit is marr’d,” Astrophel exclaims in Sonnet 34 (11); and given his constant employment of his reason in the service of his will, the reformers would corroborate this diagnosis. Indeed, the adjective Astrophel uses here to describe his wit—which he elsewhere uses to describe his mind (“my young mind marr’d” (*AS* 21.2))—would have been theologically charged for Sidney. In his translation of Mornay’s *Woorke*, Sidney used the term to describe “the corruption [in man that] came in by sin”: man’s “marrednesse” is such that “all that is of matter or matched with matter... is filled with euill, as the eye that beholdeth darknes is filled with darknes. Here ye see, not onely from whence we be turned away, but also too what: that is too wit, from God, to vanitie, from the Creator to the creature, from good to euill.”⁵⁵ Likewise, in the Fall narrative of Guillaume du Bartas’ (1544-1590) *Divine Weekes and Workes*, Adam sins clear-sightedly (not by “blinde Error”). One

⁵⁴ Book 3, Chapter 10 of *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia, Written by Sir Philip Sidney, Knt. The Original Quarto Edition (1590) in Photographic Facsimile*, ed. H. Oskar Sommer (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1891), 277, 280-82.

⁵⁵ *A Woorke*, fol, V6.

consequence of this sin is that Adam's "reason robs [his] reason": a consequence that echoes in Astrophel's claim that "with wit my wit is marr'd" (*AS* 34.11).⁵⁶ Astrophel is, indeed, rather postlapsarian than classically ignorant.

The implications of Stella's heavenly name have not gone unnoted; less remarked upon are the ways her name functions in a collection so attentive to how the lover, with his "too much wit," fails to heed her "sweetest sovereignty / Of reason" (*AS* 71.6-7). Reformers often referred to the remnant of reason remaining in man as a "star": Thomas Cartwright writes that "there is some star or light off reason" left "whereby some act may be well donne / and acceptably unto God"; Richard Hooker refers to the surviving "star of reason" multiple times in his *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity*.⁵⁷ Mornay writes: "reason is after a sort in like case towards God, as our eye is towards the Sunne," since—as with the sun—"neither God nor any thing belonging to God can bee seene without God." When both shine, however, "then our eye seeth the things which it sawe not afore."⁵⁸

Chauncey Wood observes that "Sidney's repeated differentiation between

⁵⁶ *Du Bartas his deuine weekes and workes translated: and dedicated to the Kings most excellent Maiestie* by Iosuah Syluester (London: Printed by Humfrey Lounes, 1611), 222, 249. Sidney was reading Du Bartas—and was likely translating *La Sepmaine* (a translation apparently entered in the Stationer's Register, never printed, and lost)—before he died. See Sidney Lee, *The French Renaissance in England: An Account of the Literary Relations of England and France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 343; E.K. Gregory, Jr., "Du Bartas, Sidney, and Spenser" in *Comparative Literature Studies* 7.4 (Dec. 1970), 437-49; Alan Sinfield, "Sidney and Du Bartas" in *Comparative Literature* 27.1 (Winter 1975), 8-20; "du Bartas, Guillaume de Salluste" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1990), 80; Michael Mack, *Sidney's Poetics: Imitating Creation* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic U of America P, 2005), 76-9.

⁵⁷ Cartwright cited in Frederick C. Beiser, *The Sovereignty of Reason: The Defense of Rationality in the Early English Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2014), 55. "As for such things as are found out by any star or light of Reason..."; "the star of Reason and learning"; "The light therefore, which the star of natural Reason and wisdom casteth, is too bright to be obscured by the mist of a word or two uttered..." (*The Works of that Learned and Judicious Divine Mr. Richard Hooker*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1807), 375, 376, 391).

⁵⁸ *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse*, fol. D4.

Astrophel's reduced wit or reason, and Stella's unimpaired faculty" is "a contrast that informs the entire sequence."⁵⁹ This contrast becomes most pronounced as the sequence concludes, and, in Stella's absence, Astrophel's world grows increasingly dark. Tom Parker notes that, as the darkness closes in upon the lover, "Stella is seen only through a window: 'from window,' 'by a happy window,' 'underneath my window,' and the final 'dead glasse'" of Sonnet 105—the last of which evokes the Pauline claim that "now we se through a glasse darkely: but then *shal we se* face to face. Now I knowe in parte: but then shal I knowe euen as I am knowen" (1 Cor. 13:12).⁶⁰ Again, Sidney figures Astrophel as a regenerate by virtue of this subtle comparison to Paul. For Calvin, the reason we "se[e] not [God's] face in the present, but the image only in the glasse" is that that very image was lost to us in The Fall (Gen 1:26-7).⁶¹ The same is true for Astrophel, who—still in his postlapsarian flesh—can only see Stella "through a glasse darkely."

Given this, there is one final allusion in Sonnet 19 worth noting: Astrophel compares himself to "him that both / Looks to the skies and in a ditch doth fall." (10-11). This is one of many subtle references Astrophel makes to The Fall, the narrative undercurrent that explains his internal conflict between his will and his reason. As commentaries have noted, these lines refer to the astronomer Thales, who, according to Plato, "was studying the stars and looking upwards, [and] fell into a pit," where he

⁵⁹ "With Wit My Wit is Marred," 253.

⁶⁰ Tom W.N. Parker, *Proportional Form in the Sonnets of the Sidney Circle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 64-5. Parker also mentions 2 Corinthians 3:18 here: "But we all beholde as in a mirrour the glorie of the Lord with open face."

⁶¹ *A commentarie vpon S. Paules epistles to the Corinthians. Written by M. Iohn Caluin: and translated out of Latine into Englishe by Thomas Timme* (London: Iohn Harrison and George Byshop, 1577), fol. 157.

was jeered at by a “servant girl... because he was so eager to know the things in the sky that he could not see what was there before him at his very feet.”⁶² Sidney also refers to Thales in the *Defence* during his discussion of “the knowledge of a mans selfe” and its superiority to all other forms of knowledge. Here, Sidney claims that “when by the ballance of experience it was found, that the Astronomer looking to the stars might fall in a ditch,” it became clear that astronomy was but a “serving science” whose end was self-knowledge.⁶³ The pratfalling Thales, prioritizing knowledge of what is outside of himself and forgetting to look at “what was there before him”—and “in [his] heart”—serves as a figure for ignorance.

In evoking Thales, Astrophel expresses his fear of resembling that proverbial self-ignorant astronomer *as* he exhibits the very “knowledge of [his] selfe” he claims to fear he doesn’t possess—both in this sonnet, and in the following reiterations of The Fall. We don’t get the sense, that is—from the first half of Sonnet 19 alone—that Astrophel would ever find himself face-down in that ditch beside Thales. True, he can’t stop looking at that singular star, Stella. But the lover—as the poetic persona of a writer resolute about the virtues of self-knowledge—is looking down, in, and at himself, too intensely to “fare like” him who “looks to the skies,” regardless of the fact that this attention increasingly reveals to him the disparity between what he *knows* and what he *does* with that knowledge. “I willing run, yet while I run repent; /

⁶² “Theaetetus,” trans. Harold N. Fowler in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol 12 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1921), 174a. Perseus. See *Sir Philip Sidney: An Apology for Poetry or The Defence of Poesy*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1973), 167; *The Anchor Anthology of Sixteenth-Century Verse*, ed. Richard Standish Sylvester (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1974), 428.

⁶³ *The Prose Works*, Vol. 3, 11.

My best wits still their own disgrace invent,” the lover confesses (*AS* 19.4-5). This radical Pauline self-knowledge is the very reason there *is* some glimpse of grace for the lover in the sequence.

ASTROPHEL, REPETITIONS OF THE FALL, AND THE RECEPTION OF GRACE

As Paul writes in his Epistle to the Romans, man sins “after the like maner of the transgression of Adam” (5:14).⁶⁴ Paul’s message was in many ways resonant with Mornay’s *The true knowledge of a mans own selfe*: a reader of either would be instructed to look into his heart (i.e. Paul’s claim that Gentiles “haue the Law written in their hearts”), where he would discover his depravity (“But I se another law in my members”). For both, that depravity originated in man’s first sin. It was a doctrine familiar to Sidney—certainly one he spent time contemplating in his meditations on self-knowledge; and the moralizing poet would have discerned that when Astrophel looked into his heart (*AS* 1), he could only have observed himself “after the like maner of Adam.” It has been noted that Astrophel repeats The Fall over the course of Sidney’s sequence; the possibility that he *begins* the sequence “fallen” has received less commentary.⁶⁵ But the collection suggests this early on:

Reason, in faith thou art well serv'd, that still
Wouldst brabbling be with sense and love in me;
I rather wish'd thee climb the Muses' hill;
Or reach the fruit of Nature's choicest tree;

⁶⁴ See also 1 Cor. 15:22 and 15:45, 1 Tim. 2:14.

⁶⁵ See “With Wit My Wit is Marred,” 260; Andrew D. Weiner, “Structure and ‘Fore Conceit’ in Astrophil and Stella” in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 16.1 (Spring 1974), 24). Elsewhere, Weiner argues that the “shady grove” in which Astrophel and Stella meet in Song 8 asks that we remember its “antecedent in Eden” (“‘In a grove most rich of shade’: A Figurative Reading of the Eighth Song of *Astrophil and Stella*” in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 18.3 (Fall 1976), 347).

Or seek heaven's course or heaven's inside to see.
 Why shouldst thou toil our thorny soil to till?
 Leave sense and those which sense's objects be;
 Deal thou with powers of thoughts, leave love to will.
 But thou wouldst needs fight with both love and sense,
 With sword of wit giving wounds of dispraise,
 Till downright blows did foil thy cunning fence;
 For, soon as they strake thee with Stella's rays,
 Reason, thou kneel'dst, and offer'dst straight to prove,
 By reason good, good reason her to love. (*AS* 10)

After offering a short catalogue of what he thinks *should* be the range of Reason's concern (3-5), Astrophel suggests that Reason has been operating outside of its legitimate sphere: "Why shouldst thou toil our thorny soil to till?" The modifier here is worth considering.

Thorny soil is one of the curses God pronounces on Adam in Genesis 3. In the wake of his disobedience, God says to Adam: "cursed *is* the earth for thy sake: in sorowe shalt thou eat of it all the dayes of thy life. Thornes also, and thystles shal it bring forth to thee" (3:17-18). Thorns, the Geneva's marginal notes offer, "are not the natural frutes of the earth, but procede of the corruption of sinne" (3:18). Luther reminds his readers that "[t]here were neither thorns nor thistles" in prelapsarian Eden; "thorns and thistles" are, rather, among "the consequences of original sin, by which all the rest of the creation contracted a corruption and a loss of its original excellency."⁶⁶ Thus "[t]he whole creation as it now is"—with its "destructive weeds, darnel, tares, nettles, thorns, thistles, etc."—"reminds us in every part of the curse

⁶⁶ *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1-11*, ed. Timothy F. George (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 64; *Luther on the Creation: A Critical and Devotional Commentary on Genesis, based on Dr. Henry Cole's Translation from the Original Latin*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker (Minneapolis: Lutherans in All Lands, 1904) 118.

inflicted on it, on account of the sin of the fall.” “As often as we see thorns and thistles,” Luther claims, “so often are we reminded... of sin and the wrath of God.”⁶⁷

For Calvin, as for Luther, thorns are symbolic, meant to summon us to meditate on our inherently sinful natures: “Let us consider in the barrennes [of the earth] the wrath of God, and let us bewaile our sinnes.”⁶⁸ Even poetic representations of The Fall marked this new telluric thorniness. In du Bartas’ *Weekes and Workes*, God tells Adam:

The earth feeling (euen in her) th’effect
Of the doom thundred ‘gainst thy foul defect;
In stead of sweet fruits which she selfly yeelds
Seed-less, and Art-less ouer all thy fields,
With thorns and burs shall bristle vp her brest.⁶⁹

Astrophel’s Reason, then, is tilling decidedly post-Edenic soil. And as postlapsarian reason, it is naturally inclined to the desires of the will (witness, again, the “reasoning” of the final couplet); indeed, it is willing to commit the first sin all over again. For one of the things that Astrophel prefers Reason to be doing for him is “reach[ing] the fruit of Nature’s choicest tree”—an evocation of the “tre of knowledge of good and of euil” (Gen. 2:9) whose fruit was likewise “reached for,” resulting in the very corruption of reason that Astrophel already displays here.⁷⁰ The lover is thus both Adam (reaching for the first fruit) *and* Adam’s descendant, reaching “after the

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 314, 320.

⁶⁸ *A commentarie of Iohn Caluine, vpon the first booke of Moses called Genesis: translated out of Latine into English, by Thomas Tymme, minister* (London: Imprinted for Iohn Harison and George Bishop, 1578), 112.

⁶⁹ *The Complete Works of Ioshuah Sylvester*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart. Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1880), 111.

⁷⁰ See “With Wit My Wit is Marred,” 252; *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Prose and Poetry*, 168; *Squitter-Wits and Muse Haters*, 102-3; *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, ed. David Damrosch, Constance Jordan and Kevin J.H. Dettmar. Vol. 1 Part 2 (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 1038.

like maner of the transgression of Adam”—now toward a tree that grows out of “thorny soil.”

That Reason, rather than Will, is the figure reaching for the tree in Sonnet 10 is suggestive of a broader discourse about the role reason played in The Fall. Calvin “praised Eve for her initial determination to resist the serpent”: “It was impossible,” the theologian claims, “for Eve more prudently or more courageously to repel the assault of Satan” than she first did, by expressing to the serpent that what she and Adam had access to was “abundantly sufficient,” and that they “would be most ungrateful if... they should desire more than was lawful.”⁷¹ By this logic, Eve initially “remained in obedience.”⁷² Luther, too, observes that “at first Eve resists the tempter admirably”; when she finally does capitulate, it is not out of ignorance: “in the end she *allows herself* to be persuaded.”⁷³ Eve’s “allowing herself” is, for Luther, not a matter of weak or defective reasoning, but of *excesssive* reasoning—a state of affairs that, at this point, should sound familiar. “To reason,” Luther concedes, it indeed “seems absurd, that one apple could have such deadly properties”; Eve’s “*reason* understood not, *why* God willed these things to be.” Furthermore, Satan explicitly appeals to Eve’s reasoning faculty in his temptation: “Now, the devil... knowing that this Word or precept of God was above the understanding of man... draws her into a *thinking*... And this is the very origin of all temptation: when the

⁷¹ Cited in *Eve and Adam: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*, ed. Kristen E. Kvam, Linda S. Schearing, and Valerie H. Ziegler (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999), 254.

⁷² *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, trans. Rev. John King (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 149.

⁷³ Cited in *Eve and Adam*, 270, italics mine.

reason of man attempts to judge concerning the Word, and God.”⁷⁴ For Luther, reason was the principal cause of The Fall.

In Sonnet 2, Astrophel recounts how long it took him to fall into the sin of desiring Stella. He illustrates, here, the prelapsarian reason of the reformers, which clearly perceived all that comprised its decision to disobey. Sonnet 2 suggests, if not an initial purity of reason on Astrophel’s part (he is standing on “thorny soil,” after all), at least a more perfect wit, which he will end the poem with only “a remnant” of:

Not at first sight, nor with a dribbed shot,
Love gave the wound which, while I breathe, will bleed:
But known worth did in mine of time proceed,
Till, by degrees, it had full conquest got.
I saw, and liked; I liked, but loved not;
I loved, but straight did not what love decreed;
At length to love’s decrees I, forc’d, agreed,
Yet with repining at so partial lot.
Now even that footstep of lost liberty
Is gone; and now, like slave-born Muscovite,
I call it praise to suffer tyranny;
And now employ the remnant of my wit
To make myself believe that all is well,
While, with a feeling skill, I paint my hell.

The lover resembles the reformers’ reasoning Eve, who “sees” the fruit but initially “love[s it] not,” and who—along with Adam—ultimately “loses her liberty” and becomes “enslaved” to sin in consequence of the first sin.⁷⁵ Like Sonnet 10, Sonnet 2 conveys both the struggle prior to The Fall—conquest “by degrees”—and the postlapsarian repercussions of that conquest. Astrophel does not “straight [do] what love decree[s]”: like Calvin’s Eve, he appears to recognize that there is another “law”

⁷⁴ *Luther Still Speaking: The Creation, A Commentary on the First Five Chapters of the Book of Genesis*, trans. Henry Cole, D.D. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1858), 132, 211, 206.

⁷⁵ Eve “se[es] that the tree was good for meat, and that it was pleasant to the eyes” (Gen. 3:6).

he ought to abide by; and—until he chooses wrongly and loses it—he also appears to possess the “liberty” of choice (9). This liberty to “agree” or disagree with Love is complicated by the fact that Astrophel only “agrees” by “force”: a paradox that corresponds to contemporary discourses around the role of free will in a predestined fall. What the lover eventually acquires *is* knowledge (“known worth”)—knowledge not only of the value of Stella’s beauty (this is *Cupid*’s “wounding,” after all) but also “of good and of euil.” That is, he comes to know Stella’s virtue, which is why he “repin[es]” at his “partial lot”: he cannot have her sexually. “Partial lot” translates not only as *incomplete ownership*, but also as *prejudicial fate*: the sonnet thus twice—in remarkably nuanced ways—posits a language around God’s (and the beloved’s) predisposition, human agency, and free will.

In finally “agreeing” to be conquered by love—“allow[ing him]self to be persuaded”—Astrophel loses not only the liberty of future choice; he also surrenders his reason (what remains is a “remnant of wit”). We have already seen Sidney’s portrayal of its corruption in the lyrics that follow. With these allusions to The Fall in Sonnets 2 and 10, the echoes of Medea in Sonnets 18 and 19 become less and less pronounced. Though a sinner, Astrophel is a regenerate both because he is representative of Paul (and of Pauline self-knowledge), and because he is evocative of Adam—the latter of whom is also a figure for God’s radical grace.

This grace is glimpsed in Sonnet 69, when Stella gives Astrophel the “monarchy” of the “realm of bliss”: her “high heart.” The poem has commonly been interpreted as an analogy of the relationship between the worldly monarch and her

courtiers; but its language may place Astrophel as close to Eden as it does to Stella's—
or to Elizabeth's—heart.⁷⁶ The lover exclaims:

O joy to high for my low style to show!
O bliss fit for a nobler state than me!
[...]
Gone is the winter of my misery!
My spring appears; oh see what here doth grow.
For Stella hath, with words where faith doth shine,
Of her high heart given me the monarchy.
I, I—O—I may say that she is mine!
And though she give but thus condition'ly
This realm of bliss, while virtuous course I take,
No kings be crown'd but they some covenants make.

Astrophel calls the conditions under which he is granted the “monarchy” a
“covenant.” Sidney used this same word in his translation of Mornay's *Woorke* when
he wrote of “the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, all which together we call the
newe Couenant or the newe Testament.”⁷⁷ Indeed, the word “covenant” was the focus
of an important theological scrutiny as Sidney was writing *Astrophel and Stella*.⁷⁸
That there had been a prelapsarian “covenant of works”—as distinct from the
postlapsarian covenant of grace—between God and Adam was an idea that originated
in the late sixteenth century.⁷⁹ Mark W. Karlberg observes that “Bullinger's passing

⁷⁶ See Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, “The Politics of *Astrophil and Stella*” in *SEL* 24 (1984), 58; Edward Berry, *The Making of Sir Philip Sidney* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998), 126; Dymphna Callaghan, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 86; Gary F. Waller, *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 149.

⁷⁷ *A Woorke concerning the trewnesse*, fol Qq6.

⁷⁸ See Mark A. Hutchinson, *Calvinism, Reform and the Absolutist State in Elizabethan Ireland* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 83; “covenant, n.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

⁷⁹ David A. Weir writes that “the prelapsarian ‘Covenant of Works’ motif originated between 1560 and 1590 in the Palatinate, one of the several intellectual centres of Calvinism besides Geneva,” and that “the use of the prelapsarian covenant as a commonplace of theology [occurred] between 1584 and 1590” (cited in Mark W. Karlberg, *Covenant Theology in the Reformed Perspective: Collected Essays and Book Reviews in Historical, Biblical, and Systematic Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 117). See also Andrew A. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in*

allusion to the prelapsarian covenant... what he calls ‘the most ancient of all covenants’ made with Adam, may well have set the stage for late-sixteenth-century Reformed thought” on this issue.⁸⁰

Taking its cue from Hosea 6:7 of the Vulgate that “they like Adam have transgressed the covenant,” covenant theology proposed that the first covenant between God and man—made in Eden—was one of works, promising life “upon condition of personal and perfect obedience,” and death for disobedience.⁸¹ When Adam broke this covenant, Christ—the second Adam—submitted himself to the conditions of the Covenant of Works, exempting man from its terms. This view first appeared with the Heidelberg theologians, who referred to Adam as the “federal head” of all humanity.⁸² It is evident from his commentary on Hosea 6:7 that Calvin knew this doctrine: some theologians, he says, “explain the words thus, ‘They have transgressed as Adam the covenant.’”⁸³

In Sonnet 69, Astrophel is granted headship (he is “crown'd” “monarch”) of the Edenic “realm of bliss” for as long as he adheres to the “covenant” of works

the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012); Cornelis P. Venema, “The Mosaic Covenant: A ‘Republication’ of the Covenant of Works?” in *The Mid America Journal of Theology* 21 (2010), 35.

⁸⁰ *Covenant Theology in the Reformed Perspective*, 118.

⁸¹ From *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, cited in “The Mosaic Covenant,” 35.

⁸² See Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., “Federal Theology” in the *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1992), 136; Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., *Shapers of English Calvinism, 1660-1714: Variety, Persistence, and Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 16-17; “Federal Theology” in *Historical Dictionary of the Reformed Churches*, ed. Robert Benedetto and Donald K. McKim (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 177-8; Daniel R. Hyde, “Covenant of Works” in *The Good Confession: An Exploration of the Christian Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 75-6.

⁸³ Cited in Jeong Koo Jeon, *Covenant Theology: John Murray’s and Meredith G. Kline’s Response to the Historical Development of Federal Theology in Reformed Thought* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999), 283. Although in this particular commentary Calvin dismisses this explanation, Andrew Weir claims “there is evidence that... Calvin considered the Edenic relationship between God and Adam to be covenantal in nature” (cited in *Covenant Theology in the Reformed Perspective*, 117).

(“virtuous course”) that Stella has laid out for him. Adam, likewise, was figured as Eden’s king: according to Calvin, God “appoint[ed] him as king of the world” until he was “banished from that royal palace of which he had been the lord.”⁸⁴ Luther writes:

God [gave] to man a polity or national government, and also an economy or the principles of domestic government, and had constituted him king over all creatures... the earth itself with all created living things... are subjected to the dominion of Adam, whom God... constituted king over the whole animal creation. For these are the words which both Adam and Eve heard when God said, ‘And let them have dominion.’⁸⁵

As Adam makes a “covenant of works” with God—kingship of Eden on condition of his virtue—so Astrophel. The latter may even be suggesting a return to a prelapsarian state in his claim that “the winter of [his] misery” has been supplanted by the appearance of spring: winter—like thorny soil—was a condition unknown to man before The Fall.⁸⁶ The conditions of the “covenant of works,” in both cases, involve a fruit tree: Adam is covenanted not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge; Astrophel is covenanted not to “bite” the “fruit” of the “cherry-tree” that is Stella (*AS* 82.14, 5-6), whose lips are “gems or fruits of new-found Paradise” (*AS* 81.2). The analogy is evident, and Astrophel’s breaking of the covenant ineluctable. Yet this gracious act on Stella’s part—committing her heart to the lover’s “kingship” now that he has properly acknowledged his postlapsarian depravity—confirms Astrophel’s status as a regenerate lover. Indeed, grace has been given him even prior to this sonnet.

⁸⁴ *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, 154, 185.

⁸⁵ *Luther on the Creation*, 159, 121.

⁸⁶ Luther, for example, “fully believe[d], that in paradise, had the state of original innocency continued, there would have been a perpetual spring without any winter or frost or snow, as they now exist since the fall and its sin” (*Luther Still Speaking*, 193).

A reader may recall Astrophel's claim in the opening sonnet that "grace" is the entire purpose of his writing. This is a grace that—as he expresses through the climax of *gradatio* and the logic of cause-and-effect—Astrophel believes he will receive by virtue of Stella's reading him: "Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know, / Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain" (3-4). Twice in the collection, this is precisely what happens: Stella not only reads Astrophel's poems; she sings them back to him ("[she] heard my plaints, and did not only hear, / But them (so sweet is she) most sweetly sing" (*AS* 57.9-10); "in piercing phrases late / The anatomy of all my woes I wrate; / Stella's sweet breath the same to me did read" (*AS* 58.9-11)).

The first elements of Astrophel's *gradatio* have thus come to fruition: Stella has read his poems (and has been "pleased" enough to read them again, aloud), coming to "know" the "truth" of both the lover's love and his postlapsarian struggle—and to "know" them by making a trial of his poems ("my songs thine own voice oft doth prove" (*AS* 59.6)). This "knowledge," the lover anticipates, will "win" him "pity" and "obtain" him "grace." Sonnet 1 proves to be remarkably prophetic, for this is exactly what occurs in the poems following Sonnets 57-59, all of which depict Stella as Astrophel's reader. Stella "shows [him] love and pity" (*AS* 60.8); she confesses to feeling "true" (though virtuous) "love" for him (*AS* 62.4); she "look[s] on [him]" and then turns away with a "blush which guilty seem[s] of love" (*AS* 66.12, 14). By Sonnet 67, Stella is looking on him "with piteous eye" (2). While Astrophel never unequivocally claims to be a recipient of grace in the sequence—at most, he

speaks of Stella's "grace" as of a kind "that when it chides doth cherish"; and we know he has been the *object* of such "chiding" (*First Song*, 18)—no small portion of the *gradatio* has been fulfilled (pleasure → reading → knowledge → pity). Stella's granting him the monarchy (*AS* 69) is the most explicit gesture of grace in the collection. Thus Sidney's sequence recapitulates The Fall while juxtaposing that transgression with an offer of grace.

The internal struggle appears to intensify immediately after the covenant of Sonnet 69. In the earlier sonnets of the sequence, Astrophel has little compunction about using his wit to wittily "reason" for what he desires. The apostrophes to Virtue and Reason in Sonnets 4 and 10 that turn on a kind of clever de-ontologizing (both would become *not themselves* in Stella's presence) are two such examples. Even Sonnets 18 and 19, in which the lover "see[s his] course to lose [him]self" and "see[s] his wrack and yet embrace[s it]," conclude with little discomfort about the fact that *gnosis* has *not* led to *praxis*. Sonnets 71 and 72, on the other hand, enact what are possibly the most intense struggles between reason and desire in the sequence.

Sonnet 72, for instance, concludes with a frustrated exclamation and a question that remains unanswered: how does Astrophel put into practice (*praxis*) his knowledge (*gnosis*) of the virtuous course in the wake of this "covenant"?

Desire, though thou my old companion art,
And oft so clings to my pure love that I
One from the other scarcely can descry,
While each doth blow the fire of my heart,
Now from thy fellowship I needs must part;
Venus is taught with Dian's wings to fly;
I must no more in thy sweet passions lie;
Virtue's gold now must head my Cupid's dart.

Service and honor, wonder with delight,
Fear to offend, will worthy to appear,
Care shining in mine eyes, faith in my sprite –
These things are left me by my only dear.
But thou, desire, because thou wouldst have all,
Now banish'd art; but yet, alas, how shall?

Astrophel is at the height of his struggle here, lacking even his characteristic wit to use the tension as fodder for language play. He is as “fired” by desire as he is by his will to do right (his “pure love”); in the sonnet’s three quatrains the lover’s regenerate right reason is in full force to rally for the latter. But unlike the earlier sonnets, in which Astrophel’s will simply enters at the couplet to subvert all the reasoning the lyric has accumulated in its first twelve lines, *here* Astrophel is still looking directly at the good—there is simply a real incertitude about how to move forward, virtuously. It is as though this “new” Astrophel has fully perceived his status as a regenerate through his covenant with Stella. And here he is at his most Pauline. The Geneva’s gloss on Romans 7:15 (“for what I wolde, that do I not: but what I hate, that do I”) reads: “one selfe same man is said to wil and not to wil... he is said to wil, in that... he is regenerate by grace: and not to will, in that... he is not regenerate, or... such an one as he was borne.”⁸⁷ True to Pauline form, Astrophel’s regenerate will tells desire that “from thy fellowship I needs must part,” while the unregenerate part of him remains “such an one as he was borne”—with a will that *resists* this “must” by asking “*how?*”

What follows these two sonnets of heightened struggle is the *Second Song*—possibly the collection’s most striking Fall narrative—in which Astrophel steals a kiss

⁸⁷ 1599 marginal note.

from Stella's lips, the "fruits of new-found Paradise" (*AS* 81.2), as she sleeps.⁸⁸ As he does so, he puns on "knowing" and "*no*-ing" ("Her tongue, waking, still refuseth, / Giving frankly niggard *no*; / Now will I attempt to *know* / What *no* her tongue, sleeping, useth," 9-12), admitting "knowledge" is the motivation for his fall.

Astrophel takes a moment to reason (and to reason *well*) with himself—"think of the danger / Of her just and high disdain! / Now will I, alas, refrain. / Love fears nothing else but anger" (17-20)—but in his eagerness for knowledge, he illustrates the marginal note to Genesis 3:4, that Satan's "chiefest subtletie" is "to cause vs not to feare God's threatenings." Such temporary fearlessness was a fundamental characteristic of both Eve and Adam in reformed glosses on Genesis 3.⁸⁹

Astrophel, too, temporarily forgets to fear Stella's "just and high disdain" as he gazes upon her "sweetly swelling" lips—an amnesia he experiences whenever he looks at her, even *as* he registers his offenses and her "justice."⁹⁰ But at the close of the *Second Song*, Stella wakes; and Astrophel is immediately recalled to his fear: "Now will I for feare hence flee; / Foole, more Foole for no more taking."⁹¹ Similarly,

⁸⁸ Song 2 follows Sonnets 71 and 72 in the non-pirated edition of Sidney's sequence, in which the songs are interspersed. See footnote 13.

⁸⁹ Johannes Oecolampadius writes: "Satan does two things. He dissolves fear, lest they fear for themselves on account of death, and he promises good things to transgressors" (*Genesis 1-11*, 120). Calvin's Satan tells Eve "the fear of punishment is quite needless"; the question he poses to her ("Can it be, that God should forbid the eating of any tree whatever?") is "used for the purpose of dissipating vain fear" (*Commentaries on the Book of Genesis*, trans. Rev. John King. Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 150, 147). Luther's Eve is "devoid of all fear" and "talks with the serpent without any fear whatever"; Luther asks of Adam: "had he not also heard the voice of the Lord before, when the Lord forbad him to eat the fruit of *that* tree? Why did he not *then* fear also?" (*Luther Still Speaking*, 90, 108, 232).

⁹⁰ In Sonnet 73, for example, Stella's lips are "scarlet judges, threat'ning bloody pain"; yet, Astrophel exclaims: "O heavenly fool, thy most kiss-worthy face / Anger invests with such a lovely grace / That anger self I needs must kiss again."

⁹¹ I take these last two lines from Albert Feuillerat's edition of *Astrophel and Stella* (*The Complete Works of Sir Philip Sidney*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1922), 288). Kimbrough's edition ends

after his transgression, Adam's eyes are opened, and he "hid[es himself] from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden," confessing, when he is found: "I heard thy voyce in the garden, and was afraied... therefore I hid my self" (3:8, 10).

A further resemblance between the Biblical Fall and Sidney's *Second Song*—in which Astrophel breaks the terms of the "covenant"—is that the song contains a transfer of blame that echoes Adam's and Eve's transfers of responsibility after having broken the Covenant of Works. In Sidney's revision, Astrophel blames the "wanton" boy Love for his own stolen kiss: as Stella "lour[s]," "chide[s]," and "threat[s]," the lover declares: "Sweet, it was saucy love, not humble I" (*AS* 73.7-8). His is a deflection not unlike Adam's (and thereafter, Eve's) when God asks if he has indeed "eaten of the tre, whereof I commanded thee that thou shuldest not eat": "The woman which thou gauest *to be* with me, she gaue me of the tre," Adam answers, "and I did eat." When God turns to Eve, she, too, places the blame elsewhere, reporting: "The serpent beguyled me, and I did eat" (3:12-13). Both Adam and Eve ultimately admit having disobeyed; but commentaries tended to focus on the transfer of blame that precedes these confessions. Adam's "wickednes & lacke of true repentance appeareth in this," the Geneva commentators note: "that he burdeneth God with his faute, because he had giuen him a wife."⁹² Both Adam and Astrophel, that is,

the *Second Song* with Astrophel exclaiming: "Now will I away hence flee: Fool, more fool, for no more taking!"

⁹² 1560 marginal notes to 3:12-13. The German theologian Johannes Brenz writes of Adam that "first he makes God the author of sin, because he gave him such a companion. This is deceitful impiety and an impious lie." Of Eve, Brenz writes: "in the same way, [she] too casts the blame back onto the serpent, by which she plainly indicates that she has been deserted by the Holy Spirit and is in thrall to

make a god (the Christian God, the God of Love) the author of their sin. The elements of a sequential reworking of The Fall in *Astrophel and Stella* are thus all here: in Sonnet 69, the covenant is made; in 70 it is celebrated; in 71 and 72 it becomes increasingly onerous to adhere to as grace intensifies the “wrestling.” In the *Second Song*, the covenant is broken through a short-lived fearlessness; the kingdom is lost and fear returns; in 73 the lover/offender deflects the blame for his own offence.

Sidney went to such great lengths to reiterate The Fall in his Petrarchan sequence, I think, to remind his readers of the scriptural origins of the “reason-versus-passion” *topos* so central to the genre. And he went to such lengths to *repeat* it to show not only how the consequences of Adam’s sin resonate in Paul, but also how they affect a Pauline (and regenerate) Astrophel, as well as Sidney’s own readers. The inner division that the regenerate experiences—“that one selfe same man is said to wil and not to wil”—spurred an inevitably complex discourse about the nature of regenerate “selfhood.” On this sentiment—which Paul repeats in Romans 7:20 (“it is no more I that do it, but the sinne that dwelleth in me”)—Luther writes: “I am at the same time a sinner and a righteous man, for I do evil and I hate the evil which I do... *So then it is no longer I*, as a spiritual man in the spirit, *that do it*, that is, lust, *but sin*, both the tinder of sin and concupiscence, *which dwells within me*.”⁹³ “It was saucy love, not humble I” (*AS* 73.8), Astrophel claims of his offence. The lover virtually

the spirit of falsehood and folly.” Calvin writes: “Adam’s insolence now more clearly betrays itself; indeed, he is so far from being subdued that he breaks forth into coarser blasphemy. Previously he was complaining to God in silence, but now he begins to contend with him openly and even insults him.” Eve, “following her husband’s example... redirects the accusation to another, and by laying blame on the serpent, foolishly and shamelessly thinks herself absolved” (*Genesis 1-11*, 146-51).

⁹³ “Lectures on Romans Glosses and Scholia,” trans. Jacob A.O. Preus in *Luther’s Works*, Vol. 25, ed. Hilton C. Oswald (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1972), 65.

recites the Pauline/Lutheran mantra here. Astrophel's claim that "I am not I" in Sonnet 45 (14; though, yes, a pun intended to procure some "pity") and the surprising last line of the *Eighth Song*—a third-person narration of an encounter between Astrophel and Stella that ends when the lover, who is suddenly speaking in the first person, says, "my song is broken"—might be further nuanced in light of Pauline and reformed claims that the regenerate is someone who is *other than himself*, and that an *other* is the one who does the sinning.

GOD'S WILL, MAN'S WILL, AND THE GRAMMATICAL POTENTIAL

While this chapter has been attending to "the holy scriptures" and "Aristotles Ethickes"—Sidney's primary archive for Edward Denny's self-instruction—Petrarch's *Canzoniere* was, of course, the leading source text for *Astrophel and Stella*. But if Sidney was indeed taking up Paul's Epistle to the Romans in his amatory poetry, as I have been arguing he was, Petrarch may have been the prompt for *this* as well. In the ultimate poem of the *Rime Sparse*—the poem Thomas Watson's lover refused to translate—Petrarch prays to the Virgin Mary: "Through you my life can be joyous, if at your prayers, O Mary, sweet and merciful Virgin, where sin abounded grace abounds."⁹⁴ The *canzone* explicitly echoes Romans 5:20: "the Law entred thereupon, that the offence should abound: neuerthelesse, where sinne abounded, *there* grace abounded much more." The place the Law "entred," of course, was the heart (Rom. 2:14).

⁹⁴ *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, trans. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976), 578.

William Kennedy has documented the interpretive and doctrinal disputes (“a highly contested passage”) the grammar of this verse generated. Petrarch’s final poem would have been suspect to a reformed reader not only because Petrarch addresses Mary as a mediator of grace, but also because some translations from the Greek—particularly those of the late medieval theologians like William of Ockham—implied “that those who do their best in a state of nature may receive grace as a reward for their achievement, congruent with their efforts.” This was the pronounced grammatical difference between the Geneva translation (“there grace abounded much more”) and the Vulgate (“*let* grace also spring forth still more”).⁹⁵ As Kennedy notes, grammatical interpretation of this verse either strengthened or diminished the role free will played in individual salvation: “As interpreted by Martin Luther and other Reformers, the first aorist of the Greek and the perfect indicative of the emended Vulgate proclaim that grace has always been God’s special gift”—it “abounded” before man ever *was*—rather than a matter of free will in the process of salvation, to be “let” by the individual.⁹⁶ Sidney may very well have picked up the excerpt from Romans that the Italian poet put down at the close of his sequence, and transfigured it to offer a Protestant English literary exemplum to rival Petrarch’s Catholic one. As Kennedy observes:

The citation of Saint Paul by Petrarch to justify his own faith in abundant grace redeems the *Rime sparse* as an appropriate model for a Protestant poet as long as one authorizes the Reformers’ perfect indicative *superabundavit* instead of the Vulgate’s *superabundet*,

⁹⁵ *Authorizing Petrarch* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), 247-8, italics mine.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

and... the priority of... God's will in bestowing grace over human action.⁹⁷

Indeed, as Brian Cummings and others have demonstrated, the doctrinal disputes that produced the Reformation arose out of a culture of grammar: grammar, that is, was the origin of the new theology.⁹⁸ Luther's *Bondage of the Will* was argued nearly entirely on what Luther saw as Erasmus' ignorance of "grammatical particulars, and... figures of speech, with which even school-boys are acquainted."⁹⁹ Taking up one of the many scriptural passages Erasmus employs to argue for free will, Luther writes that when:

Ecclesiasticus says, "If thou wilt keep the commandments, and keep the faith that pleaseth Me, they shall preserve thee," I do not see that Free-will can be proved from those words. For, "if thou wilt," is a verb of the subjunctive mood, which asserts nothing: as the logicians say, "a conditional asserts nothing indicatively:" such as, if the devil be God, he is deservedly worshipped: if an ass fly, an ass has wings: so also, if there be Free-will, grace is nothing at all. Therefore, if Ecclesiasticus had wished to assert Free-will, he ought to have spoken thus: – man *is able* to keep the commandments of God, or, man, *has the power* to keep the commandments.¹⁰⁰

Man's lack of free will is argued from the grammar first of all. Luther's reading of God's commands is that they are meant to "rous[e] him up, that he might know, by a

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 250-51.

⁹⁸ Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002). Timothy Wengert discusses Melanchthon's employment of an argument based on the grammar to justify the hardening of Pharaoh's heart in *Exodus*: "The implication that God could act justly by hardening hearts that did not want to be hardened lay heavy on Melanchthon's heart. [So] he... formulated a grammatical objection, based on his understanding of the Hebrew verb. [That] the *verba transitive* in Hebrew 'most commonly have the significance of permission'" allowed Melanchthon to "dismiss[s] as impiety the slightest hint that God might be responsible for evil in any way" (Timothy Wengert, ed. *Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560) and the Commentary* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 204-5). See also Luther's *On the Bondage of the Will*.

⁹⁹ *Martin Luther on the Bondage of the Will*, trans. Rev. Henry Cole (London: T. Bensley, 1823), 68.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 130.

real experience, how unable he is to do any one of those things.”¹⁰¹ The interpretive mistake his Catholic interlocutor makes, over and over again, is to infer the indicative sense from the imperative verb, “as though what was commanded were... possible to be done.”¹⁰² The fundamental—and radical—difference between “can” and “ought,” indicative and imperative, is one Luther stresses repeatedly: “by verbs of the imperative mood, nothing else is signified than that which *ought* to be done... what *is* done or *can be* done, is expressed by verbs of the indicative mood”; “the words of the law are for instruction and illumination, to teach us what we *ought* to do, and also what we are *not able* to do.”¹⁰³

As we might gather from Sidney’s “grammar-rules” sonnet, *Astrophel*, too, is keenly interested in grammatical particulars—even if only to willfully misinterpret the grammar of Stella’s “No, no!” (*AS* 63.8) as a double negative, and thus as Stella’s “yes.” Margareta de Grazia has observed another grammatical particularity in *Astrophel and Stella* that accords with Luther’s distinction between “ought” and “can.” De Grazia notes the addition of a mood called the potential—a “mood of possibility,” “present in neither Roman nor medieval grammars”—into Thomas Lincare’s *English Latin Grammar* (c. 1525), and shortly thereafter into other grammars of the period—including William Lily’s 1549 *A Short Introduction of Grammar Generallie to be Used*, the authorized version for all English subjects.¹⁰⁴

What distinguished this new potential mood from the optative (from which it

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 133.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 141.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* 141, 177, italics mine.

¹⁰⁴ “Lost Potential in Grammar and Nature: Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*” in *SEL* 21.1 (Winter 1981), 22.

previously would not have been differentiated) was quite literally a matter of will.

“Sixteenth-century grammarians,” De Grazia observes, “separated possibility resting in God's hands from possibility residing in individual power. The optative continued to designate the former while the potential was instituted to express the latter.”¹⁰⁵

While the former “came to look like informal prayer”—preceded “by an ‘adverbe of wishing’ and recognized... by such signs as ‘wold God’”—the latter “took the form of projections conditional upon an individual's ‘abilitie, will, or dutie to doe anything.’”¹⁰⁶ The potential, as Lily notes, “is known by these signs, *may*, *can*, *might*, *would*, *should*, *could*, or *ought*.”¹⁰⁷ These are, in other words, modal verbs of *reason*.

De Grazia observes that Astrophel uses the potential mood each time he wants “to express the possibility of renouncing his passionate love for Stella”—when, for instance, “the heavenly part / *Ought* to be king” (*AS* 5.3); or he “*could* brook... [the] leaden counsels” of patience (*AS* 56.6-7); or when from desire’s “fellowship [he] needs *must* part,” and “*must* no more in [its] sweet passions lie” (*AS* 72.5, 7).¹⁰⁸ In each of the sonnets De Grazia reads,

Sense abruptly breaks off Wit's potential mood and always with the mood of affirmation or fact—the indicative. Although appetite's say is short... it is always final. The possibility held out by the potential is conclusively dashed... What Sidney has done, then, is play out the

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* See also G.A. Padley, *Grammatical Theory in Western Europe 1500-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976), 48-9; Ian Michael, *English Grammatical Categories and the Tradition to 1800* (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), 115-16; Emma Vorlat, *The Development of English Grammatical Theory 1586-1737* (Leuven: University Press, 1975), 330.

¹⁰⁷ *A Short Introduction of Grammar, Generally to be used: Compiled and set forth for the bringing up of all those that intend to attain to the knowledge of the Latin Tongue* (London: Printed for W. Lily, and John Ward, 1789), 16.

¹⁰⁸ “Lost Potential in Grammar and Nature,” 22.

‘brabbling’ between Sense and Reason [Sonnet 10] in a grammatical conflict between the use of the indicative and potential moods.¹⁰⁹

To read De Grazia’s observation of Sidney’s sequence through a Protestant lens is to allow that each of the claims grounded in a grammar of the lover’s “abilitie, [or] will” to do the good must inevitably cede to the experience of his Pauline humanity. One of the examples De Grazia points to is found in Sonnet 47:

What, have I thus betrayed my liberty?
Can those black beams such burning marks engrave
In my free side, or am I born a slave,
Whose neck becomes such yoke of tyranny?
[...]
Virtue, awake! Beauty but beauty is;
I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
Leave following that which it is gain to miss.
Let her go! Soft, but here she comes! Go to;
Unkind, I love you not. Oh me, that eye
Doth make my heart to give my tongue the lie!

Here, Reason—through a breathless accumulation of potential verbs (“I may, I must, I can, I will”)—appears to take a resolute stance on “leav[ing]” passion. But reason is paradoxically employing a grammar of *the will* in order to make its assertions. The only verb in this catalogue that is *not* a grammatical potential is “do.” Astrophel’s accumulation of potential verbs—all implying, according to the grammars of Sidney’s day, “possibility residing in [the lover’s] individual power”—is bound to fail him when it comes to the action of virtuous “doing.” What Astrophel is lacking here is the optative—the “informal prayer” of “wold God” that would put God’s will (which is, indeed, the only *good* will) back at the center of all action.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 23-4.

ERECTED WIT / INFECTED WILL: ASTROPHEL AND THE *DEFENCE*

Despite his claim in the *Defence* that man has an “erected wit” which “maketh [him] know what perfection is,” Sidney would of course have agreed with reformed theologians that postlapsarian reason is thoroughly corrupted. Here is that portion of the *Defence*:

Neither let it be deemed too sawcy a comparison, to ballance the highest point of mans wit, with the efficacie of nature: but rather give right honor to the heavenly maker of that maker, who having made man to his owne likenes, set him beyond and over all the workes of that second nature, which in nothing he sheweth so much as in Poetry; when with the force of a divine breath, he bringeth things foorth surpassing her doings: with no small arguments to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of *Adam*, since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected wil keepeth us from reaching unto it.¹¹⁰

Attempts to read reformed doctrine on the remnants of reason alongside the *Defence*’s “erected wit” have often noted the perplexity of their juxtaposition: Robert E. Stillman observes “the troubles encountered by attempting to square Sidney’s conception of the ‘erected wit’ with Calvin’s pronouncements on the state of postlapsarian mankind.”¹¹¹ But that Sidney’s “erected wit” comes close on the heels of his reference to “that first accursed fall of *Adam*” suggests that his claims about wit may not have “dismayed” the reformers after all.¹¹² And while Sidney seeks to “ballance the highest point of mans wit, with the efficacie of nature,” we may recall what the reformers had to say about nature’s post-Edenic “efficacie.” As a result of

¹¹⁰ *The Prose Works*, Vol. 3, 8-9.

¹¹¹ *Philip Sidney and the Poetics of Renaissance Cosmopolitanism*, 141. Stillman continues: “Calvin might very well have been both astounded and dismayed by the *Defence*’s claims on behalf of the wit, its luminosity and its zodiacal range” (143).

¹¹² See footnote 129.

man's sin, the natural world, too, is "cursed"; what arises from it "procede[s] of the corruption of sinne"; the world has since been "continually declin[ing] from its own nature."¹¹³ If "the highest point of mans wit" is to be "ballance[d]" against *this* "efficacious" state of affairs, its "highest point" is, in fact, rather low. Elsewhere in the *Defence*, Sidney *does* convey the real imperfection of human wit: "man's wit [may] abus[e] poetry"; "mans wit may make *Poesie*, which should be [*eikastike*], which some learned have defined figuring foorth good things to be [*phantastike*]: which doth contrariwise infect the fancie with unwoorthy objects."¹¹⁴ As Lisa Klein notes, "though [Sidney] is surely sincere about the desirability of poetry's exalted goals, he is equally convinced that poets—including himself—fail to attain these goals. [Sidney finds] himself 'sick among the rest' with the 'common infection grown among the most part of writers.'"¹¹⁵ Sidneian "erected wit" is not a prelapsarian or perfect one; but it *is* a reason "light" enough to allow us to see the good—as does Sidney in his desire to be a "right poet"; as do both Astrophel and Paul.

Thus, where the *Defence* maintains that the "right poet" is concerned with "what *may* be and *should* be," and when it defines poetry as "that which teacheth what vertue is, & teacheth it not only by delivering forth [man's] very being, his causes and effects, but also by making knowne his enemie vice, which *must* be destroyed, and his cumbersome servant passion, which *must* be mastred," we might linger on Sidney's verbs.¹¹⁶ They recall Astrophel's use of the potential when he

¹¹³ Gen. 3:17; *Luther on the Creation*, 118; *Genesis 1-11*, 37.

¹¹⁴ *The Prose Works*, Vol. 3, 30.

¹¹⁵ *The Exemplary Sidney and the Elizabethan Sonneteer* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1998), 46.

¹¹⁶ *The Prose Works*, Vol. 3, 10, 12, italics mine.

professes: “I may, I must, I can, I will” (*AS* 47.10). The “must” of Sidney’s *Defence* (by which vice is “destroyed” and passion “mastred”), and the “must” of Astrophel’s “erected wit” (by which he “leave[s] following” his carnal desires), are as the “ought” of Luther’s scriptural interpretation: the “thou shalt” that we are in effect powerless to accomplish. Astrophel can repeat “I may, I must, I can” *ad infinitum*; but beneath each iteration of the same is Paul’s admission that “what I wolde, that do I not.” Thus in the *Eleventh Song*, when Astrophel stands beneath Stella’s window (seeing her only “through a glasse darkely”), and Stella asks from above, “Be not yet those fancies changed?” the answer is simply: *of course they are not*; for Astrophel is *still* a lover in the flesh. And Stella can remind Astrophel all she wants that his “reason’s purest light” bids him in a better direction, sounding a lot like Sidney’s “erected wit” and the reformers’ “star of reason” in the process (26). But the lover will nonetheless reply: “Dear, do reason no such spite; / Never doth thy beauty flourish / More than in my reason’s sight” (*Eleventh Song*, 28-30). A reason *erect* enough to see—and know—the good, but *corrupt* enough to “reason” for what it desires, rather than for what it sees—and knows—to be best.

Risto Saarinen concludes his study on *akrasia* in Reformation thought by observing:

The Protestant view of Christian existence [was] that of being justified and sinner at the same time... The human condition was no longer predominantly characterized as being either virtuous or wicked. Instead, the human being aiming at the good remains half-virtuous and continues to wrestle with his or her conflicting inner powers. While the emerging Protestant theology emphasized the problematic nature of remaining sin, in a parallel manner the early modern ethics increasingly began to outline human moral life as continuous wrestling

and human character as permanently half-virtuous.¹¹⁷

Saarinen describes, here, the “what els” of Sidney’s *Defence*. The reformers would likely add one qualification to Saarinen’s early modern “wrestler”: he would only be “continuous[ly] wrestling” if he were *regenerate*.

In the penultimate sonnet of *Astrophel and Stella*, Astrophel compares Stella to “a queen, who from her presence sends / Whom she employs,” and asks that she “dismiss from thee my wit / Till it have wrought what thy own will attends” (*AS* 107.7-9). Not much note has been taken of this request, let alone of the possibility that the sequence ends precisely *because* Stella has agreed to Astrophel’s proposition. The lover cannot—being in the flesh—conform his “wit” to the will of “queen” virtue, let alone to the will of a heavenly King. It is not until he can wholly do so that Stella will have cause to welcome him back into her presence—and yet, given what Paul says about the temporality of the battle between spirit and flesh, and what Calvin claims about the lightening of the “glasse darkely,” and what reformers assert about the perfect “return” of the “star” of reason, this cannot be the case until he is delivered from his fleshly body. Paul “teaches us,” Calvin says of Romans 7, “that the faithful never reach the goal of righteousness as long as they dwell in the flesh, but that they are running their course, until they put off the body.” It is *then* that they will “understan[d] and wil[l] aright”; then that their wit—in Astrophel’s words—will work “what [God’s] own will attends.”¹¹⁸

Thomas P. Roche, Jr. writes: “The brilliance of Sidney’s negative example is

¹¹⁷ *Weakness of Will*, 219.

¹¹⁸ *Commentaries on the Epistle... to the Romans*, 274.

that he realized that Astrophel must end in despair because he never learns from his experience.”¹¹⁹ And so we return to the question of whether Astrophel is a negative example, or simply a *familiar* one. It seems worth pointing out that Astrophel doesn’t exactly “end in despair”; rather, the sequence leaves him vacillating between “woes” and “joy,” “joys” and “annoy.” That is, Astrophel closes his lyric sequence just as Paul closes Romans 7: “I thanke God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Then I my selfe in my minde serue the Law of God, but in my flesh, the law of sinne” (7:25). Virtue and vice, delight and grief: for *both*, Paul is “thankful.” That Astrophel would serve as a “negative example” for Roche is particularly striking given Roche’s own observation that many of the metaphors in Sidney’s sequence derive from Paul’s Epistles.¹²⁰ For the reformers, Paul—like David—was not to be understood as a negative example; he was a prompt to his readership to turn and look within, to *know* their sinful nature—*not* to “mend” it (that was *God*’s doing, by his grace).

The struggle between his postlapsarian nature and his “erected wit” is precisely what Sidney’s own search for self-knowledge (the Bible, the *Ethics*) would have led him to. What the details of the theological debates above show is that a “what els” view of human nature was actually a central part of the reformed position. For the reformers, this view served less as a cautionary tale (except for those unwilling to “look in their hearts”), and more as a positive dimension of self-knowledge. It was only through this self-knowledge that one could recognize the need for divine grace; indeed, self-knowledge was the precondition for grace’s reception.

¹¹⁹ *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences*, 197.

¹²⁰ For example, *Ibid.* 201-2, where Roche points to Romans 13 and 1 Thessalonians 5.

What Astrophel sees when he “looke[s] in his heart” is a “well knowing” that might occasionally produce a “well doing,” though these occasions are aberrations. Sidney’s readers would have recognized themselves in Astrophel as they recognized themselves in the David of the Psalms and in the Paul of the Epistle to the Romans. Sidney’s lover joins these men as mirrors to reflect the truth of human nature, giving his readers an occasion to better know themselves, and thus to be better prepared for—and disposed toward—God’s grace.

Sidney’s best friend, Fulke Greville, was working on a sonnet sequence called *Caelica* during some of the same years Sidney was composing his own, though Greville’s collection was not published until 1633, after both men’s deaths. The lover of *Caelica* undergoes a religious conversion that resembles the one the lover of the *Hekatompathia* experiences: it is a spontaneous and unanticipated grace-event, and it thoroughly alters both the substance of the lyrics that follow it and the arc and direction of the entire sequence. But while his sequence is structurally most comparable to Watson’s, Greville appears to have been as specifically compelled by the biblical account of The Fall and the doctrinal question of regeneration in his love poems as his friend Sidney was. We will see, in the next chapter, how Greville took up these matters in his collection to a different end than Sidney did.

**“From despair to new election”: PREDESTINATION AND ASTROLOGICAL
DETERMINISM IN FULKE GREVILLE’S *CAELICA***

“The brilliance of Sidney’s negative example,” Thomas P. Roche writes, “is that he realized that Astrophel must end in despair because he never learns from his experience.”¹ I closed Chapter 3 not wholly in agreement with Roche’s interpretation of Astrophel’s affective state in the final sonnet of *Astrophel and Stella*. But there may have been an early modern reader of Sidney’s sequence who registered—as Roche does—an ultimate despair in Sidney’s lover. Fulke Greville was not only Sidney’s best friend; he was also his biographer. And it is worth noting that—despite the fact that the two friends were evidently composing their love poems together, and despite the fact that Greville lavishes a great deal of praise on the virtues of Sidney’s *Arcadia* in his *Life of Sidney*—Greville never once mentions *Astrophel and Stella*, but rather passes over what is now considered Sidney’s greatest work.²

It is also worth asking why this omission. Greville’s insistence on the *Arcadia*’s capacity to promote virtue suggests that he, like Sidney, believed that the fundamental purpose of literature is moral instruction.³ I propose that Greville’s anxiety about his friend’s sonnet sequence has something to do with the difference between what Roche reads as Astrophel’s “despair” in Sidney’s Sonnet 108 and what Greville’s lover’s relationship is to despair in *Caelica*. Indeed, despair is a fundamental concern of Greville’s sequence; but it is, finally, a *religious* despair

¹ *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), 197.

² See Paul Allen Miller, “Sidney, Petrarch, and Ovid, or Imitation as Subversion” in *ELH* 58.3 (Autumn 1991), 505; J.M. Purcell, “Sidney’s Astrophil and Stella and Greville’s Caelica” in *PMLA* 50.2 (Jun. 1935).

³ “Sidney, Petrarch, and Ovid,” 505.

about the lover's predestined status that the poet is thoughtfully examining. Greville's fear may very well have been that readers of *Astrophel and Stella* would be more likely to despair than to seek for grace when they recognized themselves in the mirror that was Astrophel. And it may have had something to do with a popular genre of literature being published that pointed readers in a misguided direction—toward the stars—for signs of their election.

Caelica's lover takes a rather sharp turn, more than halfway through the sequence (Sonnet 84 is his "farewell" to the "sweet Boy" Cupid (1)), from recapitulating the joys and woes, the praise and despair, of Petrarchan convention to contemplating political and theological matters. Much has been made of Greville's departure from the Petrarchan, much of it asking whether the poems were simply placed in the collection in the order in which they were written, or whether, rather than an "individual miscellany," Greville rearranged the poems out of concern for the moral narrative offered by the sequence's final arrangement.⁴ As this chapter will

⁴ Richard Waswo, *The Fatal Mirror: Themes and Techniques in the Poetry of Fulke Greville* (Charlottesville, VA: UP of Virginia, 1972), 42-3; Gary L. Litt, "'Images of Life': A Study of Narrative and Structure in Fulke Greville's 'Caelica'" in *Studies in Philology* 69.2 (April 1972), 219; *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequence*, 296; Gavin Alexander, *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney 1586-1640* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 244; *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, M.A. Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1939), 37; "Fulke Greville's *Caelica*" in Douglas L. Peterson, *English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne: A History of the Plain and Elegant Styles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1967), 252; Richard Waswo, "The Petrarchan Tradition as a Dialectic of Limits" in *SEL* 11.1 (1978), 12-13; Gavin Alexander, "Fulke Greville and the Afterlife" in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 62.3/4 (1999), 224; Armando Maggi, "Flesh, Privation, and Apocalypticism in Fulke Greville's 'Caelica'" in *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 11.2 (2005), 415. G.A. Wilkes, "'Left... to Play the Ill Poet in My Own Part': The Literary Relationship of Sidney and Fulke Greville" in *The Review of English Studies* 57.230 (June 2006), 307-8. See Wilkes (who argues that "we do not have a final text of *Caelica*"), for more on the publication history of the sequence (*Ibid.* 309). The diversity in these arguments can be seen in comparing Ricard Waswo's claim that "Greville collected and revised his lyrics over a long lifetime, and was careful in their final arrangement to emphasize the ultimate limit of courtly love as its incompatibility with the love of God" with this by Charles Larsen: "Only 41 of the poems are sonnets;

show, I take a side with those who argue for the latter. The collection's skyward-looking lover, who undergoes a conversion mid-sequence—serves, I believe, as Greville's antidote to what may have appeared like his friend's dubious object lesson in Astrophel.

For the bigger part of the sixteenth century, the stars were widely regarded as fixed and immutable, unchanging in both position and brightness.⁵ Philip Sidney died in 1586, not long after the discovery of a new star—first observed by Tycho Brahe—in 1572. In the years after Sidney's death, two new stars (1596 and 1604) were recorded by David Fabricius and Johannes Kepler. These *stellae novae* troubled the long-standing Aristotelian view of the cosmos, which contained a sphere of fixed and

35 are in six-line stanzas; 17 are in quatrains; the rest furnish examples of ottava rima, four-foot trochaics, rhymed Sapphics, and other forms... Furthermore, there are virtually no narrative links of any kind between the poems, so the reader necessarily becomes accustomed in all ways to treating the poems as nearly discrete artifacts" ("The Petrarchan Tradition as a Dialectic of Limits," 12-13; *Fulke Greville* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 25-6).

⁵ "Robert Recorde, in his *Castle of Knowledge* (1556), emphasized that the fixed stars 'waxe not werye with laboure, nother growe olde by continuance, but are as freshe in beutye and shape, as the firste daye of their creation' because they 'utterly stande cleere from all corruption of time.' John Dee, writing in 1568 [in the *Propaedeutica*]... affirmed the importance to the whole cosmos of a heavenly realm immune to change: 'That the mutual spaces among the fixed stars have never been altered in the whole eternity of time shows that the stars are very much superior even to those things in the elemental universe that strongly retain an unvarying condition in their situations.' He goes on to say that 'if this were not so [if the fixed stars were not immutable], no particle would be preserved naturally even for a single day'" (Mary Thomas Crane, "Marlowe and the New Science" in *Christopher Marlowe in Context*, ed. Emily C. Bartels and Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013) 257). See Mary Thomas Crane, *Losing Touch with Nature: Literature and the New Science in Sixteenth-Century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014), 28-9). Even after the discovery of the *stellae novae*, it appears that the fixed realm of the Aristotelian cosmos was a difficult concept to let go of. John Norden, in his 1600 *Vicissitudo Rerum*—a poem obviously concerned with change—is still insisting on the changeless nature of the heavens:

The Heauens seeme of most admired might,
Fixed on nothing, yet stand firme and fast,
Prouidence Diuine them hath so set aright,
Worldes may not waue them, nor vnprop their bast
Who then essayes to prooue they will not last,
Syth from creating, they are as they were,
Not changed by chace, nor alter'd by their stere.

(*Vicissitudo rerum, an Elegiacall Poeme, of the interchangeable courses and varietie of things in this world* (London: Imprinted by Simon Stafford, 1600), fol. A4).

changeless stars that stabilized the changing and chaotic sublunar realm beneath them. Change, that is, was now occurring in the realm previously believed to be immutable. Moreover, while the other new stars (today known as supernovae) eventually vanished, the new star of 1596—first sighted by the Lutheran pastor and astronomer Fabricius, and called “Mira Ceti”—vanished and then returned in 1603, and then again in 1609.⁶ Because of its disappearance and reappearance (it was the first known “variable star”), “Mira challenged traditional notions of celestial change and cosmic order” like no other celestial object had before it.⁷

Responses to these new stars tended to take two forms that were discursively distinct, but not essentially opposed to each other. On the one hand, the *stellae novae* were referred to again and again as miracles (*Mira* means “wonder” or “miracle”).⁸

⁶ These sightings were noted by Johann Bayer and Fabricius, respectively. See Robert Alan Hatch, “Discovering Mira Ceti: Celestial Change and Cosmic Continuity” in *Change and Continuity in Early Modern Cosmology*, ed. Patrick J. Boner (New York: Springer, 2011).

⁷ “Discovering Mira Ceti,” 166. As Mary Thomas Crane writes, “By the end of the sixteenth century, long-held assumptions about the intelligibility of the universe in Aristotelian terms were radically questioned, with no clear theories as yet available to replace them” (*Losing Touch with Nature*, 22).

⁸ When Mira reappeared, Fabricius wrote to Kepler, “proclaiming the wondrous appearance as a sign from God.” Brahe called his new star “a miracle indeed”; Kepler called his “an exceedingly wonderful work of God. Taking up the astronomers’ language, John Donne writes in his epistolary poem “To the Countesse of Huntingdon”:

Who vagrant transitory Comets sees,
Wonders, because they’re rare; But a new starre
Whose motion with the firmament agrees,
Is miracle; for, there no new things are.

In his *De naturae divinis characterismis* (1575), the astronomer Cornelius Gemma compared Brahe’s new star of 1572 with miracles—such as the star of Bethlehem—described in the Scriptures. Indeed, most writing on these new stars that employed the rhetoric of the miraculous considered them alongside their biblical precedents, including the star that reigned at Christ’s birth: Thomas Digges, Tycho Brahe, and Francis Shakelton all compared these new stars to scriptural astronomical miracles. See “Discovering Mira Ceti,” 156; “A Star Never Seen Before Our Time” in *The Book of the Cosmos: Imagining the Universe from Heraclitus to Hawking*, ed. Dennis Richard Danielson (New York: Perseus Books, 2000), 129; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Vol 1: Apostolic Christianity (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1889), 115; *Poems, by J.D. With elegies on the authors death* (London: Printed by Miles Flesher, 1633), 90; Dario Tessicini, “Cornelius Gemma and the New Star of 1572” in *Change and Continuity in Early Modern Cosmology*, ed. Patrick J. Boner

On the other hand, according to most Lutheran observers—and Fabricius, Brahe, and Kepler were all astrologers *and* staunch Lutherans—change invariably meant degeneration.⁹ The punishment for Adam and Eve’s first sin was that they were cast from paradise into a world of chance and change, including the “thorny soil” we saw in Sidney’s Sonnet 10. The late-sixteenth-century discovery of these new astronomical phenomena served as further evidence of the repercussions of The Fall—that, due to original sin, the earth was in a state of increasing decline and decay.¹⁰

It seems worth noting, then, that the lover in Fulke Greville’s *Caelica* woos three women (or *one* woman, variously called) Caelica (the sky), Cynthia (the moon), and Myra (likely a reference to the “miraculous” *stella novae* of the period)—as he insists upon their inconstancy.¹¹ Indeed, one of the most remarkable aspects of Greville’s sequence is how radically its beloved—be she one or many—varies from the Petrarchan tradition in which the lady is inaccessible, but not inconstant. While *Astrophel and Stella* ends with Stella—the fixed star—refusing, *still*, to yield, Greville’s

(New York: Springer, 2011), 55-6; *Losing Touch with Nature*, 42-3, 77; “A Star Never Seen Before Our Time,” 129; Dava Sobel, *A More Perfect Heaven: How Copernicus Revolutionized the Cosmos* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 203; John Freely, *Celestial Revolutionary: Copernicus, the Man and His Universe* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 190.

⁹ Indeed, Kepler rejoiced when he completed his first book, the *Mysterium cosmographicum*; for as he wrote in a letter to his former professor of mathematics, “I wanted to be a theologian; for a long time I was distressed: behold God is now celebrated too in my astronomical work” (cited in Avita Rothman, “From Cosmos to Confession: Kepler and the Connection Between Astronomical and Religious Truth” in *Change and Continuity*, 115).

¹⁰ See Freya Sierhuis, “Metaphysical Skepticism, Incertitude and the Dissolution of the Theatrum Mundi” in *If then the World a Theatre Present*, ed. Björn Quiring (De Gruyter, 2014), 188; *Fortune: “All is but Fortune,”* ed. Leslie Thompson (Washington, D.C.: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 2000), 15; E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), 49-50; Robin B. Barnes, *Astrology and Reformation* (New York: Oxford UP, 2016), 147.

¹¹ There is a fourth beloved as well—Cala—but only one poem (Sonnet 19) is addressed to her; and her variability is not an issue there. On Myra’s changeable nature, see Sonnets 7, 22, 28, 30, 32, 41, 73; on Caelica’s, Sonnets 18, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 58, 64, 65, 70, 72, and 75; on Cynthia’s, Sonnets 48, 52, 53, 56.

sequence registers, again and again, the changeability of the *caelum* that contains the collection's beloveds.

Both Sidney's and Greville's amatory sequences are fundamentally interested in the consequences of original sin. Indeed—as I have argued is the case in Sidney's sequence—The Fall is acknowledged again and again in *Caelica*. In Sonnet 37, for example, the lover recalls being once “lodg'd in the midst of paradise, [Caelica's] Heart,” where he possessed “part” of “euery fruit and flower” until “curious Knowledge” of “the sweetest fruits” caused him to be “straight forbidden” from that paradise (2, 4, 5-6, 8). Elaine Y.H. Ho has noted the “distinctly postlapsarian character” of *Caelica*—a character underscored, I would add, by the fact that the degeneracy characteristic of fallen man (specifically, concupiscence) is not limited to Greville's lover, as it is in Sidney's sequence, but extends to his beloved/s.¹²

While *Astrophel and Stella* was grappling with the consequences of The Fall as they concerned the corruption of man's reason and will, it appears *Caelica* was grappling with them *first* as they applied to the natural world: indeed, it is not until

¹² Ho writes: “Greville rewrites the Petrarchan lover as the object lesson of the Fall and its impact on human existence... [thus] the Petrarchan discourse of the first section acquires a distinctively postlapsarian character” (“Fulke Greville's *Caelica* and the Calvinist Self” in *SEL* 32.1 (Winter, 1992), 42-3). Toby Mostysser agrees that postlapsarian human nature is at the center of attention in the first part of the sequence: “Even in the love lyrics, [Greville's] main concern is rather with the Fall of man, a Calvinist preoccupation, that with love, the subject of the courtier poet” (*Fulke Greville's Caelica: the lyrics of a courtier and Calvinist* (Dissertation: City U of New York, 1974), iv). Mostysser specifies the “explicitness and thoroughness with which the Edenic myth is integrated into the lyrics. In LXXI, Cupid recalls the myth to explain that his failure in love was caused by his naïveté... in XLVI, the lover evokes the myth to reject the counsels of an allegorical Patience... Finding himself banished from his first paradise, the lover repudiates the Christian heaven of an indefinite ‘time to come.’ In XLIV, the speaker identifies the classical Golden Age with pre-lapsarian times, when ‘the Serpents had not stung,’ and contrasts the perfection of those times with the decadence of his own. The use of the myth in these three poems is unusual, for the myth does not simply provide a source of allusion, but seems to form part of the poems’ arguments and meanings” (*Ibid.* 26-7).

the sequence's second half that the lover "looks into his heart"—as Astrophel does in Sonnet 1—and is then able to diagnose that same corruption in himself while, paradoxically, simultaneously dispensing with his despair. Greville likely began his project playfully punning on the names of the lover and beloved in his best friend's sequence; but the radical changes in perceptions of the sky—and the convictions that those changes were repercussions of the first sin—allowed his contemplations of postlapsarian corruption to take a very particular turn, extending beyond the scope of his friend's lyric collection.

CAELICA, SELF-KNOWLEDGE, AND PREDESTINATION

You little starres that liue in skyes,
 And glory in *Apollo's* glorie,
 In whose aspects conioined lyes
 The Heauens will, and Natures storie,
 Ioy to be likened to those eyes,
 Which eyes make all eyes glad, or sorie,
 For when you force thoughts from aboue,
 These ouer-rule your force by loue.
 And thou *ô Loue*, which in these eyes
 Hast married *Reason* with *Affection*,
 And made them Saints of beauties skyes,
 Where ioyes are shadowes of perfection,
 Lend me thy wings that I may rise
 Vp not by worth but thy election;
 For I haue vow'd in strangest fashion,
 To loue, and neuer seeke compassion.¹³

The fourth poem of *Caelica* is comprised of two apostrophes. In the first, the lover reverses the conventional Petrarchan hyperbole in which the beloved's eyes are

¹³ All citations of *Caelica* are taken from Geoffrey Bullough's 2-volume edition of *The Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1939). The *Caelica* poems are found in Volume 1.

described as stars. Here, the lover directly informs the stars that they ought to delight in being likened to the beloved's eyes, which they are allegedly—in Greville's particular tropical swerve—inferior to. He then turns to Cupid and asks to borrow his wings, that he “may rise / Vp not by worth but thy election”: evidently in order to meet, eye-to-eye, the very eyes he has just praised. Once there, gazing upon the beloved's star-eyes, he will apparently be able to discover whether his *own* eyes are “glad, or sorie.”

That the poem evokes the Catholic-Protestant distinction between works-righteousness and election has not gone unnoted: the poem virtually announces as much in its antepenultimate line. Like the Protestant God, Cupid is depicted as having the power to arbitrarily “lend” and deny his wings at will.¹⁴ But what has been less acknowledged—if it has been acknowledged at all—is that the beloved is no less an arbitrary power than Cupid is (“Which eyes make all eyes glad, or sorie”).¹⁵ The analogy is offered in astrological terms: the eyes-that-are-like-stars contain both “Heauens will, and Nature's storie” in their “conioined aspects.” An aspect marked the relative positions of the heavenly bodies at a given moment in time; Kepler defined it as “an Angle made in the Earth by the Luminous Beams of two Planets, of

¹⁴ See Douglas L. Peterson, *English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne: A History of the Plain and Elegant Styles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1967), 256; Murray Kriger, *The classic vision: the retreat from extremity in modern literature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins P, 1971), 73; *Fatal Mirror*, 48; Ronald Rebholz, “Love's Newfangleness: A Comparison of Greville and Wyatt” in *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 11:1 (1978), 29.

¹⁵ Elaine Y.L. Ho most approximates this analogy when she says that “the traditional Neo-Platonic figurations of the lady's superiority and the lover's abjectness... bear the trace of a Calvinistic rewriting” (“Fulke Greville's Caelica and the Calvinist Self,” 40).

strength to stir up the vertue of all sublunary things.”¹⁶ A conjunction was a matter of proximity; William Lilly defined it in his *Christian Astrology* (1647) as “when two Planets are in one and the same degree and minute of any Signe.”¹⁷ Both were used to cast elections and nativities—astrological “birth charts”—in the Renaissance. For instance, according to the section titled “Of the aspects of the Planets betwene them” in Auguer Ferrier’s *A learned astronomical discourse, of the iudgement of natiuities* (1593), “the coniunction of Mars & Mercury” at a person’s birth made “lyers, deceiuers... and bablers”; but when Mercury was conjoined with the *sun*, it signified “wisdom, science, [and] great aduancement.”¹⁸

Greville’s beloved—whose eyes are like the “conioined aspects” of the “starres” insofar as they determine whether a man who looks into them will “glad, or sorie”—is thus, in one sense, a figure for astrological determinism. But she *also* possesses the power to “ouer-rule” the “force” of the very stars that her eyes are being compared to: “when [the stars] force thoughts from aboue, / These [eyes] ouer-rule [their] force by loue.” As we will see below, the astrological writings of Greville’s day were cautious of assertions that the stars could actually compel a man to be of a particular temperament (indeed, *astra inclinant, sed non necessitant*—“the stars incline, but they do not force”—was a commonplace qualifier); theological writings on

¹⁶ Cited in *The Works of That Late Most Excellent Philosopher and Astronomer, Sir George Wharton, Bar. Collected into one Entire Volume. By John Gadbury, Student in Physick and Astrology* (London: Printed by H.H. for John Leigh, 1683), 90.

¹⁷ “Conjunction, n. 3.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁸ *A Learned Astronomical discourse, of the iudgement of Natiuities. Deuided into three Bookes, and dedicated first to Katherin the French Queene, by Oger Ferrier her Physition. Translated by Thomas Kelway Gentleman* (London: Printed at the widow Charlewoods house, for Richard Watkins, 1593), fols. K1-K2.

astrology insisted again and again that God, through his grace, had the power to “ouer-rule [the] force” of the stars. Analogously, the beloved’s eyes in Sonnet 4 accommodate both “natures storie” and “the Heauens will”; since *she* (*Caelica*) is the “heauens” (*caelum*) whose “will” will be done, she is simultaneously the stars’ deterministic “force” and their divine nullification.

The poem suggests that for the lover to be truly “glad” and not “sorie,” he has to be “elected” *twice*: Cupid must first elect to give him the wings that he can’t attain by “merit”; and then, when the lover rises on these wings to meet the starry eyes of the beloved, he must be made “glad” by virtue of what he sees reflected there.

Greville’s Calvinism (or at least his Calvinist upbringing) is well known; and the Calvinist tendencies of *Caelica* have been intensively examined.¹⁹ But what Sonnet 4—and, indeed, the collection as a whole—is no less interested in is the astrological.

“Election,” after all, was not only a theological term; it was also “the choice on astrological grounds of the fit time for undertaking any particular business.”²⁰ This denotational conflation, and Greville’s play on the word’s multivalence in Sonnet 4,

¹⁹ See John Williams, *The world and God: the poems and dramas of Fulke Greville* (Dissertation: University of Missouri, 1954); Burnam Carter, *The intellectual background of Fulke Greville* (Dissertation: Stanford U, 1955); G.F. Waller, “Fulke Greville’s Struggle with Calvinism” in *Studia Neophilologica* 44.2 (1972); *The Fatal Mirror; Fulke Greville’s Caelica: the lyrics of a courtier and Calvinist*; David A. Roberts, “Fulke Greville’s Aesthetic Reconsidered” in *Studies in Philology* 74.4 (October 1977); June Dwyer, “Fulke Greville’s Aesthetic: Another Perspective” in *Studies in Philology* 78.4 (Summer 1981); Germaine Warkentin, “Greville’s Caelica and the Fullness of Time” in *English Studies in Canada* 6 (1980); James A. Devereux, “Love Human and Divine in Fulke Greville’s *Caelica*” in *Christianity and Literature* 29.4 (Summer 1980); “Fulke Greville’s *Caelica* and the Calvinist Self”; “Peace, Order, and Confusion: Fulke Greville and the Inner and Outer Forms of Reform” in Kenneth J.E. Graham, *The Performance of Conviction: Plainness and Rhetoric in the Early English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994); Helen Vincent, “‘Syon Lies Waste’: Secularity, Scepticism and Religion in *Caelica*” in *Sidney Journal* 19, nos. 1-2 (2001); Armando Maggi, “Flesh, Privation, and Apocalypticism in Fulke Greville’s ‘Caelica’” in *Bruniana & Campanelliana* 11.2 (2005). This list is hardly exhaustive.

²⁰ “What is... Astrologie,” Robert Burton asks, “but vaine elections, predictions?” (“Election, n. 4.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press).

points to a troubled early modern question: whether God's will—and God's will for the individual, including his soteriological status—could be discerned in the stars.

Later in the sequence, the lover more explicitly offers the correspondence between amatory and theological election that I suggest the collection, as a whole, is examining. The representation of Cupid and the beloved as Calvinist Gods recurs in Sonnet 52, where the lover is again subject to the arbitrary decisions of both, despite his faith and his constancy (“I weare her Rings on Holy dayes, / In euery Tree I write her name, / And euery Day I read the same,” 14-16). While these qualities served as significant “tokens” of assurance in the theological realm, they prove inconsequential for the devotee in the amatory realm: Cupid's arrows still “causelesse[ly] good or ill decree”; and Cynthia reserves the right to “craue her Ring of” the lover whenever she pleases (8, 19). The lover identifies the arbitrariness of this “election” with the Protestant God at the close of the poem, when he writes of Cynthia that “*many runne, but one must winne*” her—a pronounced echo of 1 Corinthians 9:24, where Paul writes to the church at Corinth: “Knowe ye not, that they which runne in a race, runne all, yet one receiveth the price? So runne, that ye may obtaine.”²¹ The “one” who “wins” Cynthia *is* thus the worldly cognate of God's elect.

More than halfway through the sequence—at Sonnet 84—Greville's lover (sometimes called Myraphill, sometimes Philocell) turns from contemplating his beloveds to contemplating political and theological matters. Much recent scholarship on *Caelica* has focused less on the division this turn appears to establish and more on

²¹ All scriptural passages are taken from the 1599 Geneva Bible.

what Ho calls a “textual interplay” between the early and later poems of the sequence.²² For Ho, the common motif between the two parts is interiority (Petrarchan self-narrative and Calvinist self-examination); for others who insist that “this turnabout is not as drastic as it seems,” the overlapping thematic has to do with the poems’ philosophical seriousness, their interest in the universality of change, and their intense scrutiny of various kinds of love, human and divine.²³ But no one, to my knowledge, has offered predestination—which is so clearly a concern in the second half of the sequence, despite the fact that the word “election” only occurs in the first, “Petrarchan” half—as a common theme. The lover’s predestinarian claim, for instance, that “many runne, but one must winne” the beloved appears in the early (amatory) portion of the sequence, which is otherwise saturated with astrological terms and figures.

I suggest that what is happening across this sequence—roughly and hardly by perfect analogy—is that the lover initially looks to the skies, as the reformers frequently warned against, for signs of his election. Greville’s best friend, after all, had written in his *Defence of Poesie* that “when by the ballance of experience it was found, that the Astronomer looking to the stars might fall in a ditch,” it became clear that astronomy was nothing more than a “serving science” whose end was “the knowledge of a mans selfe.”²⁴ While Sidney’s similitude took from a classical source

²² “Fulke Greville’s *Caelica* and the Calvinist Self,” 35-6.

²³ “Images of Life,” 217-18, 222-23; Joan Rees, *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554-1628: A Critical Biography* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1971), 103-4.

²⁴ “The Defence of Poesie” in *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia. Written by Sir Philip Sidney, Knight. Now the Third Time published, with sundry new additions of the same Author* (London: Imprinted for William Ponsonbie, 1598), fol. Tt3.

(Plato's *Theaetetus*) and was not necessarily theologically motivated, this *was*—as we saw in Chapter 3—the argument of the reformers: self-knowledge—including the “assurance” of one’s soteriological status—could only be acquired by going inward. Likewise, for Greville’s lover, the search for signs of his “election” in the “sky” of the beloved proves un-self-illuminating. Having “beene aboute himselfe” in the early part of the sequence (C 83.8), he goes “inward” in the second (C 86.5, 89.25, 100.3, 5, 14), and discovers that, indeed—through God’s grace—*astra inclinant, sed non necessitant*.

Perhaps not surprisingly, then, Greville’s theological deployment of the Petrarchan sequence is in line with his friend’s. However, while both collections maintain the significance of self-knowledge through personae that serve as exemplars for “looking inward,” Sidney emphasizes his lover’s postlapsarian corruption through various iterations of The Fall, while Greville underscores another trope—the astrological—through his sequence. Like Astrophel, Greville’s lover does not become any less “corrupt” as the sequence proceeds; but he *does* appear to become less despairing. I read Greville’s *Caelica*, broadly, as an initially-playful theological commentary on Sidney’s (already deeply theologically-resonant) Astrophel. Greville’s lover plays the astrologer (Philocell, lover of the *entire* sky) to Sidney’s persona, who can’t stop looking at his *particular* star. Sidney’s Stella and his reference to Thales in the *Defence* served as points of origin for Greville to examine self-knowledge while sharing his love poems with his friend. But it also allowed him to take the theological matters Sidney’s sequence broached one step further. For

Greville, self-knowledge concerns more than man's understanding of his present, postlapsarian dilemma: this kind of knowledge is, after all, what would keep a reader/penitent in despair. Rather, self-knowledge also concerns man's awareness of, and his "assurance" of, his salvational status; for while despair is a crucial *step* toward such assurance, the reformers claimed, it can only be a temporary one.

REFORMED POSITIONS ON ASTROLOGY: PREDESTINATION MEETS DETERMINISM

Broadly speaking, astrology was of two types in the Renaissance: natural and judicial. The former concerned astral influences on phenomena such as the weather and agriculture; it was widely used for medical purposes because of the power the moon was understood to have over water. Judicial astrology, on the other hand, was the art of making predictions about human events based on the positions of heavenly bodies. Included under its umbrella were nativities (which were based on a map of the positions of the planets at the moment of a person's birth), horary astrology (which answered questions based on the positions of the planets at the moment the question was asked), and "elections and inceptions, which concerned the beginning of an enterprise."²⁵

While reformers expressed varying degrees of horror about judicial astrology, they had little to say against natural astrology. To negate the art of the stars, after all, would be to repudiate Scripture: in Genesis, God declares that the "lightes in the firmament of the heauen" are "for signes, and for seasons, and for daies and yeres"

²⁵ Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power: Astrology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 8-9.

(1:14); the Geneva editors glossed “signes” as “things appertaining to [both] natural and political ordres.” Tycho Brahe argued for the value of astrology so long as one protected the notion of free will.²⁶ And while Luther was wary of his student, Melanchthon’s, ardent belief in astrology—and while he claimed that “when [astrology] will step out of her bounds, that is, when she will prophecy,” she ceases to be a justifiable art—other writings of his attest to the difficulty of effectively condemning even judicial astrology.²⁷

Even Calvin’s 1549 *Avertissement contre l’astrologie* (*An Admonicion against Astrology Judiciall*, 1561) claimed that “no man can denie but that the science of Astrologie is honorable.”²⁸ Despite the text’s blow to the predictive aspects of the science, Calvin could not rule out the influence of the spheres on the physical matter of the world. Using the stars to foretell the weather and the tides, to elect auspicious moments for administering medicine and for bloodletting, for agriculture, and for determining “the complexions of men and chiefly as concerning the affections which are partakers of the qualities of their bodies,” were all admissible practices as far as Calvin was concerned.²⁹ And yet, that final practice mentioned—determining “the complexions of men”—is one Calvin denounces elsewhere in the same text, indicating

²⁶ See Robert S. Westman, *The Copernican Question: Prognostication, Skepticism, and Celestial Order* (Berkeley: U of California P), 244.

²⁷ “Of Astronomy and Astrology” in *Luther’s Table Talk; or, Some choice fragments from the familiar discourse of that godly, learned man... Dr. Martin Luther* (London: Printed for Longman, et al., 1832), 314-15. On Luther’s reactions to Melanchthon’s astrological convictions, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Vol. VI (New York: Charles Scribner, 1893), 470; *The Copernican Question*, 110; *Astrology and Reformation*, 135.

²⁸ *An admonicion against astrology iudiciall and other curiosities, that raigne novv in the vworld: written in the french tonge by Ihon Caluine and translated into English, by G.G* (London: Imprinted by Roulande Hall, 1561), fol. A6.

²⁹ *Ibid.* fols. B1-B2.

the complexities of the subject and of disavowing only certain aspects of the art.³⁰

Calvin is referring to the casting of nativities here—an art he alludes to again when he claims that “the starres may emprunte certain qualities in the persones but they can not cause that this thing or that shuld fall upon them afterwarde.”³¹

Philip Melanchthon—the reformer best known for championing the art of astrology—highly regarded the practice of casting nativities.³² The Lutheran theologian had both his own horoscope and his children’s horoscopes read, and lectured regularly at Wittenberg, for over a decade, on Ptolemy’s work.³³ His correspondence with the reformer Joachim Camerarius abounds with astrological discussions, including the readings of horoscopes of eminent men and interpretations of passages from Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* (which both men translated) and the *Centiloquium*.³⁴ In his writings on the subject, Melanchthon repeatedly affirms that man’s constitution, inclinations, temperament and behavior are direct results of astral influence—though these astral influences are themselves subject to God’s will.³⁵ “It should be understood that those most beautiful bodies of the stars were not created to

³⁰ *Ibid.* fol. B1.

³¹ *Ibid.* fol. B5.

³² Robert Burton even cites Melanchthon in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*: “‘This variety of melancholy symptoms proceeds from the stars,’ saith Melanchthon” (*The Anatomy of Melancholy: What it is, with all the kinds, causes, symptoms, prognostics, and several cures of it*. Vol. 1 (London: John C. Nimmo, 1886), 274).

³³ Clyde L. Manschreck, *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 104.

³⁴ See Sachiko Kusakawa, *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy: The Case of Philip Melanchthon* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995), 135; Stefano Caroti, “Melanchthon’s Astrology” in *‘Astrologi hallucinati’: Stars and the End of the World in Luther’s Time*, ed. Paola Zambelli (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 112-13; Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*. Vol. 5 (New York: Columbia UP, 1941), 384.

³⁵ See “The Dignity of Astrology” in *Philip Melanchthon: Orations on Philosophy and Education*, ed. Sachiko Kusakawa, trans. Christine F. Salazar (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 122; *Astrology and Reformation*, 145, 393-8; *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer*, 103-5; *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 378-405; John Montgomery, *Cross, Constellation, and Crucible: Lutheran Astrology and alchemy in the Age of the Reformation* (Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada, 1963).

no purpose,” Melanchthon wrote; for—if inquired into—they give man knowledge of God’s providential governance.³⁶

This refusal of the notion that the stars are ultimately without purpose might recall *Astrophel and Stella* 26, wherein the lover chastises the “dusty wits [who] dare scorn astrology” and think the “wonders” of the sky to have “no cause” except to “spangle” in the night. As for Astrophel:

I do Nature unidle know,
And know great causes great effects procure;
And know those bodies high, reign on the low
And if these rules did fail, proof makes me sure,
Who oft forejudge my after-following race,
By only those two stars in Stella's face.³⁷

Sidney’s sonnet locates itself somewhere between the astrological and the theological. Astrophel looks at the “stars” that are Stella’s eyes to predict (“forejudge”) his future (“my after-following race”). The word “birthright”—employed earlier in the poem (5), and coupled with the lover’s turn toward the stars at its close—may very well have evoked an astrological nativity for an early modern reader. But the words “proof” and “race” also carry distinctly Pauline echoes; both come from verses commonly cited in reformed texts on assurance: “Proue your selues whether ye are in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5); “Knowe ye not, that they which runne in a race, runne all, yet one receiue the price?” (1 Cor. 9:24). Astrophel here becomes a kind of Pauline astrologer, attempting to predict whether he will be the “one [who] receiue the

³⁶ Cited in *The Transformation of Natural Philosophy*, 127, 130.

³⁷ *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Prose and Poetry*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (Madison, WI: The U of Wisconsin P, 1983), 177.

the price.” And, indeed, nativities sometimes came perilously close to sounding like guarantees of one’s salvational status.

As any perusal of a sixteenth-century nativity would show, astrological language verged on the deterministic: “the planets ‘cause’, ‘give’, ‘mak[e]’, ‘prescribe’, or ‘personate’ individuals ‘born under’ them.”³⁸ Astrologers generally strove to relinquish celestial control to the workings of divine grace; thus the Ptolemaic commonplace *astra inclinant, sed non necessitant* was given a theological bent.³⁹ In 1588, the Lutheran physician and practical writer Anton Brelochs wrote that the stars:

Incline us and do not force us, as the great Ptolemy shows. Thus too we are to call only upon the maker of the stars in our afflictions and adversities. For just as he has created them out of his good will, so too may he change their influence to the good through his grace and mercy.⁴⁰

The Lutheran theologian Johann Arndt (1555-1631), in his *True Christianity*, declared that “by the gift of grace one could become a child no longer of Saturn or Venus, but of God.”⁴¹ In a 1649 translation of his work called *Astrologie Theologized*, Valentine Weigelius (1533-1588) suggests that God’s grace is “another Starr” more powerful than the stars that rule at one’s nativity—a metaphor that sounds remarkably

³⁸ Mark S. Dawson, “Astrology and Human Variation in Early Modern England” in *The Historical Journal* 56.1 (March 2013), 47.

³⁹ Alison A. Chapman, “Marking Time: Astrology, Almanacs, and English Protestantism” in *Renaissance Quarterly* 60.4 (Winter 2007), 1286-7; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1971), 330, 361; *Astrology and Reformation*, 163; Graziella Federici Vescovini, “The Theological Debate” in *A Companion to Astrology in the Renaissance*, ed. Brendan Dooley (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 100-101.

⁴⁰ Cited in *Astrology and Reformation*, 165-66.

⁴¹ Cited in *Ibid.* 273.

like the beloved in Sonnet 4, who–star-like *herself*–“ouer-rule[s]” the “force” of the celestial bodies:

Although some of us by constitution and concordance of the externall and internall heaven, in the point of... conception and nativity, should happily have attained the most wicked constellation and nature, ready and prone to commit any kind of maliciousnesse... we must not altogether despair of... correction and salvation... Because besides the naturall Heaven, and Astralic Firmament which is in our soul, we have another Heaven, another Sydus, another Starr... which is the Spirit of God, by whose power... we may shake off and drive away all the provocations of the evil ascendants of natural stars.⁴²

Man can dispense with his “despair” and “ease [him]self from that most hard yoke of the Zodiac” by “theologiz[ing his] Astrologie”: obeying the Pauline injunction to “put off the old Man, and put on the new Man, fall back from vices, and passe on to vertues, that is, to shake off from us all the ascendent Starres,” which is a new, and “best nativity.”⁴³

The “old man,” that is, continues to be ruled by the stars; but the “new man” is not governed by them. These Pauline figures are repeatedly invoked in the astrological writings of Melanchthon and his circle at Wittenberg.⁴⁴ Calvin, too, argues that spiritual regeneration through God’s grace can completely alter a man’s astrally-determined complexion: “if we come to the grace that God geueth to his

⁴² *Astrologie Theologized: Wherein is set forth, What Astrologie, and the light of Nature is. What influence the Starres naturally have on Man, and how the same may be diverted and avoided* (London: George Whittington, 1649), fol. D3.

⁴³ *Ibid.* fols. E1, D3-4.

⁴⁴ Melanchthon’s associate and Nuremberg’s leading stargazer Johann Schöner wrote that the stars “merely inclined us and do not force us, for only the fleshly man is subject to their influence, and not the spiritual [man].” Schöner’s successor, Joachim Heller, wrote that “only faith can counteract stellar fate.” The pastor and astrologer Georg Caesius argued that prayer, repentance, and the will of God could overrule the influence of the stars: “I know and believe in my heart,” he wrote, “that God almighty can change the order of nature and hear the prayers of the just.” Barnes writes: “Here was an application of the basic Melanchthonian principle: stellar fate applied to the old man; gospel faith was the great gift possessed of the new” (*Astrology and Reformation*, 163-5).

children... whereto serueth all the aspecte and respects of the planets?" he asks.

Calvin then chides the "folishe" "Byrthtellers & castars of mens natiuities" who alledge that it "is [the stars] whereupon God hath founded his eternall election."⁴⁵

But Calvin's contempt of the "inferior means" by which "castars of... natiuities" forecasted men's lives and *afterlives* ultimately bumped up against the Protestant injunction that *every man search for signs of his election*. "What can be more absurd and unbecoming," he asks in the *Institutes*, than that we should "refuse to attend to election?" And the best way of "seeking the certainty of our election," Calvin claims, is to "cleave to those... signs which are sure attestations to it" (3.24.3-4).⁴⁶ The *Institutes* not only offered reformed theologians "signs" of election; it also offered "marks" by which God revealed "the judgment which awaits" the reprobate (3.21.7).

The mass of theological writings that came from the presses in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries codifying such "signs and tokens" of election and reprobation took from both the admonition in 2 Peter 1:10 ("Wherefore, brethren, giue rather diligence to make your calling & election sure") and Paul's charges to the Corinthians to "Proue your selues" and "examine your selues."⁴⁷ Titles

⁴⁵ *An Admonicion against Astrology Judiciall*, fol. B4.

⁴⁶ All quotations from the *Institutes* are taken from Henry Beveridge's translation (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012).

⁴⁷ Nicholas Byfield, for instance opens *The marrow of the oracles of God* with a reminder to his readers that: "The Apostle Paul chargeth men to *examine themselues whether they bee in the Faith, and whether Christ Iesus bee in them, vnlesse they bee reprobates*, 2 Corinth. 13.5" (*The marrow of the oracles of God. Or, Divers Treatises, containing Directions about sixe of the weightiest things can concerne a Christian in this life*. Ninth edition (London: Printed by Iohn Legat, 1633), fol. K3). George Gifford paraphrases Peter ("The fourth Sermon" in *Foure sermons vpon the seuen chiefe vertues or principall effectes of faith, and the doctrine of election: wherein euerie man may learne, whother he be Gods childe or no* (London: Imprinted for Tobie Cooke, 1582), fol. E8).

such as George Gifford's 1582 *Foure sermons vpon the seuen chiefe vertues or principall effectes of faith and the doctrine of election: wherein euerie man may learne, whother he be Gods childe or no* and Arthur Dent's 1601 *The plaine mans path-way to heauen: Wherein euery man may cleerely see, whether he shall be saued or damned* promised their readers that they could guide them into "easily discern[ing]"—as Nicholas Byfield's *A Garden of Spirituall Flowers* put it—"whether we abide in the state of Nature, or the state of Grace, whether Slaues to Sin and Sathan, or Seruants and Heyres to Christ and his Kindgome."⁴⁸ The compilers of these catalogues stressed the "necessity" of such predestinarian knowledge. And the certainty with which a reader could arrive at his or her salvational status was expounded upon, in each of these texts, on nearly mathematical principles.

In *The golden chaine*, for instance, William Perkins includes "A Survey or Table declaring the order of saluation and damnation," pictorially representing the separate paths of the elect and reprobate. More complex than a "redde line" showing the path to salvation and a "blacke line" the path to damnation, Perkins' table includes "lines A.A.A." that apply to the elect who experiences "Effectuall calling" and goes through the *ordo salutis* of "Iustification, Sanctification, Glorification," and "lines B.B.B." that "shew the tentation of the godly, and their remedies," as well as separate paths for the reprobate who has "a calling not effectuall" and the reprobate

⁴⁸ *A Garden of Spirituall Flowers, 2 Part* (London: Printed by T.S. for T. Pauier, 1620), fol. C6.

who has “no calling” *at all*.⁴⁹ Arthur Dent gives three separate catalogues of the signs of salvation, “in order of increasing significance.”⁵⁰ Nicholas Byfield:

[D]evoted *The Signes* [1614] to a detailed review of sixteen ‘infallible signes of a child of God,’ with multiple subdivisions under each. Then, in *The Spirituall Touch-stone*, he presented a far lengthier roster of major and subsidiary signs. It was designed to inspire and guide a private rite, a thorough examen of self to identify as many signs as possible... No one, Byfield warned, could possess the full range of signs, but he expected true saints to exhibit the ‘perhaps twentie, or thirtie, or fortie... distinct... marques’ that would suffice for confident assurance.⁵¹

These “signs” of election generally fell under the term “sanctification,” that part of the *ordo salutis* which Perkins defined as that “whereby such as believe... are by little renewed in holiness and righteousness.”⁵² Paul had defined sanctification in his Epistle to the Romans as “be[ing] made like the image of [God’s] Sonne” (8:29); the Thirty-nine Articles repeats Paul nearly to the letter. According to Arthur Dent, we ought to judge our predestination based on the degree to which we find ourselves “made like the image of [God’s] Son,” that is, the degree to which we are “holy and righteous; for most certain it is that we can judge nothing of predestination but by the

⁴⁹ “A Survey or Table Declaring The Order of Salvation and Damnation” at the *Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics* at the Craig Center, Westminster Theological Seminary. <http://www.reformed.org/calvinism/index.html?mainframe=/calvinism/perkins.html>.

⁵⁰ Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2014), 43.

⁵¹ Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004), 135.

⁵² Cited in James D. Boulger, *The Calvinist Temper in English Poetry* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1980), 91. The *ordo salutis* (“order of salvation”) was taken directly from Romans 8:29-30: “For those which he knewe before, he also predestinate to be made like to the image of his Sonne... Moreouer whome he predestinate, them also he called, and whome he called, them also he iustified, and whome he iustified, them he also glorified.” These stages were codified in Article 17 of the Thirty-nine Articles (“Of Predestination and Election”).

consequents, that is, by our calling, justification, and sanctification.”⁵³

To read these catalogues of signs alongside the astrologers’ nativities is to be struck by their similarities. The former claimed that the elect and reprobate possessed particular qualities and manifested particular “fruits,” while the latter suggested that men born under certain signs manifested certain temperaments; and while there is no perfect overlap between fruits and temperaments, they *do* invite comparison.

Galatians 5:22-23 and 2 Peter 1:5-7 were the scriptural texts most often cited in catalogues of signs of election. In Galatians, Paul writes: “the frute of the Spirite is loue, ioye, peace, long suffring, gentleness, goodnes, faith, mekenes, temperancie.”

Peter counsels:

Ioyne... vertue with your faith: and with vertue, knowledge: And with knowledge, temperance: and with temperance, pacience: and with pacience, godliness: And with godliness, brotherlie kindenes: and with brotherlie kindenes, loue.

Gifford warns that these “fruites” “cannot bee wanting,” or else man is not

“justifie[d]... before God.”⁵⁴

A man searching for signs of his election may have been pleased to read his nativity—if, that is, he was born under a planet such as Jupiter. According to *Christian Astrology*, when “Jupiter [is] the significator of any man... or Lord of his Ascendant in a Nativity, and well dignified,” that man will be “Honourable and Religious... full of Charity and Godlinesse, Liberal, hating all Sordid actions, just... [and]

⁵³ Arthur Dent, *The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven* (Belfast: North of Ireland Book & Tract Depository, 1859), 229.

⁵⁴ *Foure sermons*, fols. E5, C2. See also Arthur Dent, *The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven* (Belfast: North of Ireland Book & Tract Depository, 1859), 185-6; *Spirituell Flowers*, fols. E3, F7.

Vertuous.”⁵⁵ *A learned astronomical discourse* describes Jovalists as “honest, gracious, amiable, faithfull... of good hart & good loue... dreaming alwaies vpon some vertuous thing.”⁵⁶ The *conjunction* of Jupiter with another planet also signified virtue. John Maplet writes:

As [Mercury] is ioyned with Saturne or Mars, hee procureth an abuse of the same good and commendable giftes, and conuerteth them to bestow... [his] wits to the hurt and harme of others... [but] if this Mercury be ioined with Iupiter he causeth in the Mercurists a clean contrary effect. As wholly to apply & refer the aforesaied precious gifts... to contend in nothing so much as in the aduancement of Religion and vertue.⁵⁷

The marks of the reprobate also had scriptural precedent. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Paul writes: “nether fornicatours, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor wantons, nor bouggerers, Nor theues, nor couetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extorcioners shal inherite the kingdome”; he expands this catalogue in Galatians 5:19-21. The Christian in William Perkins’ dialogue “The conflicts of Sathan with the *strong Christian*” says he knows he is among the elect because he *abhors* the sins set forth in Galatians 5.⁵⁸ In *The plaine mans path-way*, Theologus lists Paul’s “clear and manifest signs of a man’s condemnation,” warning that “Whoever is infected with three of them, is in great danger of losing his soul.”⁵⁹

One can imagine a reader taking these mathematics (Dent’s “Whoever is

⁵⁵ *Christian Astrology, Modestly Treated of in three Books* (London: Tho. Brudenell, 1647), fol. H4.

⁵⁶ *Astronomical discourse*, fol. D1.

⁵⁷ *The diall of destiny... wherein may be seene the continuall and customable course, disposition, qualities, effectes, and influence of the seuen planets ouer all kyndes of creatures here belowe* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1581), fol. C1. See also *Astronomical discourse*, fol. K2.

⁵⁸ *A treatise tending vnto a declaration whether a man be in the estate of damnation or in the estate of grace* (London: R. Robinson, 1590), fol. R4.

⁵⁹ *Plain Man’s Pathway*, 25.

infected with three of them, is in great danger,” or Byfield’s “perhaps twentie, or thirtie, or fortie... distinct... markes” that would assure a man of his election) seriously.⁶⁰ While a Jovialist might find his “assurance” in his nativity, a Lunist would find himself less fortunate. Those born under the moon were said to be, at their worst:

[N]aturally mutable & mouable, without fidelity and constancy, geuen to provoke much anger and discord betwene friends... also uery enuyous, agreeued with the prosperity and good fortune of others... also ful of hatred, and in their conuersation and manner of lyfe... [and] verye childish.⁶¹

One can imagine a Lunist moving between Galatians 5 and his nativity, horrified to discover that at least three of the characteristics of Paul’s reprobate (“hatred,” “contentions,” “enuie”) were in his chart.

Indeed, some astrological texts went so far as to contend that the stars one was born under would determine one’s religion—and, by extension, one’s soteriological status. Calvin observed this absorption of religious determinism by constitutional determinism with some disdain in his *Admonicion* when he wrote:

These phantastical felowes [the astrologers] say that some corner of some signe of the Zodiak doeth cause man to beleve [the Gospel]. Contrariwise the sect of Mahomet as the Scripture teacheth us is a just plague of God to punish the ingratitude of the world. And yet they will make men beleve that it is set up and advaunced by the disposition of the stars.⁶²

Keith Thomas observes the astrological propensity that Calvin laments, as well as its resemblance to the doctrine of predestination. Despite the fact that attempts to

⁶⁰ Byfield cited in Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004), 135.

⁶¹ *Diall of destiny*, Fol. B6.

⁶² *An Admonicion against Astrology Iudiciall*, fol. D7.

identify the elect by way of the stars were considered heresy:

To penetrate this mystery was precisely what the astrologers seemed to be attempting to do. Not only did they predict an individual's expectation of life and his fortune in the world. Their textbooks even taught that the stars could indicate a client's prospects of getting to Heaven. It was the final insult, thought Bishop Carleton, that 'we must repair to the astrologer to know who are regenerate in the Church and who are not'... It seemed that the star-gazers had taken the Calvinist dogmas and twisted them into a new and secular form, 'turning... eternal predestination into fatal destiny; and the election of grace into sidereal elections.'⁶³

Calvin's grievance, thus, was not unfounded. The astrologers claimed that "Saturnists are... Jews" and Jovialists often "Hypocritically Religious." Men born under Mars when Mars is ill-dignified do not "fea[r] God," while those born under Venus when *it* is ill-dignified are "meer Atheist[s]."⁶⁴ Ferrier expounds:

Saturne of his nature is most enclined to the Law of the Iewes: and Mars to the law of the Turkes & Mahometists... If the part of the spirite be in the signe of the Lyon at the byrth of a Christian, hee shall be very constant in hys religion, if the Sunne be fortunate: if he be vnfortunate by Saturne, to goe from his fayth, and to addresse it to that of the Iewes. If he be vnfortunate by Mars, it maketh him more to encline to the lawe of the Turkes and Mahometists.⁶⁵

Assurance of election and affirmation of reprobation were thus literally possible to obtain by "looking upward."

But as a sort of theological analogue to Sidney's astronomer whose prioritizing of celestial knowledge prohibits him from *self*-knowledge ("it was found, that the *Astronomer* looking to the starres might fall in a ditch"), reformed texts on election routinely stressed that a man *not* "climb into heaven" to ascertain his

⁶³ *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 170-71.

⁶⁴ *Astrologie Theologized*, fol. E4; *Christian Astrology*, fols. H4, I2; *Astronomical discourse*, Fol. K2.

⁶⁵ *Astronomical discourse*, fol. G2.

soteriological status. George Gifford instructs his congregation “not to fetch the certentie of [our election]... [by] clim[bing] vp into heaven, to search in the counsels of god, whether our names be in the book of life.” Rather, “we are to fetch our warrant from within our selues, and that from the fruits of the spirite.”⁶⁶ In a sermon based on 2 Peter 1:10, Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1656) advised his congregation to “think not of a ladder to climb up into heaven, to search the books of God” when searching for “evidence of [their] calling and election.” Rather, “first, look into your own lives.”⁶⁷ The Puritan preacher Thomas Watson (1620-1686) wrote: “We need not climb up into heaven, to see whether our sins are forgiven: let us look into our hearts, and see if we can forgive others. Then we need not doubt but God hath forgiven us.”⁶⁸ Later in the century (1678), Thomas Powell compared the attempt to “clim[b] up into Election” to an astrologer reminiscent of Sidney’s:

Tis hard to climb up into *Election*; but if we find the Fruits of Holines springing up in our Hearts, we may conclude, the *Sun* of *Righteousness* hath Risen there... Hast thou not the Saving Graces of *Faith, Love* and *Repentance*? What are these, but the Infallible Signes of *Election*?... *That Astrologer... was deservedly Laught at, that was so intently gazing upon the Stars, so admiring their Twinkling Beauties, as that unawares he tumbled into the Water; where-as... if he had been but pleased to look so low as the Water, he might have seen the Stars there represented in that Crystal-Glass. Such as will needs be prying into Stars, that will Ascend up into Heaven, and gaze upon Election.*⁶⁹

⁶⁶ *Foure sermons*, fol. E8.

⁶⁷ “Good Security. A Comfortable Discourse of the Christian’s Assurance of Heaven” in *The Works of the Right Reverend Joseph Hall, D.D.*, ed. Philip Wynter, D.D. Vol. 5 (Oxford: U of Oxford P, 1863), 680.

⁶⁸ *A Body of Practical Divinity, in a Series of Sermons on the Shorter Catechism, composed by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at Westminster, by Thomas Watson* (Aberdeen: George King, 1838), 736.

⁶⁹ *A sanctuary for the tempted: being a discourse on Christ’s friendly admonition to Peter* (London: Printed by T.M. for B. Harris, 1678), fols. F7-F8.

Powell is quoting verbatim from Nathaniel Culverwell's 1652 "The White Stone: Or, a Learned and Choice Treatise of Assurance"—also a commentary on 2 Peter 1:10. Culverwell closes his similitude: "whereas they might easily see the starres in the water; they might see election in Sanctification."⁷⁰ The theologians largely agreed: astrology was useful as a "serving science"; but when the astrologer looked upward, rather than inward, for signs of his election, he failed to learn *himself*—the only source of certain knowledge about his soteriological condition.

ELECTION IN *CAELICA*

In the first 84 sonnets of *Caelica*, the lover looks perpetually skyward. He writes for, and speaks to, Caelica (the sky), Cynthia (the moon) and Myra, the "wonder" that possibly refers to the *stellae novae* of the century's newly-recognized variable sky—particularly if these beloveds are, indeed, Greville's punning on Sidney's *Stella*. We are offered evidence of the beloved's "stellar" self before we are given any of her names. In Sonnet 1, she is "maintaine[d]" by "the Heauens" (16). Sonnet 3 characterizes her as "full of that heauenly fire, / Kindled aboue to shew the Makers glory" (1-2). This poem is also the first to subtly fuse the astrological and the soteriological in the figure of the beloved: she is both "heauenly creature" and "Iudge of earthly merits" (9). But the astrological references in the sequence far exceed the conventional trope of beloved-as-star, the beloveds' names, and the language for their

⁷⁰ "The White Stone: Or, a Learned and Choice Treatise of Assurance: Very useful for all, but especially weak Believers" in *An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature, with several other Treatises* (London: Printed by T.R. and E.M. for John Rothwell, 1652), fol. Y2.

gazes (“aspects,” C 4.3, 51.4). As Freya Sierhuis has noted, the sequence “abounds with images of globes and revolutions, of spheres, parallels, and equinoxes.”⁷¹

In Sonnet 44, the lover contemplates the decay of the world and of love, from the “*Golden-Age*” with its prelapsarian echoes (“Malice not knowne, the Serpents had not stung”) to the “*Brasen Age*,” in which “Beauty [is] growne sicke, Nature corrupt and nought, / [and] Pleasure vntimely dead as soone as borne” (1, 3, 9-11). The lover attributes this degeneration directly to the stars: “in the guilt-Age *Saturne* rul’d alone, / And in this painted, *Planets* euery one” (17-18). Sonnet 16 employs Ptolemaic cosmology to distinguish the transience of desire from the longevity of love (“then Earth stand fast, the skye that you benight / Will turne againe,” 9-10).⁷² Sonnet 62 adopts the language of horoscopes and nativities when it describes thieves and liars: “those *Mercurists* that vpon humors worke, / And so make others skill, and power their owne” (13-14).⁷³ In Sonnet 67, the lover uses the metaphor of “casting figures”—making astrological calculations—to describe self-love (11).⁷⁴ Sonnet 69 references the “Great Year,” the return of the celestial bodies to their original positions in the cosmos. Either comets or *stellae novae* are referred to in the “blazing starre[s]” of Sonnets 78 and 79 (lines 29 and 1, respectively).

Even where the sequence tropes on earlier amatory poems, Greville adds his

⁷¹ “Metaphysical Skepticism,” 187-8.

⁷² See *The English Lyric from Wyatt to Donne*, 260.

⁷³ To use one example from the nativities of Greville’s day, “*Mercurie*,” when it is in the house of Mars, “maketh the man a lyer, an euill person, a deceiuer, a babler and a demaunder of vniust thinges: otherwise eloquent, subtle in his affayres, diligent, suspicious, a nigromancer, a little false or a theefe” (*A learned astronomical discourse*, fol. 14).

⁷⁴ “One desire in many figures cast” (C 67). A figure is “a diagram of the aspects of the astrological houses; a horoscope; a scheme or talbe showing the dispotiion of the heavens at a given time.” To cast a figure is “to calculate astrologically, as *to cast a figure, horoscope, nativity*, etc. (“figure, n. 14” and “cast, v. 39a” in *OED Online*. Oxford University Press).

own astrological flourishes. When the lovers must “now in absence liue” (C 51.1)—as happens to Astrophel and Stella—the estrangement is described in astrological terms absent from Sidney’s sequence: their “Aspects are to another Zone” (4). And “Loues vnconstant zone” is what transforms “Caelica’s faire eyes” in Sonnet 42, so that she metamorphoses into a series of substances: stone, cloud, stream (11, 7). The lyric echoes Petrarch’s *canzone* 23, in which the lover transforms from laurel, to swan, to stone, to fountain, to stag—and yet, that is the regions of the *sky* (“zones”) that cause Caelica’s transformation is Greville’s own astrological embellishment to the translation.

There are, too, the sequence’s three references to Endymion, all of which occur in the amatory poems in the first part of the sequence. According to Greek mythology, Endymion was the first astronomer, and the first to understand the motions of the moon.⁷⁵ While the myth of Endymion and Cynthia varies, the former is nearly always characterized as seeking, or as being given, exclusive knowledge of the heavens.⁷⁶ But despite his thirst for (or gift of) astronomical knowledge, Endymion is also often depicted *sleeping*. The cause of this sleep varies across the literatures of Greville’s period; but what remains constant is that Endymion’s sleep

⁷⁵ Thomas P. Roche, *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequence* (New York: AMS, 1989), 306.

⁷⁶ See Wendy Heller, “Of Bears, Satyrs, and Diana’s Kisses: Metamorphoses in Early Modern Opera” in *Culture and Change: Attending to Early Modern Women*, ed. Margaret Mikesell and Adele Seeff (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2003), 70. In Michael Drayton’s 1595 *Endimion and Phoebe*, the goddess of the moon wraps Endymion in a mantle and carries him up to the “ayery Regions” where she “impart[s] heauenly secrets to him,” offering him a view of “the powerfull Plannets, all in their degrees, / Their sundry reuolutions in the skies” and a sense of the influence those bodies have on men’s “natiuitie[s]” (*Poems by Michael Drayton, from the Earliest and Rarest Editions, or from Unique Copies*, ed. J. Payne Collier, Esq. (London: J.B. Nichols and Sons, 1856), 212, 217). This representation was common; see John Lyly, *Endymion*, ed. David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996), 79, 102; “Two Songs, on the Lord Fauconberg, and the Lady Mary Cromwell” in *The Poetical Works of Andrew Marvell* (London: Alexander Murray, 1870), 62.

presents the very obstacle to self-knowledge that Sidney's, Nathaniel Culverwell's, and Thomas Powell's astrologers experience.⁷⁷ In John Lyly's *Endymion* (1591), for instance, the sorceress Dipsas says to an already-unconscious Endymion: "Thou shalt sleep out thy youth and flowering time and become dry hay *before thou knowest thyself* green grass." And when he finally wakes in Act 5—having slept through the majority of the play—Endymion recognizes that he has "waxed old and not know[n] it," though he *cannot* recognize his body ("that this should be my body I doubt"). All he can do is recount the dreams he's had while sleeping—but even these narrations are full of unknowing ("I know not whether fear to offend or desire to know some strange thing moved me"; "I know not how to term them").⁷⁸

Indeed, the view of sleep as an impediment to self-knowledge is conveyed in the very first poem of Mary Wroth's sonnet sequence, when the lover claims that "sleepe deaths Image did my senceses hiere, / From knowledg of my self" (2-3).⁷⁹ In his *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama*, Garret A. Sullivan argues that sleep

[D]efines a subjectivity at odds with moral law, self-knowledge, and knowledge of God. Not merely the cauterizing of conscience, sleep is a mode of being from which... one needs to be awakened (via "the remembrance of Gods presence") in order to return and become

⁷⁷ David Bevington notes that Endymion is most commonly *put* into a state of perpetual sleep by the moon "so that she can descend nightly to embrace him" (*Endymion*, 10). According to Charles Saumarez Smith, "Endymion was traditionally... an astrologer who had fallen asleep through excessive contemplation of the course of the moon" (*The Building of Castle Howard* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990), 108). In Drayton's poem, Endymion falls asleep from the humoral exhaustion brought about by love melancholy; Lyly's Endymion is enchanted into sleep by an aged sorceress named Dipsas, and sleeps through most of the play.

⁷⁸ *Endymion*, 114, 166, 168-9, italics mine.

⁷⁹ "Pamphilia to Amphilanthus" in *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, ed. Josephine A. Roberts (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983). The description of Wroth belongs to George Chapman, cited in *Ibid.* 18.

oneself.

Sullivan here quotes the English clergyman Richard Carpenter (1575-1627), who claimed that sleep was an impediment to the conscience, and hindered men from “know[ing] God, & our selves.”⁸⁰ This is precisely the problem Greville’s lover, as the sleeping Endymion, appears to have. In Sonnet 46, the lover asks that he, Endymion, be awakened “with *Diana’s* kisse,” since in his “weake minded” state of sleep, he cannot feel—or know—much of anything (7, 1). His “Loue feeles nothing but correction”; his “carelesnesse o’reshadowes [his] deuotion”; and he is in “a senselesse state, [of] no true Patience” because he does not “feeles what wrong [he] beare[s]” in his banishment (9-10, 13). *True* suffering (*patientia*), the poem intimates, can only be experienced while awake. Such is also the case for self-knowledge: in his current state of “senselessness,” the lover does not know *how* he has wronged the beloved.

Slumber is equally problematic in Sonnet 74, where the lover describes Endymion’s hope that “the heauens [will] kisse” him while he sleeps as “simple” and “poor” (55-57). The sleeping astronomer is divorced from *self*-knowledge; but he also lacks a sense of the true disposition of the beloved/divine (we cannot “know God” in sleep, Carpenter affirms). And even when he is awake, Endymion demonstrates the trouble with astrology. In Sonnet 17—the sequence’s first reference to the astrologer—the lover laments that “*Starre-gazers only multiply desires*” (14). In the Warwick manuscript—the scribal copy of *Caelica* annotated in Greville’s hand—the lover treats

⁸⁰ *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 124.

astrology with even more distaste. The manuscript contains three different versions of Sonnet 17's final line: "Star-gazers by vayne prophesies are knowne"; "Star-gazers but thru vanities are knowne"; and "Star-gazers but by vanyty are knowne."⁸¹ The reiteration of "vanity" in each of these versions signals not only the astrologers' conceit, but also the futility of their practice.

Thus, Endymion—the sleeping astrologer—becomes less a figure for human-divine love and more a figure of fruitlessness, arrogance, and senselessness. According to the astrological texts of Greville's day, "star-gazing" could "prophecy" a man's character and temperament (and thus offer a form of self-knowledge), and possibly prophecy his "election"; but Greville's lover recognizes the art as a "vayne" detour from self-knowledge. In the first 84 sonnets of the sequence, that is, the lover learns little about himself by looking upward.

Still, he insists on "climbing up into heaven," taking the reformers' metaphorical warnings literally. Sonnet 39 recalls Genesis 11, wherein the Babylonians, through "pride of Flesh... did purpose... to ouer-reach the skye" (1-2). The punishment for such presumption was that the Babylonians' "tongues were chang'd" so "none could tell his fellow what he thought" (7-8). The second half of the lyric secures the analogy: the lover, too, attempted to "Babylon [him] selfe" in "*Caelica's* faire heart"; his punishment is *also* non-understanding—though not necessarily in the linguistic realm ("All's chang'd: she vnderstands all men but me," 10-11, 14). We are, of course, to take "vnderstands" in the sexual, rather than the

⁸¹ *Poems and Dramas*, 238-9.

semantic, sense. Yet the lover's story differs from the Babylonians' in another significant way: while the Babylonians' motivation was "pride of flesh," *his* motivation for "understanding" the sky is *peace* ("So I that heavenly peace would comprehend," 9). This secondary sense of "understanding" represents the lover as seeking assurance through a "comprehensive" reading of the sky. As such, his search for peace reads as a search for the "frute[s] of the Spirite" of Galatians 5 ("loue, ioye, peace...") so often reiterated in the literatures on signs of election. Of course, the peace of assurance—the antidote to despair—cannot be gotten by looking skyward. The lover is punished for "climbing up into heaven," as Calvin, Gifford, Hall, and Watson warned against.

Caelica (the sky) indeed represents an erroneous path to assurance, for the lover *does* appear to cast an election in Sonnet 56, when he says:

Am I borne vp to the skyes?
See where *Ioue* and *Venus* shine,
Shewing in her heauenly eyes
That desire is diuine. (17-20)

Here is another astrological conjunction in the beloved's eyes—this time, of Jupiter and Venus. Recall that Jupiter tended to "incline" men toward virtue: a man born under it would be "Honourable and Religious... full of Charity and Godlinesse, Liberal, hating all Sordid actions, just... [and] Vertuous."⁸² Further, the conjunction of Jupiter with another planet *also* inclined one toward virtue—and in the case of a conjunction of Jupiter and Venus, the temperament of the former was said to tame the lascivious and wanton temperament of the latter. Venus "without any aspect of

⁸² *Christian Astrology*, fol. D1.

Iupiter” is “voluptuous withut hauing shame”; but when “the aspect of Iupiter [is] towards Venus, [it] gyueth alwaies chastity, and loue of vertue.”⁸³ Indeed, in Sonnet 56, the conjunction of Jupiter and Venus causes the beloved’s “desire [to be] *diuine*” and not earthly: it divines a chaste encounter. Further, these two planets were called “the fortunes” because of their friendly natures and “fauourable beames”; and if Greville knew anything about astrology, he was surely playing with this theory here. According to *A learned astronomical discourse*, “at all times the receptions of Iupiter and Venus be alwaies fauourable.”⁸⁴ “The fortunes (that is... Iupiter & Venus),” for example, “ad[d]... yeeres” to the lives of those born under them; they are stronger than the “euill aspect” of Mercury, which “doe[s] neuer anoy them,” nor can Mars influence a man born under them to “stryife, sutes, debates, and enmities against the world... when he is in a good aspect of Iupiter and Venus.”⁸⁵ Lilly’s *Christian Astrology* says of Jupiter and Venus that they “naturally are Fortunes and temperate, and never import any malice.”⁸⁶

In astrological terms, then, the conjunction of “*Ioue* and *Venus*” in Cynthia’s eyes ought to bode favorably, but chastely (“that desire is diuine”), for the lover. Of course these two things are mutually exclusive as far as a Petrarchan lover is concerned: if Cynthia loves him *chastely*, the lover is not in her “favor” in the way he would want to be. Nevertheless—perhaps hoping for the good “fortune” the conjunction appears to promise—the lover gives “reynes to [the] conceipt” of his

⁸³ *A learned astronomical discourse*, fol. D3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* fol. B4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* fols. G1, C4, D3, G4. See also “fortune, n. 8” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

⁸⁶ Fol. Pp2.

favorable election, and—again, like the Babylonians—“step[s] forth” in Sonnet 56 “to touch the skye” (25, 29).

This “step[ping] forth” causes Cynthia to “runn[e] away,” leaving the astronomer-lover literally and metaphorically blind (32). Either the stars misled him into believing his fortunes were good, or he misread the conjunction—which presaged the beloved’s chastity—entirely. The first possibility would imply that the stars are not legitimate omens or “elections” after all; the second would imply that—legitimate or not—man’s limited knowledge prohibited the lover from adequately interpreting what he *read* there. Either way, the lover now finds himself standing still like the North Star (“like *Artike* pole”) while the sun passes the equator (“*Sol* passeth o’re the line”), “benighted” and having lost the “light diuine” reflecting off of Cynthia (37-40). He closes the poem having learned this lesson, which he “preach[es]” to the reader in what ultimately reads like an admonition against “climbing”:

Let no Loue-desiring heart,
In the Starres goe seeke his fate,
Loue is onely Natures art,
Wonder hinders Loue and Hate.
*None can well behold with eyes,
But what vnderneath him lies.* (49-54)

The final two lines of the poem contain a playful double entendre, but the lesson about the dangers of stargazing is clear: the lover who reads “Loue” (Venus) in his stars as he searches for—or casts—his “election” will discover that he is reading more into the stars than is actually there. “Loue is onely Natures *art*”: when Venus is in the eye (or the “aspect”) of the beloved, it announces no more than the beloved’s capacity for deception; it is not a horoscope that portends the lover’s “fate.” Further,

the limits of knowledge and self-knowledge are depicted as the limits of vision in that final couplet: “*none can well behold.*” Man’s understanding cannot transcend the low and small sphere in which he moves. As Culverwell and Powell propose, the lover’s best bet is to “seeke his fate” by looking downward and inward (“*what underneath him lies*”), seeking out signs of sanctification *there* (“*if he had been but pleased to look so low as the Water, he might have seen the Stars there represented in that Crystal-Glass*”).

Still, the lover is powerless to turn his gaze until the beloved *directs* him to do so—a condition that parallels that of the Protestant penitent. Sonnet 75 is not the precise turning point of the collection; but it contains a dialogue—apparently in imitation of the *Eighth Song of Astrophel and Stella*—between the lover of the sky (Philocell) and the sky (Caelica) that appears to plant a seed in the lover, effecting the “conversion” that occurs nine poems later. Philocell is silent with anguish for the first thirty-eight lines of the poem, until “despaire” finally forces him to appeal to the beloved:

Let not Fortune haue the power,
Cupids Godhead to deuoure.
For I heare the Wise-men tell,
Nature worketh oft as well,
In those men whom chance disgraceth,
As in those she higher placeth.
Caelica, 'tis neare a God,
To make euen Fortunes odd. (69-76)

What Philocell is asking Caelica for here is *grace*—the grace that her face (his stars) appeared to “promise” him in Sonnet 74 (“he thought that in her face, / He saw Loue, and promis’d grace,” 33-4), just as the conjunction of Jupiter and Venus in her

eyes in Sonnet 56 appeared to promise him fortune. The lover's plea invokes the theologians' contention that God's grace could overrule the force of the stars: if Caelica would only agree to function like the Christian God ("neare a God"), she could counteract his "Fortunes" (perhaps a reference to Jupiter and Venus) through grace. It may be useful to recall, here, Joachim Heller's claim that "only faith can counteract stellar fate," or Georg Caesius' assertion that "God almighty can change the order of nature and hear the prayers of the just."⁸⁷ Perhaps even more striking—given Philocell addresses his *own* "stars" here—is Weigelius' claim that God's grace is "another Heaven, another Sydus, another Starr" more powerful than the stars that rule at one's nativity, and can grant man a new, and "best nativity."⁸⁸ Regenerate man—"new man"—was no longer subject to celestial influences, having been "made like the image of [God's] Sonne" (Rom. 8:29). And this is precisely what Philocell petitions for: that his thoughts be remade in Caelica's "image":

Then Deare, though I worthlesse be,
 Yet let them to you worthy be,
 Whose meeke thoughts are highly graced,
 By your image in them placed. (79-82)

Philocell's "prayer" is a plea for spiritual regeneration through grace. He recognizes he is not naturally worthy ("worthlesse"); but he believes that the divine Caelica ("neare a God") can "make [his] euen Fortun[e] odd." The lover may be playing on the word "odd" here, which is more than the mathematical opposite of "euen." It also denoted surplus ("worth" above and beyond Philocell's nature), and

⁸⁷ *Astrology and Reformation*, 164-5.

⁸⁸ *Astrologie Theologized*. fols. E1, D3-4.

was used to define someone “singular in valour, worth, [or] merit.”⁸⁹ To ask that his fortunes be made “odd” is thus another way of asking that his “worthlesse[ness]” be made “worthy” through a mathematics of grace. As a devotional prayer to the Protestant God, this plea would have been in full accord with reformed dogma. But the prayer is addressed, of course, to the wrong object. Caelica “answeres him with Reason”:

Philocell, if you loue me,
 (For you would beloued be)
 Your owne will must be your hire,
 And desire reward desire.
 [...]

 Make not then your owne mischance,
 Wake your selfe from Passions-traunce,
 And let Reason guide affection,
 From despaire to new election. (95-98, 103-106)

Caelica turns Philocell’s mathematics back on him: it is not up to *her*, she argues, to create the surplus (“another Starr”): his “will” must recompense (“hire”) *itself*, his desire *reward* itself. Philocell cannot look outside himself, that is, for signs of his fortune or misfortune (“election,” “mischance”). Caelica offers him, instead, the exercise of going inward: “let Reason guide affection, / From despaire to new election.” At this point in the collection, both the astrological and theological resonances of “election” are pronounced. Caelica’s claim seems to be that Philocell’s “new election” will not entail the kind of despair he has felt for as long as his “heart” has been “fix’d on her eyes, / Where Loue he thinks liues or dyes” (*C* 75.111-112). Philocell is slow to respond to the grace of Caelica’s instruction here; at the close of

⁸⁹ “Odd, adj. 7a.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

the poem he determines to continue to keep “lou[ing]” Caelica despite both “despaire in his election” and a “faith [that is] damn’d” (214-215). But the “conversion” *does* occur, nine lyrics later, when the lover says to “*Cupid* now farewell” (C 84.13).

TOKENS OF SANCTIFICATION AND THE NECESSITY OF TEMPORARY DESPAIR

It is striking what happens to despair after this conversion: the word nearly vanishes from the sequence. Indeed, the lover employs the word “despair” twenty times over the course of the collection; seventeen of these occur prior to the “farewell” sonnet, and the sonnet immediately preceding the lover’s farewell contains the most occurrences of the word: “despair” appears six times in Sonnet 83.⁹⁰ It may be worth considering this poem in the reformed context of despair’s proximity to grace.

Despair was the emotion most strongly identified with Calvinist (and Puritan) soteriology. Alec Ryrie writes: “if early modern Protestantism is connected in modern imagination with any emotional state at all, it is despair.”⁹¹ Robert Burton gives a compelling description of the emotion, citing theologians on the matter. Of verses such as Matthew 22:14 (“manie are called, but fewe chosen”), he writes:

These and the like places terrify the souls of many... ‘They doubt of their election, how they shall know, it, by what signs. And so far forth,’ saith Luther, ‘with such nice points, torture and crucify themselves, that they are almost mad, and... lay open a gap to the devil by desperation to carry them to hell’... God’s eternal decree of

⁹⁰ I abide by Bullough’s numbering here. Sonnet 83 is actually one of two sonnets Greville wanted repositioned, as per his notes in the Warwick manuscript. If this order had been observed in the 1633 collection, Sonnet 83 would instead be Sonnet 77 – still close enough to the conversion sonnet to be read as an indicator of the lover’s imminent change. See *The Fatal Mirror*, 42-3; *Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, 1554-1628*, 79.

⁹¹ *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, Oxford UP, 2013), 27.

predestination, absolute reprobation, and such fatal tables, they form to their own ruin, and impinge upon this rock of despair.⁹²

But while theologians like Calvin and scholars like Burton warned against despair, Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Puritanism all *demand*ed it, to some degree, of their adherents. For the fundamental paradox of Protestant despair was its proximity to grace. Perkins writes of a “*holy* dispaire” which causes a man to turn to God because he his “wholly out of all hope euer to attaine saluation by any strength or goodness of his owne.”⁹³ According to Richard Hooker, “dispayre” is “no argument of a faithless mind,” since it presumes “a *desire* to beleev,” which is a sign of “true beleevers.”⁹⁴ Richard Sibbes contends that “none are fitter for comfort than those that thinke themselves furthest off... [since] a holy dispaire in our selves is the ground of true hope.”⁹⁵ For Luther, despair over one’s salvational status is “salutary” and “near to grace.”⁹⁶ *Temporary* despair became a sign of the elect, a crucial step on the path to self-knowledge (specifically the knowledge that one cannot save oneself), and the recourse to God’s grace. Temporary despair, that is, is a sign of the elect.

Sonnet 83 describes the exiled lover’s “prospect of dispaire” at length. The poem opens:

Who Grace for *Zenith* had, from which no shadowes grow,
Who hath seene Ioy of all his hopes, and end of all his woe,
Whose Loue belou'd hath beene the crowne of his desire,
Who hath seene sorrowes glories burnt, in sweet affections fire:

⁹² *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Vol. 3 (London: John C. Nimmo, 1886), 458-9, 485.

⁹³ *A treatise tending vnto a declaration*, fol. D6, italics mine.

⁹⁴ Cited in Deborah K. Shuger, “Faith and Assurance” in *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, ed. Torrance Kirby (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 231-2, italics mine.

⁹⁵ Cited in *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, 37-8.

⁹⁶ Cited in Keith D. Stanglin, *Arminius on the Assurance of Salvation: The Context, Roots, and Shape of the Leiden Debate, 1603-1609* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 179.

If from this heauenly state, which soules with soules vnites,
 He be falne downe into the darke despaired warre of sp'rits;
 Let him lament with me, for none doth glorie know,
 That hath not beene aboue himselfe, and thence falne downe to woe:
 But if there be one hope left in his languish'd heart,
 If feare of worse, if wish of ease, if horror may depart,
 He playes with his complaints, he is no mate for me,
 Whose loue is lost, whose hopes are fled, whose feares for euer be.
 Yet not those happy feares which shew Desire her death
 Teaching with vse a peace in woe, and in despaire a faith:
 No, no, my feares kill not, but make vncured wounds,
 Where ioy and peace doe issue out, and onely paine abounds.

The lover calls upon a specific readership—one that has experienced the vicissitudes of fortune as *he* has—to “lament with” him. The height of these vicissitudes is described in both theological and astrological terms: “Grace for *Zenith*.” Like Sidney’s, Powell’s, and Culverwell’s astrologers, the lover has “beene aboue himselfe,” having “climbed to heaven” as he ought not to have. But the lover further qualifies the *kind* of “fallen man” he will “lament with.” If the man “be falne downe into the darke despaired warre of sp’rits”—if *no* hope remains for him—he is invited to join in the lover’s perennial despair. But if the man’s despair is *temporary* or *not entire* (“if there be one hope left in his languish’d heart”), then “he is no mate for me.” The lover’s despair is not yet the “salutary” “*holy* dispaire” of the elect: it is not a “happy fear[e]” that teaches “a peace in woe, and in despaire a faith.” It is, rather, a despair he distrusts (“Nor can I trust mine owne despaire”), one that offers him nothing on the other side (“and nothing else receiue”), such as the grace an elect Christian would be assured of.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming despair of Sonnet 83 *is* the beginning of the lover’s turn inward, and to a wholly new method of “sign-searching” (as John Donne

instructed: “prove thine election by thy sanctification; for that is the right method”).⁹⁷

As the poem closes, the lover finally heeds Cynthia’s call to “let reason guide affection / From despaire to new election.” “Reason” becomes the “Looking-glasse” that shows him to himself (C 83.89)—something he is incapable of doing in the earlier amatory poems of the sequence, since “loue is no true made *Looking-glasse*” (C 61.25). Now, the lover, for the first time in the sequence—and remarkably so, given Astrophel does so as early as Sonnet 1—looks into his “Heart,” *which*, he discovers, is “a wilderness” (83). It is not the pleasantest of sights; but with it comes the inauguration of self-knowledge—so much so that the poet-lover *identifies* himself for the first time. The final couplet has Greville punning on his own name: “Let no man aske my name, nor what else I should be; / For *Greiv-ill*, paine, forlorne estate doe best decipher me” (97-8).

This “deciphering” of self is, indeed, the genesis of self-discovery. Henceforth, the lover ceases astrologizing; and—but for one striking use of a “cleere starre” as a metaphor for regeneration in Sonnet 96 (45)—the collection is nearly emptied of astrological language. The penitent, having taken his eyes off the heavens and “plac’d” them as an internal “watch to inward senses,” now sees clearly (“proper reflections” (C 100.3, 10)). And while the word “election” is never spoken again, the question—now solely a theological one—is at the subsurface of the sequence’s remaining poems.

⁹⁷ “Preached to the King. April 20. 1630” in *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne*, ed. David Colclough. Vol. 3: *Sermons Preached at the Court of Charles I* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 224.

Much has been written about Calvinist theology—and more specifically, Calvinist soteriology—in the latter (post-amatory) portion of *Caelica*, so I will limit my comments here to its relationship to the literatures on election.⁹⁸ In *A golden chaine*, William Perkins writes:

Of al the effects of sanctification, these are most notable. I. To feele our wants, & in the bitternes of heart, to bewaile the offence of God in euery sin. II. To striue against the flesh, that is, to resist, & hate the vngodly motions thereof, and... to thinke them burthenous & troublesome. III. To desire earnestly and vehemently the grace of God, and merite of Christ to obtaine eternal life... VI. To cal vpon God earnestly, & with teares. VII. To desire & loue Christs cumming, & the day of judgement, that an end may be made of the dayes of sinne.⁹⁹

Over forty-five years later, the 1637 edition of Byfield's *The Spirituall Towch-stone, or, the Signes of a Godly Man* reiterates these signs. The “true Christian” will

afflict and humble his soule for his sinnes... he loues not the world... he setteth vp a daily course of seruing god... [he experiences] humiliation for sinne... hee hath a true sight and sense of his sinnes... he trembles at Gods Word... he renounceth his owne merits... repenting he repents still.¹⁰⁰

We observed some of these “effects of sanctification” in Astrophel in the previous chapter—particularly Perkins’ Pauline-sounding “second effect”: “to striue against the flesh.” But this “striving” in Sidney’s lover may have been too subtle to serve a didactic purpose for Greville. Rather, the penitent of *Caelica*’s second half exhibits *each* of these “effects of sanctification.” He “reflect[s] vpon [his] soule darke desolation,” bewails the fact that “I have sinn’d, and mine iniquity, / Deserues this

⁹⁸ See footnote 15.

⁹⁹ *A golden Chaine, or the Description of Theologie, containing the order of the causes of Saluation and Damnation, according to Gods worde. Written in Latin by William Perkins, and translated by another* (Cambridge: Printed by Iohn Legate, 1591), fol. O8.

¹⁰⁰ London: Printed by J. Norton, 1637, fols A1-A4.

hell”; yet he calls upon God repeatedly to “deliuer” him (C 98.3, 11-12). He laments that truth has been “banished” (C 91.6) and “exiled from mans fleshly heart,” so that “one thought to God wee giue, the rest to sinne” (C 97.2, 13) and “thus deciau’d adore... Calues of brasse” (C 91.18). Illustrating Byfield’s description of the elect as one who “repenting he repents still,” he is again and again “forc’d vp to call for grace” (C 96.38) and suggests his readers, likewise, “forsake [them] selfe[s], [and] to heauen turne” (C 86.13). He stands in stark contrast to Byfield’s reprobate, who “can spend his dayes without examining himselfe,” who “never seekes to God, nor humbles his soule before God,” and who “is not affected with feare or sorrow vnder spirituall judgements.”¹⁰¹ And he exemplifies Perkins’ elect who “desire & loue Christs cumming, & the day of judgement” in the closing lines of the sequence: “Rather, sweet Iesus, fill vp time and come, / To yeeld the sinne her euerlasting doome” (C 109.29-30)—a desire already intimated in Sonnet 88 (“*That Christ may come, and all these types depart,*” 12).

While the despair that the lover feels in the first portion of the sequence does not disappear entirely, it is subsumed by the penitent’s glimpses of assurance in the latter portion. And whereas in the amatory and astrological poems, “*constant faith is made a drudge*” (C 61.49), “faiths ensigne... is Shame, and Miserie” (C 71.10), and “faith” is “damn’d” and made “a scorne” (C 75.215, 222), faith finds a new efficacy in the theological poems, having been placed in a different object: “To faith, wherein flesh may saluation finde” (C 97.8)).

¹⁰¹ *The marrow of the oracles of God. Or, divine treatises* (London: Printed by George Miller and Richard Badger, 1625), 212-4, fols. K11-12.

This shift corresponds with the distinction Greville posits in his philosophical poems—*A Treatise of Religion* and *A Treatie of Humane Learning*—between “man-made knowledge” and self-knowledge. In both poems, Greville maintains the inadequacy of the former, since “Humane Learning” is infected by “the minds of fallen men.”¹⁰² The only resolute knowledge man *can* attain—because it is grounded in *self*-knowledge rather than in worldly knowledge—is that which God’s elect discover in their hearts. The emotional force of *A Treatise of Religion* comes from precisely this profession: that man is “lost in all thinges but Election.”¹⁰³ And the *assurance* of this election demands an inward turn: *material* “arckes nowe we looke for none, or signes to part / *Egypt* from *Israel* [reprobate from elect]; [for] all rests in the hart.”¹⁰⁴ All else, according to Greville, is “idle Curiositie”—the lack of which he praises in the elect in the final twenty-four stanzas of *A Treatie of Humane Learning*.¹⁰⁵

The reader will not be surprised to discover that astrology—an “*unlawfull Ar[t]*” that Greville contemns in both treatises—is included under the category of “idle Curiositie.”¹⁰⁶ In *Religion*, he denounces “Starr-Divines,” who are begotten by “naturall disease of mortall witte”; in *Humane Learning*, those who “doe bring the influence of Starres, / Yea God himselfe euen vnder moulds of Arts.”¹⁰⁷ While their references to astrology are limited to these lines, Greville’s philosophical treatises

¹⁰² Gavin Alexander, “Fulke Greville and the Afterlife” in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 62.3/4 (1999), 210.

¹⁰³ “A Treatise of Religion” in *The Remains: Being Poems of Monarchy and Religion*, ed. G.A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965), 213, 17.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 226.

¹⁰⁵ “A Treatie of Humane Learning” in *Poems and Dramas*, Vol. 1, 190; *The Performance of Conviction*, 103.

¹⁰⁶ “A Treatie of Humane Learning,” stanza 123, p. 184.

¹⁰⁷ “A Treatise of Religion,” stanza 21, p. 208; “A Treatie of Humane Learning,” stanza 28, p. 161.

thus affirm the soteriological propriety of *Caelica*'s lover-turned-penitent's conversion. And they underscore the role of Greville's lover as a didactic figure for readers of his sequence—a less despairing, and thus perhaps more instructive, version of Astrophel, because more clearly assured.

This chapter has argued that Greville's sonnet sequence served as an instructional corrective to Sidney's less assured and more despairing Pauline lover. In the next chapter, I argue that the fourteen-sonnet corona in the lyric sequence composed by Sidney's niece, Lady Mary Wroth, was meant to serve a similar function—except this time as a corrective to her uncle's best friend's sequence. Like Greville's lover, Wroth's Pamphilia looks within and identifies certain signs intimating she is among the “elect,” “prouing” herself as Paul admonished the Corinthians to do (2 Cor. 13:5). However, these signs are tempered by the redeployment of figures—such as the hemlock bush and “Jealousie”—that were used to admonish the Israelites of the Old Testament for their *over*-assurance. Pamphilia thus walks the fine line many reformed theologians appealed to: balancing her perception of the signs of her election with her suspicion of presumptive predestinarianism.

**MARY WROTH'S "strang labourinth" AS A PREDESTINARIAN FIGURE IN
*PAMPHILIA TO AMPHILANTHUS***

Both Sidney's and Greville's amatory collections, I have argued, were concerned with self-knowledge specifically as it served theological ends. For Sidney, self-knowledge entailed the full consciousness of one's postlapsarian corruption. In the elect, this knowledge necessarily revealed a wrestling between regenerate and unregenerate parts; Astrophel serves as an object lesson for this recognition and its concomitant lifelong Pauline struggle. In *Caelica*, self-knowledge serves more pointedly soteriological ends. Perhaps uneasy that his friend's poetic persona would be perceived as an equivocal instructional figure, Greville's lover—who also turns inward, though not until more than halfway through the sequence—characterizes himself unequivocally as a regenerate through his possession of signs and tokens that indicated his election. Greville's approach to self-knowledge marks his lover as less ambiguous, less despairing, and more assured of his soteriological status than Astrophel appears to be.

One may suspect, then, that while Sidney's niece was composing her sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, in the ongoing interest of forging a literary identification with her uncle, she was motivated not only by similar concerns about self-knowledge, but also by the view that amatory poetry could serve as a vehicle for instruction in the discovery of self. Indeed, Wroth may have been considering Greville's repeated references to the sleeping Endymion when she opened her sequence with a poem in which the sleeping Pamphilia's senses ("senceses") are

engaged elsewhere, divorcing her “from knowledge of [her] self” (2-3).¹ Wroth was clearly no less interested in the value of literary heritage than were the men who came before her. The syncretic approach to her opening sonnet has been duly observed: the poem takes up the first sonnet of Dante’s *Vita Nuova* while alluding to both Petrarch’s *Trionfi d’Amore* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.² But I propose that Wroth is also taking up Paul’s Epistle to the Romans in Sonnet 1—though a later section of the Scripture than the one concerning *akrasia* (Romans 7) that her uncle appears to have lingered on. In Romans 11:8, Paul says of the Israelites that, in punishment for their works-righteousness and their rejection of the Gospel, “God hathe giuen them the spirit of slomber” (v. 8).³

Romans 9-11 were the decisive Pauline texts concerning predestination. Romans 9 provided the foundation for a doctrine of election and reprobation according to God’s free will and pleasure—particularly through its consideration of Jacob and Esau in verses 6-13, the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in verses 17-18, and the metaphor of the potter and the clay in verses 20-23. Paul’s motive in employing these Old Testament narratives was to justify God’s later “reiection of the Iewes” and the “vocation [calling] of the Gentiles” (Rom. 9 headnotes). But having set this down, Paul is compelled, in Romans 11, to remind the Church that this “reiection” of the Jews is not entire. “I also am an Israelite,” the apostle reminds his readers; and of the

¹ All citations of Wroth’s sequence are taken from *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, ed. Josephine Roberts (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983).

² See Robyn Bolam, “The Heart of the Labyrinth: Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*” in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 261; *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, 85.

³ All scriptural citations taken from the 1560 Geneva Bible, unless otherwise noted.

Israelites there remains “a remnant through the election of grace” (vs. 1, 5). Salvation was given to the Gentiles, Paul claims, not so that the Israelites would “stomble” until they “shulde fall,” but so they would be “prouoke[d]” to “follow” the Gentiles in their knowledge, and embrace, of the Gospel (v. 11). According to the Geneva Bible, “enuie” and “ielous[y]” were what ultimately “prouoke[d]” the Israelites to take up the Gospel.”⁴ That is, jealousy becomes a significant stage in the process of the Israelites’ conversion and redemption.

Pamphilia’s sleep and her characteristic jealousy—which produced what has been called the sequence’s “most original feature: a scattered but insistent series of brooding sonnets on Jealousy”—have been discussed fairly extensively in work on Wroth’s sequence.⁵ But no one, to my knowledge, has observed that both are characteristic of the “remnant” of Israelites who will eventually take up and “haue the knowledge of” the Gospels’ message of faith and love (Rom. 11:12 marginal note). I

⁴ Romans 10:19, 11:14 marginal note in the 1560 Geneva.

⁵ Roger Kuin, “More I Still Undoe: Louise Labe, Mary Wroth, and the Petrarchan Discourse” in *Comparative Literature Studies* 36.2 (1999), 155. On sleep, see Naomi J. Miller, “Rewriting Lyric Fictions: The Role of the Lady in Lady Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*” in *The Renaissance Englishwoman in Print*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990), 304; Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995), 146; Cora, Jesús, “‘Sleep Fy Possess Mee Nott’: The Return of the Repressed in Lady Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Sonnets 16 and 17 [P18 and P19]” in *SEDERI: Journal of the Spanish Society for English Renaissance Studies* 12 (2001). On Jealousy, see Elaine V. Beilin: *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987), 214, 233-4; Maureen Quilligan, “The Constant Subject: Instability and Female Authority in Wroth’s *Urania Poems*” in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990), 315; Ann Rosalind Jones: *The Currency of Eros: Women’s Love Lyric in Europe, 1540-1620* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990), 145; Mary Ellen Lamb, *Gender and Authorship in the Sidney Circle* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1990), 166; Rosalind Smith, “Lady Mary Wroth’s ‘*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*’: The Politics of Withdrawal” in *ELR* 30.3 (Autumn 2000), 430; Clare R. Kinney, “Mary Wroth’s Guilty ‘secrett art’” in *Write or be Written: Early Modern Women Poets and Cultural Constraints*, ed. Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 70-81; Barbara K. Lewalski, “Authorship and Author-Characters in Sidney and Wroth” in *Re-reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Katherine R. Larson and Naomi J. Miller (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 45.

propose that Wroth takes up Romans 11 to figure Pamphilia as an Israelite (“slombering” and “ielous” throughout the sequence) who ultimately finds a way to take up the Gospel in the “Crowne of Sonetts,” situated toward the end of her lyric collection. As such, she serves as a caution against works-righteousness (as I argue, in Chapter 1, that Spenser’s lover did), and as a figure for God’s free will rather than her own works: it is not for nothing that Wroth puns on *work* in her spelling of “labourinth” in the first and final sonnets of the crown.

Wroth’s “Crowne of Sonnets” comprises only fourteen poems in a “sequence” (or a collection of discrete groupings) of many more: the Folger manuscript (Folger V.a.104) contains 117 poems; the 1621 sequence–appended, with separate pagination, to the *Urania*–contains 103 poems.⁶ Much recent scholarship has focused on the difference between the manuscript and the published versions of the sequence, much of it asking whether these poems were intended as a complete sequence, or are rather a miscellany of various “sequences” Wroth wrote over her lifetime.⁷ Those who argue

⁶ See *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, ed. G.F. Waller (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1977), 3, 22; Gavin Alexander, “Constant Works: A Framework for Reading Mary Wroth” in *Sidney Newsletter and Journal* 14.2 (1996), 5-6; Michael G. Brennan, “Creating female authorship in the early seventeenth century: Ben Jonson and Lady Mary Wroth” in *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas Manuscript Publication in England, 1550–1800*, ed. George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 81

⁷ Josephine Roberts, in her 1983 edition of *Pamphila to Amphilanthus*, observes discrete groupings in the collection, but at the same time identifies an over-arching narrative (*The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, 44-6). Since then – and because of recent work on the Folger V.a.104, whose numbering is not sequential and whose subdivisions are more pronounced (blank pages between poems, for instance) – scholarship has tended to read the collection *less* “as a single unified sequence with several discrete and thematically related subsections,” and more as “a verse miscellany with some unified subsections on which Wroth drew when she was preparing her romance and revising her sonnet sequence” (Katherine R. Larson, “Voicing Lyric: The Songs of Mary Wroth” in *Re-reading Mary Wroth*, 120). Gary Waller observes that “Roberts’ reading is a pleasurable and comfortable... narrativization, but, as we read any sustained collection of Petrarchan lyrics, inevitably we discover that what holds it together is less... the ‘story’ but the arbitrariness of desire, the surges of discontinuity and surprise” (*The Sidney Family Romance: Mary Wroth, William Herbert, and The Early Modern Construction of Gender*

for the latter are in loose agreement about how each section relates to the others. The first fifty-five poems are arranged in a perfectly regular design, in which every six sonnets are followed by a song. These sonnets are the most familiarly “Petrarchan” of the collection; May N. Paulissen observes that they “sugges[t] most strongly that Lady Mary wrote these poems for both intellectual and social purposes while participating in group activity” because they are “filled with insinuations, double meanings, and subtle suggestions of flirtations; in this first sequence the emphasis is on the physical aspects of sensuous love.”⁸

The final poem of this initial sequence is signed “Pamphilia”—possibly intimating that these are the very poems Pamphilia gives to Amphilanthus in the

(Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1993), 196-7). Jeff Masten writes: “We might as easily read the manuscript as several distinct sequences of poems copied into a single manuscript, including *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (the first fifty-five poems)... Both Roberts (whose structural analysis and continuous numbering impose unity and continuity upon the manuscript) and Elaine V. Beilin (whose novelistic narrative posits a totalizing structure) obscure discrete groupings within the manuscript” (“Shall I turne blabb?” 27). Those who read *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* as a collection of discrete groupings are divided on how many groupings there in fact are. See “Shall I turne blabb?” 27; Gavin Alexander, “Constant Works: A Framework for Reading Mary Wroth” in *Sidney Newsletter and Journal* 14.2 (1996), 15; Susan Lauffer O’Hara, *The Theatricality of Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia to Amphilanthus: Unmasking Conventions in Context* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP, 2011), 19; Heather Dubrow, “‘And Thus Leave off’: Reevaluating Mary Wroth’s Folger Manuscript, V.a.104” in *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 22.2 (Autumn 2003), 273. Dubrow’s study is dedicated to a reading of the “slashed-S” that Wroth uses in the manuscript as a closural symbol, and she groups the poems based on the symbol’s placement in the Folger: “The slashed-S surely renders the discrete groupings of poems not intended for *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* that Masten posits as equally possible, in fact significantly more probable than Roberts’s claims of an essentially unified early version... we now have additional evidence of a substantial shift after P55... [insofar as the first 55 poems] use the symbol in question once, while the poems immediately following them use it twice.” (*Ibid.* 282-3).

⁸ *The Love Sonnets of Lady Mary Wroth: A Critical Introduction* (Salzburg, Austria, 1982), iv-v. Elaine Beilin notes that these first fifty-five poems “include the most familiar images of Elizabethan sonnet style and numerous Sidneian echoes” (*Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987), 233-4); Barbara Lewalski observes that “in context we are perhaps to identify them as the poems Amphilanthus finds and reads in Pamphilia’s closet [in the *Urania*],” and argues that “the initial fifty-five poem sequence claims the Petrarchan tradition for an English woman poet and gives voice and subjectivity to a sonnet lady, normally the silent object of the sonneteer’s desire” (*Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), 252). Gavin Alexander offers that “the pattern of six sonnets plus one song is analogous to the significance of the Sabbath in the Judeo-Christian week, the song functioning as a point of rest” (“Constant Works,” 88). See also Josephine Roberts’ *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, 44.

Urania, but in any case setting them off from the remainder of the collection.⁹ At this point, the careful arrangement dissolves into what has been described as both “scattered songs and sonnets” after which “wholeness only appears with a crown of 14 sonnets” and “arrange[ments of] shorter sequences” that “include a carefully executed corona.”¹⁰ The poem that precedes the “Crowne” serves to introduce it: Pamphilia begs pardon of Cupid for having committed “rash” “treason” against him, and promises him—in recompense—“a Crowne vnto thy endlesse praise” (7, 3, 12). Formally, the “Crowne” that ensues asks to be read as a discrete sequence (a crown, or corona, is a sequence of poems linked by the formal detail that the last line of each poem is repeated as the first line of the next, the sequence coming full circle when the final line of the last poem repeats the first line of the first poem).¹¹

Wroth’s “Crowne” is followed by twenty-two poems in the Folger and thirteen poems in the 1621 *Urania*. The two versions conclude differently: while V.a.104 closes—like Sidney’s sequence—with a poem in which the lover is still experiencing perplexity and turmoil in the “torments” of love (“I, who doe feelee the

⁹ *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 252; *Writing After Sidney*, 300.

¹⁰ *Redeeming Eve*, 233-4; *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 252.

¹¹ Studies of both the “slashed-S” and white space between poems in the Folger V.a.104 have confirmed that the “Crowne” is meant to be read as a single unit, even apart from its formal qualities. Gavin Alexander observes that “[at the crown] Wroth departs from her practice of a page per sonnet and squeezes in as much text as possible, to indicate a continuous text. The special mark is not found at the end of the last line of each sonnet... The final poem [of the crown] is followed by a signing off with the special mark, and, once again, a blank page” (“Constant Works,” 12). And Heather Dubrow writes: “we are in a position to observe how intimately connected are the poems in her crown. The lack of even a single slashed-S at the end of all but the final sonnet suggests they are virtually a single poem... whereas she generally starts a new page at the beginning of a new text elsewhere in the sequence, she copies the sonnets in the crown on the same page as the previous one if there is room for an additional text or even part of them. Leaving about the same space between poems that she elsewhere leaves between sections of a single poem, she marks the end of one sonnet and the beginning of the next only with an Arabic number... Chained by the repetition that defines a crown of sonnets, then, Mary Wroth’s lyrics are further chained visually” (“And Thus Leave off,” 280).

highest part of grieffe / shall I be left without reliefe,” 1-2), Wroth’s rearrangements in the version appended to the *Urania* produce a closure in which Pamphilia tells the “now happy” muse of her amatory poetry that she can “lay [her] selfe to rest”—for together, they have proven their “Constancy” and “Honor,” and can now renounce love poetry, leaving it to “young beginners” (1, 14, 10).¹²

I focus on the “Crowne” here—despite its comparative brevity—because of the scholarly penchant for reading it as a “Neo-Platonic” sequence.¹³ Wroth’s crown has also been interpreted as a gender-specific response to a male literary tradition, and as a critique of King James, his court, and courtier politics.¹⁴ These elements are

¹² On closural variations, see *The Love Sonnets of Lady Mary Wroth*, iv-v; Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987), 233-4; *Lady Mary Wroth: Poems: A Modernized Edition*, ed. R.E. Pritchard (Staffordshire, England: Keele UP, 1996), 14; “And Thus Leave off,” 285. Gary Waller gives a sense of how these divisions, in both sequences, have been differently interpreted: “May Paulissen sees four sequences; the opening one courtly, witty, and frequently flirtatious; the second, more erotic, ‘occult, more debauched’; third, the ‘Crowne’; and then a concluding group focused on spiritual love. Roberts agrees on a four-fold structure, but sees the focus differently: an opening section of fifty-five sonnets and songs focusing on Pamphilia’s struggle for love; a second on the darker side of love; the crowne of sonnets in which different versions of love are debated; and a final section in which unpredictability, pain, and loss are all acknowledged as an inevitably part of love” (*The Sidney Family Romance: Mary Wroth, William Herbert, and The Early Modern Construction of Gender* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1993), 196-7).

¹³ May N. Paulissen calls the crown “literary, Neo-Platonic, [and] high-flown” (*The Love Sonnets of Lady Mary Wroth: A Critical Introduction* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1982), iv-v). Barbara Lewalski claims that Pamphilia moves, in the crown, “from a Petrarchan to a revised Neoplatonic conception of love and poetics” (*Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 258, 262-3). Ilona Bell observes that Wroth’s revisions to the 1621 *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* make the crown “look like a paean to transcendent Neoplatonic love” (“The Autograph Manuscript of Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*” in *Re-reading Mary Wroth*, 175). Indeed, Madeline Bassnett opens her essay on predestination in Wroth’s collection by noting: “That Wroth’s sequence has a spiritual aspect has been readily acknowledged, particularly in relation to the fourteen-sonnet corona that appears in the latter part of the poem; yet this aspect has commonly been interpreted in the nonpolitical context of Neoplatonic sonnet conventions” (“Politics of Election,” 112).

¹⁴ Jennifer Munroe suggests “we might read the various ‘way[s]’ Pamphilia has to choose from [in the labyrinth] to be analogous to the way that Wroth seeks a position for women within a male literary tradition” (*Gender and the Garden*, 118). See also *Changing the Subject*, 42-3; “Ariadne, Venus, and the Labyrinth,” 207-8. On the corona as an implicit political critique, see Linda L. Dove, “Mary Wroth and the Politics of the Household” in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain*, ed. Mary E. Burke et al. (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2000), 141-2; *Currency of Eros*, 151-2; “Politics of Withdrawal.”

certainly there; but given the routine deployment of the labyrinth—the principal figure of Pamphilia’s crown—as a trope for free will and predestination, it is perhaps worth reading the “Crowne” more closely beside the theological texts of Wroth’s moment.

In composing her “Crowne,” Wroth may also have been considering Greville’s *Dedication to Sir Philip Sidney*, where the poet claims that his best friend’s “end [in writing] was not vanishing pleasure alone, but morall Images, and Examples (as directing threds) to guide every man through the confused *Labyrinth* of his own desires, and life.”¹⁵ In constructing a “morall Image, and Example” in Pamphilia, Wroth both took up and rejected certain features of her uncle’s and his friend’s sonnet sequences in order to shape her own theology. From *Caelica*, she took up Greville’s interest in Paul’s injunction to “Proue your selues whether ye are in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5) and the manifest “fruits” of predestination. Pamphilia *is*, after all, a paragon of constancy; and the texts cataloguing the signs of election and reprobation that we considered in Chapter 4 emphasized “abiding grace” and “perpetuitie of inward grace”—as opposed to the temporary faith of the reprobate—as “proofs” of election.¹⁶ Constancy was also understood as a theme of Romans 11: Calvin claims in his commentary on the “remnant” of Israelites in verse 2 that “Paul derives the origin of constancy from secret election.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Cited in Richard Hillyer, *Sir Philip Sidney, Cultural Icon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 48. See also Robin Farabaugh, “Ariadne, Venus, and the Labyrinth: Classical Sources and the Thread of Instruction in Mary Wroth’s Works” in *JEGP* 96.2 (April 1997), 209.

¹⁶ Cited in Daniel Eppley, “Richard Hooker on the Un-conditionality of Predestination” in *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W.J. Torrance Kirby (Springer, 2013), 69.

¹⁷ *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. and ed. Rev. John Owen (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1849), 410.

Further, the labyrinth was one of the principal tropes that reformers employed in figuring the relationship between free will and predestination. Taking up the “thread” from within the labyrinth in Sonnet 1 of the crown (14), Pamphilia—as we will see—stops writing about sleep (a word that appears nine times in the lyrics prior to this) and begins to reap the benefits of self-knowledge. But even as she redeploys the sleep trope from Greville’s collection, what Wroth *rejects* in *Caelica* appears to be the possibility that this “waking” self-knowledge can lead to absolute assurance of election. The labyrinth, after all, was specifically used as a metaphor to caution against *over*-speculation about predestination: for the reformers who employed this trope, the thread out of the labyrinth was not human reason, but (as it is for the Israelites in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans) the Gospel.

From Sidney’s sequence (and in contrast to Watson’s *Hekatompathia*, whose lover escapes the “*Labyrinth of Loue*” through Reason’s “guiding thrird” (H 55)), Wroth borrowed a deep distrust of postlapsarian reason.¹⁸ Indeed, Wroth’s labyrinthine “Crowne” privileges the domain of affection: one doesn’t “reason” one’s way out of the labyrinth, just as he doesn’t “reason” his way into assurance of election. The theologian Bernardino Ochino—whose *Labirinti* we will shortly see—claims that those who attempt to understand predestination “by force of wyt” or “theyr owne corrupt reason” will only “intangl[e] their braynes, darke[n] theyr myndes, and offen[d] their consciences... and will not be able to get out of

¹⁸ Thomas Watson, *The hekatompathia or Passionate centurie of loue* (London: Imprinted by Iohn Wolfe, 1582).

predestination's "darke and intricate laborynthes."¹⁹ The search for proof of one's election was—as a reader will have observed in Chapter 4—a search for affections (faith, love, humility, joy, godly sorrow, despair); Pamphilia's weakening of Reason's role in her predestinarian labyrinth may have taken its cue from such rejections of reason in the practice of "giu[ing]... diligence to make [her]... election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

Wroth's deployment of predestinarian discourse in her crown results in a persona who instructs her readers though a provocation to take up the Gospel and dispense with despair—not because the reader will ever be able, in this lifetime, to arrive at complete assurance; but because, once he has taken up the "thread" of the Gospel, he then has in hand all that it is necessary to know. In shaping a comparison between Pamphilia and the Israelites, Wroth also redefines what constancy *looks like* in the elect—possibly relieving her readers who felt themselves routinely falling away from God. The Israelite "remnant," after all, is not "constant" insofar as it *does not ever stray* from God, but insofar as it always eventually returns. Indeed, one 1618 commentary on verse 11 reads:

O sayth *Paul* despare not. God hath not cast you off to that end; he hath not made you stumble that you should fall and neuer rise again (for to fall is to be vnderstood, finally, to fall)... God purposed no such thing, but he propounded some other end.²⁰

A reader will note the minister's use of the pronoun "you" here: the Israelites' lesson had become a lesson for every parishioner. Redefining constancy through a long view

¹⁹ *Fouretene sermons of Barnardine Ochyne, concernyng the predestinacion and eleccion of god* (London: John Day, 1551), fols. A5-6.

²⁰ Elnathan Parr, *A plaine exposition vpon the whole 8. 9. 10. 11. chapters of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans* (London: Printed by George Purslowe, 1618), fol. C8.

(to *fall*, but not to fall “*finally*”) served as a practical means of keeping those who *had* fallen from despair—a word that drops out of Wroth’s collection at the “Crowne” when Pamphilia takes up the “thread of love” that refers to the Gospels, just as Paul desired the Israelites would do.

THE LABYRINTH AS A PREDESTINARIAN TROPE

In the mid-sixteenth century, the Italian theologian Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564) published a book, composed of nineteen sermons, called *Labirinti del libero arbitrio* (*Labyrinths of Free Will*), which contended with the question of free will as it related to predestination. While published in Basle, the treatise was begun while Ochino was in England; it qualified some of the earlier positions about predestination he had taken in a book of sermons published in English in 1551—and it was dedicated to none other than Queen Elizabeth, because:

When I was in England, your Majesty read some of my treatises on predestination, and when you consulted me about them, you gave me many proofs of your intellect, and of your desire to examine the deep things of God, I therefore conceive that you, before all others, will reap the fruit from my exposition.²¹

Elizabeth was, in fact, one among many of Ochino’s translators; both she and Lady Anne Bacon—Francis Bacon’s mother—translated his sermons, including those

²¹ Cited in Karl Benrath, *Bernardino Ochino, of Siena: A Contribution towards the History of the Reformation* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1876), 251. See also J.W. Martin, *Religious Radicals in Tudor England* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1989), 47; *Certayne sermons of the ryghte famous and excellent clerk master Barnardine Ochine, borne within the famous vniuersitie of Siena in Italy, now also an exyle in this lyfe, for the faithful testimony of Iesus Christe. Faythfully translated into Englyshe* (London: Jhon Day, 1551).

“concerning the predestinacion and eleccion of god.”²² Ochino’s reflections on free will and predestination also occasioned lyric responses. In 1537, the Italian poet Tullia d’Aragona heard Ochino preach in Ferrara, and replied to him in a sonnet in which she contended that “it is not saintliness but arrogance to take from us the gift of free will, the greatest gift God gave us within our first dwelling on earth.”²³

But while, in his earlier sermons, Ochino had strongly aligned himself with the doctrine of double predestination (God’s predetermination of both the elect *and* the reprobate)—and while some have claimed that the *Labirinti* was written “against” Calvin’s predestinarianism—the *Labirinti* neither “takes from” nor “gives to” the reader the “gift” of free will.²⁴ Indeed, Carol V. Kaske describes it as “a work that deliberately vacillated on free will in imitation of a Scripture which on this topic was contradictory.”²⁵ Ochino demonstrates the perplexing nature of the relationship between free will and predestination by “set[ting] forth four dilemmas involved in predestination and four in free will, and then extricat[ing] himself from the first four and then from the second four, and end[ing] just where he began.”²⁶ These eight dilemmas are the text’s “labyrinths,” each demonstrating the inextricable difficulties of, in the first place, maintaining that man acts freely, and, in the second place,

²² Pamela J. Benson, “Italian in Tudor England” in *A Companion to Tudor Literature*, ed. Kent Cartwright (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 272; *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, ed. Gemma Allen (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014), 5-6.

²³ *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Virginia Cox (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2013), 330.

²⁴ George H. Dryer, D.D. *History of the Christian Church. Vol. III: The Reformation, 1517-1648* (Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye, 1903), 350; Alan P.F. Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 7.

²⁵ *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999), 150.

²⁶ Roland H. Bainton, *The Travail of Religious Liberty: Nine Biographical Studies* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951), 168. See also Kaske, who cites Bainton (*Spenser and Biblical Poetics*, 151).

maintaining that he acts of necessity. It is perhaps worth quoting the *Labirinti* at some length to give a sense of the logical impasses Ochino presents. If we “declare that we are not free”:

We shall... meet with four labyrinths: The first consists in this, that we must necessarily assume either that the sin we commit is no sin, and not displeasing to God, or that God Himself is sinful and wicked, for in this case God would have denied us the necessary power to withstand evil. If we think to escape this labyrinth, we must also extricate ourselves from a second; God cannot justly punish me for my sin if it was not in my power not to sin, if I have no free will. If I were to escape this labyrinth I should still fall into a third, I should not know wherefore God had created me and placed me in the world, since, if I am not free, He cannot wish to try and develop me. Finally, I should be involved in a fourth labyrinth. I know that God is wise, and does nothing without reflection, and everything for a certain reason. Besides this He calls all men to Him, not only the elect, but also the reprobate, but He would be unwise in so doing if we were not free to follow.²⁷

The first eight of Ochino’s sermons describe these labyrinths, and the subsequent eight attempt solutions; but free will and predestination turn out, for Ochino, to be largely irreconcilable.²⁸ The remaining sermons offer two distinct but interrelated solutions, the first of which is for man to recognize that he knows nothing. “How,” Ochino asks:

[S]hould we men, who cannot even penetrate natural things, be able to understand supernatural?... God has not revealed everything to man which he is capable of understanding, but only that which it is necessary to his salvation to know, and all this is contained in the Holy Scriptures. Concerning the freedom or subjection of the will, nothing is revealed to us... from this we infer that it is not necessary for our salvation to know whether we are free or not.²⁹

²⁷ Cited in *Bernardino Ochino, of Siena*, 252-3.

²⁸ See “Bernardino Ochino, *Labirinti del libero arbitrio*. A cura di Marco Bragali” (book review) in the *Dutch Review of Church History: The Formation of Clerical and Confessional Identities in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wim Janse and Barbara Pitkin. Vol. 85 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 494.

²⁹ *Bernardo Ochino, of Siena*, 256-7.

A far cry, indeed, from the resolute positions and the abundance of scriptural “proofs” forwarded by both Luther and Erasmus in their debate about this very topic. Ochino chose, after all, to call his final chapter “Whoever appeals to learned ignorance finds the only way out of the above maze.”³⁰

Ochino then appeals to something beyond this “learned ignorance”: the only sure way out of all eight labyrinths, he claims, “is on the one hand to strive with all our power after good, *as though* we knew that we were free, and on the other to give God alone the glory, *as though* certain of our subjection.”³¹ Far from echoing the reformers who advised their readers and parishioners to search for signs of their election, the *Labirinti* instead suggests to its readers that they leave off speculating and recognize that if they have no free will, there is little they can do about this state of affairs. And yet they may as well *act* as though they do: for “if a man does not know whether he is free or not, and yet firmly strives after good for the glory of God, as though he were sure of his freedom, he will in this case make a more laudable use of his free-will, and one better pleasing to God, than if he had known that he was free.”³²

The labyrinth was a figure for a wide range of metaphorical possibilities in the literature of Wroth’s day. She would have found a precedent for it in the Petrarchan sonnet sequence, including in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* and in Thomas Watson’s

³⁰ Barbara Sher Tinsley, *Pierre Bayle’s Reformation* (Cranbury, NJ: Susquehanna UP, 2001), 279-80.

³¹ *Bernardo Ochino, of Siena*, 251. See also *The Travail of Religious Liberty*, 168-9.

³² *Bernardo Ochino, of Siena*, 257.

Hekatompathia.³³ Wroth's father—and Philip's brother—Robert Sidney had also written a sonnet sequence that employed the figure of the maze. In Robert's sequence, the inconstant lover's "saving thread" which "the maze unw[inds]" is his recognition of his lady's faults; and much scholarship on *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* has read Wroth's labyrinth as a moral revision of her father's own labyrinth.³⁴ Elsewhere, Wroth had the labyrinth available to her as a figure for blindness, for frustrated love, for right instruction in how to live, and for the intellectual state of postlapsarian man.³⁵ But as we just saw in Ochino's *Labirinti*, the labyrinth held a particularly prominent place in discourses about free will and predestination. Erasmus claimed that "among the many difficulties encountered in Holy Scripture—and there are many

³³ In *canzone* 211, Petrarch writes: "One thousand three hundred twenty-seven, exactly at the first hour of the sixth day of April, I entered the labyrinth, nor do I see where I may get out of it." And *canzone* 224 describes the lover's life as "a long wandering in a blind labyrinth" (*Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976), 364, 380). For Watson, see Sonnets 55 and 95. The *Canzoniere*'s lover revises the figure of Theseus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* such that he prolongs his entrapment in the *cieco laberinto* ("blind labyrinth") over the course of the sequence, rather than executing and celebrating a heroic escape ("Canzone 224," *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*, 380). On Petrarch's revising the *Metamorphoses*, see Jami Ake, "Mary Wroth's Willow Poetics" in *Crossing Boundaries: Issues of Cultural and Individual Identity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Sally McKee (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1999), 146. For Watson as a source for Wroth, see "Ariadne, Venus, and the Labyrinth," 208.

³⁴ See Ann Rosalind Jones, "Mary Wroth's Contest with Robert Sidney: A Corrective Corona?" in *Sidney Journal* 25.1-2 (2007), 111; "Rewriting Lyric Fictions"; Naomi J. Miller, *Changing the Subject: Mary Wroth and Figurations of Gender in Early Modern England* (Lexington, KY: The UP of Kentucky, 1996), 42-3; William J. Kennedy, *The Site of Petrarchism: Early Modern National Sentiment in Italy, France, and England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2003), 188; "Heart of the Labyrinth," 263-4.

³⁵ Fulke Greville used the figure in his *Inquisition upon Fame and Honour*, which opens with the question: "What are Mens liues, but *labyrinths of error*?" As we saw above, Greville also claimed Greville claimed that Sidney's "end [in writing] was... morall Images, and Examples (as directing threds) to guide every man through the confused *Labyrinth* of his own desires, and life." Calvin uses the metaphor to describe the intellectual state of man, who fails to "think of the Creator" when "regard[ing] the fabric and admirable arrangement of the universe," and imagines events as "produced by the blind evolutions of the wheel of chance" rather than "ascrib[ing] them to the ruling providence of God": "each human mind is like a labyrinth," and is thus "drawn aside into various falsehoods" (*Institutes* 1.5.11-12). See "An Inqvisition vpon Fame and Honovr" in *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville, First Lord Brooke*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough. Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1939), 192; *Sir Philip Sidney, Cultural Icon*, 48.

of them—none presents a more perplexed labyrinth than the problem of the freedom of the will.”³⁶ In his commentary on Romans 9—possibly the Pauline text most frequently cited in disputes about predestination for its inclusion of God’s evidently harsh claim: “As it is written, I haue loued Iacob, & haue hated Esau” (9:13)—Calvin warns against over-speculating about predestination and reprobation (being “loued” or “hated”):

The predestination of God is indeed... a labyrinth, from which the mind of man can by no means extricate itself: but so unreasonable is the curiosity of man, that the more perilous the examination of a subject is, the more boldly he proceeds; so that... he cannot restrain himself within due limits, [and]... plunges himself, as it were, into the depths of the sea.³⁷

The metaphor is repeated in the *Institutes*. The very chapter whose title declares that it will consider “the Eternal Election, by which God has Predestinated Some to Salvation, and Others to Destruction,” opens with this caveat:

[W]hen they inquire into predestination, let them remember that they are penetrating into the recesses of the divine wisdom, where he who rushes forward securely and confidently, instead of satisfying his curiosity will enter an inextricable labyrinth. For it is not right that man should with impunity pry into things which the Lord has been pleased to conceal within himself, and scan that sublime eternal wisdom which it is his pleasure that we should not apprehend but adore... those secrets of his will, which he has seen it meet to manifest, are revealed in his word... in so far as he knew to be conducive to our interest and welfare (3.21.1).

As is the case in Ochino’s *Labirinti*, the thread out of Calvin’s labyrinth is the Scriptures: if man desires to know anything about predestination in general—or about

³⁶ “A Diatribe or Sermon Concerning Free Will” in *Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther: Discourse on Free Will*, trans. and ed. Ernst F. Winter (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 11.

³⁷ Cited in Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2009), 115.

his own election in particular—he is to look no further than the Gospel. Indeed, “in order to be assured of our salvation, we must begin with the word, and... our confidence ought to go no further than the word” (3.24.3). The relationship between Ariadne’s thread and the Scriptures is not merely implied; Calvin makes a point of unpacking the metaphor for his readers in Book I: “The brightness of the divine countenance, which even an apostle declares to be inaccessible (1 Tim 6:16), is a kind of labyrinth—a labyrinth to us inextricable, if the word do not serve us as a thread to guide our path” (1.6.3).³⁸

In Calvin’s employment of the labyrinth as a trope, man’s pursuit of self-knowledge, of his salvational status, and of God is a journey—a life-long *itineraria* the precise path of which only God knows—that is dark, meandering, precarious, and impossible, without the guidance of the Gospel and its message of faith and love. Only through the Word can man come to know himself, and can God’s likeness (“the divine countenance”) once again become visible, when sanctified man is “renewed... after the image” of God (Col. 3:10).³⁹ In Calvin’s adaptation of the metaphor, taking hold of the Gospel dissolves the labyrinth’s turns and brings one immediately *out of* it: the Gospel is the “track” and the “straight path” to “the pure contemplation of God,” since it is there that he is “truly and vividly described to us from his works” (1.6.3).

Theologians, poets, and philosophers redeployed the trope as a predestinarian

³⁸ See also T.H.L. Parker, *Portrait of Calvin* (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 1954), 61-2.

³⁹ See Michelle Chaplin Sanchez, *Providence: from pronia to immanent affirmation in John Calvin’s Institutes of 1599* (Dissertation: Harvard University, 2014), 185-9.

figure. Rather than have any man presume himself predestined to “an absolute and irrespective decree of Reprobation,” the English theologian Peter Heylyn (1599-1662) would have him “*suffer himself to be guided in the Labyrinth by the line of truth (as by the Clew of Ariadne) drawn from the undeniable Authority of holy Scriptures.*”⁴⁰ Francis Quarles’ 1635 book of *Emblemes* contains an image of a pilgrim standing at the center of a labyrinth, holding a thread that connects him to a winged figure who is situated outside of the maze. In the accompanying poem, the figure depicted outside of the labyrinth is identified as God. “Ile trust my God,” Quarles writes; “His Law shalbe my Path; his heav’nly Light my Clue.” That the labyrinth specifically concerns the pilgrim’s soteriological status is conveyed in the poem’s third stanza:

No resting here; Hee’s hurried back that stayes
A thought; And he that goes unguided, wanders:
Her way is dark; her path untrod, unev’n;
So hard’s the way from earth; *so hard’s the way to Heav’n.*⁴¹

Huston Diehl, who has written on Quarles’ emblem at some length in his study of the labyrinth in the Protestant tradition, observes its resemblance to two other images in French Renaissance emblem books (Guillaume La Perriere’s (1539) and Claude Paradin’s (1551)), observing that “it is, perhaps, significant that neither... depicts a visible clue; their ‘perfect guide’ requires an act of faith.”⁴² Indeed, Quarles may have picked up on what Diehl reads as the *sola fide* intimations of these French

⁴⁰ “*Historia Quinquarticularis: Or, A Historical Declaration of the Judgment of the Western Churches, and more particularly of the Church of England, in the Five Controverted Points reproach’d in these last times with the Name of Arminianism*” in *The Historical and Miscellaneous Tracts of the Reverend and Learned Peter Heylyn, D.D.* (London: Printed by M. Clark, for Charles Harper, 1681), 616.

⁴¹ *Emblemes. By Fra: Quarles* (London: Printed by G.M., 1635), fols. N5-N6, italics mine.

⁴² “Into the Maze of the Self: The Protestant Transformation of the Image of the Labyrinth” in *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 16 (1986), 288.

Catholic emblems. Long after all these texts were published—in the preface to his 1710 *Theodicy*—the philosopher Gottfried Leibniz writes: “There are two labyrinths, famous for their misdirections: one has been the particular torment of theologians,” and this labyrinth “regards freedom [of the will].”⁴³ Thus, by 1710—as far as Leibniz was concerned—the “labyrinth” of free will and predestination had become “famous.”

PAMPHILIA’S CONSTANCY AS A TOKEN OF ELECTION

Certainly Wroth’s corona—the 14-poem “Crowne of Sonnets dedicated to LOVE” in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*—drew upon the classical stories of Ariadne, which, Margaret M. Morlier remarks, “involve a labyrinth, a golden thread, and a circular coronal, wreath, or crown.”⁴⁴ Morlier maintains—and she is not alone in doing so—that Wroth’s use of the Theseus-and-Ariadne myth allows her to “draw an important theme from these stories of Ariadne’s abandonment: the value of constancy in love.”⁴⁵ Indeed, there is no ignoring the centrality of what Clare R. Kinney calls “the sequence’s official poetics of constancy” to Wroth’s collection.⁴⁶ In the 1621 printed edition—which was appended to Wroth’s *Urania*, a prose romance in which Pamphilia (“all-loving”) appears as a distinctly constant character beside Amphilanthus (“lover of two”)—the word “constancy” (or some variation of it) occurs in Wroth’s “Crowne” four times. Across the sequence it occurs thirteen times, including in the final line of the collection, when Pamphilia tells her muse to “now let

⁴³ Cited in Andrea Poma, *The Impossibility and Necessity of Theodicy: The ‘Essais’ of Leibniz* (New York: Springer, 2008), 241, 239.

⁴⁴ “The Maze Within: Lady Mary Wroth’s ‘strang labournith’ in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*” in *The Labyrinth*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 94.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 95. See also “Ariadne, Venus, and the Labyrinth.”

⁴⁶ “Mary Wroth’s Guilty ‘secret art,’” 69.

your Constancy your Honor proue.” (“Change,” on the other hand, occurs nineteen times; each time she employs the word, Pamphilia is either swearing never to *do* so, or lamenting that other lovers *do*). And as has been repeatedly observed, the beloved is virtually elided from Wroth’s sequence, so that “constancy rather than Amphilanthus becomes the poem’s fetish.”⁴⁷ Pamphilia’s constancy has regularly been attributed to Wroth’s resistance to the perception of women as characteristically inconstant, or to the temporal contrast between human and divine love.⁴⁸ But “constancy” also held special significance in the predestinarian realm: it was one of the most significant characteristics displayed by the elect.

⁴⁷ Janet H. MacArthur, “‘A Sidney, though un-named’: Lady Mary Wroth and her Poetical Progenitors” in *English Studies in Canada* 15.1 (March 1989), 18. See also Elaine V. Beilin, “‘The Onely Perfect Vertue’: Constancy in Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*” in *Spenser Studies* 2 (1981), 230; Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), 256; *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, ed. Roberts, 48; *Currency of Eros*, 122; *Lady Mary Wroth: Poems: A Modernized Edition*, ed. R.E. Pritchard (Staffordshire, England: Keele UP, 1996), 12-13; Jeff Masten, “‘Shall I turne blabb?’: Circulation, Gender, and Subjectivity in Mary Wroth’s Sonnets” in *Early Women Writers: 1600-1720*, ed. Anita Pacheco (London: Longman, 1998), 25-6; Elizabeth Hanson, “Boredom and Whoredom: Reading Renaissance Women’s Sonnet Sequences” in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 10.1 (1997), 177; “Mary Wroth’s Guilty ‘secret art,’” 69; Natasha Distiller, *Desire and Gender in the Sonnet Tradition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 88; James M. Bromley, *Intimacy and Sexuality in the age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 148; Elizabeth Hodgson, *Grief and Women Writers in the English Renaissance* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2015), 77-8. More recently, however, Wroth scholars who are paying more attention to the Folger manuscript of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* have observed that it is only in the 1621 version of Wroth’s sequence that the lover is elided from the sequence. Ilona Bell observes that the changes Wroth made in the printed version “cover up Pamphilia’s persuasive purpose, disembody and distance Amphilanthus, suppress evidence of a consummated, clandestine love affair, and conceal the psychological turmoil that emerges when the affair is discovered” (“‘Joy’s Sports’: The Unexpurgated Text of Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*” in *Modern Philology* 111.2 (November 2013), 234-5). For more on Amphilanthus’ presence in the Folger Manuscript, see Ilona Bell, “Sugared Sonnets Among Their Private Friends: Mary Wroth and William Shakespeare” in *Mary Wroth and Shakespeare*, ed. Paul Salzman and Marion Wynne-Davies (New York: Routledge, 2015), 9; Heather Dubrow, “‘And Thus Leave off’: Reevaluating Mary Wroth’s Folger Manuscript, V.a.104” in *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 22.2 (Autumn 2003); Madeline Bassnett, “The Politics of Election in Lady Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*” in *SEL* 51.1 (Winter 2011), 126-9.

⁴⁸ See “The Onely Perfect Vertue,” 229, 238-40; Tina Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 129; *Redeeming Eve*; Kim Walker, *Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 176, 188; *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, 49;

Calvin, William Perkins, Richard Hooker and Theodore Beza were the most prominent reformers to emphasize the distinction between “the *regenerating* faith of the elect and the *temporary* faith of the reprobate.”⁴⁹ Perkins’ *Treatise tending unto a declaration whether a man be in the state of damnation or in the estate of grace* was written precisely to ensure that men experiencing “temporary faith” would not deceive themselves into thinking they possessed the “saving faith” of the elect.

Perkins writes:

It may then be required, how these vnsounde professors differ from true professours; I answere, in this they differ, that they have not sound heartes to cleaue vnto Christ Jesus for euer... Wherefore... seeing there is such a similitude and affinitie betweene the temporarie professour of the Gospell, and the true professour of the same: it is the duetie of every Christian to trie and examine himselfe whether hee be in the faith [2 Cor. 13:5].⁵⁰

The Pauline admonition stood: “examine your selues” to “proue your selues” (2 Cor. 13:5)—and do so *constantly*. Distinguishing the elect from the reprobate was thus, in no small part, a matter of temporality. For Hooker,

Perpetuitie of inward grace, belongeth unto none butt eternallie foreseene elect, whose difference from castawayes in this life, doeth not herein consist, that the one have grace allwayes, the other, never: butt in this that the [elect] have *grace that abideth*, the [non-elect], eyther not grace att all, or else grace which abideth not.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Graham Redding, *Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ in the Reformed Tradition* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 100. See also Calvin and *English Calvinism to 1649*, 6-7, 25, 36-41, 67-73; Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 62-4; Kenneth D. Keathley, “Perseverance and Assurance of the Saints” in *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, ed. David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010), 169-70; Paul Cefalu, *Moral Identity in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 30-31.

⁵⁰ *A treatise tending vnto a declaration* (London: Printed by R. Robinson, 1590), fol. A7.

⁵¹ Cited in Daniel Eppley, “Richard Hooker on the Un-conditionality of Predestination” in *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W.J. Torrance Kirby (Springer, 2013), 69.

“Perpetuity,” “perseverance,” “abiding,” and “constancy” became watchwords for the elect. Calvin’s oeuvre alone is a mine of such references.⁵² Constancy was repeatedly emphasized in the literatures of the period cataloguing the “signs and tokens” of election that we saw in Chapter 4.⁵³ And at the close of Book I of Wroth’s *Urania*, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus must pass through three towers—proving their Desire, their Love, and their Constancy in succession—in order to gain entry to the Court of Love. When Pamphilia arrives at the “last Tower, where Constancy stood holding the keyes,” Pamphilia takes them; at that moment “Constancy vanished, as metamorphosing her self into [Pamphilia’s] breast.”⁵⁴ As Pamphilia is transformed

⁵² In a sermon on 2 Timothy 2:19 (“The Lord, knoweth who are his”), Calvin asks: “How can we rest ourselves with constancy upon God, and commit ourselves to him with settled hearts, not doubting but that he will take care of us to the end, unless we flee to this election as our only refuge?” For “the election of God is to give us a sure constancy”; thus “we must not cease to call upon him, to run to him, and to walk diligently in the way wherein he hath called us” (cited in *A Selection of the Most Celebrated Sermons of John Calvin* (New York: S. & D.A. Forbes, 1830), 92). In the *Institutes*, he quotes Scriptural “passages which... imply perseverance, they are also attestations to the inflexible constancy of election” (3.22.10). In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 11, Calvin stresses that “we ought to remain firm and constant. For in this way hypocrites are detected—in this way... the sincerity of believers is tried” (*Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to The Corinthians*, trans. Rev. John Pringle (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1848), 367). In his commentary on Romans 1, he defines the “faithless” as “those in whom there is no sincerity or constancy of faith” (*Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul... to the Romans*, 82).

⁵³ *A Garden of Spirituall Flowers* professes that “If our Sanctification be effectually wrought in vs, it will be constant, and continuall: so that we shall not deliuer an holinesse to GOD for a time, or in some causes, or for some persons, but wee must throughly fulfill the dayes of our holinesse” ((London: Printed by T.S. for T. Pauier, 1620) fol. D4). In Nicholas Byfield’s *Signes*, the elect are described as “constant: both because they are renued dailie... as also because they are alike carried to the eternall fruition of the things desired, as to the present enjoying of them” (*The Signes or An essay concerning the assurance of Gods loue, and mans saluation* (London: Printed by John Beale, 1614) fol. E8). For Byfield, each of the individual signs of the elect is also constantly manifest: his “sauing knowledge” is “constant and indelible, it hath deepe impressions and much assurance”; his “feare of God” is “constant, it is not for a fit, but alwaies”; his “holy thirst” for the things of God “is constant and indelible in this life” (*Ibid.* fols. F9, G8; *The marrow of the oracles of God. Or, divine treatises* (London: Printed by G. Miller and R. Badger, 1625), fol. H1).

⁵⁴ *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania. Written by the right honorable the Lady Mary Wroath. Daughter to the right noble Robert Earle of Leicester. And neece to the ever famous, and renowned Sr. Phillips Sidney knight. And to ye most exele[n]t Lady Mary Countesse of Pembroke late deceased* (London: Printed for Ioh[n] Marriott, 1621), fol. T3. See also “The Onely Perfect Vertue,” 232;

into the figure of Constancy, the King of Cyprus resolves to convert to Christianity; and “out of loue to the Christian faith,” “so became the whole Island Christians.”⁵⁵ Even in Wroth’s prose romance, then, constancy and “true” Christianity are inextricably linked.

Yet even those scholars who have so closely attended to the politics of election in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*—and specifically in its “Crowne,” which Pamphilia opens by asking: “In this strang labourinth how shall I turne?”—have examined neither Pamphilia’s constancy nor Wroth’s use of the labyrinth in their considerations of Pamphilia’s predestinarianism. Mary B. Moore perhaps comes closest to this particular triangulation when she reads Diehl’s study of the labyrinth alongside Wroth’s corona, suggesting that Wroth “might have known the labyrinth as symbolizing Protestant inwardness and emphasizing both the necessity and difficulty of self-analysis.” Linger on Quarles’ emblem, Moore observes that the “figure strongly echoes Wroth’s ‘thred of love’ in her corona’s labyrinth,” as both threads, “representing precepts of faith, guid[e] Christians through what Diehl calls ‘the subjectivity of self and the endless maze of consciousness.’”⁵⁶

Madeline Bassnett also advances something consonant to the claim I am making here. Bassnett claims that the “lovelorn complaint” Pamphilia expresses throughout the sequence “exists alongside a Protestant narrative that records the

Jennifer Munroe, *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 113-14.

⁵⁵ *The Countesse of Mountgomerie Urania*, fol. T4.

⁵⁶ Mary B. Moore, *Desiring Voices: Women Sonneteers and Petrarchism* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2000), 133-4.

stages and struggles of the elect individual.”⁵⁷ Election, after all, “was increasingly a focus for politicized debate in the latter years of the reign of James I,” and the employment of Calvinist discourse in such debates “had come to encode opposition to James’s policies and regime”—opposition, Bassnett claims, that Wroth was actively engaged in.⁵⁸ Though Bassnett also uses Wroth’s “Crowne” as the locus of her argument, she hones in on a “Protestant discourse of election” that includes symbols such as “the tortured heart, the occluding dark, and the illuminating light,” as well as Pamphilia’s inwardness and self-analysis as a road to “Protestant” self-knowledge.⁵⁹

Moore’s and Bassnett’s studies collectively offer a picture of Wroth as proud of her Sidney heritage and its religious and political affiliations, and of her oeuvre as permeated by recognizably Calvinist language that not only aligns her with the Protestant faction in James’ England, but also displays a particular interest in the

⁵⁷ “Politics of Election,” 112.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 113.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 116, 129. Of the political atmosphere, Bassnett writes: “The 1613 marriage of James’s daughter, Princess Elizabeth, to the staunchly Calvinist Frederick V, Count Palatine of the Rhine and elector of the Holy Roman Empire, gave militant English Protestants hope for the spread of their faith. The king’s obstinate refusal to support the couple following their expulsion in 1620-21 from both the Palatinate and Bohemia... reinforced the growing impression that James was not promoting England’s interests and was even opposing them through perceived pro-Catholic policies. In this politically charged atmosphere, the language of religious sectarianism—and belief in predestination—became increasingly indicative of political opposition... Wroth appears intentionally to have chosen language that would associate her with James’s political detractors, and she created a model character—Pamphilia—who would endure the often-torturous passage through the stages of both love and election... this sequence is likewise audacious in its communication of Protestant longing for and submission to the will of the divine rather than earthly king... Wroth declares her Protestant allegiance upfront, dedicating *Urania* to Susan Herbert, Countess of Montgomery, a known ‘Protestant patron,’ and identifying her own personal and political lineage on the title page: ‘Daughter to the right Noble Robert Earle of Leicester. And Neece to the ever famous and renowned Sr. Phillips Sidney knight. And to ye most exelēt Lady Mary Countesse of Pembroke late deceased.’ By the seventeenth century, Philip Sidney was firmly linked to the cause of international and martial Protestantism, a stance incompatible with that of the Jacobean regime; this self-association... reveals that Wroth’s sequence was not simply a ‘private rejection of the courtly life’ but instead was ‘a pointed and public rejection of the present court’ that united religious and political beliefs” (*Ibid.* 113, 115-16). See also Rosalind Smith, *Sonnets and the English Woman Writer, 1560-1621: The Politics of Absence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 99.

question of predestination. But Bassnett's list of Wroth's symbols of election in her corona does not include the labyrinth *itself*; and while Moore's study attends to the labyrinth as a metaphor for self-knowledge, it does not examine the figure as a peculiarly predestinarian trope. I offer a reading of the labyrinth in Wroth's corona as such.

PAMPHILIA'S PREDESTINARIAN "LABOURINTH"

In this strang labourinth how shall I turne?
Wayes are on all sids while the way I miss:
If to the right hand, ther, in love I burne;
Lett me goe forward, therein danger is;
If to the left, suspition hinders bliss,
Lett mee turne back, shame cries I ought returne
Nor fainte though crosses with my fortunes kiss;
Stand still is harder, although sure to mourne;
Then lett mee take the right, or left hand way;
Goe forward, or stand still, or back retire;
I must thes doubts indure with out allay
Or help, butt traveile find for my best hire;
Yett that which most my troubled sence doth move
Is to leave all, and take the thread of love.

Thus begins Wroth's "Crowne." Set against the classical myth, Pamphilia appears to occupy the roles of every figure: she is at once Daedalus (the writer/creator of the labyrinth), Ariadne (providing the guiding "thread" in the language of the final couplet), and—principally—Theseus (the lover lost in the lyric's maze).⁶⁰ Yet the classical analogy is weakened in this opening sonnet by the fact that all Pamphilia can do is "take" the "thread" that is apparently already *there* for her. It would be useful to

⁶⁰ See Jami Ake, "Mary Wroth's Willow Poetics" in *Crossing Boundaries: Issues of Cultural and Individual Identity in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Sally McKee (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1999), 146-7; "The Maze Within," 97.

recall, here, Calvin's claims that speculation about election and "the divine countenance" is "a kind of labyrinth—a labyrinth to us inextricable, if the word do not serve us as a thread to guide our path" (1.6.3), as well as the analogies of the Gospel to Ariadne's thread. Indeed, Pamphilia's consideration of her options ("If to the left, suspicion hinders bliss, / Lett mee turne back, shame cries I ought returne") echo those of Quarles' pilgrim, who is attempting to find "*the way to Heav'n*" ("No resting here; Hee's hurried back that stayes / A thought").

The Gospels had reduced the Mosaic laws of the Old Testament to a single commandment—*love*—when Christ told his apostles, in the Book of John: "A new commandment giue I vnto you, that ye loue one another: as I haue loued you... By this shal all men knowe that ye are my disciples, if ye haue loue one to another" (13:34-35). Elsewhere in the Gospels, Christ calls love of God and love of man the two greatest commandments ("there is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31)). References to this new law of "loue" pervade the New Testament; Paul writes that "all the Law is fulfilled in one worde, which is this, Thou shalt loue thy neighbor as thy self" (Gal. 5:14; see also Eph. 5:2; 1 Thess. 4:9; James 2:8; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:23, 4:21). So when Pamphilia "take[s] the thread of love" in the midst of the labyrinth, she may be indeed taking hold of a Neoplatonic perception of love; but she is *also*—according to the reformers' analogy—taking hold of the Gospel message of love. Indeed, the Gospel is the only thing capable—according to Ochino, Calvin, Heylyn, and others—of bringing a wanderer out of the labyrinth of predestinarian thought.

Pamphilia's primary grievance before the *volta* recalls her to the "thread of love" (and certainly before she "*take[s]*" it) is that "wayes are on all sides." The phrase may recall Ochino's *Labirinti*, wherein each time a man extricates himself from one labyrinth, he finds himself trapped in the next. Diehl's study of the labyrinth is also suggestive here. Diehl claims that the Protestant Reformation was a transitional moment for the labyrinth as a theological figure. This included a structural transition: whereas the medieval labyrinth had *a way*, the early modern labyrinth had any *number* of "ways"—only one of which led to the center. That is, the maze had always been a metaphor for labor—and it is worth considering Pamphilia's "traveile" (physical or mental work) as well as the likely pun in Folger V.a.104 ("In this strang *labourinth* how shall I turne?") in this light.⁶¹ But it was only during the Reformation that the labyrinth was also becoming a trope in which: 1) one might, in fact, labor in vain (because *despite* one's exertion, one took the wrong path); and 2) the will was no longer the decisive force that brought one to its center, or back out again. Diehl looks to Quarles' emblem as one expression of this mid-Reformation transition:

Although the path to the center of the medieval church maze is long and arduous, it is, significantly, a single, continuous path, with no blind ways and no impediments. The pilgrim might grow weary in his symbolic quest for God, but, if he had the necessary desire, he would inevitably reach the center... Even though Quarles uses the medieval motif of the pilgrim in his emblem, his labyrinth is not the labyrinth of the medieval Roman Catholic Church... although heaven is the pilgrim's destination, it is removed, distant, on another plane. Even if the pilgrim makes his way out of the maze, he does not arrive automatically or inevitably in heaven... Unlike the medieval maze, there is no guarantee that the people inside will reach their desired

⁶¹ See "The Maze Within," 97, 99; Penelope Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth: From Classical Antiquity Through the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990), 97.

destination.⁶²

If Pamphilia's labyrinth is, indeed, an echo of the predestinarian labyrinths of Ochino, Calvin, Heylyn, Quarles, and Leibniz, then her "wayes" take on a specifically theological anxiety: their trouble is not only a fundamental unknowing, but also a fundamental lack of agency. What differentiated the Protestant labyrinth from both medieval and Counter-Reformation labyrinths were matters of *assurance* ("there is no guarantee that [Protestant pilgrims] will reach their desired destination") and *will* ("if [the medieval pilgrim] had the necessary desire, he would inevitably reach the center").

To regard Pamphilia's labyrinth in light of the *Labirinti* alone is to raise the question of Pamphilia's free will. Sonnet 1's answer to whether or not Pamphilia *possesses* free will is as indeterminate as Ochino's ultimate answer. Although there is something both grievous ("sure to mourne") and more difficult ("harder") about "stand[ing] still" than there is about progressing in any direction, Pamphilia does not move until the close of the sonnet, when she "leave[s] all, [to] take the thread of love." But even here the language belies Pamphilia's apparent willing, for the lover does not move *herself*: her "troubled sense [is] move[d]" by something outside of her to do so.

Furthermore, prior to the final couplet—and to Pamphilia's taking up the thread—the phrase "lett mee" is repeated three times ("lett mee goe forward"; "lett mee turne backe"; "lett mee take the right, or left hand way"). The word "lett" is

⁶² "Into the Maze of the Self," 284-5, 288.

provocative insofar as it is a contronym: to Wroth's contemporaries, the word meant both "to allow" and "to prevent."⁶³ But it also indicates that all Pamphilia can do, initially, is express a series of possibilities, a catalogue of desires or entreaties—without *acting* upon any of them. If she *is* in Ochino's many-"wayed" *Labirinti*, the only sure way out is "on the one hand to strive with all our power after good, *as though* we knew that we were free, and on the other to give God alone the glory, *as though* certain of our subjection."⁶⁴ As a simultaneous expression of supplication and permission, "lett me" exists at the very threshold of freedom and subjection that Ochino's solution to the labyrinthine question of free will does. No matter which way Pamphilia "turnes" in the end, she will have turned *not* because she willed it herself ("my troubled sence [*is*] move[*d*]"), but because she is given (and giving) the *appearance* of freedom to have willed it ("lett mee"). Though she describes herself as willfully "leav[ing] all" and "tak[ing] the thread" in the poem's final line, the couplet as a whole summarizes this indeterminacy.

TOKENS OF ELECTION IN THE LABYRINTH

While Pamphilia may still have a number of "Wayes" available to her, the "thread" she takes up offers a "line" that "straite leads" her (*C* 2.2) down a single path (presumably the *right* one) in the labyrinth. There is an echo here of Calvin's claim that the Word, when taken hold of, is the "straight path" through the labyrinth to "the pure contemplation of God," where he is "truly and vividly described to us from his

⁶³ "let, v.1, v.2," *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

⁶⁴ *Bernardo Ochino, of Siena*, 251. See also *The Travail of Religious Liberty*, 168-9.

works.” And the thread of love *does* launch Pamphilia directly into a “contemplation” of love (indeed, the whole of the corona could be described as such), granting her a capacity to “vividly describ[e]” it. In Sonnet 7, she claims that the love whose thread she takes up in the labyrinth:

[W]ill a painter make you, such, as you
Shall able bee to drawe your only deere
More lively, parfett, lasting, and more true
Than rarest workman, and to you more neere.

These lines have been read as a commentary on “gendered boundaries between art forms,” “a kind of neo-Platonic power surge” and “a testimony to art’s beguiling power to refashion lived experience.”⁶⁵ I would also observe the theological undercurrents here. Calvin’s Gospel thread of love leads one out of the labyrinth and toward “the brightness of the divine countenance”; what the thread of love grants Wroth’s lover is the capacity to “drawe” the beloved’s “countenance.” When one takes up the thread, the play of the poem intimates, the “only deere” is *drawn* in a double sense: 1) fashioned as an image most like himself, and 2) brought closer (“more neere”). Indeed, a sense of God’s nearness was one sign by which the elect could know themselves as such; in his *Treatise of Religion*, Greville writes of the elect—evidently including himself—that “God dwelleth neare about us, even within / Worckinge the goodnesse, censuring the sinne.”⁶⁶ The “work” is no longer the *labour* of the labourinth; it is *God’s* working. The lover need only contemplate the

⁶⁵ *Gender and the Garden*, 119; Clare R. Kinney, “‘More lively, parfett, lasting, and more true’: Mary Wroth’s Indefensible Apologies for Poesy” in *The History of British Women’s Writing, 1610-1690*, ed. M. Suzuki. Vol. 3 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 164. See also *Changing the Subject*, 157.

⁶⁶ “A Treatise of Religion” in *The Remains: Being Poems of Monarchy and Religion*, ed. G. A. Wilkes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965), 211.

nature of her “deere” in order to better *imitate* him—as a “workman” through artistic reproduction, and as an elect soul through the fruits of her action, “renewed... after the image” of God (Col. 3:10).

For Calvin, the divine countenance can only become visible to man again through the “thread” of the Word. But this is also the only way that man can become visible to *himself*. Pamphilia’s taking up the “thread of love” in Sonnet 1 produces the very effect that Calvin claims the Scriptures will have: it begins to show the lover “signs” of her election. We see these as promptly as Sonnet 2:

Is to leave all, and take the thread of love
Which line strait leads unto the soules content
Where choyse delights with pleasures wings doe move,
And idle phant’sie never roome had lent,
When chaste thoughts guide us then our minds are bent
To take that good which ill from us remove,
Light of true love, brings fruit which none repent
But constant lovers seek, and wish to prove;
Love is the shining star of blessings light;
The fervent fire of zeal, the root of peace,
The lasting lamp fed with the oil of right;
Image of faith, and womb for joyes increase.
Love is true vertue, and his ends delight;
His flames are joyes, his bands true lovers might.

Of the “Crowne’s” second sonnet, Madeline Bassnett writes:

Conflating love with the light of faith and the demonstration of God's grace, Wroth evokes the experience desired by many English Protestants—the assurance of election. In linking light to love, zeal, and peace, Wroth alludes specifically to the Calvinist-influenced belief in predestination... These terms were part of common parlance used by both Puritan preachers and Anglican ministers such as William Perkins to discuss the process of election, and would arguably have been as obvious to Wroth's readers as the coexisting Petrarchan tropes.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ “Politics of Election,” 112-13.

Bassnett's article has gone a great way in identifying these "signs" in the crown, and so I need not linger here—though I can't help but point to some of the more striking comparisons I have found between the third quatrain of Sonnet 2 alone and the literatures cataloguing signs of election.⁶⁸ Bishop William Cowper (1566-1619) wrote of the elect that "not onely [is] God... present with [them], but also make[s] the[m] sensibly perceiue it by inward & glorious feelings"; this presence "maketh a comfortable *light* to *shine* where fearful darknesse abounded, it makes our *faith* liuely, our *loue feruent*, our *zeale* burning, and our prayer earnest."⁶⁹ Nicholas Byfield writes of the "holy desires of Gods elect" that "they are *fierie*, that is, such as cause the heart of man, to *burne* within him, with some measure of *zeale* for Gods glorie, indignation at sinne, and *feruent* affection in Gods seruice."⁷⁰ Ochino writes that "as it is impossible to have *fyre* within the brest and not fele it, so is it impossible to have in the hart Christ, the holye ghoste, ardent charitie and the *fierye lighte* of *faythe*, and not to perceiue it"; this is the case because "his *lighte* is so clere and effectuous, that... maketh them to se, and liuelie to fele with the spirite, that christ is deade for them

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* I have italicized the words in Cowper, Byfield, and Ochino below that are also found in the third quatrain of Sonnet 2. Other studies of the theological language in the crown have read the "signs" of Sonnet 2 through a specifically Puritan lens. Margaret Morlier observes that "when 'chaste thoughts' guide the mind, then love can lead to 'blessings,' 'peace,' 'right,' and 'fayth'... with diction alluding... to Puritan inner light of faith" ("The Maze Within," 98); Mary B. Moore writes: "The Puritan revival associates 'zeale' with Protestant reform and prophecy, while the lamp images the inner light that suggests the subjectivity and moral fervor of the Protestant relationship with God, a beacon inside the labyrinth of self. The paradox of light within an internal, labyrinthine darkness underscores the spiritual qualities implied here, suggesting powers that transcend physical light and human perception" (*Desiring Voices*, 145).

⁶⁹ *The Triumph of a Christian, Contayning three excellent and heauenly Treatises* (London: Printed for Iohn Budge, 1608), fol. E7. See also *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, 45.

⁷⁰ *The Signes*, fol. E7.

upon the crosse.”⁷¹ And, of course, *faith* (Pamphilia’s “image of fayth”)—which is wholly inextricable from love (“faith which worketh by loue,” Gal. 5:6)—was the indispensable mark of election for all of these theologians.⁷²

While she makes no mention of them, Bassnett’s case for Pamphilia’s election is bolstered by the references to “fruits” and “proving” in the sequence—both of which first occur in the “Crowne’s” second sonnet (“Light of true love, brings fruite which none repent / Butt constant lovers seeke, and wish to prove”). The characterization of *true* love as “bring[ing] fruite which none repent” recalls the fruit of which *all* repented: the fruit of original sin. But there appears to be a play on the word here, as Pamphilia simultaneously evokes the “fruit” of Genesis and the “fruits” of the New Testament. The shift from Old to New Testament—from the tangible fruit of the “tre of knowledge of good and of euil” (Gen. 2:9; the fruit which *all* repent) to the metaphorical fruits of the Gospels and Pauline Epistles—appears to hinge on the word “constant.” The “fruite” that “constant lovers seek” is immaterial: it is that by which they “wish to prove” themselves.

⁷¹ *Fouretene sermons of Barnardine Ochyne*, fol. C1.

⁷² “Unfained faith... where a ful and settled... assurance of salvation [is],” “Assured faith in the promises,” and “true sauing faith: a wonderfull gift peculiar to the elect” were repeatedly stressed as the prerequisite tokens of election; scholars on Reformation doctrine have noted that “faith [is] the first mark of election” in the course of Perkins’ thought, and that “faith to Calvin is... the ultimate consequence of election” (Thomas Sparke, *A short Treatise, very comfortable for all those Christians that be troubled and disquieted in theyr consciences with the sight of their owne infirmities: wherein is shevved hovv such may in their owne selues finde whereby to assure them of their free election, effectuall vocation, and iustification* (London: Printed by H. Bynneman, 1580) fol. B2; Arthur Dent, *The Plain Man’s Pathway to Heaven* (Belfast: North of Ireland Book & Tract Depository, 1859), 186; William Perkins, *A treatise tending vnto a declaration whether a man be in the estate of damnation or in the estate of grace* (London: R. Robinson, 1590), fol. C7; James D. Boulger, *The Calvinist Temper in English Poetry* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1980), 81; R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 19).

Wroth's contemporaries would have been recalled to Paul's directive to the Corinthians to "proue your selues whether ye are in the faith" and its frequent reiterations in the religious texts of the time: George Gifford's instruction to his congregation, for instance, that they be "surely resolved in [them]selues... by sure & substantiall prooffe, that [they] be chosen of God," or Calvin's assertion that "we find in ourselves a satisfactory proof [of election] if [God] has sanctified us by his Spirit."⁷³ That "proof" was to be found in the elect's "fruits." The elect will neither be "idle, nor unfruitful"; he will "feelee in [his] heart the fruites of the spirit"; and—as for the rest of us—"we shall knowe [the elect] by their fruites."⁷⁴ For as long as Pamphilia continues to hold the "thread of love," the corona returns to these terms: in fourteen sonnets, the word "prove" occurs six times, "fruit," three times.

This play on literal and metaphorical "fruit"—the former calling attention to The Fall, the latter to signs of sanctification—occurs again in two consecutive sonnets that have been interpreted as invoking pre- and postlapsarian gardens, respectively.⁷⁵ Sonnet 10 closes with the image of "fruit of a sowre, and unwholsome ground / Unprofitably pleasing, and unsound." The poem's final line is repeated as the first line of Sonnet 11, where the reader is recalled to one of the principal consequences of original sin: that "heaven gave liberty to frayle dull earth / To bringe forth plenty that

⁷³ Gifford, *Foure sermons vpon the seuen chiefe vertues or principall effectes of faith, and the doctrine of election: wherein euerie man may learne, whother he be Gods childe or no* (London: Imprinted for Tobie Cooke, 1582), fol. E8; Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians: With Four Homilies or Sermons on Idolatry, &c.*, trans. Rev. John Pringle (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1851), 343.

⁷⁴ *Foure sermons*, fol. E1; *A treatise tending vnto a declaration*, fol. R4; *Fouretene sermons of Barnardine Ochynne*, fol. B7.

⁷⁵ See *Gender and the Garden*, 114-15; "The Onely Perfect Vertue," 237-8; "Mary Wroth and the Politics of the Household," 154-56; *Grief and Women Writers*, 91-2.

in illis abound / Which ripest yett doe bring a sertaine dearth.” A reader may be recalled to Astrophel’s postlapsarian “thorny soil” here (*AS* 10), though Pamphilia appears to be more interested in postlapsarian fruit than she is the ground out of which it grows. Again, the rather pronounced allusions to Genesis have been noted; what strikes me most about Sonnet 11 is that whatever trees or bushes remain in Wroth’s “frayle dull” garden are described as “hemlock like.”

While hemlock never appears in the Geneva Bible, the word appears twice in the King James Bible, which was commissioned by James himself and completed ten years before Wroth’s sequence was published. Both passages concern Israel. In the first, the prophet Hosea claims that “Israel is an empty vine” because it only “bringeth forth fruit unto itself” while refusing to “seek the LORD” (10: 1, 12). Pamphilia appears to employ the figure in Sonnet 11 in reference to the broken covenant (concerning a fruit tree) between God and Adam; for Hosea, hemlock is the repercussion of *another* broken covenant: that between God and Israel. Israel has “spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field” (v. 4). In the Book of Amos, God laments the Israelites’ fall into complacency, telling them they “have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock” (6:12).

Through these two passages, hemlock became a reformed metaphor employed to warn against what Calvin called “presumptuous security.” Calvin’s interpretation of Amos 6:12 as an admonition against over-assurance reads:

We have already observed how secure the Israelites were; for they thought that God was, in a manner, bound to them, for he had pledged

his faith to be a father to them. This adoption of God puffed up their hearts. The Prophet now reproves this presumptuous security... Ye ought indeed to have been the vineyard and the field of the Lord... but *ye have turned... righteousness into hemlock.*⁷⁶

Calvin alludes, here, to John 15: “I Am the true vine, and my Father is an housband man... as the branche can not beare frute of it self, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (15: 1, 4). The “frutes” John refers to are the shows and signs that the elect bear as outward tokens of sanctification. Hemlock and the “true vine” cannot coexist in the same predestinarian garden: in Hosea, where hemlock *is*, the vine is “empty.” Having discerned certain “proofs” of her elect status in the sonnets after she took up the “thread of love,” Pamphilia now appears to find herself in the precarious situation of the prophets’ Israelites—assured to the point of presumption. While Greville’s *Caelica* seems to approve of such absolute assurance, the theology of Wroth’s corona takes a more cautious doctrinal stance. Thus while Sonnet 11 indeed reads as a recapitulation of The Fall, it also more subtly functions as a warning: too much assurance about one’s “fruits” paradoxically makes one a fruitless vine.

The crown digests the lesson from the prophets’ Israelites between one sonnet and the next. The “fruits” of Sonnet 12—which depicts a different garden entirely—appear again to refer to the fruits of sanctification. The “unprofitably pleasing, and unsound” fruits and the hemlock of Sonnet 11 are both replaced by “blossoms fayre / Which fall for good, and lose theyr coulers bright / Yett dy nott, but with fruite theyr

⁷⁶ *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets. By John Calvin. Now First Translated from the Original Latin by the Rev. John Owen. Vol. 2: Joel, Amos, Obadiah* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1846), 321.

loss repaire” (2-4). Wroth likely intended to invoke The Fall in the blossoms’ “fall[ing] for good”: the loss of innocence, the decree of banishment from Eden, and the extension of Adam’s punishment to all his descendants were, after all, irreversible. And this irreversibility of the first sin (“fall for good”) appears to be a crucial remembrance to maintaining the *right kind* of assurance: while the “fruite” “repaire[s]” the “loss” of the fallen blossoms, it will always have grown out of a state of loss: loss of the blossoms’ original “couler”; loss of their initial attachment to the vine. Even the fruits of sanctification, the lyric suggests, will be imperfect—though they *point* toward an imminent glorification.

Thus, though the blossoms on the trees of Pamphilia’s second garden *fall*, they still experience some form of eternal life (“dy nott”), producing fruit where there once were flowers. The vine-and-branches metaphor of John 15 (“he that abideth in me, & I in him, the same bringeth forth the muche frute” (v. 5)) is evoked here. For Pamphilia, though The Fall is irreversible, redemption (“repaire” of the “loss” of eternal life) is still possible. Those who are predestined for such “repaire” indeed bear the “fruits” of their election—neither grandly (and in fact, less “coulerfully” than in Eden) nor presumptuously, but through quiet reparation. And even *then*, these reparative fruits are only possible because they (unlike the irreparably-fallen blossoms from the first sin) remain attached to, and “abiding” in, the vine of Christ.

REASON AND FREE WILL IN PAMPHILIA’S LABYRINTH

As the sequence progresses, Pamphilia continues to praise the “chaste art” of “devine love” (C 5.8), “chast[e]... passions,” “vertuouse love” (C 8.11-12), and

“holly friendship” (C 13.3). But the lover’s descriptions of “Neoplatonic love” parallel the tokens of the elect, such that the lovers who “leave all” and take the thread in the labyrinth of the Court of Love appear to have been predestined to do so: “faith” (C 2, 3, 4, 5, 14), “truth” (C 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14), “joy” (C 2, 3, 5, 12), “light” (C 2, 3, 4, 12), “vertue” (C 2, 5, 8) and “constancy” (C 2, 3, 4, 14) were emphasized in every catalogue of elect signs. Even the “pleasing sting” and the “hapy smart” of the crown’s Sonnet 4 (11-12) sound like Nicholas Byfield’s claim that the elect is “fire[d]... to a desire to abase himselfe and to humble himselfe,” or Arthur Dent’s and *A Garden of Spirituall Flowers*’ contention that one of the signs of election is “patient bearing of the crosse, with profit and comfort.”⁷⁷ Pamphilia even goes so far as to conflate Cupid and Christ in Sonnet 9, strengthening the analogy between the elect and the lovers in the “court of love” (C 9.14, 10.1): “Oure harts ar subject to [Venus’] sunn; wher sinn / Never did dwell” (5). As Venus is juxtaposed with Mary, Cupid becomes a faultless Christological figure who is indeed worthy of his “subject[s]” “trials” and pursuits of “proof” (C 3.5, 4.10, 6.14, 7.1) that they *are*, in fact, his subjects.

Sonnet 10—in which Pamphilia instructs other lovers (who are also, ostensibly, her readers) that “Reason adviser is, love ruler must / Bee of the state which crowne hee long hath worne”—is thus doubly provocative (5-6). In the first place, it stands in stark contrast to other amatory collections we have seen—Watson’s *Hekatompathia* and Greville’s *Caelica*—whose lovers are finally delivered from love *through* the

⁷⁷ *The Signes*, fol. C5; *Plain Man’s Pathway*, 25; *A Garden of Spirituall Flowers*, fol. D2.

figure of reason (indeed, for Watson's lover, through Reason's "guiding thrid" out of the labyrinth).⁷⁸ What "tak[ing] the thread of love" in Sonnet 1 requires of Pamphilia is that she "leave all." Apparently this "all" includes an entire English Petrarchan literary tradition—excepting Sidney's sequence—in which Reason proves capable of overcoming the passions. It also ostensibly includes Pamphilia's desire for certain knowledge of the right way, or the belief that she could ever discover that way on her own: what Calvin calls the "curiosity of man" in "examin[ing] the subject" of predestination.⁷⁹

Pamphilia here takes the crown *from* Reason (who "long hath worne" it) and places it on the head of Love, privileging the domain of affection. Wroth's radical transposition of the crown—and its accompanying shift in both the "government" of the poem and Reason's role in the amatory tradition—might very well have something to do with Richard Sibbes' instruction to "*Reason not* this, whether God hath elected or Christ hath died for thee. The commandment is, to believe in Christ."⁸⁰ Likewise, as we saw above, Ochino warned that those who attempt to understand predestination "by force of wyt" or "theyr owne corrupt reason"—"without other testimony of holy scripture"—will only "intangl[e] their braynes, darke[n] theyr myndes, and offen[d] their consciences," rather than "get out of [predestination's] darke and intricate

⁷⁸ Alexander Craig, *The Amorse Songes, Sonets, and Elegies: Of M. Alexander Craige, Scoto-Britane* (London: Imprinted by William White, 1606), fol. L3; *Hekatompathia*, fols. L1, L2, L4, M1, M4; *Poems and Dramas*, Vol. 1, 124.

⁷⁹ Cited in Bruce Gordon, *Calvin*, 115.

⁸⁰ "If it were made for man, 'twas made for me': Generic Damnation and Rhetorical Salvation in Reformation Preaching and Plays" in *Sin and Salvation in Reformation England*, ed. Jonathan Willis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 179, italics mine.

laborynthes.”⁸¹ While Pamphilia does not relinquish “wyt” and reason altogether, what *does* unwind when she takes up the “thread of love” is a series of lyrics describing neither reason nor logic, but feelings. Even in Sonnet 1, she concedes that she must her “doubts indure with out allay”—an affection that the even the elect was understood to maintain—in the midst of her assurance.

But the irreducible perplexity of Ochino’s *Labirinti* becomes precisely the irreducible perplexity of Pamphilia’s “strang labourinth.” In one sense, having taken up the thread in Sonnet 1, Pamphilia has reaped the benefits of self-knowledge, having not only come to see the “brightness of the divine countenance” that is Calvin’s labyrinth, but also having come to regard her *own* countenance: such love as Pamphilia experiences in the labyrinth will “make you see,” after all, “that in your self, which you knew nott before” (C 6.9-10). But the language Pamphilia employs as she moves through the labyrinth with love’s guiding thread belies an ambiguity in the role her free will plays in that very movement. Indeed, the corona vacillates on the issue until Pamphilia ends nearly where she began. The examples of this ambiguity are many, beginning with the complex grammar of Sonnet 1, where Pamphilia claims that “that which most my troubled sence doth move / Is to leave all” (13-14). Certainly, the question of Pamphilia’s will is in part a matter of what has been called the poems’ “aporetic ambiguity of reference.”⁸² And interpreting the role of the

⁸¹ *Fouretene sermons of Barnardine Ochyne*, fols. A5-6.

⁸² Clare R. Kinney—citing other scholars of Wroth—remarks upon “the difficulty verging upon hermeticism of Wroth’s poems, their tendency to speak an ‘almost inscrutable private language,’ their ‘aporetic ambiguity of reference’” (“Mary Wroth’s Guilty ‘secret art,’” 72-3). See also “‘Shall I turne blabb,’” 26; Paul J. Hecht, “Distortion, Aggression, and Sex in Mary Wroth’s Sonnets” in *SEL* 53.1 (Winter 2013), 91; Clare R. Kinney, “Turn and Counterturn: Reappraising Mary Wroth’s Poetic

lover's will in lyrics such as Sonnet 8—in which Pamphilia claims that love is “strengthened by worth” (6)—is complicated by the very fact that *Wroth* was pronounced like *worth* in Wroth's day: Wroth's name, in fact, was frequently punned on in poems and dedications to this end.⁸³ If Wroth is entering and playing the homophonic game here, a whole new agency (the willful capacity to “strengthen love”) is accorded the poet, and thus—to the extent to which they overlap—to the lover.

Further, the corona is full of directives to its readers/other lovers who also find themselves in love's labyrinth (“then love obey” (C 3.13); “maintaine the fires of love” (C 4.3); “then joy wee nott in what wee ought to shun” (C 11.9))—*as though* they (or we) could maneuver through the maze of their/our own will. But as we realize that the other lovers in the labyrinth are undergoing the same experience Pamphilia is, we realize that the extent to which their/our “free wills” *are* free is as doubtful for us as it is for her. In Sonnet 7, for example, Pamphilia writes that those lovers are “blest” who “nurse [Cupid's] longings with his thoughts intire, / Fixt on the heat of wishes formd by love” (1, 5-6). While at the grammatical level, these “blest” lovers initially appear able to “nurse” Love's longings of their own will, we soon realize it is *Love's* thoughts (“*his* thoughts intire”)—thoughts “formd” by Love himself—that he is being self-reflexively nurtured by. In effect, the lovers do no

Labyrinths” in *Re-reading Mary Wroth*, 85-6. One of Wroth's editors, R.E. Pritchard, writes that Wroth “often has difficulty with her grammar; her sentences frequently lose direction, impetus and clarity, while nouns and verbs do not always agree in the way a modern reader would expect” (*Lady Mary Wroth: Poems: A Modernized Edition*, 11-12). For Mary B. Moore—at least as far as the corona is concerned—form mirrors content: “Wroth magnifies the confines of the sonnet through contracted syntax that elides articles and pronouns and creates ambiguous referents, suggesting the troublesome fit of meaning to poetic form. Such tricky syntax mimics labyrinthine complexity” (“The Labyrinth as Style in ‘Pamphilia to Amphilanthus’” in *SEL* 38.1 (Winter 1998), 109).

⁸³ See “Politics of Withdrawal,” 429; *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, 246; *The Love Sonnets of Lady Mary Wroth: A Critical Introduction*, 22-3.

“nursing” of their own; love fashions the very expressions that the lovers then return to him. This depiction of the God of Love resonates with that of the Protestant God, without whom man has not a single gift (or thought) to give to God. One might recall George Herbert’s description of prayer as “God’s breath in man returning to his birth,” or John Jewel’s (1522-1571) claim that “we are not able to lift up our eyes unto heaven, nor to believe in God, nor to praise him, nor to call upon his name... Unless he open our lips, we cannot shew forth his praise.”⁸⁴

This paradox of free will is again produced in the transition from Sonnet 13 to Sonnet 14, the penultimate and ultimate poems of the corona. Sonnet 13 closes with Pamphilia’s offering to the:

Great King of Love, my soule from fained smarts
Or thoughts of change I offer to your trust
This crowne, my self, and all that I have more
Except my hart which you bestow’d before.

The first quatrain of the following sonnet reads:

Except my hart which you beestow’d before,
And for a signe of conquest gave away
As worthless to bee kept in your choyse store
Yett one more spotless with you doth nott stay.

Pamphilia offers her “soule,” her “crowne,” her “self, and all” to the “Great King of Love”; but that offer of “all” is complicated the moment Pamphilia appears to withhold her “hart.” There seem to be at least two interpretive possibilities here. In the first, Pamphilia recognizes she *cannot* offer her heart (“except my hart”), because

⁸⁴ “Prayer (I)” in *George Herbert: The Complete Poems*, ed. John Tobin (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 45; “An Exposition upon the Second Epistle” in *The Works of John Jewel, D.D., Bishop of Salisbury*, ed. Richard William Jelf, D.D. Vol. 7 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1848), 129-30.

it is not hers to offer: it *already* belongs to Love; it always has; and the god has always already done just as he wants with it (“bestow’d” it, “gave [it] away”). In the second, we might read “except” as “accept”: in which case Pamphilia is requesting that the God of Love take what he can evidently take *whether or not* it is offered him—again, what doesn’t appear to be hers to give.⁸⁵ Thus, while the opening of Sonnet 14 could certainly be read as Cupid’s having given Pamphilia’s heart away to Amphilanthus “as a signe of conquest,” there is also a theological significance to the lines. Pamphilia’s offering up what is not hers to offer is, indeed, a version of Ochino’s solution to the question of will: *to act “as though”*: “to strive with all our power after good, *as though* we knew that we were free, and [yet] give God alone the glory, *as though* certain of our subjection.”

It is perhaps worth pointing to one more labyrinth of Wroth’s period—this one constructed by Katherine Parr—the last of Henry VIII’s wives—in “The Lamentation of a Sinner”:

If I should hope, by mine own strength and power, to come out of this maze of iniquity and wickedness wherein I have walked so long, I should be deceived. For I am so ignorant, blind, weak, and feeble that I cannot bring myself out of this entangled and wayward maze. But the more I seek means and ways to wind myself out, the more I am wrapped and tangled therein. So that I perceive my striving therein to be hindrance, my travail to be labor spent in going back. It is the hand of the Lord that can and will bring me out of this endless maze of death; for, without I be prevented by the grace of the Lord, I cannot ask forgiveness, nor be repentant or sorry for them.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ “Except” was occasionally *used* to mean “to receive, accept” (from the Latin *excipere*)—although as the OED is quick to point out, in some of its examples the word is a mistake for “accept.” See “except, v. 6,” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

⁸⁶ “The Lamentation of a Sinner (1547)” in *Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence*, ed. Janel Mueller (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011), 454.

While Parr's labyrinth does not specifically concern predestination, it certainly makes matter of the will: Parr claims that she is not even capable of the affections of sorrow and the desire for repentance without the "thread" of the Lord's hand. Further, any struggle on her own part to "seek means and ways to wind [her]self out" of the maze is lost "travail," plunging her more deeply into the labyrinth than she would be were she simply to wait and watch for "the hand of the Lord."

Prior to finding herself trapped in the labyrinth of the "Crowne," Pamphilia undergoes an experience that suggests she may have been considering this question of free will even in the opening—and far more "amatory"—sequence of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. In Sonnet 31, Pamphilia is offered advice from the figure of Fortune, who instructs her to "bannish all clouds of doubt... and on Love depend" (11-12). The lover relates that "I, [Fortune] obey'd"; through this obedience, she discovers that "love / Indeed was best, when I did least itt move" (13-14). While spoken by a "pagan" figure (the Christian analogue was Providence), the advice Fortune offers Pamphilia is of service to her when she later finds herself in the labyrinth: the "less" she "moves" love, Fortune claims, the better she can be guided by love's "thread." In reformed terms, "not moving" in the labyrinth is Pamphilia's only option: God is the origin of both the will to move and the movement itself.

ISRAEL, JEALOUSY, AND THE TURN TO THE GOSPEL

At the close of the crown the jealousy that Pamphilia has resisted throughout

the sequence returns.⁸⁷ Here is the remainder of Sonnet 14, with its volta (“yett”) at the sestet:

The tribute which my hart doth truly pay
Is faith untouch’d, pure thoughts discharge the score
Of debts for mee, wher constancy bears sway,
And rules as Lord, unharm’d by envyes sore,
Yett other mischiefs faile nott to attend,
As enimies to you, my foes must bee:
Curst jealousie doth all her forces bend
To my undoing; thus my harmes I see.
So though in Love I fervently doe burne,
In this strange labourinth how shall I turne?

Even as Pamphilia devotes herself to spiritual love and to the path of virtue, she cannot thwart her old antagonist for long: the poems that follow the “Crowne” include “a scattered but insistent series of brooding sonnets on Jealousy,” which Roger Kuin calls *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*’ “most original feature.”⁸⁸ Barbara Lewalski identifies jealousy as “the single remaining flaw in [Pamphilia’s] love”; Clare Kinney argues that “the Corona... becomes a testing ground for a powerful, if ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to define and embrace a vision of a higher Eros that will purge the ‘idle phant’sie’ of the jealous imagination.”⁸⁹ Josephine Roberts reads this return as a “failed attempt to idealize passion.”⁹⁰ Indeed, Sonnet 14 would appear to confirm this “failure”: jealousy is described as “mischief,” an “enim[y]” to the God of Love, “ben[t] to [Pamphilia’s] undoing.”

⁸⁷ Josephine Roberts’ edition of Wroth’s sequence maintains the unusual numbering of the Folger manuscript. “Jealousy” occurs in the following poems of this edition: Sonnet 18 (page 97), “Song” (page 119), Sonnet 3 (page 120), and Sonnet 4 (page 121).

⁸⁸ “More I Still Undoe,” 155.

⁸⁹ “Authorship and Author-Characters,” 45; “Escaping the Void: Isolation, Mutuality, and Community in the Sonnets of Wroth and Shakespeare” in *Mary Wroth and Shakespeare*, 31-2.

⁹⁰ “The Biographical Problem of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*” in *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 1.1 (Spring 1982), 50-51.

But to return to Paul's Epistle to the Romans for another interpretation of this jealousy is to allow Pamphilia to serve as an instructive figure in the corona's final sonnet, rather than to read the "Crowne" as a wholly "unsuccessful" or "failed" romanticization. Paul reminds the church at Rome that "there [is] a remnant through the election of grace. And if it be of grace, it is no more of workes, or els were grace no more grace" (11:5-6)—something Pamphilia conceivably rehearses as she attempts to dispense with the "labour" of the "labourinth" and instead take the thread of love in Sonnet 1. Earlier in the Epistle, Paul had described God's rejection of Israel for "going about to stablish their owne righteousness" (10:3), and used the Israelites as an example to the Romans for how *not* to attain such righteousness: "Say not in thine heart, Who shal ascende into heauen?... Or, Who shal descende into the depe?... [for] the worde is nere thee, euen in thy mouth, and in thine heart" (10:6-8).

Here we see the Pauline origins of Calvin's admonition against predestinarian over-curiosity, as well as his recourse to the Gospel ("worde") as an alternative.⁹¹ Paul claims that God's punishment for their self-righteousness was to "harden" the hearts of the rebellious Israelites (11:7) so that they found themselves in a state analogous to those in the theologians' predestinarian labyrinth: "Let their table be made a snare, & a net, & a stombling block... Let their eyes be darkened that they se not" (11:9-10). But this "stombling" was not meant to be permanent. Rather, Paul asks: "Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their

⁹¹ Indeed, the marginal notes to the 1560 Geneva gloss "worde" as "the promes & the Gospel which agreeth with the Lawe" (10:8).

fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy” (11:11).⁹²

It is a rare word in the New Testament, appearing only four times in King James’ translation—two of which occur in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (10:19, 11:11), and both of which concern the jealousy that “provokes” the Israelites to turn to God. Calvin writes of Romans 11:11:

The Apostle asserts... that the fall of the Jews had turned out for salvation to the Gentiles; but to this end—that they might be kindled by a sort of jealousy, and be thus led to repentance... The word here used denotes the feeling of emulation or jealousy with which we are excited, when we see another preferred before us. Since then it was the Lord’s purpose that Israel should be provoked to emulation, they were not so fallen as to be precipitated into eternal ruin; but that God’s blessing, despised by them, might come to the Gentiles, in order that they might at length be also stirred up to seek the Lord, from whom they had fallen away.⁹³

Again, Pamphilia appears to be a figure for the Israelites. In Sonnet 14 of the corona, the lover writes that the God of Love “beestow’d” her “hart,” and *then* “gave [it] away”—precisely the order in which the Israelites experience God, to whom they first belong, and against whom their hearts are later “hardened.” Of course, this hardening is temporary: Andrew Willet (1562-1621) reminds his congregation that “the Iewes” of Romans 11 “should not thinke their fall to be irrecoverable.”⁹⁴ Reading the first quatrain of the crown’s final poem through the lens of Romans 11 thus emphasizes the singular importance of predestinarian “constancy”—even for those who appear to have “stumbled that they should fall” *for good*. Pamphilia tells Love that “one [heart]

⁹² I use the King James Version here, which uses the word “jealousy.” The Geneva reads, “to prouoke them to follow them.” The Geneva does use “enuie” in Romans 10:19, and “ielouse” in a marginal note to Romans 11:14, to the same end.

⁹³ *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul... to the Romans*, 421-2.

⁹⁴ *Hexapla, that is, A six-fold commentarie vpon the most diuine Epistle of the holy apostle S. Paul to the Romanes* (Cambridge: Printed by Cantrell Legge, 1611), fol. Tt3.

more spotless with you doth nott stay.” That is, though Pamphilia’s heart has been “given away” by the God of Love, this severing—like the Israelites’ hardening—is only a temporary state of affairs. The “curst jealousy” that her absence from her own heart provokes in Pamphilia thus may not be so “curst” after all, so long as she uses it well: to “provoke” her to continue turning to the God of Love, to diligently “prove” that the sanctification she experienced in the first thirteen sonnets of the corona is not temporary.

I suggested earlier that Wroth may have been referencing Israel’s “presumptuous security” of election in the hemlock of Sonnet 11. I am indeed of the belief that Wroth wrote her corona with the Israelites in mind. Surely their story permeated her both her religious and personal lives in various ways. We saw, in Chapter 1, the degree to which the Psalms and Paul’s Epistles were emphasized in the Church of England’s liturgical calendar. Wroth’s aunt and uncle had, after all, translated Israel’s history in translating the former; and we have just seen how the latter took up Israel as a soteriological lesson. Wroth’s *Countesse of Mountgomerie Urania* had Sidney’s *Countesse of Pembroke’s Arcadia* as its source; likewise *Pamphilia and Amphilanthus* followed in the footsteps of *Astrophel and Stella*. It is thus wholly reasonable that Pamphilia’s “Crowne”—particularly given its “constant” persona’s allusions to Israel’s neglect of what Hooker called the “perpetuitie of inward grace”—would be a partial response to her aunt and uncle’s *Psalms*.

In evoking the Israelites, Wroth joins Spenser in what I read as an attempt to bring both Old and New Testaments to bear on the didactic possibilities of a newly-

Protestantized English Petrarchan sequence. But unlike Spenser—for whom I argue both Old and New covenants end up *matter*ing (works are, after all, signs of sanctification after grace)—Wroth evokes Israel in her “Crowne” to hopefully anticipate their conversion. The purpose of the Israelites’ “enuie” and “jealousy” was, after all, their turn to the Gospel—the very text that would also lead those struggling in the predestinarian labyrinth to the recollection of faith and love.

PAMPHILIA’S RELINQUISHING OF PREDESTINARIAN DESPAIR

There have been a wealth of interpretations about what it means that Pamphilia closes her corona asking the same question she began with (“In this strange labourinth how shall I turne?”).⁹⁵ Josephine Roberts’ reading—in which Pamphilia “learns that it is impossible to sustain a perfect vision and returns at the end to her awareness of the human weaknesses that undermine love”—is a fairly typical take on the matter.⁹⁶ That the first-person singular—which disappeared after Sonnet 1—returns again in Sonnets 13 and 14 has been widely noted; Bassnett, for one, sees in this return “an important confirmation of Pamphilia’s position as one of the lucky elect.”⁹⁷ I would only add one observation to these interpretations.

As is the case in Greville’s sequence, there is plenty of despair in the poems preceding *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*’ corona: of the first “sequence” of fifty-five

⁹⁵ See *Gender and the Garden*, 120; “The Maze Within,” 95; *Redeeming Eve*, 239; *Desiring Voices*, 148; *Echoes of Desire*, 153; *The Currency of Eros*, 151-2; “Ariadne, Venus, and the Labyrinth,” 209; “The Onely Perfect Vertue,” 238-9; *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, 48; *Women Writers of the English Renaissance*, 188; “Heart of the Labyrinth,” 264.

⁹⁶ *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, 48. See also “The Onely Perfect Vertue,” 238-9.

⁹⁷ “Politics of Election,” 124. See also *Women Writers of the English Renaissance*, 188; “Mary Wroth’s Guilty ‘secret art,’” 80; “Escaping the Void,” 31-2.

poems alone, the word occurs in Sonnets 5, 6, 9, 28, 29, and 32, and in Songs 2 and 3. But there *is no* despair in the corona itself. I argued that the eventual disappearance of despair in *Caelica* was due to the collection's adherence to the reformed argument about despair's crucial—but temporary—role in obtaining assurance. But because Pamphilia's theology *cautions* against such presumptuous over-assurance, the disappearance of Wroth's lover's despair must have a different cause.

Because the labyrinth was a metaphor for election, it was also necessarily a metaphor for divine providence. Citing Penelope Reed Doob's study on the labyrinth, Mary Moore writes that "the labyrinth's several meanings" can be attributed "to its three dimensional form, which makes possible two visual positions: inside and outside. Seen from inside, the labyrinth confuses the wanderer, as it does Pamphilia." However, "seen from the outside, the perspective the reader takes, the labyrinth reveals its complexity and artistry."⁹⁸ Moore posits a distinction here between poetic persona and reader; but the labyrinth also marked the perspectival difference between the penitent and God.

As is the case with Calvin's over-curious penitent who finds himself in a predestinarian labyrinth of his own making (and perhaps the great irony of the "Crowne" is that the labyrinth *is*, literally, of Pamphilia's own making), Pamphilia experiences severely restricted vision in the labyrinth ("Wayes are on all sides while the way I miss"). Yet, to the viewer of the maze, "who sees the pattern whole," the labyrinth's "random confusion is revealed as the perfect physical and moral order of a

⁹⁸ *Desiring Voices*, 132. See also *The Idea of the Labyrinth*.

divine architect.”⁹⁹ (One may recall, for instance, the winged God-figure who is pictured *outside* of the maze in Quarles’ book of emblems). The labyrinth thus served as one of many metaphors in Wroth’s period of the distinction between postlapsarian man’s limited knowledge and divine omniscience—and thus for the trust that man needed to place in the latter.¹⁰⁰ To do so would be to dispense with despair.

As Huston Diehl observes of the medieval church maze, “though the pilgrim would not be able to see the whole design at once, he could act with the faith that a comprehensive design existed, that the path led to heaven and God, the symbolic center of the maze.”¹⁰¹ In her “reformed” labyrinth, Pamphilia *cannot*, in fact, be wholly assured that her “thread of love” leads her down the path “to heaven and God.” Wroth’s lover has more “wayes” to turn than the medieval pilgrim did, but—and perhaps *moreso*, for this reason—the need for faith above “labour” still holds. Through the “Image of fayth” (C 2.12) that she perceives while holding the thread, Pamphilia—at her best—would be able to see that the apparent malevolence of fortune (the return of “curst jealousie” (C 14.11)) is actually the benevolence of Providence. Indeed, “the reiection of the Iewes is not euill but good,” commentaries on Romans 11 claimed; “for this event must not be seuered from the providence of God.”¹⁰² While the labyrinth as a trope, that is, indicates the limits of knowledge that ensued from The

⁹⁹ *Changing the Subject*, 42-3; “The Maze Within,” 99; *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, 312-13.

¹⁰⁰ For instance, Thomas Browne’s (1605-1682) metaphor in the *Religio Medici* of history as a play in which man only partakes of one scene while God beholds all of its scenes at once, or Philippe de Mornay’s metaphor (in Sidney’s translation of *A woorke concerning the trewenesse of the Christian religion*) in which man only hears a single note in the song of which God hears the whole. See C.A. Patrides, *The Grand Design of God: The Literary Form of the Christian View of History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 83; Frederick Kiefer, *Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy* (The Huntington Library, 1983), 20-21.

¹⁰¹ “Into the Maze of the Self,” 284-5.

¹⁰² *A plaine exposition*, fol. C8; *Hexapla*, fol. Tt3.

Fall—a Fall Pamphilia rewrites in Sonnet 11—it also hints at providential guidance according to a preordained plan, which includes Pamphilia’s salvational status—even if, from within, she can only register *some* “signs” of this plan.

BONDAGE OF THE WILL / THE BONDAGE OF WILL: THEOLOGICAL TRACES IN *SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS*

It is difficult to shake the nagging feeling that something ought to be “done” with Shakespeare at the end of all of this. By the time the *Sonnets* was published in 1609, there was a strain of English Petrarchism well underway—indeed, its moment nearly finished—that this study has been arguing was consistently taken up to Protestant ends. A reader would understandably be anticipating a chapter with a claim about the theological infrastructure of the *Sonnets* along the lines of the five that have preceded it. I am bound to disappoint: the *Sonnets* remains an apple in a study of oranges. If Will was “bound,” it was not to the theological inclusions of the amatory tradition he inherited. Nor was it to the idea that love poetry ought to be written to didactic ends: indeed, English Petrarchism is nearly wholly emptied of instruction in Shakespeare. While Sidney’s “end [in writing] was not vanishing pleasure alone, but morall Images, and Examples,” Shakespeare was a man of the theater; pleasure came first and foremost for the playwright-poet.¹ And when one is in the business of creating and destroying whole worlds on a daily basis, one is likely to be more interested in time, its ravaging, and how poetry might *extend* it in one’s love poems: “morall Images, and Examples,” it appears, do not of necessity follow.

I turn to Shakespeare, then, not to offer a theological underpinning to his sequence, nor to uncover any subtle religious doctrine there. Rather, what *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* does for this study is to bolster its argument for theology in the collections that *precede* it (we must exclude Wroth’s sequence, published over a

¹ Cited in Richard Hillyer, *Sir Philip Sidney, Cultural Icon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 48.

decade after the *Sonnets*). That is to say, Shakespeare could only have parodied the Petrarchan blazon in Sonnet 130 (“My Mistres eyes are nothing like the Sunne”) because the blazon’s prevalence in the genre had finally rendered it trite. One can only parody what has been overdone, or else the parody is indecipherable as such. It appears that Shakespeare perceptively caught on to the theological underpinnings I have been arguing for in his predecessors’ sequences, and redeployed their theology—and not just their Petrarchisms—to parodic ends. In this final chapter I will focus on just two of Shakespeare’s sonnets—Sonnets 57 and 58—which I read as “Will sonnets” (a term that has been reserved for sonnets 135 and 136). The collection, as a whole, may not be “doing anything” in particular (at least not so far as I have been able to tell) with theology; but these two poems offer a critique of the ways English Petrarchan poets before them took up theology in their love poems.

Free will was no less a concern for Shakespeare than it was for Spenser or for Wroth. Studies of how Shakespeare dealt with the matter of free will and providence in a play like *Hamlet* alone are abundant.² When the lover tells the fair youth, in Sonnet 58, that “in your Will, / (Though you doe any thing) he thinkes no ill” (13-14), he is in one way no less serious than Laertes is when he tells Ophelia that Hamlet’s “will is not his own,” or than Hamlet is when he reminds Horatio that “there is special

² See Alan Sinfield, “Hamlet’s Special Providence” in *Shakespeare Survey* 33 (1980), 89-98; Richard Mallette, “‘From Gyves to Graces’: *Hamlet* and Free Will” in *JEGP* 93 (1994), 336-55; John Gillies, “The Question of Original Sin in *Hamlet*” in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64.4 (Winter 2013), 396-424; Russell M. Hillier, “Hamlet the Rough-hewer: Moral Agency and the Consolations of Reformation Thought” in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Ethics*, ed. Patrick Gray and John D. Cox (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014); John E. Curran, Jr., *Hamlet, Protestantism, and the Mourning of Contingency: Not to Be* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Gary Watt, “‘His will is not his own’: Hamlet Downcast and the Problem of Performance” in *Shakespeare’s Acts of Will: Law, Testament, and Properties of Performance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). These are but a few of many more examples.

providence in the fall of a sparrow” (I.iii.17, V.ii.197-8).³ But there is another way in which the lover appears exhausted (as Hamlet is not) by the ways that English Protestantism has theologized the genre in which he is writing: the poem’s sardonic tone—spoken by a lover-“slave” who claims to have *no* will, to a beloved who is figured as the embodiment of *free* will (though clearly emptied of his divinity)—intimates what Shakespeare may have seen as theology’s overdone ubiquity in the collections that precede it. Before turning to the sonnets, I turn to another set of metaphors—far from Wroth’s labyrinth—that were regularly taken up in the free will controversy. As he parodies the Protestant employment of the “bound will” in the Petrarchan tradition (Spenser’s lover describing the beloved as “my lower heaven” “whose will my love doth sway” (*Am* 46); Astrophel’s “I willing run, yet when I runne repent” (*AS* 19)), Shakespeare, too, appears to be guided by Paul’s Epistle to the Romans—as well as the language employed in the two most well-known disputes on the topic.

REFORMED DOCTRINE ON THE BOUND WILL

Far from resolving the question of free will and predestination, the disputes between Luther and Erasmus and between Calvin and Albertus Pighius brought these matters to the forefront of the early modern English imagination only to further imbue them with a disquieting uncertainty. We have seen this ambiguity most conspicuously in Watson and Wroth. The views presented in Luther’s 1532 *De servo arbitrio* (*On the Bondage of the Will*) had been offered in germinal form in his 1517 *Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam*, as well as the following year in the Heidelberg

³ Ed. A.R. Braunmuller (New York: Penguin Books, 2001).

Disputation: man's "inclination is not free, but captive"; "we are not masters of our actions... but servants."⁴ Erasmus' defense of a limited freedom of the will in his *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio* (*Diatribe or discourse on the freedom of the will*, 1524) prompted Luther to return to these early assertions.⁵ In *De libero arbitrio*, Erasmus argues that if man has the capacity neither to "apply himself" through grace, nor to "turn away from" the "things which lead to eternal salvation"—that is, to choose between good and evil—then he simply cannot be admonished for having made the wrong choice.⁶ Indeed, God is not a good God if he coerces our will one way and then damns us for being coerced, Erasmus claims; the only way to keep God a *just* God is to acknowledge man's agency in his own reprobation.

But as far as Luther is concerned, Erasmus' argument is fundamentally flawed for two reasons. In the first, it attempts to fit God's sovereign justice—a justice man cannot, in fact, comprehend—into man's perception of justice, and to reduce God's will and pleasure to the confines of human reason. It has become a commonplace to summarize the theologians' dispute as such: "Where Erasmus says, 'let God be good,' Luther says, 'let God be God'"; and indeed, Luther's insistence on God's sovereignty against man's dim reason makes this nearly a legitimate encapsulation. Luther acknowledges that "reason can neither grasp nor endure" the thought of a God who would reprobate man through no fault or demerit of his own—and yet, to apply reason

⁴ Cited in Dolora A. Wojciehowski, *Old Masters, New Subjects: Early Modern Poststructuralist Theories of Will* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995), 92.

⁵ In *De libero arbitrio*, Erasmus had defined free will as "the power... by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them" ("Erasmus: On the Freedom of the Will" in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 47). He concludes his diatribe as such: "Thus to those who maintain that man can do nothing without the help of the grace of God, and conclude that therefore no works of men are good—to these we shall oppose a thesis to me much more probable, that there is nothing that man cannot do with the help of the grace of God, and that therefore all the works of man can be good" (*Ibid.* 85).

⁶ *Ibid.* 47.

to this scenario is to “demand that God should act according to human justice... or else cease to be God.”⁷ And when asked, then, why God does not simply “change the evil wills that he moves?” Luther’s answer is straightforward (if unsatisfying): “this [answer] belongs to the secrets of his majesty, where his judgments are incomprehensible. It is not our business to ask this question, but to adore these mysteries.”⁸ Yet the summary of the dispute (“let God be good” / “let God be God”) is only *roughly* concordant with the facts: for Luther, too, maintains God’s goodness and justice—though for Luther, these things are “mysterious,” “secret,” and “hidden” to man. What God wills is right and good “not because he is or was obliged so to will [it]”; on the contrary, Luther claims, “because [God] himself so wills, therefore what happens must be right.”⁹ While from a human perspective, God’s will appears both capricious and arbitrary, it *is*, according to Luther, in fact always consistent with God-self, which is—when rightly understood—forever both good and just.

Erasmus’ second mistake, according to Luther, is that the Catholic theologian presumes that the opposite of a *free* will is a *coerced* will. When man sins, Luther claims, he does so willingly and not out of compulsion—and for this reason he *is* wholly responsible for his actions. Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely this willingness to sin that man cannot change—he is bound to his own willingness. Lisa Freinkel observes how Luther’s characterization of the will refuses any simple dichotomy of “willing-and-unwilling”:

[Luther] doesn’t claim that man *lacks* free will – nor does he claim that man is incapable of doing what he wants. Rather, Luther argues that as willing creatures, we can *only* do what we want: our desires are the

⁷ “Luther: On the Bondage of the Will” in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, 258.

⁸ *Ibid.* 236.

⁹ *Ibid.* 236-7.

one thing about which we are unwilling. At the very heart of us as willing creatures, our will, *as such*, is unwilling. We don't *lack* free will; instead, what will we have, Luther tells us, is *unfree*. No simple dichotomy then obtains between our willingness and our unwillingness. Every act of will, precisely by dint of being willful, contains that about which we are unwilling: the volition or inclination that we do not choose, nor cannot change.¹⁰

This paradox of “willing bondage” is one Calvin echoes nearly two decades later in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* (*Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii*). Calvin's 1543 text is a reply to the first six books of Pighius' 1542 *Ten Books on Human Free Choice and Divine Grace* (*De libero hominis arbitrio et divina gratia*), which were an attack on Calvin's views on the bondage of the will as they were put forth in the 1539 *Institutes*. Indeed, Calvin first employed the paradox of “voluntary slavery” or “voluntary servitude” there:

Man, since he was corrupted by the fall, sins not forced or unwilling, but voluntarily, by a most forward bias of the mind; not by violent compulsion or external force, but by the movement of his own passion; and yet such is the depravity of his nature, that he cannot move and act except in the direction of evil. If this is true, the thing not obscurely expressed is, that he is under a necessity of sinning (2.3.5).¹¹

The paradox—the will as “both bond and free”—occurs repeatedly in the *Institutes*.¹² In *Bondage and Liberation*, Calvin returns to these assertions. His postlapsarian man—like Luther's—sins both necessarily *and* voluntarily: fallen man is a slave to sin in that he can do nothing *but* sin—and yet he sins spontaneously, of his

¹⁰ *Reading Shakespeare's Will: The Theology of Figure from Augustine to the Sonnets* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), 247.

¹¹ All citations of the *Institutes* are taken from Henry Beveridge's translation (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008).

¹² Quoting Augustine, for instance, Calvin writes: “Thus the soul, in some strange and evil way, is held under this kind of voluntary, yet sadly free necessity, both bond and free; bond in respect of necessity, free in respect of will: and what is still more strange, and still more miserable, it is guilty because free, and enslaved because guilty, and therefore enslaved because free” (2.3.5).

own will and of his own accord.¹³ A coerced will, after all, Calvin claims, would be a contradiction in terms, while a free will (which would imply an ability to choose the good) would be a contradiction of postlapsarian man's innate wickedness.¹⁴ What remains, then, is the *bound* will—which, “because of its corruptness is held captive under the authority of its evil desires, so that it can choose nothing but evil, even if it does so of its own accord and gladly, without being driven by any external impulse.”¹⁵ It is the distinction between “necessity” (which is an aspect of bondage) and “coercion” that allows Calvin—as it does Luther—to claim that when man sins, the sin is to be imputed to *him* rather than to God.

The *servo* of Luther's title and the *servitude* of Calvin's mean both “servant” and “slave”; both theologians use these terms repeatedly in their defenses of the bound will. Luther writes that “free will... is not free at all, but immutably the captive and slave of evil, since it cannot of itself turn to the good.”¹⁶ Calvin's will “is free by nature, but by corruption it has been made a slave.”¹⁷ It has become “so enslaved by depraved lusts as to be incapable of one righteous desire”; it “is indeed free, but not freed—free of righteousness, but enslaved to sin.”¹⁸ In the *Institutes*, Calvin exclaims: “An admirable freedom! that man is not forced to be the servant of sin, while he is, however, *ethelodoulos* (a voluntary slave); his will being bound by the fetters of sin” (2.2.7). Philippe de Mornay, William Perkins, Bishop Edwin Sandys (1519-1588),

¹³ Paradoxically, this bondage was brought on *voluntarily* through original sin; as Calvin maintains, “our choice is now held captive under bondage to sin, but how did this come about except by Adam's misuse of free choice when he had it?” (*Bondage and Liberation*, 46-7).

¹⁴ “We do away with coercion and force, because this contradicts the nature of the will and cannot coexist with it. We deny that choice is free, because through man's innate wickedness it is of necessity driven to what is evil and cannot seek anything but evil” (*Ibid.* 69).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ “Luther: On the Bondage of the Will,” 141.

¹⁷ *Bondage and Liberation*, 97.

¹⁸ *Institutes* 2.2.12; 2.2.8; 2.3.5.

and the puritan preacher Thomas Watson (1620-1686) were among the many who picked up the servant/slave metaphor and redeployed it in their sermons and commentaries.¹⁹

Reformers agreed that the will is only actually “freed” (able to do good) through grace. But this description is misleading; for the will “freed” through grace, in fact, remains bound. In part this is due to the Pauline and Augustinian conception of the “double will,” which we saw at work in *Astrophel* in Chapter 3—that is, that even the *regenerate* remain in part wickedly willful due to the fact that they are still in the flesh.²⁰ Calvin calls this “the common bondage of the faithful,” wherein the regenerate experiences a contrary will—the “remnants of the old man”—at the same time that he experiences a will that agrees with righteousness.²¹ In this sense,

¹⁹ Mornay writes that “by following his owne will in sted of Gods Will, [man] left his freedome and became a bondseruant vnto euill.” For Perkins, “by nature we are servants of sinne,” since “before we are justified, we cannot so much as will that which is good.” Sandys describes the will as being “in such thralldom and slavery unto sin, that it cannot like of any thing spiritual and heavenly.” William Ames (1576-1633) laments that “although fallen human beings ‘serve a most miserable servitude... to sin,’ they do not desire to ‘shake off this slavish yoke,’ since ‘their very will it selfe, and the spirit of their minde is possessed by this slavery’”; Watson, likewise, that men are “willing to be slaves, they will not take their freedom, they kiss their fetters.” (*A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion, written in French: Against Atheists, Epicures, Paynims, Iewes, Mahumetists, and other Infidels*. By Philip of Mornay Lord of Plessie Marlie. Begunne to be translated into English by Sir Philip Sidney Knight, and at his request finished by Arthur Golding (London: Imprinted for Thomas Cadman, 1587), 207; Perkins cited in Anthea Hume, *Edmund Spenser: Protestant Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 68-9; Sandys and Ames cited in Benjamin Myers, *Milton’s Theology of Freedom* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 137, 141; “Man’s Misery by the Fall” in *A Body of Practical Divinity, in a Series of Sermons on the Shorter Catechism* (Aberdeen: Printed by George King, 1838), 142).

²⁰ See Romans 7:18-23. Augustine writes: “The mind commands the mind to will; it is not something else, yet it does not do it. What is the source of this monstrosity? What purpose does it serve? It commands, I say, that the will-act be performed, and it would not issue the command unless it willed it, yet its command is not carried out.” It must be the case, then, Augustine proposes, that two “wills” arise within the mind, but neither of these is the “complete” will: “it does not will it completely, and so it does not command it completely. For, it commands to the extent that it wills; and what it commands is not done, to the extent that it does not will it, since the will commands that there be a will, not another will, but its very self. So, it does not command with its whole being; therefore, its command is not fulfilled... And, thus, there are two voluntary inclinations, neither one of which is complete, and what is present in one is lacking in the other.” (*Saint Augustine: Confessions*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 217-18).

²¹ *Bondage and Liberation*, 179-80.

Christian “liberty” consists in partially-bound will that *does not will* to accomplish what it, at the same time, *desires* to accomplish. Furthermore, the will is never *not* in servitude because when grace acts upon it, it becomes bound to another object—God—rather than being *delivered* from bondage. As Luther famously declared through the metaphor we saw Sidney take up:

If God works in us, the will is changed, and being gently breathed upon by the Spirit of God... it goes on willing and delighting in and loving the good, just as before it willed and delighted in and loved evil... So not even here is there any free choice, or freedom to turn oneself in another direction or will something different, so long as the Spirit and grace of God remain in a man... if a Stronger One [God] comes who overcomes [Satan] and takes us as His spoil, *then through his Spirit we are again slaves and captives - though this is royal freedom - so that we readily will and do what he wills*. Thus the human will is placed between the two like a beast of burden. If God rides it, it wills and goes where God wills... If Satan rides it, it wills and goes where Satan wills; nor can it choose to run to either of the two riders or to seek him out, but the riders themselves contend for the possession and control of it.”²²

There *is* no free will in the sense of autonomy or independence. Even once redeemed, man “has no Free will, but is a captive, slave, and servant... to the will of God.”²³ Indeed, “you would not call a slave free, who acts under the sovereign authority of his master; and still less rightly can we call a man... free... when [he] live[s] under the absolute sovereignty of God.”²⁴

Similarly, for Calvin, the grace that draws men out of bondage to sin only binds them elsewhere: the regenerate do not possess the option of willing or not-willing. Rather, God “offers” grace to certain men without also offering them the choice “between receiving it and rejecting it”; instead, “he steers the mind to choose

²² “Luther: On the Bondage of the Will,” 140, italics mine.

²³ *Ibid.* 143.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 170.

what is right, he *moves* the will... to obedience,” so that the regenerate “*of necessity* will well.”²⁵ “Accordingly, all the actions which are afterwards done [by the regenerate] are truly said to be wholly [God’s]”: grace “produces,” “works,” and “moves” the regenerate will; therefore “we are not our own” (*Institutes* 2.5.15; 3.7.1).²⁶

The reason Calvin and Luther had such difficulty with the term “free will” (Luther called it a “contradiction in terms” and “an empty phrase, of which the reality has been lost”) is that it is a concept only properly applicable to God.²⁷ Indeed, God’s sovereign will and his good pleasure were one and the same thing: *Benepiacitum Dei* was the Latin term—taken from Ephesians 1:5 (God “hathe predestinate vs... according to the good pleasure of his wil”) and Philippians 2:13 (God “worketh in you, bothe the wil and the dede, *euen* of *his* good pleasure”)—that became “almost a technical term in classical Reformed dogmatics” to refer to God’s will to freely bring

²⁵ *Bondage and Liberation*, 114, 135, italics mine.

²⁶ See also *Institutes* 2.3.7; 2.3.6. Philippe de Mornay urges his readers to pray for the very transfer of bondage that Luther and Calvin describe: “We be free to followe our owne Nature; and our Nature is become euill through sinne. O wretched freedome, which bringeth vs vnder such bondage! And a fore this nature of ours, we can neither shun it nor driue it from vs: for we be bondsclaues to it, and it to sinne, and there behoueth a stronger than our selues to rid vs thereof. Therefore let vs pray God to bring the freedome of our wills in bondage to his will, and to free our soules from this hard and damnable kind of freedome, and to graunt vs by his grace, not as to the wicked, to doe his will in beeing vnwilling to do it; but as to his Children, at least wise to be willing to doe it euen in not doing it” (*A Woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian Religion*, fol. P).

²⁷ “Luther: On the Bondage of the Will,” 141, 181. Calvin writes: “we ought religiously to eschew terms which imply some absurdity, especially in subjects where error is of pernicious consequence. How few are there who, when they hear free will attributed to man, do not immediately imagine that he is the master of his mind and will in such a sense, that he can of himself incline himself either to good or evil?” (*Institutes* 2.2.7). As Luther insists in *De servo arbitrio*, free will “properly belongs to no one but God alone”; “free choice is plainly a divine term, and can be properly applied to none but the Divine Majesty alone; for he alone can do and does... whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth” (“Luther: On the Bondage of the Will,” 170, 141).

about whatever he desires—including the election and reprobation of men—without taking into account the actions or merit of his creatures.²⁸

Thus the word “pleasure” was practically unavoidable in commentaries concerning predestination. Calvin concedes that “the reason [we are elected] is the good pleasure of God,” and “the only ground on which [God] will show mercy to one rather than to another is his sovereign pleasure” (*Institutes* 3.22.3; 3.22.6). Richard Hooker claims that the cause of election “was not the foresight of any vertue in us at all,” but was only “an Act of Gods good pleasure.”²⁹ Perkins writes: “why God should know some to be His, and not others, no other reason can be giuen, but Gods good pleasure alone.”³⁰ Turning to Paul’s use of Jacob and Esau as predestinarian figures in Romans 9, Perkins writes of Esau’s reprobation: “though these mysteries cannot be comprehended by reason,” reason must still “mooue vs with reuerence to submit our selues unto the soveraigne will and pleasure of God herein.”³¹

Beneplacitum Dei was codified in the section “Of Divine Predestination” in the 1619 Canons of the Synod of Dort, which professed a strictly reformed theology of predestination, grace, will, and freedom:

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath, out of mere grace, *according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will*, chosen, from the whole

²⁸ Katherine Sonderegger, “The Doctrine of election and the Doctrine of God” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 111. *The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* defines *beneplacitum dei* as “God’s will to act freely and bring about what is good and desired by God without any influence from other sources” (ed. Donald K. McKim. 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 133).

²⁹ Cited in Daniel Eppley, “Richard Hooker on the Un-conditionality of Predestination” in *Richard Hooker and the English Reformation*, ed. W.J. Torrance Kirby (Springer-Science+Business Media, B.V., 2003), 65.

³⁰ *A Godly and Learned Exposition of Christs Sermon on the Mount: Preached in Cambridge by that Reuerend and iudicious Divine M. William Perkins* (Printed by Cantrell Legge, Printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1611), fol. Kk8.

³¹ *Ibid.*

human race... a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ... not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree: whom God, *out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure*, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves.³²

Caussam electionis esse beneplacitum Dei, maintained the Synod. “We must always return to the mere pleasure of the divine will,” Calvin claims while discussing reprobation, “the cause of which is hidden in himself” (*Institutes* 3.23.4).

Romans 9 was unanimously regarded as providing the foundation for a doctrine of predestination “according to his pleasure”—particularly the consideration of Jacob and Esau in verses 6-13 (“As it is written, I have loved Jacob, & have hated Esau,” v. 13), the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in verses 17-18, and the metaphor of the potter and the clay in verses 20-23.³³ It is worth looking briefly at the last of Paul’s Old Testament examples, because it—together with the theology of the “voluntary servitude” of the “bound will”—supports a more theologically-inflected reading of Shakespeare’s sonnets 57 and 58 than any I have yet encountered.

After the references to Jacob and Esau and to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart—and anticipating his readers’ resistance to God’s reprobating some men according to his apparently arbitrary *beneplacitum*—Paul asks the Church at Rome:

O man, who art thou which pleadest against God? shal the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hathe not the potter power of the claie to make of the same lompe one vessel

³² Articles VII and XV in “First Head of Doctrine: Of Divine Predestination” in “Canons, Ratified in the National Synod of the Reformed Church, Held at Dordrecht, in the Years 1618 and 1619.” *The Psalms and Hymns, with the Catechism, Confession of Faith, and Canons, of the Synod of Dort* (Philadelphia: Mentz & Rovoudt, 1848), 41-2.

³³ The glosses to verses 6, 11, 16, and 18 in the 1599 Geneva Bible all point to God’s pleasure as the sole cause of election and reprobation: “God chooseth by his secret counsel, such as it pleaseth him”; “God’s decree... whereby it pleased him to choose one, and refuse another”; “God is not unjust in choosing and saving of his free goodness, such as it pleaseth him”; “[those] whom it *pleased* him to appoint, to show his favor upon.”

to honour, and another vnto dishonour? *What* and if God wolde, to shewe his wrath, and to make his power knownen, suffre with long pacience the vessels of wrath, prepared to destruction? And that he might declare the riches of his glorie vpon the vessels of mercie, which he hathe prepared vnto glorie? (v. 20-23).

Paul is evoking, here, one of two—and possibly both—Old Testament references to a potter and his vessels: when Isaiah exclaims to the Israelites: “Wo be vnto him that striueth with his maker, the potsherd with the potsherds of the earth: shal the claie sai to him that facioneth it: What makest you?” (45:9); and when God exclaims, even more directly, in the Book of Jeremiah: “Beholde, as the claie *is* in the potters hand, so are you in mine hand, o house of Israel.” (18:6).

The vessel as a trope (whether for the free or bound will) was taken up frequently. According to Erasmus, the metaphorical rebukes in Isaiah and Jeremiah were meant to move the Israelites to submission to God “as a vessel to the hands of the potter”; this very submission is to be understood *as* an achievement of free will: thus the metaphor “in truth is not to take away free choice wholly.”³⁴ (Indeed, Erasmus claims, this is why the reference to vessels in Jeremiah is followed by an exhortation to penance). Elsewhere in *De libero arbitrio*, Erasmus takes up another Pauline verse metaphorizing men as vessels (“If anie man... purge him self from these, he shalbe a vessel vnto honour, sanctified, and mete for the Lord, and prepared vnto euerie good worke,” 2 Tim. 2:21) to make a similar argument:

What could be more stupid than to address a Samian pot and say, “If you make yourself clean, you will be a useful and honorable vessel”? Yet this could well be said to be a vessel endowed with reason, which, when admonished, can conform to the Lord's will. Besides, if a man is simply to God as clay in the hands of a potter, whatever shape the vase takes must be attributed to no one but the potter, especially if the potter is the one who first created the clay and molded it by his own choice.

³⁴ “Erasmus: On the Freedom of the Will,” 71.

Yet here a vessel which has been guilty of nothing because it is not its own master is thrown into eternal fire.³⁵

For Erasmus, the only way to absolve God of unrighteousness is to interpret the metaphor as inferring that the clay can be exhorted to improve itself, and that if the potter rejects it, it must be due to some fault either in the clay or in the vessel itself: since “those whom God hates or loves,” Erasmus insists, “he hates or loves for just reasons.”³⁶ The theologian goes on to make a metaphor of the metaphor, comparing the deformed vessel to a deformed slave—a comparison that will be worth remembering in a moment when we turn our attention to Shakespeare. Just as it would be unjust for God to reject a deformed vessel that had not deformed *itself*, but had been deformed by the potter-God, “anyone would deem a master cruel and unjust who flogged his slave to death because his body was too short or his nose too long or because of some other inelegance in his form”—and he would be even more unjust if the master *himself* were responsible for his slave’s deformities.³⁷

Luther, on the other hand, claims that Paul’s invocation of the vessel is “a poor sort of comparison, or rather a quite inappropriate and irrelevant one, if [Paul] does not think that freedom for us simply does not exist.”³⁸ Luther’s logic—which includes a return to the trouble of relying on human reason to understand why the potter could behave toward the vessel as he does—is not so much at issue here as is the ubiquity of the trope. Calvin, too, evokes the clay and potter of Romans 9 in an examination of reprobation in the *Institutes* (3.23.4). And the trope surfaced

³⁵ *Ibid.* 73.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 70.

³⁷ “And he would say this with still more justice if it were in his lord’s power to alter the bodily blemish of his slave, as it is in the power of God to change our will” (*Ibid.* 88).

³⁸ “Luther: On the Bondage of the Will,” 245.

repeatedly in Shakespeare's period, in lyrics by poets such as John Davies of Hereford (1565-1618) and William Alexander (1567-1640)—both of whom also wrote amatory poetry in the tradition of Petrarch.³⁹

Paul himself neither asked nor answered the question of why “vessels to dishonour” even *exist*. To do so would be to take up a thread of reason, an avenue reformed theologians resisted. Rather than justifying God's justice, Paul raises the specter of God's unrighteousness (“What shal we say then? Is there vnrighteousnes with God?”), and then immediately forecloses an inquiry into that specter with the tortured non-answer: “God forbid” (9:14)—a phrase that Paul employs ten times in his Epistle to the Romans alone.⁴⁰ What Brian Cummings writes of the potter in Jeremiah 18:6 (“O house of Israel, can not I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord?”) is equally applicable to Romans 9:14: the verse “is shot through with the terrifying possibility that God is unjust, a suggestion which it struggles to repress.” Turning again to Romans 9, Cummings continues: “Paul confronts the possibility [of God's injustice], then vigorously denies it [“God forbid”]; but the whole point of his argument would be lost if the fault were seen to lie so self-evidently ‘with the vessel and not with the potter.’”⁴¹

Indeed, “God forbid” as Paul's answer to his own question is doubly

³⁹ John Davies' speaker addresses God in “The Complaint of a Sinner”: “Lo, I a *masse* of rude vnformed *Clay*, / Present my selfe to thine *All-making skill*; / To doe all my deformities away, / And to informe my *Wit*, reforme my *Will*” (*The Muses Sacrifice* (London: Printed by T.S. for George Norton, 1612), fol. C3). William Alexander writes in his poem “Doomes-Day”: “Th'elected are not lost when as they stray, / And let none aske what so to doe God mov'd: / His will his word, his word our will should sway; / He hated *Esau*, and he *Iacob* lov'd, / Hath not the potter power to use the clay? / And though his vessels could, why should they plead, / If to dishonour, or to honour made?” (*The Poetical Works of Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling*, ed. Robert Alison. Vol. 3 (Glasgow: Maurice Ogle & Co., 1872), 16).

⁴⁰ See Romans 3:4, 3:6, 3:31, 6:1, 6:15, 7:7, 7:13, 9:14, 11:1, 11:11.

⁴¹ *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 182.

unsatisfactory. In the first place, it “answers” a question that was posed rhetorically (*of course* there is no “unrighteousness with God”); and so sits at the end of the verse superfluously and awkwardly. In the second place, “God forbid” is a phrase that traditionally carries little meaning beyond its exclamatory nature; thus a reader of Paul’s Epistle who really *may* have wondered if he reserved the right to accuse God of injustice for reprobation would never have received a direct answer.⁴² Paul himself doesn’t appear to have one; instead the verse suggests that we ought not be so presumptuous as to ask the very rhetorical question the Epistle itself has just posed.

In the face of what must have been perceived by many as the real inadequacy of Paul’s “God forbid”—he *had*, after all, just posed the most crucial question a Protestant, a Calvinist, or a Lutheran could have asked about the justice of his preordained salvational status—the reformers clung to two lines of argument. The first—as we saw Luther maintain above—was the absoluteness of God, the potter’s, goodness, *even* in preordaining reprobation. Like Luther, Calvin observed how easily naysayers would be able to “deny that the justice of God is... truly defended” in Paul’s “God forbid”—and, like Luther, Calvin goes further than simply to argue that the potter has the right to do with his clay as he pleases. Whatever the potter *does* with his clay, Calvin proposes, *is* just, by virtue of the fact that it is the potter who is doing it. For “how could he who is the Judge of the world commit any unrighteousness? (*Institutes* 3.23.4). God “wills nothing that is not just and befitting” (1.17.8); “the goodness of God is so connected with his Godhead, that it is not more necessary to be God than to be good” (2.3.5); “everything which he wills must be held to be righteous by the mere fact of his willing it” (3.23.2). It is a chain of

⁴² See “forbid, v. 2b.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

causation William Perkins follows in an influential 1590 treatise when he argues that “men are not to imagine, that a thing must first bee just and then afterward that God doth wil it: but contrariwise, first God wils a thing, and thereupon it becomes just.”⁴³

The second line of argument concerns the imperative to patience on the part of the vessel. This is perhaps a direct echo of Paul himself, who asked in the section of Romans 9 excerpted above: “*What* and if God wolde, to shewe his wrath, and to make his power knowen, suffre with long pacience the vessels of wrath, prepared to destruction?” (v. 22). Rather than accusing God of injustice for creating such “vessels of wrath,” “we must suffer and be subject to his pleasure,” Luther maintains.

(*Patience* comes from the Latin *patientia*: the endurance of pain and suffering).⁴⁴ And we must “suffer” regardless of whether we think ourselves elect or reprobate—for “even as a potter out of his clay makes a pot or vessel, as he will,” so it is for us “to suffer and not to work.”⁴⁵ In a sermon on justification, Richard Hooker tells his parishioners that God elected “us” “in suche sort alone that our selves [were] mere *patients* working... no more then the claye when the potter appointeth it to be framed for an honorable use.”⁴⁶ “Suffer patiently” was an instruction that wholly reduced man to non-action in the face of his own salvation—but given neither his will nor his actions were his own anyhow, this was his only “choice.”

THE BONDAGE OF WILL

Patience is, indeed, one of the principal characteristics of the lover in Sonnets

⁴³ Cited in David Morse, *England's Time of Crisis: From Shakespeare to Milton: A Cultural History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 360.

⁴⁴ “Patience, n. 1.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

⁴⁵ “Of Free-Will” in *The Table Talk of Martin Luther*, trans. and ed. William Hazlitt (London: H.G. Bohn, 1857), 117.

⁴⁶ Cited in “Richard Hooker on the Un-conditionality of Predestination,” 65, italics mine.

57 and 58. Here are the poems as they appeared in the 1609 Quarto:

57

Being your slaue what should I doe but tend,
Vpon the houres, and times of your desire?
I haue no precious time at al to spend;
Nor seruices to doe til you require.
Nor dare I chide the world without end houre,
Whilst I (my soueraine) watch the clock for you,
Nor thinke the bitterness of absence sowre,
When you haue bid your seruant once adieue.
Nor dare I question with my iealous thought,
Where you may be, or your affaires suppose,
But like a sad slaue stay and thinke of nought
Saue where you are, how happy you make those.
So true a foole is loue, that in your Will,
(Though you doe any thing) he thinkes no ill.

58

That God forbid, that made me first your slaue,
I should in thought controule your times of pleasure,
Or at your hand th'account of houres to craue,
Being your vassail bound to staie your leisure.
Oh let me suffer (being at your beck)
Th' imprison'd absence of your libertie,
And patience tame, to sufferance bide each check,
Without accusing you of injury.
Be where you list, your charter is so strong,
That you your selfe may priuiledge your time
To what you will, to you it doth belong,
Your selfe to pardon of selfe-doing crime.
I am to waite, though waiting so be hell,
Not blame your pleasure be it ill or well.⁴⁷

Both lyrics are, on one level, sonnets composed by a jealous lover who first employs the metaphor of the servant/slave, and then the commonplace trope of the feudal lord and his vassal, to inform his characterization of his relationship: the lord's apparent infidelities are *not* infidelities (for *that* is the nature of his sovereignty); and while the lover/vassal is *wounded* by the beloved/lord's dalliances, he cannot *accuse*

⁴⁷ *Shake-peares sonnets: Neuer before imprinted* (London: G. Eld for T.T., 1609), fol. E1.

him of them for the same reason—the master/feudal lord has absolute sovereignty to do as he pleases. This is, as might be expected, the most common interpretation of these poems.⁴⁸

And yet: “God forbid,” Sonnet 58 begins. It is often proposed that the “God” of this interjection is a reference to Cupid, despite the fact that—at least in the 1609 Quarto—“God” is the only word in the entire poem that occurs mid-line but is anyhow capitalized.⁴⁹ Indeed, almost all editors of Sonnet 58 reduce the capitalized ‘God’ of the poem’s opening line to ‘god.’⁵⁰ David Schalkwyk argues that “lowering the Quarto’s upper-case ‘God’ negates the force of the opening speech,” turning the lyric into “a merely overblown cliché about Cupid’s thrall.” For Schalkwyk, the force of “God forbid” lies in its allusion to the real experience of political subordination—a reference that is obscured “if, reducing God to Cupid, we see the poem as a mere exercise in the histrionics of infatuation.”⁵¹ I think Schalkwyk is right to introduce another layer onto the hyperbolic Petrarchan one; and I would add a third, theological, layer—one that *would* render the speaker neither hyperbolic nor

⁴⁸ See *William Shakespeare: The Sonnets and a Lover’s Complaint*, ed. John Kerrigan (New York: Viking, 1986), *The Sonnets*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 246; 166; Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1997), 278; David Honneyman, *Shakespeare’s Sonnets and the Court of Navarre* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 19; Anthony Hecht, *Melodies Unheard: Essays on the Mysteries of Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2003) 32; Marcus Nordland, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Love: Literature, Culture, Evolution* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2007), 111; David Schalkwyk, *Shakespeare, Love and Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 120.

⁴⁹ John Kerrigan says of “God” that he is “presumably Love” (*The Sonnets and a Lover’s Complaint*, 245); G. Blakemore Evans that he is “probably Cupid, the god of Love” (*The Sonnets*, 165). See also M.M. Mahood, *Shakespeare’s Wordplay* (London: Routledge, 1968), 109; Mark J. Mirsky, *The Drama in Shakespeare’s Sonnets: ‘A Satire to Decay’* (Lanham, MD: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2011) 98-9. Mirsky is one of a few who offers the possibility that the line “can be read as spoken to the biblical God” (98); possibly only Katherine Duncan Jones registers this reading, *first and foremost*, as an oath due to Q’s capitalized “God” (*Shakespeare’s Sonnets: Revised* (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), 58).

⁵⁰ David Schalkwyk, “The Conceptual Investigations of Shakespeare’s Sonnets” in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare’s Poetry*, ed. Jonathan Post (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 470.

⁵¹ *Shakespeare, Love and Service*, 119.

histrionic—given the exclamation’s (eternal) consequences—if indeed it were his relationship to the Christian God he was examining here. If we consider the lover’s “God forbid” as an echo of Romans 9, then the word “vassail” (Sonnet 58) offers up a new meaning: Paul’s predestinarian theology presses in upon the poem, rendering it a lyric playing on salvational justice as much as it plays on amatory infatuation.

By “vassail,” of course, the lover indicates his state of servitude.⁵² But English spelling had yet to be codified by 1609, and our poet is, regardless, a paronomasiac. Indeed, the pun (“vassal” / “vessel”) would become—if it were not already—a familiar one: Ben Jonson’s *Volpone* (1605), Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Miriam* (1613), Mary Wroth’s *Love’s Victory* (c. 1620), and Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish’s *The Concealed Fancies* (c. 1645) all employ it.⁵³ Shakespeare himself employs the pun in *Loves Labour’s Lost* (a play of sonnets and sonnet writing), when Armado writes to the king: “For Jaquenetta (so is the weaker vessel called), which I apprehended with the aforesaid swain, I keep her as a vessel of thy law’s fury; and

⁵² “vassal, n. 2b.” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

⁵³ In a 1578 translation of a conquest narrative, for instance, Thomas Nicholas writes “vessals and seruitours” for “*vassals* and seruitours”—one example of what an uncoded spelling could evoke (“vassal, n. 2a.” *OED Online*). In *Volpone*, Mosca says: “When you do come to swim in golden lard, / Up to the arms in honey, that your chin / Is borne up stiff with fatness of the flood, / Think on your vassal.” Mosca characterizes himself as a servant here, with a pun on “vessel,” bearing Voltore through the “flood” of wealth (*The Works of Ben Jonson, in Nine Volumes*, ed. W. Gifford, Esq. Vol. 3 (London: W. Bulmer and Co., 1816), 186). In Cary’s *Tragedy*, Graphina says: “You have preserved me pure at my request, / Though you so weak a vassal might constrain / To yield to your high will” (II.i.61-3), using the spelling of “vassal” while punning on the “weaker vessel” of 1 Peter 3 (*Elizabeth Cary: The Tragedy of Miriam, the Fair Queen of Jewry*, ed. Karen Britland (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), 34). In Wroth’s *Love’s Victory*, Lissius says: “And now, thou powerful, conquering God of Love, / I do but this much crave: thy forces prove / And cast all storms of thy just-caused rage / Upon me, vassal,” punning on “vassal” as his lady’s servant, and “vessel” as a ship wrecked by the storms of his lady’s anger (“*Love’s Victory*” in *Early Modern Women’s Writing: An Anthology 1560-1700*, ed. Paul Salzman (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 121). In *The Concealed Fancies*, Presumption says “I beseech your sweetness to account of me, as of your sad creature and vassal,” to which Tattiney responds: “How now, your still is nothing but full of impudencel!” (II.ii.16-18). A “still” is a container for distillation; Tattiney thus puns on “vassal” (servant) and “vessel” (container) (“*The Concealed Fancies*” in *Renaissance Drama by Women: Texts and Documents*, ed. S.P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (New York: Routledge, 1996), 138).

shall, at the least of thy sweet notice, bring her to trial” (I.i.259-62).⁵⁴ Armado’s “weaker vessel” evokes 1 Peter 3:7, where the apostle uses the phrase as a metaphor for women and wives; but Armado simultaneously conjures the word “vassal,” since Jaquenetta is characterized as being “kept” in servitude to the law until she is brought to trial. Further, “vessel of thy law’s fury” is plausibly a reference to the “vessels of wrath” of Romans 9:22.⁵⁵ And in the same letter—just lines before—Armado had called Costard a “shallow vassal” (l. 244), so that the missive and its “vassal” and “vessel[s]” evoke container, servant, and ship all at once.⁵⁶

I see no reason to think that the case would be otherwise in Sonnet 58. Indeed, as the lover describes himself as a “seruant,” a “slaue” (both translations of Luther’s *servo* and Calvin’s *servitude*), and a “vassail” in these two sonnets, he also characterizes himself in all the ways the reformers glossed the “vessel” of Romans 9: paradoxically “voluntarily bound” to the “hidden will” of an absent lord and his inscrutable pleasure, bereft of the right to *inquire* into that very will, and thus having no choice but to exercise patience and trust that his lord’s will *is good* until the day it is revealed to him assuredly as such. Indeed, Sonnet 58’s “vassail” is immediately followed by the word “bound”; the poem virtually demands that we regard the two

⁵⁴ *Love’s Labor’s Lost*, ed. Peter Holland (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 13.

⁵⁵ See footnotes in editions by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens (New York: T. and J. Ronalds, 1806); Edmund Malone (London: Printed for F.C. and J. Rivington, 1821); Sir Sidney Lee (New York: George D. Sproul, 1907).

⁵⁶ H.B. Charlton writes of Armado’s use of the word “vassal”: “[J.P.] Collier... substituted ‘vessel’ for ‘vassal,’ with the remark that *shallow* made the substitution necessary. But ‘vassal’ makes sense, — ‘dependent,’ ‘slave,’ — descriptions which have an obvious appeal to the chivalry-stuffed mind of Armado. Further, the fact that *shallow* would more obviously be appropriate with *vessel* is probably a strong reason for supposing that Armado would not use the combination. And finally, the fact that ‘shallow vassal’ has so easily suggested ‘shallow vessel’ is another reason for Armado’s preference: it gives him word-play, in this passage suggested only, but explicit a little later when Jaquenetta is referred to as a ‘vessel’” (*Love’s Labour’s Lost* (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1917), 121). See also Herbert A. Ellis, *Shakespeare’s Lusty Punning in Love’s Labour’s Lost: With Contemporary Analogues* (Mouton: The Hague, 1973), 101.

terms as a pair: “vassail bound,” “bound vassail.” The juxtaposition proposes that these two sonnets contain Protestant/Calvinistic predestinarian underpinnings that have not yet been fully explored. And if this is the case, then there is an even broader pun than “vassal” / “vessel” at work in both poems: Shakespeare is playing on the reformed concept of “the bondage of the will.” In Sonnets 57 and 58, we are given, instead, “The Bondage of Will.”

Scholarship on both poems has been a bit suspicious of the true nature of the lover’s professed servitude—a “servitude,” it suggests, that is effectually self-imposed.

Helen Vendler writes of Sonnet 57:

[The poem] constructs a set of alternatives to the present enslaved attendance on the hours and times of the sovereign’s desire. In fact, the writer is neither servant nor slave: *being your slave* modulates into the more accurate *like a sad slave*, which in itself yields to the better representation of the speaker as a *true fool* in love. The alternative forms of behavior... show what the speaker should, as a free man, be doing with his time... [but] the inner dismissal of all these free alternatives is the speaker’s act of self-enslavement, and his appropriation of the term *slave* leads us less to pity him than to resist his equation between real slavery and his own infatuation.⁵⁷

Other readings of the poem have expressed similar resistance to the metaphors of “slavery,” “servitude,” and “bondage” that the speaker offers.⁵⁸ The lover presents us, after all, with no chains; we are shown no cell; no literal captivity is depicted for us. In fact, the “imprisonment” that the “slave” describes in Sonnet 58 is but “th’ imprison’d absence of your libertie”: what he experiences when the fair youth

⁵⁷ *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, 274.

⁵⁸ William F. Zak, for instance, observes that “it is not [the friend] but the speaker who keeps him[self] ‘vassail bound’” (*A Mirror for Lovers: Shakespeare’s Sonnets as Curious Perspective* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 322). Carl D. Atkins calls the poem “a study in ambivalence” (*Shakespeare’s Sonnets: With Three Hundred Years of Commentary* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2007), 157). See also P.D. McIntosh, “Every Word doth almost tell my name”: *The Authorship of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2013), 50; Neil L. Rudenstine, *Ideas of Order: A Close Reading of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2014), 61.

employs his freedom to be absent from the lover.⁵⁹ The speaker's "imprisonment," in other words, is solitude. Rather than "watching the clock"—which he appears to choose to do—we get the sense that the lover could just as simply walk out the door.

The first quatrain of Sonnet 57 introduces the ambivalence of his subjection:

Being your slaue what should I doe but tend,
Vpon the houres, and times of your desire?
I haue no precious time at al to spend;
Nor seruices to doe til you require.

The "should" of "what should I doe" signifies that the speaker has options.

Grammatically, "should" did not carry the same degree of obligation it does for us now; instead it signaled conditional or hypothetical statements—Shylock's famous "What should I say to you? Should I not say 'Hath a dog money?'" being one example of such "epistemic possibility."⁶⁰ It is as though the duties of the slave-lover were never clearly delineated by his lord in their "charter"; and now, in the lord's absence, the lover is in a position to define what his own "slavery" entails: *Given I am not compelled to do anything (my lord has only wished me "adieu"), what shall I do?* he asks. The very fact that he can pose such a question belies his expressions of "slavery" and "bondage."

Further, the "slave's" function ("to waite," Sonnet 58) is arrived at by process of elimination ("I haue no precious time... to spend"; "Nor dare I chide the world without end houre"; "Nor dare I question with my iealous thought, / Where you may be"). But he cannot truly be "bound" to these "dare nots," for he is *doing* each of

⁵⁹ *The Sonnets*, ed. Evans, 166.

⁶⁰ See N.F. Blake, *A Grammar of Shakespeare's Language* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 126-8; John Bybee, "The Semantic Development of Past Tense Modals in English" in *Modality in Grammar and Discourse*, ed. Joan L. Bybee and Suzanne Fleischman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995), 511-13.

them even *as* he says he “dares not” do them. The speaker *is* “questioning” where the fair youth is; and his claim that he has “no time... to spend” is controverted by the very fact that he is writing poems in his lord’s absence: an expenditure of time, indeed. In spite of this, the speaker’s claim that he has “n[o] seruices to doe til you require” implies that the lord’s “requirement” alone makes the service as good as done.⁶¹ There is an imperative of a kind here that renders the speaker’s actions simultaneously necessary *and* voluntary—just like the actions of the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Protestant “bound wills.” For the reformers, only God possesses free will; for Shakespeare’s vassal, only his lord possesses the freedom of coming and going—and he must “suffer” (Sonnet 58) his own bondage in order to sustain his lord’s freedom.⁶² The speaker, thus, is precisely the Puritan preacher William Ames’ (1576-1633) “most miserable” servant who does not wish to “shake off this slavish yoke”; he is the preacher Thomas Watson’s “willing slave,” who “will not take [his] freedom.”⁶³ He possesses Calvin’s will, “held under [a] kind of voluntary, yet sadly free necessity, both bond and free” (*Institutes* 2.3.5).

When read as a development of the Petrarchan sonnet tradition, the lover’s “enslavement” is suffused with irony concerning the matter of his agency versus his expected submissiveness. But when the “vassail bound” is read as an echo of the predestinarian theology of Romans 9 and its commentaries, the lyric does two things at once: 1) when we recall the seriousness of the matter to the church and the government of late-sixteenth-century England, it performs an anxious oscillation between will and bondage, infused with an emotional tension perhaps not otherwise

⁶¹ *The Sonnets and a Lover’s Complaint*, ed. Kerrigan, 244.

⁶² *A Mirror for Lovers*, 321.

⁶³ *Milton’s Theology of Freedom*, 141. See footnote 19.

present in the poem's tone; *and* 2) when we recall that the fair youth is about as "divine" as the beloveds of *Caelica* or *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* are, it serves as a critical commentary on the hyperbolic nature of the genre, the conventional employment of theological language to describe the beloved, and what had become—in English Petrarchism—the conventional employment of predestinarian language to define the love relationship.

In one sense, this real theological undercurrent—and the apparent injustice of the "bound will" as it was discussed above—is quite possibly the explanation for what has been called the "bitter" tone of these two poems (the lover himself describes the "bitternesse" of the fair youth's absence).⁶⁴ There *is* a subtle tonal difference between the two lyrics: the speaker of Sonnet 57 masks his jealousy with satisfaction just a little bit better than he does in 58; in Sonnet 58, jealous suspicion becomes the more prevailing tone; the lover sounds more restless in his "bondage" and possesses a stronger sense of the injustice of his situation ((*"I am to waite, though waiting so be hell," "without accusing you of injury"*). He even suggests, in the final line of Sonnet 58, that his lord's "pleasure" may in fact *be* "ill."

But there is also a sense—as Vendler has claimed—that the lord has posited an objection between the two sonnets, and that this is the reason for the difference in tone. It is "as though the 'sovereign' had read 57, and objected to its implicit blame," Vendler observes. "Sonnet 58 has the air of a response to an anterior utterance... on the order of: 'You have no right to ask me why I was away so long, or what I was

⁶⁴ "[Martin] Seymour-Smith argues that in this Sonnet [57] 'a more direct tone of heavily sarcastic bitterness is introduced for the first time in the Quarto sequence.' The sardonic undertones felt elsewhere in the sequence begin 'taking over the whole sonnet' here, its apparent servility exuding 'ironic contempt'" (*A Mirror for Lovers*, 319). See also *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 277.

doing, or to blame me for finding pleasure elsewhere.”⁶⁵ According to this logic, the sonnets present a diptych equivalent to the two halves of Romans 9:14 (“Is there vnrighteousnes with God? God forbid”), in which the lover initially wonders if he “dare” say or think *anything* about his lord (“nor dare I chide”; “nor dare I question”), and then directly echoes Paul: “God forbid” the very *thought* that his lord might be “vnrighteous.” But the lover’s answer is as tortured as Paul’s is; and by the close of Sonnet 58, Shakespeare’s lord resembles the very “tyrant”—rather than the “sovereign”—that Calvin was concerned his predestinarian God would invoke (*Institutes* 3.23.2).

Indeed, the very thing being “forbid” in Romans 9:14 *is* thought: “Is there vnrighteousnes with God?” Paul asks. “God forbid [we think such a thing].” And it is the “thought” of the lord’s unrighteousness in the paraleipsis of Sonnet 57 (even as he says “Nor dare I thinke” and “nor dare I question,” he is “thinking” and “questioning”) that appears to get the speaker chastised, causing him to backpedal in Sonnet 58. But the vassal also gives himself permission, at the close of Sonnet 57, to “stay and thinke of nought / Saue where you are, how happy you make those.” Reading these poems as in some measure embedded in a predestinarian context asks that we observe “happy” as synonymous with “blessed,” “beatified,” predestined for election.⁶⁶ What the lover is “think[ing] of,” in accordance with such a reading, is precisely what the reformers insisted their readers and parishioners *not* think on—for that would be prying into the unfathomable mysteries of the godhead. Predestination, Luther claims, “belong[s] to the secrets of his majesty, where his judgments are

⁶⁵ *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, 277.

⁶⁶ See “happy, adj. and n., 1a and 1b” *OED Online*. Oxford University Press.

incomprehensible. It is not our business to ask” why God chooses some for election and others for reprobation; it is our business, simply, instead, “to adore these mysteries.”⁶⁷

Sonnet 58 opens with the impression that the lover has been chastened for thinking precisely on this: the unfathomable mystery of God’s *Beneplacitum Dei*. “God forbid” that “I should in thought controule your times of pleasure,” the speaker says. This is the first of two occurrences of the word “pleasure” in Sonnet 58; in the second, the vassal remarks that he is “not [to] blame [his lord’s] pleasure,” *whether* that pleasure be “ill or well.” The precise nature of the lord’s “pleasures” remains unknown, though they are consistently interpreted as the “worldly diversions enjoyed by the young man”—specifically, sexual ones.⁶⁸ Indeed, where we comprehend the character of the fair youth as he has been presented to us across the sequence is where the predestinarian language of both sonnets begins to reveal itself as a travesty.

Recall that *beneplacitum Dei*, God’s “good pleasure,” concerned two aspects of the Protestant predestinarian God in particular: his hiddenness (“the cause of [predestination] is hidden in himself” (*Institutes* 3.23.4)), and his absolute justness (“everything which he wills must be held to be righteous by the mere fact of his willing it” (3.23.2)). The lord of Sonnets 57 and 58 is, likewise, “hidden.” But he is “just” and “blameless” insofar—and *only* insofar—as the speaker implies he has no choice but to *think* and *call* him so (the latter, the poems demonstrate, is more easily accomplished than the former). Indeed, the speaker is a “foole” for “think[ing] no ill”

⁶⁷ “Luther: On the Bondage of the Will,” 236.

⁶⁸ *The Sonnets and a Lover’s Complaint*, ed. Kerrigan, 246; *The Sonnets*, ed. Evans, 166; *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977), 234; *The Drama in Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, 98; Lynne Magnusson, *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 53.

of whatever (“any thing”) the fair youth might be up to—the presumption being that what the youth is up to *is* “ill.” The couplets of both sonnets accommodate the same ironic and undercutting tone—a tone that would be blasphemous were these lines spoken to the Christian God. “Pure, pure idolatry,” Berowne exclaims of Longaville’s sonnet in *Loves Labour’s Lost*; and his exclamation describes the whole of Petrarchan literary history. “God amend us, God amend! We are much out o’ th’ way” (IV.iii.71-2). Shakespeare preempts the censure offered in these lines by his own character, by emptying the fair youth of the very divinity accorded to the beloveds in the tradition he inherited.

“What is the beloved doing [in Sonnet 57] to make [those others] so happy?” Vendler asks (though I gather she has some sense of the answer). “A curtain is drawn over the speculation.”⁶⁹ And indeed, the speaker must eventually content himself with saying, “be where you list.” The servant/slave has no idea what his lord is up to beyond the fact that he is tending to his own pleasure; and his pleasure involves making some blessedly “happy,” and—by extension—others miserable. *Theologically* speaking, the “vassail” / “vessel” has no right to ask: for ““woe to him,” [Paul] says, ‘who speaks against his maker;’ that is, the pot that contends with the former of the clay; ‘shall the clay say to its former, what doest thou?’”⁷⁰ The admonitory language of both lyrics echoes—verbatim—the cautionary language of the reformers on thinking God unrighteous or unjust. In *Bondage and Liberation*, Calvin writes of “the incomprehensible judgments of God, before which Paul trembles in adoration and

⁶⁹ *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, 274.

⁷⁰ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to The Romans*, trans. and ed. Rev. John Owen (Edinburgh: Printed for the Calvin Translation Society, 1849), 366.

wonder because he *dare not* scrutinize them.”⁷¹ Shakespeare’s lover, likewise, *dare not* chide or question (Sonnet 57)—though surely he *does*. Nor may he “accus[e]” his lord “of injury” (Sonnet 58), echoing Calvin’s admonition to the reprobate: “Let them not accuse God of injustice if they are destined by his eternal judgment to death” (3.23.3).⁷² And just as Calvin—in the same section of the *Institutes*—declares the “perversity” of men’s “lay[ing] the blame upon God” for their own sin and damnation, the speaker of Sonnet 58 affirms that he is not to “blame [his lord’s] pleasure be it ill or well.”

The final words of this sonnet register as an allusion to double predestination, which—whether the lord’s “pleasure” bodes “ill” or “well” (reprobation or election) for the speaker—will have been God’s/the fair youth’s righteous choice. It is for the lord *himself* “to pardon [himself] of selfe-doing crime.” In Protestant terms, the predestinarian “pardon” is always already there. The ends of both election and reprobation already justified the means: God elected “certaine men” “to the praise of the glorie of his grace”; he reprobated others “to the praise of his justice.”⁷³

Of course, the line in Sonnet 58 still drips with resentment; the vassal cannot constrain himself from intimating the “criminality” of “self-pardon” or of “blameless ill.” The underlying sentiment is, in part, Erasmian: if the vassal/vessel’s will is not his own in the tableau of these lyrics (“what *you* will”), then where is the justice of his circumstance? But it is, at the same time, the poems’ registering the relative folly of a set of theologically-inflected conventions Shakespeare chose to write into—or, *out*

⁷¹ *Bondage and Liberation*, 39-40, italics mine.

⁷² This excerpt from the *Institutes* trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

⁷³ William Perkins, cited in R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 57.

of. There *is* no savior in *Shake-speares Sonnets*; *nor* (it seems to want to remind us) was there ever any savior in the Petrarchan sequences that preceded it. Like every beloved that has come before the beloved depicted here, *this* beloved is flawed, and known to be flawed. This is perhaps why there is no temptation to ask (as has been repeatedly asked of *Caelica*'s lover, or of Wroth's Pamphilia) whether—given the apparent analogy these poems present—the “vassail” of these lyrics is among the elect or the reprobate, a “vessel of mercie” or a “vessel of wrath.” We cannot be invested in the speaker's soteriological status, for the simple reason that—unlike the speaker of the *Amoretti*, or the *Hekatompathia*, or *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*—neither is the speaker. At best, we can be invested in his decision to stay or go.

In the 1609 quarto of *Shake-speares Sonnets*, “Will” is capitalized in the penultimate line of Sonnet 57 (“So true a foole is loue, that in your Will, / (Though you doe any thing) he thinkes no ill”), so that the line conjures the speaker/poet as much as it does the lord's volition. The multivalence of “will” in what have come to be known as “the ‘Will’ sonnets” is notorious; Lisa Freinkel refers to “the by now canonical ‘six senses’ of ‘will,’” adding that “the polysemy of puns [in Sonnets 135 and 136] renders the spatial and temporal imperatives of our reading strategies... meaningless.” Indeed, “interpretations” and “paraphrases” of 135 and 136 are generally reduced to “a list of implausibly discrete and distinct definitions”—a counting of the “types of ambiguity”—since “it is not quite clear how precisely one should ‘unpack’ or explicate a pun.”⁷⁴ The “six senses” Freinkel refers to are elucidated by G. Blakemore Evans as: a) wish, desire, choice, intent; b) carnal desire,

⁷⁴ *Reading Shakespeare's Will*, 225-6.

lust; c) shall; d) penis; e) vagina; f) the Christian name Will[iam].⁷⁵ Freinkel's own list includes "rational volition, irrational desire, vagina, penis, future auxiliary, female 'common place' . . . common male proper name . . . and . . . testament."⁷⁶ Most editions of the *Sonnets* include catalogues of signification similar to these, observing that the sonnets' multivalence makes them "clever," "amusing," "artful[ly] artificial[I]" "festivals of verbal ingenuity."⁷⁷

But unlike Sonnets 135 and 136, paraphrase *is* possible within the paronomasia of Sonnets 57 and 58—both of which, I contend, are also "will sonnets." "You your selfe may priuiledge your time / To what you will," the vassal says to his lord in Sonnet 58. And the slave to his sovereign: "So true a foole is loue, that in your Will, / (Though you doe any thing) he thinkes no ill" (57). The final couplet of Sonnet 57 does not defy interpretation the way Sonnets 135 and 136 do. The grammar of the clause and the context of the poem reduce us, essentially, to two possible meanings of "Will": volition and the poet-lover's name. That is, the two possible paraphrases of the poem's final couplet are: "love thinks there is no ill in your volition, no matter what you *do* according to your desire," and "your William loves you so truly that no matter *what* you do, his love for you makes him think no ill of you."

It is precisely this reduction in paronomasiac possibility—the play sustained by the interpretive excess of sonnets 135 and 136—that points back to the inadequacy—the *lack of choice*—in Paul's "God forbid." As the "Will" of Sonnet 58 is reduced to two possible meanings (and further reduced to *one* if we abide by the claim of reformed

⁷⁵ *The Sonnets*, 253.

⁷⁶ *Reading Shakespeare's Will*, 166.

⁷⁷ *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Atkins, 335; *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Booth, 466-7. See also *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. Kerrigan, 365; *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 339-40.

theologians that God “produces,” “works,” and “moves” the will/Will, and therefore, “we are not our own” (*Institutes* 2.5.15; 3.7.1)), so is the poet’s power to make a pun. Instead of biding his time in lyrical play, he is reduced to patience: “I am to waite, though waiting so be hell.” And indeed, while that waiting might metaphorically *be* hell for the Petrarchan poet, it might more literally *end* in hell in doctrinal terms. It has been noted that the speaker’s “world without end houre” (*S* 57) is a liturgical borrowing: “As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen” was repeated in the daily “Order for Morning Prayer.”⁷⁸ Stephen Booth offers that “the general religious context that builds up in the course of this poem gives the speaker’s vigil overtones of Christian anticipation of the second coming of Christ.”⁷⁹ This *is*, after all, when “when the sonnes of God shalbe reueiled” (Rom. 8:19), and when each man shall know, with full certainty, whether or not he is among the “happy.” I do not think Booth’s suggestion about the theological in this lyric is imprecise—Romans 8 contains its fair share of “apocalyptic” language—but I maintain that its borrowings of predestinarian language (“seruant,” “slaue,” “vassail,” “pleasure,” “in your Will,” “what you will”) it is more broadly predestinarian than it is specifically apocalyptic.

It is quite likely we come to the end of these two sonnets as unsatisfied by the lover’s exclamation (“God forbid”) as we are by Paul’s: neither interjection quite seems to justify a “hidden will” (whether it be the Protestant God’s or the fair youth’s—who, let’s be honest, is out gallivanting) that cannot be *called* unjust, regardless of whether its “pleasure” is “ill or well.” Indeed, these poems may well be

⁷⁸ *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*, ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 242, 243, 245, 246, 247. See *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, ed. Atkins, 158.

⁷⁹ *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, 232.

subtly commenting on the very injustices of predestinarianism—and particularly on the apparent injustice of double predestination (God’s predetermination not only of the elect, but of the reprobate). The speaker’s suggestion that he *could* think “ill” of his lord’s pleasure points back to Erasmus’ deep struggle with the notion of the bound will (or “the bound Will”) in *De libero arbitrio*:

It is as though a master, knowing the depraved mind of a servant, should commit him to a task, in which an opportunity to sin would be given, in which he might be taken and punished... He foreknows that he will follow his inclinations and sin, and wills him to perish, and even wills him in some way to sin. Yet the servant is not thereby excused, since he sins from his own wickedness. For he has already previously deserved punishment and is to be publicly punished now that his wickedness is exposed.⁸⁰

It was precisely the idea of “*already* deserving punishment” that bore such deep disquiet in the realm of predestinarian thought; and it may be precisely this predestinarian disquiet that lends what has been read as a distinctly bitter tone to these two sonnets.⁸¹

But we are also perhaps unsatisfied by the poems because we register that the lover could very well—if he so chose—take his eyes off the clock and leave the house. Sonnets 57 and 58 *are*, I believe, profoundly interested in Protestant theology—and, more specifically, Protestant soteriology; indeed, Shakespeare appears to have lingered long on Romans 9 while composing them. But they are more interested in the ways those doctrines were redeployed in amatory poetry—with an end to *interrogating* that redeployment—than they are in taking a doctrinal stance, or in constructing a theology from within. In recalling to its readers the flaws of the beloved, as Greville’s sequence does, the theological undercurrent in the *Sonnets* is

⁸⁰ “Erasmus: On the Freedom of the Will,” 67.

⁸¹ See footnote 64.

rendered ironic. In jettisoning the theological didacticism his predecessors infused their collections with, Shakespeare does not *refuse* theology (indeed, it is palpable); rather, he resituates the genre back in the world of the flesh, where not only is the *lover* subject to the Pauline conditions of the flesh, but so is the *beloved*.