EXPLORING THE POLITICS OF TRANSCENDENTALISM IN THE POETRY OF DONNE, LANYER, CRASHAW AND MILTON: A LITERARY THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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A Dissertation

Presented to the Department of English Literatura

Programme at Selinus University

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature

2023

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how an evolving concept of transcendentalism in early modem England, influenced by Reformation and counter-Reformation theology, created new ways of responding affectively and philosophically to emerging articulations of national identity in British devotional poetry. My thesis focuses on a series of politically disruptive moments in the seventeenth century – from the residual trauma of the Protestant Reformation to the Civil War of the 1640's – that troubled England's developing sense of national identity. In the shadow of these troubles, devotional poets reworked ideas of transcendence that they had inherited from medieval Catholicism to provide a sense of national cohesion in the midst of a changing political landscape. This research explores transcendentalism as it is reconceived by four different authors: John Donne's work translates Catholic iconography to symbolise the ascension of a Protestant England; Aemelia Lanyer's poetry appeals to the exclusivity of religious esotericism as a palliative for the actual exclusion of women from political life; Richard Crashaw's writings reinterpret mystical union to rescue sovereignty from failure; and John Milton's work revises transubstantiation to authorise a new republic.

By investigating how early modern poetry reimagines transcendentalism in response to political events, my project widens ongoing conversations in political theology of literary studies, which are often unilaterally focused on the influence that religion had on politics in the course of an inevitable secularisation of culture. My contribution to this work, and the underlying premise to my argument, is that literature provides a forum for rethinking religious concepts at the heart of political organization despite the apparent impulse toward secularisation. In doing so, literature serves as a cultural medium for testing the conceptual limits of transcendence – its viability as a tool for inspiring and maintaining social unity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I bring my research journey to a close, I can genuinely say that I am immensely proud of my accomplishments. This transformative journey has not only shaped me as a researcher but also as an individual, imparting the invaluable lesson that perseverance yields fruitful rewards in the long run. The unwavering commitment and determination displayed by those around me have profoundly influenced my character.

My greatest aspiration is that my research proves beneficial and contributes to a better understanding of metaphysics. The drive to advance knowledge in this field continues to fuel my motivation and determination. I am deeply grateful to all the individuals mentioned, as none of this would have been possible without their guidance and encouragement. I am excited to see what the future holds.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: TRANSCENDENTALISM AND POETRY

Transcendentalism is an idealistic philosophical and social movement developed in New England around 1836 in reaction to rationalism. The forms of religious experience that this dissertation designates as "transcendentalism" had a different vocabulary in the Renaissance, one marked by words such as "ecstasy," "furore" and "wonder." While these words provide the expressive script to a highly charged encounter with an infinite God, the conceptual relationship between human and divine implicit in the term "transcendentalism" was generally invoked in less ecstatic moments of theological contemplation. Milton's Adam, for instance, gazes heavenward from within his earthbound Paradise to witness beings "whose excellence he saw/ transcend his own," an observation that sparks the educative conversation of *Paradise Lost*'s Book V.[1] And one seventeenth-century translation of Augustine of Hippo's *Meditations* has the saint longing for his thoughts to "transcend all that which is created." Augustine's desire takes on a charming, fantastical appeal as he imagines his mind floating beyond the material realm: "Let it run, and rise, and flutter and fly."[2] These usages of the term acknowledge a distinction between the known and the unknown, the material and the ephemeral; they do not, however, apply that distinction to the intensely emotional experiences that often characterise personal devotion. My use of the term 'transcendentalism' in a study of seventeenth-century devotional poetry – where the encounter with God is highly emotive and experiential – therefore calls for some explanation.

Put simply, I invoke transcendentalism as a theoretical term to designate the incomprehensibility of the divine from the perspective of the human. As such, transcendental is a condition of the relationship between God and humanity rather than an ontological claim about the character of God. This important distinction, drawn in part from phenomenology, directs transcendence away from a conceptualised or universal divine, where its association with absolute knowledge, justice, or power has been used as the basis for social and political

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[1] John Milton, *Paradise Lost,* (Ed.) Scott Elledge, New York: W.W. Norton, 1993, V. 456-457.

[2] Augustine, *The Meditations, Soliloquia and Manual of the Glorious Doctour,* S. Augustine translated into English, Paris: Printed by Mrs. Blagaert, 1655, p. 96.

oppression. Such was the case, asserts Emmanuel Levinas, for colonial history, in which empires frequently cited a transcendent moral good as justification for the paternalist logic that drove the colonialist enterprise. Within this context, transcendentalism functions as the epistemological basis for empire, a devastating cultural lesson in how "the emancipation of minds can be a pretext for exploitation and violence."[3] But if transcendental has, in the past, helped to determine the colonialist agenda, in recent years, transcendentalism has resurfaced in a number of different academic and popular fields, reconceived, as Regina Schwartz points out, "as the ground of humility: epistemological, ethical, aesthetic and political."[4] A brief overview of some of the major fields in which transcendentalism has been reconsidered will help to map how the idea relates to my own work in devotional poetry.

In theology, the return of transcendentalism can be tracked through the rising popularity of mysticism, with its corollary apophatic theology. Insisting on the unknowability of God, the apophatic tradition does away with the conceptual divine in favour of a God who is approached entirely through an indescribable experience. As Kevin Hart points out, the effect of a transcendent religious experience is not absolute knowledge, but openness: "God takes shape as a question in human experience, not as an answer."[5] The question formulated within mystical experience leaves devotees with desire instead of knowledge; mystics emerge from the enlightened moment without the means to understand or even describe it, but with a longing to repeat it.

This longing is what, in phenomenology, is identified as the desire for the Other. Writing from within the "theological turn"[6] of continental philosophy, Jean-Luc Marion relates transcendentalism to the Catholic icon. He contrasts the icon, which represents the God beyond the image, with the idol, which contains the God within the image.[7] Within his

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[3] Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings,* (Ed.) Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002, p. 58.

[4] 4 Schwartz, "Transcendence: Beyond," *Introduction to Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond,* (Ed.) Regina Schwartz, London and New York: Routledge, 2004, pp. vii-xii, vii. The essays in this volume form an exceptional Interdisciplinary Introduction to the Topic of Transcendence.

[5] 5 Kevin Hart, *Introduction to the Experience of God: A Postmodern Response,* (Ed.) KevinHart and Barbara Wall, New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, pp. 1-19, 7. For a more in-depth conversation on the other theological grounds for transcendence, such as imagination or anticipation, see *Transcendence and Beyond: A Postmodern Inquiry,* (Ed.) John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

[6] See Dominic Jincaud, Jean-Francois Courtine, Jean-Louis Chretien, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion, and Paul Ricoeur, *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn: The French Debate,* New York: Fordham University Press, 2001.

[7] Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte,* trans. Thomas A. Carlson, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

conception, transcendence designates the space between the gazing subject and the divine for which she searches, a space that draws heavily on Levinas' distinction between the Other and the Same. Far from creating a rift between the two subjects, this space ignites a longing for proximity, a need that is met (although never fully) through love for the other.[8] In this sense, the icon is understood as a phenomenon that awakens the subject to her own desire for the transcendent divine.

In literary studies, transcendentalism is related less to experience or phenomenon than to representation, forever frustrated by the inapproachability of the signified. Post-structuralism presents transcendentalism through aporia or interruption, when the indeterminacy of language calls attention to the unbridgeable chasm between signifier and signified. And yet, even this variation on transcendentalism has religious dimensions, as the Judeo-Christian designation "people of the book" might indicate. The relationship between icon and God, for instance, is representational, as are the performative words of institution spoken over the host: "This is my body." In his later work, Jacques Derrida mapped the inadequacies of representation onto an increasingly religious landscape when he turned to a series of affective categories – givenness, forgiveness, mourning and hospitality – as a means of analysing the interruption of transcendence into the material reality that governs interpersonal interaction.[9]

The various academic fields under which transcendence has become an object of interest all relate to my work in different ways. Certainly in the context of Reformation England, representation and experience both have a direct and immediate effect on how transcendence might be understood. What does one do, for instance, when the material objects that signify a connection with the divine are suddenly shorn of meaning, or annihilated altogether? This was certainly the case in the Elizabethan period, which witnessed the greatest destruction of religious images in the long and tumultuous history of Christian iconoclasm.[10] I take up the problem of representation in my chapters on John Donne and John Milton, who are

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[8] Levinas, pp. 6, 52.

[9] On Givenness, see Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money,* trans. Peggy Kakmuf, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 96-104. On forgiveness and hospitality, see *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness,* London: Routledge, 2001. On mourning, see *Memoires: for Paul de Man,* trans. Lindsay Culler, Cadava and Kamuf, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

[10] Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 5. See also Eamon Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992; Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia,* Reading UK: University of Reading Press, 1986; and John Phillips, *The Reformation of the Images,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

concerned with icons and transubstantiation – artistic and embodied representation – respectively. If the Protestant Reformation stripped the altars of representation, however, it opened up the possibilities for personal, individual experience, especially one pitted against institutionalized ritualism. Contrast the case of St. Teresa of Avila, who for years encountered resistance against her visions, with the words of radical Reformer Valentine Weigel: "you will have to confess that the Kingdom of God is within you and all things in Christ, about which it is proper to say no more. Let everyone experience it within himself."[11] Both Richard Crashaw and Aemilia Lanyer make use of the burgeoning culture of individual experience in their poetry – an unsurprising fact, given the minority status of both, one a recusant Catholic and the other a woman. I explore the unusual political claims they make on the basis of experience in my chapters on their work.

The category of phenomena also deeply informs my thinking on transcendentalism, but on a more theoretical level. Specifically, phenomenology provides an intellectual framework for the project through posing a series of questions and interests, rather than supplying an anachronistic "lens" through which to read early modem poetry. Kevin Hart writes that "the main question that preoccupies phenomenology, especially today, is less oriented to the question of the *that* or the *what* than the how… How the phenomenon is disclosed will depend on the intentional horizons in which it is concretely embedded.[12] Traditionally, understandings of transcendence have been more focused on "the *what"*: what is the character of the transcendent being? Drawing from phenomenology, however, I instead ask a series of questions related more to "the how": How did social change in the seventeenth century affect the way people approached the divine? What venues for transcendence (both literary and theological) were opened or closed as a result of these changes? How did new formulations of transcendentalism help to shape the social imaginary?

This dissertation explores how four Renaissance poets variously conceived of the responses to these questions by specifically analysing how they frame the encounter with the transcendent divine. In chapter three, John Donne encounters transcendence through the lost icon of Catholicism, an object that he uses to create solidarity within the Protestant nation of England. In chapter four, Aemilia Lanyer turns to revelation, a form of encounter that,

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[11] Valentine Weigel, *On the Place of the World,* 1576, in *The Classics of Western Spirituality,* trans. Andrew Weeks, New York: Paulist Press, 2003, p. 113. Qtd. In *Experience of God,* p. 4.

[12] Kevin Hart, "Of Love and How," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 77, no. 3, September 2009: 712-733, 714.

available only to a privileged group of women, creates an exclusive and enlightened feminine community. In chapter five, Richard Crashaw reproduces St. Teresa of Avila's mystical union within the hearts of her readers, thereby imagining a disturbingly homogenous England populated by mystic-saints. And in chapter six, John Milton apprehends the transcendent God through a metaphoric version of the Eucharist which, with its emphasis on breaking and sharing, supplies the template for imagining a republican government unified in diversity.

In each of these chapters, I discuss how the moment of encounter establishes not only a religious subject, but also a political subject, where "politics" is understood as the organisation of people within society, rather than as the maintenance of state power. Each form of encounter-iconicity, revelation, mystical union and transubstantiation provides the basis for understanding how the religious subject might relate to the transcendent divine and, by virtue of that fact, how religious subjects relate to each other. In doing so, it necessarily establishes the conceptual groundwork for imagining how a community might be organized-how it is rendered "political." Revelation, for instance, posits a close, personal, and unmediated encounter with transcendentalism. Because it does not require the use of an icon or the knowledge of sacred texts, there are (theoretically at least) no limitations on who might receive revelation. For this reason, it is a particularly effective form of encounter for early modem women, whose illiteracy and social marginalisation might otherwise debar them from the religious community. But, revelation is also completely controlled by the transcendent divine, who may bestow or withhold it at will; revelation is not, therefore, a common occurrence. This makes a community based on revelation exclusive in the extreme, as is indeed the case with Lanyer's community of women.

The politics of transcendentalism is not related to ethics but to organisation. Despite this fact, however, the authors that I study all attempt to use transcendentalism to answer the inadequacies and oppressions of temporal government by bringing people together under an alternative political structure. As such, they give voice to a desire, common in the early modem period, to enact an "authentic" politics, a utopic society that both anticipates and participates in the eschatological kingdom of God. Within this conception, the body politic is less an institution such as a state, than an assembly – a group in which all members participate in communal life. This is simply because the community of metaphysical poetry is always founded on a shared religious experience. While this vision of community demonstrates great potential for formulating an egalitarian society, it is, in the end, ethically ambivalent. In contemporary terms, the communities imagined within metaphysical poetry

can be problematic, as with Lanyer's exclusivity or Crashaw's homogeneity, or laudable, as with Donne's solidarity or Milton's diversity. While I have attempted to acknowledge these possibilities throughout this dissertation, my concerns are primarily descriptive rather than prescriptive: I do not wish to praise or denigrate any particular political vision so much as I seek merely to understand how religious experience establishes the conditions for communal organisation.

The poems I study are also political in the sense that they are produced within a concrete historical moment, and deeply informed by contemporaneous political developments. The early seventeenth century was an infamously instable period in England's history. The accession of a Scottish monarch to the throne in 1603 undermined the cohesion of a nation still recalibrating its identity in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. This national identity crisis was only intensified by a series of internal disruptions from various religious groups. Donne's work responds to this instability by encouraging solidarity through communal identification with the icon. Although radical Reformers are usually cited as the main cause for early seventeenth century political discord,[13] they were not the only group upsetting the social fabric of early modem England; the first two decades of the seventeenth century also witnessed an unusual amount of public dissent among women.[14] The "pamphlet war" of 1615-1620 is one late example of the rising awareness of women's issues throughout this period.[15] Lanyer's work, published in 1611, uses this moment to voice her own critique of gender exclusion in her version of transcendence. During the 1640's, the civil unrest of the earlier seventeenth century finally reached its zenith with the battles waged between Parliament and the King, culminating in the trial and execution of Charles I in 1649. Within this context, Crashaw's homogenous England is posed as a spiritual counterpoint to the actual failures of the factious government. Culminating in the republican experiment of 1649-1660, England's civil unrest created an unprecedented period of decentralization. Although Oliver Cromwell's title of Lord Protector, conferred in 1653 after the dissolution of the Bare bones Parliament, established his *de facto* rule over a military state, the political imagination in the decade leading up to this event demonstrates a more optimistically democratic sentiment, one

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[13] 13 See Christopher Hill's classic work on the subject, *World Turned Upside-Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution,* London: Penguin, 1972.

[14] See the context and pamphlets in *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women,* ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, Champaign IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985. See also Barbara Keifer Lewalski's influential writing *Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

[15] *Half Humankind,* pp. 16-18.

that both extolled and was undone by the diverse array of opinions voiced throughout the country, in public houses and Parliament alike.[16] John Milton's work tracks the arc of this republican sentiment through the metaphor of the Eucharist.

Through bringing together politics and religion, this work is in conversation with "the religious turn" in early modem studies,[17] and particularly those critics most interested in political theology. In literary criticism, political theology most often refers to work that comes out of writing by Carl Schmitt. Jurist for the Weimar Republic, Schmitt posited a legal order that arises from states of emergency, when power is granted to the monarch in the form of the exception. According to Schmitt, the "sovereign is he who decides the exception," and, by residing in some capacity outside of the law, constitutes it. His work defines power from the margins, where sovereignty is "a borderline concept"[18] and theorists following his footsteps have tended to analyse similar figures situated on the hinterlands of the *polis.* Walter Benjamin, for instance, analyses the tyrant-martyr as the central figure of baroque tragedy, while Giorgio Agamben's focuses on the sacred man of ancient Rome – the criminal outcast who is exiled beyond the reach of the law.[19] All of these writers investigate the problematic migration of theological concepts into juridical discourse, a migration that Schmitt dates to the late medieval and early modem periods, when "the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver."[20]

Because of their focus on sovereignty, these works are especially relevant to early modem concerns, and are particularly popular in Shakespeare studies.[21] The connection between

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[16] England was only one of many countries that dealt with increasing diversity. For an overview, see *Living with Religious Diversity in Early-Modern Europe,* (Ed.) C. Scott Dixon, Dagmar Freist, and Mark Greengrass, London: Ashgate, 2009.

[17] For an overview on the "religious turn" in early modem studies, see Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti, "The turn to Religion in Early Modem English Studies," *Criticism* 46, no. 1, Winter 2004: 167-190. See also the essays in "The Clash of Religions," *PMLA* 126, no. 2, March 2011: 422-471; and *English Language Notes,* 44, no. 1, "Literary History and the Religious Tum," special ed., Bruce Holsinger, Spring 2006.

[18] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty,* trans. George Schwab, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, p. 5.

[19] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama,* trans. John Osborne, London: Verso, 1998. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life,* trans. Daniel Heller Roazen, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

[20] Schmitt, *Political Theology,* p. 36.

[21] See especially Debora Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England,* Hounsmills, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001; Victoria Kahn, "Political Theology and Reason of State in *Samson Agonistes,*" *South Atlantic Quarterly,* 99, Fall 1996: 1065-1097; and the essays in *Representations* 106, no. 1, Spring 2009, especially Stephen Greenblatt's "Introduction: Fifty Years of the King's Two Bodies," pp. 63-66.

Shakespeare and political theology was made famous by Ernst H. Kantorowicz, who related his theory of sovereignty, known as the doctrine of the king's two bodies, to Shakespeare's *Richard II*.[22] According to Kantorowicz, late medieval and early modem European political theory differentiated between the king's finite physical body and his transcendent mystical body, a differentiation invoked in the phrase "The king is dead. Long live the king."[23] This rift separated the absolute monarch underwritten by divine right (the mystical body) from the constitutional monarch of social contract (the physical body), making visible the path toward modem politics.

While Kantorowicz's chapter on *Richard II* has long influenced scholars of early modem political theology, more recent work has turned its attention to questions that stretch beyond Kantorowiz's study. Julia Reinhard Lupton's *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology,* for instance, turns to the "corpus of citizens implied by political theology rather than its gallery of dead kings," to analyse power not from the margins, but among the masses.[24] Her work follows a line of thought in early modem political theory that derives citizenship from sainthood, influenced by Pauline notions of citizenship within the kingdom of Heaven. Lupton's work tracks how this shift from citizen to saint was imperfectly accomplished in fits and starts through Marlowe, Shakespeare and Milton.

All of these critical works chart the problematic emergence of politics from religion, enabled through increasing reliance on social contract and the concomitant demystification of religion in culture's inevitable progress toward secularization. Known as the "secularization thesis,"[25] this idea, while popular in modem histories, is not unique to modem thought; early modem writers also seemed to be aware of this apparent shift, even while it was occurring. We find the secularization thesis, for instance, most famously in the mouth of Shakespeare's Lafeu in *All's Well that Ends Well:* "They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical

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[22] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The Kings Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

[23] See especially *The Introduction to Kantorowicz*, pp. 2-6.

[24] Reinhard Lupton, *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology,* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005, p. 5.

[25] The secularization thesis is a problematic concept, and one that has undergone long debate. For an overview of the secularization debate, see especially Bruce Steve, *Religion and Modernization: Sociologists and Historians Debate the Secularization Thesis,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992; and William H. Swatos and Daniel V.A. Olson, eds., *The Secularization Debate,* Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000. For one example that argues for "The Marginalization of Religion" in the early modem period, see C. John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith,* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless."[26] Bracketing for the moment the question of whether the secularization thesis is verifiably true, the mere fact that early modem peoples were aware of an increasing emphasis on scientific materialism at the end of the age of miracles begs the question: what becomes of religion in the wake of this perceived cultural shift? This is a question that is often ignored in early modern studies on political theology, which instead tend to focus on the residual influence of religion in early modem politics.

By investigating the religious response to particular political developments, my project suggests that one of the effects of perceived secularism is the increased malleability of religious concepts, particularly in the face of political change. This dissertation witnesses transcendence as an idea in flux, one that shifts the moment of encounter from a personal, private experience to a corporate one. Donne's icons do not, for instance, enable communion *only* between soul and God, but *also* between the various subjects of a Protestant England. Similarly, Crashaw emphasizes that the mystical union of Teresa is not for herself alone, but is instead played out in perpetuity within her community of readers. If transcendence is to maintain any purchase in early modern thought, it does so in the service of the emerging national community.

The authors I survey also evince a surprising willingness to rethink the concept of transcendentalism well beyond the pale of orthodoxy; rather than demystify outmoded religious concepts, such as transubstantiation, early modern poets simply repurpose them within an alternative political-theological framework. This fact demonstrates not only the malleability of religious ideas in response to political turmoil, but also the persistence of religious thinking despite the apparent impulse toward secularism. Transcendentalism seems to be embedded particularly deeply in human experience, disappearing from one cultural location only to resurface in another. Regina Schwartz cogently points this fact out in a brief survey of the various sites of transcendence in academic study today:

> Even those who claim to be radical materialists rediscover transcendence in new guises: the postmodern notion of transgression, the phenomenological notion of the other, the scientific notion of the impenetrable mystery of an infinite universe, the

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[26] William Shakespeare, *All's Well that Ends Well,* (Ed.) O.K. Hunter, London: Arden, 2006, II.iii.1-3.

aesthetic notion of excess, the psychoanalytic notion of subjectivity, the political notion of revolutionary ecstasy.[27]

The malleability and persistence of religious concepts puts some pressure on the claims of secularism, for they demonstrate that religious thinking is possible outside of the narrow confines of theology, and may, in fact, have been a cultural presence throughout the course of "secularisation." In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish "theology" from "religion," where theology might be thought of as a particular set of institutionalized practices and doctrines, and religion is, as Lupton defines it, "a form of thinking," one that is irreducible to culture but that compels action within culture. It is my contention that what the secularisation thesis reads as the evacuation of *religion* from culture is actually the retreat of, specifically, Christian *theology* from Western politics.

But the argument against the secularisation thesis can, in the context of my work, be made on an even more fundamental level. Given the close connection between religion and politics, where both are instantiated at the same moment through the encounter with transcendence, the case can be made the two are inseparable. In politics, as in religion, the most compelling forces that call people into collectivities are largely immaterial. Despite the fact that a state is most readily defined by its quantifiable trappings – it's economic, military, and geographic borders – the people within it are frequently held together simply by the belief that they are "deeply, mystically united"[28] to each other. Politics and religion share similar modes of social cohesion, organising people around a collective mythos, a common history, or a communal identity, and it is this aspect of political theology that I wish to foreground in my thinking on transcendentalism. My work thus opposes the secularisation thesis on two fronts: by demonstrating the inerrability of transcendence beyond a theological context, and by demonstrating the inextricability of politics from religion at the founding moment of both.

While these claims may seem to place my work in opposition to contemporary writing on political theology, it actually enters and expands space that has been opened by work that, like Lupton's, focuses more intently on the centre, rather than the margins, of power. It does so by supplementing the line of political theology extending from Schmitt and Kantorowicz in early modem literary criticism with thinkers who, like Levinas, Marion, Hart and Derrida,

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[27] Schwartz, *Transcendence*, p. viii.

[28] William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination,* London and New York: T & T Clark, 2002, p. 1.

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are more interested in the community-making possibilities enabled by transcendentalism.[29] This blend utilizes the phenomenological proclivity for investigating the mechanisms and structures by which people relate to their environs within a historical context provided in part by political theology. In doing so, it ultimately gives an account not of the appearance of secular politics from an archaic religion, but of the perseverance of a religious concept that manifests politically. Put another way, this dissertation ultimately demonstrates a concerted effort to extend the life of religious ideas within the political imagination through devotional poetry's insistent recasting of transcendence as central to the formulation of the body politic.

1.1. Why Poetry?

In *Of Adversity*, Francis Bacon writes that "It is true greatness, to have in one the frailty of a man, and the security of a God… but his would have done better in poesy, where transcendences are more allowed. And the poets indeed have been busy with it."[30] But the question is, why? Why is transcendentalism "more allowed" in poetry than in any other genre of writing? And how does a literary study of transcendence contribute to a fuller understanding of the political and religious life in early modern England? The answer, I suggest, lies in the imaginative possibilities that poetry offers, both within a political and theological context.

In politics, imagination supplies the conceptual matrix from which all forms of governance arise. As William T. Cavanaugh defines it, the "political imagination is simply the condition of possibility for the organization of bodies in society."[31] If, in the early modern period, the political imagination (as manifested in nonfiction treatises) was beholden to particular theological, epistemic, and ontological norms, poetry presented a venue in which to imagine political organization outside of these normative responsibilities. As studies in early modern political theology have demonstrated, the central tenant of the monarchy is divine right, which, in his *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,* James I links to the authority conferred upon

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[29] These philosophers are not, it is worth pointing out, always completely comfortable with the designation "political theology," and do not necessarily appear in the list of academics, usually modem theologians, grouped under that category. Levinas, for instance, strenuous rejected the designation of "theology" as it applied to his work, while Marion, despite his interest in the icon, is somewhat uncomfortable with the ontological categories that theology implies. For more, see Horner, p. 64.

[30] Francis Bacon, "Of Adversity," in *The Essays or Counsels, Civil, and Moral,* (Ed.) Micahel Kiernan, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, pp. 18-19, 18.

[31] William T. Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination,* London and New York, T & T Clark, 2002), p. 2.

the kings of Israel by God.[32] Metaphysical poetry, however, ties its political imagination instead to the promised arrival of a future heavenly kingdom. Because this kingdom is utopic, spiritual, and outside of time, it often features fantastic conceptions of non-hierarchical power, as with Crashaw's kingdom of saints or Milton's republican society. The purpose of poetry, therefore, is to provide a venue for presenting political alternatives, an act that ultimately challenges and widens the political imagination.

Similarly, within a religious context, the flexible epistemic boundaries of poetry allow for ideas to be explored outside the limits of traditional theology. As I have noted above, this freedom of thought within the genre allows for the formulation of unorthodox theological content, such as Lanyer's substitution of Christ's male disciples with a feminine community. It also, however, allows for unorthodox connections between theology and politics, such as Donne's compelling use of the icon to unite the nation. This latter function appears to be more prevalent in early modem devotional poetry, perhaps in part because of the influence of the "metaphysical" genre, with its proclivity for stretching conceptual associations to their outer limits. Beyond the metaphysical conceit, however, poetry in general, with its metaphor, simile, and hyperbole, often ignores the borders governing spheres of knowledge, and this allows for connections to be made between ideas that would, in a sermon or theological treatise, be disallowed.

Political theory and theology both present venues for disciplined forms of imagination; poetry does not. In fact, one of the responsibilities of early modem poetry in particular was simply to idealise. In his *Defense of Poesy*, Sir Philip Sidney notes that poetry functions as a privileged genre for testing the limits of the ideal when he notes that the proper subject of poetry is "the divine consideration of what may be and should be."[33] If this sounds to modem ears like hopelessly wishful thinking, it is important to point out that idealism, in the early modem period, held greater social potential than it does today.[34] Debora Kuller Shuger notes that the period is "pervasively concerned with what should be… its premises are based on Aristotelian teleology, which identifies a thing's nature with its end and perfection so that to ask what, for example, a republic should be and to ask what a republic is turns out to be the

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[32] James I, *The True Laws of Free Monarchies: Or, The Reiprock and Mutual, Duties Betwixt a King and His Natural Subjects,* Edinburgh: Printed by Robert Waldegrame, 1598.

[33] Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry or the Defense of Poesy,* (Ed.) Geoffrey Shepherd, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002, p. 87.

[34] Shuger, *Political Theologies,* p. 3.

same question." In this context, the effectiveness of the poetic ideal does not lie in its viability as an achievable social order so much as in its potency as a paradigm, as an ideal *qua* ideal. Early modem poetry is most useful in its affective registers, which enable it to poetically create – and invite its readers to emotionally participate in – an imaginative political and religious life.

There is, therefore, an aspect of the imagined community[35] to my study of seventeenth-century metaphysical poetry. Circulated among readers, poetry creates the possibility for a community to self-identify with and through literature. Seen from this angle, perhaps the true transcendentalism of metaphysical poetry can be located not in its subject matter, but in the act of communal reading: as early modem poems circulated, they created a social imaginary that exceeded the individual imaginations that contributed to it. Early modem poetry ultimately created a space for cultural fantasy, wish fulfilment, and longing, registering a deep nostalgia for a politic that is eternally obscured behind the alluring and unapproachable sign of transcendentalism.

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[35] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* London and New York: Verso, 2006.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. History of Transcendentalism

The prophet of the new philosophy in England was Samuel Taylor Coleridge; in the early part of the present century, perhaps the most conspicuous figure in our literary world; the object of more admiration, the centre of more sympathy, the source of more intellectual life than any individual of his time; the criticism, the censure, the manifold animadversion he was made the mark for, better attest his power than the ovations he received from his worshippers. The believers in his genius lacked words to express their sense of his greatness. He was the "eternal youth," the "divine child." The brilliant men of his period acknowledged his surpassing brilliancy; the deep men confessed his depth; the spiritual men went to him for inspiration. His mind, affluent and profuse, contained within no barriers of conventional form, poured an abounding flood of thoughts over the whole literary domain. He was essayist, journalist, politician, poet, dramatist, metaphysician, philosopher, theologian, divine, critic, expositor, dreamer, soliloquiser; in all eloquent, in all intense. The effect he produced on the minds of his contemporaries will scarcely be believed now. At present he is little more than a name: his books are pronounced unreadable; his opinions are not quoted as authority; his force is spent. But in 1851, Thomas Carlyle, then past the years of his enthusiasm, and verging on the scornful epoch of his intellectual career, spoke of him, in the *Life of John Sterling*, as "A sublime man, who, alone in those dark days, had saved his crown of spiritual manhood; escaping from the black materialisms and revolutionary deluges, with God, freedom, immortality still his; a king of men. The practical intellects of the world did not much heed him, or carelessly reckoned him a metaphysical dreamer; but to the rising spirits of the young generation he had this dusky, sublime character, and sat there as a kind of Magus, girt in mystery and enigma, his Dodona oak grove whispering strange things, uncertain whether oracles or jargon."[36]

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[36] Thomas Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling*, Edinburgh: The Carlyle Society, 1851, pp. 78-86. *The Life of John Sterling* is a biography of the Scottish author John Sterling (1806-1844) written by his friend, the Scottish essayist, historian and

The abatement is painfully just; but while Coleridge lived, this very indolence and moral imbecility added to the interest he excited, and gave a mystic splendour as of a divine inspiration to his mental performances. The distinction between unhealthy and inspiration has never been clearly marked, and the voluble utterances of the feebly outlined and loosely jointed soul easily passed for oracles. Thus his moral deficiencies aided his influence. His wonderful powers of conversation or rather of effusion in the midst of admiring friends helped the illusion and the fascination. He really seemed inspired while he talked; and as his talk ranged through every domain, the listeners carried away and communicated the impression of a superhuman wisdom.

The impression that Coleridge made on minds of a very different order from Carlyle's, is given in the following lines by Aubrey de Vere:[37]

> No loftier, purer soul than his hath ever
>
> With awe revolved the planetary page
>
> From infancy to age,
>
> Of knowledge, sedulous and proud to give her
>
> The whole of his great heart, for her own sake;
>
> For what she is: not what she does, or what can make.
>
> And mighty voices from afar came to him;
>
> Converse of trumpets held by cloudy forms
>
> And speech of choral storms.
>
> Spirits of night and noontide bent to woo him;
>
> He stood the while lonely and desolate

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philosopher Thomas Carlyle. It was first published in 1851. John Sterling was a colleague and friend of Carlyle, but achieved far less success as a writer.

[37] Thomas Humphry Ward (Ed.), *The English Poets: Selections with Critical Introductions by Various Writers and a General Introduction by Matthew Arnold*, New York, London: Macmillan and Co., 1880-1918.

As Adam when he ruled a world, yet found no mate.

His loftiest thoughts were but as palms uplifted;

Aspiring, yet in supplicating guise –

His sweetest songs were sighs.

Adown Lethean streams his spirit drifted,

Under Elysian shades from poppied bank,

With amaranths massed in dark luxuriance dank.

Coleridge, farewell!

That great and grave transition

Which may not king or priest or conqueror spare.

And yet a babe can bear,

Has come to thee. Through life a goodly vision

Was thine; and time it was thy rest to take.

Soft be the sound ordained thy sleep to break;

When thou art waking, wake me, for thy Master's sake.

In May 1796, he was then twenty-four years old – Coleridge wrote to a friend, "I am studying German, and in about six weeks shall be able to read that language with tolerable fluency. Now I have some thoughts of making a proposal to Robinson, the great London bookseller, of translating all the works of Schiller, which would make a portly quarto, on condition that he should pay my journey and my wife's to and from Jena, a cheap German University where Schiller resides, and allow me two guineas each quarto sheet, which would maintain me. If I could realize this scheme, I should there study chemistry and anatomy, and bring over with me all the works of Semler and Michaelis, the German theologians, and of Kant, the great German metaphysician."[38] In September 1798, in company with Wordsworth and his sister,

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[38] Werner W. Beyer, "Coleridge's Early Knowledge of Germen," *Modern Philology,* Chicago: The University of Chicago, Vol. 52, No. 3, 1955, pp. 192-200.

and at the expense of his munificent friends Josiah and Thomas Wedgewood, he went to Germany and spent fourteen months in hard study. There he attended the lectures of Eichhorn and Blumenbach, made the acquaintance of Tieck, dipped quite deeply into philosophy and general literature, and took by contagion the speculative ideas that filled his imagination with visions of intellectual discovery. Schelling's *Transcendental Idealism*, with which Coleridge was afterwards most in sympathy, was not published till 1800.[39] The *Philosophy of Nature* was published in 1797, the year before Coleridge's visit.[40] In 1817, he tells the readers of the *Biographia Literaria* that he had been able to procure only two of Schelling's books – the first volume of his *Philosophical Writings* and the *System of Transcendental Idealism*; these and "a small pamphlet against Fichte, the spirit of which was, to my feelings, painfully incongruous with the principles, and which displayed the love of wisdom rather than the wisdom of love."[41]

The philosophical ideas of Schelling commended themselves at once to Coleridge, who was a born idealist, of audacious genius, speculative, imaginative, original, capable of any such abstract achievement as the German undertook.[42]

> In Schelling's *Natur Philosophie* and the *System des Transcendentalen Idealismus*, I first found a genial coincidence with much that I had toiled out for myself, and a powerful assistance in what I had yet to do. All the main and fundamental ideas were born and matured in my mind before I had ever seen a single page of the German philosopher; and I might indeed affirm with truth, before the more important works of

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[39] Tom Rockmore, *Kant and Idealism*, Yale University Press, 2007, p. 72. F.W. J. von Schelling, translated by Peter Heath, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, UP of Virginia, 1978. See Nicholas Reid, "Coleridge and Schelling: The Missing Transcendental Deduction," *Studies in Romanticism* 33.3 (Fall 1994), 451-479; reprinted in *Coleridge, Form and Symbol*, Chapter 6, Ashgate, 2006.

[40] In his *Naturphilosophie* (Philosophy of Nature), which emerges in 1797 and develops in the succeeding years, and in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800, Schelling wavers between a Spinozist and a Fichtean approach to the 'unconditioned'. In the *Naturphilosophie* the Kantian division between nature as appearance and nature in itself is seen as resulting from the fact that the nature theorised in cognitive judgments is objectified in opposition to the knowing subject. This objectification, the result of the natural sciences' search for fixed laws, fails to account for the living dynamic forces in nature, including those in our own organism, with which Kant himself became concerned in the third *Critique* and other late work, and which had played a role in Leibniz's account of nature. *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur als Einleitung in das Studium dieser Wissenschaft*, 1797, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature: as Introduction to the Study of this Science*, translated by E.E. Harris and P. Heath, Introduction R. Stern, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

[41] *Biographia Literaria*, in full *Biographia Literaria* or *Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, work by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, published in two volumes in 1817. Another edition of the work, to which Coleridge's daughter Sara appended notes and supplementary biographical material, was published in 1847.

[42] Dale E. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism*, Albany: Suny Press, 1996, pp. 22-30.

Schelling had been written, or at least made public. Nor is this at all to be wondered at. We had studied in the same school; been disciplined by the same preparatory philosophy, namely, the writings of Kant; we had both equal obligations to the polar logic and dynamic philosophy of Giordano Bruno; and Schelling has lately, and, as of recent acquisition, avowed that same affectionate reverence for the labours of Behmen and other mystics which I had formed at a much earlier period. God forbid that I should be suspected of a wish to enter into a rivalry with Schelling for the honours so unequivocally his right, not only as a great original genius, but as the founder of the Philosophy of Nature, and as the most successful improver of the Dynamic system, which, begun by Bruno, was reintroduced (in a more philosophical form, and freed from all its impurities and visionary accompaniments) by Kant, in whom it was the native and necessary growth of his own system. Kant's followers, however, on whom (for the greater part) their master's cloak had fallen, without, or with a very scanty portion of his spirit, had adopted his dynamic ideas, only as a more refined species of mechanics. With exception of one or two fundamental ideas which cannot be withheld from Fichte, to Schelling we owe the completion and the most important victories of this revolution in philosophy. To me it will be happiness and honour enough, should I succeed in rendering the system itself intelligible to my countrymen, and in the application of it to the most awful of subjects for the most important of purposes. Whether a work is the offspring of a man's own spirit and the product of original thinking will be discovered by those who are its sole legitimate judges, by better tests than the mere reference to dates."

The question of Coleridge's alleged plagiarism from Schelling does not concern us here. Whether the philosophy he taught was the product of his own thinking, or whether he was merely the medium for communicating the system of Schelling to his countrymen, is of no moment to us. For us it is sufficient to know that the English-speaking people on both shores of the Atlantic received them chiefly through the Englishman. Those who are interested in the other matter will find Coleridge's reputation vindicated in a long and elaborate introduction to the *Biographia Literaria*, edition of 1847, by the poet's son.

Coleridge was a pure Transcendentalist, of the Schelling School. The transcendental phrases came over and over in book and conversation, "reason" and "understanding," "intuition," "necessary truths," "consciousness," and the rest that were used to describe the super-sensual

world and the faculties by which it was made visible. He shall speak for himself. The following passage from the *Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XII, will be sufficiently intelligible to comprehend their cardinal ideas:[43]

> The criterion is this: if a man receives as fundamental facts, and therefore of course indemonstrable and incapable of further analysis, the general notions of matter, spirit, soul, body, action, passiveness, time, space, cause and effect, consciousness, perception, memory and all these, and is satisfied if only he can analyse all other notions into some one or more of these supposed elements, with plausible subordination and apt arrangement; to such a mind I would as courteously as possible convey the hint, that for him this chapter was not written… For philosophy, in its highest sense, as the science of ultimate truths, and therefore *scientia scientiarum*, this mere analysis of terms is preparative only, though as a preparative discipline indispensable.

> It is the essential mark of the true philosopher to rest satisfied with no imperfect light, as long as the impossibility of attaining a fuller knowledge has not been demonstrated. That the common consciousness itself will furnish proofs by its own direction that it is connected with master currents below the surface, I shall merely assume as a postulate pro tempore… On the immediate which dwells in every man, and on the original intuition or absolute affirmation of it (which is likewise in every man, but does not in every man rise into consciousness), all the certainty of our knowledge depends; and this becomes intelligible to no man by the ministry of mere words from without. The medium by which spirits understand each other is not the surrounding air, but the freedom which they possess in common, as the common ethereal element of their being, the tremulous reciprocations of which propagate themselves even to the inmost of the soul. Where the spirit of a man is not filled with the consciousness of freedom (where it only from its restlessness, as of one struggling in bondage) all spiritual intercourse is interrupted, not only with others, but even with himself. No wonder, then, that he remains incomprehensible to himself as well as to others. No wonder that in the fearful desert of his consciousness he wearies himself out with empty words to which no friendly echo answers, either from his own heart or the heart of a fellow-

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[43] Jason M. Wirth, *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and His Time*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003, pp. 65-72.

being; or bewilders himself in the pursuit of notional phantoms, the mere refractions from unseen and distant truths through the distorting medium of his own enlivened and stagnant understanding! To remain unintelligible to such a mind, exclaims Schelling on a like occasion, is honour and a good name before God and man.

Philosophy is employed on objects of the inner sense, and cannot, like geometry, appropriate to every construction a corresponding outward intuition… Now the inner sense has its direction determined for the greater part only by an act of freedom. One man's consciousness extends only to the pleasant or unpleasant sensations caused in him by external impressions; another enlarges his inner sense to a consciousness of forms and quantity; a third, in addition to the image, is conscious of the conception or notion of the thing; a fourth attains to a notion of his notions – he reflects on his own reflections; and thus we may say without impropriety, that the one possesses more or less inner sense than the other… The postulate of philosophy, and at the same time the test of philosophical capacity, is no other than the heaven-descended KNOW THYSELF. And this at once practically and speculatively. For as philosophy is neither a science of the reason or understanding only, nor merely a science of morals, but the science of BEING altogether, its primary ground can be neither merely speculative nor merely practical, but both in one. All knowledge rests upon the coincidence of an object with a subject. For we can know only that which is true; and the truth is universally placed in the coincidence of the thought with the thing, of the representation with the object represented.

Coleridge then puts and argues the two alternatives. (a) Either the Objective is taken as primary, and then we have to account for the supervention of the Subjective which coalesces with it, which natural philosophy supposes. (b) Or the Subjective is taken as primary, and then we have to account for the supervention of the Objective, which spiritual philosophy supposes. The Transcendentalist accepts the latter alternative.[44]

The second position, which not only claims but necessitates the admission of its immediate certainty, equally for the scientific reason of the philosopher as for the common-sense of mankind at large, namely, I AM, cannot properly be entitled a prejudice. It is groundless indeed; but then in the very idea it precludes all ground,

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[44] Thomas J. Wise, *A Bibliography of the Writings in Prose and Verse of Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* 2 Volumes, London: Bibliographical Society, 1913, pp. 91-93.

and, separated from the immediate consciousness, loses its whole sense and import. It is groundless; but only because it is itself the ground of all other certainty. Now the apparent contradiction, that the first position – namely, that the existence of things without us, which from its nature cannot be immediately certain – should be received as blindly and as independently of all grounds as the existence of our own being, the transcendental philosopher can solve only by the supposition that the former is unconsciously involved in the latter; that it is not only coherent, but identical, and one and the same thing with our own immediate self-consciousness. To demonstrate this identity is the office and object of his philosophy. If it be said that this is idealism, let it be remembered that it is only so far idealism, as it is at the same time and on that very account the truest and most binding realism.

To follow the exposition further is unnecessary for the present purpose, which is to state the fundamental principles of the philosophy, not to give the processes of reasoning by which they are illustrated. Had Coleridge been merely a philosopher, his influence on his generation, by this means, would have been insignificant; for his expositions were fragmentary; his thoughts were too swift and tumultuous in their flow to be systematically arranged; his style, forcible and luminous in passages, is interrupted by too frequent episodes, excursions and explanatory parentheses, to be enjoyed by the inexpert. Besides being a philosopher, he was a theologian. His deepest interest was in the problems of theology. His mind was perpetually turning over the questions of trinity, incarnation, Holy Spirit, sin, redemption, salvation. He meditated endless books on these themes, and, in special, one *On the Logos*, which was to remove all difficulties and reconcile all contradictions. "On the whole, those dead churches, this dead English church especially, must be brought to life again. Why not? It was not dead; the soul of it, in this parched-up body, was tragically asleep only. Atheistic philosophy was, true, on its side; and Hume and Voltaire could, on their own ground, speak irrefragably for themselves against any church: but lift the church and them into a higher sphere of argument, they died into inanition, the church revivified itself into pristine florid vigour, became once more a living ship of the desert, and invincibly bore you over stock and stone."

The philosophy was accepted as a basis for the theology, and apparently only so far as it supplied the basis. Mrs. Coleridge declares, in a note to Chapter IX of the *Biographia Literaria*, that her husband, soon after the composition of that work, became dissatisfied with

the system of Schelling, considered as a fundamental and comprehensive scheme intended to exhibit the relations of God to the world and man.[45] He objected to it, she insists, as essentially pantheistic, radically inconsistent with a belief in God as himself moral and intelligent, as beyond and above the world, as the supreme mind to which the human mind owes homage and fealty – inconsistent with any just view and deep sense of the moral and spiritual being of man. He was mainly concerned with the construction of a "philosophical system, in which Christianity, based on the triune being of God, and embracing a primal fall and universal redemption, (to use Carlyle's words) Christianity, ideal, spiritual, eternal but likewise and necessarily historical, realized and manifested in time, should be shown forth as accordant, or rather as one with ideas of reason, and the demands of the spiritual and of the speculative mind, of the heart, conscience, reason, which should all be satisfied and reconciled in one bond of peace."

This explains the interest which young and enthusiastic minds in the English Church took in Coleridge, the verses just quoted from Aubrey de Vere, one of the new school of believers, the admiring discipleship of Frederick Denison Maurice, the hearty allegiance of the leaders of the spiritual reformation in England. Coleridge was the real founder of the Broad Church, which attempted to justify creed and sacrament, by substituting the ideas of the spiritual philosophy for the formal authority of traditions which the reason of the age was discarding.[46]

The men who sympathized with the same movement in America felt the same gratitude to their leader. Already in 1829 *The Aids to Reflection* were republished by Dr. James Marsh.[47] Caleb Sprague Henry, professor of philosophy and history in the University of New York in 1839, and before that a resident of Cambridge, an enthusiastic thinker and eloquent talker, loved to dilate on the genius of the English philosopher, and was better than a book in conveying information about him, better than many books in awakening interest in his thought. The name of Coleridge was spoken with profound reverence, his books were studied industriously, and the terminology of transcendentalism was as familiar as commonplace in the circles of divines and men of letters. At present Hegel is the prophet of these believers,

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[45] Adam Roberts (ed.), *Biographia Literaria by Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014, pp. 92-99.

[46] Edmund Gosse, "Aubrey de Vere," *Portraits and Sketches.* London: William Heinemann, 1913, pp. 117-125.

[47] John J. Duffy, "Problems in Publishing Coleridge: James Marsh's First American Edition of Aids to Reflection," *The New England Quarterly,* Vol. 43, No. 2, 1970, pp. 193-208.

Schelling is obsolete, and Coleridge, the English Schelling, has had his day. The change is marked by an all but entire absence of the passionate enthusiasm, the imaginative glow and fervour that characterized the transcendental phase of the movement. Coleridge was a vital thinker; his mind was a flame; his thoughts burned within him, and issued from him in language that trembled and throbbed with the force of the ideas committed to it. He was a divine, a preacher of most wonderful eloquence.[48] At the age of three or four and forty Serjeant Talfourd heard him talk.

> At first his tones were conversational: he seemed to dally with the shallows of the subject and with fantastic images which bordered it; but gradually the thought grew deeper, and the voice deepened with the thought; the stream gathering strength seemed to bear along with it all things which opposed its progress, and blended them with its current; and stretching away among regions tinted with ethereal colours, was lost at airy distance in the horizon of fancy. At five-and-twenty William Hazlitt heard him preach.[49]

In 1851, Thomas Carlyle burlesqued Coleridge, took off his solemn oracular manner, made fun of his "plaintive snuffle and sing-song," his "om-m-ject and sum-m-ject," his "talk not flowing any whither like a river, but spreading every whither in inextricable currents and regurgitations like a lake or sea; terribly deficient in definite goal or aim, nay often in logical intelligibility; what you were to believe or do, on any earthly or heavenly thing, obstinately refusing to appear from it, so that, most times, you felt logically lost; swamped near to drowning in this tide of ingenious vocals spreading out boundless as if to submerge the world."[50] But in his earlier days the "windy harangues" and "dizzying metaphysics" had their charm for him too; the philosophy of the Highgate sage was in essence and fruit his own. He explained at some length and with considerable frequency, as well as much eloquence, the distinction between "understanding," the faculty that observed, generalized, inferred, argued, concluded, and "reason," the faculty that saw the ideal forms of truth face to face, and beheld

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[48] Ronald Vale Wells, *Three Christian Transcendentalists: James Marsh, Caleb Sprague Henry, Frederic Henry Hedge*, Columbia University Press, 1943, p. 79.

[49] Herschel Baker, *William Hazlitt*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962. See Stephen Burley, *Hazlitt the Dissenter: Religion, Philosophy, and Politics, 1766–1816*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 104.

[50] "Among these Humble, Stern, Earnest Religionists of the Burgher Phase of Dissent Thomas Carlyle was born." John MacGavin Sloan, *The Carlyle Country, with a Study of Carlyle's Life,* London: Chapman & Hall, 1904, p. 40. See Bliss Perry, *Thomas Carlyle: How to Know Him,* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1915.

the inmost reality of things. He dilated with a disciple's enthusiasm on the principles of the transcendental philosophy, painted in gorgeous colours the promises it held forth, prophesied earnestly respecting the better time for literature, art, social ethics and religious faith it would bring in, preached tempestuously against shams in church and state, from the mount of vision that it disclosed. We have already seen how he could speak of Kant, Fichte, Novalis, of Goethe and Jean Paul.[51] Thirty-five years ago Carlyle was the high priest of the new philosophy. Emerson edited his miscellanies, and the dregs of his ink-bottle were welcomed as the precious sediment of the fountain of inspiration. In 1827 he defended the *Kritik of Pure Reason* against stupid objectors from the sensational side, as, in the opinion of the most competent judges, "distinctly the greatest intellectual achievement of the century in which it came to light," and affirmed as by authority, that the seeker for pure truth must begin with intuition and proceed outward by the light of the revelation thence derived.[52] In 1831 he carried this principle to the extreme of maintaining that a complete surrender to the informing genius, a surrender so entire as to amount to the abandonment of definite purpose and will, was evidence of perfect wisdom; for such is the interpretation we give to the paradoxical doctrine of "unconsciousness" which implied that in order to save the soul it must be forgotten; that consciousness was a disease; that in much wisdom was much grief.

Had Carlyle been more of a philosopher and less of a preacher, more a thinker and less a character, more a patient toiler after truth, and less a man of letters, his first intellectual impulse might have lasted. As it was, the reaction came precisely in middle life, and the apostle of transcendental ideas became the champion of force. His Transcendentalism seems to have been a thing of sentiment rather than of conviction. A man of tremendous strength of feeling, his youth, as is the case with men of feeling, was romantic, enthusiastic, hopeful, exuberant; his manhood, as is also the case with men of feeling, was wilful and overbearing, with sadness deepening into moroseness and hopelessness verging towards despair.

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[51] Georg Lukács, 1908 "Novalis," *Nyugat*, 1:313ff. Collected in his *A lélek és a formák*, Budapest: Franklin Társulat Nyomda, 1910. Translated from the Hungarian to German as "Zur romantischen Lebensphilosophie: Novalis," in *Die Seele und die Formen: Essays*, Berlin: Egon Fleischel, 1911 (special edition, Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1971). Translated from the 1971 German edition to English as "On the Romantic Philosophy of Life: Novalis," *Soul and Form*, Anna Bostock (trans.), London: Merlin Press, 1974.

[52] In transcendental logic we isolate the understanding (as in transcendental aesthetic the sensibility) and select from our cognition merely that part of thought which has its origin in the understanding alone. The exercise of this pure cognition, however, depends upon this as its condition, that objects to which it may be applied be given to us in intuition, for without intuition the whole of our cognition is without objects, and is therefore quite void. That part of transcendental logic, then, which treats of the elements of pure cognition of the understanding, and of the principles without which no object at all can be thought, is transcendental analytic, and at the same time a logic of truth.

The era of despair had not set in at the period when the mind of New England was fermenting with the ideas of the new philosophy. Then all was brave, humane, aspiring. The denunciations of materialism in philosophy, formalism in religion and utilitarianism in personal and social ethics, rang through the land; the superb vindications of soul against sense, spirit against letter, faith against rite, heroism and nobleness against the petty expediencies of the market, kindled all earnest hearts. The emphatic declarations that "wonder and reverence are the conditions of insight and the source of strength; that faith is prior to knowledge and deeper too; that empirical science can but play on the surface of unfathomable mysteries; that in the order of reality the ideal and invisible are the world's true adamant, and the laws of material appearance only its alluvial growths; that in the inmost thought of men there is a thirst to which the springs of nature are a mere mirage, and which presses on to the waters of eternity," fell like refreshing gales from the hills on the children of men imprisoned in custom and suffocated by tradition. The infinitely varied illustrations of the worth of beauty, the grandeur of truth, the excellence of simple, devout sincerity in nature, literature, character; the burning insistence on the need of fresh inspiration from the region of serene ideas, seemed to proceed from a soul newly awakened, if not especially endowed with the seer's vision. It was better than philosophy; it was philosophy made vital with sentiment and purpose.

Carlyle early learned the German language, as Coleridge did, and drank deep from the fountains of its best literature. To him it opened a new world of thought, which the ordinary Englishman had no conception of. Coleridge found himself at home there by virtue of his natural genius, and also by the introduction given him by Wm. Law, John Pordage, Richard Saumarez, and Jacob Behmen, so that the suddenly discovered continent broke on him with less surprise; but Carlyle was as one taken wholly unawares, fascinated, charmed, intoxicated with the sights and sounds about him. Being unprepared by previous reflection and overpowered by the gorgeousness of colour, the wealth was too much for him; it palled at last on his appetite, and he experienced a reaction similar to that of the sensualist whose delirium first persuades him that he has found his soul, and then makes him fear that he has lost it.

With the reactionary stage of Carlyle's career when, as a frank critic observes, "he flung away with a shriek the problems his youth entertained, as the fruit by which paradise was lost; repented of all knowledge of good and evil; clapped a bandage round the open eyes of morals, religion, art, and saw no salvation but in spiritual suicide by plunging into the

currents of instinctive nature that sweep us we know not whither,"[53] we are not concerned. His interest for us ceases with his moral enthusiasm.

A more serene and beneficent influence proceeded from the poet Wordsworth, whose fame rose along with that of Coleridge, struggled against the same opposition, and obtained even a steadier lustre. There was a kindred between them which Wordsworth did not acknowledge, but which Coleridge more than suspected and tried to divulge. One chapter in the first volume of the *Biographia Literaria* and four chapters in the second volume are devoted to the consideration of Wordsworth's poetry, and effort is made, not quite successfully, to bring Wordsworth's psychological faith into sympathy with his own.

Wordsworth's genius has furnished critics with materials for speculation that must be sought in their proper places. We have no fresh analysis to offer. That the secret of his power over the ingenuous and believing minds of his age is to be found in the sentiment with which he invested homely scenes and characters is a superficial conjecture. What led him to invest homely scenes and characters with sentiment, and what made this circumstance interesting to precisely that class of minds? What, but the same latent idealism that came to deliberate and formal expression in Coleridge, and suggested in the one what was proclaimed by the other? For Wordsworth was a metaphysician, though he did not clearly suspect it; at least, if he did, he was careful not to betray himself by the usual signs. The philosophers recognised him and paid to him their acknowledgments.

In the general preface to his poems, where Wordsworth discusses the principles of the poetic art, he wrote: "The imagination is conscious of an indestructible dominion; the soul may fall away, from its not being able to sustain its grandeur, but if once felt and acknowledged, by no act of any other faculty of the mind can it be relaxed, impaired or diminished. Fancy is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature; Imagination to incite and support the eternal."[54] And in the appendix: "Faith was given to man that his affections, detached from the treasures of time, might be inclined to settle on those of eternity: the elevation of his nature, which this habit produces on earth, being to him a presumptive evidence of a future state of existence, and giving him a title to partake of its holiness. The religious man values

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[53] Thomas Carlyle, "Notes of a Three-Day's Tour to the Netherlands," *Cornhill Magazine,* Vol. 53, 1922, pp. 626-640.

[54] Don H. Bialostosky, "Coleridge's Interpretation of Wordsworth's Preface to Lyrical Ballads," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. 93, No.5, Oct. 1978, pp. 912-924. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria,* 1817.

what he sees, chiefly as an 'imperfect shadowing forth' of what he is incapable of seeing." Was this an echo from the German Jacobi, whose doctrine of Faith had been some time abroad in the intellectual world?[55]

The ode *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, was a clear reminiscence of Platonism. This famous poem was the favourite above all other effusions of Wordsworth with the Transcendentalists, who held it to be the highest expression of his genius, and most characteristic of its bent. Emerson in his last discourse on Immortality, calls it "the best modern essay on the subject."[56] Many passages in the *Excursion* attest the transcendental character of the author's faith. Coleridge quotes the following lines:[57]

> For I have learned
>
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
>
> Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
>
> The still sad music of humanity,
>
> Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
>
> To chasten and subdue.
>
> And I have felt
>
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
>
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
>
> Of something far more deeply interfused,

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[55] Moritz Cantor, "Jacobi, Carl Gustav Jacob," *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie (ADB)* (in German), Vol. 50, Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1905, pp. 598-602. See P. G. Lejeune Dirichlet, "Gedächtnißrede auf Carl Gustav Jacob Jacobi," *Journal für die reine und angewandte Mathematik*, 52, 1855, pp.193-217. This article incorporates text from a publication now in the public domain: Chisholm, Hugh, ed. "Jacobi, Karl Gustav Jacob," Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol. 15, 11th ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, p. 117.

[56] Frances Ferguson, "The Immortality Ode," *William Wordsworth,* Harold Bloom (Ed.), New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985.

[57] Catherine L. Albanese, *Corresponding Motion: Transcendental Religion and the New America,* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977; Paul F. Boller Jr. *American Transcendentalism, 1830-1860: An Intellectual Inquiry*, New York: Putnam, 1974.

> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
>
> And the round ocean and the living air,
>
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
>
> A motion and a spirit that impels
>
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
>
> And rolls through all things.

The passage quoted next suggests the very language of Fichte in his Bestimmung des Menschen, "In der Liebe nur ist das Leben, ohne Sie ist Tod und Vernichtung."

> This is the genuine course, the aim, the end,
>
> Of prescient Reason; all conclusions else
>
> Are abject, vain, presumptuous and perverse,
>
> The faith partaking of those holy times.
>
> Life, I repeat, is energy of Love,
>
> Divine or human; exercised in pain,
>
> In strife and tribulation; and ordained,
>
> If so approved and sanctified, to pass
>
> Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.

Having before me a copy of Wordsworth's poems, once the possession of an earnest Transcendentalist, I find these, and many lines of similar import, underlined; showing how dear the English poet was to the American reader.[58]

There were others who held and enunciated the new faith that came from Germany, the transfigured Protestantism of the land of Luther. But these three names will suffice to indicate the wealth of England's contribution to the spiritual life of the New World – Coleridge,

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[58] J. Robert Barth, *Romanticism and Transcendence,* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003, pp. 34-39.

Carlyle, Wordsworth – the philosopher, the preacher, the poet; the man of thought, the man of letters, the man of imagination. These embrace all the methods by which the fresh enthusiasm for the soul communicated its power. These three were everywhere read, and everywhere talked of. They occupied prominent places in the public eye. They sank into the shadow only when the faith that glorified them began to decline.

It is remarkable that Emerson in the paper just quoted, written in 1840, passes from Wordsworth to Landor; while the author of the other paper, written in 1843, passes, and almost with an expression of relief, from Wordsworth to Tennyson, the new poet whose breaking glory threatened the morning star with eclipse. By this time Transcendentalism was on the wane. The *Dial*[59] marked for one year longer the hours of the great day, and then was removed from its place, and the scientific method of measuring progress was introduced. Wordsworth from year to year had a diminishing proportion of admirers: from year to year the admirers of Tennyson increased. As early as 1843 the passion for music, colour and external polish was manifest. Tennyson's elegance and subtlety, his rich fancy, his mastery of language, his metrical skill, his taste for the sumptuous and gorgeous, were winning their way to popularity. The critic in the *Dial* has misgivings: "In these boudoirs of damask and alabaster one is further off from stern nature and human life than in "Lalla Rookh" and "The Loves of the Angels." Amid swinging censers and perfumed lamps, amidst velvet and glory, we long for rain and frost. Otto of roses is good, but wild air is better."[60] But the sweets have

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[59] The literary achievements of Transcendentalism are best exhibited in the *Dial*, a quarterly "Magazine for Literature, Philosophy and Religion," begun July, 1840, and ending April, 1844. The editors were Margaret Fuller and R. W. Emerson; the contributors were the bright men and women who gave voice in literary form to the various utterances of the transcendental genius. Mr. Emerson's bravest lectures and noblest poems were first printed there. Margaret Fuller, besides numerous pieces of miscellaneous criticism, contributed the article on Goethe, alone enough to establish her fame as a discerner of spirits, and the paper on "The Great Lawsuit; Man versus Men – Woman versus Women," which was afterwards expanded into the book *Woman in the 19th Century*. Bronson Alcott sent in chapters the *Orphic Sayings*, which were amazement to the uninitiated and an amusement to the profane. Charles Emerson, younger brother of the essayist, whose premature death was bewailed by the admirers of intellect and the lovers of pure character, proved by his "Notes from the Journal of a Scholar," that genius was not confined to a single member of his family. George Ripley, James Freeman Clarke, Theodore Parker, Wm. H. Channing, Henry Thoreau, Eliot Cabot, John S. Dwight the musical critic, C. P. Cranch the artist-poet, Wm. E. Channing, were liberal of contributions, all in characteristic ways; and unnamed men and women did their part to fill the numbers of this most remarkable magazine. The freshest thoughts on all subjects were brought to the editors' table; social tendencies were noticed; books were received; the newest picture, the last concert, was passed upon; judicious estimates were made of reforms and reformers abroad as well as at home; the philosophical discussions were able and discriminating; the theological papers were learned, broad and fresh. The four volumes are exceedingly rich in poetry, and poetry such as seldom finds a place in popular magazines. The first year's issue contained sixty-six pieces; the second, thirty-five; the third, fifty; the fourth, thirty-three; among these were Emerson's earliest inspirations.

[60] Alan C. Golding, "The Dial, the Little Review and the Dialogics of Modernism," *Little Magazines and Modernism*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2005, pp. 42-55.

been tasted, and have spoiled the relish for the old homeliness. For the man who loved him the charm of Wordsworth was idyllic; for the few who bent the head to him it was mystical and prophetic. The idyllic sentiment palled on the taste. It was a reaction from artificial forms of sensibility, and having enjoyed its day, submitted to the law of change that called it into being. The moral earnestness, the mystic idealism became unpopular along with the school of philosophy from which it sprung, and gave place to the realism of the Victorian bards, who expressed the sensuous spirit of a more external age. Transcendentalism lurks in corners of England now. The high places of thought are occupied by men who approach the great problems from the side of nature, and through matter feel after mind; by means of the senses attempt the heights of spirit.

A remarkable feature of the *Dial* were the chapters of "Ethnical Scriptures," seven in all, containing texts from the Veeshnu Sarma, the laws of Menu, Confucius, the Desatir, the Chinese "Four Books," Hermes Trismegistus, the Chaldæan Oracles. Thirty-five years ago, these Scriptures, now so accessible, and in portions so familiar, were known to the few, and were esteemed by none but scholars, whose enthusiasm for ancient literature got the better of their religious faith. To read such things then showed an enlightened and courageous mind; to print them in a magazine under the sacred title of "Scriptures" argued a most extraordinary breadth of view. In offering these chapters to its readers, without apology and on their intrinsic merits, Transcendentalism exhibited its power to overpass the limits of all special religions, and do perfect justice to all expressions of the religious sentiment.

The creed of Transcendentalism has been sufficiently indicated. It had a creed, and a definite one. In his lecture on "The Transcendentalist," read in 1841, Mr. Emerson seems disposed to consider Transcendentalism merely as a phase of idealism.[61]

> Shall we say then that Transcendentalism is the Saturnalia or excess of Faith; the presentiment of a faith proper to man in his integrity, excessive only when his imperfect obedience hinders the satisfaction of his wit. Nature is Transcendental, exists primarily, necessarily, ever works and advances; yet takes no thought for the morrow. Man owns the dignity of the life which throbs around him in chemistry, and tree, and animal, and in the involuntary functions of his own body; yet he is balked

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[61] Barbara L. Packer, *The Transcendentalists*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007.

when he tries to fling himself into this enchanted circle, where all is done without degradation. Yet genius and virtue predict in man the same absence of private ends, and of condescension to circumstances, united with every trait and talent of beauty and power… This way of thinking, falling on Roman times, made stoic philosophers; falling on despotic times made patriot Catos and Brutuses; falling on superstitious times, made prophets and apostles; on popish times, made protestants and ascetic monks; preachers of Faith against preachers of Works; on prelatical times, made Puritans and Quakers; and falling on Unitarian and commercial times, makes the peculiar shades of Idealism which we know.

It is audacious to criticize Mr. Emerson on a point like this; but candour compels the remark that the above description does less than justice to the definiteness of the transcendental movement. It was something more than a reaction against formalism and tradition, though it took that form. It was more than a reaction against Puritan Orthodoxy, though in part it was that. It was in a very small degree due to study of the ancient pantheists, of Plato and the Alexandrians, of Plutarch, Seneca and Epictetus, though one or two of the leaders had drunk deeply from these sources. Transcendentalism was a distinct philosophical system. Practically it was an assertion of the inalienable worth of man; theoretically it was an assertion of the immanence of divinity in instinct, the transference of supernatural attributes to the natural constitution of mankind.

Such a faith would necessarily be protean in its aspects. Philosopher, Critic, Moralist, Poet, would give it voice according to cast of genius. It would present in turn all the phases of idealism, and to the outside spectator seem a mass of wild opinions; but running through all was the belief in the Living God in the Soul, faith in immediate inspiration, in boundless possibility, and in unimaginable good.[62]

A good example of the courteous kind of injustice may be found in the *Christian Examiner* for January, 1837, in a review of "Nature" from the pen of a Cambridge Professor, who writes in a kindly spirit and with an honest intention to be fair to a movement with which he had no intellectual sympathy:[63]

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[62] See Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance (1841),* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

[63] Guy R. Woodall, "The Record of a Friendship: The Letters of Convers Francis to Frederic Henry Hedge in Bangor and Providence, 1835-1850," *Studies in the American Renaissance,* 1991, pp. 1-57.

The aim of the Transcendentalists is high. They profess to look not only beyond facts, but, without the aid of facts, to principles. What is this but Plato's doctrine of innate, eternal and immutable ideas on the consideration of which all science is founded? Truly, the human mind advances but too often in a circle. The New School has abandoned Bacon, only to go back and wander in the groves of the Academy, and to bewilder themselves with the dreams which first arose in the fervid imagination of the Greeks. Without questioning the desirableness of this end, of considering general truths without any previous examination of particulars, we may well doubt the power of modern philosophers to attain it. Again, they are busy in the enquiry (to adopt their own phraseology) after the Real and Absolute, as distinguished from the Apparent. Not to repeat the same doubt as to their success, we may at least request them to beware lest they strip the truth of its relation to Humanity, and thus deprive it of its usefulness.

This passage is quoted not merely to show how inevitably the best intentioned critics of Transcendentalism fell into sarcasm, nor to illustrate the species of error into which the "Sensational" philosophy betrayed even candid minds; but to call attention to another point, namely, the general misconception of the practical aims and purposes of the new school. It was a common prejudice that Transcendentalists were visionaries and enthusiasts, who in pursuit of principles neglected duties, and while seeking for the real and the absolute forgot the actual and the relative. Macaulay puts the case strongly in his article on Lord Bacon:[64]

To sum up the whole; we should say that the aim of the Platonic philosophy was to exalt man into a God. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to provide man with what he requires while he continues to be man. The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to raise us far above vulgar wants. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to supply our wants. The former aim was noble; but the latter was attainable. Plato drew

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[64] *The Essay of Lord Bacon* (1837) by Lord MacAulay is an excellent source for ideas which Macaulay and early middle class Victorians considered important. The Victorian Age also called the Age of Faith, the Age of Reform, and the Age of the Industrial Revolution, was similar to the Renaissance decades of England in being a time of great literature, world trade expansion, political change and social mobility. In MacAulay's essay the Whig Liberal view of government is clearly defined: the mistrust of monarchy, the need for checks and balances in government, the importance of Parliament, the need for adherence to law, the value of middle class participation in business and government, and individual responsibility. The creed of Evangelicalism, providing much of the framework of the essay, is apparent in the subjects discussed: the Reformation, Anti-Popery, the Bible, sermons, repentance, family influence, death, and most important, moral righteousness. The idea of progress, at its peak in the early nineteenth century, and the idea of utility which paralleled scientific development, are used by Macaulay to illustrate Bacon's genius. Also discussed are modern language translations and their value in relation to the classics.

a good bow; but, like Acestes in Virgil, he aimed at the stars; and though there was no want of strength and skill, the shot was thrown away. Bacon fixed his eye on a mark which was placed on the earth, and within bow shot, and hit it in the white. The philosophy of Plato began in words and ended in words – noble words indeed; words such as were to be expected from the finest of human intellects exercising boundless control over the finest of human languages. The philosophy of Bacon began in observations and ended in arts. The smallest actual good is better than the most magnificent promises of impossibilities. The truth is, that in those very matters for the sake of which they neglected all the vulgar interests of mankind, the ancient philosophers did nothing or worse than nothing – they promised what was impracticable; they despised what was practicable; they filled the world with long words and long beards; and they left it as wicked and as ignorant as they found it.

Substitute Idealism for Platonism, and Transcendentalists for ancient philosophers, and this expresses the judgment of "sensible men" of the last generation, on Transcendentalism. It was not perceived that the two schools of philosophy aimed at producing the same results, but by different methods; that the "Sensationalist" worked up from beneath by material processes, while the "Idealist" worked downward from above by intellectual ones; that the former tried to push men up by mechanical appliances, and the latter endeavoured to draw them up by spiritual attraction; that while the disciples of Bacon operated on man as if he was a complex animal, a creature of nature and of circumstances, who was borne along with the material progress of the planet, but had no independent power of flight, the disciples of Kant and Fichte assumed that man was a creative, recreative force, a being who had only to be conscious of the capacities within him to shape circumstances according to the pattern shown him on the Mount. The charge of shooting at stars is puerile. The only use they would make of stars was to "hitch wagons" to them. The Transcendentalists of New England were the most strenuous workers of their day, and at the problems which the day flung down before them. The most strenuous, and the most successful workers too. They achieved more practical benefit for society, in proportion to their numbers and the duration of their existence, than anybody of Baconians of whom we ever heard. Men and women are healthier in their bodies, happier in their domestic and social relations, more contented in their estate, more ambitious to enlarge their opportunities, more eager to acquire knowledge, more kind and humane in their sympathies, more reasonable in their expectations, than they would have been if Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker and George Ripley

and Bronson Alcott, and the rest of their fellow believers and fellow workers had not lived. It is the fashion of our generation to hold that progress is, and must of necessity be, exceedingly gradual; and that no safe advance is ever made except at snail's pace. But ever and anon the mind of man refutes the notion by starting under the influence of a thought, and leaping over long reaches of space at a bound. Transcendentalism gave one of these demonstrations, sufficient to refute the vulgar prejudice. Its brief history may have illustrated the truth of Wordsworth's lines,

> That 'tis a thing impossible to frame
>
> Conceptions equal to the Soul's desires;
>
> And the most difficult of tasks to keep
>
> Heights which the Soul is competent to gain.[65]

The heights were gained nevertheless, and kept long enough for a view of the land of promise; and ever since, though the ascent is a dim recollection, and the great forms have come to look like images in dreams, and the mighty voices are but ghostly echoes, men and women have been happy in labouring for the heaven their fathers believed they saw.

The influence of Transcendentalism on general literature can be only indicated in loose terms. Its current was so strong, that like the Orinoco rushing down between the South American continent and the island of Trinidad, it made a bright green trail upon the dark sea into which it poured, but the vehemence of the flood forbade its diffusion. The influence was chiefly felt on the departments of philosophy and ethics. It created the turbulent literature of reform, the literature born of the "Enthusiasm of Humanity," the waves whereof are still rolling, though not with their original force. The literature of politics was profoundly affected by it; the political radicals, philosophical democrats, anti-slavery Whigs or republicans, enthusiasts for American ideas, prophets of America's destiny, being, more or less wittingly, controlled by its ideas. In this department Parker made himself felt, not on the popular mind alone, but on the recognized leaders of opinion East and West. The writings of Sumner and his school owe their vigour to these ideas. In history Bancroft was its great representative, his earliest volumes especially revealing in the richness, depth, and hopefulness of their interpretations of

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[65] William Wordsworth, *The Excursion,* Book 4, l, 1814, 136.

men and measures, the faith in humanity so strongly characteristic of the philosophy he professed.[66]

In poetry the influence is distinctly traceable, though here also it was confined within somewhat narrow limits. Bryant betrays scarcely perceptible marks of it, though he ascribed to Wordsworth a fresh inspiration of love for nature. It is hardly perceptible in Longfellow, whose verse, bubbling from the heart, gently meanders over the meadows and through the villages, gladdening daily existence with its music. Neither Bryant nor Longfellow had the intellectual passion that Transcendentalism roused. The earlier pieces of Lowell, the anti-slavery lyrics and poems of sentiment, were inspired by it. Whittier was wholly under its sway. The delicious sonnets of Jones Very were oozing from its spring. Julia Ward Howe's *Passion Flowers*, though published as late as 1854, burn and throb with feeling that had its source in these heights.[67]

The writers of elegant literature, essays, romances, tales, owed to Transcendentalism but a trifling debt, not worth acknowledging. They were out of range. It was their task to entertain people of leisure, and they derived their impulse from the pleasure their writings gave them or others. It was not to be expected that authors like Irving, Paulding, Cooper, would feel an interest in ideas so grave and earnest, or would catch a suggestion from them. But Lydia Maria Child, whose *Letters from New York* – 1841, 1843 – were models in their kind; whose stories for young people have not been surpassed by those of any writer, except Andersen; whose more laboured works have a quality that entitles them to a high place among the products of mind, is a devotee of the transcendental faith. A very remarkable book in the department of fiction was Sylvester Judd's "Margaret; a tale of the Real and the Ideal; Blight and Bloom." It contained the material for half a dozen ordinary novels; was full of imagination, aromatic, poetical, picturesque, tender, and in the dress of fiction set forth the whole gospel of Transcendentalism in religion, politics, reform, social ethics, personal character, professional and private life.[68]

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[66] Russel B. Nye, "The Religion of George Bancroft," *The Journal of Religion,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 19, No. 3, July 1939, pp. 216-233.

[67] Julia Ward Howe, *Passion Flowers*, Spain: Hardpress, 1854, p. 87.

[68] Lydia Maria Child, *Letters from New York,* New York: C. S. Francis & Boston: J. H. Francis, 1845, pp. 92-99.

As has been already remarked, the transcendental faith found expression in magazines and newspapers, which it called into existence, and which no longer survive. Its elaborate compositions were, from the nature of the case, few; its intellectual occupancy was too brief for the creation of a permanent literature. Had Transcendentalism been chiefly remarkable as a literary curiosity, the neglect of the smallest scrap of paper it caused to be marked with ink would be culpable. As it was, primarily and to the end, an intellectual episode, turning on a few cardinal ideas, it is best studied in the writings and lives of its disciples. They knew better than anybody what they wanted; they were best acquainted with their own ideas, and should be permitted to speak for themselves. Earnest men and women no doubt they were; better educated men and women did not live in America; they were well born, well nurtured, well endowed. Their generation produced no warmer hearts, no purer spirits, no more ardent consciences, no more devoted wills. Their philosophy may be unsound, but it produced noble characters and humane lives. The philosophy that takes its place may rest on more scientific foundations; it will not more completely justify its existence or honour its day.[69]

2.2. Of Transcendental Ideas

Transcendental analytic showed us how the mere logical form of our cognition can contain the origin of pure conceptions a priori, conceptions which represent objects antecedently to all experience, or rather, indicate the synthetical unity which alone renders possible an empirical cognition of objects. The form of judgements – converted into a conception of the synthesis of intuitions – produced the categories which direct the employment of the understanding in experience. This consideration warrants us to expect that the form of syllogisms, when applied to synthetical unity of intuitions, following the rule of the categories, will contain the origin of particular a priori conceptions, which we may call pure conceptions of reason or transcendental ideas, and which will determine the use of the understanding in the totality of experience according to principles.

The function of reason in arguments consists in the universality of cognition according to conceptions, and the syllogism itself is a judgement which is determined a priori in the whole extent of its condition. The proposition: "Caius is mortal," is one which may be obtained from experience by the aid of the understanding alone; but my wish is to find a conception which contains the condition under which the predicate of this judgement is given – in this

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[69] Frothingham Octavius Brooks, *Transcendentalism in New England: A History,* New York: G. P. Putnam'a Sons, 1976, pp. 76-104.

case, the conception of man – and after subsuming under this condition, taken in its whole extent (all men are mortal), I determine according to it the cognition of the object thought, and say: "Caius is mortal."

Hence, in the conclusion of a syllogism we restrict a predicate to a certain object, after having thought it in the major in its whole extent under a certain condition. This complete quantity of the extent in relation to such a condition is called universality. To this, corresponds totality of conditions in the synthesis of intuitions. The transcendental conception of reason is therefore nothing else than the conception of the totality of the conditions of a given conditioned. Now as the unconditioned alone renders possible totality of conditions and, conversely, the totality of conditions is itself always unconditioned; a pure rational conception in general can be defined and explained by means of the conception of the unconditioned, in so far as it contains a basis for the synthesis of the conditioned.

To the number of modes of relation which the understanding cogitates by means of the categories, the number of pure rational conceptions will correspond. We must therefore seek for, first, an unconditioned of the categorical synthesis in a subject; secondly, of the hypothetical synthesis of the members of a series; thirdly, of the disjunctive synthesis of parts in a system.

There are exactly the same number of modes of syllogisms, each of which proceeds through prosyllogisms to the unconditioned – one to the subject which cannot be employed as predicate, another to the presupposition which supposes nothing higher than itself, and the third to an aggregate of the members of the complete division of a conception. Hence the pure rational conceptions of totality in the synthesis of conditions have a necessary foundation in the nature of human reason – at least as modes of elevating the unity of the understanding to the unconditioned. They may have no valid application, corresponding to their transcendental employment, in concerto, and be thus of no greater utility than to direct the understanding how, while extending them as widely as possible, to maintain its exercise and application in perfect consistence and harmony.

But, while speaking here of the totality of conditions and of the unconditioned as the common title of all conceptions of reason, we again light upon an expression which we find it impossible to dispense with, and which nevertheless, owing to the ambiguity attaching to it from long abuse, we cannot employ with safety. The word absolute is one of the few words

which, in its original signification, was perfectly adequate to the conception it was intended to convey – a conception which no other word in the same language exactly suits, and the loss – or, which is the same thing, the incautious and loose employment – of which must be followed by the loss of the conception itself. And, as it is a conception which occupies much of the attention of reason, its loss would be greatly to the detriment of all transcendental philosophy. The word absolute is at present frequently used to denote that something can be predicated of a thing considered in itself and intrinsically. In this sense absolutely possible would signify that which is possible in itself (interne) – which is, in fact, the least that one can predicate of an object. On the other hand, it is sometimes employed to indicate that a thing is valid in all respects – for example, absolute sovereignty. Absolutely possible would in this sense signify that which is possible in all relations and in every respect; and this is the most that can be predicated of the possibility of a thing. Now these significations do in truth frequently coincide. Thus, for example, that which is intrinsically impossible is also impossible in all relations, that is, absolutely impossible. But in most cases they differ from each other *toto caelo*, and I can by no means conclude that, because a thing is in itself possible, it is also possible in all relations, and therefore absolutely. Nay, more, I shall in the sequel show that absolute necessity does not by any means depend on internal necessity, and that, therefore, it must not be considered as synonymous with it. Of an opposite which is intrinsically impossible, we may affirm that it is in all respects impossible, and that, consequently, the thing itself, of which this is the opposite, is absolutely necessary; but I cannot reason conversely and say, the opposite of that which is absolutely necessary is intrinsically impossible, that is, that the absolute necessity of things is an internal necessity. For this internal necessity is in certain cases a mere empty word with which the least conception cannot be connected, while the conception of the necessity of a thing in all relations possesses very peculiar determinations. Now as the loss of a conception of great utility in speculative science cannot be a matter of indifference to the philosopher, I trust that the proper determination and careful preservation of the expression on which the conception depends will likewise be not indifferent to him.

In this enlarged signification, then, shall I employ the word absolute, in opposition to that which is valid only in some particular respect; for the latter is restricted by conditions, the former is valid without any restriction whatever.

Now the transcendental conception of reason has for its object nothing else than absolute totality in the synthesis of conditions and does not rest satisfied till it has attained to the absolutely, that is, in all respects and relations, unconditioned. For pure reason leaves to the understanding everything that immediately relates to the object of intuition or rather to their synthesis in imagination. The former restricts itself to the absolute totality in the employment of the conceptions of the understanding and aims at carrying out the synthetical unity which is cogitated in the category, even to the unconditioned. This unity may hence be called the rational unity of phenomena, as the other, which the category expresses, may be termed the unity of the understanding. Reason, therefore, has an immediate relation to the use of the understanding, not indeed in so far as the latter contains the ground of possible experience (for the conception of the absolute totality of conditions is not a conception that can be employed in experience, because no experience is unconditioned), but solely for the purpose of directing it to a certain unity, of which the understanding has no conception, and the aim of which is to collect into an absolute whole all acts of the understanding. Hence the objective employment of the pure conceptions of reason is always transcendent, while that of the pure conceptions of the understanding must, according to their nature, be always immanent, inasmuch as they are limited to possible experience.

I understand by idea a necessary conception of reason, to which no corresponding object can be discovered in the world of sense. Accordingly, the pure conceptions of reason at present under consideration are transcendental ideas. They are conceptions of pure reason, for they regard all empirical cognition as determined by means of an absolute totality of conditions. They are not mere fictions, but natural and necessary products of reason, and have hence a necessary relation to the whole sphere of the exercise of the understanding. And, finally, they are transcendent, and overstep the limits of all experiences, in which, consequently, no object can ever be presented that would be perfectly adequate to a transcendental idea. When we use the word idea, we say, as regards its object (an object of the pure understanding), a great deal, but as regards its subject (that is, in respect of its reality under conditions of experience), exceedingly little, because the idea, as the conception of a maximum, can never be completely and adequately presented in concerto. Now, as in the merely speculative employment of reason the latter is properly the sole aim, and as in this case the approximation to a conception, which is never attained in practice, is the same thing as if the conception were non-existent – it is commonly said of the conception of this kind, "it is only an idea." So we might very well say, "the absolute totality of all phenomena is only an idea,"

for, as we never can present an adequate representation of it, it remains for us a problem incapable of solution. On the other hand, as in the practical use of the understanding we have only to do with action and practice according to rules, an idea of pure reason can always be given really in concerto, although only partially, nay, it is the indispensable condition of all practical employment of reason. The practice or execution of the idea is always limited and defective, but nevertheless within indeterminable boundaries, consequently always under the influence of the conception of an absolute perfection. And thus the practical idea is always in the highest degree fruitful and in relation to real actions indispensably necessary. In the idea, pure reason possesses even causality and the power of producing that which its conception contains. Hence we cannot say of wisdom, in a disparaging way, "it is only an idea." For, for the very reason that it is the idea of the necessary unity of all possible aims, it must be for all practical exertions and endeavours the primitive condition and rule – a rule which, if not constitutive, is at least limitative.

Now, although we must say of the transcendental conceptions of reason, "they are only ideas," we must not, on this account, look upon them as superfluous and nugatory. For, although no object can be determined by them, they can be of great utility, unobserved and at the basis of the edifice of the understanding, as the canon for its extended and self-consistent exercise – a canon which, indeed, does not enable it to cognize more in an object than it would cognize by the help of its own conceptions, but which guides it more securely in its cognition. Not to mention that they perhaps render possible a transition from our conceptions of nature and the non-ego to the practical conceptions, and thus produce for even ethical ideas keeping, so to speak, and connection with the speculative cognitions of reason. The explication of all this must be looked for in the sequel.

But setting aside, in conformity with our original purpose, the consideration of the practical ideas, we proceed to contemplate reason in its speculative use alone, nay, in a still more restricted sphere, to wit, in the transcendental use; and here must strike into the same path which we followed in our deduction of the categories. That is to say, we shall consider the logical form of the cognition of reason, that we may see whether reason may not be thereby a source of conceptions which enables us to regard objects in themselves as determined synthetically a priori, in relation to one or other of the functions of reason.

Reason, considered as the faculty of a certain logical form of cognition, is the faculty of conclusion, that is, of mediate judgement – by means of the subsumption of the condition of a

possible judgement under the condition of a given judgement. The given judgement is the general rule (major). The subsumption of the condition of another possible judgement under the condition of the rule is the minor. The actual judgement, which enounces the assertion of the rule in the subsumed case, is the conclusion. The rule predicates something generally under a certain condition. The condition of the rule is satisfied in some particular case. It follows that what was valid in general under that condition must also be considered as valid in the particular case which satisfies this condition. It is very plain that reason attains to cognition, by means of acts of the understanding which constitute a series of conditions. When I arrive at the proposition, "All bodies are changeable," by beginning with the more remote cognition (in which the conception of body does not appear, but which nevertheless contains the condition of that conception), "All compound is changeable," by proceeding from this to a less remote cognition, which stands under the condition of the former, "Bodies are compound," and hence to a third, which at length connects for me the remote cognition (changeable) with the one before me, "Consequently, bodies are changeable" – I have arrived at a cognition (conclusion) through a series of conditions (premisses). Now every series, whose exponent (of the categorical or hypothetical judgement) is given, can be continued; consequently the same procedure of reason conducts us to the ratiocinatio polysyllogistica, which is a series of syllogisms, that can be continued either on the side of the conditions (per prosyllogismos) or of the conditioned (per episyllogismos) to an indefinite extent.

But we very soon perceive that the chain or series of prosyllogisms, that is, of deduced cognitions on the side of the grounds or conditions of a given cognition, in other words, the ascending series of syllogisms must have a very different relation to the faculty of reason from that of the descending series, that is, the progressive procedure of reason on the side of the conditioned by means of episyllogisms. For, as in the former case the cognition (conclusio) is given only as conditioned, reason can attain to this cognition only under the presupposition that all the members of the series on the side of the conditions are given (totality in the series of premisses), because only under this supposition is the judgement we may be considering possible a priori; while on the side of the conditioned or the inferences, only an incomplete and becoming, and not a presupposed or given series, consequently only a potential progression, is cogitated. Hence, when a cognition is contemplated as conditioned, reason is compelled to consider the series of conditions in an ascending line as completed and given in their totality. But if the very same condition is considered at the same time as the condition of other cognitions, which together constitute a series of inferences or

consequences in a descending line, reason may preserve a perfect indifference, as to how far this progression may extend a parte posteriori, and whether the totality of this series is possible, because it stands in no need of such a series for the purpose of arriving at the conclusion before it, inasmuch as this conclusion is sufficiently guaranteed and determined on grounds a parte priori. It may be the case, that upon the side of the conditions the series of premisses has a first or highest condition, or it may not possess this, and so be a part priori unlimited; but it must, nevertheless, contain totality of conditions, even admitting that we never could succeed in completely apprehending it; and the whole series must be unconditionally true, if the conditioned, which is considered as an inference resulting from it, is to be held as true. This is a requirement of reason, which announces its cognition as determined a priori and as necessary, either in itself – and in this case it needs no grounds to rest upon – or, if it is deduced, as a member of a series of grounds, which is itself unconditionally true.

CHAPTER 3

ICONIC PATRIOTISM IN THE POETRY OF JOHN DONNE

The icon provides one of the clearest visual images of transcendence possible: a believer, looking at the image, finds her gaze directed beyond it. The transcendence of the icon occurs because the images on it represent more than themselves; they represent the God that authorizes them as well as the God that resides in the space beyond them. JeanLuc Marion remarks how, in this sense, the icon can be distinguished from the idol, which literally contains the divine that it also represents. As such, both icon and idol present "two modes of apprehension of the divine in visibility:[70] the idol by containing the God within representation, the icon by pointing to the God outside of representation.

In the pre-modem context of widespread illiteracy in Europe, the importance of visual transcendence cannot be underestimated. The medieval Catholic reliance on the spectacle of the visual-leant itself to a culture that privileged the image as the site of devotion. In this environment, even literary documents, with their vibrant illuminations, attested to the sacramental valences of the image. Given this cultural milieu, the sixteenth-century Reformation campaign against the Catholic icon was, far from being the liberation promised by the iconoclasts, a cause of deep social trauma.[71] While iconoclasm had removed Catholic icons from the gaze of the Protestant nation, it left, in their place, a spiritual void that could only be filled visually. This chapter witnesses the migration of the icon from the material object of Catholicism to the poetic metaphors of patriotism in the work of John Donne. It argues that Donne divorces the iconic image from its material matrix, and uses the transcendence of iconicity-the ability of images to represent beyond themselves-to create new "icons" of Protestant nationalism within the metaphors of his poetry.

3.1. Converting England

The word "conversion," especially in literary studies, almost uniformly signals an internal choice, a drama that, although staged against the backdrop of political and theological

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[70] Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte,* transl. Thomas A. Carlson, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1991.

[71] On Elizabethan iconoclasm, see Chap. 1, nll.

change, is played out largely in the realm of the individual. In fact, a number of recent works have investigated the drama of conversion vis-a-vis the actual dramas of the day – Philip Massinger's *The Renegado,* William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice,* and Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great,* to name a few.[72] While the conversions in these plays take place in the midst of social and political upheaval imagined on the grand scale, the actual moment of change tends to be focused on by critics as a deeply internalized act. For instance, Daniel Vitkus, while recognizing that Tamburlaine's unstable religious identity is underwritten by contemporary anxieties about divine authority, ultimately perceives Tamburlaine's rejection of God as a matter of private ambition, what contemporaries would call an "infirmity of faith."[73]

However inseparable conversion may be from individual experience, the early modern interrelationship of microcosm and macrocosm, of person and society, ensured that the word 'conversion' also applied at the national level. As John Donne notes, "that which is proverbially said of particular Bodies, will hold in a Body Politick."[74] The conversion of early modern England, from Catholicism to Anglican Protestantism, can therefore be understood and analysed as a national event as much as a collection of individual ones. In some respects, of course, this national event was the result of the only individual conversion that actually mattered: the conversion of the monarch. But if, at the official level, Henry VIII's self-proclaimed title of 'supreme head of the Church of England' changed the religious identity of an entire nation seemingly overnight, at the level of the populace, England's conversion was still largely a fiction of the state; national conversion was a Protestant idea and ideal that helped navigate the state through the very real instabilities of the Reformation. As Christopher Haigh writes, the English Reformation produced a "Protestant nation, but not

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[72] As the names of these plays suggest, most of these works concentrate on contact between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. See Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 1-44; Shankar Raman, *Framing 'India': The Colonial Imaginary in Early Modern Culture,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002; Richard Barbour, *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of the East, 1576-1626,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999; and Claire Jowitt (ed.), *Pirates? The Politics of Plunder, 1550-1650,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. In poetry, critical work on conversion tends to focus on the personal experiences of particular authors such as Richard Crashaw. See Molly Murray, *The Poetics of Conversion in Early Modern English Literature: Verse and Change from Donne to Dryden,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[73] Vitkus, *Turning Turk,* p. 51.

[74] John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne,* ed. George Potter and Evelyn Simpson, 10 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953-1962, 4:140.

a nation of Protestants."[75] Indeed, as revisionist historians such as Haigh have shown, the achievements of the English Reformation were constantly troubled by sectarianism and the presence of recusant culture even, as Molly Murray notes, "after England's official Reformation would seem to have been definitely achieved."[76] In the face of such religious disorder, the idea of national conversion provided a fantasy of unity. Although the English Reformation may have been interrupted and usurped by papists and internal divisions, the hopes of the official Protestant state (when it *was* officially Protestant, that is) remained pinned inexorably on what Ethan Shagan has called "the phantasmagoric goal of 'national conversion.'"[77]

In order to authorize this idea of national conversion, England required a "conversion" of another kind; the ideological structures that had their roots in Catholic traditions had to be adapted to a Protestant worldview. This need created a symbolic campaign to rehabilitate the images and texts that had traditionally upheld Catholicism and adapt them to a newly Protestant England.[78] It is perhaps no coincidence that the most famous example of this pilfering from Catholic iconography – the transformation of Elizabeth I into the Virgin Queen – occurred during the reign that did the most to solidify the Protestant identity of the nation. Imaginative literature provided a space in which to translate the philosophies of Protestant apologetics and polemics into affective language, allowing people to connect on an emotional, intuitive level with the idea of a nation whose formerly Catholic practices and symbols now had Protestant valences. This symbolic campaign is what Donne, in the early years of the seventeenth century, continues as his poetry instils Catholic iconography with Protestant meaning as a way of imagining England's conversion on the large scale.

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[75] Christopher Haigh *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 281.

[76] Murray, *Poetics of Conversion,* p. 18. See also J.J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1984; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992. For a concise historiography of the Reformation and a compelling 'post-revisionist' historical alternative, see Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003.

[77] Shagan, *Popular Politics,* p. 7. For Shagan, historians ought to reject the assumption that any nation is capable of 'converting' in this sense. However, this chapter holds that the fantasy of 'national conversion' still bears investigation as a compelling idea for early modern peoples.

[78] For a more general discussion on the relationship of art to Reformation ideology, see Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 75.

In the years of the late Elizabethan and early Stuart reigns, the task of instilling Catholic symbols with Protestant meaning was complicated by the traumatic effects of colonization; a changing world meant that many of the patriotic objects that might have been used by the English state as Protestant "icons" were destabilized.[79] The rapidly expanding geography of the world, coupled with burgeoning capitalism, particularly affected two objects that had, in the past, used religious imagery to underwrite the authority of Catholic nations: maps and coins. The renowned T-O maps had for centuries depicted the relationship of the world's continents centred on the holy cities of Rome or Jerusalem, while coins typically encoded the figure or heraldry of the prince together with images of crosses or angels. By the seventeenth century, however, the settlement of new lands and the consequent imperatives of geographically accurate navigation increasingly made the conceptual cartography of the T-O maps seem outmoded.

Similarly, the debasement of monies in early modem Europe as the result of an influx of New World bullion had, by the seventeenth century, undercut the stability not only of the monetary value of coins, but also of the symbolic value that was supposed be analogous to it. And so, while the official English stance asserted the *fait accompli* of England's conversion to Protestantism under the auspices of the monarchical head of church and state, the objects that might have been marshalled to lend weight to those assertions were rapidly becoming obsolete in the face of a changing world.

Donne's poetry rescues maps and coins from this defunct geographic and economic context, giving them a new artistic framework that ultimately resurrects them as icons of a unified Protestant nationality. To accomplish this poetic feat, Donne's work turns to the mystical union described in the writings of such Catholic theologians as St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Teresa of Avila in order to reinvigorate maps and coins with spiritual meaning. Specifically, maps and coins become metaphors that convey union on a mass scale in order to imagine not the mystical interior conversion of the Catholic soul toward God, but the communal conversion of a Protestant nation.

This chapter will investigate three of Donne's poems to discover how each highlights a different aspect of this symbolic project. *A Valediction of Weeping* reveals the centrality of

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[79] To some extent, this symbolic rupture was as much the fault of court culture as political upheaval. See Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England,* pp. 34-36. It is also worth noting that the addition of Scotland to Britain in 1603 may have further destabilized national identity.

mystical union in reimagining these crumbling representations of the nation; it utilizes coins not as problematic symbols of economic prosperity, but as tools that enable union between lovers. *The Bracelet* highlights nationalism by using Catholic symbols within Protestant patriotism; it focuses on Michael the Archangel, an image that English coinage inherited from Catholic iconography, as the ideal figure for the Protestant nation. And finally, *Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness* expresses the hope that the religious and national cohesion of England might one day extend to the world at large; the poem overlaps images drawn from the Catholic T-O maps with newer, more geographically accurate references to imagine a union between God and the world that goes beyond doctrinal boundaries.

In relying on mystical union to underwrite the meaning of these metaphors, Donne's poetry attempts to clear away the complications of outer colonial turmoil and, in doing so, creates a symbolism that transcends inner politico-religious division. Even though New World discoveries led to destabilization or debasement in the political sphere, in Donne's poems, these new lands and resources lead to union with a God that mimics their expansiveness. This fact relocates the symbolic meaning of coins and maps, not within the problematic realities of expansion, but within spiritual union. St. Teresa points out that this turning away from the temporal world is one of the hallmarks of the Prayer of Union: "We are all asleep, and fast asleep, to the things of the world, and to ourselves… as someone who has completely died to the world in order to live more fully in God."[80] That is, an awareness of God supersedes any problems that might arise within the material world. Consequently, the nation that these maps and coins symbolize is founded on an immeasurable God capable of unifying England beyond the deleterious effects of popish partisanship and schismatic sects. Unified to a God beyond doctrinal disputes, Donne's poetry imagines an England unified to itself.

For over a century, critics have been aware of Donne's familiarity with Spanish theology; one of Donne's earliest biographers, Edmund Gosse, cites Donne himself, who confessed to having more works by Spanish authors in his personal library than from any other country.[81] However, while the influence of Spanish mysticism has long been a focus for Donne studies,

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[80] Avila Teresa de, *Castillo Interior o Las Moradas y Exclamaciones del Alma a Dios y Poesias,* Madrid: Aguilar, 1965, pp. 115-116.

[81] Edmund Gosse, *The Life and Letters of John Donne,* 2 vols. New York and London: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1899, 2:176-177. See also E.N.S. Thompson, "Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century English Literature," *Studies in Philology* 18, no. 2, 1921: 170-231; and Harry J. Brown, "'Soul's Language Understood': John Donne and the Spanish Mystics," *Q/W/E/R/T/Y: Arts, Literatures & Civilisations du Monde Anglophone* 11, 2001: 27-35. For an early argument against Donne's Spanish influence, see E.M. Simpson, "Donne's Spanish Authors," *Modern Language Review* 42, 1948: 182-185.

criticism has largely ignored the political context of that influence. Donne's own conversion from Catholicism to English Protestantism has, understandably, tended to deflect critical thinking toward questions of Donne's own individual religious identity and away from his poetry's engagement with conversion. The central question of critical work tends toward the biographical – whether Donne was truly Protestant or secretly Catholic – to create what one critic has termed the "confessionally based rift" of Donne studies.[82]

In fact, Donne's own family was deeply invested in questions of conversion. Donne's grandfather, John Heywood, was involved in a 1542 plot against Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and eventually sought asylum abroad rather than convert to Protestantism. Donne's great-uncle, Thomas Heywood, was executed for Jesuitism in 1574, and Donne's maternal uncle, Jasper Heywood, headed a Jesuit mission in England before his capture in 1583. He was condemned for high treason and sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, although the sentence was later commuted to exile. There is convincing evidence that the twelve-year-old Donne visited Jasper during his imprisonment. Even Donne's own brother, Henry, was imprisoned in 1593 for harbouring a priest, and died in Newgate before his trial.[83] Donne was therefore highly aware of the political ramifications that accompanied conversion, or the refusal to convert.

As John Carey points out, this family tradition of fierce loyalty to Rome contrasts greatly with Donne's decision to join the Anglican Church. Carey notes that having to face the terrifying possibility of his own damnation as he contemplated apostasy would prompt Donne later to embrace a model of the True Church that was more inclusive.[84] Donne's family history of religious persecution, coupled with the personal spiritual trauma of his own

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[82] Robert Whalen, *The Poetry of Immanence: Sacrament in Donne and Herbert,* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. xiii. For Donne's Catholic, continental influences, see Louis Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1954; Dennis Flynn, *John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995; and R.V. Young, *Doctrine and Devotion in Seventeenth Century Poetry: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan,* Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000. For arguments in favour of Donne's Protestantism, see Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Richard Strier, *Love Known: Theology and Experience in George Herbert's Poetry,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983; and Mary Arshagouni Papazian (Ed.), *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives,* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003. For a recent alternative to this dichotomy, see Murray Roston, "Donne and the Meditative Tradition," *Religion and Literature* 37, no. 1, 2005: 45-68.

[83] On this family history, see R.C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life,* New York: 1970, 25-26, 39-45; Carey J., *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 20-25; and John Stubbs, *John Donne: The Reformed Soul,* New York and London: Viking, 2007, pp. 10-20, 43-46.

[84] Carey, *Life, Mind and Art,* pp. 15-36.

conversion, would eventually lead him to embrace a soteriology that ensured all truly "faithful souls be alike glorified," independent of church affiliation.[85]

3.2. Mystical Union in *A Valediction of Weeping*

In Donne's *Songs and Sonnets,* these political and religious interests remain largely obscured behind the more immediate poetic project: to establish union between lovers. The metaphysical (and, just as often, physical) union in these poems is frequently consummated by means of a proxy, a metaphor that both symbolizes and enables it. In the case of "A Valediction of Weeping," union is authorized by the tears of the lover, who is about to embark upon a long journey. As the lover stands before his beloved, her image is reflected in his tears, striking a coin that blends their individual identities into one object. Consequently, the coins of this poem are valued not monetarily but by their ability to bring two people together.

Donne's poetic conceit of loving union struggles to rise above the realities of individuality and separateness that the speaker experiences. In doing so, the poem simultaneously alludes to a contemporary challenge in seventeenth century economics: the problem of reconciling two separate and often incompatible systems of valuing coins. As a result of Tudor economic policies during the sixteenth century, the intrinsic value of coins was intermittently divorced from their face value, a fact that destabilized monetary value in general throughout the period. Previous centuries had valued coins by the precious metal they contained,[86] and England during these late medieval years maintained what economic historian C. E. Challis calls "one of the finest gold currencies anywhere in Europe.[87] English coins preserved a remarkably stable gold standard of 23 carats and 3½ grains, known as "angel gold."[88] Throughout the sixteenth century, however, this "old right standard" suffered from periods of debasement, including most notably the Great Debasement of 1544-1551. During this time, the purity of coinage dropped to as low as 20 carats, even though coins minted at this lower

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[85] Holy Sonnet 16, "If faithful souls," line 1; all subsequent references to John Donne's poetry will appear parenthetically in the text by line number and are from Donne, *John Donne's Poetry,* ed. Daniel R. Dickson, New York: Norton, 2007. See also Carey, *Life, Mind and Art,* p. 28.

[86] Harry A. Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe, 1560-1600,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 155; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences,* New York: Vintage, 1973, p. 176.

[87] C.E. Challis, *The Tudor Coinage,* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1978, p. 257.

[88] Challis, *Tudor Coinage,* pp. 257 and 303.

standard were supposed to maintain the same face value of the finer coins that were already in circulation.[89] Additionally, increasing amounts of precious metals from the Americas destabilized the commodity price of bullion, making it even more difficult to link face value and intrinsic value.[90] As Charles P. Kindleberger notes: "Even without the extended wars and the malversation of mint masters and their higher authorities, getting the currency right in this period posed difficulties because of rapidly changing relative supplies of gold, silver and copper, and the opportunities this gave to exercise Gresham's Law."[91]

As a result, the value of English money relied intermittently on the power of the monarch to set arid enforce it.[92] *Scipion de Grammont* cogently noted this shift while it was occurring: "Money does not draw its value from the material of which it is composed, but rather from its form, which is the image or mark of the Prince."[93] Relying on a face value set by the monarch could be problematic, however, as merchants could not always be trusted to uphold face value, especially when it differed significantly from a coin's intrinsic value.[94]

In response to this economic upheaval, Donne's poem offers coinage an alternative image – the face of the beloved rather than the monarch – that realigns intrinsic arid face value by signalling loving union rather than wealth.[95] The instable valuation of the economic arena thus finds the possibility of an imagined stability in the poetic domain as head of state morphs into head of beloved:

> Let me pour forth

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[89] *Ibid,* p. 307. See also pp. 81-112; John Dennis Gould, *The Great Debasement: Currency and the Economy in Mid-Tudor England,* Oxford: Clarendon, 1970; and Miskimin, *Later Renaissance Europe,* pp. 40-41 and 155-162. Other instances of royal manipulation of currency included the issuance of dandyprats (1492-1525), Irish debasement (c.1530-1543), English debasement (1542-1544), re-minting of base English coins to baser Irish coins (after 1551), and the issuance of rose nobles for circulation in the Netherlands (1584-1587). Challis, *Tudor Coinage,* pp. 52-54 and 248-268.

[90] Challis, *Tudor Coinage,* pp. 183-198; Foucault, *Order of Things,* pp. 168-174. For a longer history of the commodity price of bullion in early modem Europe, see Miskimin, *Later Renaissance Europe,* pp. 28-43.

[91] Charles P. Kindleberger, "The Economic Crisis of 1619 to 1923," *Journal of Economic History* 51, no. 1 (1991): 149-175, 151.

[92] Shankar Raman, "Can't Buy Me Love: Money, Gender, and Colonialism in Donne's Erotic Verse," *Criticism* 43, no. 2, 2001: 135-168, 138.

[93] Qtd. in Foucault, *Order of Things,* pp. 174-175.

[94] For an example of illegal currency trading during Irish debasement, see Challis, *Tudor Coinage,* pp. 268-274.

[95] On the relationship between intrinsic and face value in Donne's poetry, see Carey, "Donne and Coins," in Carey (Ed.), *English Renaissance Studies: Presented to Dame Helen Gardner in honour of her Seventieth Birthday,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, pp. 151-163, 154.

My tears before thy face, whilst I stay here,

For thy face coins them, and thy stamp they bear;

And by this mintage they are something worth. (*Of Weeping*, lines 1-4)

The metaphor visually unites poet and beloved by combining the substance of the poet's tear with the reflection of the beloved to create a coin. In this sense, the intrinsic value of the coin (the tear) is derived entirely from its face value (the beloved); it is only by the "face" or "stamp" of the beloved that the coins might be considered "something worth." By making intrinsic value contingent on face value, the poem reorganizes the unstable relationship that the two had in the economic arena.

The metaphor capitalizes on the divorce between intrinsic and face values by linking these values to lover and beloved, and then posing the possibility that value systems and people might both be realigned by love. As such, the ultimate value of the coin is predicated on love's ability to bring two people together. As John Carey notes, "a coin, to Donne, was not an object but a relationship."[96] The coin in this poem makes it possible for both beloved and lover to step outside of their separate identities and to become blended together in one image.

By becoming metaphors that enable union, coins in *Of Weeping* approximate the function of meditative images in contemporary mystical treatises. Louis L. Martz notes that the union between God and man imagined by contemporary mystics was often inaugurated by, as Francis de Sales notes, "some similitude, answerable to the matter" of the day's meditation.[97] Similarly, Ignatius of Loyola's famous "composition of place," to which we will return, urges a practitioner to begin their meditation with visualization.[98] Mystical devotions incorporate these symbols in order to encourage the soul's transformation by emotionally and visually identifying with God. While *Of Weeping* has none of the overt theology of mystical treatises, it nevertheless uses the meditative images of mystical union as kind of template for imagining the union of lovers.

Thus, the union forged in Donne's poem reiterates the emotional progression of a mystical conversion experience: the soul identifies with an intermediary image that represents the

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[96] John Carey, "Donne and Coins," p. 154.

[97] Qtd. in Martz, *Poetry of Meditation,* p. 28.

[98] Loyola, Ignatius de, *Autobiographia y Ejercicios Espirituales,* Madrid: Aguilar, 1966, pp. 182-183.

complete union between self and God (in the case of mysticism) or between lovers (in the case of Donne's poem). In doing so, the poem seeks to find a language in which to overcome the problems of individuality and separation, to imagine the possibility of a continual internal conversion away from a solitary identity and toward community.[99]

Donne's poetry is infamously self-destructive, with metaphors that can rarely maintain the conceptual challenges set before them. In keeping with this poetic tradition, the final stanzas in *Of Weeping* witness the gradual dissolution of that union so carefully constructed in the poem's opening. Ultimately the lovers' community can only last as long as their tears do. In an attempt to keep this future destruction at bay, the poem's second stanza reaches beyond itself to find a metaphor large and permanent enough to maintain the union symbolized in those tears. It is not enough that the lovers be unified in a coin; there must also be a world for them to circulate in:

> On a round ball
>
> A workman, that hath copies by can lay
>
> An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,
>
> And quickly make that which was nothing *All;*
>
> So doth each tear,
>
> Which thee doth wear,
>
> A globe, yea world, by that impression grow. (10-16)

Whereas the first stanza of the poem concerns itself primarily with symbolic value, this second stanza struggles to find a place to suit the significance of those priceless coins. As if the image of the beloved on the tears were not enough to generate intrinsic value for the metaphor, the images of these lines reach out to a world beyond themselves, to an *"All"* that

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[99] Of course, *The Ecstasy* is the poem where this mystical union is most fully achieved in *Songs and Sonnets.* See Merritt Hughes, "Some of Donne's 'Ecstasies,'" *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 75, no. 5, 1960: 509-518; and Regina Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008, pp. 87-116. In a later sermon, Donne would use coins more explicitly to imagine the union of God and humanity: "And then it repayment of sin's debt was lent in such money as was coined even with the Image of God; man was made according to his Image: That Image being defaced, in a new Mint, in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, there was new money coined; the Image of the invisible God, the second person in the trinity, was imprinted into the human nature." Donne, *Sermons,* 4:288. See also Carey, "Donne and Coins," pp. 156-157.

might match the value of the coin. As the images move from coins to continents, globes, and worlds, they create a metaphoric stockpile that ultimately dismantles the symbolic apparatus entirely. The pileup of discarded metaphors finally topples into itself. The tears of the beloved mix with the tears of the lover, drowning any possibilities for union that the poem once held:

> Thy tears mix'd with mine do overflow
>
> This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so. (17-18)

Although *Of Weeping* employs coins as meditative images that reach toward mystical union, its symbols ultimately fail. This poetic collapse is due to the lack of a metaphor expansive enough to support its own symbolic weight. Tears and coins, for all their value, are insufficient to signify union on the scale that Donne imagines it. The tantalizing possibility offered by the poem, however – the promise that two people might inhabit the same spiritual space – keeps Donne's early poems formulating and reformulating the religious valences of these patriotic metaphors.

3.3. The Protestant Nation of *The Bracelet*

The Bracelet avoids the metaphoric lack that undoes *Of Weeping* through a central image that is both nationalistic and religious.[100] The poem is a versified plea made by a young rapscallion on behalf of his "gold angel" coins, so called because they featured a representation of Michael the Archangel on their obverse. The angel is depicted on the coin defeating a serpent, an attribute inherited from Catholic iconography.[101]Hoping to avoid sacrificing these "righteous angels" to his mistress as reimbursement for losing her bracelet, the unfortunate speaker futilely lobbies that they be spared "the bitter cost" of being illegally alloyed with "vile solder" to create a replacement chain. (*The Bracelet*, lines 8-10)

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[100] Chronologically, most editors believe *The Bracelet* (before c.1598) was probably written before *Of Weeping* (after c. 1602). I have analysed *Of Weeping* first, however, in order to foreground Donne's idea of loving union. For the date of *The Bracelet*, see Donne, *The Elegies,* vol. 2 of Donne, *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne,* ed. Gary A. Stringer, 8 vols, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 513-514. For *Of Weeping*, see Donne, *The Complete Poetry of John Donne,* (Ed.) John .T. Shawcross, New York and London: New York University Press, 1968, p. 413; Donne, *The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets,* (Ed.) Helen Gardner, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965, p. xxv; and Donne, *The Poems of John Donne,* (Ed.) Robin Robbins, 2 vols, Harlow, London, and New York: Longman, 2008, 1:273 and 1:268-269. For *Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness* (c.l623 or c. 1631), see John Sparrow, "On the Date of Donne's *Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness*," *The Modern Language Review* 19, no. 4, 1924: 462-466; and Donald R. Dickson's note in Donne, *John Donne s Poetry,* p. 155.

[101] Challis, *Tudor Coinage,* p. 167. See also Rev. 12:7-9.

The poem's central desire – to prevent its coins from being alloyed and reforged – manifests residual anxiety over Henrician debasement and changing bullion supplies.[102] In response, it links the supposed purity of the English coins to religious homogeneity. The speaker asserts that his coins, in their pure form, are Protestant symbols of a nation united to God, imagining an England in which uncorrupted coinage is the physical witness to a unified Protestantism. Unlike the coin – tears in *Of Weeping*, which create a private union between lovers, the coins in *The Bracelet* symbolize a national community. The speaker thus appeals not to his beloved's compassion, but to her patriotism as he attempts to spare the coins – and the nation from metaphoric doom.

The poem's opening brings economics and religion together by using religious language to underwrite the value of the gold angel coins. Specifically, the poem unites the social signs of wealth with the reconciliatory justice of the resurrection, torturously back loading the central metaphor with spiritual meaning:

> Angels, which heaven commanded to provide
>
> All things to me, and be my faithful guide;
>
> To gain new friends, t'appease great enemies;
>
> To comfort my soul, when I lie or rise.
>
> Shall these twelve innocents, by thy severe
>
> Sentence; dread Judge, my sin's great burden bear?
>
> Shall they be damn'd and in the furnace thrown,
>
> And punish'd for offences, not their own?
>
> They save not me; they doe not ease my pains,
>
> When in that hell they're burnt and tied in chains. (*The Bracelet*, lines 13-22)

Through a backward and implicit logic, the poem retroactively establishes the spiritual value of social climbing by mourning the loss of the coins as a lost salvation. The sacrifice of the innocent Christ, the poem asserts, was intended for the reconciliation of man and God. Far

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[102] See Helen Gardner's unnumbered note in Donne, *The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets,* p. 113.

from re-enacting that drama of reunion, however, the death of the coins abolish any metaphysical value they might have, for the sacrifice of the "twelve innocent," doomed to bear the "great burden" of "offences not their own" fails to convey grace. In fact, grace relocates itself in the passage to the site of social ambition; the poem suggests that the speaker's easy passage through society, enabled by the coins, serves a soteriological function. This ability to save, however, is lost as the coins are consumed by fire.

The religious value of the coins relies on maintaining their intrinsic value – their economic purity. As the poem progresses, it expounds upon this contingent relationship between economic and religious purity by comparing the value of uncontaminated English coinage to that of other, less God – fearing nations:

> Were they but crowns of France, I cared not,
>
> For most of them, their natural country rot,
>
> I think, possesseth; they come here to us
>
> So lean, so pale, so lame, so ruinous.
>
> And howsoe'er French kings most Christian be,
>
> Their crownes are circumcis'd most Jewishly.
>
> Or were they Spanish stamps, still travailing,
>
> That are become as catholic as their king. (*The Bracelet*, lines 23-30)

The passage denounces the economic, national, and religious impurity of those foreign moneys, with their debased fineness and Jewish /Catholic influences. The corruption of these continental coins contrasts with the spiritual integrity of the English angels, still in "the first state of their creation" (*The Bracelet*, line 12). The suggestion is that debasement itself reflects a spiritual degeneration that occurs on the national level. The sexual pun on the "French disease," connoted by France's "natural country rot" (sometimes spelled "cuntry rott") underscores the infectious threat that the Catholic continent posed to Protestant England.[103] The passage displays the continental perversions of economics and religion as a

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[103] See Gardner's unnumbered note in Donne, *The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets,* p. 114; and John T. Shawcross' unnumbered note in Donne, *The Complete Poetry,* p. 43.

warning to both the beloved and to England as a whole; in order to avoid falling into the trap of economic or religious disintegration, it is vital that the coins and the nation both maintain their integrity.

The poem fantasizes about religious homogenization as an extension of economic standardization; the purity of the gold angels constitutes a kind of metaphoric talisman against the degenerative influence of continental Europe. If, in reality, both Protestantism and economics in England were tarnished by popery, sectarianism, and the recent memory of debasement, in the poem at least, the speaker's gold angels represent the possibility of a "pure" England, unified to itself and to God.

Although the poem fantasizes about a nation that has achieved an untarnished Protestant identity – a "nation of Protestants," to repeat Haigh's words – it also manifests anxieties about the nation's ability to remain wholly Protestant. In answer to the mistress' assertions that the gold, although alloyed, would remain in the chain, Donne shifts his marker for religious value, from the intrinsic purity of the coins to their unblemished imprint, or form. He tells her that the loss of gold isn't the only tragedy for the coins, for "form gives being, and their form is gone" (*The Bracelet*, line 76).[104] In fact, the "form" of the actual gold angel that the poem puns on also links nationalism to religion; while the obverse features Michael the Archangel, the reverse complements it with the image of a royal shield surmounted by a cross and superimposed over a traveling ship.[105] This arrangement of images on both surfaces of the coin bring religious and national emblems together, creating a patriotic icon that would, if not for the mistress' machinations, bolster the poem's central claims about the link between the nation's religious and economic purity. Instead, the speaker surrenders his coins to the mistress, foreclosing the metaphor as a symbol of national unity and the coins lose any possibility they may have had for representing the union of God and nation.

As the inescapable fate of the coins closes in on them, their form, purity and symbolism begin to shift, regressing rapidly from divine significance to more earthly imagery. The speaker, upon giving up his coins to his mistress, initially grieves in terms that profanely echo moments of the Passion. Bravely acquiescing to his mistress' demands, he announces, "thy will be done," a phrase that recalls not only the Lord's prayer, but also the words spoken by

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[104] Raman, *Can't Buy Me Love*, p. 140.

[105] Challis, *Tudor Coinage,* p. 167.

Christ in Gethsemane: "not what I will, but what thou wilt"[106] (*The Bracelet*, line 79). The speaker then takes on the mantle of Mary as he offers his coins up for sacrifice: "with such anguish, as her only son / The mother in the hungry grave doth lay /Unto the fire these martyrs I betray" (*The Bracelet*, lines 80-82). Any image of the Pieta is fleeting, however, as maternal connotations morph into martyrdom. As the poem's conceits metamorphose in search of a spiritual significance that might continue to signify despite the destruction of the angels, the coins pass from divine sacrifice to martyrdom, from an iconic singularity to a debased plurality, from a visually unified image of salvation to a symbol of entrapment and display in the chain of the bracelet.[107]

3.4. Mapping Union in *Hymn to God my God*

In *The Bracelet* and *Of Weeping*, the symbolic systems fail to uphold the weight of the union that they promise. As these poems reach out toward a space beyond coins, they find that the possibility of mystical union is a concept that is simply too big to be sustained. Rather than reject the metaphors of coins as "too small" to hold the largeness of mystical union on a national level, however, Donne's later poetry simply enlarges the metaphor, ultimately finding that images of patriotic expansion are precisely the ones to convey the expansiveness of union with the divine, and, along the way, underwrite a nationalist religion.

"Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness" turns away from the coins and value systems of earlier poems and toward colonial cartography in order to create a metaphoric map that plots the course to mystical union. In doing so, the poem makes a concerted effort to negotiate a new global geography that threatened to undo the symbolic meaning of medieval T-O maps. The conventional account of early modem cartography holds that medieval *mappaemundi* supplied a conceptual, and often religious, representation of world geography.[108] Centred, as many of the *mappaemundi* were, on holy sites such as Jerusalem or Rome, such representations demonstrated both spatially and figuratively the religious origins of human history. By the early seventeenth century, however, such sacred valences were largely

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[106] Mark 14:36.

[107] Richard E. Hughes and Roma Gill note the various religious roles played by these coins. See Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul: The Interior Career of John Donne* (New York: W. Morrow, 1968) 32; and Gill, *Musa Jocosa Mea: Thoughts on the Elegies*, in Albert James Smith (Ed.), *John Donne: Essays in Celebration,* London: Methuen, 1972, pp. 47-72, 69.

[108] Victoria Morse, "The Role of Maps in Later Medieval Society: Twelfth to Fourteenth Century," in David Woodward (Ed.), *The History of Cartography,* 6 vols, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987, 3:25-52, 31.

supplanted by a Ptolemaic emphasis on abstract space.[109] Although this change was based partially on cultural shifts, early modem global expansion played a large part in the shifting organization of cartographic space; with the advent of New World discoveries, it became necessary to depict geography with more spatial accuracy.[110] If these newer systems of mapping supplied cartographic solutions to the difficulties of early modem exploration, however, they also created a symbolic absence by their inability to visualize religion in relation to the actual geography of an exponentially expanding world. The Ptolemaic emphasis on abstract space, although suited to early modem expansion, foreclosed the religious conceptualising of earlier maps. In much the same way that *Of Weeping* and *The Bracelet* deals with competing value systems in relation to coins, "Hymn to God, My God" takes advantage of this contemporary geographic confusion by rehearsing the break between conceptual and physical mapping and then reformulating a relationship between the two that uses the poet's own body as a map to mystical union.

Although the poem ostensibly muses on what the speaker believes to be his imminent death, the first part of the poem is much more concerned with laying out the geography of the body-map than of dealing with the immediate terrors and uncertainties of the afterlife. The *fretum februs* of the poet's own body are, for him, less an indication of a physical state than a spiritual one (*Hymn*, line 10). The "physicians," transformed into "cosmographers" may be more interested in the *februs,* the fever that harkens the speaker's death; the speaker himself is drawn to the *fetrum,* the straits, that his own body signifies (*Hymn*, lines 6-7). As the speaker meditates on the metaphoric and religious connections between his body-map, an actual world-map, and a promised resurrection, he turns increasingly to extra-cartographic references to help manage the symbolic meanings of the map, which would otherwise threaten to undo his soteriological hopes:

> I joy, that in these straits, I see my West;
>
> For, though their currents yield return to none,
>
> What shall my West hurt me? As West and East

[109] David Woodward, "Cartography and the Renaissance: Continuity and Change," in *History of Cartography,* 3:3-24, 12.

[110] One of the most beneficial consequences of the Ptolemaic map was its ability to accommodate new discoveries. Since Ptolemaic maps were proportional, new lands could simply be added in without "'stretching' or extending the map." Woodward, *Cartography and the Renaissance*, p. 13.

> In all flat Maps (and I am one) are one,
>
> So death doth touch the resurrection. (*Hymn*, lines 11-15)

In order to read his own body, the poet must flatten the globe into a finite map, thereby superimposing an artificial beginning and end to the otherwise infinitely circular and repetitious sphere. Flattening an endless circuitry imposes meaning by physically locating the cardinal directions that, on the globe, are conceptual fantasies of place. There is no exact location for "East" or "West" on the globe, for both indicate directions of travel that exclude arrival. As Donne puts it in a sermon that is often cited to gloss this image: "In a flat Map, there goes no more, to make West East, though they be distant in an extremity, but to paste that flat Map upon a round body, and then West and East are all one.[111] Since east and west in the poem are conceptually "off the map," they enable the speaker to imagine a hidden cycle of death and resurrection that lies waiting to be discovered outside of the artificially "flattened" birth-death chronology of life. If east meets west somewhere beyond the flat map, so too does death meet rebirth somewhere outside of the physical boundaries of life.

Before moving into the afterlife, however, the poet gets inexplicably caught up in the geography of his travel:

> Is the Pacific Sea my home? Or are
>
> The easterne riches? Is Jerusalem?
>
> Anyan, and Magellan, and Gibraltar,
>
> All straights, and none but straights, are ways to them,
>
> Whether where Japhet dwelt, or Cham, or Sem. (16-20)

The proliferating place-names of straits-Bering, Magellan, Gibraltar-reflect the proliferation of discoveries that had occurred in the previous century, along with the mounting symbolic confusion that they instantiated. The historical and moral imperatives of the medieval *mappaemundi,* the poem asserts, are unnatural representations of a real world marked by exponentially increasing places. Thus, while the first few lines of the poem attempt to create

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[111] Donne, *Sermons,* 6:59. Qtd. in Carey, *Life, Mind and Art,* p. 264; Donne, *The Complete Poetry,* p. 410; Sparrow, "On the Date," p. 463; Janel M. Mueller, "The Exegesis of Experience: Dean Donne's 'Devotions upon Emergent Occasions,'" *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 67, no. 1, 1968: 1-19, 14.

symbolic meaning out of the world map, the following lines undo that meaning when they begin to account for the new discoveries of early modern exploration. While, according to the symbolic meaning of the T-O maps, the speaker should be able to chart his course to heaven, the presence of these uncharted territories complicates his journey to the afterlife.

The poet finds resolution in the unification of Ptolemaic mapping and religious meaning, reified in the mystical overlap of Eden and Calvary, where it was supposed that "Christ's Crosse, and Adam's tree, stood in one place" (*Hymn*, line 23).[112] This image links together the lost land of Eden and the promised land of the New Jerusalem, finding a new location on the map to signal the cycle of death and redemption described in the opening lines. The passage thus recreates the relationship between a religious worldview and the map that helps to construct it; the burden of mapping is to enable mystical union rather than delineate space.

Ultimately, this new union enables the poet to imagine his own body as the location of resurrection, where the poet might "find both Adams met in me" (*Hymn*, line 23). The journey of the poem's metaphor, from maps of space to metaphysical symbols to, finally, union with the divine, creates an understanding of an expanding world that was disallowed both by the religious perspectives of medieval *mappaemundi* and by the realities of a world engaged in a political struggle for land and power. *Hymn to God, My God* reads infant globalism as a possibility for mystical union; it imagines a world map as a symbol of rebirth that allows the speaker to attain union with the divine.

The specific reference to the union of humanity and divinity within the body imports mysticism into the poetic project. The poem utilizes mystical theology even more specifically, however, in its reference to the mapping of an imaginative place that metaphorically enables that union to occur; like the coins in *Of Weeping* and *The Bracelet*, maps in *Hymn to God, My God* function as meditative images that inaugurate union. Contemplative writings draw abundantly from images of place to enable union with God. Ignatius of Loyola enjoins his followers to visualize a mental landscape in preparation for meditation. In his recommendation for the "composition of place," he entreats his readers "to see with the imagination the corporeal place where the thing is that we wish to contemplate… for example a temple or mountain, where Jesus Christ or Our Mother is."[113] Similarly, Teresa

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[112] See Donne, *The Complete Poetry,* p. 391.

[113] Loyola, *Autobiographia,* pp. 183-184.

of Avila's "Prayer of Recollection" also makes use of an imaginative place, though rather than a purposeful prelude to prayer, hers appears as a mystical gift provided to the contemplative that "makes one close one's eyes and desire solitude, and without artifice, there gradually appears the building in which one can make the prayer already described."[114] The point of the practice is to facilitate union by creating a symbolic topography that will provide a path to contemplation.

Like the map in *Hymn to God, My God*, this visualized place in mystical writings, while ostensibly an outer landscape or imaginative edifice, is always located within the body. In his description of the composition, for instance, Loyola calls for two different kinds of imaginative space-making, both of which are closely connected to images of embodiment. The first kind of visualization is a *lugar corporeo*, literally translated, a corporeal place, a physical setting for meditating on visible things. The second, meant for contemplating conceptual things, is an imaginative scene that encapsulates the idea. In a meditation on sin, for instance, Loyola recommends that the practitioner imagine her soul "imprisoned in her body," and her body amid the topography of a valley.[115]

For Donne's poem, that meditational topography stretches to include an entire world by rendering the globe a symbol of union with God. The merging of the poet's single, distinct identity with a collective world landscape metaphorically imagines an individual conversion that sustains, rather than problematizes, the idea of corporate conversion. As the individual turns to God, the lands on the map are themselves simultaneously transformed into a pictorial representation of that inner change. This individual conversion is an interior turning and a cyclic returning from physical death to spiritual birth, to a divine presence that has always resided within. That is to say, the poem's ideal religious experience moves away from maintaining strict institutional boundaries and toward a capacious religiosity, one that eschews the doctrinal debates in which the Christian church was embroiled. It surrenders strict classifications in favour of identifying with a God beyond boundaries.

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[114] Avila, *Castillo Interior,* p. 100.

[115] Loyola, *Autobiographia,* p. 184.

3.5. Icons of the Nation

Donne's poetry constructs an idea of conversion in which internal change brings the soul into alignment with a collective experience of "one divine truth."[116] Conversion is therefore registered less as a transfer of religious allegiance than as a reorienting of the self toward God. It is a moment in the process of repentance, a spiritual movement that, in the words of Murray, is always "resolutely inward and upward… an interior journey to God made by every Christian soul."[117] This interior journey leads the convert to union with God and, in doing so, to union with a nation that is itself undergoing the same transformative process. Donne's England turns from the Catholic Church not in order to embrace the dogmatic truthfulness of Protestantism so much as to realize its own spiritual regeneration; the English Reformation is simply one more page in the long narrative of the country's religious development.[118]

Maps and coins metaphorise this process, by using a form of representation more commonly seen at the site of the icon. Whereas icons link believer to God through an image of Christ or saint, maps and coins symbolise a nation that has its roots in unification with God. These metaphors reject the limitedness of contemporary monetary value or geographic signification in order to inaugurate a mysticism that enables community. Maps and coins ultimately become the emblems of the nation's corporate conversion to a religion that moves beyond the boundaries of Reformation upheaval. Of course, this optimistic portrait of national unity is nothing more than a fantasy. Donne's poetry envisions an impossible conversion to a non-existent religion, to a Church of England that would be forever in the making. However, even while the realities of England's continued religious instability gave the lie to this pipe dream, Donne's poetry offers an imaginative alternative. In the face of actual religious turmoil, his symbolism finally reaches toward a whole church – a True Church – that might be truly embraced by all.

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[116] Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England,* p. 48.

[117] Murray, *Poetics of Conversion,* p. 12. Murray notes that this kind of conversion has its roots in medieval *conversio,* and was displaced by the early modem emphasis on institutionalism.

[118] Stubbs, *Reformed Soul,* p. 92 and 378-397.

CHAPTER 4

ESOTERIC NATIONALISM IN AEMILIA LANYER'S *SALVE DEUS REX JUDAEORUM*

Whereas Donne locates transcendence in representation – through the icon Lanyer finds transcendence in experience-through revelation, primarily by means of a dream. As an unmediated encounter with a transcendent other, revelation holds great promise in two ways: by awakening a subject to a transcendent ontological reality and by instantiating a community around that revelation. While, for Lanyer, revelation leads to true knowledge and justice, the community that revelation creates is somewhat more problematic, for revelation, as a means of accessing the divine, also carries political implications. Revelation instantiates a community in secret, a community that is best described under the rubric of esoteric theology.

Esoteric theology creates a community, but only one that is hidden. As a structure of thought that underwrites theology, esotericism operates by means of a sophisticated and complex alchemy of initiation, textual interpretation, and revelation. Certainly this was the case in the early modem period especially, when esotericism blended into magic, when the aristocracy regularly consulted astrologers such as John Dee and Simon Forman, and when Marsilio Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* was all the rage. From hermeticism to Gnosticism, from Kabbalah to Sufism, the open secret of esoteric thought is the concealed nature of truth, which lies somewhere just beyond the denotative meanings of a text. And yet, for all its sophistication, as a structure of thought that organizes people, esotericism creates boundaries between people that function as blunt instruments of community-making, a simplistic and exclusionary way of establishing an "us" and a "them."

If esotericism marks out its community as a sanctuary from the masses of the unenlightened, however, it does so by means of a fascinating rhetorical move that renders it simultaneously beyond and within mainstream theology. For esoteric thought is frequently formulated not in opposition to exoteric theology, but in an uneasy alliance with it.[119] An esoteric hermeneutics will frequently elaborate on, supplement, or critique mainstream theology, and, in so doing,

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[119] See Mircea Eliade (Ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Religion,* 16 vols, New York: Macmillan, 1987, 5: s.v. "esotericism."

establish an uncommon, uncanny discourse that passes between the very boundaries that it seeks to uphold.

In this chapter, I want to explore how Aemilia Lanyer uses the strange duality of esotericism-simultaneously inside and outside of dominant modes of theology – as a parallel to and commentary on gendered forms of exclusion. While critics have commented on Lanyer's pro-female, perhaps even proto-feminist, theology,[120] my own particular contribution to the critical conversation on Lanyer is twofold: I investigate not the female-centric content of Lanyer's theology so much as its structure, and I locate that esoteric structure within a remarkably nationalist agenda, one that is layered alongside whatever feminist stakes she may claim.

This chapter makes three corollary assertions. The first is that Lanyer's political engagement can be adduced at least as much from her poem's generic elements as it can from its content; that is, Lanyer's poem is "political" not only because it participates in contemporary debates about women, but also because it frames those debates within a poetic form that critics have almost uniformly overlooked: the epic, a genre deeply inflected by national, indeed, even imperial, concerns. My second assertion is that Lanyer's interest in the affairs of the state is presented specifically as a critique of the problematic office of the sovereign. Sovereignty, as Lanyer's poem intimates, embeds an innate tendency toward tyranny, an inherited trait that Lanyer traces using classical and Biblical allusions from the "matter of Rome" back to the early monarchy of ancient Israel. My third and final assertion is that as a means of thinking past the problems of sovereignty, Lanyer's poem relies on esotericism to imagine a sacred community of women centred on Christ who represents a more just, if transitory, portrait of power that arises from within dominant forms of government. In doing so, it aligns the

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[120] Suzanne Woods, "Anne Lock and Aemilia Lanyer: A Tradition of Protestant Women Speaking," in *Form and Reform in Renaissance England: Essays in Honour of Barbara Kiefer Lewalski,* Newark: Associated University Press, 2000, pp. 171-184; Micheline White, "A Woman with St. Peter's Keys?: Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and the Priestly Gifts of Renaissance Women," *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* 45, 2003: 323-341; Achsah Guibbory, "The Gospel According to Aemilia: Women and the Sacred in Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," in *Sacred and Profane: Secular and Devotional Interplay in Early Modern British Literature,* (Ed.) Helen Wilcox, Richard Todd, and Alasdair MacDonald, Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit University Press, 1996, pp. 105-126, rev. and rpt. in *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and the Canon,* (Ed.) Marshall Grossman, Lexington KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1998: 191-211; Sue Matheson, "Religious Reconstruction of Feminine Spirituality: Reading Past the Praise in Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," in *Things of the Spirit: Women Writers Conducting Spirituality,* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004: 51-68; Roger Prior, "The Passion of a Female Literary Tradition: Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 63, 2000: 435-46. For a Non-theological Reading of Lanyer's Feminism, see Betty Travitsky, who argues that Lanyer's work was "Societal, rather than Religious in Purpose." Travitsky (Ed.), *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance,* Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1981, p. 28.

exclusionary trends of gender politics with an equally exclusionary theology, creating a vexed "solution" to the problem of tyrannical kingship.

Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,* published in 1611, contains a long poem of the same title recounting the passion of Christ, along with several patronage poems and, five years before Ben Jonson popularized the genre, a country-house poem entitled *To Cooke-ham.* The work is concluded by a short epilogue to assure "the doubtful reader" that the title of the book, and by extension, the authority to write it, were conferred upon her in a prophetic dream.[121] One of the most significant features of her work, and the touchstone of my analysis, is its cast of characters, a group of almost entirely female figures – both patrons and characters that, taken together, have come to be known in critical parlance as her "community of women." The most notable grouping of these women occurs near the closing lines of *Salve Deus*, which transition inexplicably from the scene of Christ's resurrection to a list of women culled from the history of Israel, whose "glorious actions did appear so right / That powerful men by them were overthrown" (*Salve Deus*, lines 1465-1467). The list is somewhat eclectic, and includes the fictional women of Scythia who conquered the armies of King Darius; the deuteron canonical Judith, who beheaded the enemy general Holofemes; Deborah the premonarchic prophet – judge of Israel, who overthrew Sisera; Queen Esther of Persia, responsible for the trial and execution of Hamon; Susanna, the wife of Joachim, who was unjustly accused of adultery by the elders of the community and whose virtue eventually exposed their lies; and the Queen of Sheba, who left her native land to pay homage to Solomon (*Salve Deus*, lines 1465-1608). While critics have remarked on the gendered disruption of power that these women enact, especially as it relates to Lanyer's own position as a women writer,[122] there remains a kind of unaccountable randomness to this assemblage of women, drawn together across time and place. It is, in fact, this very arbitrariness that is evidence of Lanyer's structural reliance on esoteric thought. Lanyer's community of women are brought together not by any external similarities such as class status or secular power, but by a shared, and privileged, access to God. Moreover, their disparate locations across time serves to mark the community out as simultaneously beyond and within temporal (both

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[121] "To the Doubtful Reader," in Aemilia Lanyer, *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,* (Ed.) Susanne Woods, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. All citations Lanyer's work are from this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text by poem and line number.

[122] The foundational work for this reading is Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, "Imagining Female Community: Aemilia Lanyer's poems," Chap. 8 in *Writing Women in Jacobean England,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 213-241.

chronological and governmental) structures. Lanyer's community ultimately presents an exclusive form of political and temporal transcendence, one that momentarily disrupts worldly politics as to comment on a critique it.

4.1. The Genre of Nationalism

Although Lanyer's poem *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* can loosely be defined as a devotional narrative poem, as many critics have noted, it displays a startling stylistic eclecticism that makes it difficult to categorize under any single genre.[123] As Barbara K. Lewalski has noted, its generic modes and rhetorical conventions run the gamut from apologia to passion, from encomia to lament.[124] It is alternately valedictory and panegyric, and appears to have affinities with a wide array of poetic forms, including sonnets,[125] epyllions, and, of course, country-house poems. Lewalski is not the only critic to note that, like Jonson's *To Penshurst*, Lanyer's *To Cooke-ham* abounds with pastoral language and images. According to Lewalski, *Cooke-ham* borrows heavily from Virgil's Eclogues, especially the First Eclogue, "based on the classical topes, the valediction to a place."[126] In referencing the classical poet, Lanyer embarks on the cruses Virgilii, establishing herself as a professional poet by mimicking the progression of Virgil's career much the same way Spenser had in the previous century.[127] While borrowing Virgil's authority lends her poetry the professional legitimacy that her gender might otherwise deny,[128] it also positions her, like Virgil and Spenser, as a writer of

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[123] See especially the essays in Marshall Grossman (Ed.), *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and the Canon.*

[124] Barbara Lewalski, "Seizing Discourses," pp. 49-59.

[125] On Lanyer and the blazon, see Wendy Wall, "Our Bodies / Our Texts? Renaissance Women and the Trails of Authorship," in *Anxious Power: Reading, Writing and Ambivalence in Narrative by Women,* (Ed.) Carol J. Singley and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, New York: Statecrashe University of New York Press, 1993, pp. 51-71.

[126] Lewalski, "Seizing Discourses," p. 55.

[127] Spencer, the "English Virgil," is the poet who most often invokes this common Renaissance idea of the poetic profession, explicated in part by lines that are sometimes attributed to Virgil and, according to William J. Kennedy, appended to Renaissance editions of the Aeneid as a four-line proemium: Ille ego, qui quondam gracili modulatus avena Carment, et egressus silvis vicina coegi Ut quamvis avido parerent arva colono, Gratum opus agricolis, at nunc horrentia Martis' (I am he who, after singing on the shepherd's slender pipe and leaving the woodside for the farmlands, urged the ploughed lands ever so much to obey their eager tenant; my work was welcome to the farmers, but now I tum to the sterner stuff of Mars.) For more, see William J. Kennedy, "Virgil," in Charles Albert Hamilton, et al. (Ed.), *The Spencer Encyclopaedia,* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, pp. 717-719. See also P.A. Hansen, "Ille Ego Qui Quondam… Once Again," *The Classical Quarterly,* n.s., 22, 1, May, 1972: 139-149.

[128] On early modem female authors and the pastoral poetic tradition, see Anne Rosalind Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540-1620,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990, pp. 124-125. Regarding Lanyer's poetic authority, most critics reference Lanyer's relationship to Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke. See especially Kari McBride, "Remembering Orpheus in the Poems of Aemilia Lanyer," *SEL: Studies in English Literature 1500-1900,* 38, 1998: 87-108; and Debra Rienstra, "Dreaming Authorship: Aemilia Lanyer and the Countess of Pembroke,"

and for the nation: Virgil, a Roman statesman, writes in a pastoral mode that centres on Rome, whose revolutionary politics haunt the beautiful and war-torn land of the Eclogues and the Georgics.

Like Virgil's First Eclogue, which opens on the exile of Meliboeus from his homeland, Lanyer's *To Cooke-ham* begins with the ousting of the poet from the estate: "Farewell (sweet Cooke-ham) where I first obtain'd /Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain'd" (*To Cooke-ham*, lines 1-2). Bereft of life, the estate is haunted by the ghosts of the recent past, metaphorized by Ovidian references to Philomela and Echo (*To Cooke-ham*, lines 31 and 199). While the grounds of Cooke-ham are populated by all the classical figures of Rome's sylvan copses, however, it is for all that a specifically English estate. The poem notes that Cooke-ham overlooks "thirteen shires," and it invokes the sibling rivalry between England and its continental neighbours by noting that "Europe could not afford much more delight" to the view that Cooke-ham supplies (*To Cooke-ham*, lines 73 and 74). Furthermore, Lanyer's English estate is, or at least should be, inhabited by an English mistress – Lady Margaret, the Dowager Countess of Cumberland. When her husband the Count had died in 1605, he had illegally bequeathed Cooke-ham to his brother, rather than allowing it to pass to his only heir, his daughter Lady Anne. The bequeathal violated the conditions under which Edward II had granted the estate to the family, which stipulated that it pass down hereditary lines regardless of gender.[129] In 1611, therefore, Lady Anne and Lady Margaret were embroiled in a legal battle over ownership of the estate,[130] and these politics form the backdrop to the poem's valedictory mood. Like Virgil's blending of actual politics with a fantasy of place, the overall effect of Lanyer's use of the pastoral creates an idealized setting that references the specific locus and events of England.

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in *Discovering and Recovering the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric,* (Ed.) Eugene Cunnar and Jeffrey Johnson, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001, pp. 80-103. See also Colleen Shea, "Literary Authority as Cultural Criticism in Aemilia Lanyer's The Authors Dreame," *English Literary Renaissance* 32, 2002: 386-407. Janel Mueller also notes her relationship to Christine de Pizan (Janel Mueller, "The Feminist Poetics of Aemilia Lanyer's 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,'" in *Feminist Measures: Soundings in Poetry and Theory,* (Ed.) Lynn Keller and Christianne Miller, Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 1993, pp. 208-236; rev. and rpt. in *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender Genre and the Canon,* pp. 234-254. Other critics note Lanyer claims authority through other means, including identifying women with Christ (Wall, "Our Bodies / Our Texts?"), and claiming Biblical authority (Guibbory, *The Gospel According to Aemilia*).

[129] Lewalski, "The Lady of the Country House Poem," in *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House,* ed. Gervase Jackson-Stops, Gordon J. Schochet, Lena Cowen Orlin, and Elisabeth Blair McDougall, Hanover: National Gallery of Art, 1989, pp. 261-75, 266; D.J.H. Clifford, introduction to *Anne Clifford: The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford,* (Ed.) D.J.H. Clifford, Pheonix Mill UK: Alan Sutton, 1990, pp. x-xv, x.

[130] Lady Anne wasn't granted the estate until 1643, after her uncle's only son had died without heirs. Lewalski, *Lady of the Country House*, p. 267; D. J. H. Clifford, Introduction, xi.

By cutting her poetic teeth on the bucolic matter of *Cooke-ham*, Lanyer opens the possibility to find, as Spencer puts it in The Faerie Queene, the "trumpets steam"[131] of the epic genre, represented elsewhere in her work. While Lanyer's pastoral mode in *Cooke-ham* is well-remarked by criticism, however, there is a paucity of work that notes the remarkable characteristics that *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* shares with epic poetry.[132] There are several possible reasons for this oversight, including the fact that lyric poetry in the early modem period was considered a more suitable genre for women's writing than the masculine subject matter and professionalized authorship required by the epic.[133] A more fundamental reason however, is likely the poem's brevity: at 1,841 lines, *Salve Deus* weighs in far beneath the length of a traditional epic. In fact, this length would appear to place it more in the category of the epyllion, a generic term coined in the nineteenth century to describe a brief narrative poem common in Hellenistic and Roman writings, such as Peleus and Thetis, by Catullus. This genre was popular throughout the early modem period, and is represented by such works as Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* or Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*.[134] Lanyer's work does, in fact, share some generic features with the epyllion, which tends toward more amorous themes than its longer heroic counterpart: her erotic descriptions of Christ as the love-interest to the Dowager Countess certainly bear close resemblances to Shakespeare's *Venus*. Like the goddess of love, who in Shakespeare's account "stains her face" with the "congealed blood" of the dead Adonis,[135] the Countess of Cumberland embraces the "bleeding body" of the dying Christ in her arms, while her "tears of sorrow" fall on his cheeks. (*Salve Deus*, lines 1332-1333)

Despite these similarities, however, *Salve Deus* shares more generic features with the epic than the epyllion. It starts, for instance, in media res – in the middle of the Christian Bible – with the passion, and it's opening, as well as the patronage poems, contains numerous

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[131] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene,* (Ed.) Thomas P. Roche, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, p. 39, stanza 1.

[132] The one major exception is Melanie Faith, whose work is discussed in further detail below. Melanie Faith, "The Epic Structure and Subversive Messages of Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," Master's Thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 1998.

[133] See Patrick Cook, "Aemilia Lanyer's 'Description of Cooke-ham' as Devotional Lyric," in *Discovering and Recovering,* pp. 104-118.

[134] See Ian Ousby (Ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 67.

[135] William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis,* in Shakespeare's Poems, (Ed.) Katherine Duncan-Jones, London: Arden Shakespeare, 2007, pp. 125-230, 118, line 1122.

invocations to the muse. Even her "community of women" may be thought of as an epic catalogue. Presented as an *enumeratio* at the end of *Salve Deus,* the women of Lanyer's community amplify the number and power of the female characters in earlier lines of the "Salve," as well as the patronesses to which her work is dedicated. Melanie Faith points out that Lanyer's subject matter also follows Torqueto Tasso's "comprehensive epic theory found in *Discorsi del poema eroica,* the preface to *Gerusalemme Liberata,* 'Allegoria,' and in their English derivatives."[136] According to Tasso, the subject matter for an epic poem must deal with Judeo-Christian history, must treat noble subjects, and must have a hero of unquestionable virtue.[137] As Faith points out, Lanyer's focus on the Passion, her inclusion of aristocratic characters (and patrons), and her hero, the virtuous Dowager Countess all fulfil these conditions.[138] Also in the tradition of Tasso, along with Ariosto and Boccaccio, Lanyer writes *Salve Deus* in ottava rima, the rhyme scheme that, as Faith notes; Tasso considered "the gravest and most perfect of stanzaic forms."[139]

As with Lanyer's use of pastoral themes, her participation in epic conventions signals her concern with the nation. While her poem on *Cooke-ham* bids farewell to the English estate, however, *Salve Deus* is, in keeping with the genre, more concerned with mythic origins. Tracing the genealogy of Britain through the history of Rome, Lanyer layers classical and contemporary references, imagining a family tree for the British aristocracy that is rooted in the cultural matrix of Greco-Roman mythology. In the dedicatory poem to the Queen, for instance, the narrator swaggeringly assures Queen Anne that, had the judgment of Paris been enacted in seventeenth-century England, the golden apple would surely have gone to the British monarch rather than Hera, Athena, or Aphrodite (*To the Queenes most Excellent Majesty*, lines 7-12). This mythic revision certainly invites strange possible outcomes for the war that supplied the basis for the three great epics of classical literature. More importantly, however, it ties British royalty to the founding myth of European culture: it is not only Rome that rises from the ashes of the Trojan War, but England as well.

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[136] Faith, "Epic Structure," p. 105.

[137] These are three among ten qualities of the epic that Faith identifies from Tasso's works, all of which are adhered to by Lanyer's poem. See Faith, "Epic Structure," p. 106.

[138] Faith, "Epic Structure," pp. 104-113.

[139] *Ibid.* p. 113.

4.2. The Critique of Monarchy

Lanyer's interest in England as a nation forms the background for a more central concern about the problematic office of the sovereign. This concern is, perhaps, unsurprising in a work whose subject matter is women.[140] Even if the Dowager Countess and Lady Anne had not needed to contend with the late Count's illegal bequest, Lanyer's focus on sovereignty would still have been in keeping with her middle-class position as a woman whose economic hopes were built on the good patron.[141]

Good and bad monarchs populate *Salve Deus*, while the patronage poems contain numerous references to the characteristics and quality of kingship.[142] In conventional early modem fashion, Lanyer praises God as the archetype for all kings. In a prefatory poem to the Queen, God is the "mighty Monarch both of heaven and earth," while *Salve Deus* declares its main theme to be "The meditation of this monarchs love," a theme that vies for importance with the poem's other ostensible goal, to immortalize the virtuous reputation of the Dowager Countess of Cumberland (*To the Queenes Most Excellent Majesty*, line 44; *Salve Deus*, lines 153 and 9). And yet, while the poem celebrates the Countess' "never-dying fame" by relating it to the "everlasting Sovereignties" of Christ, the bulk of the narrative is nevertheless populated by tyrannous rulers who disrupt the celebratory mode of nation-building. It is this tyranny, injected into temporal forms of sovereignty that ultimately prevents the England from becoming the location for Lanyer's dreams of a perfect political society.

The arch-villain of Lanyer's work is Pontius Pilate, prefect of the Roman province of Judaea, who presides over the trial of Christ. Pilate's wife lays the first charge of tyranny against the

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[140] In her later life, Lanyer would face her own legal battle against a landlord who, she asserted, demanded unwarranted fees for his building, which she used as a school. See Susanne Woods, Introduction to *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer.*

[141] On Lanyer and patronage, see Lisa Schnell, "Breaking 'the rule of Cortezia': Aemilia Lanyer's Dedications to Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 27, 1997: 77-102; Schnell, "'So great a difference is there in degree': Aemilia Lanyer and the Critique of Aristocratic Privilege," in *Literate Experience: The Work of Knowing in Seventeenth-Century English Writing,* ed. Andrew Barnaby and Lisa Schnell, New York: Palgrave; Houndsmills: Macmillan, 2002, pp. 91-122; and Woods, Susanne, "Aemilia Lanyer and Ben Jonson: Patronage, Authority and Gender," *Ben Jonson Journal,* 1, 1994: 15-30.

[142] See especially *To the Queenes Most Excellent Majestie*, lines 7-18. Lanyer follows dominant early modem theories of monarchy in locating the power of temporal kingship in the divine King of Heaven, but is quick to point out that Christ, as king, gave up his power. See *To the Queenes Most Excellent Majestie*, lines 43-49.

ruler by fore grounding his failure in his capacity as judge. Appealing on behalf of Christ, she begs Pilate to "let barb'rous crueltie farre depart… And in true Justice… Open thine eies" (*Salve Deus*, lines 753-755). This rupture in the legal system continues when, after some fancy syllogistic footwork, Pilate's oppression of Christ becomes conflated with his oppression of women – and especially, his disregard for his wife's lengthy plea. Her famous defence of women condenses into a few succinct lines that seek the liberation both of Christ and women:

> Then let us have our Libertie againe,
>
> And challenge to your selves no Sov'raigntie;
>
> …. why should you disdaine
>
> Our being your equals, free from tyranny? (*Salve Deus*, lines 825-830)

This passage has often been read as general appeal on behalf of women for freedom from masculine oppression. Within the framework of the passage, however, it is Pilate alone who has the power to restore liberty and release Christ. The implications of this passage therefore reveal two important facets of monarchy: first, the disempowerment of women is a question of justice that can only be righted by the sovereign, and second, the sovereign who refuses to address this disempowerment is a tyrant. The charge of tyranny against Pilate in fact pervades the trial scene: Pilate's wife claims that her husband's judgment of Christ is tainted "with blood, and wrong, with tyrannie, and might," and, after Pilate sends Christ to Herod, questions why he must "reconcile thy self (to Herod) by tyrannie, / Was this the greatest good in Justice meant." (*Salve Deus*, lines 844-945)

Pilate's tyranny may, of course, be dismissed as a case of individual autocracy, or even merely circumstantial – in the context of a Christian poem, what other epithet can be given to the ruler responsible for the death of Christ? However, Lanyer's poem intimates that Pilate's failure as a ruler is the inevitable consequence of the conditions of kingship. She extends the charge of tyranny even to the original kings of Israel, including David, who is generally taken in early modem Biblical interpretations and political theory as the king par excellence, despite his several peccadillos. The narrative opens the door to Israelite monarchic history in a curious question that Pilate's wife poses to her husband: "Why wilt thou be a reprobate with Saul? / To seeke the death of him that is so good" (*Salve Deus*, lines 838-839). Pilate's wife compares the Roman prefect to the first king of Israel, who lost favour with God after

unlawfully performing a sacrifice, and who afterwards sought the death of his future successor, David.[143] In referencing Saul, the poem redirects the line of descent for Judaea's rulers from Pilate, who represents Rome,[144] and toward a Judaic genealogy of kingship while, at the same time, contextualizing the tyranny of the Roman ruler within the history of Israelite monarchy. The opening argument to the first book of Samuel in the Geneva Bible recounts Saul's rise and fall as the first king of Israel. The failure of this monarchy begins, the passage asserts, with Israel's misdirected desire for a king.

> The Israelites who not content with that ordre, which God had for a time appointed for the government of his Church, demanded a King, to the intent thei might be as other nacions, and in a greater assurance as thei thoght: not because thei might the better thereby serve God, as being under the safeguard of him, which did represent Jesus Christ the true deliverer: therefore he gave them a tyrant and an hypocrite to rule over them, that they might learne, that the persone of a King is not sufficient to defend them, except God by his power preserve and kepe them.[145]

As the passage rereads the history of Israel, the people were given a tyrant monarch because of their desire to place themselves under temporal governance – to "be as other nations" – in opposition to spiritual governance – to be "under the safeguard of him, which did represent Jesus Christ." The temporary church government the passage refers to is the rule of the judges of Israel, who served as prophetic intermediaries between God and the Israelites, particularly in times of war or civil unrest, without wielding the unilateral or hereditary power of kings.[146] Tyranny, understood in this passage as unbridled authority, is thus embedded in the original moment of temporal kingship, and intricately tied to Israel's desire for a governmental order that mimics those of rival nations. The slippage between the words "Church" to describe the governorship of the prophets and "nation" to describe a monarchy is

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[143] 1 Samuel 13 and 19. Woods also notes that it could be a reference to Saul of Tarsus, later Paul, who presided over the martyrdom of Stephen and who was instrumental in the early oppression of the Christian church. See Woods' unnumbered note in Lanyer, *Salve Deus* p. 87n.

[144] See especially *Salve Deus*, lines 919-920.

[145] *The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969, p. 121 r. Since Lanyer's work was published in 1611, all Biblical quotations pertaining to her work are from this edition, rather than the *KN*.

[146] As rulers who arose during times of political disruption, the Israelite judges constitute an uncanny rendition of Schmitt's sovereign as he who decides the exception. See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty,* Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1985.

telling, signalling the difference between a people ruled by a divine head of state and those ruled by a man.

In the early modern period, Saul is often represented an archetype of tyranny; indeed, James I opens his *True Lawe of Free Monarchies*, published in 1598 as an apology for kingship, with an analysis of Saul's reign. James attributes Saul's downfall to "the corruption of his own nature," noting that, like Pilate, Saul's actions transform him into a "monstrous persecutor and Tirant."[147] In contradistinction to James I and in keeping with the interpretation forwarded by the Geneva Bible, however, Lanyer's poem reads the Biblical aversion to kingship at face value: the problem with the king is not that he might overreach the extent of his authority, but that the office is itself predicated on an imperfect distribution of power, one that places too much authority in the hands of a single person, and, in so doing, takes it out of the hands of God.

As a result of Saul's transgression, David is appointed as the replacement for Saul. As the true king, or, as the opening argument to first Samuel phrases it, the "true figure of Messiah," David ultimately fills the representative role of "Jesus Christ the true deliverer."[148] As such, the Messianic figure of David, pursued by the tyrant Saul, would seem to correspond perfectly to the Messianic Jesus, condemned by the tyrant Pilate. In *Salve Deus*, however, Lanyer does not accord David this traditional role, and instead asserts that, like Saul, David and his son Solomon also failed in their duties as monarchs:

> If for one sinne such Plagues on David fell,
>
> As grieved him, and did his Seed undoe:
>
> If Salomon, for that he did not well,
>
> Falling from Grace, did loose his Kingdome too:
>
> > Ten Tribes being taken from his wilfull Sonne
> >
> > And Sinne the Cause that they were all undone. (*Salve Deus*, lines 443-448)

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[147] James I, *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies: Or, the Reiprock and Mutual, Dutie Betwixt a King and His Natural Subjects,* Edinburgh: Printed by Robert Waldegrame, 1598.

[148] *The Geneva Bible*, p. 121r.

Solomon's fall from grace is, like Saul's, well known: after marrying wives outside of Israel, he worshipped foreign gods. The biblical narrative attributes the fracturing of Israel following Solomon's rule directly to these actions, making him the last of the three kings to rule over united Israel.[149]

Lanyer's reference to David's "sinne" is slightly more abstruse. According to her editor, Susanne Woods, the reference is to an obscure moment in David's kingship when David elects, contrary to the orders of God, to take a census of the people. Following David's sin, the prophet Gad arrives to deliver a punishment from God: three days of plague. God appears to suspend the plague, however, midway through after witnessing the distress of the Israelites.[150] Woods does not note that the reference may also be to David's dalliance with Bathsheba and murder of her husband, Uriah. Although there was no accompanying plague for this sin, his adultery resulted in the death of his son by Bathsheba and his family was cursed with disorder, a consequence that might be read as the undoing of his "Seed." In either case, however, there is no indication that David loses his kingship as a result of his actions, or is in any way complicit with the rupturing of Israel – David's undoing is Lanyer's addition to the Biblical text.[151]

For Lanyer, Christ is not merely an archetypal king, but the only true king, who takes up the legitimate throne of Israel inherited from the problematic line of David. As Gabriel remarks to Mary, "Thou shouldst beare a Sonne that shal inherit / His father David's throne, free from offence" (*Salve Deus*, lines 1051-1052).

4.3. Esoteric Community

Wendy Wall notes that Lanyer's work associates women with Christ, and derives some form of authority from the association.[152] It is important to point out, however, that the authority granted to these women corresponds more precisely not to Christ's sovereignty, but to the temporary and conditional authority bestowed on Israel's pre-monarchic judges; their power is granted as a condition of relationship to the divine, and is only bestowed for specific tasks.

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[149] 1 Kings 11:1-13.

[150] 1 Chronicles 21.

[151] 1 Chronicles 22:7-8; 2 Samuel 12.

[152] Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

Regarding Deborah, for instance, the narrator asserts that "God… gave her power to set his people free," while Esther also obtains grace from the king of Persia "by God's power." Susanna, after being accused of adultery by two lascivious elders in Israel, is vindicated when God "rais'd the spirit of a Child to speak, / Making the powerful judged of the weak." If these women overthrow powerful men, it is only by the authority of God that they do so; their work is therefore not the imaginative replacing of oppressive male authority with liberated female authority, but the radical undoing of temporal power structures altogether, symbolized by the gendered political upheaval that these women enact.

The conditionality of the disruptive power wielded largely (although, as I will discuss below, not exclusively) by women is important for understanding how Lanyer's political vision relates to her theological one, for it is precisely the transitory nature of her community that calibrates the liminality of women with the frustratingly provisional, yet insistently compelling, ideal of a perfect ruler. In the early modern period, women occupied a political space that was not unlike the hybrid inside/outside community created by esoteric theology. While they could not hold political office, women, and single women in particular, held a political identity that allowed them to intervene in a legal sphere largely dominated by men.[153] They could pursue legal cases, for instance. In fact, in Lanyer's later life, she was herself sued by the landlord of the private school that she ran for back-rent on the property (she countered that the cost of repairs she had made to the building ought to have been deducted from the rent).[154] But perhaps the best example of a feminine community formed within the midst of a dominant male politics is Queen Anne of Denmark's court, which existed alongside James I's more male-centred circle.[155]

While the women in Lanyer's community naturally mimic the political hybridity of women in the early modern period, in order to understand fully how that communal form mimics esotericism, and in the process stages an effective critique of sovereignty, it is necessary to investigate how Lanyer invokes and utilizes esotericism in relation to women. Throughout

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[153] Although common law held that married women could not pursue legal suits, city laws and loopholes in contract law often allowed married women to pursue litigation. See Mary E. Weisner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe,* 2nd ed., New Approaches to European History, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 37.

[154] See n22 above.

[155] See especially Naomi Miller, "Ruling Women in Jacobean England," in *Form and Reform in Renaissance England,* pp. 247-267; and Leeds Barroll, "The Court of the First Stuart Queen," in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court,* (Ed.) Linda Levy Peck, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 191-208.

her work, Lanyer's use of esotericism takes the repeated form of obsession over hidden knowledge, beginning in the prefatory poem *The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Margaret the Countess Dowager of Pembroke*. In this dream, the Countess is led into a "sacred spring where Art and Nature striv'd / Which should remain as Sov'raigne of the place" (*Author's Dream*, lines 81-82). This "ancient quarrel" is put to right, however, by the ladies, including the Countess, who, unable to choose between them, realizes that the two must coexist in harmonious sharing of power:

> But here in equall sov'raignty to live,
>
> Equall in state, equall in dignitie
>
> That unto others they might comfort give,
>
> Rejoycing all with their sweet unitie. (*Author's Dream*, lines 93-96)

The "equall sov'raignty" of Art and Nature enact a more perfect balance of power than the tyranny that instils itself throughout the "Salve," and it also does so by invoking unity, a characteristic of this bower that, the poem insinuates, is borrowed from God. For it is within these woods that Mary Sidney sings her translations of the Psalms, composed by David "Unto the Father of Etemitie; / Before his holy wisedom tooke the name / of great Messias, Lord of unitie" (*Author's Dream*, lines 118-120). In this light, God incarnate ("great Messias") invokes the coming together of people, and the end of strife.

By engaging in the idea of oneness, however, Lanyer also deploys an accompanying trope that, especially in an age obsessed with Hermeticism, was often related to mystical theology: esotericism. Mary Sidney's bower, while Utopic in its vision of a unified community, is also hidden beneath a double obscurity: like the title of her book, the bower is revealed to the author alone in a dream, and is, within the framework of the dream world, only known by certain characters. It is even a "Place that yet Minerva did not know," which seems odd for the goddess of wisdom (*Author's Dream*, line 80). Minerva's lack of knowledge is singularly important, for it circumvents the transmission of learning based in Greco-Roman culture, signified in the medieval *translatio studii.* The pastoral singing of the psalms within the bower, undertaken by, presumably, those who knew of its existence, instead establishes knowledge under the purview of Biblical history.[156]

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[156] On the pastoral singing contest, see McBride, "Remembering Orpheus," p. 95.

Not only is the place itself revealed by hidden knowledge, but also it is a place where knowledge is given, beginning with the revelation of the dream to the author, who, in turn, extends that revelation to her readers, mimicking the mentor/disciple relationship that underwrites the acquisition of esoteric knowledge. Privileged access to knowledge is further played out in the scene itself, when the ladies who arbitrate the case between Nature and Art enter "as umpires… judging with pleasure their delightful case" (*Author's Dream*, lines 85-86). As judges, they perform the ancient right given to Israel's pre-monarchic and, more problematically, monarchic rulers, so that the "equall sov'raingty" of the passage is only made possible by dint of access to knowledge, symbolized in the ability of the women to judge.

Secret knowledge and revelation, as concepts at play in Lanyer's mystic ontology, appear at particularly pivotal moments in both *Salve Deus* and *Cooke-ham*. Knowledge acquisition, for instance, plays a naturally major role in *Eve's Apologie*, Lanyer's radical retelling of the fall of humanity, as imagined by Pilate's wife. In the episode, Pilate's wife exculpates Eve by establishing, among other things, Adam's superior understanding of, and therefore responsibility for, the consequences of eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He receives the injunction against eating "from God's own mouth," and "he knew" that the punishment for ignoring the prohibition "was present death" (*Salve Deus*, lines 787-788). In contrast, Eve "had no power to see, / The after-coming harme" that her transgression would entail (*Salve Deus*, lines 765-766):

> That undiscerning Ignorance perceav'd
>
> No guile, or craft that was by him intended;
>
> For had she knowne, of what we were bereav'd,
>
> To his request she had not condescended. (*Salve Deus*, lines 769-772)

Kari Boyd McBride and John C. Ulreich point out that Lanyer's argument relies heavily on the contribution made by the gnostic Henricius Cornelius Agrippa to the *querelle de femmes*. Agrippa's argument has a long contextual history, stretching back to Augustine's gloss on 1 Timothy 2:13-14: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." For Augustine, this verse indicates that Eve's sin was predicated on ignorance rather than wilful disobedience, a fact that conflates sin with the state of being deceived. Consequently, Augustine reasons, because Adam is

cognizant of his actions, they cannot constitute a similar transgression and instead merely reflect his kinship with and sympathy toward Eve.[157] In response to Augustine and in contradiction of 1 Timothy, Agrippa asserts that Eve's ignorance in fact mitigates, rather than establishes, her sin; Agrippa distinguishes between Adam's knowledge *(certa scientia),* which caused him to sin *(peccavit),* and Eve's ignorance *(ignorans),* which caused her to merely err *(erravit).*[158] Agrippa's argument, according to McBride and Ulreich, posed the counterpoint to the Augustinian reading of the Fall in the querelle, a counterpoint that Lanyer's work seeks to uphold.

While Eve's moderated culpability helps to establish Lanyer's pro-female, perhaps even "proto-feminist," stance in the querelle,[159] I argue that it also importantly lays the groundwork for her thinking about knowledge. Whereas the passage begins with Adam's superior knowledge, established by virtue of his direct access to God, it ends with Eve bestowing knowledge on mankind: "Men will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke / from Eves faire hand, as from a learned Booke" (*Salve Deus*, lines 807-808). In a configuration that substitutes knowledge for Christ as the fortunate consequence of the felix culpa, Lanyer rereads not only Eve's role in the fall, but also the moral value of the knowledge that is bestowed. The conditions of the fall imply that sin inheres within the knowledge of good and evil, making knowledge itself potentially problematic. Lanyer's work holds no such view, however, and instead rehabilitates the knowledge bestowed at the fall by positing a continuous relationship between it and the knowledge that Adam had in prelapsarian Eden: "What Eve tasted, Adam likewise might prove, / Whereby his knowledge might become

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[157] Augustine, *City of God,* trans. Henry Bettenson, Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972, book 14, chap. 11, p. 570. It is worth noting that, in this same passage, Augustine equates the original fall of Satan to an act of tyranny, p. 569.

[158] See Kari Boyd McBride and John C. Ulreich, "'Eve's Apologie': Agrippa, Lanyer and Milton," in *All in All: Unity, Diversity and the Miltonic Perspective,* (Ed.) Charles W. Durham and Kristin A. Pruitt, London: Associated University Presses, 1999, pp. 100-111, p. 104. I use McBride and Ulreich's translation of Agrippa: "Vir itaque ex certa scientia peccavit, mulier erravit ignorans, et decepta (Henricius Cornelius Agrippa, *De nobilitate et praecellentia foeminei sexus* (1552), (Ed.) R. Antonioli, Geneva: Libairei Droz, 1990, p. 66; qtd. in McBride and Ulreich, "'Eve's Apologie,'" p. 110 n19).

[159] On Lanyer and the querelle, see especially Kari McBride and John C. Ulreich, 'Eve's Apologie' and Esther Gilman Richey, "Subverting Paul: The True Church and the Querelle des Femmes in Aemilia Lanyer," *The Politics of Revelation in the English Renaissance,* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998, pp. 60-83. Lewalski also notes Lanyer's contribution to the querelle through her "Epistle to the Virtuous Reader" in "Of God and Good Women," p. 212. For a review of the literature regarding Lanyer and feminism more generally, see Suzanne Trill, "Feminism versus Religion: Towards a Re-reading of Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Reforme,* 25, 2001: 67-80.

more cleare" (*Salve Deus*, lines 803-804).[160] In Lanyer's cosmology, to live in ignorance as Eve does is to dwell in a life that only partly reaches its fullest potential. In this light, Eve's ignorance does more than merely mitigate her actions: it motivates them. As Pilate's wife reminds her husband: "If Eve did err, it was for knowledge sake" (*Salve Deus*, line 797). Lanyer's poem thereby recasts sinful Augustinian ignorance as a lack, and one that demands to be compensated.

Eve's overreaching desire for knowledge can be thought of as a function of her desire for proximity to God, who the narrative establishes as the source of knowledge. Despite Eve's apparent Promethean dissemination of that knowledge at the fall, it remains only imperfectly revealed in the world, an idea that is expressed in the parallel somnolence of the vision of Pilate's wife and in the hidden bower of *The Author's Dream*. Pilate's wife, like the author Lanyer, receives a revelation through a dream vision, which inspires both to write: Lanyer pens her poem, and Pilate's wife writes her apology in defense of, simultaneously, women and Christ.[161] *Eve's Apologie* thus functions simultaneously as a lengthy narrative digression and as a revelation to Pilate, whose actions, his wife intimates, demonstrate his essential ignorance of the "true" understanding of the fall. This concealment of the truth correlates hidden knowledge to the essential obscurity of God himself, who "in the water laies his chamber beames / And clouds of darknesse compasse him about" (*Salve Deus*, lines 99-100). From within his watery abode, God "searches out the secrets of all mindes," because, as the poem rhetorically asks, "who is wiser? Or who can be sager?" (*Salve Deus*, lines 85 and 171-172).

The hidden nature of knowledge bears a double conceptual burden. On the one hand, it functions to contain knowledge within gendered boundaries, inherited by women from Eve. On the other, however, it also ensures that Christ's incarnation of that knowledge as the embodiment of the logos would occur without any potential philosophical dissonance that might arise from a cosmology that links knowledge to sin. And, indeed, Christ is a figure whose arrival is posed as the perfect redemption of Eve's transgressive actions. In the crucifixion scene, for instance, the guards tasked with arresting Jesus fall at his feet because

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[160] See especially Wendy Miller Roberts, "Gnosis in Aemelia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 59, 2, 2005: 11-28. Roberts views Lanyer's revaluation of knowledge has been used in part as an argument for Lanyer's apparently Gnostic theology, an argument bolstered by her connection to Agrippa. As I see it, however, Lanyer's theology lacks some of the more central themes of Gnostic thought, including the idea of a demiurge creator, and that a more useful and appropriate term is, therefore, "esoteric."

[161] On Lanyer, dreams and poetic authority, see n11 above, especially Reinstra.

When Heavenly Wisdome did descend so lowe

To speake to them: they knew they did not well

…………………………………………………

How blinde were they could not discerne the Light!

How dull! If not to understand the truth. (*Salve Deus*, lines 500-506)

Despite the inability of the guard to grasp the "Heavenly Wisdom" that Christ embodies, Christ sees through their plans, or, as the narrative puts it, he "could their learned Ignorance apprehend… Who no resistance makes, though much he can, / To free himselfe from these unlearned men" (*Salve Deus*, lines 546-553). The guards' hesitation at the moment of revelation ("they knew they did not well") reveals a momentary lapse in their "learned Ignorance," that is, the command to arrest Christ.

This is a key moment that helps to reveal the poem's stake in knowledge. For, while the guards have been tasked with actions in accordance with temporal legality, the moment of revelation demands adherence to Heavenly justice, which would condemn the oppression of "this innocent Dove" (*Salve Deus*, line 994). In Lanyer's poem, true knowledge activates true justice.[162] Given this relationship between knowledge and justice, it may be understood that the tyranny that puts Christ to death, a tyranny enacted by all the kings of Israel, is a tyranny that is born and mained away from God, beyond access to his "Heavenly Wisdom."

4.4. The Gender of Justice

Throughout Lanyer's work, select women, rather than men, tend to have access to a justice-bearing capacity for knowledge, as already evidenced in the bower scene, where the Countess judges between Art and Nature. The connection between knowledge, justice, and women is especially true of Lanyer's "community of women," where the conditional power that women receive is granted, as has been noted, to accomplish a specific task, and one that, moreover, inevitably serves justice at the behest of a revelation or commission from God. "Wise Deborah that judged Israel" successfully overthrows Sisera when "God did his wille reveale" (*Salve Deus*, lines 1481-1483). And Judith beheads Holofernes "that the just might see / What

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[162] See especially B. R. Siegfried, "An Apology for Knowledge: Gender and the Hermeneutics of Incarnation in the Works of Aemilia Lanyer and Sor Juana Ines de Cruz," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 6, no. 3, January 2001: 5.1-47.

small defence vaine pride, and greatnesse hath / Against the weapons of God's word and faith" (*Salve Deus*, lines 1485-1488). Hester's character is made, "by God's power," a foil for Hamon's, thereby revealing his "malice, envie, guile" (*Salve Deus*, lines 1505-1510). And, as B. R. Siegfried notes, "the sheer strength of Susanna's reputation for virtue becomes the touchstone which reveals the corruption of civil authorities who are then executed.[163]

While this community creates a power structure that upends the traditional gendering of models of power, this fact is somewhat complicated by the surprise inclusion of a male presence within the bounds of this otherwise all-female community. Amid the *ennumeratio* of women, Solomon makes something of a cameo appearance as, this time, the unproblematic ruler of Israel. He exists as a mirrored counterpart to the Queen of Sheba, who travels away from her native Ethiopian lands "to heare the Wisdom of this worthy King" (*Salve Deus*, line 1578). In an address to God, Solomon had famously asked for "an understanding heart, to judge thy people that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy mighty people?"[164] Thus, despite the earlier criticism of Solomon's kingship, Lanyer's poem later includes him among the "community of women" on the basis of his ability, like the women, to enact justice conferred on the basis of knowledge bestowed by God. As a judge, his access to knowledge mimics the Queen of Sheba's, where "Wisdome to Wisdome yielded true content" (*Salve Deus*, line 1585). As if to underscore the ability for men to be included within this community, Lanyer's final lines switch from the women of pre-Christian history to the martyrs of the early church, including Stephen, Lawrence, Andrew, Peter and John the Baptist (*Salve Deus*, lines 1745-1824). Like the women (and Solomon) before them, these men stand against the "Tyrants storms" of temporal authority (*Salve Deus*, line 1759).

The inclusion of men in Lanyer's "community of women" resists a reading of Lanyer's vision for community that relies solely on sex. In response, many critics have argued that her community is gendered – a "feminine community," rather than a "community of women." This reading is bolstered by what has often been read as a feminized Christ.[165] Like early modem women, Christ has no voice to raise in his own defense, relying instead on Pilate's wife to speak at this trial. Furthermore, the beauty of Christ is a feminine beauty, described in

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[163] Siegfried, "An Apology," para 20.

[164] 1 Kings 3:9.

[165] See especially Wendy Wall, "Our Bodies / Our Texts." See also Roger Prior, "The Passion of a Female Literary Tradition: Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," *Huntington Library Quarterly,* 63, 2000: 435-446.

an embedded blazon that celebrates his "cheeks like scarlet," "his curled lockes," that are "blacke as a Raven in her blackest hew," and his lips like "the sweetest honey dropping dew" (*Salve Deus*, lines 1305-1320). Most importantly, however, he associates and aligns himself with women, particularly at his trial where, when he finally does speak, he directs his words to the weeping women of Israel rather than his accusers (*Salve Deus*, lines 969-984).

Rather than establish a spiritual community in which all members are either women or feminine, however, I believe that Lanyer's poem instead employs femininity in order to imagine feminine exclusion as a marker of the esoteric quality of knowledge and justice. In doing so, she redefines not only femininity itself – as that which is more inclined to have access to the hidden knowledge of God – but also exclusivity as a mode of community building. Lanyer's poem is not afraid of boundaries, and this fact sits uneasily on the conscience of a reader who might expect Lanyer's radical theology to tear down the iron curtain standing between women and their access to political power. While early criticism of Lanyer's poem focused on her celebration of female authority, critics have more recently sought to understand how that authority silently allies itself to racial and class hierarchies, demolishing gendered lines of exclusion only to reinstate them within other social localities, often as part of an authorial bid for power.[166] Given this problematic approach to oppressive social constructions, what, one might ask, is the ultimate political efficacy of Lanyer's communal vision?

By way of answering this question, I want to resituate it within Lanyer's national genealogy, with its tyrannical set of kings and its frustrated desires for justice. The exclusivity of her community emphasizes the rarity of justice and the conditionality of sovereign power. Put simply, exclusivity, for Lanyer, highlights two important characteristics of ideal governance: sovereignty resides only with God (who bestows it only conditionally), and the ends of sovereignty are always justice. Seen from this angle, the sparse assemblage of women who represent the esoteric nation comes into focus not only as a placeholder for the exclusivity of

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[166] On class, see especially Ann Baynes Coiro, "Writing in Service: Sexual Politics and Class Position in the Poetry of Aemilia Lanyer," *Criticism,* 35, 1993: 357-376; Mary Ellen Lamb, "Patronage and Class in Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," in *Women Writing and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain,* (Ed.) Mary E. Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove, and Karen Nelson, Syracuse: Syracuse, UP, 1999, pp. 38-57; Richard Y. Duerden, "Crossings: Class, Gender, Chiasmus and the Cross in Aemilia Lanyer's Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum," in *The Tradition of Metaphysical Poetry and Belief,* (Ed.) Richard Y. Duerden and William Shullenberger, special issue, *Literature and Belief,* 19, 1999: 131-52; and Hi Kyung Moon, "Gender, Class and Patronage: Aemilia Lanyer's Country-House Poem, 'The Description of Cookeham,'" *Feminist Studies in English Literature,* 9, 2002: 95-118. On race, see Barbara Bowen, "Aemilia Lanyer and the Invention of White Womanhood," in *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens,* (Ed.) Susan Frye and Karen Robertson, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999: pp. 274-303; and n23 above.

her community, but also as a set of arterial points that reveal the transhistorical pulse of Lanyer's communal-driven imagination. Taken together, they form an account of authority that resists any readings of power bound up in bloodlines or inheritance. Indeed, they resist any notion of teleological accumulation whatsoever; rather, their repetitious appearance in the final sections of the poem replay the moment of revelation-which is also always a moment of justice across time and place.

4.5. Mythic Time

The appearance of Lanyer's community establishes a rift within chronological history that indicates the temporal existence of another kingdom. This historical vision demonstrates close kinship with the idea, expressed by Benedict Anderson via Walter Benjamin, of "Messianic time," a mythic time that exists alongside and in opposition to the plodding chronology of lived experience.[167] The anachronism of Messianic time is suggested not only in Lanyer's poem, but also in other early modem works. As Carl Schmitt points out, it is especially conjured into existence in Hamlet's rhetorical question: "What is Hecuba to me?" By posing the possibility that Hecuba does, indeed, mean something to him, Hamlet opens the door to the same kind of transhistorical relationships between people that Lanyer's community attempts to forge. Like the enlightened men and women of *Salve Deus*, both Hamlet and Hecuba occupy exceptional positions in the midst of political chaos. This inextricable link between the two characters stitches the time of falling Troy to the time of rotting Denmark, and thereby suggests a temporality that exists beyond the artifice of sequential history.

As the representative ruler of this anachronistic nation, Christ's coming to earth is meant as its fullest revelation, a fact that gives the Countess more direct access to God than any of the pre-Christian members of Lanyer's community. For this reason, the Countess Wages "farre greater warre… against that many headed monster Sinne" than either Deborah or Judith, and is motivated by Christ's "Love, not Fear... to fast and pray" like Hester (*Salve Deus*, lines 1489-1490 and 1521). The love Sheba bore for Solomon is "but a figure of the Countess' deerest Love" (*Salve Deus*, line 1610), for, as the poem elaborates, Solomon's "wisdome, tending but to worldly things" merely foreshadowed "that heav'nly wisdome, which salvation brings," manifested in "the Sonne of righteousnesse, that gives true joys" (*Salve Deus*, lines

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[167] 49 See Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of Time into the Play,* trans. David Pan and Jennifer C. Rust, New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2001.

1620-1623). Just as the members of Lanyer's community are given a power for knowledge and justice by God, Christ's coming bestows power on the Countess: "These are those Keyes Saint Peter did possesse, / Which with a Spirituall powre are giv'n to thee" (*Salve Deus*, lines 1369-1370). And, in fact, this is the very power that not only the Countess, but also Lanyer herself, as author, hopes to claim. She asserts this possibility in the invocation by relying on the wisdom of Christ to inform her poem, asking Christ to "t'illuminate my Spirit, / And give me Wisdom from his holy Hill, / That I may Write part of his glorious Merit" (*Salve Deus*, lines 321-323).[168]

By positing herself and the Countess – two English women – as the fullest culminations of a nation headed by Christ, Lanyer's poem finally illuminates the parallel histories of England and Israel, both of which feature two competing formulations of nationhood. On the one hand, there is the temporal formulation of power, manifested in the vexed office of the king, who always inherits the problematics of hierarchy and oppression that inheres in all monarchies. On the other, however, there is a historical nation that links Israel and England together by relating figures, such as the Countess, Lanyer and the "community of women" together. This nation is ruled conditionally, rather than absolutely, by an assemblage of people who are granted conditional access to knowledge of God.

Appended at the end of *Salve Deus*, *To Cooke-ham*, makes clear the need for such a spiritualized reconstruction of leadership. The political background of the poem the Count's imperious bequeathal of Cooke-ham to his nephew and the subsequent eviction of the Dowager Countess from the estate – supply the central "tyranny" of the poem. In response to this tyranny, *Cooke-ham* follows *Salve Deus* in grounding the communal life of its characters in a kind of fantastical spiritual world, nestled within the nationalist geography of the estate. The Countess spends her time walking the grounds with Christ and his Apostles, philosophizing with Moses and singing with David (*Cooke-ham*, lines 81-82 and 85-88). The setting of the estate in fact provides a fantasy of place for a spiritual nation that otherwise would have no home to call its own. And yet, temporal politics intrude into this ideal landscape, forcing the Countess out of her spiritual community. As the Countess takes her leave of Cooke-ham, the house and grounds react by entering into a state of profound decay; flowers droop at her impending departure, briars tug at her skirts in a vain attempt to force her to stay, Philomela and Echo both die, and the house covers itself with Dust and Cobwebs

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[168] On Lanyer and authorial power, see n10 above

(*Cooke-ham*, lines 189-202). To put it, as the narrator does, succinctly: "All desolation did there appear" (*Cooke-ham*, line 203).

In the face of this loss, it is tempting to look for evidence of the lingering existence of a "true" community somewhere beyond the borders of Cooke-ham. And, indeed, the poem conventionally asserts that the estate will continue to live in verse form, echoing the desire for poetic immortality that many early modem lyrics express: "When I am dead, thy name in this may live" (line 206).[169] But, given the death that surrounds the final lines of the poem, it is doubtful just how much life the estate might lay claim to. Here is no welcoming home replete with warmed hearth and well-trimmed gardens, but an abandoned dwelling, sunk into a state of eternalized, irreparable decay. In the end, whereas *Salve Deus* celebrates the transhistory of an eternal nation, *Cooke-ham* witnesses the fundamental elsewhere of the ideal state, a nation that, while insistently imagined as a real collection of individuals, is ultimately fated to exist, like Thomas More's *Utopia*, nowhere.

It is important to note, however, that this foreclosure does not unsettle the ideal; Lanyer's nation persists, despite its lack of time and place. This curious persistence, the tenuous balance Lanyer's work maintains between ideal and real, ultimately illuminates the relationship between the temporal and the spiritual nation. For, while her most ideal nation arises from an imaginative matrix that lacks chronology and geography, it is not posed in opposition to the temporal nation – either Israel or England – but is the most perfect formulation of it, a fact that is invoked in such moments as the rise to temporal leadership of Deborah, prophet-judge of Israel, or the English setting of *Cooke-ham*, in which the Countess communes with Biblical figures. Lanyer's epic genre does not, therefore, attempt to tell the history of a nation that exists beyond the boundaries of England, but rather traces the origins of a "true" England, a hidden kingdom that is embedded within the temporal geography and problematic government of the island nation, and that comes into focus, like the members of her community, only at select moments and locations. Lanyer's politics of exclusion, underwritten by her esotericism, might finally be thought of as a vexed structural necessity for a poetry that wishes not to draw boundaries between people, but between this world and another. The ideal nation that Lanyer imagines is not intended to exist either entirely outside the grasp of humanity, nor are English politics eventually meant to morph into a Christian

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[169] As manifested in Shakespeare's sonnet 55: "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme," Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* (Ed.) Katherine Duncan-Jones, London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001, Sonnet 55, lines 1-2.

government; rather, her community crystallizes only in moments of revelatory justice, when her anachronistic nation breaks into and reveals humanity's struggle with its own temporal hierarchies.

CHAPTER 5

MYSTICAL SOVEREIGNTY IN RICHARD CRASHAW'S *THE FLAMING HEART*

Richard Crashaw's poetic vision centres on mystical union as the moment of encounter with transcendence. While this is the case most famously in his poem *The Flaming Heart*, a poetic account of the mystical union of St. Teresa of Avila, many of his works extol the coming together of God and human in a moment of ecstasy. Crashaw's interest in mystical union is not merely spiritual, but also political. Mystical union calls for a commingling of human and divine, a transformative relationship in which self becomes reoriented toward God. Crashaw mines the political possibilities of this relationship to imagine how power might, in an ideal context, be determined by an original expression of love for the other.

In contemporary writings on transcendence, mystical union is often understood as the basis for ethics. Such work founds this assertion on the desire, frequently expressed in writings by mystics, to reproduce the moment of union. This longing for return is, for instance, what Emmanuel Levinas draws from when formulating his notion of the desire for the Other, a desire that can only be filled by love. The demand for sympathy made by the Other constitutes what Levinas calls "the ethical signification of transcendence,"[170] making it a useful lens for examining Crashaw's political imagination. Crashaw does not, however, posit the ethics of transcendence without some complications. In *The Flaming Heart*, the encounter with the divine is always a reproduction of the union of St. Teresa. Because of this, mystical union tends to have a homogenizing effect; anyone who participates in Teresa's mystical union becomes, essentially, like her. While, for Crashaw, this homogeneity establishes non-violent community, it jars against contemporary ideals of robust diversity. Understanding Crashaw's ethical vision, therefore, requires full awareness of its historical context in order to appreciate the nuanced political life that it imagines.

For Crashaw, mystical union with the divine is always mystical union with the sovereign, and this fact establishes Crashaw's entrance within the context of early modern politics. However

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[170] Emmanuel Levinas, 'God and Philosophy' in Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Eds.), *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 129-148, 141.

much actual monarchs may have drawn on the theological force of a divine sovereign to justify royal prerogative,[171] it remained the case that kingship in 17th century England was a contested political office.[172] The decade leading up to the execution of Charles I in 1649 particularly amplified Renaissance anxieties surrounding the sovereignty of the king. This chapter investigates how the poetry of Richard Crashaw sought to negotiate these anxieties by reformulating ideas of sovereignty within his work. By taking up Crashaw as a political poet, this chapter simultaneously seeks to reinvigorate critical understandings of the poet, who has been largely pigeonholed as an apolitical mystic. As a poet who is not generally associated with the political, Richard Crashaw has remained outside the purview of studies in early modern political theology.[173] This chapter will argue, however, that the poet's work in fact demonstrates deep concern with questions of sovereignty and how it functions, in terms that are both political and theological, to bring a community together. Through utilizing the political aspects of mystical in *The Flaming Heart*, Crashaw reorients sovereignty away from legal questions and toward a model of power based on mutual affection between human and divine. To understand how *The Flaming Heart* takes on its political connotations, this chapter will discuss the poem in the context of Crashaw's early political poetry, which has gone largely unremarked by criticism.[174] By illuminating the political project embedded within Crashaw's theological vision, this chapter accomplishes a two-fold critical purpose: to explore how early modern sovereignty functioned as an affective, rather than legal, political-theological category, and to revise critical understandings of Crashaw's ethical and political engagements.

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[171] See especially James I, *The True Law of Free Monarchies: or The Reciprock and Mutual, Dutie Betwixt a Free King and His Natural Subjects,* Edinburgh: Printed by Robert Waldergrave, 1598.

[172] See, for instance, George Buchanan's reply to James I, *De Jure Regni apud Scotos, or, a Dialogue, Concerning the Due Privilege of Government in the Kingdom of Scotland, Betwixt George Buchanan and Thomas Maitland by the Said George Buchanan; and Translated out of the Original Latine into English by Philathes,* 1680, Early English Books Online, Wing B5275. This dialogue between king and subject was paralleled by Charles I and Milton one generation later. See Charles I, *Eikon Basilike: The Portraicture of His Sacred Majestie in Solitudes and Sufferings,* London, 1649, Early English Books Online, Wing, 2nd Ed.; and John Milton, *Eikonoklastes, in Answer to a Book lntitl'd Eikon Basilike, the Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitude sand Sufferings,* London: Printed by Thomas Newcomb, 1650. Early English Books Online, Wing (2nd Ed.), M2114.

[173] One notable exception is Gary Kuchar's recent "A Greek in the Temple: Pseudo Dionysius and Negative Theology in Richard Crashaw's 'Hymn in the Glorious Epiphany,'" *Studies in Theology* 108, no. 2, 2011: 261-298.

[174] To my knowledge, the only sustained work on Crashaw's political poems is Anne Baynes Coiro, "'A Ball of Strife': Caroline Poetry and Royal Marriage" in Thomas N. Corns (ed.), *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 26-46.

A sampling of the past 150 years of writing on Richard Crashaw reveals a multiplicity of critical positions that tend to characterize the poet's work in any possible number of ways. Critics have produced equally plausible evidence for his baroque Catholicism as for his High Anglican Protestantism.[175] They have found his metaphors to be far-fetched and strained, while, nonetheless, conceding that his imagery "spiritualises the senses."[176] His conceits, while littered with "encrusted grotesquerie,"[177] also participate in a "flamboyantly sexual" celebration of the body.[178] Feminist critics have persuasively argued that Crashaw's unconventional use of gender and sexuality provokes questions of female agency,[179] while queer theorists have investigated male homoeroticism as a site that correlates sexual and spiritual pleasure.[180] Despite the astonishing variety of what John R. Roberts and Lorraine M. Roberts have called the "vagaries"[181] of Crashaw's critical assessments, it is surprising to note that the one thing Crashaw is never accused of is being overly political.

In fact, Crashaw wrote a number of political poems that give the lie to the assumption that he was somehow unconcerned with the social questions of the day. Out of Crashaw's eighty-two "secular" poems,[182] sixteen are on specifically political themes nine that were recovered in manuscript form, and seven that were published in gratulatory volumes released by the university on particularly felicitous royal occasions, most often the birth of a child. Because

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[175] Ruth C. Wallerstein, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Style and Poetic Development,* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1935; Helen C. White, *The Metaphysical Poets: A Study in Religious Experience,* New York: Macmillan, 1936; Austin Warren, *Richard Crashaw: A Study in Baroque Sensibility,* University: Louisiana State University Press, 1939; Douglas Bush, *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1945; Rosemund Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947; Helen Gardner (Ed.), *The Metaphysical Poets,* Harmondsworth and Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1957.

[176] Antonio Praz, *The Flaming Heart: Essays on Crashaw, Machiavelli, and Other Studies in the Relations between Italian and English Literature from Chaucer to T. S. Eliot,* Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1966, p. 262. See also Percy C. Osmond, *The Mystical Poets of the English Church,* London: SPCK; New York: Macmillan, 1919, p. 125.

[177] Robert Martin Adams, "Taste and Bad Taste in Metaphysical Poetry: Richard Crashaw and Dylan Thomas," *Hudson Review* 8, no. 1, 1955: 61-77, 69.

[178] Coiro, 'Ball of Strife', p. 28.

[179] Maurine Sabine, *Feminine Engendered Faith: The Poetry of John Donne and Richard Crashaw,* Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1992; Paul A. Parrish, "'Oh Sweet Contest': Gender and Value in 'The Weeper'" in John R. Roberts (Ed.), *New Perspectives on the Life and Art of Richard Crashaw,* Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1990, pp. 127-39.

[180] Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

[181] John R. Roberts and Lorraine M. Roberts, "Crashavian Criticism: A Brief Interpretive History" in Roberts (Ed.), *New Perspectives,* pp. 1-29, 1.

[182] These poems span from number 337-419 in George Walton Williams' edition of Crashaw's works.

of their occasional nature, most of these poems may be dated with some accuracy to between the years 1631 (the year of the birth of the Princess Mary) and 1640 (the year that Prince Henry was born).[183] These poems were therefore almost certainly written during Crashaw's tenure at Cambridge, first as a student at Pembroke College, to which he was matriculated in 1631, and then at Peterhouse, where he was elected as a Fellow in 1635.[184] There are, however, five poems that cannot be dated precisely-two on the coronation of King Charles I and three on the Gunpowder Plot. Because of their style and subject matter, these poems are generally considered to be written sometime before 1631.[185] Taken together, these gratulatory and occasional verses reveal a patriotic concern with Britain's stability and future that deserves to be folded into critical understandings of the poet's larger work.

This political poetry provides an illuminating context for *The Flaming Heart*. Written in the shadow of England's civil upheaval and in all probability while Crashaw was in exile on the continent between 1644 and 1649,[186] *The Flaming Heart* echoes the political language of his earlier poetry to convey nostalgia for an idealized Britain that never arrived and, at the same time, to transfer hope for the future of an imagined nation from a temporal to a spiritual field.[187] The poem is thus informed by a project begun in his political poetry – the project of envisioning a state in which love, both romantic and filial, dictates the terms of sovereignty.

The Flaming Heart has a well-known plotline: it opens on a painting of St. Teresa of Avila's transverberation and, dissatisfied with the depiction, trades out the roles of the two protagonists, giving Teresa the angel's darts (and the masculine gender that accompanies them), and the angel, her monastic veil. Teresa shoots her darts into the hearts of her readers,

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[183] Crashaw did not appear to write poems on the births of Prince Charles in 1630, or of Henrietta Anne in 1644.

[184] Williams, "Introduction to Crashaw," *The Complete Poetry,* pp. xv-xxii, xvi; Parrish, *Richard Crashaw,* p. 25; Warren, *Baroque Sensibility,* p. 32.

[185] See Williams' editorial notes and introductions to these poems in Crashaw, *The Complete Poetry,* pp. 453-455 and 458-563. Especially noteworthy is "Upon the King's Coronation ('Strange Metamorphosis')," which, Williams asserts, may date to as early as 1626, when Crashaw was fourteen years old.

[186] The poem appears in the second edition of *Steps to the Temple* in 1648, but is not included in the first edition in 1646, indicating that it was most likely written between these two years. See Williams' introduction to *The Flaming Heart* in Crashaw, *The Complete Poetry,* pp. 61-62. See also Praz, *The Flaming Heart,* pp. 261-262; and Warren, *Baroque Sensibility,* pp. 141-144.

[187] This tendency to fantasize over a spiritual nation is one that was common in Post-Reformation England. See Christopher Hill's influential *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution,* London: Temple Smith, 1972.

creating "nests of new Seraphims here below."[188] To understand how *The Flaming Heart* frames its political desires, this chapter will examine how these two conceits within the poem – love, represented by arrows, and reproduction, represented by nests – correlate to and are informed by similar schema in his earlier political poetry. The first portion of this study will investigate the similarities between Teresa's darts and the Petrarchan dart imagery in Crashaw's political poetry. This section will suggest that the idea of a wounded monarch formed a powerful catalyst for imagining a compassionate nation. The second section compares nesting imagery in *The Flaming Heart* with similar imagery in Crashaw's political poems to show how Crashaw extends the responsibilities of the reproductive monarch to potentially all subjects of the state. The final section of this chapter explores the relationship between the imaginative state of *The Flaming Heart* and the contemporary politics that form the backdrop to the poem. It investigates how the poet's famous desire to "leave nothing of my SELF in me" expresses a poignant longing for a reversal of roles between art and reality that might sacralise statehood *The Flaming Heart*, line 105). This longing attunes the desires of the poem with the biography of Crashaw himself, who, living in the shadow of a ruptured England and a failed monarchy, poetically imagined the reunification of his country under the auspices of a shared experience of God.

5.1. Sovereign Love

The poem's opening bemoans the egregious misrepresentation of Teresa's transverberation, which could have been avoided had the painter's "cold pencil" kissed Teresa's instructive "PEN" *The Flaming Heart*, line 20). Instead of "some weak, inferior, woman saint," the painter would have coloured her with the hues of "love's manly flame," rendering her angelic, "SERAPHICAL" *The Flaming Heart*, lines 24-30). Exposure to the words of Teresa would have awakened the artist to her true identity, an identity that, since spiritual, is not immediately evident in the body of the saint. Since the painting does not adequately capture the essence of Teresa, the poem must, and begins by appropriating the masculinity of the angel for her *The Flaming Heart*, lines 11-12).

The most notable accoutrement of Teresa's new embodiment is "that fiery DART" (*The Flaming Heart,* lines 34). This polyvalent metaphor weaves masculine agency together with

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[188] Richard Crashaw, "The Flaming Heart" in Crashaw, *Complete Poetry,* pp. 61-65, line 46. Subsequent references to Crashaw's poetry are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text by the name of the poem and line or stanza number.

Petrarchan literary conventions and medieval mystical traditions.[189] The account of the actual St. Teresa de Avila's transverberation is found in her *Vida,* in which she describes the experience of being repeatedly struck through the heart by an angel's arrow and thereby joined in ecstatic union with God.[190] Her description of her mystical marriage with Christ follows in the tradition of such writers as Bernard of Clairvaux and Catherine of Sienna who, inspired by the Song of Songs, wrote in erotic terms about the soul's union with God.[191] Erica Longfellow notes that in post-Reformation Europe, the erotic description of a soul's marriage to God, known as "bridal mysticism," occurred exclusively in Catholic writings, as Protestants tended to shy away from the more grossly embodied aspects of mystical marriage theology.[192]

Although Crashaw's celebration of Teresa's thoroughly Catholic transverberation might therefore appear to reinforce the poet's early reputation for esoteric spirituality, his use of mystical marriage in fact conceals deep affinities with the political imperatives of his earlier poetry. Within these sixteen poems, arrows take on more Petrarchan overtones as they appear within a romance between nation and monarch that at once symbolizes Britain's internal peace and its imagined ascendency over the rest of Europe. In *Upon the King's Coronation* (Strange Metamorphosis), for instance, a newly-crowned Charles I conquers the Catholic continent with the sheer force of his amorous gaze:

> The lustre of his face did shine some bright,
>
> That Rome's bold Eagles now were blinded quite,
>
> The radiant darts, short from his sparkling eyes,
>
> Made every mortal gladly sacrifice
>
> A heart burning in love.

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[189] Williams, *Image and Symbol in the Sacred Poetry of Richard Crashaw* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1963), pp. 112-116.

[190] Teresa de Avila, *La Vzda; Las Moradas,* ed. Antonio Comas, Barcelona: Planeta, 1984, chapter 21, part 17.

[191] Erica Longfellow cites "descriptions of love drawn from Hosea 1-3, the Psalms, Ezekiel, 1 Corinthians 7, Revelation 22, Ephesians 5, and especially the Song of Songs," all read through the lens of Ephesians 5, which "likens the love of Christ for the Church to the love of a man for his wife." See Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 2 and 19.

[192] Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing,* pp. 26-31.

<center>(*Upon the King's Coronation* (Strange Metamorphosis), lines 33-37)</center>

The radiant darts shot by the King draw heavily on the Petrarchan tradition to recast patriotism as love. National sentiment is a fairly regular feature of the Petrarchan mode; Petrarch's sonnets to Laura are not merely love poems, they also recount, as William J. Kennedy notes, Petrarch's "identification of his native Italy, his awareness of being Italian, and his sense of belonging to a community larger than a local or regional one."[193] This sense of national belonging, Kennedy argues, has been variously adopted by Petrarch's poetic inheritors throughout Europe. In England, the presence of a female queen during the boom of Petrarchism in the 1590s meant that sonneteers (who were also courtiers) could write to a female love-object who represented several "beloveds" at once: the fictive beloved of the sonnet sequence, the poet's actual beloved, and the sovereign beloved.[194] Given this literary history, it is noteworthy that Crashaw, who wrote numerous poems to and about women, including Queen Henrietta Maria, would choose the king, rather than the queen, as his Petrarchan beloved. There was, of course, some precedent in England for this gender reversal, including many of Shakespeare's own *Sonnets,* published in 1609,[195] which were written to an unidentified male youth.[196] While critical analyses of these sonnets tend to focus on the homoerotic affection they display,[197] and while Crashaw's poetry certainly contains

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[193] William J. Kennedy, *The Site of Petrarchism: Early Modern National Sentiment in Italy, France and England,* Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003, p. 1. See also Cynthia Nyree Nazarian, "Petrarch's Wound: Love, Violence, and the Writing of the Renaissance Nation," Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.

[194] This layering of beloveds is especially apparent in Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti,* written to Elizabeth Boyle. See especially William J. Kennedy, *Authorizing Petrarch,* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994, pp. 195-216. For more on the influence of Elizabeth I in English Petrarchism, see also Richard C. McCoy, *Sir Philip Sidney: Rebellion in Arcadia,* (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979; Luis Adrian Montrose, "'Eliza, Queene of Shepherd' and the Pastoral of Power," *English Literary Renaissance* 10, no. 2, Spring 1980: 153-182; Arthur F. Marotti, "'Love is not Love': Elizabeth Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order," *English Literary Heritage* 49, no. 2, Summer 1982: 396-428; Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, "The Politics of Astrophil and Stella," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* 24, no. 1, "The English Renaissance," Winter 1984: 53-68; and Clark Hulse, "Stella's Wit: Penelope Rich as Reader of Sidney's Sonnets," in Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Eds.), *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe,* Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986, pp. 259-271.

[195] On this date, see Kathryn Duncan-Jones, Introduction to William Shakespeare, *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* (Ed.) Katherine Duncan-Jones, London: Arden Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 1-106 and 1-28.

[196] Richard Barnfield's sonnets also feature a male beloved. See Richard Barnfield, *The Affectionate Shepherd,* (Ed.) James Orchard Halliwell, London: Percy Society, 1845. Lady Mary Wroth reverses both the gender of the beloved and the lover in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus.* See Mary Wroth, *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth,* (Ed.) Josephine A. Roberts, Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.

[197] See, for example, Kenneth Borris and George Klawitter (Eds.), *The Affectionate Shepherd: Celebrating Richard Barnfield,* Selinsgrove PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2001; Richard Halpern, *Shakespeare's Perfume: Sodomy and Sublimity in the Sonnets, Wilde, Freud and Lacan,* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002; and Paul

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homoeroticism, the presence of a specifically *sovereign* male beloved in the coronation poem seems to require further discussion of the politics of kingship as it is expressed within the generic conventions of Petrarchism.

In substituting king for queen, Crashaw's coronation poem invokes all the militaristic duties associated with a male monarch. This association of militancy with masculinity is no doubt due in some portion to traditional gender roles, but it is also important to note that, unlike during Elizabeth I's reign, the Caroline period saw the presence of *both* king and queen on the throne. While Elizabeth I may have styled herself as the military head of the nation, for Crashaw, the national role of Queen Henrietta Maria is primarily maternal, while the role of Charles I is primarily military. The militancy of Charles I is underlined by the fact that the king's arrows hit the heart of not only a solitary lover-speaker in the poem, but "every mortal," especially those mortals residing beyond the boundaries of Britain. Crashaw evokes the violence of conquest in order to shift its site away from literal militarism and toward a poetic field in which violent acts might be reframed as love. By framing the male monarch's power in terms of romance, Crashaw shifts the rules of engagement for foreign conquest from the battlefield to the bedroom, or, more properly, from militancy to romance. The language of the poem itself conveys this shift. The reference to *Rome's Bold Eagles*, for instance, is actually a double reference to both the Catholic Church and to the eagle that adorned the military standard under which ancient Roman legions marched. As such, the metaphor operates on two levels; on the one hand, it pits England against Rome, while, on the other, it fires Cupid's arrows against an ancient symbol of imperial domination.

Crashaw's poetry does, occasionally, describe the royal family in more literally militant language, but it is telling that these descriptions are reserved almost exclusively for the royal children, and are often less effective than conquests made in the name of love. In fact, the only instance of physical violence in Crashaw's poetry occurs in the *To the Queen,* when the toddler Prince Charles (the future Charles II) spears an embroidered lion on a tapestry in a make-believe battle:

> If any lion brought to life in embroidered rages stands
>
> in these halls, which the needle mimicked with its clever point,

O ho! He is an enemy...

Then the heavy spear rages against the foe (the spear is a rod);

Soon the false breast gapes with a real wound.

The lion stands, just as if stunned, pierced through by such an enemy;

As if he should fear or love something in these eyes,

So fiercely they flash. (*To the Queen*, lines 13-21)

Unlike most epic verse extolling the military might of kings, the actions of this prince are mitigated by his childhood: only the lion is conquered here, and even he admits that this manifestation of the warlike Mars within the Prince is still one that "could easily be loved" (*To the Queen*, line 23).

To the Newborn Princess undermines military hostility even more explicitly by connecting it to childhood; in this poem, the Princes Charles and James are "a small pair of smaller thunderbolts," who team up to "rattle the whole / Bosporus from shore to shore," and "shake / the Ottoman Moors with unfeigned fear" (*Newborn Princess*, lines 4-11). While this description might register an awareness of England's self-conscious desire to gain power on an international stage, the overall military effect is somewhat lessened by the fact that Charles and James were six and three years old at the time of the poem's publication.[198] For these poems, military might is mere child's play-sound and fury that, to borrow from *Macbeth,* signifies nothing. Indeed, even those two small thunderbolts never *actually* take over North Africa; the poem leaves the "Ottoman Moors" trembling in their boots with no invasion to fight. The might of the princes is finally overshadowed by the princess, who is tasked with "other battles... which peace will not have to fear" (*Newborn Princess*, line 12). Her "well-aimed arrows... fly on haughtier wing," hitting the "many heart" of foreign suitors who are her "devoted enemy" (*Newborn Princess*, lines 11-14).

Although it was common practice in early modem literature to pit Venus against Mars, or to imagine a monarchical romance with the nation, Crashaw's monarchs seem incapable of maintaining power in any other way. The point of this metaphoric manoeuvring is ultimately

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[198] The poem was published in the first Cambridge volume congratulating the birth of the Princess Anne on 17 March 1637. Charles was born on 29 May 1630, James on 14 October 1633. See Williams' unnumbered footnote to the poem in Crashaw, p. 565n.

to demilitarize invasion. By gaining power over hearts rather than bodies, Crashaw's poetry fantasizes about a Britain that achieves dominance without the violence and turmoil that, on the actual international scene, had resulted in a spate of poorly-executed military operations, including, most notably, the disastrous Cadiz Expedition of 1625.

By using romance as a trope for the expansion and strengthening of the nation, Crashaw's poetry reconstitutes subject-hood not as a legal category, but as an affective one; the subject becomes a subject only when he or she is "conquered" by her sovereign's love. For Crashaw's poetry, such an approach to sovereignty has clear advantages over other models of power not only because it takes the proverbial sting out of military invasion, but also because it carries positive implications for subjects themselves. Rather than submit to the tyrannical declarations of a monarch who presides over a police state, Crashaw's subjects willingly surrender to the monarch as their bride-groom: "Who would not be a Phoenix," he writes, referencing the animal chosen to represent Queen Henrietta Maria, "and aspire / To sacrifice himself in such sweet fire?" (*Upon the King's Coronation* (sound forth), lines 35-36)

Despite its aversion to physical violence, Crashaw's political poetry still maintains an aggressive dynamic between a beloved sovereign who brandishes the weapons of love and a loving subject who is pierced by them. This essential passivity of the subject puts him or her in a vulnerable position: if, as is the case with Petrarchan love, the beloved-sovereign does not require the lover-subject, then the subject risks the danger of enslavement, and, as Sidney's Astrophel does, calling it "praise to suffer tyranny."[199]

This unbalanced power dynamic is redressed, however, in Crashaw's sacred poems, where the pierced body of Christ supplies the archetype for a different kind of sovereign. Although, like Charles I, Christ inflicts wounds that inspire the love of the subject, they are wounds that mimic the crucifixion; the pain of Christ is the original pain of love. By foregrounding mutual pain in his sacred poetry, Crashaw establishes reciprocity between lover and beloved. In *Sancta Maria Dolorum*, for instance, Mary's heart is pierced by the vision of her son in anguish, and he, in turn, is penetrated by her pain:

> His NAILES write swords in her, which soon her heart

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[199] Philip Sidney, *Astrophile and Stella,* in David Damrosch and Kevin J. H. Dettmar (Eds.), *The Longman Anthology of British Literature,* 3rd ed., vol. 1b, "The Early Modern Period," (Ed.) Constance Jordan and Clare Carroll, New York: Pearson Longman, 2006, pp. 1036-1053, 1037, Sonnet 2, line 11.

> Payes back, with more than their own smart;
>
> Her SWORDS, still growing with his pain,
>
> Turn SPEARES, and straight come home again. (*Sancta Maria Dolorum*, stanza III)

Petrarchan love in this passage gives way to a mutual and erotic wounding between mother and son. In doing so, it rewrites the Petrarchan balance of power; rather than feature a lover under the tyrannous rule of his beloved, this poem instead understands love as a process of mutual pain that leads to self-identification with the suffering other:

> and in his woes
>
> And Paines, her Pangs and throes.
>
> And each wound of His, from every Part,
>
> All, more at home in her own heart. (*Sancta Maria Dolorum*, stanza I)

In a moment that might reside comfortably alongside Adam Smith's theory of moral sentiments, the pain of Christ *becomes* the pain of Mary. Thus, the pain of love, which Crashaw's verse inherits from Petrarchism finds a decidedly un-Petrarchan resolution in the sympathetic gaze. While, for Smith's theory, that sympathetic identification with the suffering other is the foundation for ethical political action, for Crashaw's poetry, it is the foundation for a new kind of political order altogether-one in which suffering becomes the central means of social identification. Throughout the poem, the poet desires to enter into this economy of pain, "to bleed with him," or "to weep with her" (stanza IX). He wants to "mix / wounds" with Mary and Christ, and, in so doing, "become one crucifix' (stanza X). As with the wounded lover-subjects of Crashaw's poems, the lovers of these poems, Mary and the poet are drawn together not by legal, ethical or cultural measures, but by dint of their mutual affection for Christ, creating a corporate identity.[200] Crashaw's poetry demonstrates the hope that, like the arrows of Christ's suffering, those arrows shot by the royal family might enter the "hard, cold heart" of Europe's population, causing them to "relent, and prove / soft subjects for the siege of love" (Stanza V).

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[200] Maureen Sabine notes that this identification links the pain of childbirth to the pain of the crucifix. See Sabine, *Feminine Engendered Faith,* p. 172.

The Flaming Heart enfolds this political longing and pseudo-Petrarchism within the mystical marriage theology that makes up the bulk of the poem's source.[201] Using language that is more reminiscent of the sonnet tradition's God of Love than of Christianity's loving God, the poet addresses the angel as "lover" and "fair youth" (*Flaming Heart*, lines 44-48). Even the mother / son relationship between Teresa and the angel reproduces not only the Mary / Christ relationship of *Sancta Maria Dolorum*, but also the Venus / Cupid pairing of Petrarchan imagery.

Like Charles I and the Princess Anne, Teresa also uses her darts to hit not a single beloved, but multiple targets:

> Sends she not
>
> A SERAPHIM at every shott?
>
> What magazins of immortal ARMES there shine!
>
> Heaven's great artillery in each love-spun line. (*Flaming Heart*, lines 53-56)

This armed force is a key addition to the Saint's original account, because it translates her individual experience into a corporate one. The poem seeks to transform the singularity of the soul's ecstatic union into a communal initiation rite that echoes not only the love affair between the mystic's soul and God, but also between subjects and sovereign.

Teresa's conquest substitutes God for monarch and soul for subject, thereby trading the temporal nation for a spiritual one. This substitution does not ignore the political troubles of the day so much as it offers an answer to them. Written against the backdrop of a monarchy that was in ruins, *The Flaming Heart* borrows from Catholic theology to imagine a communal structure that organizes people not by military enforcement or juridical decrees, but by a

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[201] There is, of course, no way to draw a clear distinction between "Petrarchan" darts and "mystical marriage" darts in Crashaw's poetry. This is due in part to the fact that no one knows for certain when Crashaw first came into contact with Teresa's writing. Williams notes that "Crashaw was 'excellent' in Spanish and Latin," and that the *Vida* was first published in Spanish in 1588, with English versions appearing in 1611, 1623, and 1642 (*Complete Poetry,* p. 59 n7). Other critics favour later dates for Crashaw's familiarity with Teresa's work, particularly since the 1642 translation of the *Vida* by Sir Toby Matthew bears striking titular similarities to "The Flaming Heart"; it was published in Antwerp as *The Flaming Heart or the Life of the Glorious St. Teresa.* A.F. Allison claims that "between 1640 and 1645 his (Crashaw's) mind and art were profoundly affected by the mystical writings of St. Teresa." See Allison, "Some Influences in Crashaw's poem "On a Prayer Booke Sent to Mrs. M.R.," *The Review of English Studies* 23, no. 8, January 1947: 34-42, 34. In the end, there may be less difference between *cupidas* and *caritas* than critics have traditionally assumed. See Thomas P. Roche, *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences,* New York: AMS Press, 1989.

common experience of love. In doing so, it discloses a deep longing for a political organization that might transcend the realities of Britain's tumultuous politics.

As is the case with the crucified Christ, Teresa is both pierced and piercing, with a heart that is "bigge alike with wounds and darts," and Teresa's status as the original casualty of love supplies the foundation for a reciprocal relationship between her and her readers (*The Flaming Heart*, line 76). In order to become a subject of Teresa's spiritual nation, her reader must first apprehend and identify with her pierced body. As the poet muses, "the wounded is the wounding heart" (*The Flaming Heart*, line 74). By taking up the figure of the sacrificial other, Crashaw imagines how a nation might be born of sympathetic identification, unified around the figure of the wounded monarch.

5.2. Maternity and the Mystical Nation

While the love affair between monarch and soul register Crashaw's interest in the subject's affective relationship to the state, his poetry also displays a concern over the overarching structures that form and maintain statehood. This interest in governmental superstructure is invoked by the metaphor of childbirth; the subjects of Crashaw's spiritualized nation are metaphorically "born" into it by reading Teresa's work. Their entrance into subjecthood is made possible, somewhat paradoxically, by the fact that Teresa is given a set of arrows and a masculine gender to accompany them. As the poem famously admonishes, its readers are to "read HIM for her and her for him / And call the SAINT the SERAPHIM" (*The Flaming Heart*, line 11).

There is a kind of flashy ambiguity to Teresa's gender transformation; while she may not be "pricked" out in Shakespeare's famous literal usage,[202] there still remains the question of why masculinity should be imputed to a character whose body is otherwise all woman, or even, to borrow from the title of *A Hymn to the Name and Honour*, "more than a woman."[203] While critics such as Maureen Sabine and Paul Parrish have supplied important readings about the agential and spiritual implications of Teresa's masculinity,[204] the ultimate irreducibility of the

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[202] Shakespeare, Sonnet 20, "A woman's face with nature's own hand painted," in *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* (Ed.) Katherine Duncan-Jones, The Arden Shakespeare, 1997; London: Arden Shakespeare, 2004, p. 20, line 13.

[203] Crashaw, "A Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Sainte Teresa, Foundress of the Reformation of the Discalced Carmelites, both Men and Women; A Woman for Angelical Height of Speculation, for Masculine Courage of Performance, More than a Woman. Who yet a Child, Out Ran Maturity, and Durst Plot a Martyrdom," in *Complete Poetry,* p. 53; also qtd. in Sabine, *Feminine Engendered Faith,* p. 215).

[204] See especially Sabine, *Feminine Engendered Faith,* p. 229; and Parrish, *O Sweet Contest*, p. 164.

question of engenderment, the fact that Teresa defies any binary categories, itself supplies an intriguing subject of study.

As has been shown above, the ambivalence of Teresa's body-indeed, of virtually all bodies in Crashaw's work is precisely what enables their interpenetration. It also, however, allows for a reading of gendered embodiment that is not, as Richard Rambuss puts it, "wholly containable within the soft contours of the merely androgynous."[205] In his assessment, Teresa's body is not merely multiply-gendered, it is ultra-gendered, and a fact that coincides with the other excesses that overrun Crashaw's poetry: the boundlessness of mystical union and the illimitable pleasure of ecstasy.

While Teresa's excessive embodiment and the question of her gendered status lend themselves to compelling critical analyses, it also tends to obscure the fact of her fecundity.[206] It is my contention that, for Crashaw, the excessiveness of her gendered and sexual subjectivity corresponds to excessiveness in her ability to bear children as well; in both its political and spiritual valences throughout his poetry, the metaphoric child appears as the figure of increase beyond accounting: a growing family, an expanding nation, an infinite heavenly kingdom.

In *The Flaming Heart*, Teresa's newly-endowed body enables her maternity and, in doing so, defies the normative biology of procreation, rendering her motherhood already beyond the reach of binary gender categories:

> Give Him the vail; that he may cover
>
> The Red cheeks of a rivall'd lover.
>
> Asham'd that our world, now, can show
>
> Nests of new Seraphims here below.
>
> Say and bear wittnes. Sends she not
>
> A Seraphim at every shott? (*Flaming Heart*, line 43-54)

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[205] Richard Rambuss, *Closet Devotions,* p. 42.

[206] Rambuss and Sabine both note Teresa's maternity in passing. See Rambuss, *Closet Devotions,* p. 42; and Sabine, *Feminine Engendered Faith,* p. 229.

Teresa's masculinity, which is both accompanied by and visually symbolized in the dart, ultimately enables her to build these "nests of new Seraphims," a metaphor that Crashaw uses repeatedly to indicate maternity. In *An Apologie upon the Foregoing Hymn*, for instance, Teresa's work "breaks... into the wondering reader's brest; / who feels his warm heart hatched into a nest." (*An Apologie*, lines 24-26)

In Crashaw's political poems, this language of childbirth is used exclusively for that "Virgin Phoenix," Queen Henrietta Maria (*Upon the King's Coronation* (Strange Metamorphosis), line 30). Taking his cue perhaps in part from the Queen herself, who, like Elizabeth before her, was represented by a phoenix, Crashaw's images of the Queen's motherhood revolve around aviary themes. In *A Panegyrick upon the Royal Family*, which bears the apt subtitle, "To the Queen, upon her numerous progeny," Queen Henrietta Maria births a "nest of Heroes" that resonates with Teresa's "nests of seraphims." Elsewhere in the poem, the Queen is a "fair Halcyon, on a sea of balm," whose "faithful womb" produces not one Phoenix, but "a brood / a brood of phoenixes... we have Brother / And sister-phoenixes, and still the Mother" (*A Panegyrick*, lines 104-134).

Taken together, this brood of royal children indicates national abundance, growth, a state in excess of itself. In fact, the opening lines of this poem draw a direct connection between an expanding state and an expanding royal family:

> Stretch thyself (Fair Isle) and grow; spread wide
>
> Thy bosom, and make room. Thou art opprest
>
> With thine own glories: and art strangely blest
>
> Beyond thyself, for (lo) the Gods, the Gods
>
> Come fast upon thee; and those glorious ods
>
> Swell thy full honours to a pitch so high
>
> As sits above thy best capacities. (*A Panegyrick*, lines 2-8)

In this passage, it is the nation itself, not the Queen, who is pregnant with its own children, a "strange" blessing indeed for a country whose literal expansion is already foreclosed by the boundaries of its island topography; there is effectively nowhere for that "Fair Isle" to expand. By invoking the royal family, however, the metaphor of expansion holds forth; the

empire is assured by the royal children, who each represent a nation that emanates from the union of Charles I, and Henrietta Maria. The poem exuberates over England's children, each of whom might "glad the sphere of any nation" (*A Panegyrick*, line 14). Beneath the metaphoric slippage from family to government, from island status to empire, the subtext of the poem speculates that with enough children, England might eventually produce enough rulers to seat an English monarch on every throne in the world.

Anne Baynes Coiro notes that the royal family's ability to metaphorically underwrite Britain's greatness had only recently re-emerged into literary discourse after nearly a century of monarchs that had troubled stable familial categories: "in a country that had not seen a functional royal marriage for generations and that had lived through the dire consequences, the idea of a fertile marriage and the stable dynasty it could produce must have seemed enormously desirable."[207] Contemporary political rhetoric demonstrates a keen awareness of this fact. When James I ascended to the throne in 1603, he and his wife, Anne of Denmark, already had three children. It is therefore no coincidence that when he called his first Parliament in 1604, *The Journal of the House of Commons* reflects in its opening introduction an explicit connection between the state and the family that was designed to strengthen his claim to the throne:

> Order, the Lustre of Nature, guided by a First Essence, put all Government into Form: First, in Two, who, by Procreation, according to the Rule of Power (increase and multiply) made a Family, with One Head; by Propagation, a Tribe, or Kindred, with One Elder, or Chief; by Multiplication, a Society, a Province, a Country, a Kingdom, with One or more Guides or Leaders, of Spirit, aptest, or, of Choice, fittest, to govern.[208]

Because the government is based on the model of the family, its very nature is toward growth, "by Procreation... by Propagation... by Multiplication." Thus, the expansion of England's chief family – the royal family – ensured the peaceful continuance of government itself.

Crashaw's constant calling forth of children reiterates political structure according to this narrative of reproduction. That is to say, Crashaw's poetry de-emphasises the responsibility

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[207] Coiro, *Ball of Strife*, p. 27.

[208] "Introduction," *Journal of the House of Commons*, 19 March 1604.

of the military or the law in protecting and maintaining the state, and instead deputizes a domestic scene of parenting as the cultural matrix best suited to body forth a kingdom. In hanging its hopes on the promises of a future literally embodied by children, Crashaw's poetry casts its gaze toward a political future that is already present, symbolically contained in the person of the royal child.

Lee Edelman notes that in modem democracies, the child is often invoked to justify or denigrate political decisions.[209] The timeworn imperative to create "a better future for our children"[210] is in fact a political one that entrenches heteronormative reproduction at the heart of state decisions. As Edelman puts it, "the Child remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics."[211] This projected fantasy of the future embodied in children may be related to a similar set of early modem political imperatives that also revolved around the family. But while "the Child" of Edelman's analysis remains a phantasm to be invoked and protected in political rhetoric, the royal child of Crashaw's context is a flesh-and-bone assurance of the future state. In a monarchy, reproduction is the primary site of state-making; the body of the royal child contains not only the promise of the continuance of the king's unbroken line (the "body natural"), but also the continuance of the office of the monarchy (the "body politic").[212] The princes and princesses of England *were* the future state incarnated in the present moment, or, as Crashaw more poetically put it, "our future now" (*On Hope*, line 1).[213]

In the relationship between family and government, early modem discourse privileges men as the progenitors of the nation. As Kevin Sharpe writes, "to be a father, in early modem England, was to be a king and the reverse was also true."[214] In striking contrast, Crashaw's

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[209] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive,* Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

[210] Indeed, the phrase "a better future for our children" is so ubiquitous that one early twentieth-century independent political party in Australia simply adopted it as an appellation. "A Better Future for Our Children" did not, however, last long enough to witness the future that it lauded. See Rodney Smith, *Against the Machine: Minor Parties and Independents in New South Wales 1910-2006,* Sydney: Federation Press, 2006, pp. 110.

[211] Edelman, *No Future,* p. 3.

[212] See Ernst Kantorowicz's *Introduction to The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-23.

[213] Crashaw is writing more generally here on hope. Robert Ellrodt notes that in Crashaw's verse, hope tends to blur "the distance between the present and the future," *Seven Metaphysical Poets: A Structural Study of the Unchanging Self,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 146).

[214] Kevin Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 44.

verse calls upon female characters to deliver the nation's future. By doing so, his work attunes the maternity of both Teresa and Henrietta Maria to the Virgin Mary – the mother nonpareil of his verse. Anglican Protestantism had, despite Laudian reforms, largely divested Mary of her role as mother of the Christian Church, opening the way for other women (including, notably, Elizabeth I) to take on that role. By encoding this slippage between Mary, Henrietta Maria, and Teresa, Crashaw's poetry subtly transforms the role of motherhood itself into a political office from which originates the spiritual state.

While, in Crashaw's political poems, the responsibility for maintaining the state rests squarely with the royal family, the "sons" of Teresa represent an indiscriminate gathering of the population. Crashaw's sacred poetry effectively expands the role of sovereignty, making it available for all members of the state. The desire behind this expansion is for the exponential increase of the state as all citizens – not merely one family – continues Teresa's work and, in their role as "new Seraphims here below," conquer an infinite number of hearts for the nation (*The Flaming Heart*, line 46). *The Flaming Heart* extends to the general populace the hope that Crashaw's political poetry reserves for the royal family: that the sovereign "mayst in a son of His find every son / Repeated, and that son still in another, / And so in each child often prove a Mother." (*A Panegyrick*, lines 148-150)

In conferring the maternal duties of the sovereign onto the populace, mystical union in *The Flaming Heart* serves as a kind of levelling mechanism, undermining the hierarchy upon which centralized authority is based. If all people share in the role that is originally bestowed upon Christ or Teresa, then no one person can claim unmitigated authority. For Crashaw, the mystical encounter with the other underwrites community and ensures that the organizing structure for that community is interconnectivity rather than a unidirectional flow of power.

In much the same way that mutual wounding allows Crashaw's poetic characters to identify with another, the ability to be, both mother and child, instantiated equitability between the two. The crowns of Teresa's children – those "thousands of crowned souls" – in fact carry a double meaning: as crowns that Teresa has herself earned, and as royalty in their own right, mother-queens who themselves create more Crowns to populate and rule the Heaven.

5.3. Crashaw's Historicised Ethics

The closing lines of *The Flaming Heart* (lines 85-108) were most likely added sometime during Crashaw's final year of life. In them, the poet begs for his own transformative union

with God, one that would reorient him away from self-identity and toward a religious otherness:

> Leave nothing of my SELF in me.
>
> Let me so read thy life, that I
>
> Unto all life of mine may dy. (*The Flaming Heart*, lines 106-108)

Given Crashaw's stylistic tendency toward erotic metaphors, it is difficult not to read an embedded pun in the final word, "dy" that releases the speaker in both spiritual and sexual terms. The erotic connotations of the word underlines the fact that the death of the self is not so much a self-abnegation as it is a commingling of persons; the poet finally hopes to lose himself entirely in the rapture of God. Ultimately, the union with the transcendent other enacts deep change in the self, that, as Levinas remarks, "is conceived radically as a movement of the Same toward the Other which never returns to the Same.[215] For Crashaw, that movement signals the advent of a new kind of subject and a new kind of nation. Founded on a sovereign who is wounded with love and pregnant with the nation's future, this political structure calls subjects beyond themselves, inviting them to step into an alternative political and religious subjectivity. For Crashaw, community is ultimately cultivated within the unfamiliarity of mystical union, a strange and shared subjectivity that draws people closer to the divine, and to each other. *The Flaming Heart* posits an experience of love that breaks across boundaries of self and other, resulting in a power that is diffused among peoples. Whereas, in Crashaw's more political modes, sovereignty tends to be consolidated around the royal family, in *The Flaming Heart*, it flows through an interconnected community, symbolised by the capacity that both Teresa and her readers have to penetrate and be penetrated, to give birth and to be born. As such, this spiritual state, Crashaw's own City of God, can only maintain its conception of civic life by refusing to erect any borders that might stem this continual flow of power.

It is perhaps no surprise, then, that the political world of Crashaw's poetry imagines a state without the problematic boundaries of territory. In the earlier *An Apologie for the Fore-Going Hymne*, which was written to justify his laudatory hymn to Teresa, the speaker imagines a

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[215] Levinas, *Meaning and Sense*, p. 49.

kind of transnational communality to mediate the dissonance that might otherwise arise from a love affair between an English soul and a Spanish saint:

> Souls are not SPANIARDS too, one friendly floud
>
> Of BAPTISM blends them all into a blood.
>
> CHRIST's faith makes but one body of all soules
>
> And love's that body's soul, no law controwlls
>
> Our free traffique for heav'n. (*An Apologie*, lines 15-19)

Although the "free traffique" that these lines imagine unwittingly foreshadows modem understandings of global capital flows, this poem seeks not so much to establish lines of contact *between* nations as it looks for an organizing structure that *supersedes* them. As this chapter has argued, it finds this structure in mutual spiritualised affection, directed through erotic metaphors of kinship.

Crashaw's imaginative nation trades out juridical categories for affective ones, which allows the formation and maintenance of the state to be cast as a transformative relationship between people rather than as a series of institutional regulations. This shift – from law to love, from militancy to motherhood – calibrates its political theological longings against the poet's own experience of political violence. *The Flaming Heart* was most likely written between 1646 and 1648, sometime after Crashaw had been run out of Cambridge by Cromwell's New Model Army.[216] He had, along with Queen Henrietta Maria, taken up refuge on the continent, where he converted to Catholicism. Although the Queen wrote the Pope to request a position in the Church for Crashaw, none materialized for several years, by which time poverty and disease had worn the poet down; he died in obscurity in August of 1649, a few months after the January execution of Charles I.[217] Crashaw's spiritual nation can therefore be read not as a mere by-product of the poet's mystical proclivities, but as a longing for a religiosity that might overcome the violent differences that Crashaw himself had faced in real-world politics.

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[216] On these dates, see n18 above.

[217] Biographical detail is compiled from Williams' Introduction to Crashaw, *Complete Poetry,* pp. xv-xxii; Warren, *Baroque Sensibility,* pp. 3-62; and Parrish, *Richard Crashaw,* pp. 15-46.

Crashaw's insistent idealism coupled with his vision of a homogenous ethical community render his imaginative politics only partially palatable to contemporary tastes: our current multicultural and postcolonial milieu generally calls for more diverse and practical political theorization. And yet, the poet's desire for a peaceful society and his turn toward otherness to make that society possible resonate deeply with current political trends. This uncanny relationship between modem and early modem political ideals results in a discomforting reading experience. While it may be tempting to sum up Crashaw's political vision in either laudatory or derogatory terms, truly engaging his worldview requires us as critics to accept the poet's work as simultaneously familiar and strange. Crashaw's political vision is, in the end, its own kind of historical "other" to the postmodern "self."

Attending to Crashaw's work requires us to step outside of the priorities formed by our own temporal moment and engage with ideas across the historical divide. Approaching the other therefore can be, and often is, an act that transcends time. Levinas remarks that the response to the other is "a liberation from my time... it is an action for a world to come, a going beyond one's epoch."[218] For Crashaw, moving beyond temporality is an undertaking that is essentially hopeful, that acknowledges the "absent presence" of an ideal future poised constantly on the horizon, what he calls "the entity of things that are not yet" (*On Hope*, lines 70, 12). Reading early modem literature ultimately invites the critic into this extra-historical space, where a reader is called beyond his or her epoch to fully engage with historical ideas, and where, by attending to the other in history, a reader might begin to participate in the ethics of a future that is yet to come.

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[218] Levinas, *Meaning and Sense*, p. 5.

CHAPTER 6

EUCHARISTIC REPUBLIC IN JOHN MILTON'S *AREOPAGITICA, PARADISE LOST* AND *SAMSON AGONISTES*

Following the dissolution of the monarchy in 1649, the mystical body of the king who underwrote the health of the nation in English politics transformed into the mystical body of the people. It is for this reason that John Milton, apologist for the puritan Republic and famous iconoclast, utilizes transubstantiation as his primary marker of transcendence. Transubstantiation appears most famously in *Paradise Lost* in the midst of a shared meal between Adam and the angel Raphael. Milton's angel interacts remarkably closely with Adam's material world, compelled by the force of "real hunger" to join Adam in his meal, and engaged in an act of eating that the poem classifies as "transubstantiate."[219] This moment of transubstantial eating, however, represents a literal representation of Milton's more symbolic thinking on the subject, thinking that turns the Catholic sacrament into a metaphoric exercise in community formation. While this metaphor necessary draws from the original theological association between the Eucharist and the unity of the church, it also relates that unity not to the ecclesiastical body of Christ, but to the political body of the republic.[220] This chapter will investigate Milton's use of transubstantiation as a metaphor that underwrites republican sentiment from *Areopagitica,* his early treatise against censorship, through the Post-restoration *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes* to discover how his initial optimism toward transubstantiation dissolves into pessimism at the close of the republican government.

The theology of transubstantiation generally relates the transcendence of God to his immateriality, mysteriously manifest in the substance of the bread. In so doing, the bread becomes the sign capable of transferring the transcendent characteristics of the divine to the celebrant, most notably the life of Christ. For Milton, however, God is not present in the bread of communion, only remembered: "That living bread therefore which Christ calls his flesh, and that blood which is drink indeed, can be nothing but the doctrine of Christ's having

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[219] John Milton, *Paradise Lost,* ed. Scott Elledge, New York: W.W. Norton, 1993, V. 437-438. References to *Paradise Lost* hereafter are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text by book and line numbers.

[220] On political bodies and physical bodies in the Renaissance, see Susanne Scholz, *Body Narratives: Writing the Nation and Fashioning the Subject in Early Modern England,* London: Macmillan, 2000.

become man in order to shed his blood for us."[221] As such, the bread symbolizes not the presence of Christ in the world, but the absence of Christ from it, for, resurrected and ascended; his body cannot be brought again to earth. Thus, whenever the transubstantial body is present in Milton's work, it initiates a search for the absent God. This search constitutes the activity around which the republican community might form, and also marks out absence as the primary characteristic of God's transcendence. Milton takes seriously the apophatic idea of God's utter inaccessibility, and uses it as the precursor for community.

Milton conceives of the search for God as holy work. Throughout his writing, metaphors of the body are accompanied by images of labour, particularly construction. His early work overlaps the search for God with the building of the church, while, in his later poetry, images of broken bodies commingle with broken edifices. Milton's writing derives this connection between body and building in part from Paul's assertion in 1 Corinthians that the body is a temple. But the connection is also related to the slippage between Church and church – the body of believers and the building in which that body meets. Therefore, his work demonstrates not only an interest in the transcendence of God, but also in humankind's response to it. Milton's work is ultimately triangulates three enterprises related to the transcendence of God: transubstantiation, which manifests God's transcendence as absence; labour, which constitutes humanity's proper response to that transcendence; and edifices, which metaphorically represent the community that is the end-result of the encounter with the transcendent divine.

6.1. The Body Remembered

This chapter begins not with a poem, but with a treatise – *Areopagitica* – that, despite its status as political tract, nonetheless contains a metaphor so extended as to rival the most elaborate of Milton's epic similes: truth as body. That I begin with a treatise rather than a poem is perhaps an indication of a singular generic shift in England amid the rise of republican sentiment, during years that witnessed a fervent uptick in the imaginative thinking related to the nation. So enmeshed was the dream of republicanism in a particular cultural and religious fantasy that the kind of politicized wishful thinking that, in earlier years, tended to

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[221] Milton, *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine, Compiled from the Holy Scriptures Alone (De Doctrina Christiana),* trans. Charles R. Sumner, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1825, p. 441.

occur in the realm of poetry wound its way in the 1640s into more solidly realistic venues.[222] *Areopagitica* certainly contains an exuberant optimism surrounding God and politics, and uses this optimism to confidently assert the possibility of a self-governed nation guided by public debate and civic cooperation.

Milton's argument against censorship in *Areopagitica* hangs on the nature of truth: what responsibilities it demands from humanity, and how those responsibilities are upheld in the act of publication. Throughout the work, the feminized truth takes on myriad forms, all entangled in the fabric of early modern social and political life, from the somewhat strained familial relations invoked by her status as the stepdaughter to Order, to the burgeoning scene of international trade, in which she participates as "our richest Merchandise."[223] But perhaps no single metaphor for truth has such potency for Milton's work, or receives more attention in Milton's argument, as the metaphor of the divine body:

> Truth indeed came once into the world with her Divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on: but when He ascended, and His Apostles after Him were laid asleep, then straight arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the sad friends of truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb, still as they could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; He shall bring together every joint and member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection… we continue to do our obsequies to the torn body of our martyred saint. (*Areopagitica,* p. 30)

In the narrative world that Milton constructs around truth, her metaphoric incarnation arises from the revelation of God to man in the embodied Christ. It makes good sense that truth should arrive, like Christ, in a body, for the body is the only object that mediates God's appearance to humanity. This fact highlights the incarnation as a moment that tends toward

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[222] Christopher Hill most usefully charts the optimism – and the politically disastrous effects that Milton later writes about – in his classic work, *World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution,* London: Temple Smith, 1972.

[223] John Milton, *Areopagitica,* in *Areopagitica and Other Prose Works,* London: J.M. Dent, 2004, pp. 27-30. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by name and page numbers.

immanence, and corresponds to truth's whole and complete form, her "perfect shape most glorious to look on." Following the ascent of Christ and the death of his Apostles, however, truth's dismemberment is the founding act that reinstates the transcendence of the divine; the missing limbs of the incoherent body metonymically standing in for the invisible characteristics of an incomprehensible God, a God who no longer dwells within the world.

Milton's metaphor derives from Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*.[224] Plutarch's account, like Milton's, links the search for truth with a fundamental desire for the gods, a desire that helps to illuminate humanity's proper response to the transcendent God:

> Therefore the effort to arrive at the Truth, and especially the truth about the gods, is a longing for the divine. For the search for truth requires for its study and investigation the consideration of sacred subjects, and it is a work more hallowed than any form of holy living or temple service; and, not least of all, it is well-pleasing to that goddess whom you worship, a goddess exceptionally wise and a lover of wisdom, to whom, as her name at least seems to indicate, knowledge and understanding are in the highest degree appropriate. For *Isis* is a Greek word.[225]

The transcendence of the gods necessitates a search, one initiated by their persistent, perpetual absence. What we do not know about the gods, we do not know about truth, and education is therefore a pursuing after the sacred. For Milton, then, the transcendence of God, connected to the nature of truth as parsed by Plutarch, is represented as an unrelenting, eternal call for knowledge: "The light which we have gained was given us, not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge" (*Areopagitica,* p. 31).[226]

If the gods have abandoned humanity, however, they have not left without a trace. It is no accident that the trace of Christ takes the form of a body in pieces; Milton's metaphor calls up not only Plutarch's broken body of Osiris but also the *Corpus Christi,* the body of the Eucharist. Critics have largely tended to ignore the Eucharistic aspects of Milton's metaphor,

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[224] See M.E. Seaton, "Milton and the Myth of lsis," *The Modern Language Review,* 17, no. 2, April 1922: 168-170.

[225] Plutarch, *Plutarch's Moralia,* Loeb Classical Library Series, 15 vols, London: W. Heinemann, 1926-1976, 5:9.

[226] In this sense, I agree with Stanley Fish's basic interpretation of *Areopagitica's* understanding of truth as indeterminate. See Fish, "Driving from the Letter: Truth and Indeterminacy in Miton's *Areopagitica,*" in *Remembering Milton: Essays in the Texts and Traditions,* (Ed.) Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson, New York and London: Methuen, 1987, pp. 234-254.

although Nigel Smith and Lana Cable have remarked on the connection between readings and eating that pervades the text.[227] Building on their work, John D. Schaeffer notes the Eucharistic trends of *Areopagitica* that relates the spiritual and physical functions of writing: "Books are Eucharistic for Milton not just because they are consumed but because their spiritual contents, human reason as image of divinity, enter the mind of the reader through the body by means of their materiality, paper, print, etc."[228] It is important to note, however, that Milton's utilization of the religious trope also subtly changes it, a change that Milton himself generously welcomes.

Elaborating on the metaphor of truth as light, Milton further asserts that the point of discovering new truths is to continually revise theological understanding. He notes that it is not enough for the Reformation to have defrocked a priest, or unmitred a bishop, but asserts that "if other things as great in the Church… be not looked into and reformed, we have looked so long upon the blaze that Zuinglius and Calvin hath beaconed up to us, that we are stark blind" (*Areopagitica,* p. 31). His references to two theologians who deeply impacted Protestant models of the Eucharist, embedded in a call to revise their work, follows directly on the heels of the account of the dismembered Osiris. The effect is an ingenious renegotiation of the Eucharistic controversy, one that ultimately comes to bear on the intricate connection between *Areopagitica*'s unique understanding of transcendence as absence and the Miltonic desire for community-what he expresses in *Paradise Lost* as a universal "all in all" (*Paradise Lost,* III. 341).

The history of the Eucharistic debates can be seen as a shift between two poles represented in the two foundational Biblical texts most often used to explicate the meaning of the sacrament.

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[227] See especially Nigel Smith, *"Areopagitica: Voicing Contexts, 1643-5,"* in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton*: SO *Prose,* (Ed.) David Lowenstein and James G. Turner, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 119-195; and Lana Cable, *Carnal Rhetoric: Milton*: SO *Iconoclasm and the Poetics of Desire,* Durham: Duke University Press, 1995. Regina Schwartz also writes compellingly about Milton's general concern with eating and digestion, and its relation to God in "Milton's Cosmic Body: Doing Justice," Chap. 4 in *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008, pp. 59-88.

[228] John D. Schaeffer, "Metonymies We Read By: Rhetoric, Truth and the Eucharist in Milton's *Areopagitica*," *Milton Quarterly* 34, no. 3, 2000: 84-92, 87. Schaeffer asserts that Milton's Eucharistic reading of publication supplies the primary force of argumentation against censorship. This reading compellingly directs criticism on *Areopagitica,* notoriously divided over the rationality, logic, and ethics of Milton's argument, toward the literary forms that underline it: "Milton's success in *Areopagitica* depends not on the effectiveness of his argument, nor on whether the work can accommodate our own post-modernist paradigms, but on the way it successfully altered our concepts of reading, printing, and censorship. Those concepts are not drawn from the work's argument, even though we like to think of freedom of the press as a unique contribution of Enlightenment rationality. Rather those concepts are drawn from religious metaphors, indeed the most profound religious symbol of Christianity," p. 91.

The first, of course, are the words of institution, spoken by Christ at the Passover supper before the crucifixion, and translated by the King James Bible as "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."[229]

Based on this passage, the sacrament performs the same memorializing function as the Passover feast, and, moreover, invites the celebrant into unity with Christ by literally incorporating the divine. In a later passage, however, Paul points out that communion instantiates unity not only with Christ but also among believers: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we *being* many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."[230] From these two passages derive the two major purposes for the Eucharist: communion with Christ through memorializing, and communion with others through corporate eating.

Patristic writers almost entirely emphasized the Pauline function of the Eucharist, so much so that the presence of Christ in the accident of the elements was unnecessary for the meaning of the sacrament. "In this conception," notes Edward J. Kilmartin, "Christ, in various roles, was present in the whole of the ceremony: officiating as priest, partaking as communicant, and unifying as bread through a mystery."[231] In this tradition, steeped in the Byzantine and early Latin culture of the image, the body of Christ was implicitly archetypal; the community that the sacrament instantiated, however, was immanently real.[232] Throughout the high Middle Ages, however, the theology of the Eucharist grew increasingly Christological. This can be seen in part as a result of scholasticism's meticulous categorization and obsessive tendency toward syllogism, which underwrote a continual effort on the part of theologians to deduce the precise relationship between Christ and the communion elements.[233] A number of distinctions and definitions arose during this period, not the least of which was the word

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[229] Luke 22:19.

[230] 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

[231] Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology,* (Ed.) Robert J. Daly, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998, pp. 1-2. See also Darwell Stone, *History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist,* London: Longman's Green, 1909.

[232] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West,* pp. 3-7.

[233] See Sarah Beckwith, *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings,* London: Routledge, 1992; and David Aers, *Sanctifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in Late Medieval England,* South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004.

"*transsubstantiare,*" first used in the middle of the twelfth century by Rolando Bandinelli to indicate the transformation of the substance of the bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ, a word that only received official approval at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.[234] The effect of this trend toward defining the body of Christ in that was a tendency to elide the aspects of church unity: "Thus the (formerly dominant, overarching) ecclesiological aspect of the Eucharistic sacrifice is inserted into the Christological aspect, or rather is absorbed by it."[235]

Reformation theology inherited from its medieval antecedents this tendency to emphasize the Christological aspects of the ceremony over the communal. For the radical reformer Huldrych Zwingli, the parallels between communion and community were so subordinate to the question of Christ in the elements that his commentary on the subject seems to imply that the creation of a community is an auxiliary function to the unity attained between God and man in the ceremony: "He that would take part in this public thanksgiving should prove to the whole Church that he is of the number of those who trust in the Christ who died for us. Hence, also the Eucharist is called Communion or Communication by Paul."[236] Zwingli's account unearths commonality: a history of Eucharist's Pauline name (communion), linked to its public and declarative aspects (communication) that constitute its secondary function (community). The act itself, with its ritualistic baking and breaking, supplies a metaphoric basis for the relationship between communion and community, a relationship that rises (as it were) from Paul's explication of the ceremony. Zwingli, ever attuned to the symbolic overtones of the sacrament, elaborates: "Thus, it becomes clear that Christ wished to give us bread and wine as food and drink, because as these two are combined each into one body from numberless grains or atoms of flour or drops of the juice of the vine respectively, so we come together into one faith and one body."[237]

While the emphasis on real presence subsumed the union of the Church into union between Christ and believer, it also added a strange tendency to attribute a life-giving function to the ritual. For Luther, Calvin, and even, on a different register, Zwingli, the transcendent life of

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[234] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West,* p. 145.

[235] *Ibid.* p. 151.

[236] Huldreich Zwingli, *On True and False Religion,* in *The Latin Works of Huldreich Zeingli,* trans. Samuel Macauley Jackson et al, 3 vols, Philadelphia: Heidelberg Press; New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912-1929, 1:43-343, 200.

[237] Zwingli, *True and False Religion,* p. 232.

the bread passes, either physically or symbolically, to the communicant. This assertion remained remarkably stable despite the different position each took on the actual doctrine of transubstantiation. Luther and Zwingli may be read as opposite ends of a Reformation continuum, with Lutheran consubstantiation taking a position closest to Catholic models of transubstantiation,[238] while Zwingli, even as he insists on the merely symbolic function of the Eucharist, nonetheless maintains that partaking the bread constitutes "eating of faith," an activity that doesn't merely represent, but also imparts life.[239] Calvin, who is often understood as a mediating voice between them, takes issue with Zwingli precisely on the basis of the Eucharist's life-giving quality. He asserts that Zwingli's extreme symbolism is unconscionable because it disallows the transmission of immortality through the physical act of eating. Calvin makes no bones about the fact that communicants "are *quickened* by the true partaking of him, which he designated by the terms eating and drinking, lest anyone should suppose that life which we obtain from him is obtained by simple knowledge.[240] Calvin perhaps has Zwingli's followers in mind when he writes against "those hyperbolical doctors, who, according to their gross ideas, fabricate an absurd mode of eating and drinking, and transfigure Christ, after divesting him of his flesh, into a phantom."[241] While Calvin strenuously rejected a purely symbolic reading of the Eucharist, he nonetheless voiced a sentiment regarding the Eucharist that, in its emphasis on life, explicates the significance of the ritual for all three theologians: "The flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain, which transfuses into us the life flowing forth from the Godhead into itself."[242]

The Reformation insistence on real presence (if not transubstantiation) demonstrates the insistent need that the bread take a particularly *embodied* form. For, following the failure of the presence of Christ's body in bread, whether real or symbolic, what other forms of divine incarnation might also break down? For theologians arguing over the Eucharist, the host supplies not only the conduit through which humanity obtains its own immortality (signalled in Calvin as "quickening"), but also the guarantee that the mystery of God-in-man might be

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[238] Luther's position on the Eucharist is infamously difficult to pinpoint, particularly as it appeared to change throughout his career. I base my assessment here largely on his "Confession Concerning Christ's Supper," in *Luther's Works: Word and Sacrament,* (Ed.) Robert H. Fischer, vol. 37 of *Luther's Works,* 55 vols, St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986.

[239] Zwingli, *True and False Religion,* p. 206.

[240] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* trans. Henry Beveridge, 2 vols, London: James, Clarke, 1949, p. 559.

[241] Calvin, *Institutes,* p. 560.

[242] *Ibid.* p. 561.

possible at all. Whether it is the commingling of divine and human natures in Christ, or the immortality of the Resurrection, God meets humanity in the body, and this assertion lies behind the insistence that body be manifest in its signifier, bread.

This was an issue that stood at the heart of debates over transubstantiation, in part because real presence problematically begins to uncouple signified and signifier, body and bread. In early modern England, as Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher have noted, this created the "problem of the leftover, that is, the status of the material remainder."[243] If Christ merely inhabits, rather than transforms, the bread, then what does that make the bread? And at what point does consecrated bread cease to contain Christ's body (hopefully prior to digestion – a decidedly profane activity)? The real presence ultimately creates a rift between signified and signifier that leaves behind not only a material leftover but also a symbolic surplus. For, if consecrated bread can attain and then lose the real presence of Christ, then that real presence might also be relocated, contained in other signs. Regina Schwartz has tracked this very issue in Milton by relating the sacral activities of eating and digestion to Milton's thought on the natural world, conveyed within his poetry. As she relates, the Reformation loss of the Catholic sacrament scatters symbolic leftovers throughout Protestant poetry, where, circulated among readers, it creates a different kind of communal unity – a push toward an Enlightenment (and enlightened) revision of the original mystical church body.[244]

In his thinking on transubstantiation, Milton lies closer to Zwingli than any of his other Reformation counterparts; he insists on communion as a symbolic, rather than literal, act of eating. For him, the doctrine of transubstantiation raises the unpalatable possibility that the substance of the Eucharist, bearing the physical body of Christ, would necessarily serve a soteriological function for any who eat it. He imagines a strange doctrine of salvation in which pests and rodents receive entrance to Heaven alongside men who, he asserts, would be equally unworthy: "Were it, as the Papists hold, his literal flesh, and eaten by all in the Mass, the consequence would be that the very worst of the communicants (to say nothing of the mice and worms by which the Eucharist is occasionally devoured) would through the virtue of this heavenly bread attain eternal life" (*De Doctrina,* p. 441). Milton evicts the bread even

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[243] Stephen Greenblatt and Catherine Gallagher, *Practicing New Historicism,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000, p. 141.

[244] See n9 above. *On Milton and the Eucharist*, see n33 below.

of its real presence, and, in doing so, leaves in its place an absence. Unlike Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, who extol the presence of Christ as the life-giving property of the elements, Milton insists that the Eucharist is an act of remembering only, an act that calibrates the absence of Christ in the bread to the absence of Christ on earth. In *Areopagitica,* this contribution to the Protestant project, the body of Christ signalled as absence rather than presence, persists even as it transfers from one sign, Eucharist, to another, embodied truth.

Milton's invocation of the Eucharist features a series of uncanny correlations between communion and writing that demonstrate a strong interrelationship between the two while at the same time stopping short of strict analogy. In keeping with Milton's rejection of the soteriological possibilities of Eucharist, the body of truth does not confer immortality on its authors. It does, however, provide an assurance in the form of the written word, a kind of security placed upon future immortality. In one of *Areopagitica's* most famous quotes, displayed over the entrance of the main reading room of the New York public library, Milton notes that "a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life" (*Areopagitica,* p. 27). Milton's shift from real presence to figural absence effectively relegates immortality to the condition of promised futurity – a "life beyond life" – rather than an embodied present. In doing so, it also redirects the primary function of the Eucharist itself back toward the original Patristic emphasis on community.

For Milton the absence of Truth, which initiates the search, also brings men together to complete it:

> To be still searching what we know not by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is homogeneal and proportional), this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic, and makes up the best harmony in a church; not the forced and outward union of cold and neutral, and inwardly divided minds. (*Areopagitica,* p. 31)

Unity comes not from identity – marked out in the Eucharist by the singular body of Christ – but from the search for it. The singularity of Truth, externalized from the body of believers, is indeed divided, may even perhaps appear disparate, but those fractures do not shatter the cohesive vision, or central function, of the Church. Milton's return to community, a repetition with a difference, deterritorialises the purview of Eucharistic meaning, available now not in the ritual of communion, but in the ritual of writing. But, although deterritorialisation might indicate affinities with a kind of liberal, open-minded embracing of all members into this

Eucharistic community, there are several key aspects of Milton's communal vision, related to nationalism, diversity and labour that insist on a particularly English republican version of community.

If Milton's work rejects transubstantiation as the territory for Eucharistic meaning, it reinstates that territory firmly in Britain, a country that, Milton believes, is particularly suited to the eternal search for truth:

> Lords and Commons of England, consider what Nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are governors: a Nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtle and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point, the highest that human capacity can soar to ... Why else was this nation chosen before any other, that out of her, as out of Sion, should be proclaimed and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of Reformation to all Europe? (*Areopagitica,* pp. 31-32)

Milton fantasizes over England as the source of true reform, hammered home somehow prior to the moment when the Ninety-Five Theses were nailed to the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg. As his reference to Zion, taken from Psalms 50:2, might indicate, to make this politicizing move, Milton appeals in part to England's connection with Israel as a chosen people: "what does He then but reveal Himself to His servants, and as His manner is, first to His Englishmen?" (*Areopagitica,* p. 32). In part, however, Milton also creates an intellectual genealogy that roots ancient wisdom within Britain's early history: "writers of good antiquity and ablest judgment have been persuaded that even the school of Pythagoras and the Persian wisdom took beginning from the old philosophy of this island" (*Areopagitica,* p. 31). But ultimately, Milton does not need to stretch England's intellectual heritage back so far to predate Protestantism; he only need reference the Lollard movement to find the aborted first birth of the Reformation: "had it not been the obstinate perverseness of our prelates against the divine and admirable spirit of Wickliff, to surprise him as a schismatic and innovator, perhaps neither the Boehemian Huss and Jerome no nor the name of Luther or of Calvin, had been ever known: the glory of reforming all our neighbours had been completely ours" (*Areopagitica,* p. 32).

Far from surprising, Milton's impulse to relocate the Eucharist within the boundaries of the political is not uncommon in Protestant thinking, a consequence of the trend to delink the ritual from materialism. As Schwartz notes, "when the theological doctrine of the Eucharist

was the most spiritualized, it was most politically manifest in the state. *With the real material body of Christ denied, it is "substantialised" in the body of the nation."*[245] Milton's body of truth metonymically enacts this claim, situating civic republicanism within Reformation theology, so that England might take the central role in a future "reforming of Reformation itself" (*Areopagitica,* p. 32).

There is a political efficacy to Milton's reconceptualisation as well, and one particularly suited to England's republic of letters. For, as any academic might be able to attest, a community centred on the search for truth must allow for a diversity of opinion: "While there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making" (*Areopagitica,* p. 32). The agonistic tension that Milton imagines pervading his community matches the particular brand of sectarianism that, in 1643-1644, characterized England's political milieu.[246] Within this context, Milton mediates between the divided sects of Britain by distinguishing between, as Schaeffer puts it, "unity and unanimity."[247] Milton castigates men who rail against "schismatic and sectaries; as if, while the temple of the Lord was building, some cutting, some squaring the marble, others hewing the cedars, there should be a sort of irrational men who could not consider there must be many schisms and many dissections made in the quarry and in the timber, ere the house of God can be built" (*Areopagitica,* p. 33). He goes so far as to suggest that there will never be full agreement among the Church: "And when every stone is laid artfully together, it cannot be united into a continuity, it can but be contiguous in this world; neither can every piece of the building be of one form; nay rather the perfection consists in this, that, out of many moderate varieties and brotherly dissimilitude that are not vastly disproportional, arises the goodly and graceful symmetry that commends the whole pile and structure" (*Areopagitica,* p. 33). In fact, Milton asserts, the only division that might be truly detrimental is the cutting off or prevention of ideas – a division of truth from itself. He writes: "We stumble and are impatient at the least dividing of one visible congregation from another, though it be not in fundamentals; and through our forwardness to suppress, and our backwardness to recover any enthralled piece of truth out of the gripe of custom, we care

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[245] Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics,* p. 22.

[246] On the historical context of *Areopagitica,* particularly the licensing controversy, see especially Abbe Blum, "The Author's Authority: *Areopagitica* and the Labour of Licensing," in *Remembering Milton,* pp. 74-96.

[247] Schaeffer, "Metonymies We Read by," p. 89.

not to keep truth separated from truth, which is the fiercest rent and disunion of all" (*Areopagitica,* p. 37).[248]

The final characteristic of Milton's community that distinguishes it from the *corpus mysticum* of the communion ritual is the role of its members, who, as Milton's extended construction metaphor above might indicate, are fewer communicants than labourers.[249] Milton's references to writing as hewing, squaring and cutting echo other metaphors that unites around the body of truth, where authorship is similarly imagined as work. Milton engages the fruitful possibility of knowledge as a harvest field: "What wants there to such a cowardly and pregnant soil, but wise and faithful labourers" (*Areopagitica,* p. 32). In another place, England is a "city of refuge," where authors "fashion out the plates and instruments of armed Justice in defence of beleaguered Truth." This passage imagines the industriousness of pre-industrial Europe as the busy occupation of knowledge acquisition, with some authors "sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, and revolving new notions and ideas" and "others as fast reading, trying all things, assenting to the force of reason and convincement" (*Areopagitica,* p. 32).

The end result of nationalism, diversity, and labour for Milton's *Areopagitica* is that the Eucharistic valences of community are made legible only under the sign of the English republic.[250] Milton's treatise against censorship is, after all, a treatise against the censorship of a particular *kind* of writing, done by a particular *kind* of man: a Protestant (likely Puritan) reformer who labours in service of God and country. Milton thus marshals the sacramental valences of the Eucharistic metaphor to underwrite the patriotic unity of his religious republic.

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[248] Of course, it bears acknowledging that the disputed terms of what constitutes the "fundamental" status of "brotherly" thought or ideas "not vastly disproportional" opens the possibility for justifiable concerns over the ethics of Milton's vision. Milton's community does not allow for Catholic thought, which lies beyond the "fundamental" Protestant vision. Furthermore, Milton's argument may remove the boundaries of oppressive censorship from the state governance only to re-erect them within the realm of gendered and classed privilege, where a group of highly-educated, bourgeois men constitute the "brotherly" inhabitants of the writing republic. On *Areopagitica* and the Reformation, see William Kolbrenner, *Milton's Warring Angels: A Study of Critical Engagements,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. On the bourgeoisie, see Francis Barker, "Areopagitica: Subjectivity and the Moment of Censorship," in *John Milton,* (Ed.) Annabel Patterson, New York: Longman, 1992, pp. 65-73.

[249] On Milton's *Areopagitica* and labour, see Sandra Sherman, "Printing the Mind: The Economics of Authorship in Areopagitica," *English Literary Heritage* 60, no. 2, Summer 1993, pp. 323-347, p. 329.

[250] On Milton and "Proto-nationalism," see Christopher Kendrick, *Milton: Ideology and Form,* New York: Methuen, 1986, p. 85.

6.2. The Body Constructed

While *Areopagitica* emplaces the body of the Eucharist within England's body politic to imagine an industrious, self-governing community, *Paradise Lost* makes use of the metaphor in a more private mode.[251] In book five, the poem finds the angel Raphael sitting with Adam over the paradisal dinner table, partaking of the offered fare in a kind of heavenly communion:

> ... So down they sat,
>
> And to their viands fell, nor seemingly
>
> The angel, nor in mist, the common gloss
>
> Of theologians, but with keen dispatch
>
> Of real hunger, and concoctive heat
>
> To transubstantiate, what redounds, transpires
>
> Through Spirits with ease. (*Paradise Lost,* V. 433-439)

The importance of angelic eating, not "in mist," but with "real hunger," is a product of Milton's concept of transubstantiation, which, properly belonging to the prelapsarian world, indicates the upward spiritual mobility of all substance. Milton imbues his vision of Paradise with an understanding of transubstantiation that reverses the direction of transcendence prevalent in Eucharistic theology; whereas, in the postlapsarian Eucharist, God descends to earth to inhabit bread, in the prelapsarian transubstantiation, bread, like all matter, sublimes toward God. As Raphael relays to Adam:

> ... what he gives

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[251] On the Eucharist in *Paradise Lost,* see Michael Schoenfeldt, "Temperance and Temptation: The Alimental Vision in *Paradise Lost,"* Chap 5 in *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England,* Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture 34, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; John C. Ulreich, "Milton on the Eucharist: Some Second Thoughts about Sacramentalism," in *Milton and the Middle Ages,* (Ed.) John Mulryan, Lewisburg PA: Bucknell University Press, 1982, pp. 32-56; Marshall Grossman, "Milton's "Transubstantiate: Interpreting the Sacrament in *Paradise Lost,"* *Milton Quarterly* 16, no. 2, May 1932, pp. 42-47; and Claude N. Stulting, "'New Heav'ns, New Earth': Apocalypse and the Loss of Sacrmaentality in the Post-lapsarian Books of *Paradise Lost,"* in *Milton and the Ends of Time,* (Ed.) Juliet Cummings, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 184-201.

(Whose praise be ever sung) to man in part

Spiritual, may of purest Spirits be found

No ingrateful food: and food alike those pure

Intelligential substances require

As doth your rational ...

And corporeal to incorporeal tum. (*Paradise Lost,* V. 404-412)

As Raphael eats, he demonstrates the literal physicality of his promise that substance moves from "corporeal to incorporeal;" the fantastic transubstantiation of their "viands" from physical food into spiritual sustenance constitutes the evanescence of materiality itself. As he later assures Adam: "All things proceed, and up to him return" (*Paradise Lost,* V. 470). Food, changed into sustenance, eventually "transpires," sublimates, through the very air that surrounds Raphael.

The prelapsarian transcendence of matter, rather than presenting certain evidence for Milton's monism,[252] instead relates more directly to the literal transubstantiation of Paradise, where God is less absent than sublime-available somewhere just above Adam's material being. Perhaps watching the Raphael as he eats reminds Adam of this fact, prompting him to think about the phenomenon of upward mobility, for it is following their meal together that Adam begins his lengthy theological dialogue with Raphael. Adam seems to gain knowledge of God's transcendence through first-hand witness rather than through the perception of an absence:

... sudden mind arose

In Adam, not to let th' occasion pass

Given him by this great conference to know

Of things above his world, and of their being

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[252] See Stephen Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers: Poetry and Materialism in Seventeenth-Century England,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991; Phillip J. Donnelly, "'Matter' Versus body: The Character of Milton's Monism," *Milton Quarterly* 33, no. 3, 1999, pp. 79-85; Michael Lieb, "Reading God: Milton and the Anthropopathetic Tradition," *Milton Studies* 25, 1989, pp. 213-243; and John Rumrich, "Milton's Theanthropos: The Body of Christ in Paradise Regained," *Milton Studies* 42, 2003, pp. 50-67.

Who dwell in heav'n, whose excellence he saw

Transcend his own so far. (*Paradise Lost,* V. 452-457)

In Paradise, transubstantiation functions not to make God's body earthly, but to make earthly bodies heavenly, a fantastical desire that takes on more insistently spiritual overtones than his treatise against censorship. While Milton's poetic genre and subject matter make this shift into the realm of religious fantasy possible, both treatise and poem share a similar connection between transcendence and truth. While, in *Areopagitica,* the close relationship between transcendence and truth causes Milton to rail against suppressing any possible work that might contribute to the remembering of truth's metaphoric body, in *Paradise Lost,* the communion meal is the centrepiece and occasion for the educational conversation that occurs between Raphael and Adam. As Regina Schwartz points out, "Instead of the words of institution or a sermon, there is ... a conversation with the angel – a conversation whose subject is, of all things, the nature of transubstantiation."[253]

It is particularly fitting that Milton should feature transubstantiation at the centre of education at this particular moment in England's history. *Paradise Lost* was published amid the failure of the republican experiment, when Milton's original hope for public debate registered in *Areopagitica* was overshadowed by the oppression administered by licensors, newly installed at the hands of the reinstated monarch. While dating the composition of the poem is always problematic, Milton was likely working on his epic throughout the waning years of the republic and during the opening years of the Restoration, finishing perhaps as early as 1663. Critics have noted the political difficulties that he faced during this period and in the following years.[254] Having been briefly imprisoned and released in 1659, Milton waited anxiously to hear whether his anti-royalist actions throughout the interregnum would result in legal prosecution, or whether he might receive pardon with others under the 1660 Act of Free and General Pardon, Indemnity and Oblivion.[255]

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[253] Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics,* p. 61; see also Beverley Sherry, "Not by Bread Alone: The Communication of Adam and Raphael," *Milton Quarterly* 13, 1979, pp. 111-114.

[254] Of some note is the gap between the apparent completion of *Paradise Lost* and its publication. For more, see especially Nicholas von Maltzahn, "The First Reception of Paradise Lost (1667)," *The Review of English Studies,* new series, 47, no. 188, November 1996, pp. 479-499.

[255] Maltzahn, "First Reception," p. 480.

Six years later, when Milton sought the license for his poem from the Episcopal licensor Thomas Tomkins, he was apparently subject to the very censorship that he had argued against some twenty years earlier. Milton's early (and occasionally unreliable) biographer John Toland reports that Tomkins had nearly suppressed "the whole Poem for imaginary Treason in the following lines:"

> ... As when the Sun new risen
>
> Looks thro the Horizontal misty Air
>
> Shorn of his Beams, or from behind the Moon
>
> In dim Eclipse disastrous Twilight sheds
>
> On half the Nations, and with fear of change
>
> Perplexes Monarchs. (1.594-599)[256]

It is possible to see how Milton's lines, with their reference to the eclipse and the incumbent instabilities related to the monarch, may have touched a nerve with Tomkins, author of a treatise entitled *The Inconveniencies of Toleration* (1667). In his treatise, Tomkins rails against the "hideous Heresies, Schisms and Scandals" that had resulted in a lack of "Uniformity" of the nation,[257] a uniformity that Tomkins hoped to restore by means of uniform speech through censorship. Tomkins' logic presents a stunning counterpoint to Milton's, who embraces the relative freedom of sectarianism in his vision of a multi-voiced public conversation.

Amid the increasing censorship of the early years of the Restoration, Milton's Paradise presents a portrait of the search for truth that bridges the gap between the different ways that *Areopagitica* and *Paradise Lost* conceive of transcendence. While the poem may host a fantasy in which earthly bodies literally transubstantiate, the treatise takes a more pessimistic viewpoint of the postlapsarian access to God's body. Both, however, maintain that the transubstantiated body is accompanied by an accomplished through truth, gained through open, thoughtful conversation.

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[256] John Toland, "Biography" in *A Complete Collection of the Historical, Political and Miscellaneous Works of John Milton, both English and Latin, with some papers never before Published*, Amsterdam, London, 1698, 1:40-41.

[257] Thomas Tomkins, *The Inconveniences of Toleration, or, An answer to a late book intituled, A proposition made to the King and Parliament for the safety and happiness of the King and Kingdom,* London, 1667, p. 6.

Milton uses the accoutrements of the Paradisal meal-fruit, table, chairs, plants to describe in detail not only the spiritual process of transubstantiation, but also the work that goes into becoming a host. Eve, preparing the meal, crushes "for drink the grape." She "tempers dulcet creams" from "sweet kernels," planning carefully how best to arrange the dishes, so that, rather than serving dishes with clashing flavour palates, she might serve a meal that "taste after taste (would uphold) with kindliest change" (*Paradise Lost,* V. 331-348). She even prepares the ground for Raphael, not by sweeping away dust but instead strewing the grass "with rose and odours from the shrub unfumed" (*Paradise Lost,* V. 350). The only thing that Eve does not arrange is the table itself, which seems to have sprung of its own volition from the earth: "Raised of grassy turf / Their table was, and mossy seats had round" (*Paradise Lost,* V. 391-932). Eve's labour is, of course, a classic example of Milton's vexed portrayal of gender roles, but it is also part and parcel of Milton's larger understanding of the role of labour in Paradise.

Both Adam and Eve participate in work, which, for Milton, imbues them with human dignity even as it tames the land:

>Man hath his daily work of body or mind
>
>Appointed, which declares his dignity
>
>And at our pleasant labour, to reform
>
>Yon flow'ry arbours, yonder alleys green,
>
>Our walk at noon, with branches overgrown,
>
>That mock our scant manuring, and require
>
>More hands than ours to lop their wanton growth:
>
>Those blossoms also, and those dropping gums,
>
>That lie bestrewn unsightly and unsmooth,
>
>Ask riddance, if we mean to tread with ease. (*Paradise Lost,* IV. 618-632)

For Milton, the plants of paradise require no incentive to grow, but instead only lack harvest. Milton's paradise is characterized by excess, and this excess renders Adam and Eve's labour utterly dissimilar to agrarian practices today. Any farmer would be hard pressed to find fields

that "by disburd'ning grows / More fruitful," as occurs in Paradise (*Paradise Lost,* V. 319-320). There are no orchards in the postlapsarian world where fruit of "All seasons, ripe for use hangs on the stalk," waiting only to be plucked (*Paradise Lost,* V. 323). Indeed, even Eve's hospitable work, for all its careful planning and tending seems almost to accomplish itself. When Raphael greets Eve, he does not recognize her work as her own, but instead as the work of God:

> Hail mother of mankind, whose fruitful womb
>
> Shall fill the world more numerous with thy sons
>
> Than with these various fruits the trees of God
>
> Have heaped this table. (*Paradise Lost,* V. 388-391)

Eve's work of hospitality, tied to her work of maternity, is elided as the "trees of God" gain the credit for having not only supplied the feast, but also placing it on the table.

If Adam and Eve have only to pluck food from plants that supply it without care or tending, can their activities properly be classified as work? At the very least, it cannot be said that the work of Adam and Eve is one of production – creating from scarcity – but rather of removal – trimming excess.[258] As such, the image of work presented in Paradise contrasts greatly with the labour represented in *Areopagitica;* certainly Paradise does not contain the same resounding chords of industry that echo through Milton's treatise.

In order to find, in *Paradise Lost,* a scene of industry reminiscent of the metaphors of architecture and defense in *Areopagitica,* it is necessary to descend into Hell, and the construction of Pandemonium:

> ... And here let those
>
> Who boast in mortal things, and wond'ring tell
>
> Of Babel, and the works of Memphian Kings,
>
> Learn how their greatest monuments of fame,

---

[258] On the Historical Context of Labour and Proto-capitalism for the Poem, see Kendrick, *Milton: Ideology and Form.* See also Laura Lunger Knoppers, "Rewriting the Protestant Ethic: Discipline and Love in *Paradise Lost,*" *ELH* 58, no. 3, Autumn 1991, pp. 545-559.

And strength and art are easily outdone

By Spirits reprobate, and in an hour

What in an age they with incessant toil

And hands innumerable scarce perform. (*Paradise Lost,* 1. 690-699)

The architectural construction of Pandemonium is made possible by mining the earth for its precious metals. The demons "Opened into the hill a spacious wound / And digged out ribs of gold," while "a second multitude / With wondrous art founded the massy ore" and "a third as soon had formed within the ground a various mould," filling it with the mined ore (*Paradise Lost,* 1. 688-689). The construction of Pandemonium is remarkably reminiscent of Milton's earlier portrait of the industrious church, with its hewing, cutting and squaring. The metalworking of the demons similarly recalls the activities in *Areopagitica's* "city of refuge," where, as noted above, authors use "anvils and hammers" to create those "plates and instruments," that function "in defence of beleaguered Truth" (*Areopagitica,* p. 32).

Of course, there may be some danger of mixing metaphors in comparing *Paradise Lost* and *Areopagitica:* the demons of Hell may not be said to be searching for truth, and the authorial community of *Areopagitica* are certainly (or at least probably) not fallen angels. But the two nonetheless manifest a close connection; there is something fundamentally similar about the two metaphors, both related to the work of producing that is simply not present in the labour of Adam and Eve. While the demons engage in a kind of mass delusion that results in the breath-taking beauty of Pandemonium, the authors of truth similarly engage a communal imagination in their reconstruction of the body of truth. *Paradise Lost* manifests a split perspective on the relationship between labour and education. If paradise connects the easy work of hospitality to educative conversation, Hell parodies that connection by putting its demons to work to build a council house. The question then becomes: why does the productive labour of *Areopagitica* – the communal endeavour of building that revitalizes the political body of England – show up, in Milton's epic, among the hordes of the damned?

The answer lies in the absence of God. In the postlapsarian world of *Areopagitica,* this absence is an uncomfortable reminder of the distance between fallen man and God. In hell, however, that absence is reified into a persistent, irretrievable loss. In Milton's cosmology, God is the source of all creative activity, and it is for this reason that paradise, which tends toward upward spiritual mobility, continually renews itself. The overabundant fertility of the

land is sparked by its own innate ability to transcend, a constant subliming that draws upon and forever repeats the creative act.

In contrast, the demons, like fallen man, must use whatever raw materials they can find-words or ore-to produce the structures they build. It is no coincidence that the demons are miners in particular: ore lies within the earth, causing the demons to literally move downward in their search for construction materials. The demonic tendency toward descent, rather than ascent, is inherent to their condition; Mammon in particular has "looks and thoughts" that "were always downward bent" (*Paradise Lost,* 1. 681-682). The poem plays on the fall of the angels by relating even the materials of their construction to their spiritual course. With their misapprehension of the role of nature, it is little wonder that they abuse natural materials. Rather than gather up the abundance of the earth, they instead "ransacked the centre, and with impious hands / Rifled the bowels of their mother earth / For treasures better hid" (*Paradise Lost,* 1. 686-688).

Paradise Lost brings out the tensions in the metaphor of productive construction, and particularly architecture, that *Areopagitica* leaves hidden. For, if one might use construction to build a church or a "city of refuge," as authors do in *Areopagitica,* one might also use it to build an idol, a pagan temple, or a tower, reminiscent of the one raised in Babel. The Genesis account of the Tower of Babel foregrounds both labour and unity as central features of the construction, a building that represents a single name and location: "And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.[259] Milton's awareness of the tower is, of course, prevalent in *Paradise Lost,* where his poem gives voice to the iconoclastic fear that Pandemonium, like all buildings, might "act as loci to which idolatry, over time, will fundamentally adhere."[260] But the dangers of creative production also apply to *Areopagitica,* where the construction of the Church functions as a compromise in a postlapsarian world in which God is not, and may never be, "all in all."

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[259] Genesis 11:3-4.

[260] Joseph Lyle, "Architecture and Idolatry in 'Paradise Lost,'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* 40, no. 1, The English Renaissance, Winter 2000, pp. 39-155, 139.

And this is why the *body* of God is so important: it gives purpose to the building. The church is inhabited not by an idol but by recovered truth. More than that: the body of God serves as a blueprint by which authors might "piece" together truth as they rediscover her. And yet, Milton's calm assertions in *Areopagitica* that God's body is capable of delivering on these promises is subtly undermined by the possibility that truth, broken and obscured from humanity, may not ultimately ever emerge in the recognizable form of God's body. Milton attempts to sidestep this possibility by insisting on a whole and corporate form in a quote that, although examined above, bears repeating here: "To be still searching what we know not by what we know, still closing up truth to truth as we find it (for all her body is homogeneal and proportional), this is the golden rule in theology as well as in arithmetic" (*Areopagitica,* p. 31). While Milton insists that each piece of the body will inevitably fit, the parenthetical assurance of a "homogeneal and proportional" body functions as an ominous interruption within that sentiment, for it raises the possibility that the body may, in fact, be heterogeneous and incoherent.

Lurking behind this possibility is the myth of Osiris itself, which features a key detail that Milton, conveniently, omits from his account: the missing member. In Plutarch's narrative, the grieving Isis is unable to locate Osiris's penis, which, Plutarch speculates, was thrown into the Nile and eaten by the fish. In an attempt to complete the remembering of the murdered Osiris, Isis creates a golden phallus for him, a symbol that, translated to Milton's metaphor, stands in as the representative absence, the piece of the body that renders truth forever incomplete. Milton himself recognizes truth's permanent state of incompletion when he cheerfully admits that there is no end to gathering the scattered limbs of truth: "We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor ever shall do, till her Master's second coming; He shall bring together every joint and every member, and shall mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection" (*Areopagitica,* p. 30). And yet, this reassurance seems to have a counter-productive effect, by encouraging its listeners to continually engage in their search while awaiting the seemingly endless deferral of its completion. Milton reminds his listeners that truth will remain indefinitely incomplete, the final piece forever hidden – perhaps in the belly of an uncongenial fish.

There is something monstrous about an incomplete body. Something about the disarticulated Osiris conjures up endless disjointing, either in the form of continual decrease, a finite body that atomizes into ever smaller constituent parts, or (what is worse), an infinite body, one that continually produces dislocated limbs to be magically incorporated. Milton ultimately leaves

his audience with two choices: either there is no end to the division of the body, or there is no end to the body itself. Of course, these possibilities remain, like the missing member of Osiris, hidden deep within the rhetoric of *Areopagitica.* But they are resurrected later in his career, only five years after the publication of *Paradise Lost,* with the appearance in 1671 of *Samson Agonistes.*

6.3. The Body Disarticulated

Published as an addendum to his "brief epic," *Paradise Regained, Samson Agonistes* gives metaphoric form to the failure of the Eucharistic body as a symbol of community, conversation and truth. Certainly its co-publication with a work that ostensibly seeks to recount humanity's story of its recovered redemption might seem to lend contradictory force to the eulogizing overtones of *Samson Agonistes.* And yet, even *Paradise Regained,* centred not on the passion and resurrection but on the temptation of Christ, is largely concerned with scarcity, metaphorised as hunger – Christ's physical hunger for bread, and the reader's spiritual hunger for knowledge of God.[261]

While the public discourse of *Areopagitica,* as well as the conversation between Raphael and Adam in *Paradise Lost* might seem to indicate that that this spiritual hunger might be satisfied through conversation, *Paradise Regained* evinces a pessimistic attitude toward the efficacy of public debate. While this fact might be foreshadowed by the fact that debate, in *Paradise Lost,* is located in hell, the debate in *Paradise Regained* occurs between Christ and Satan, inviting the possibility that Christ might somehow use the forms of disputation to conquer his tempter. But the conversation between the two is instead infamously unenlightening, less dialogue than two overlapping monologues. Northrop Frye notes that the scene has its closest affinities "with the debate and with the dialectical colloquy of Plato and Boethius ... but these forms usually either incorporate one argument into another dialectically or build up two different cases rhetorically; Milton's feat of constructing a double argument on the same words, each highly plausible and yet as different as light from darkness, is, so far as I know, unique in English Literature."[262] In *Paradise Regained,* the spirit of public debate is completely suppressed beneath the solitary logic of a Christ who refuses to directly answer Satan using any form of recognizable disputation.

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[261] See especially *Paradise Regained,* 11.331-377.

[262] Northrop Frye, "The Typology of *Paradise Regained*," *Modern Philology* 53, no. 4, 1956, p. 235.

Samson Agonistes elaborates on the failures of public discourse differently. Unlike the dialogue between Christ and Satan, the conversations that Samson has with his various interlocutors are anchored solidly in the realm of debate. Samson eloquently resists every visitor he speaks with: Manoa, who seeks to comfort Samson with rationalizing; Dalilah, who begs forgiveness with emotional pleas; the giant Harapha, who taunts Samson with boasting; and the officer, who commands Samson to perform in front of the Philistines. But, strangely, it is not through conversation that Samson ultimately lights on his final plan of action, and the culmination of the poem. His decision to tear down the Philistine temple of Dagon, thereby destroying both the worshippers and himself, remains hidden from characters and audience. Samson makes this choice privately, as an individual, and he guards it in silence. In doing so, *Samson Agonistes,* like *Paradise Regained,* stages the failure of discourse as a means of arriving at truth.

Samson Agonistes accompanies this failure with a final image that uncannily recalls the dismembered Osiris: a striking portrait of the mangled dead that are destroyed in the wake of Samson's actions. By ending his poem on this sombre note, Milton suggests the failure of his optimistic republican dreams by enmeshing his protagonist among the stones and bodies of the destroyed temple in a scene that tragically reiterates the broken body of Osiris, and the broken edifice of the Church.

The centre of the action in the dramatic poem is no cathedral or city of refuge, nor even a council house, but instead a pagan temple, where "drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine ... Chanting their idol" the Philistines call for Samson to entertain them.[263] The temple itself is described with the same elaborate attention to detail as Pandemonium, a place that provides seats for the spectators at the feast:

> The building was a spacious theatre,
>
> Half round on two main pillars vaulted high,
>
> With seats where all the lords, and each degree
>
> Of sort, might sit in order to behold. (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1606-1609)

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[263] Milton, *Samson Agonistes: The Poem and Materials for Analysis,* ed. Ralph E. Hone, San Francisco: Chandler Publishing, 1966, lines 1670-1672. Hereafter cited in the text by line number.

The temple therefore provides a theatre for what might be thought of as the only true "action" the play – the feats of strength that the Philistines command Samson to perform, and the destruction of the temple that Samson himself accomplishes.[264] While the poem casts the destruction of the temple as a form of genuine labour, the feats of strength that Samson is forced to do are pantomime rather than authentic work. In fact, because it is labour performed not for God, nor even for food, but for the pagan god Dagon, it is worse than mere pantomime: it is idolatry. Samson tells the chorus that, while he does not object to working for the Philistines as a slave, he refuses to translate that labour from a civil to a religious sphere by performing at the temple. He maintains that he will participate in Philistine society:

> Not in their idol-worship, but by labour
>
> Honest and lawful to deserve my food
>
> Of those who have me in their civil power. (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1366-1368)

Work for the civil authorities is devoid of sacral connotations, and therefore lawful to Samson, while the feats of strength would merely expend his energy in pagan spectacle. But the effort of making this claim taxes Samson, creating a labour of the mind. The Chorus sympathizes with him, noting that the feast day of Dagon "hath been to thee no day of rest, / Labouring thy mind / More than the working day thy hands" (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1297-1299). Samson himself follows this line of logic that separate physical from mental labour when, as he responds to the Philistine officer, he insists that his "corporal servitude" to the Philistines has not tired his mind so much that he will give in to the request that he perform in the temple (*Samson Agonistes,* line 1336). By exerting his "labouring" mind, Samson seeks to maintain the spiritual integrity of mind and body.

Samson decides to go to the temple, however, once he realizes that he can perform *destructive* labour that will align his mental and physical self in a way that *productive* labour will not. This realization happens almost instantaneously, not as the result of careful consideration through conversation, but as the by-product of "some rousing motions" in him.

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[264] Because of this destruction, *Samson Agonistes* has, in recent years, been cited as a problematic example of religious violence akin to terrorism. See the essays in Michael Lieb and Albert C Labriola, (Eds.), *Milton in the Age of Fish: Essays on Authorship, Text and Terrorism,* Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006. See also Feisal G. Mohamed, "Confronting Religious Violence: Milton's *Samson Agonistes,*'" *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 120, no. 2, March 2005, pp. 327-340; and Michael Lieb, *Milton and the Culture of Violence,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994. In recent years, critics have also been concerned with the historical and theological specificities of the poem's context. See Joseph A. Wittreich, *Shifting Contexts: Reinterpreting 'Samson Agonistes,'* Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2002.

(*Samson Agonistes,* line 1382). After resolving to go to the temple, Samson confides in no one-not audience, chorus, or semi chorus (and certainly not officer). This reticence makes for a puzzling reading experience, rendering his action abrupt, seemingly baseless and without reason. Samson's individual decision and death leave a number of unanswered questions, both for the reader and for the characters of the poem. Because of this indeterminacy, any statements that the characters later make to justify his actions seem less retroactive logic than pitiful attempts to make sense out of a deep and unalterable confusion. The lack of insight into Samson's rationale defies the reader to understand Samson's actions: conversation not only fails to illuminate Samson's rationale, it also makes it impossible to gauge Samson's actions as just, right, or even reasonable.

This irrationality instils itself throughout the speech of the messenger, who arrives only after the destruction of the temple to relate what has happened. The messenger describes how, at the temple, Samson had gamely taken up the actions commanded of him, a simulacra of the work that they were symbolically meant to register: "to heave, pull, draw, or break, he still performed / All with incredible, stupendous force" (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1626-1627). It isn't until they lead him to the core of the building, "the arched roof that gave main support," however, that Samson decides to perform his true labour:

> ... straining all his nerves, he bowed
>
> As with the force of winds and waters pent
>
> When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
>
> With horrible convulsion to and fro
>
> He tugged, he shook, till down they came. (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1646-1650)

Samson's labour here is the labour of destruction, the trembling columns mimicking the movement of his tugging and shaking, body and building momentarily caught up in symbiotic continuity, until both lie broken on the ground. The Chorus' commentary on Samson's actions immediately foregrounds them as genuine labour:

> Living or dying thou hast fulfilled
>
> The work for which thou wast foretold
>
> To Israel, and now liest victorious. (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1661-1663)

In a poem obsessed with the labour that Samson accomplishes as the captive slave of the Philistines, the word "work" takes on the double connotations of manual labour and life work. But if this work is Samson's crowning achievement, it comes at a price, for it leaves him entangled among the dead:

> Among thy slain self-killed;
>
> Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
>
> Of dire Necessity, whose law in death conjoined?
>
> Thee with thy slaughtered foes, in number more
>
> Than all thy life had slain before (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1664-1668)

The image of destruction is one that resists comprehension. Indeed, it is recounted by a messenger who seems unable to relate the scene; the opening argument to the poem points out that he begins "confusedly at first, and afterwards more distinctly" to relate "the catastrophe" (*Samson Agonistes,* p. 6). This confused relating derives from the tableau of confused bodies, intertwined, incoherent, and indistinguishable, with Samson utterly lost, "conjoined" to the dead.

The tragedy for the poem lies not in the destruction of idols or idol-worshippers, but in the entanglement of the Hebrew protagonist among them. As the messenger relates: "Samson, with these immixed, inevitably / Pulled down the same destruction on himself" (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1658-1659). Once enmeshed in the pile of broken bodies, how is it possible to distinguish Samson from the rest? How can the dead identify itself as distinctly belonging to any nation or religion? Because it cannot speak for itself, a dead body is a thing only: neither more, nor less, than a dead body. Remarking on the image of the dead, Gordon Tesky notes that Samson is:

> Led back not to his God, not to the Law, not to his nation, not even to himself, seated on that bank where his mind is tormented with remorse as soon as his body can rest. He is being guided toward the scene that sticks to our eyes: his physical entanglement with the bodies of those he has slain. We are ourselves involved in what I would call the aesthetics of the heap of the dead, the psychological impact of the sight of dead bodies heaped up and entangled with one another, so that it is very nearly impossible

to see any one body as a whole. Everybody we see there has parts which, when examined more closely, actually belong to another.[265]

It is worth noting that this image of incoherent embodiment is one that the poem has already forecast in its description of Samson himself. On viewing Samson early in the poem, the Chorus identifies his body as a jumble of undifferentiated corporeality: "See how he lies at random, carelessly diffused" (*Samson Agonistes,* line 118). For all of his supposed action, the description of Samson's posture throughout much of the poem is a constant reminder that he is bound, broken, his body already spent, evocative of such images as Michelangelo's *Pieta* or Picasso's *The Guitarist.*

The "heap of the dead" is a metaphoric memory, a residual artefact of the endless disarticulation of truth. *Samson Agonistes* brings out the possibilities that merely haunt the margins in *Areopagitica,* presenting the reader with the terrifying spectre of the failure of the republican experiment. While Milton's earlier work hopes for a transcendent body that might be pieced into wholeness, his later work views the corporate body as a confused mass of broken pieces. This latter image presents not a continuous community of diverse authors, as Milton had hoped for in *Areopagitica,* but a muddle of disparate voices vying for royalist and republican attention,[266] a cacophony of dissent that royal licensors such as Tomkins ultimately sought to wrestle into some form of singular politico-religious identity through censorship. Milton imagined that the body of truth might brilliantly emerge from public discourse, and the licensors sought to shape the body of truth through silence, but both failed to account for the remains, those voices that do not fit those limbs that correspond to nobody in particular.

And yet, even while Samson lies "tangled in the fold" of disarticulation, the poem struggles with the symbolic meaning of the act, ending finally with his father Manoah's enigmatic pronouncement that "Samson hath quit himself / Like Samson," hanging desperately to the name that no longer relates to a body. He asserts that Samson acted "with God not parted from him, as was feared," and determines to rescue Samson's body, cleaning it from the stain of pagan blood:

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[265] Gordon Tesky, *Delirious Milton: The Fate of the Poet in Modernity,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 193.

[266] Not all critics read political echoes of the Restoration in the poem. For more, see Blair Worden, "Milton, *Samson Agonistes,* and the Restoration," in *Culture and Society in the Restoration,* (Ed.) Gerald Maclean, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

> Let us go find the body where it lies
>
> Soaked in his enemies' blood, and from the stream
>
> With lavers pure, and cleansing herbs wash off
>
> The clotted gore. (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1725-1728)

For Manoah, the care of the dead requires not only that Samson's body be distinguished from the others, but also that it be memorialized. He replaces Samson's body with a kind of funereal prosthetic: a monument.

> ... There will I build him
>
> A monument, and plant it round with shade
>
> Of laurel ever green and branching palm,
>
> With all his trophies hung, and acts enrolled
>
> In copious legend, or sweet lyric song. (*Samson Agonistes,* lines 1733-1737)

While the monument might preserve the "acts" of Samson, it does so with the problematic construction of a building. Here, Manoah imagines, virgins and young men will visit "on feastal days" to remember the man who, on the day of a feast, destroyed the pagan Dagon (*Samson Agonistes,* line 1741). In *Samson Agonistes,* the monument does not replace the temple with a "true" church building any more than the bodies symbolize transcendent community or transubstantiated matter. Rather, it reinscribes a cycle of meaningless labour and idolatrous temples that the poem associates with humanity's entrapment within its own materiality.

6.4. The Failure of Transcendentalism

Milton began his career by positing the possibility that a community might be based on the absence of God. In doing so, he hoped to revalue the fractures forming between people as sectarianism increased in the dawning years of republicanism. The space between people merely mimicked the space between humanity and God, a void that called for increased literary production, a lack that brought people together. But, in his utopia fervour, Milton did not consider the possibility that, while the incomplete body of God renders it transcendent, an incomplete political body renders it incoherent. His later works registers this differentiation

by taking up the absence of God on a more profound, pervasive level. Shifting the mood from euphoric to elegiac, Milton contemplates the distance between a withholding God and a community in need: a God who holds out a tantalizingly unapproachable promise for wholeness, and a community that fruitlessly seeks its fulfilment.

Milton's work represents an increasing trend in the latter half of the seventeenth century to delink religion from politics. Many have seen this as the beginning of the modern demystification of religion, when a gradual process of secularization evacuated culture of a phantasmagoric God. Milton's work demonstrates, however, that "secularization," at least in this period, was less demystification than disillusionment: a God who is not invented, just ineffective. As such, Milton's late poetry does not push toward a secular culture, but instead ponders the unspeakable possibility of a hidden God, a God who has no role to perform in the political life of the country. In doing so, Milton ultimately stages the failure of transcendence as a basis for community-building, mourning the loss not only of the republic that transcendence was meant to uphold, but also of the political God that the republic was meant to embody.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: THE (POLITICAL THEOLOGY) AFTERLIFE OF TRANSCENDENTALISM

The early modern period famously witnessed the death of Christendom, when Christian theology became a decreasingly viable option for political theorizing. Concurrent with this shift was the apparent retreat of transcendence from the nationalized public forum and into a more privatized space. Seen through the lens of early modern poetry, it is apparent that this privatized version of transcendence still held powerful possibilities for imagining the nation, even if in the poetic space of cultural fantasy, but what about the fate of transcendence in the political realm of the state, or the civil space of religion? Although the majority of this dissertation has been concerned with the imaginative possibilities offered by transcendence, the concept has also had an afterlife in these more practical realms, and I will attempt here to sketch out a brief history of that afterlife, as well as make a few assertions regarding the place of transcendence in society today.

While the flight of theology from politics cannot be viewed as a simplistic matter of Western culture's "secularization," it is important to note that the separation of the two nonetheless created the perception of impoverishment in both church and state, especially notable in the twentieth century. In politics, that impoverishment is best understood as the loss of meaning at the site of the public community as a result of the migration of religion to the realm of inward, personal conviction. This void is famously filled in American civil religion with the nationalist trappings of patriotism – the anthem, the pledge, and the flag that lend religious meaning to a secularized state.[267] Within Christian theology, the impoverishment of secularism is understood as the loss of a public forum for understanding and enacting the political aspects of theology. While I will return in the latter portion of this chapter to the question of political impoverishment, I want, for the moment, to look at how perceptions of theological impoverishment have determined the course of modem Christian political theology, with an eye toward understanding the role that transcendence has played in shifting formulations of church-state relations in recent history.

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[267] "American Civil Religion" is an idea popularized by Robert N. Bellah in "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96, no. 1, Winter 1967: 1-21; report in Donald R. Cutler (Ed.), *The Religious Situation 1968,* Boston: Beacon, 1968, pp. 388-393.

William T. Cavanaugh writes that "in one way or another, all political theologies at the end of the twentieth century can be read as so many attempts to come to grips with the death of Christendom without simply acquiescing in the privatisation of the church."[268] While this statement might apply in some way to the writings of Carl Schmitt, Cavanaugh is thinking more specifically of a slightly different group of twentieth-century theologians, including such thinkers as Karl Barth, Jiirgen Moltmann, and Johann Baptist Metz. This branch of political theology can be distinguished from the Schmittian branch as more interested in the practical, rather than theoretical, relationship between church and state. Schmitt considered his work to investigate the "systematic structure" in which theology and politics were inextricably linked,[269] hence, any practical application arises as a condition of the interrelationship between the two. Barth, Moltmann, and Metz, however, are all concerned with the immediate effect that the church might have on state. In the context of a secular state, the appropriate place of the church is, according to modem political theology, civil society.[270] Cavanaugh elaborates: "Even for most theologians who do not accept the Enlightenment story of secularization, the end of Christendom is to be accepted as the proper separation of the church from worldly power."[271] Following this separation, the function of the state is to maintain the freedom required for the various populaces within civil society to pursue their own individual interests. The function of the church, however, is up for some debate. It is acknowledged that, as an institution of civil society, the church has some voice in the formation of the state. But, far from reinforcing a conservative moral order or reinstituting a Christianised state, that voice is raised with the understanding that all politics are institutions of society or culture, rather than religion. Karl Barth notes in *The Christian Community and Civil Community*:

> By making itself jointly responsible for the civil community, the Christian community participates – on the basis of and by belief in the divine revelation – in the human search for the best form, for the most fitting system of political organisation; but it is also aware of the limits of all the political forms and systems which man can discover

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[268] William T. Cavanaugh, "Church," in *Blackwell Companion,* pp. 393-406, 393.

[269] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty,* trans. George Schwab, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, p. 5.

[270] See Daniel M. Bell, "State and Civil Society," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology,* (Ed.) Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 423-938.

[271] William T. Cavanaugh, "Church," in *Blackwell Companion,* p. 393.

(even with the co-operation of the Church), and it will beware of playing off one political concept – even the "democratic" concept – as *the* Christian concept, against all others.[272]

Barth cautiously accepts the church's role as an active agent for political change among the many other agents within civil society, but he does not, however, permit that role to include overpowering the state, a move that is common among modem political theologians.

In Latin American liberation theology, the church takes even less of an active role in the formation of the state, participating in politics instead through supplementing the shortcomings of a secular state by rendering aid to the disenfranchised. As Gustavo Guitierrez points out in *A Theology of Liberation,* this is less an attempt at finding an ideal politics and more a way of presenting a "critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word."[273] Based on Christ's treatment of the poor, social justice as Christian practice has grown in popularity in recent decades in North America as well, evidenced by such grass-roots Protestant undertakings as New Monasticism, a movement that establishes religious communities as venues of hospitality in impoverished, typically urban, locales.[274]

Within this conception, the metaphysical role of transcendentalism is largely eclipsed by its soteriological role: the encounter with the transcendent divine largely establishes individual salvation, rather than community. It is true that the encounter with transcendence might heighten awareness of the spiritual kingdom of God, or (in the case of liberation theology and New Monasticism) Christ's political vision of helping the poor, but the kingdom of God exists only in an eschatological sense; it cannot be said to inhabit any temporal region.[275] Barth cautions against mistaking political achievements for spiritual ones, admonishing his readers not to "regard any such achievements as perfect," because, "in the face of all political

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[272] Karl Barthes, "The Christian Community and the Civil Community," in *Community, State and Church: Three Essays,* New York: Anchor Books, 1960, pp. 149-190, 161.

[273] Gustavo Guitierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation,* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 1973, p. 13.

[274] "On New Monasticism," see Shane Claiborn, *The Irresistible Revolution,* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.

[275] There is some room for debate here. New Monasticism, for instance, might be said to seek to create an alternative political society that is intimately connected to the eschatological kingdom of God. It's focus on social justice (rather than self-identification), paired with its status as an emerging populist movement, however, make it difficult to categorize its political theology with any certainty. Liberation theology has, in this turn, been criticized by some as politics in disguise. But Cavanaugh rejects this idea, pointing out that participating in political actions is the same as constituting a polity, what he calls a "political ecclesiology." See William T. Cavanaugh, "Church," in *Blackwell Companion,* p. 402.

achievements, past, present, and future, the Church waits for the 'city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'"[276]

In recent decades, however, there has been a shift in modem political theology that has begun to relocate transcendence at the site of the community. Specifically, this shift involves reconfiguring politics within a theological framework in order to understand the church as, itself, an alternative political body to the state. It is important to note here that "church" is not taken to mean an institutional body, but an assembly, a return to the early modem ideal of an authentic politics. The politics enacted by this body are, as is the case with the politics of early modem devotional poetry, closely linked to the eschatological kingdom, thought to exist on earth through the material activities of the church. In this sense, Cavanaugh argues, "the church itself bears the fullness of God's politics through history," creating a body of Christians that has political efficacy only *as* a community. This vision of the church as polity is contrasted with that of earlier twentieth century political theology, which posited "a disembodied Christianity that serves only, in a Gnostic fashion, to inform the consciences of individual citizens occupying an autonomous political space."[277]

The polity of the church body as described by recent political theology sounds remarkably like many of the radical Protestant sects of the Reformation. Indeed, theologians John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas, two major proponents of the "church as polity" model, have even been said to participate in a "Contemporary Radical Reformation."[278] Their vision of a transcendent community (rather than the individual transcendence of salvation) resonates particularly with the Anabaptist movement of the Reformation. As Daniel Liechty describes it, the Anabaptists sought transcendence primarily through the communal body of Christ:

> Christ was actually experienced in an incarnate form through the gathered assembly of believers. This gathered assembly was the actual body of Christ in the world and to participate in this assembly was to participate in the body of Christ. Therefore, for the

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[276] Barth, "Christian Community," p. 161.

[277] William T. Cavanaugh, "Church," in *Blackwell Companion,* p. 403. For a longer treatise on this subject, see also Cavanaugh, *Theo-political Imagination,* London and New York, T & T Clark, 2002; Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of Nations,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character,* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981; and John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997. See also Arne Rasmusson, *The Church as Polis: From political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jurgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas,* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.

[278] Rasmussen, *Church as Polis*, p. 16-17.

Anabatists, the *unio mstica,* the mystical union of the believer with Christ, was found in participation in the gathering together of believers.[279]

The question is why has theology in the latter half of the twentieth century returned to a seemingly pre-modern conception of political transcendence? I suggest that this return has much to do with the persistence of transcendence as a specifically political, rather than merely theological, concept. By calling transcendence political, what I mean here is that it lies at the heart of how people imagine their own communities. In this sense, it functions as a form of communal self-identification: the transcendence of the community beyond a grouping of individuals. This possibility for political transcendence is frequently obscured behind the urge to use transcendence as the basis for ethics. Such is the case, for instance, in Charles Taylor's *A Place for Transcendence* in which Taylor maps out the various social locations where he believes transcendence might have value following the end of Christendom. His list includes the political, as manifested in the capability of transcendence to answer the humanitarian crisis by, in a Levinasian fashion, cultivating love for the other that goes beyond civic responsibility. And yet, when it comes to identity, the place for transcendence is not communal, but individual, even interior. He notes that transcendence can also find a place in the formation of the "modem subject," who "is no longer open to the universe as were those that lived in an enchanted world," but is instead formulated within "an impassable membrane" that "separates the realm of the spirit – interior – from that of physical reality – exterior."[280] And yet, is not the political community itself one variation of a transcendent reality that is exterior, perhaps even physical?

This possibility is exploited in the popular use, mentioned above, of patriotic items to create religious sentiment regarding the secular nation of America. It is also, however, invoked in the context of burgeoning globalism with the phrase "the global village." In this designation, what is transcendentalism is no longer the divine, but the collective. Paired with the adjective, "global," the village transcends national, cultural, and racial boundaries; it even transcends the localized connotations of the word "village" itself.

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[279] Daniel Liechty (Ed. and Trans.), *Introduction to Early Anabaptist Spirituality: Selected Writings,* New York: Paulist Press, 1994, pp. 1-17, p. 12.

[280] Charles Taylor, "A Place for Transcendence?" in *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature and Theology Approach the Beyond,* ed. Regina Schwartz, New York and London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 1-12.

Without the aid of literature to understand this phenomena, the political aspect of transcendentalism as communal identification might seem merely dogmatic, a code by which the nation-state might enforce unanimity (in the case of American civil religion), or by which individuals might create meaningful identity from the bare fact of capital trade in the global market. But a literary study of transcendence exposes the origins of communal identity instead at the level of the imagination, the matrix in which the possible conditions for both political and theological communities are formed. It is for this reason that transcendentalism, in both its theological and non-theological forms, might be said always to have a place at the heart of community.

Of course, this fact says nothing about the *kinds* of organizations that might arise within a community based on transcendentalism. In order to understand that, I suggest that it would be necessary to survey, as this dissertation has the various means by which the transcendental community is made legible to its members. What are the avenues through which people apprehend their own communal identity? How one is made aware, for instance, of one's citizenship? What are the objects, the words, the metaphors that inspire national sentiment? If, as early modem poetry demonstrates, the encounter with transcendentalism underwrites the political organization of the community, then the answer to these questions might be a way to help understand how transcendence, in a modem sense, continues to inform how we organize society today.

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