

INTIMATE EXEGESIS: READING AND FEELING IN EARLY MODERN DEVOTIONAL
LITERATURE

Bronwyn V. Wallace

A DISSERTATION

in

English

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2015

Supervisor of Dissertation

Margreta de Grazia

Sheli Z. and Burton X. Rosenberg Professor of the Humanities (Emerita)

Graduate Group Chairperson

Melissa E. Sanchez

Associate Professor of English

Dissertation Committee

Zachary Lesser, Professor of English

Melissa E. Sanchez, Associate Professor of English

Peter Stallybrass, Walter H. and Leonore C. Annenberg Professor in the Humanities

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is a project about intimacy in reading; that should tell you something about the world in which it took shape. It developed in moments of kinship and community, its vital earliest impulses provoked by acts of friendship and its late stages, marked by what seemed insurmountable stuckness, survivable only for sustaining intimacies of friends, mentors, and colleagues, and a handful of priceless people who are all three. Acknowledgement has a funny way of referring everything back to self; what should be an outward gesture becomes a narcissistic practice: this list of people and their fine qualities, all in terms of what they have given to *me*, to *my* project. I have not managed it here, but I would like to discover the syntax in which it would be possible to show that it is otherwise: that there is no *me* in this work, only *us*. That there is no such thing as single authorship.

This dissertation has been supported by a committee of the kind every doctoral student should get to have. Melissa Sanchez has a special genius for powerful synthesis that I have not encountered elsewhere; her robust, incisive questions showed me the shape and direction of my own work when I could not see it myself. I hope one day to have satisfactory answers to them. To Melissa also goes the credit for provoking me, however inadvertently, to write this dissertation instead of another. Anyone who has been in the presence of Peter Stallybrass for five minutes knows what it is like to be inspired by him; he has not only provided this project with much vital material but infused its writing with some astonishing and unlooked-for moments of real joy. Zachary Lesser has been this work's organizing white space, the invisibly structuring principle without which no content could be presented. His patience and calm have on many occasions when I had none of my own given me space to breathe, his has been the vital responsibility of telling me when something is done, and his acute rhetorical sensibilities have quietly but significantly sharpened my style.

For Margreta, *sine qua non*, there can be no adequate thanks. She has taught me the value of difficulty, and she has shown me what honesty, empathy, and generosity really are. Her tenacity and her integrity have been at times the whole principle of this work. From the beginning she has valued this project's riskiest ventures and refused to let me lose courage to pursue them; she has let the work run wild and then identified its insights and shown me their shape. If this and everything to come after is not dedicated to her, it is only because it is and always will be already so much hers.

Natasha Korda set me on this path; in a straightforward way, I would not be here without her. Priscilla Meyer taught me to read. Each of them in her different way of remaining with me in the intervening years has shown me how a shared life in this work can produce invaluable kinship. Brian Cummings, who startled me by entering my life unexpectedly at a moment when I was silly enough to think I knew what I was doing, changed everything about what I wanted to think about and how I thought about it; I will never grow out of that debt. The friendship of Rita Copeland has been one of the great discoveries of the late stages of this work; in its earliest stages, she opened the treasury of classical rhetoric to me for the first time, and it's to her that I owe my love of Augustine. Patricia Dailey's seminar on embodiment was the crucible of this project in any number of ways; Origen is the shape of my debt to her.

The Medieval/Renaissance reading group at Penn has been my intellectual home for more than seven years; in its unparalleled combination of rigor and generosity it has shown me what collective inquiry can be at its best. It taught me what a worthwhile question is; it is where I found my voice. For this I thank, in addition to those named elsewhere, David Wallace, Emily Steiner, Kevin Brownlee, Ania Loomba, Rebecca Bushnell, and Phyllis Rackin. I am especially grateful to Rebecca for her honesty and integrity, as well as last-minute material support in a research assistantship, and to Phyllis for keeping me honest. Elsewhere among the Penn English faculty, Jim English, Peter Decherney, Michael Gamer, Nancy Bentley, Timothy Corrigan, Chi-ming Yang, and Paul Saint-Amour have in various ways big and small sustained my work and my spirit.

Current and former grads from Penn English, Comp Lit, and related fields have formed the invaluable intellectual community without which I think none of us would ever get anywhere. This project has been particularly nourished by the contributions and intellectual and pedagogical companionship of my cohort sisters, Marissa Nicosia, Marie Turner, Alyssa Connell, Marina Bilbija, Emily Gerstell, Sunny Yang, Amy Paeth, and Yumi Lee; Med/Ren co-conspirators Claire Bourne, Jessica Rosenberg, Tekla Bude, Simran Thadani, Kara Gaston, Dianne Mitchell, Alan Niles, Jackie Burek, Mariah Min, Samantha Pious, Erika Smith, Sarah Townsend, Anna Lyman, Lydia Kertz, Daniel Davies, Megan Cook, Thomas Ward, Stephanie Elsky, Emily Weissbourd, and honorary Penn alum Ari Friedlander; wise elders and example-setters Melanie Micir, Sarah Dowling, Jen Jahner, Greta LaFleur, and Julia Bloch; and many others including Jonathan Fedors, Alexander Devine, Ruth Rand, Carolyn Trench, Mary-Catherine French, Kelly Rich, Jessica Hurley, Christine Woody, Laura Finch, Julius Fleming, Don James McLaughlin, Laura Soderberg, Thomas Dichter, Phil Maciak, Dave Alff, Angela Britto, Jazmín Delgado, Evelyn Soto, Clare Mullaney, Eleni Palis, Najnin Islam, Orchid Tierney, and Mary Zaborskis. This list, remarkably, is shorter than it could be. We have been very lucky.

The Center for Teaching and Learning provided me with a second home for two years. Cathy Turner, Julie McGurk, and Ian Petrie have been invaluable mentors, not least in sustaining an expansive definition of what this work is for. Among my fellow fellows, Bridget Swanson, Rose Muravchik, Lindsey Fiorelli, and Ian Hartshorn merit special mention as sustainers of my teacher-self. Between them, my CTL people have provided a disproportionate amount of the total laughter I have experienced in my time at Penn.

Audiences at the University of York, the Shakespeare Association of America, the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference, the Katherine Philips 350 conference, and Penn's Gen/Sex and GSWS working groups have both given space to the work and important feedback on it, and provided it with much in the way of emotional sustenance. To Heather Love, Victoria Burke, Penelope Anderson, Abigail Marcus, Lara Dodds, Tessie Prakas, Piers Brown, Richard Strier, Kathleen Lynch, Cathy Nicholson, and especially Helen Smith for a timely invitation to York, I owe particular debts.

To the students I have taught at Penn, I owe much of the understanding of readerly intimacy that structures my dissertation. This project has benefited in particular from the sharp insight

of Emma Hirvisalo and Clare Tamburelli. Becky Lu, one of my very first students and the first to become a colleague, is in a category all her own.

The friendship of Claire Bourne has been an object lesson in the inestimable value of remaining. Alyssa Connell's ferocity has often stood in for my own. Alice McGrath has borne me company in periods of impenetrable bleakness, made the kind of depressive reading this project values bearable in its dark patches. Marie Turner and Marissa Nicosia are still what they were when we first found each other. Abi Shinn has been illuminating my work spaces with her incandescent energy since the beginning. Karen Burrows, who knows how to offer the right kind of distraction, has brought me new ways of reading intimately. Claire Falck, Kristiane Stapleton, Brooke Conti, Susan Amussen, Nancy Caciola, John Pollack, and Abigail Marcus are proof that work and friendship can be coextensive categories. Jes Albrecht, Rebecca Blair, Isabel Cole, LJ Kadey, Meda Kahn, Raya Shapiro, Jeremy Livingston, Sarah Orem, Sarah Schneider, Rosamund Taylor, and Cathryn Wynn-Jones have borne me company and taught me more about how to be in the world than I know how to put into language; their influence is on every page of this project. Kate Aid and Sal Nicolazzo, in their sisterhood so fierce, so unwavering, so capacious, have taught me the true meaning of survival relationship. To my parents, Jane Wallace and Scott Wallace, I owe literally everything. To them I add Claire Stairiker, Michael Nicolazzo, and Mary Domenico, family belatedly discovered.

And I'm perfectly fine with being that spinster grad student who thanks her cat. A sweeter, more steadfast companion could no self-caricature ask for than Miss Tamburlaine, Scourge of God.

* * *

Acknowledgement is a funny kind of dwelling in the past, a feeling backward not unlike the ones that are the preoccupation of this project. But whatever my investments in recalcitrance and nostalgia and resistance to progress, if one is to survive one must invent a future to persist into, and so I close with you, reader, whoever you are. As I began to finish this project, to be able to say "I am finishing my dissertation," if finishing in long time, I began to ask myself for whom I was writing – a dissertation has no obvious audience beyond the committee. The real audience of this project, as a *dissertation*, the people who are actually likely to read it beyond my committee, are other graduate students, future graduate students in my program and adjacent ones who will read my dissertation to find out what a dissertation looks like, as I have read so many dissertations to find out what a dissertation looks like.

Thinking of them – that is, of you – helped me to understand why I wanted to write this project as myself, and not in the fully artificial voice and tone of academic prose. It gave me a way of thinking about why it was important to me to draw connections between Aemilia Lanyer's radical poetics of feminist eschatology and nostalgia and the pain of losing intimate friendships under the pressure of academic institutionality, between Robert Southwell's weeping Mary Magdalen or Anne Lock's self-excoriating poetics of despair and penitential desire and the challenges of the place where mental illness meets intellectual labor. These

connections I have tried sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly to draw do not have a ready or easy place in academic discourse, but they are necessary, because they are about how we – or at least how I – live in and through this work. They are about being honest about the conditions under which this work proceeds, the feelings that attach to and emerge from this work. I have brought patristic theology and queer theory and devotional literature together not, or not only, because it is an intellectually productive thing to do in the sphere of academic discourse, but because it is how I live, how I find myself and ways of being in the world and with others.

I want to say to you other graduate students who will read this project, here is what it was like to live through this work, with these texts on my desk. Here is what happens when you happen to find yourself weeping in public because you happened to read Aemilia Lanyer and Eve Sedgwick together by accident one day, and thought there was something there to be understood, because you happened to be aroused by a reading of Mary Magdalen's desire for the body of Christ, and then later identified with her afflicted weeping, and thought there was something there to be understood, and spent eight years finding out what. Here is what it is like to be honest about how you live with your texts in the world.

And also: here is proof that I survived, that I found a way to love this work and live, and so proof that you can do this, too. That, I am beginning to think, is what this work is for. So it is dedicated to you. I hope you find something in it you can use.

ABSTRACT

INTIMATE EXEGESIS:
READING AND FEELING IN EARLY MODERN DEVOTIONAL LITERATUREBronwyn V. Wallace
Margreta de Grazia

“Intimate Exegesis” proposes that early modern devotional literature offers feeling, and particularly bad feeling, as a productive matrix for interpretation. In this body of work, feeling – haptic, sensory, affective – generates an intimacy between reader and text in a reading practice that is also a means of coping with the tremendous gap between life in the fallen world and divine perfection. In an unlikely union that I argue involves a powerful shared approach to affect, embodiment, and interpretation, I bring patristic theology together with feminist and queer theory to address how Robert Southwell, Anne Lock, Aemilia Lanyer, and Katherine Philips develop sophisticated interpretive practices out of mourning, recalcitrance, despair, nostalgia, and failure, all grounded in the peculiar passions of embodied femininity. In their work, difficult or even destructive feeling is not an obstacle to reading and devotion, but rather enables the reader’s identification with and even desire for the text she reads. While recent debates in early modern studies have pitted historicism against queer temporality, devotional practice suggests that to read historically is – has always been – to read anachronically. The negative affects that Southwell, Lock, Lanyer, and Philips introduce to their scenes of leverage the properties of form and rhetoric to approach distant pasts, imagine radical futures, and above all to slow down the time of reading and the time of worldly politics, to stand still, to refuse to move on.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	vi
1 Introduction : Intimate Exegesis	2
2 <i>Desideria Dilata</i> : Robert Southwell's Erotic Exegesis	37
3 Time as a Psalm : Anne Lock's Recalcitrant Poetics	77
4 Precarious Typology : Aemilia Lanyer and the Poetics of Failure	102
5 Coda : Katherine Philips and the Limits of Intimacy	134
BIBLIOGRAPHY	147

*We might want the girls to read the books
that enable them to be overwhelmed by grief.*

-- Sara Ahmed

I. Introduction : Intimate Exegesis

This dissertation began as a study of desire and presence and became a study of mourning, recalcitrance, despair, nostalgia, and failure. That's a joke about graduate school, see? Either you get it or you don't. But it's also no joke at all.

I began with two basic questions: one, how is it that devotional literature activates its erotic dimensions in the reader? What is happening when a text makes us feel the desire it describes? And two, what might be gained from coordinating the exegetical protocols of patristic theology with contemporary studies in queer affect, given their shared interests in the relation between the reader's embodiment and the text she reads?

These questions, especially to the degree that they call on problems of relation across time – between my primary texts and their objects in salvational history; between the modern reader and early modern ways of reading and feeling – drew me to work in queer temporality, much of which promises materially close communion across the historical gulf that divides us from our objects of study. The field is dense with the metaphors of touch: for Elizabeth Freeman, the “close” in the “close-reading” that sutures gaps in historical time is characterized by “a grasp, a clutch, a refusal to let go.”¹ For Carolyn Dinshaw, the affective and often erotic charge of intimacy with the past is a “touch across time.”² Meanwhile, patristic theology routes interpretation through the dialectical system of spirit and body: for example, in his figure of scripture as “treasure in earthen vessels” (2 Cor. 4:1-7), Saint Paul

¹ *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xx.

² *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 21.

conflates the capacity of the gospel as text to express divinity in human terms and the capacity of the base material of humanity to exceed itself in preaching that gospel – that is, for Paul here as elsewhere, the body and spirit of scripture and of human being are so nearly analogous as to be almost identical. The shared set of concerns between these two apparently disparate bodies of work appeared at first to offer a means of accounting for how devotional texts generate presence: that is, intimacy with divinity. I began this project with an optimism conditioned by Dinshaw's: the intense appeal of the idea that one might reach across time and *make contact*, that touch or even close adjacency might be achieved. In *Getting Medieval*, Dinshaw envisions the possibility of a literary history that could be conceived as community, through the “touch across time” that conditions our encounters with the texts that shape us. In *How Soon is Now?*, she calls it love.³

In the work of Robert Southwell, which has always been at the center of my thinking and has provoked many of my most central questions, the animation of such love in reading is a primary concern. His prefaces to *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* call on the power of poetry to orient emotion, to “to draw [the] floud of affections into the right chanel,” in an affective interchange between text and reader.⁴ He imagines himself writing directly to his readership, a pastoral role in which reading becomes relationship. One of this project's earliest readings thus centered itself in an epistolary mode, in a letter of 1580 in which, as a young man of about nineteen, Southwell wrote from the Jesuit College at Rome to his close “spiritual friend” John Deckers, in reply to a letter from Deckers expressing his doubt of his

³ *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁴ *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* (London: John Wolfe for Gabriel Cawood, 1591), A3^v.

vocation in the Society of Jesus.⁵ To comfort and affirm his friend, Southwell details with loving nostalgia the early days of their friendship in the English College at Douai, drawing out of an extended dilation on the past a recollection in the present of their mutual devotion to each other, to God, and to the Society. He recounts their early courtship – two young neophytes drawn together by their mentors and confessors, Southwell struggling with his vocation and Deckers confirmed in his own; the nervous anticipation of desiring spiritual friendship and the instantaneous joy of discovering it in the other. In the midst of his account, Southwell interjects a burst of present affection for his friend, staking a claim on their common past to affirm them both in the present:

If you only knew, dear John, what an esteem I then formed in my mind of your devotion, piety, inward communication with God, I feel sure you would derive thence a fresh incentive to serve God more fervently: if you knew, too, what ardent affection for you that esteem excited in me, you would easily understand my present feelings toward you.

A tremendous amount of faith in communication is staked on those *ifs*. In this syntactic balancing act, Southwell's "esteem" for Deckers' spiritual security and his "ardent affection" for him personally are coextensive; so likewise are the renewed conviction to which Southwell exhorts his friend and the "understanding" of "feeling" he hopes to elicit in him. Southwell dwells in this suspension, on the "unwonted light" that "shone on my mind previously clouded in darkness," on the small miracle that the hope alone of "winning your consent" to an intimate friendship "seemed to heal all the wounds of my preceding conflict." The dilation of this recollection of anticipation is itself remarkable: "But why linger on the hope thus raised in me, why rest in the sight rather than relish the taste of the honey

⁵ In *Publications of the Catholic Record Society*, vol. 5, Latin original pp. 295-98, English trans. by J.H. Pollen, S.J. pp. 298-300.

presented me?” Why, indeed? To prolong the arousal of desire, as though to cherish its suspense, to experience again, to give to Deckers to experience again, that sudden fervent hope and longing. Dwelling in the past anticipation of intimacy secures the present intimacy of the letter: rhetorical dilation brings the past into the present epistolary scene of shared desire. But Southwell does move on at last, as the richly sensual – and densely scriptural – figure of honey tasted prepares a scene in which the two young men meet for the first time before the chapel of the College:

There we met and disclosed to each other the desires and secrets of our heart, and were both kindled with enthusiasm as we conversed about God and the Institute of the Society. No friend was then so dear to John as Robert, none so dear to Robert as John; no delight in this world seemed greater than to enter the Society. Not a day passed, not an opportunity was lost. Whatever free time we could steal for conversation together seemed all too short. From that time our fervour in prayer began to increase; private chastisements of the flesh to afford delight; the unsparing use of the hairshirt and discipline to please exceedingly.

The pleasure of devotion becomes extreme when shared. The erotic urgency of the past moment Southwell here relates is also the erotic urgency of the letter itself, and the payoff of the retelling of this story is in its value as memory to the present: “Let us *now* recall those experiences, my dear John, and strive to perform more fervently *now* the exercises we *then* practised, when we were as yet exiles sighing for our country, and imitators of the members of the Society” (my emphasis). Confirmation in vocation here is understood as an erotic intimacy, confirmed in an epistolary exchange that unites the friends across a long distance and as a function of memory that secures present to past. The exercise in memory that Southwell recommends to Deckers, calling perhaps on their shared training in Jesuit meditation, demands his investment in the present experience of Southwell’s account, whose prose is crafted to evoke and amplify the “fervour” they developed together in a past

experience. Paradoxically, the mimetic account of past experience is posed against the imitative nature of that experience itself – it’s *now* that Southwell and Deckers can perform the original of the “exercises” they merely copied as young men. In this strange temporality, the eroticism of the letter secures mutual practice in the present. For Southwell, textualizing his recollection gives the former practice present urgency, grants it the capacity to move and affirm in the present; the letter’s promise is that the effect on Deckers will be immediate and transformative.

In a provocatively-titled recent book, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*, Kathy Eden argues that Renaissance stylists from Petrarch to Montaigne took up a relatively narrow category of ancient rhetoric – the intimate style of epistolary writing – as the foundation for *all* writing, weaving an insistence on the centrality of intimacy into the very fabric of the humanist rhetorical tradition. Eden posits, first, the “inseparability of rhetoric and hermeneutics,” that “how a culture writes is inextricably linked to how it reads,” an insight she borrows from Gadamer.⁶ That intimacy between reading and writing, hermeneutics and rhetoric, generates the further intimacy between reader and writer in what Gadamer calls the “miracle” of interpretation, the “transformation of something alien and dead into total contemporaneity (*Zugleichsein*) and familiarity [i.e., intimacy] (*Vertrautsein*).”⁷ But Eden lets Gadamer’s sacramental language drop in her pursuit of a largely secular project predicated on the classical rhetorical tradition and its inheritance – its rediscovery – by Renaissance humanism. Any time the Renaissance rediscovers something, a periodizing gesture occurs that elides any tradition emerging from late antiquity or the Middle Ages; one

⁶ Eden, *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 4.

⁷ This is Gadamer; the parenthetical glossing of the translation and the bracketed interpolation are Eden’s. *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd ed. (New York, 1989), 163; cited in Eden 6.

of the things that cannot be adequately addressed by such a gesture is the sustained development of Christian theology throughout that period. Eden's periodization and her secularism, in other words, are of a piece. That loss was one thing my project initially set out to recover: the rhetoric of intimacy by which Southwell proceeds in his letter to Deckers depends entirely on its emergence from and orientation toward divinity: "As then Jesus Christ laid the foundation of our fellowship (and on this point I have not the slightest doubt), and the desire we both shared of serving Him, was the force that consolidated our union in its progress, why should not the result we both longed for also consummate our friendship?"⁸ Gadamer's *miracle* here appears as the rhetorical-ritual "consummation" of friendship, the erotic relay secured by desire and devotional purpose. As Brian Cummings has argued, in the affective modes of epistolarity, "subjectivity is not so much asserted as shared," that in the "relationship of feeling" motivated in letter-writing and -reading, "emotions [...] form the attunement which enables us to recognise our selves as our selves, and to recognise another as like us and thus able to respond to us and understand us."⁹ This argument emerges from a reading of Donne, who describes his own letter-writing as "a kind of exstasie, and a departure and secession and suspension of the soul, which doth then communicate it self to two bodies."¹⁰ In Donne's characteristic articulation of the interanimation of two bodies, as in the shared devotion which Southwell's letter to Deckers enacts, emerges a powerful account of the intimate phenomena of writing and reading.

⁸ Pollen, 298.

⁹ "Donne's Passions: Emotion, Agency, and Language," in *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture*, eds. Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 56, 58, 71.

¹⁰ "To Sir H.G.," in *Letters to severall persons of honour written by John Donne ... published by John Donne, Dr. of the civill law* (London: J. Flesher for Richard Marriot, 1651), 70. Quoted in Cummings, 65.

Yet these accounts, like Southwell's epistolary rhetoric, require an extraordinary, almost an outrageous, faith in the success of such ecstatic communion. This project originated with a deep desire to experience that kind of faith – after all, the register of intimacy in devotion and rhetoric is enormously appealing, not to mention the sweetness of these boys (Southwell was nineteen in 1580) in their shared agonies and ecstasies of faith. The fantasy of Southwell's letter to Deckers is the easy accessibility of its rhetorical performance of the consummation of that profoundly erotic devotional intimacy; it presents the seductive possibility that any intimate reading might be so successful. When I began this project, I wanted to find this letter's exquisite satisfaction in more properly literary texts, too – and of course, they do sometimes do this, not least in Southwell's own *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*. But as I read, I found claims to the capacity of language to register divine presence increasingly hollow, and began to be much more curious about what obstacles emerge in the course of devotional feeling and its movement into language. Early drafts of descriptions of this project are full of the language of desire and presence and touch – I wanted to account for how a more or less sacramental erotics emerges in the practice of reading devotional literature; how the movement of desire in reading manifests divine presence. Perhaps what I wanted was to be John Deckers receiving Southwell's letter; wanted my own faith to be consummated in someone else's rhetorical performance. I wanted to experience Dinshaw's touch across time, and to locate in my texts how they generated such a plenitude of presence.

But all of my primary texts are works in which touch, both literally as physical contact and figuratively as a stand-in for presence, is proscribed or inaccessible. Robert Southwell's *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* (1591) centers on an absence, dilating the few

verses of the gospel of John in which Mary Magdalen stands disconsolate before the empty tomb of Christ – the first confrontation in Christian history with the absence of Christ from the world. In *Mary*, Southwell makes a study of the defeat of the senses in John 20, a text whose climactic *noli me tangere* expressly renders touch problematic. Anne Lock's sonnet sequence on Psalm 51, *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner* (1560) confronts the limits of the flesh in an excoriating poetics that flays the body to lay the soul vulnerable before god, but even as it "groapes about" for grace, it never lays hold of anything sensible, placing that attainment of intimacy with god beyond the scope of both body and text. Aemilia Lanyer opens *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611) with a set of dedicatory poems whose richly haptic figures stake radical claims to the material intimacy of devotional reading at the same time as they seek to call into being a reading community of women. But her book ends with the dissolution of those figures into ephemeral trace, the failure of intimacy between women registering as a failure of figure to generate meaning. A similar failure conditions the anxieties about embodiment that structure the neoplatonic conceits of Katherine Philips' friendship poems (1667), which identify touch not as the threshold of the intimacy of presence, but as the unattainable horizon of figurative meaning.

(FEELING BACKWARD)

I modeled my early thinking on work like that of Richard Rambuss, whose *Closet Devotions* understands "devotion [...] as a form of desire."¹¹ The eroticism that Rambuss recognizes as encouraged by an incarnational theology that requires meditation on the exquisite, agonized body of its god made flesh, I thought, might reveal itself to be as much an interpretive

¹¹ *Closet Devotions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 1.

method as a specular mode of adoration. In other words, where Rambuss addresses a *poetics* of devotional eroticism, I was equally interested in the *hermeneutics* of eroticism: how does desire read? My past tense notwithstanding, this interest remains at the heart of the project: the desire for an absent god or for an experience of his presence that necessarily structures Christian devotion. But as my work progressed, I became increasingly interested in the other feelings that attend on that desire, often difficult feelings that would appear dissonant in Rambuss's world of exuberantly excessive, orgasmic plenitude.

For Rambuss, the incarnational body of Christ is strangely unproblematic: the material body is a threshold of erotic experience, often ecstasy, and the body of Christ is a representable object to be adored. In perhaps the most striking claim of *Closet Devotions*, “envisioning Christ in his Passion as a highly fertile somatic field [...] evokes no discourse so much as contemporary pornography’s fetishistic explorations of the erotic body and its paroxysms” (34). Christ’s “excitingly vulnerable male body,” as “an iconic male body rendered visible and open to desire” (34) makes possible, for example, Crashaw’s orgasmically liquifacient poetics. As an incarnational theology, Christianity makes its god available in representable flesh – an amenity Rambuss takes advantage of in order to gesture to the “heightened devotional expressivity” (17) that provides him with the “intensities” and “perversities” (5) where he locates queerness. In order to throw out a robust challenge to the contemporary American Christian right wing, Rambuss insists on centering “the ecstatic, the excessive, the transgressive, the erotic” (6) – but at the same time, risks reducing desire to its extremes and to the enactment of embodied sexual deviance, to the exclusion of any other mode of longing or intimacy.

In other words, in Rambuss's analysis, the ostensible availability of the body of Christ to representation is the ground of a celebratory gay male perversion. But what happens in the absence of that body? What becomes of the problems posed to semiotics and cognition by the exceptional embodiment of the Son of God, both flesh and divinity, departed from the world yet always present in it, and bound eventually to return? How to cope with the intervening time? In Rambuss's reading of John Donne's "Good Friday 1613. Riding Westward," for example, "despite Donne's renunciatory efforts ... the poem remains an unnerving confrontation" with the "shattering sight" of the very image it purports to abjure:

Could I behold those hands which span the Poles,
And tune all spheres at once peirc'd with those holes?
Could I behold that endlesse height which is
Zenith to us, and our Antipodes,
Humbled below us? or that blood which is
The seat of all our Soules, if not of his,
Made durt of dust, or that flesh which was worne
By God, for his apparell, rag'd, and torne?¹²

Rambuss is of course correct that the fear the poem expresses of confrontation with "That spectacle of too much weight for me" paradoxically requires some expression of that spectacle, a kind of reluctant incarnational periphrasis. The refrain of "Could I," however, also signals a genuine problem of perception: *can I* truly behold something so exceptional and so, ultimately, lost? (What would it mean to be able to *see* something that is both zenith and antipodes, *and also* humbled, little enough to see?) Meanwhile, the spatial disorientation indicated in the poem's title also gestures to a historical disorientation: how to cope with an event that is both very long past and always present? The poem seems to be asking Carolyn

¹² *The Divine Poems*, ed. Helen Gardner, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 31.

Dinshaw's question: "What does it feel like to be an anachronism?"¹³ – but it is also reluctant to take on the challenge of such a feeling, or at least interested in forestalling it. "I turn my backe to thee, but to receive / Corrections" : the undecidable ambiguity between the gesture of a submissive lover offering himself to the rough and transformative ministrations of his divine top, and the overwhelmed turn away from, as refusal of, an unbearable sight and the inarticulate feeling it provokes. In this gesture, the speaker of Donne's poem seems to turn away from us, too, to turn his back not only on the image of Golgotha but also on the reader. As Heather Love argues, such back-turned figures should be dear to queer literary historians. In her pursuit of queer figures and texts that "turn their backs on the future," that "resist our advances," she summons such figures as Lot's wife, who "clings to the past and is ruined by it," and the *noli me tangere* as an "apt motto for queer historical experience," suggesting the productiveness of theological possibilities to queer literary historiography.¹⁴ If "our existence depends on being able to imagine these figures reaching out to us," Love argues, we must nevertheless attend to the ways in which it "remains difficult to hear these subjects when they say to us, 'Don't touch me.'"¹⁵ We must try to hear them.

Rambuss's confidence in the capacity of poetry to represent the body of Christ and make it available to the desiring reader anticipates a vogue for "sacramental poetics," in which scholars have read devotional poetry as performing the presence-making work of the sacraments, or as a replacement for that work, with a particular focus on the sacrament of

¹³ "Temporalities," in *Middle English*, Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 107-123.

¹⁴ *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 8, 9, 40.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

the eucharist as the semiotic *sine qua non* of post-reformation Christianity.¹⁶ “What does it mean,” Ryan Netzley asks in the opening gesture of his book, “to desire a god that one does not lack?”¹⁷ One sees what he means; God should be in some sense present to the mind of the believer at all times, and especially at the moment of the ritual of the Eucharist (in whatever doctrinal version of that sacrament). The relation of Donne’s speaker in “Good Friday” to his god could be characterized in those terms: the challenge of turning his face is not for lack of a savior to turn to. And yet for him, as for a figure like Mary Magdalene, blinded by her mourning as she stands by the empty tomb of Christ – and then being presented with the object of her love only to be deprived of him a second time – Netzley’s question fails to make any kind of sense at all. As Shelly Rambo has argued, the text of John 20 “dismantles sight, sound, and even touch as vehicles constituting Mary’s witness” so that Mary “points to a different kind of presence, whose form cannot be readily identified or can only be received through multiple experiences of misrecognitions. She encounters not simply the absence of Jesus, but a mixed terrain of his absence and presence. He is there but not there; he is present in a way that she has not known before.”¹⁸ Something must take the place of, or at least supplement, the bodily senses in the scene of Mary’s longing for and eventual apprehension of Christ. The perceptual problem of Donne’s “Good Friday,” then,

¹⁶ See for example Regina Schwarz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008); Ryan Netzley, *Reading, Desire, and the Eucharist in Early Modern Religious Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Sarah Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011); Sophie Read, *Eucharist and the Poetic Imagination in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Kimberly Johnson, *Made Flesh: Sacrament and Poetics in Post-Reformation England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

¹⁷ Netzley, 3.

¹⁸ *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 89-90.

is active in the gospel text itself: even Mary who stood before Christ risen in that first immediate encounter, even she struggles to “behold” him – and is forbidden to touch him.

Even Gary Kuchar’s *Poetry of Religious Sorrow*, which identifies Christianity as “a vast technology of mourning” in its opening gesture, posits that mourning as “the very medium by which God makes himself present to the soul.”¹⁹ The paradox is appealing, but like Netzley’s desire-without-lack, it vaults over the most troubling aspect of bad feeling in faith: the missingness of god, the sheer distance between a seventeenth-century English rider and the Calvary of the Passion, between disconsolate Mary Magdalen and Christ in his divinity. For Kuchar, “sorrow is less an emotional state than it is a language,” “a discourse,” a claim that depends on a conception of the emotions as discrete, stable “affective states.”²⁰ That is, like Rambuss’s pornographic body of Christ, they are the stuff of representation rather than experience, semiotic rather than phenomenal. God’s absence from the world is the structuring condition of the yawning time between the resurrection and the final judgement, and Kuchar is right that in early modern devotional writing, it is feeling that fills that gap. My way of rephrasing Netzley’s question might be: how do you cope with the fact of a god who is *at once* present and absent, whom you do not and yet also irreducibly do lack? What does it feel like? And how does such feeling operate in reading?

As it proceeded, this dissertation thus began to be less concerned with desire itself as an orientation toward communion than with the circuits of feeling that attend, structure, and impede it. Mary Magdalen’s mourning, the despairing recalcitrance of Anne Lock’s speaker, Aemilia Lanyer’s lamenting nostalgia, Philips’ simultaneous ambitions for intimacy and

¹⁹ Kuchar, *The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.

²⁰ Kuchar 2, 4.

acknowledgement of its impasses, all required letting go of the fantasy of touch, of present communion with these objects of the past, demanded that I make the “intimacy” of my title problematic in the way these texts do.

“Feeling” became the critical term, productively capacious and gesturing simultaneously to the materiality of the body and to a spiritual or emotional dwelling in that body, capturing the circuit that runs between text and reader, as between soul and body, in the procedure of interpretation. As Joe Moshenska has argued, “feeling” shuttles between literal and figurative, sensory and spiritual or cognitive meanings, “hovering” productively at the boundary sites between these ostensible dichotomies.²¹ For Moshenska, “touch” produces a particular relationship to metaphor that crystallizes the semiotic debates of the Reformation, “shift[ing] restlessly between literal and metaphorical” (12) in its “refusal to specify” the degree to which touch indexes “a physical sensation akin to tactile feeling, or whether such externality merely provides a convenient illustration of an inward state that resists full explication” (7-8). While “the fact that Christ assumed a human body, a body able to touch and be touched, seemed to validate physical contact as a way of accessing the presence of the divine” (23), that immediacy becomes especially problematic with the advent of Reformed skepticism regarding the efficacy or possibility of such a touch, which verged on idolatry. But the “restlessness” of touch as a category, its easy slippage between the literal and the figurative, allowed, for example, Thomas Cranmer to back away, when challenged, from “his account of ‘sensible touching, feeling, and groping’ of Christ through the sacraments” by “disavow[ing] this claim as fully metaphorical” (41). For Moshenska, this slippery quality of touch in language carries a historical specificity that he argues disappears

²¹ *Feeling Pleasures: The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

in premodernist critics' casual appropriation of touch as a figure for engagement with the past, targeting for critique not "the desire to touch the past" but "the assumption that, in hoping to do so, they are aiming to recapture lost forms of action and understanding" (12). Where, for example, Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt invest in a model of history that places the enchantment of touch in a premodernity left behind by a modern focus on the visual sense, for Carolyn Dinshaw, Moshenska writes that "touch is what is lost, but it also offers the promise of recapturing the past, vaulting momentarily across historical distance" (11).

Only by appreciating [the] historically specific variety [of values of touch] can we properly identify the attitude most characteristic of the English Renaissance: neither the wholesale endorsement of an enchanted world of touch nor its rejection in favour of a proto-modern subjectivity founded in vision, but the employment of a language of touch that shifts restlessly between literal and metaphorical, and that thereby refuses either to reject or embrace the pleasures and vexations of the sense. (12)

Feeling as affect provides a response to the dilemma of overinvestment in touch as the primary category of phenomenal experience, be it of divinity or of literary history. In devotional reading, I argue, feeling mediates between the letter of the text and its figurative resources, as it does between the material body and the perceiving mind or soul. In the ensouled body, two things happen at once: "feeling" as a sensory metaphor slides easily into "feeling" as affect, emotion, passion, especially to the degree that these are embodied experience; and a significant distinction emerges between what the senses can perceive and what can be understood or apprehended through affective feeling alone. This project locates itself on that semicolon: at the site where a rupture occurs between what the senses can achieve and the special province of affect, and especially bad affect. Its key texts revolve

around experiences that cannot be metaphorized as touch, because they occur around an absence or an impossibility.

(REPARATIVE READING)

My focus is thus not the represented object but the reading subject. Its interest is in what happens when a reader's whole self is called upon by a text – and when she answers that call. One of this project's logical vulnerabilities is that it takes for granted the premise that the phenomena of feeling and experience these texts demand can occur and have occurred, because I know for certain that each of them has found at least one reader for whom that is true. This project takes seriously the idea that one of the most significant structuring features of a study is the potentially arbitrary fact of the disposition of the critic, and the degree of chance involved in what she happens to encounter in her reading, what happens to find its way across her desk.

It is, in this way, ironically a “happy” project, as Sara Ahmed understands the term.²² For Ahmed, in “the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of bodies into worlds, and [...] ‘the drama of contingency,’” in “how we are touched by what comes near,” *happy* returns to its etymology in hap, happenstance, chance happenings.²³ Our intimacies and our identities are shaped by what we encounter, by hap – which in turn enables us to consider in queer unhappiness, in the “unhappy queer archive ... *what it allows us to do.*”²⁴ Concluding the introduction to *Queer Phenomenology*, another, earlier study of the way orientation is shaped by phenomenal encounter, Ahmed observes the risk she takes in reading philosophy as a non-philosopher, which echoes the risks I feel attending on my readings of theology as a non-

²² *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

²³ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 89, emphasis original.

theologian, my bringing together of queer theory and theology, texts from disparate moments that have no obvious or institutionally recognized alignment with or allegiance to each other: “When we don’t have the resources to read certain texts, we risk getting things wrong by not returning them to the fullness of the intellectual histories from which they emerge. *And yet, we read.* The promise of interdisciplinary scholarship is that the failure to return texts to their histories will do something.”²⁵

We are, after all, disposed toward the texts we read *in our bodies*: we literally reach for them; we literally sit with them; we develop very literal aches from the small contortions we execute to look at them. We *turn* to them. We work by *inventio*, with finding our topics in what lies near us, or in seeking them in what lies further off. Ahmed borrows the term “desire lines” from architecture to account for the mutual shaping of bodies and space – “those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow. [...] Such lines are indeed traces of desire.”²⁶ Our readings are conditioned by the institutional spaces that orient us, by which we orient ourselves: but at the same time, we work with and in what lies to hand, what we come upon. Deviation from the lines laid out by the tracks of the profession, following new paths according to new orientations, new worlds – in other words, the process of creativity that generates new readings and new work, new intellectual desire lines, comes with a risk and often at a cost. In this landscape, reading and writing can feel a lot like mourning. What Southwell, Lock, Lanyer, and Philips have to teach us is that this recalcitrant bad affect is not

²⁵ *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 22, my emphasis.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

in contradiction with but rather a condition of desire and the always-unfolding dialectic of revelation. In other words: *And yet, we read.*

As Anne Carson puts it, “Our subjects call us.”²⁷ But I am as interested in the conditions that enable the call as what happens in its event. The event of John 20, for example, is Mary Magdalen’s turn when Christ calls her name – the moment of divine interpellation in which she recognizes him risen, and which sets her on the path to her career as apostola apostolorum. Distinctly phenomenal, recognizable in the terms of Ahmed’s conditioning “orientations,” that event is of the utmost significance, especially to Mary. But what made it possible? What put her in the way of Christ, to be available to his call when it came?

There’s another joke that isn’t one in my enduring identification with the Mary Magdalen of the early verses of John 20, stubbornly seeking something that isn’t there, insisting on standing still and crying until the impossible something arrives. Living with bad feeling is a condition of thinking and writing; the provocation of emotion is a tool to think with, both when it feels endless, boring, like the “martyrdom by tedious delay” that Southwell accuses Christ of inflicting on Mary by deferring his arrival,²⁸ and when it comes as a surprise. This project’s turning point, the moment when I first understood that its early optimism was misguided and impeding my readings, came in the form of a spontaneous emotional response to my first reading of Eve Sedgwick’s essay on reparative reading. The version I read, in *Touching Feeling*, was published in 2003, and talks frankly about the cancer of which Sedgwick died in 2009, in the spring of my first year at Penn. My reading in 2012

²⁷ Catherine Bush, “A Short Talk with Anne Carson” (Unpublished interview, 2000). <http://catherinebush.com/articles/a-short-talk-with-anne-carson/>. Accessed 08.27.15.

²⁸ Mary Magdalen’s Funeral Tears H5^v.

was thus from the beginning conditioned by that loss, by the memory of Jeff Masten beginning his Material Text talk by saying, “Eve Sedgwick has died.” And how the air went out of the room.

Toward the end of the essay, Sedgwick describes a set of relationships in illness: her two younger friends, who are terminally sick too, and her older friend, who is healthy. She will never be her older friend’s current age; her younger friends will never arrive at her present time. And it is from this stark fact that she develops her sense of the urgency of the reparative in particularly *queer* time and space, along those lines that do not regenerate according to the reproductive time of heteropatriarchy that Sedgwick associates with paranoia:

It’s hard to say, even to know, how these relationships are different from those shared by people of different ages on a landscape whose perspectival lines converge on a common disappearing-point. I’m sure ours are more intensely motivated: whatever else we know, we know there isn’t time to bullshit. But what it means to identify with each other must also be very different. On this scene, an older person doesn’t love a younger as someone who will someday be where she is now, or vice versa. No one is, so to speak, passing on the family name; there’s a sense in which our life narratives will barely overlap. There’s another sense in which they slide up more intimately alongside one another than can any lives that are moving forward according to the regular schedule of the generations. It is one another immediately, one another as the present fullness of a becoming whose arc may extend no further, whom we each must learn best to apprehend, fulfill, and bear company.²⁹

I don’t know that I’ve ever been quite so arrested by a paragraph of critical prose – literally arrested, I stopped there, reading this paragraph over and over. And when I finally looked up, I was looking at Aemilia Lanyer. *Salve Deus* happened to be next to me on my desk, waiting for me to do something else with it. But turning from Sedgwick to Lanyer – the

²⁹ *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 149.

phenomenal turn of Ahmed's orientations, the interpellative turn of a project calling me – I saw suddenly the simple thing I had been missing in years of reading her book: how powerfully sad it is. It was a moment of arrest, of stalled reading, and it was an emotional response – crying in the grad lab – that made me see, all in a flash, the sharpness of Lanyer's lament, what she was lamenting and how, that it was a lament at all. If not for that moment, if not for Eve Sedgwick's willingness to write as herself and her having given me permission to be sad, and to be sad as a method of reading, this project might never have turned out as it has. I might still be under the spell of presence.

I thus offer "intimacy" as an alternative to discourses of presence and touch, as a category that indexes closeness in feeling without overdetermining the nature of that closeness or that feeling, that can include what's uncomfortable and unassimilable. I follow Sedgwick's call for a "reparative" hermeneutics, in which she suggests that our queer intimacies with texts might resemble, if we let them, our queer intimacies with people. Her project in *Touching Feeling* is, she writes, "to explore some ways around the topos of depth or hiddenness" that has characterized poststructuralist criticism – to resist in our reading habits "the ease with which *beyond* and *beneath* turn from spatial descriptors into implicit narratives of, respectively, origin and telos." Against these suspicious spatializations of critique, Sedgwick proposes the logic of *beside*, a prepositional positioning relative to texts that "permits a spacious agnosticism" which might allow the critic not to see through the texts she reads, but rather to cohabit with them. As Sedgwick observes, such cohabitation is not necessarily easy or comfortable, "does not [...] depend on a fantasy of metonymically egalitarian or even pacific relations, as any child knows who's shared a bed with siblings."³⁰

³⁰ Ibid., 8.

To take seriously such a critical orientation is to recognize how texts, like lives, might “slide up more intimately alongside one another than can any lives that are moving forward according to the regular schedule of the generations,” in the “present fullness of a becoming whose arc may extend no further.”³¹ This project is in part a bid for experimentation with the uncomfortable elements of *beside*, with the friction that results from that queer temporality in which we slide up against the objects of our study in the face of the perpetual imminence – and immanence – of loss. What, I ask, is the status of the reparative when its object is loss or failure, when it can be neither ameliorative nor, in the most straightforward sense, pleasurable? What happens when the reparative encounters the irreparable?

Near the beginning of her essay, Sedgwick makes a suggestion so glancing that it appears to have been missed entirely in the essay’s broad reception by literary scholarship. Observing that Paul Ricoeur never meant “the hermeneutics of suspicion” to become hegemonic in criticism, she notes that “Ricoeur introduced the category [...] in a context that also included such alternative disciplinary hermeneutics as the philological and theological ‘hermeneutics of recovery of meaning.’”³² If criticism in its “paranoia” has left philology and theology behind, Sedgwick implies, then they might have something productive to offer to a queer “reparative reading.” Yet she lets the suggestion pass with no further mention. Queer philology has begun to enjoy something like a vogue in recent scholarship, particularly in fields of early literature.³³ As my reading of Rambuss above

³¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

³² *Ibid.*, 125.

³³ See Masten, “Toward a Queer Address: The Taste of Letters and Early Modern Male Friendship,” *GLQ* 10:3 (2004), 367-84; Sarah Nicolazzo takes up Masten’s method in “Reading *Clarissa*’s ‘Conditional Liking’: A Queer Philology,” *Modern Philology* 112:1 (2014), 205-25. Carolyn Dinshaw’s and Carla Freccero’s work on queer temporalities doesn’t declare itself philological, but each of them pursues the peculiarities of lexical and grammatical

indicates, devotional poetics, if not theology proper, has become the object of queer readings in early modern studies. But the capacity of theological hermeneutics to transform – to repair – our critical practice remains unexplored. If, as Ricoeur suggests, as he traces the inheritance by modern critical discourse of Biblical exegesis, “the contrary of suspicion [...] is faith,”³⁴ what might that faith resemble when it comes to critical practice? The texts I consider in this project respond to this question as they take up exegetical methods as means of dwelling with not only the text of scripture but with the feelings of loss, mourning, despair, nostalgia, failure, and alienation that attend creaturely life in the world.

Sedgwick’s proposal for a reparative hermeneutics already shares something in common with theological models; to demonstrate how, I turn to Origen, for whom the coordination of the senses of the body and the senses of scripture is much more than a felicitously available pun. In his commentary on the Song of Songs, he observes the frequent recurrence of figures of the body in scripture, where “the names of the members of the body are applied to the members of the soul, or rather they are said of the power and desire of the soul.”³⁵ For the relation between the literal and figurative senses of scripture – the fundamental ground of interpretation – has been understood since Paul as analogous to the relation between body and spirit. For Origen, the crux of understanding the bodily senses as represented in scripture lies in his cautious definition of the analogy of interiority and exteriority implied by scriptural figures:

histories as necessary motors of queer literary history. See for example Dinshaw on “contingent” in the introduction to *Getting Medieval*; Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Duke: Duke University Press, 2006).

³⁴ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 28.

³⁵ “Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs,” in *Origen*, ed. and trans. Rowan A. Greer (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 221.

What we wish to show on this basis is that in the divine Scriptures by synonyms, that is, by similar designations and sometimes by the same words, both the members of the outer man and the parts and desires of the inner man are designated and that they are to be compared with one another not only with respect to the designations but also with respect to the realities themselves.³⁶

Origen's interest here in synonym as *figure* – similar or even same words denoting more than similarity, performing a figurative operation that grounds the relation between inner and outer – depends in turn on a hermeneutic capacity closely related to that of typology as he understands it. “The simple,” he writes in his essay “On First Principles,” “may be edified by, so to speak, the body of the Scriptures; for that is what we call the ordinary and narrative meaning. But if any have begun to make some progress and can contemplate something more fully, they should be edified by the soul of Scripture.”³⁷ The inner and outer senses of the ensouled body correspond to the inner and outer senses of the text of scripture – and in interpretation, we find that these parallel structures are not simple dichotomies, but participants in a dialectical becoming that takes place in the relationship between reader and text. “Our task,” Origen writes in the commentary on John, “is to change the sensible gospel into the spiritual, for what is interpretation of the sensible gospel unless it is transforming it into the spiritual?”³⁸ In this model, the soul's disposition toward divinity operates by a language of bodily disposition, “orientation” in Ahmed's terms: “Let us,” he writes, “stretch forth the hands of our soul as of our body to God, that the Lord [...] may also give us the Word with His power, by whom we may be enabled to make clear from our treatise a sound understanding of the name and nature of love” (219-20).

³⁶ Origen, “Prologue,” 220.

³⁷ “On First Principles,” in Greer, *op. cit.*, 182.

³⁸ *Commentary on John, Book I* in Origen, ed. and trans. Joseph W. Trigg (London: Routledge, 1998), 109.

Origen's concern about love here emerges from the difficult balancing act that attends any reading of the intensely erotic Song of Songs. Origen is careful to note those sites in scripture where a divine love is referred to as *eros*, taking as his prime examples the love of Wisdom exhorted by Proverbs (4:6-8) and the book of Wisdom (8:2). The important judgement in favor of *agape* is that it "is God and takes its existence in him," and so "loves nothing earthly, nothing material, nothing corruptible. [...] [A]ffection [*agape*] for God always strives toward God from whom it took its origin," so that it is from this affection that our attention to scriptural interpretation can yield the spirit of truth.³⁹ The sixth-century theologian Pseudo-Dionysius expresses frustration with this busy attempt to differentiate modes of love and dispenses with it in a recuperation of *eros* as desire or yearning that effectuates ecstatic intimacy with divinity: "this divine yearning [*eros*] brings ecstasy so that the lover belongs not to self but to the beloved."⁴⁰ For Pseudo-Dionysius, *eros* is what moves between God and humanity and enables human access to divinity – it is by *eros* that the "differentiation" of divinity into the world and human striving toward it may happen at all. *Eros* is in brief "a capacity to effect a unity, an alliance, and a particular commingling in the Beautiful and Good."⁴¹ Such yearning is required to approach the text of scripture in any act of interpretation, to access what Augustine called the "intimus sensus" of the text – the innermost sense, and also the intimate sense.⁴² Augustine's pun bridges the distance between the terms Sedgwick opposes: the "topos of depth or hiddenness" in the model of inner and

³⁹ "Prologue," 224-8.

⁴⁰ "The Divine Names," in *The Complete Works*, ed. and trans. Colm Lubhéid and Paul Rorem (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 82.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴² *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. John Gibb and James Innes, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 438.

outer senses, and the besideness of intimacy: the *intimus sensus* is that to which one must be very close in order to discover it, or which one discovers in order to become close to it.

The mechanics of interpretation in this system is also involved with the operation of time. In the transformative interpretation that defines gospel, for Origen, discourses of futurity slide up against discourses of presence:

A gospel is a discourse consisting of an announcement of events that, because of the benefits they procure, please those hearing it when they receive the announcement. [...] Or a gospel is a discourse that itself makes present something good for the one who believes or a discourse promising that the promised good is present.

Announcement, presence-making, and promise operate as competing temporal models – yet still, Origen claims, “All of the definitions above are appropriate to the writings we entitle gospels,” that is, the function of gospel is to produce all of these multiple effects, including the tensions among them.⁴³ It is by this means that Origen gradually expands the remit of “gospel” from the four texts of the evangelists first to the whole of the New Testament, and then to include the whole of the Old as well: by figure, it too announces, promises, makes present. And we can discover how through interpretation.

(FIGURATION & FAILURE)

The involvement of figuration in temporality is one of this project’s persistent concerns – the problem that interpretation poses of being, temporally, in at least two places at once. The terms of the recent debate regarding the methods of queer historiography in early modern literary studies turn on the problem of figure. The debate, instigated by Valerie Traub in her *PMLA* polemic “The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies,”⁴⁴ is in some ways quite an old one, dating at least to disputes of twenty years’ vintage between David Halperin

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁴⁴ *PMLA* 128:1 (2013): 28-39. Further citations parenthetically.

and Eve Sedgwick regarding the historicity of sexual identity categories.⁴⁵ It turns on a set of binaries, all aligned closely with one another, the terms of each allegedly at odds: historicism and presentism; alterity and identity; diachrony and synchrony; chronology and temporality. On the side of the first terms, Traub stakes her own claim; on the other side, she places Carla Freccero and Madhavi Menon, as well as a number of other premodernist scholars of queer temporality less heavily targeted for critique, including Carolyn Dinshaw.

Traub defends a traditional historicism against the “unhistoricist” cadre of queer scholars whose work she characterizes as “sustained by the play of metaphors, rather than by discursive or material connections” – that is, as irresponsible to history (30). One of Traub’s targets in her *PMLA* piece is the rhetorical figure metalepsis, which both Carla Freccero and Madhavi Menon, in different ways, explore for its resonance with queer ways of being in language and time. “Metalepsis,” Traub writes, aiming at Freccero and Menon, “can be rhetorically powerful, but it is vulnerable to critique as fuzzy logic.” As “metaleptic sleight of hand [that] allows the ground of critique to keep shifting,” Traub further contends, “an on-again-off-again associational reasoning” fails to cohere into “a mode of queer argument” (30-1). The accusation of irresponsibility, imprecision, even fraudulence is scarcely implicit. This skepticism of the uses of figure as argument leads Traub to assert a set of polemical negatives:

Sexuality, the diverse enactments of erotic desire and physical embodiment; temporality, the various manifestations of time; and history, historicism, and historiography, the aggregate repertoire of cognitive and affective approaches to the past *are not intrinsically connected*. Neither straight identity nor heterosexual desire is the

⁴⁵ See Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Sedgwick’s critique in the introduction to *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 45-7; Halperin’s reply in the introduction to *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), esp. 10-13.

same as linear time. Not every diachronic or chronological treatment of temporality *needs to be* normativizing, nor *is every* linear arc sexually “straight.” A scholar’s adherence to chronological time does *not necessarily* imply a relation to sexuality or normativity. *Nor does* a scholar’s segmentation of time into periods. (31, my emphasis)

In one sense, well, *of course not*. But these negatives allow Traub to imply that Freccero’s and Menon’s interests in metalepsis emerge from a naïve belief in a one-to-one correspondence between temporal or chronographic models and ideologies of sexuality. Traub’s own deliberately reductive characterization of the “associational reasoning” as though it *were* taking place on literal terms renders it absurd – but at the cost of a troubling implication: that the practice of history, in order to make valid claims, must reject figurative language.

It’s strange to see a literary scholar, and whatever her preferred methods one as sensitive to literary meaning as Traub is, weighing in against what figuration can accomplish for literary-historical thought. It’s strange to sense her implicit preference for the literal – as though *history* and *literal language* were coextensive categories, especially strange on the understanding that she herself cannot possibly believe such a thing. Deliberately or otherwise, Traub has put her finger on a much older uneasiness about metalepsis, about its riskiness and the ease with which it might slide into catachresis or *abusio* – might be a crime against meaning rather than a clever vehicle for it. In her critique of the “fuzzy logic” of the “play of metaphors,” she aligns herself with those rhetoricians of premodernity who would prefer to relegate metalepsis to the margins of rhetoric. But as Brian Cummings has argued, in a study of metalepsis from Quintilian to Erasmus and Shakespeare, it is precisely its “risk of failure” that provides metalepsis with both its hermeneutic interest and its “place in rhetorical history”: as a “borderline figure, one that sometimes goes beyond the bounds, or strains the understanding,” it “provokes questions about the boundaries of metaphor

itself.”⁴⁶ Metalepsis, “haunted by an apprehension of its incompleteness” because it “multiplies metaphors out of each other without showing us what it is doing” and “transfers itself from one referent to the other without elucidation,” tests the limits of semantics but achieves a kind of meaning-making in and through that very boundary-pushing. Cummings anticipates objections like Traub’s in his observation that “a theory of semantic equivalence fails to register the way that [a metaleptic figure] takes risks with its own meaning, risks indeed that it will emerge as meaningless.”⁴⁷ But this riskiness only means that when the figure comes off, “the sheer thrill of success is precisely this sense of sharing of something recondite or mysterious, the way language pulls things together which seem in principle to be far apart.”⁴⁸ In some sense, Traub’s insistence on empiricism and the literal indexes a desire to know in full, whereas metalepsis acknowledges that we may know (that we may be in language) only in part, that meaning is always enigmatic or, in a term favored both by Cummings and by Saint Paul, mysterious. So what do we gain by that mystery in reading? I am interested less in taking a side in this debate – indeed, I think Traub’s characterization of diverse methods as sides in a debate is part of the problem – than in suggesting a way out of the bind of the binary terms that characterize it. This project suggests that early Christian modes of reading offer us a model of interpretation and temporality that can enrich and refine our own critical methods.

Typological reading, of necessity, entails a complex and mobile relationship with time. In the most basic sense, by joining one moment in salvational history to another, interpretation sutures disparate times together. In Origen’s definition of “gospel” emerges a

⁴⁶ “Metalepsis,” in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, eds. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 223-4.

⁴⁷ Cummings, 217-18.

⁴⁸ Cummings, 221.

mode of reading that is also a distinctly human way of knowing, like Paul's dark mirror: "For we knowe in part, and we prophecie in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. [...] For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:9-10, 12 [Geneva]). Stitching moment to moment in the temporal mechanics of typology is the stopgap measure we are left with until the veil of the world is lifted. In Erich Auerbach's study of the deep history of "figure," philological method reveals the inheritance by literary interpretation of the typological tradition.⁴⁹ And it also provides a model for understanding that tradition. As Auerbach observes, "in the figural system [...] events are considered not in their unbroken relation to one another" (as in linear chronological time), "but torn apart, individually, each in relation to something other that is promised and not yet present." Figures are "the tentative form of something eternal and timeless; they point not only to the concrete future, but also to something that always has been and always will be; they point to something which is in need of interpretation, which will indeed be fulfilled in the concrete future, but which is at all times present, fulfilled in God's providence, which knows no difference of time."⁵⁰

My interest in making early theological models of reading speak to contemporary queer ones lies not, or at least not merely or primarily, in recovering something lost, but in establishing a common interest between past and present that has been occluded by queer theory's uncritical inheritance of secularization. Put another way, affect studies and queer theory already have a tradition in devotional reading, a prehistory that they have yet to

⁴⁹ "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Gloucester, MA: Paul Smith, 1973), 11-76.

⁵⁰ Auerbach, 59.

acknowledge. My use of the word “prehistory” seems to imply a straightforward trajectory from then to now, but I will also attend to how the futures of the early texts I study here, to the varying degrees that they do point to futures, do not lie in our present. Whatever they gesture toward, it isn’t us.

To the degree that we might be intimate with these early texts, with the theological tradition, it will always be an uneasy relation – sometimes metaleptically far-fetched, sometimes risking catachresis, falling out of meaning altogether. But these tricky figures might have something particular to lend to study. In *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine famously distinguishes between *usus* and *fruitio* as two different orientations of love: “To enjoy something [*fruitio*] is to hold fast to it in love for its own sake. To use something [*usus*] is to apply whatever it may be to the purpose of obtaining what you love.”⁵¹ Of course the only thing to be properly enjoyed is god; everything we say we love in the world, if we love it properly, we *use* – love it toward god. “When you enjoy a human being in God, you are enjoying God rather than that human being. For you enjoy the one by whom you are made happy, and you will one day rejoice that you have attained the one in whom you now set your hope of attaining him” (25). Yet in our usual modes of expression, we don’t make these distinctions: I say “I love you” in the same terms in which I would say “I love god.” “Yet the idea of enjoying someone or something is very close to that of using someone or something together with love. For when the object of love is present, it inevitably brings with it pleasure [*delectationem*] as well. If you go beyond this pleasure and relate it to your permanent goal, you are using it, and are said to enjoy it not in the literal sense but in a transferred sense [*uteris ea*,

⁵¹ *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9. Latin from the digital *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 34, *De Doctrina Christiana Libri Quatuor* (<http://pld.chadwyck.com>).

et abusive, non proprie, diceris fru].”⁵² *Abusive, non proprie*: the distinction between a figurative and a literal sense. To love someone properly, that is, to enjoy them *in Deo*, but to say that you love them and to take pleasure in them, is an instance of *abusio*—catachresis. We cannot love one another in a literal sense; it will always be figurative, and a precarious figure at that, one which risks falling out of meaning. So when I say “I love you,” “you” become figurative in this operation. But, I’d suggest, that doesn’t reduce you to the flimsiness of figure – rather, it elevates figure or fulfills it, not “merely” figurative but the very mechanism by which something as powerful and important as an intimate attachment can proceed. This is one way in which theology might offer the sustaining ground of difficult adjacency that Sedgwick calls for as reparative reading: after all, Augustine’s discourse on love is oriented toward a mode of reading: “the fulfillment and end of the law and all the divine scriptures is to love the thing which must be enjoyed and the thing which together with us can enjoy that thing.”⁵³

Catachresis is as slippery as metalepsis: Quintilian names it as the trope that emerges when, having no proper word for a thing, we use the most nearly adjacent word we can find. But the term itself originates in grammar as a designation of error, the improper application of a word to something to which it does not belong: *κατά+χρησθαι*, *ab+usus*, usage gone awry, with a subtle implication of more than semantic perversion. By Puttenham’s time, it is simply “the figure of abuse,” freighted with all its connotations of deceit and violence.⁵⁴ But Augustine suggests that something as fundamental as love can only be articulated as a rupture in meaning, as a figure that threatens to collapse. The Christian system cherishes

⁵² Green, 25-26; Patrologia I.33.

⁵³ Green, 26-27.

⁵⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 8.2.6, 8.6.34-36; Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589), Xi^v.

such approximation, and it introduces useful friction into Dinshaw's model of love. Reading may be a form or an act of love, but it will always be a risky one, and will rarely feel like fulfillment or presence. The challenge of intimacy is in this: accepting a kind of closeness that can never be complete, that will always circle around loss and doubt. In the readings each of my chapters performs, difficult or even destructive feeling enables the reader's identification with the text she reads, creating the devotional intimacy that, however painfully, conditions faith.

My first chapter, "*Desideria Dilata*: Robert Southwell's Erotic Exegesis," establishes the primary interests of the project in the coordination of desire, rhetoric, and temporality in devotion through a reading of Southwell's 1591 prose treatise *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*. In his own terms, Southwell *dilates* the text of John 20, taking Mary's disconsolate weeping before the empty tomb of Christ as an opportunity to expand the time of the gospel. By amplifying the text's deferral of the risen Christ's arrival, Southwell "dwells," as he puts it, in Mary's surplus of mourning desire. Capacious, in need of contemplation and interpretation, Mary's tears are configured as a textual resource. Dilation collaborates in Southwell's work with its other master trope, prosopopoeia, which attempts to close the historical distance between Mary Magdalen and the reader by conveying her feeling as a voice to be inhabited. By turns voicing Mary and a narrator who is also her pastoral interlocutor, the text demands that the reader inhabit multiple empathetic positions—Mary's, the narrator's, even those of Christ and the angels, queerly oriented in multiple, multiply gendered, desiring positions. Combining the interpretive techniques of Jesuit meditation with those of a long exegetical tradition, Southwell brings Mary's past into the reader's present. This anachronic gesture, I argue, resembles what Elizabeth Freeman has called a "time bind," registering a "temporal

drag” on the time of reading.

Chapter Two, “Time as a Psalm: Anne Lock’s Recalcitrant Poetics,” takes up recalcitrance as the major impulse of the first English sonnet sequence: Anne Lock’s largely overlooked *Meditation of a Penitent Sinner* (1560), which she appended to her translations of John Calvin’s sermons on spiritual illness. Another dilatory text, Lock’s sequence expands Psalm 51 as an occasion for coping with despair. In a sequence more interested in the mechanics of desire itself than in the seizure of desire’s object, Lock develops a poetics of inarticulate utterance in reluctant, recursive sonnets that register their refusal to move forward at every level of their structure. Each sonnet dwells in a single verse of the psalm, registering reading as an act less of progression than of distension; even the single word enacts recalcitrance, monosyllables repeated over and over, materializing the word into a kind of frictional pull that slows interpretation almost to a stop. And the sequence ends in the same doubtful craving with which it began. As an “oft-repeted grone” or “crye,” the sonnets characterize their own mode of utterance as inarticulate—a deep irony in such a wrought poetic form. They nevertheless call on the paradoxical capacity of disabled speech to enable devotional feeling, drawing on Calvin’s insistence that prayer properly proceeds in “unspeable grones, such as cannot be expressed.” I read Lock’s recalcitrance as both a participation in and a deviation from Augustine’s model of time and cognition in reading: despair entails a rupture in the experience of time. Finally I suggest that Lock’s poetics of despair offers a mode of reading consonant with Ann Cvetkovich’s approach to depression as a critical posture.

In the third chapter, “Precarious Typology: Failure and Futurity in Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*,” I approach figures of devotional feeling with greater ambivalence,

as Lanyer tests the political limits of the Christian hermeneutics of desire. In creating a radical vision of readerly intimacy between women, Lanyer uncovers a deep tension between the promise of theological models of futurity and the threat of worldly material obstacles. She explores this dilemma at length in the three movements of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611). Her dedicatory poems seek to enact a community of reading women by characterizing that shared reading as a ritual scene, the poet as celebrant of a textual eucharist. The volume's title poem – the object of that ritual – takes up the exegetical hermeneutics of typology to re-imagine the Passion of Christ as a scene in a female salvational history, and envisions a feminist apocalypse in which the majesty of Lanyer's patroness rivals Christ's own. Yet the final poem, "The Description of Cooke-ham," is a nostalgic lament for the failure of precisely these projects: the material realities of marriage and property intervene in the scene of readerly intimacy between women, putting it out of reach – at least in this world. Lanyer nevertheless invests in the possibilities of the world to come, registering a deep ambivalence at the center of feminist devotion, holding in suspension the competing claims of worldly political economy and the eschatological promise of a divine new order. Lanyer offers, I argue, a productive means of engagement with Eve Sedgwick's model of "reparative reading," one that can account for the uneasy, painful elements of repair that have often been overlooked by inheritors of Sedgwick's work.

A coda on Katherine Philips' sacramental ambivalence explores the potential of this project for application in criticism more broadly, and confronts the limits of intimacy as a model for reading and for politics. Taking up Adrienne Rich's landmark essay on "Compulsory Heterosexuality," this final short chapter stakes its claim on a deliberately old-fashioned feminism in order to gesture toward a model of queer temporality that might be

properly *lesbian* by observing the uncanny political allegiances of Lanyer and Philips through their shared critiques of the institution of marriage. Philips, like Lanyer, poses theological figures as particularly problematic for women and for intimacies between women, at once celebrating the semiotic challenges that attend on female friendship (broadly defined) and expressing a sharp anxiety about them.

This project thus gradually moves toward a confrontation with the limits of its own terms and methods, a development that coincides with its movement into increasingly political readings of increasingly political texts. Properly devotional readings in Southwell and Lock become in Lanyer an ambivalence regarding what devotional reading can accomplish, an ambivalence that Philips carries out of the category of both the devotional and of reading as such in her acknowledgement of the incapacity of faith in figure to fully generate a politics. I have some anxiety of my own regarding this movement's cynical tendency – from a relative confidence in the possibility of repair in Southwell to the inevitability of loss in Philips – but I am at the same time hesitant to offer an ameliorative gesture to recuperate it. This dissertation is itself an artefact of dwelling in difficulty and bad feeling with a set of texts that at once offered themselves as means of survival and articulated the bleakness of the experience of such dwelling when it does not include access to any straightforward hope. It is, if only implicitly, a record of reading in the absence of faith. But it is just that: an artefact, a record. A testament to remaining.

II. *Desideria Dilata*: Robert Southwell's Erotic Exegesis

(ANACHRONISM)

In Rogier van der Weyden's "Mary Magdalen Reading," a fragment of a fifteenth-century altarpiece, Mary sits at a remove from the scene, comfortably reading, her jar of ointment by her side identifying her.



Figure 1: Rogier van der Weyden, "The Magdalen Reading" (c. 1435-8), The National Gallery, London

Something of historical consequence is happening beyond the frame of Mary's reading, presumed by art historians to be the Virgin and Child in the company of saints. In the original composition, Mary sits apart from this scene, in a different relationship to history and to the sacred, a relationship mediated by reading, rather than immediately engaged with what's right next to her. Some movement is suggested in the partial figures behind her – a walking stick thrust forward on the right suggests an imminent stride; the figure on the left kneels – but Mary's scene is a composition of incredible stillness, even the cushion she sits on suggesting she plans to remain there for a long time. And she is outside her own time: Mary Magdalen's story does not begin, in the gospels, until the end; her presence at the early moment of the Incarnation is already an anachronism. The effect of friction or tension between the incommensurate historical modes represented in this scene (or these scenes) is amplified by the fragmentation of the painting, the accident of history that has literally removed Mary's scene of reading from the scene of sacred history to which she is literally marginal, has refocused attention on her marginality, made her and her book the sole subject of a fragment rather than an incident to a whole.⁵⁵ Even the jar of ointment doesn't quite sit next to her, but in front of her, perspectively nearer the viewer, as though awaiting its time, which has not yet come. Mary Magdalen *will be*, the painting suggests, the anointer of the Messiah – but not yet. Yet still she is identified by a symbol of what she has not yet become. Caught in a fragment of time, Mary remains with her book while history proceeds around her.

This fragmentary temporality might be described in terms of what Elizabeth Freeman

⁵⁵ At some point in its history, the fragment was painted over to reveal only the figure of Mary Magdalen and none of her surroundings, amplifying yet further the effect of her remove from the scene:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Magdalen_Reading_uncleaned.jpg.

calls a “time bind”: the moment when “an established temporal order gets interrupted and new encounters consequently take place,” interruptions that constitute “points of resistance to [the] temporal order that, in turn, propose other possibilities for living in relation to indeterminately past, present, and future others: that is, of living historically.”⁵⁶ We might see van der Weyden’s Magdalen, in Freeman’s terms, as performing a version of “temporal drag” – dressed up out of time, a gospel figure in fifteenth-century clothing, a still figure exerting a “distorting pull” on the time of the scene, putting a kind of “necessary pressure on the present tense” of the altarpiece.⁵⁷ This distortion is, too, an effect of the material temporality of reading itself. Mary’s book, like her clothes, is an anachronism, a very fifteenth-century volume that is not explicitly identified but that one cannot help but see as the text of scripture. A psalter? A book of hours? Does Mary read in her book the very scene that she might witness, if only she looked up from her reading? The fabric that drapes the boards, bound into the book itself, identifies it as a girdle book – wrapped in cloth, and attachable to the clothes for easy carrying, easy reference, and, for Mary Magdalen in this altarpiece, easy access to a moment of peculiarly private devotion in a quiet corner of a public scene. The text is literally an extension of Mary’s clothes – and therefore of Mary’s body, and therefore of her self. As Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass have argued, clothing as “investiture” was understood in the Renaissance to literally *fashion* subjects, to be “deeply worn” as “the means by which a person was given a form, a shape, a social function, a ‘depth.’”⁵⁸ This effect of deep wearing can only be amplified by a thing that is at once worn

⁵⁶ Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xxii.

⁵⁷ Freeman, 62 and 64.

⁵⁸ Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2.

and read, as in the case of the Mary's girdle-book. In her fragment of time, she is in textual, as well as temporal drag – dressed up, as it were, not only as belonging to the painting's present, but also *as the book*, wearing deeply the thing she reads. The coordination of the material text with the material self suggests an intimate relation between text and self – that to “read deeply” might be, in some sense, to become the book, or at the very least, to be in extended time in a deep relation of mutual constitution with the book.

One more detail of this painting provides another dimension to the complex temporality of devotional reading: the brass or gold bar bookmark that rests across the top of the book's pages near the spine.⁵⁹ Not visible to the viewer are the cords or strings that hang from the bar, enabling the reader to mark several places at once, a small technological improvement on preserving cross-references by holding one's fingers between the pages at several sites. This little piece of reading technology suggests that Mary's reading proceeds cross-referentially, a procedure indispensable to the methods of Christian exegesis. Typology requires the reader to inhabit more than one textual site at once, and van der Weyden asks us to understand his Magdalen performing that multitemporal mode of interpretation. The bookmark confirms the painting's interest in anachrony as a commitment to a mode of reading: in order to dwell with this Mary Magdalen, we too must be able to read multiply. To return to Freeman's observation of the importance of putting pressure on the present tense, van der Weyden's Magdalen calls into question the stability of present time itself – to what time are we attached, when we encounter the static anachronism of her scene of reading? In what syntax would it be possible to articulate that temporal indeterminacy?

⁵⁹ I am grateful to Peter Stallybrass for helping me to see the bookmark and to understand its significance as a technology of cross-referential reading.

These questions provide a way into the scene that Robert Southwell amplifies in his 1591 *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*, the account in John 20 of Mary's devastated mourning for Christ and her eventual commission as *apostola apostolorum*. According to John, following Christ's resurrection, Mary Magdalen arrives at the empty tomb with John and Peter, who promptly flee. "But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping" (20:11).⁶⁰ Unlike the synoptic gospels, John leaves Mary alone there by the empty tomb, and leaves her there for some time, fixed in place by her loss and her confusion. When the angels who attend the tomb ask the potentially consoling question, "Woman, why weepest thou?", she takes it literally, and expresses in reply her basic misconception: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (20:13). She has failed to recognize the resurrection. When Christ does arrive, she still does not recognize him – he, too, asks her (woman) why she weeps. Taking him for the gardener, in a moment of desperate irony she asks if he knows where his own body might be (20:15). It is not until he says her name that realization dawns: "Jesus saith to her: Mary. She turning, saith to him: Rabboni (which is to say, Master)" (20:16). In this scene of divine interpellation, Mary *turns* from bereft longing toward the plenitude of perfect presence. As Southwell describes it in *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears*, her mourning is reconstituted as intimacy, an intimacy that transforms her in what Southwell calls "so strange an alteration [...] as if she had been wholly new made when she was only named."⁶¹ But in the next verse, the prohibition of touch comes so abruptly and so starkly that it has disoriented centuries of commentators: "Jesus saith to her: Do not touch

⁶⁰ All citations in this chapter from the Douai-Rheims Version.

⁶¹ *Marie Magdalens Funerall Teares* (London: John Wolfe for Gabriel Cawood, 1592) [second edition], K7^r. Further citations noted parenthetically. I have silently expanded contractions and regularized u/v, i/j, and the long *s*, but otherwise preserved original spelling and punctuation.

me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father” (20:17). There is another turn to come: he dispatches her to tell the other disciples of the resurrection, and she goes. The interpellative scene of the turn moves into her commission as *apostola apostolorum* – it sets her on a new path, directs her into a new orientation toward the community, a new relationship to the apparent absence of Christ from the world.

But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping. Before that transformative turn can occur, she must *stand there*, arrested by her extremity of feeling. *But*: her divergence from the path laid out by John’s and Peter’s flight is precisely the refusal to move or be moved, this standing that is also an extension into her desire for the absent body of Christ. The others move on, *but Mary stood*. Lancelot Andrewes identifies this as one of the “arguments of her great love” in the text of John 20:

But Mary stood (that is as much to say, as) others did not, *But*, shee did. [...] *But Mary* went not, shee *stood still*. Their *going away* commends her *staying behinde*. [...] *Fortior eam figebat affectus*, saith *Augustine*, a stronger affection fixed her, so fixed her, that shee had not the power to remove thence. Goe who would, shee would not, but *stay still*. To *stay*, while others doe soe, while company staves, that is the worlds love: But *Peter* is gone, and *Iohn* too : all are gone, and we left alone; then to *stay*, is love.⁶²

But has at least two functions here: to signal the distinction between Mary and the others, and to signal the difference between going and staying. Her fixity becomes her exceptionality, and in turn her exemplarity. In Andrewes’ citation of Augustine, we discover that it happens *to* her: *affectus* is the subject of this fixity and she its object; she has no power against it. But to be thus overcome is her virtue: to stay still, to be unmoving and unmoveable, is the necessary condition of her being in the way of Christ when he arrives. It is this period of prolonged stasis in the cognitive obliteration of extreme feeling, in the space opened by the deferral of Christ’s arrival, that Southwell takes as an occasion for his dilatory

⁶² *XCVI Sermons* (London: Richard Badger, 1631), Bbb5^r.

meditation. The others move on, *but Mary stood* – and Southwell’s text invites us to stay with her. Like the fragmentary time of van der Weyden’s painting, Southwell’s dilation of the text of John resists movement, exerting a kind of temporal drag on the time of the gospel. For Freeman, the “bind” of queer temporality is multiple; it signifies asynchronous attachment (willing or otherwise) to moments in history, the possibility or the danger that such anachronic investment might bind the subject in time, and also that the subject might create in her temporal resistance an effect of drag. Drag both in the sense of dressing-up out of time and in the sense of kinetic resistance – the capacity, as a young Shulamith Firestone put it, to “catch time short, and not just drift along in it.”⁶³ “Temporal drag,” for Freeman, registers the importance of “retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past” – of *drag* – to the unfinished business of queer feminism: how a return, in the present, to the stylized intellectual modes of an earlier moment of feminist history can constitute “a *productive* obstacle to progress, a usefully distorting pull backward, and a necessary pressure on the present tense.”⁶⁴

The queer effect of the dilated temporality of *Mary Magdalen’s Funeral Tears* is amplified by its master trope, prosopopoeia, which turns the reader’s attention and investment toward Mary Magdalen’s own voice – or even *into* her voice, inviting the reader to inhabit her speech. At the same time, Southwell voices a narrator who contests, admonishes, instructs, and empathises with her – another voice that both addresses the reader and invites the reader’s identification. By turns voicing that narrator, as a pastoral interlocutor for Mary, and Mary herself, Southwell orients and reorients his readers, demanding that they occupy a series of subject-positions – or several at once – that condition their own interpretive and

⁶³ Cited in Freeman, 77.

⁶⁴ Freeman, 62 and 64, italics original.

affective dispositions toward the text, toward Mary and her desire, toward Christ and his deferred arrival. In this field of multiple modes of address, the reader is queerly oriented by, toward, with, in Mary's desire: does the reader speak along with Mary, or does Mary speak to her? Does she adopt the narrator's admonitory or empathetic position, or is she so admonished or empathised with? All of these at once, or each of these in turn: the reading subject of Southwell's text must be multiple, must inhabit more than one desiring perspective, more than one gendered bodily disposition, more than one orientation. In the anachronic temporality of devotional reading, dilation and prosopopoeia collaborate in Southwell's text to render his erotic exegesis into prose.

(DILATION)

In order to pursue his reading of John 20, Southwell locates in Mary's wet, desiring femininity – in her tears – the ground of his exegetical method, mobilizing embodied affect for meditative and interpretive purpose. As his epistle dedicatory to Dorothy Arundell indicates, this project is in part a manifesto of devotional eroticism in poetry: Southwell makes a strong claim for the necessity of orienting erotic poetics toward divinity (a claim about writing) that also entails a claim for the capacity of feeling to generate meaning (a claim about reading).

For as passion, and especially this of love, is in these daies the chiefe commaunder of moste mens actions, & the Idol to which both toonges and pennes doe sacrifice their ill bestowed labours: so is there nothing nowe more needefull to bee intreated, then how to direct these humours unto their due courses, and to draw this floud of affections into the right chanel. Passions I allow, and loves I approove, onely I woulde wishe that men would alter their object and better their intent. (A3^v)

This passage is one of Louis Martz's proof-texts in his argument that the devotional poetics

of love constitutes a mere parody of conventional erotic lyric.⁶⁵ Yet what Southwell suggests is not the replacement of erotic feeling by devotional feeling, but rather the appropriation of eroticism *as* a devotional mode. In “due course,” in the “right chanel,” desiring inclination – passions and loves – takes the path it was always already supposed to take: toward God. It is object-choice that interests Southwell here as the primary category of desire, a priority whose implications become clear around the problem of Mary Magdalen’s crucial mistake, which Southwell characterizes as an failure of faith:

And if her weakenes of faith, (an infirmitie then common to all Christes disciples) did suffer her understanding to be deceived, yet was her will so settled in a most sincere and perfect love, that it led all her passions with the same bias, recompensing the want of believe, with the strange effectes of an excellent charitie. (A5^v-6^r)

A superabundance of feeling – the *flood* of affections – that might otherwise register as excess is perfected by its object: Mary’s “passions,” Southwell writes, were “commaunded by such a love as could never exceede, because the thing loved was of infinite perfection” (A5^v). The passive constructions throughout Southwell’s prose, his habit of positioning Mary and her thought as the objects of verbs whose subjects are terms of feeling – love, desire, passion – emphasize the agency not of Mary as a subject but of feeling itself. Passion is something that happens *to* her. That passion is enough even to overcome a serious mistake of doctrine: her “weakenes,” her failure to recognize the Resurrection, is less significant than the fact of her love. This is what sustains the long period of Mary’s dilated desire, what fixes her before the tomb, puts her where she needs to be in order to be in the way of Christ when he arrives.

Mary’s weeping, as the index of her error of doctrine, becomes an occasion to inhabit

⁶⁵ The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century, revised edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 184-93.

her extreme longing for the presence of Christ – the scriptural ground on which Southwell builds his investment in the affective phenomena of devotional reading. In his epistle dedicatory to Dorothy Arundell, Southwell declares that “among other glorious examples of this Saints life, I have made choise of her Funeral Tears, in which as shee most uttered the great vehemencie of her fervent love to Christ, so hath she given therein largest scope to dilate upon the same”(A3^{r-v}). Tears speak: as utterance, they constitute the kind of exegetical ground usually associated with the text of scripture. Their capacity – their *scope* – demands interpretation and commentary, demands *dilation*. As utterance, moreover, Mary’s tears express not only mourning but erotic attachment – her *fervent love*. Desire speaks in Mary’s body – and thus makes itself legible, makes itself available for Southwell’s mode of meditative dilation. In his more sober preface “To the Reader,” Southwell situates his work in the context of a long exegetical tradition: “the ground therof being in scripture, and the form of enlarging it, an imitation of the ancient doctors” (A8^v). Taken together, the two prefaces sketch an analogy between Mary’s capacious tears and the capacious text of scripture, between dilating on her love and enlarging the gospel text, between embodiment and interpretation. Feeling – love, desire, mourning – itself emerges as both the object and method of reading.

This method turns the text of John back on itself, taking up each of its verses in turn in order to dwell in them, perhaps most importantly in the abiding question of affect: *Woman, why weepest thou?* Why, indeed? The question is the occasion for Southwell to meditate at length on the problem of Mary’s mourning – on the question of the propriety of her weeping (did not Christ forbid the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for him?), on her preference for weeping over reasoned thought, on the excessive somatic femininity of her

weeping. *Woman, why weepst thou?* becomes the text's major refrain in its opening movements. With its emphasis on *woman* (and "too much a woman" [E6^v]), the citation challenges at once her mourning itself (apparently causeless) and the peculiarly feminine mode of her mourning (too wet, too porous, too undisciplined).⁶⁶ As a result of her "incredulous humor" (E6^v) – her unbelief coded as a somatic disorder – Mary's "wittes are smothered with too thicke a mist, to admit these unknown beames" of right belief (F1^v). Yet the question also gestures to the most generative problem posed by this passage from John: we might also paraphrase *why weepst thou?* as *why has the gospel text given us this weeping to think with, what importance might this weeping have, what is there to be understood in this figure of weeping?* Southwell recreates a problem of the gendered embodiment of feeling as a problem of interpretation, enlivening the lifeless cultural-studies jargon of "interrogating" the text: his questions excavate the surface of John's text, bringing Mary's consciousness into the frame. When Mary's reply comes at last in her own voice, she objects that "if this [weeping] be a fault, I will never amend it [...], for my part, sith I have lost my myrth, I will make much of my sorrow" (C8^v). As she later protests, "What needeth my answeare, where the miserie itselfe speaketh?" (F3^v). Voicing Mary's own defense of her weeping and her static standing by the tomb creates the dilated space in which the importance of "making much of sorrow," of dwelling in feeling, can be elaborated and understood.

The dilation of Mary's mournful desire is the condition of her disposition toward Christ upon his arrival. Southwell expands the time of that delay to include the reader in Mary's longing – deferring the end that we know (though she doesn't) must arrive in order

⁶⁶ On the excessive humoral wetness of femininity, see Gail Kern Paster, 'Leaky Vessels: the Incontinent Women of City Comedy,' in *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 23-63.

that we might dwell in that suspension of desire. In a sixth-century homily on John 20, Gregory the Great likewise invests in delay, configured as dilation in the senses both of expansion and deferral, as he reads Mary's "dilated desires" as the very mechanism of her seeking and eventual finding of Christ.

We must consider this woman's state of mind, that a great force of love inflamed her. When even the disciples departed from the sepulchre, she did not depart. She sought for him whom she had not found, weeping as she searched; being inflamed with the fire of her love, she burned with desire for him who she believed had been taken away. So it happened that she who stayed behind to seek him was the only one who saw him.

Qua in re pensandum est hujus mulieris mentem quanta vis amoris accenderat, quae a monumento Domini, etiam discipulis recedentibus, non recedebat Exquirebat quem non invenerat, flebat inquirendo, et amoris sui igne succensa, ejus quem ablatum credidit ardebat desiderio. Unde contigit ut eum sola tunc videret, quae remansit ut quaereret.⁶⁷

What appears to be a tautology – she's the only one who found him because the only one who sought him – creates in syntactic parallel (*videret, quaereret*) a strong relation between seeking and seeing. By *remaining*, by refusing to move on, in the paradoxical simultaneity of seeking and stasis, Mary gains access to the object of her desire. The condition of that remaining is indeed her *burning desire* itself – which for Gregory paradoxically generates the presence of its object:

She sought a first time, and found nothing; she persevered in seeking, and so it happened that she found him. It came about that her unfulfilled desires increased, and as they increased they took possession of what they had found. (188)

Quaesivit ergo prius, et minime invenit; perseveravit ut quaereret, unde et contigit ut

⁶⁷ English taken from "Homily 25," in *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. David Hurst (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 188; Latin from the digital *Patrologia Latina*, <http://pld.chadwyck.com>, vol. 76, *XL Homiliarum in Evangelia*, XXV.1. Hereafter cited parenthetically by page and section number, respectively.

inveniret, actumque est ut desideria dilata crescerent, et crescentia caperent quod invenissent. (XXV.2)

If “holy desires [...] increase by delay [*dilatione crescunt*]” (189; XXV.2), that increase only makes possible the eventual seizure of the desired object. *Crescentia caperent*: the expansion of desire – its crescence; its dilation – is itself the mechanism of possession. In that homely little conventional *contigit* – “contigit ut eum sola tunc videret”; “contigit ut inveniret” – is revealed the *contingency* of Mary’s seeing or finding of Christ. Contingent, of course, on her desire – first, “ardebat desiderio,” she burns with desire, *unde* contigit: her sole seeing of Christ is predicated on her ardor. Gregory then repredicates her finding of Christ on the perseverent seeking that arises from that desire: *unde* contigit ut inveniret. From contingency to contingency, Mary eventually arrives at the moment of finding and of taking hold – in the subjunctive; the verb itself registering its own syntactic contingency. As Carolyn Dinshaw has observed, “contingency” as *com+tangere*, touching-with, has a special value for queer history in its emphasis on the “sensible” and the “tactile.”⁶⁸ Gregory’s emphasis on contingency thus accrues a kind of irony, as it describes the uncertain route to a touch that is at first deferred and ultimately prohibited.

It matters, too, that Gregory describes what happens as *finding* – *contigit ut inveniret*. As a term of rhetoric and hermeneutics, *inventio* invites allegoresis of Mary’s desiring disposition as an *interpretive* one. In the very first sentence of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine turns the *inventio* of rhetoric toward scriptural hermeneutics: “There are two things on which all interpretation of scripture depends: the process of discovering [*modus inveniendi*] what we

⁶⁸ Getting Medieval, 39.

need to learn, and the process of presenting [*modus proferendi*] what we have learnt.”⁶⁹ For Augustine, the “most hidden meanings” of scripture are “discovered” – *inventum sunt* – by the interpretation of figures and tropes (88; III.xxix.41). The term is everywhere in *De Doctrina* – but perhaps most beautifully in the famous passage on the pleasure of figurative difficulty: “no one disputes that it is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery, and much more rewarding to discover meanings that are won only with difficulty [*Nunc tamen nemo ambigit et per similitudines libentius quaeque cognosci et cum aliqua difficultate quae sita multo gratius inveniri*]” (33; II.vi.8). The obscurity of the difficult text that yields pleasure in *inventionem* is analogous to the impassable difficulty Mary encounters at the empty tomb – the yawning absence of Christ a figure she does not (yet) know how to interpret.

Mary’s *inventio* provides a model for interpretation. And it is dilation – the deferral of satisfaction, the expansion of desire – that motivates both Mary’s standing by the tomb and the reader’s remaining with the text in the space and time of interpretation. The extension of the scene in John 20 through interpretation prolongs the period of want, in both senses of lack and longing. At the moment of crisis just before Christ’s appearance, Southwell’s narrator asks, “To what end, O sweet Lord, doest thou thus suspend hir longinges, prolong hir desires, and martyr hir with these tedious delaies?” (H5^v). This question likewise motivates Southwell’s own project, which amplifies the period of delay in order to explore the devotional capacity of dilated desire. For *Mary Magdalen’s Funeral Tears*, in the analogy between the dilation of desire and the dilation of the text, Mary’s desire becomes coextensive with Southwell’s text.

⁶⁹ *On Christian Teaching*, trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8; *Patrologia Latina* vol. 34, I.i.1. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

In an expansive body of philological work on Renaissance *dilation*, Patricia Parker has explored the richness of the term for understanding the poetics and politics of gender and genre. “Dilation as delay,” Parker writes, represents “a kind of semantic crossroads, a complex in which constructs rhetorical and narrative, philosophical and theological, judicial and erotic overlap as figures for the space and time of the text itself.”⁷⁰ In the case of scriptural exegesis, dilation as the opening of a hermetic text is the condition of human relationship to the divine – in Southwell’s formulation of Mary’s tears as “scope to dilate” on John 20, as in Donne’s description of the process by which a scriptural “Text is diluted, diffused into a Sermon.”⁷¹ As Parker observes, dilation thus becomes in the Christian tradition “a synonym for temporality itself, or for the mediate as distinguished from the eternal, simultaneous, or immediate.”⁷² In the face of the divine Word, the human condition is to be forever proliferating words. At the same time, dilation figures the erotic suspense – the delay of consummation – that motivates plot in a romance tradition stretching back to Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria*; at the same time, it figures the eschatological suspense that romance depends on to hold off end-times.⁷³ The conjunction of the theological and the amatory models of delay in romance should be no surprise: the mechanics of desire for god are not, as Southwell and Gregory have suggested, so distinct from the mechanics of earthly desire.

Parker further argues that dilation has sinister consequences for the representation of women – women’s voracious bodies, women’s appetitive sexuality, women’s excessive talk. Under the prurient gaze of Renaissance anatomy, for example, dilation features as a signal

⁷⁰ Parker, “Dilation and Delay: Renaissance Matrices,” *Poetics Today* 5:3 (1984), 520.

⁷¹ Cited in “Matrices,” 524.

⁷² “Matrices,” 523. Parker cites a Latimer sermon in which God’s will, as opposed to human (textual) activity, is done “without dilation.”

⁷³ “Matrices,” 528-9; *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

trope of a “quasi-pornographic discourse [...] that seeks to bring a hidden or secret place to light,” seeks to open female bodies in order to expose them – and ultimately, control them.⁷⁴ The femininity of Erasmian *copia* then begins to look less innocent. Rhetorical dilation takes on the same potentially disruptive characteristics of *fatness* that desiring female bodies do in the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson. Parker rightly critiques the political authority of male gazes and the rhetorical authority of male writers that always, ultimately, contain the dilated femininity that both props up and threatens their generic programmes. “Copia,” as she writes, “must be controlled” : rhetoric moves through “the dilation and control of a copiousness figured as female [...] in order finally to dramatize the very process of its containment, the limiting structures of authority and control.”⁷⁵ This drama of containment is likewise at stake in secular romance in dilation’s sister-trope – the *error*, in the senses of both mistake and wandering, that suspends the text at the “threshold before the promised end,” that, holding the narrative end at bay, becomes coextensive with the time of the text itself.⁷⁶ It is error – a mistake of faith – that motivates the scene in John 20, and Southwell’s whole project in *Mary Magdalen’s Funeral Tears*: Mary has failed to recognize the resurrection. That failure creates space for her mourning desire and motivates the extensive discourse between her and the narrator. For Southwell, that is, error is an amenity in itself: his aim is not to contain but to inhabit Mary’s debilitatingly desiring femininity – and to invite his reader to inhabit it, too. Mary’s weeping is excessive, her faith imperfect – but it’s precisely in her somatic affective disorder that she offers an alternative to Parker’s reading of feminized textual dilation as always-already the object of a disciplinary apparatus that seeks to

⁷⁴ Parker, “Othello and Hamlet: Dilation, Spying, and the ‘Secret Place’ of Women,” *Representations* 44 (1993), 60.

⁷⁵ *Fat Ladies*, 31.

⁷⁶ *Inescapable Romance*, 4.

neutralize it. The most stunning feature of Southwell's text might be that its motive is not containment but empathy.

(PROSOPOPOEIA)

Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears generates that empathy through a mechanics of voicing that seeks to bridge the historical divide between Mary and the reader – or not anything so easy as to bridge it, but to find a way of coping with the “time bind” that emerges in the simultaneity of an unbridgeable historical gulf with the reader's affective intimacy with Mary and her longing. Convinced of Christ's death, in the worldly sense, Mary can only conclude that his body has been stolen – “They have taken away my lord, and I know not where they have laid him,” reads John (20:13). This is the heart of her error of faith, so profound as to disarticulate her very self: “She was not there where shee was, for shee was wholly where hir master was, more where she loved then where she lived, and lesse in her selfe then in his bodie, which notwithstanding, where it was shee could not imagine” (B6^v). Like the misty cognitive challenge posed by her weeping, this disarticulation or distension registers first as an impairment. “Love is as strong as death,” Southwell writes, a citation from the Song of Songs (8:6). But he means it not in the sense of the citation – in which love's strength transcends or overcomes death – but in the sense that love induces a living death, so that Mary “is now in so imperfect a sort alive, that it is proved true in her [...] For what could death have done more in Mary then Love did?” Reduced to her tears, she is deprived of even the basic cognitive capacity that would enable her to recognize the Resurrection, or to react to the pastoral empathy of Southwell's narrator, or to answer the angels who seek to comfort her with anything but irrational refusal of clarity, or indeed to make any decision at all that

would enable her to pursue the knowledge she seeks: “Her wittes were astonied, and all her senses so amased, that in the end finding she did not know, seeing she could not discern, hearing she perceived not” (B6^v). Yet Mary’s astonishment is coextensive with her distension, not there where she was, more where she loved than where she lived: it is a signal characteristic of devotional desire. Pseudo-Dionysius writes, arguing for the recuperation of *eros* as a vital theological category, “this divine yearning [*eros*] brings ecstasy so that the lover belongs not to self but to the beloved.”⁷⁷ *Eros* is what moves between God and humanity and enables human access to divinity – it is by *eros* that the “differentiation” of divinity into the world and human striving toward it may happen at all. *Eros* is in brief “a capacity to effect a unity, an alliance, and a particular commingling in the Beautiful and Good.”⁷⁸ Distension is a condition of devotion: there is no investment in coherent subjectivity here.

As Southwell argues in the epistle dedicatory, Mary’s “perfect love” repairs her “want of belief, with the strange effectes of an excellent charitie” (A5^v-A6^r). Mary herself echoes this sentiment: “as in him alone is the uttermost of my desires, so he alone is the summe of all my substance” (G7^{r-v}), and from such desires, such substance, “such effectes must follow as are without example” (H1^r). The strangeness, the unexampledness of the “effectes” of Mary’s love register the central paradox of Southwell’s text: that feeling both debilitates and enables devotional disposition toward divinity, that desire and delay, indices of radical absence, are at the same time the very mechanisms of presence and possession. Yet Mary’s disarticulated self remains the site of a fundamental impairment: she remains committed to the problem of the missingness of Christ’s body. Southwell in turn commits to the potential

⁷⁷ “The Divine Names,” in *The Complete Works*, ed. and trans. Colm Lubhéid and Paul Rorem (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 82.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

amenity of even this error, engaging his narrator in a debate with Mary on her own misguided terms: unable to persuade her out of the stasis of her error, he must accept her faulty premise in order to contend with her at all. The narrator sustains a long dispute with her, putting pressure on the logic of her error in order to provide an opportunity to her voice.

This is the occasion for the text's most stunning account of its own practice. Southwell breaks off mid-argument to make an extradiegetic observation on his practice: "But to feel more of their sweetness, I will pound these spices, and dwell a while in the peruse of thy resolute fervour" (G5^v). The material, sensory quality of meditative prose emerges vividly here in the relentlessness of a stylistic pestle releasing the sweet essential property of spiritual spice. Southwell's spice-pounding is not consumptive – violent, perhaps, but the significant property of the spice is not diminished but activated by the pounding it receives. In the ambiguity of his sensory lexicon, the sweetness of spice is not to be smelled or tasted specifically but more generally – and perhaps more capaciously – *felt*. This conspicuous attention to the sensory as a figurative vehicle for a method of reading (and of writing – even of the movement from reading to writing) recalls Ignatius of Loyola's insistence in the *Spiritual Exercises* on the sensory involvement of the "*the whole composite self*, I mean body and soul together," in the process of meditation.⁷⁹ Southwell's complex figure may after all be more literal than it appears – extending the moment of "dwelling" by insisting on its activation of embodied perception. The metaleptic movement from the figure of spice-pounding to the figure of dwelling, itself a "strange effecte," registers something almost inarticulable about what it means to spend time with a text – with an act of

⁷⁹ "Spiritual Exercises," in *Personal Writings*, ed. and trans. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin, 1996), 295.

meditation that is also necessarily an act of interpretation and an act of writing – as a felt phenomenon. The pounding of spices means internalizing the text, consuming it bodily, in order to generate empathy with Mary Magdalen – in order, through a meditative interpretation, to approach her affectively. Southwell's figure makes clear the significance of the body to interpretation, to this process of turning and returning to the text that shapes the reader in the most material ways. Southwell, in other words, materializes the figure of dilation to explicitly include the circuitry that runs between affect, embodiment, and interpretation. The aim is to distort the time of reading – to produce in the devotional sensorium a means of extending that time. The figure's own contortion registers its resistance to the normal order of time in reading – the bind of dwelling like a gloss on John 20:11, "*But Mary stood without at the sepulchre, weeping.*"

Mary echoes this language of dwelling, too, as she begins to recognize the impossibility of moving out of her grief-stricken stasis into action: "stil I am forced to dwel in this answer. *They have taken away my Lord, and I knowe not where they have put him*" (H3^v). She *dwells* in a citation of her own words in John, as Southwell dwells in his perusal. As Mary begins to speak in the terms of Southwell's own method, the text's real investments in its master tropes of speech and address – prosopopoeia and apostrophe – begin to emerge. Meanwhile, at the end of this long discourse, we remain with her in the dilemma with which it began, as though suspended with her in the cognitive stasis that keeps her standing and weeping, not there where she was, more where she loved than where she lived. *Still I am forced to dwell in this answer*. Southwell's meditative method enacted in Mary's cognitive stasis. Just as earlier she queries the angels' response to her weeping, she here performs Southwell's method of putting interpretive pressure on the text of John. At the first citation of this

“answer” in which she dwells, she draws the reader’s attention to the textuality of her own words: “*They have taken away*, O unfortunate word. *They have taken away my Lord*” (F3^v). The typographic distinction between the conventional italics of citation and the roman type of Mary’s lamenting interjection creates a strange effect of its own: Mary’s speech comes to us as always-already citational, as though she is quoting the text of John and issuing a commentary on it. As though she reads the same gospel text that we do: a dizzying historical impossibility that recalls that of van der Weyden’s reading Magdalen. When she later reiterates the verse, slightly paraphrased, it is no longer italicized and thus easier to understand as proleptic – as historical speech awaiting its record: “And nowe (O grieffe) because I know not where he is, I cannot imagin how to help, for they have taken him away, and I know not where they have put him” (F8^r). But when at last she observes her enforced static *dwelling* in her answer, the verse is once more citational – in italics emphasized by her deixis, *this* answer. She dwells as we do, caught in the time of this one half-verse by Southwell’s spice-pounding. Southwell’s implicit argument is that understanding the gospel text requires the reader’s empathetic investment – in order to read John adequately, we must be able to think and feel as Mary Magdalen does. We must, in other words, be able to speak in her voice. And when we do, historical time seems to collapse.

This invitation to identification in feeling is a signal feature of prosopopoeia, in both classical and early modern understandings of its rhetorical capacities. A figure of speech that is also a figure of *speaking*, prosopopoeia of necessity demands the investment of identification. An early modern boy’s earliest encounters with the craft of language in schoolroom rhetorical exercises in personification asked him to understand language itself to

be nearly coextensive with prosopopoeia.⁸⁰ The task of writing a speech in the voice of Caesar demanded that the boy, however absurd it might be, identify with Caesar – to, in some sense, imagine himself to *be* Caesar. Similarly, Cicero and Quintilian both observe that in order to personate feeling, and in order to evoke it in his audience, the orator must himself rouse his passions to his subject – in prosopopoeia.⁸¹ As Gavin Alexander puts it, prosopopoeia thus has an “innate tendency [...] to ignore interiority and to elide performance with identity,” so that “personhood as it is configured and enacted in Renaissance fictions is built on the rhetorical idea that a self is the words it speaks.”⁸² Yet this fantasy of seamless elision cannot account for the challenges of figures of speaking, for the friction we encounter in them. Nor does the dismissal of “interiority” and other modes of depth from the alleged surface of rhetorical figure account for the movement between the voice ostensibly made present in figure and the irreducible absence or distance of that voice.

This kind of complexity is much more in evidence in the long history of rhetorical personification in the Christian tradition – a history richly suggested by Paul de Man in an otherwise archly secular essay on prosopopoeia, where the ensouled body serves as his aptest analogy for figurative language in general: “The language of tropes [...] is indeed like the body, which is like its garments, the veil of the soul as the garment is the sheltering veil of the body.”⁸³ But where de Man understands prosopopoeia to be therefore (only) “privative” – because the very purpose of the figure is to revive the voice it stages only to replace it –

⁸⁰ See e.g. Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

⁸¹ See Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom*, 12-25; Gavin Alexander, “Prosopopoeia,” in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, eds. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 100.

⁸² “Prosopopoeia,” 102.

⁸³ “Autobiography as De-facement,” *MLN* 94:5 (1979), 929-30.

the tradition on which he calls for his analogy of embodiment has a more complex understanding of the relationship of language to absence. And as I have argued, with Jones and Stallybrass, no “garment” is *only* a “sheltering veil” – it is also constitutive of the body beneath it. The Pauline lexicon at work in de Man’s analogy is the source of Origen’s foundational hermeneutics of the inner and outer senses of body and of text – the spiritual sense finding expression in the material of body and letter, just as prosopopoeia gives voice to what is missing, what is inapprehensible. In this tradition, figure can *never* be privative: it is to the contrary the vehicle of the ongoing process of interpretation – of what Origen called the transformation of “the sensible gospel into the spiritual.”⁸⁴ As John Parker has argued, prosopopoeia was vital to the early Christian exegetical tradition precisely because it could accommodate the complexity of that transformation. It facilitated typology because it allowed, for example, Christ to speak in the voice of the prophets of the Old Testament, allowed the erotic drama of the Song of Songs both to make sense *as* drama, and to be understood as Christian allegory. Readers of the Psalms, too, can identify with their speaking voices because of what Philip Sidney called David’s “prosopopoeias.” The trope was an especially useful one to early Christian thinkers, Parker argues, in part because it put the material mediation of the masks (*personae*) of early theatre to theological work, “substitut[ing] [...] the *personae* of God for theater-masks.” Trinitarian doctrine according to Tertullian thus “sacrificed theater by providing in its place a more sublime form of acting,” of personification.⁸⁵ The theological *prosopon poieion* of divinity’s address to humanity, to the degree that, as Parker argues, it is always already theatrical, both makes the ineffable

⁸⁴ Origen, *Commentary on John, Book I* in *Origen*, ed. and trans. Joseph W. Trigg (London: Routledge, 1998), 109.

⁸⁵ “Persona,” in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, eds. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 594.

accessible and remains as the irreducible sign of the limitation of that access.

The texture of a textual surface mediates persona as a mask does – or more, because we come into contact with the text, brush up against it, in an intimacy more available in reading than in the theatre. Reading intimately is a kind of performance, too – as the reader takes on the voice (the persona) of the speaking figure, she also internalizes the text. That interpretive performance is one piece of what is happening in the impact of a gesture like Southwell's personation of Mary Magdalen quoting from a gospeller's account of Mary Magdalen's speech – amplified by its italics, it stops us short. Like Mary, *still* – stalled in long duration, unmoving in extended time – we are *forced to dwell* – literally arrested by the site where prosopopoeia meets citation, figure meets interpretation, rhetoric meets hermeneutics. If, as Parker wryly suggests, the mimetic personifications of poetry are themselves in some way “even more hollow” than the casual deceptions of theatricality,⁸⁶ do they not then also, as Parker writes elsewhere of typological figures, “yawn for fulfillment”?⁸⁷ And what might fulfill them but the investment of a reader's attention – her identification with the voice that speaks, her inhabiting of the text she reads, filling it out?

As Margreta de Grazia has suggested, prosopopoeia “encourages anachronism.”⁸⁸ In voicing the past, and in asking a reader to dwell with that voicing, the figure necessarily stands out of ordinary time. And Southwell understands this problem of time also as a problem of feeling: Mary's grief has removed her from herself in more ways than one – she's not only “not there where she was,” but not, in a sense, *when* she was, either. This challenging temporality is vital to those aspects of Southwell's project that require the

⁸⁶ “Persona,” 605.

⁸⁷ *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 50.

⁸⁸ “Anachronism,” in *Cultural Reformations*, op. cit., 22.

reader's investment in and identification with the text of *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* in order to have the affective purchase that motivates them. As the problem of Mary's gospel-citation makes clear, voice, too, puts pressure on the present tense. For Freeman, rhetorical figures of time and its order or disorder signal those sites where queer ways of being in time surface in literary language – hysteron proteron, prolepsis, anastrophe, asynchrony, anachronism, delay, repetition, all resist the ostensible linearity of historical life and register in reading the felt experience of time out of order. I'll add to her list Southwell's dilatory metalepsis, as well as prosopopoeia. Not conventionally understood as a figure of time, prosopopoeia nevertheless demonstrates its anachronic potential as it asks us to cross a historical divide in order to inhabit Mary Magdalen's voice, and as it forces us to dwell in Mary's stalled time of loss and longing. Southwell's dilation of the text of John, configured as delay, exerts the "distorting pull" of kinetic and interpretive drag – in order to "dwell a while," to persist in perusal, his text resists the ordinary progress of reading in time. In Southwell's voicing of Mary's own attitude to that "distorting pull" – her observation of being *forced to dwell* in her static astonishment, her statement of what she knows not, prosopopoeia reveals fully its intimate involvement in the business of time. In the language of "dwelling," Southwell conjoins his own meditative method with the anachronic quality of Mary's voice and with her suspension in time, her recalcitrance and refusal as well as her cognitive impairment. Mary's citation of her own words in John exhibits the dangerous side of this – to be *forced to dwell* in one fixed moment, to be unable to move into a more promising future, is to live the discomfort of being caught in time, trapped in the undertow.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Freeman's epigraph to her temporal drag chapter is a quotation from Meryl Altman on

(CATACHRESIS : OR, DISASTER)

The affective content of prosopopoeia is exquisitely and explicitly suggested by Thomas Lodge in the title of his 1596 meditation in imitation of Southwell on the weeping before the cross of the *Virgin Mary: Prosopopeia, Containing the teares of the holy, blessed, and sanctified Marie, the Mother of God.*⁹⁰ The title-page emphasizes the capacity of figure – of prosopopoeia – to hold the complex of affect and meditation in its typographical arrangement, where “CONTAINING,” in roman capitals, is the largest word on the page. Where for Southwell, tears are precisely what *can’t* – and shouldn’t – be contained, this title page offers Lodge’s Virgin as though in a vessel.

In his epistle dedicatory to the Countesses of Derby and of Cumberland, Lodge identifies his book with Mary’s tears by a capaciously ambiguous deixis: “Good Madames, accept these teares in their nature, and hold it better to weepe many times with Jesus and Marie, than to laugh with Belial and the world” (A3^v). He reiterates the injunction to shared feeling – to weep *with* – in the epistle to the reader, promising that “in meditating with Marie, you shall find Jesus” (A6^v). Just as Southwell analogizes Mary Magdalen’s tears to the text of scripture in his prefatory materials, so Lodge thus identifies weeping with meditating – and with “finding,” as in Gregory’s and Augustine’s interpretive *inventio*. So Lodge’s Virgin will tell us, in her odd homiletic voice, riffing on Pseudo-Dionysius: “Shall I teach you how to bewaile Christ? First love him, for love uniteth all things together, drawing all mans interest from himself, and placing it in another. [...] Those that are one in affection, are one in passio[n], one in desires, one in teares, one in love, one in sorrow, one in mind, one in

“Teaching 70’s feminism” : “Every wave has its undertow” (59).

⁹⁰ *Prosopopeia* (London: for Edward White, 1596). Further citations parenthetically.

martyrdome” (E8^v). And in Lodge’s text as in Southwell’s, tears are not only text but speech – and the peculiar form of speech that manages to register all that is frail about humanity while yet remaining humanity’s best semiotic resource for coping with the burden of the felt experience of the loss or absence of god. As Lodge’s Virgin puts it, “yet in flesh whilst thou [Christ] art absent, & dwellest with death, let me bewaile thee, (for humane weaknesse requireth a little more weeping[])]” (G8^v). Tears fill the dilated space between crucifixion and resurrection.

While Lodge’s prefaces insist on the importance of imitative communion, and Mary’s voice insists on unity in feeling, these projects are in some degree impeded by the Virgin’s repeated insistence on her exceptionality – we are scolded for not being like her in grief, but who can imitate her whose grief is beyond the capacity of all humanity? Lodge’s text, however shrilly it insists on the necessity of empathy – of weeping *with* – in devotion, at the same time repulses the identification that would allow such a communion in feeling between the reader and the weeping Virgin. Lodge draws attention to the potential friction – the *drag* – in prosopopeia, those elements of the figure that *resist* identification even as they invite it: why? In the chain of analogies that runs from the reader’s dim imitation of the Virgin’s suffering to the Virgin’s afflicted body in imitation of Christ’s suffering to the afflicted body of Christ, there remains some crucial difference: *imitatio* is not identity.

But perhaps the most important thing about Mary’s speech in *Prosopopeia* is how it stops. Overcome with the excess of feeling that is the text’s central concern and primary conceit, Mary swoons and falls silent – bringing an end not only to our encounter with her voice, but to Lodge’s text itself. Mary’s voice ceases to speak, and a narrator takes over for

one final paragraph, in which speech becomes embodied performance, and then at last falls silent, too:

Thus plagued in bodie and distressed in soule, sate poore *Marie* (a holy and happie virgin) enacting hir grieffe with her armes, when she had overforced both her tongue and eies with compassion : briefly, her paine & impatience beeing so great as her words could not expresse it, hir desires so importunate, as they exceeded all her delights. The image of her grieffe before her, and the damage of her losse within her, she sownded on the senselesse earth, and being conveyed to her oratorie by the holy assistance, the sacred bodie of Christ was bound up and borne to the sepulchre. (H7^v)

This abrupt termination, with its dramatic (if conventional) typographically tapering paragraph imitating the expiration of Mary's capacity for discourse, is followed by an overdetermined FINIS – as though this really were the end. As with the enforced affective suspension of Southwell's Magdalen, there is a danger here in the defeat of the Virgin's voice by feeling – a danger that also encodes a problem of confessionalization and periodization.

The Virgin's swoon, not attested in the gospels and never legitimated by ecclesiastical doctrine in any church, nevertheless enjoyed a vogue in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, especially in visual culture. By the time of Lodge's writing, the swoon signalled both attachment to a moment long past and a dangerous confessional affiliation.⁹¹ In some sense, all Catholic iconography potentially smacks of anachronism in England in the 1590's – like a campy throwback, papist or even high-church aesthetics might seem in the age of Uniformity to belong to a discarded or discardable past. Lodge's text, far more than Southwell's, invests in a confessional specificity that introduces another order of drag into the time of reading.

⁹¹ See Gary Kuchar, 'Aemilia Lanyer and the Virgin's Swoon: Theology and Iconography in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*,' *English Literary Renaissance* 37:1 (2007), 47-73.

To illustrate the time of the Virgin's swoon, I turn to another van der Weyden example – the crucifixion scene at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

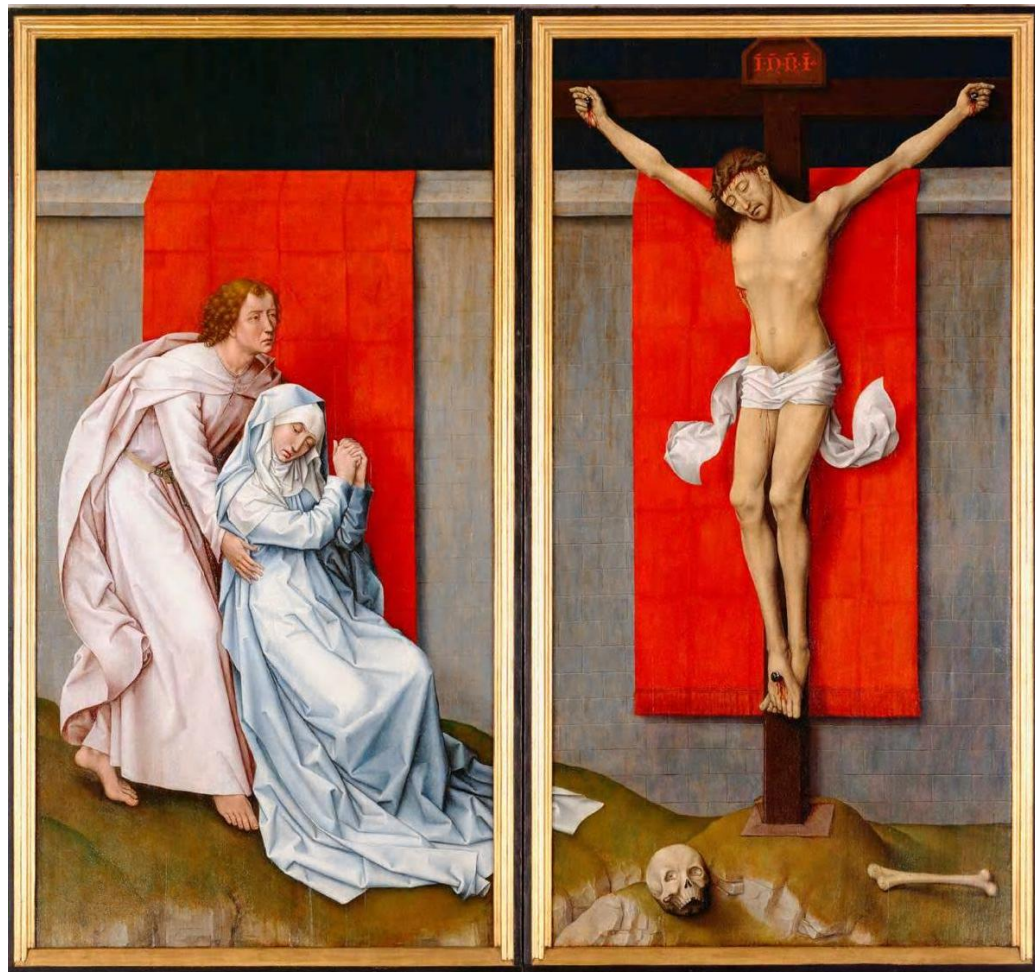


Figure 2: Rogier van der Weyden, “Crucifixion Diptych” (c. 1460), Philadelphia Museum of Art

Mary's swoon here seems less a fall than a virtuoso act of suspension – in the stillness of the composition, she is caught permanently in an impossible stasis. John does not yet bear her weight; his hand does not yet press into her garments. Her arms remain raised in a pose of devotion, her fingers locked together, her head poised reverentially, her thighs, so articulate beneath her dress, suggesting at once their strength, almost still supporting her, and the irreducible embodied femininity of her. (This, those parted thighs declare, is the *body* that

bore the child who now hangs dead on the cross.) The division of the composition into two panels emphasizes the shared strange time of the suspension of Mary's body and the suspension of Christ's loincloth, drifting in midair. And in shared time, shared suffering: the affliction of the Virgin's body by feeling and the more obviously afflicted body of Christ invite simultaneous contemplation of them both – an analogy of passion that teaches the viewer something about *compassion*.

Lodge configures this relation explicitly as a semiotic one: to endure the interval between Christ's death and resurrection, Mary tells us, "I wil symbolise thy body with mine, and quicken thy passion by my sufference" (G2^r). In a gesture of self-interpretation, Mary invents her body as a textual resource, as a sign, or set of signs, that provide her and her audience with some access to the afflicted embodiment of Christ – that "quicken" his passion, that body forth, as it were, an experience of suffering and death that might otherwise remain a thing unknown or unknowable. Desire and *imitatio* grade into one another in this scene of shared affliction: "my wounds cannot bee hid till thy wounds be healed, and til thou live to rescue mee, I shall die thorough wanting thee" (G3^v). The threat of death by "want" as both desire and lack is echoed by a subordinate reading – so wounded, "I shall die through wanting *to be like* thee," in those wounds, that suffering.

And after all, this is the end of the text – precisely what the Virgin's swoon *doesn't* do is symbolize Christ's body with her own. Quite the contrary, it is the end of signification altogether: FINIS. Lodge, perhaps inadvertently, demonstrates the greatest danger of the identification invited by figures of speaking: that we might overinvest, that we might, in the end, swoon, fall silent, and *stay there*. Like van der Weyden's Virgin, we might remain in a perpetually suspended fall.

A wonderful note in the errata of Lodge's text indexes, by accident, precisely this danger: for "desires," we are enjoined to read "disasters." Perhaps appropriately, the page and line number provided do not lead to the site for correction – the erroneous erratum suggesting the possibility that for *any* instance of *desire*, we might read *disaster*, that any instance of desire might lead to disaster. Death by wanting, the speech-cancelling swoon, thus teeters on the fulcrum between productive *imitatio* and destructive overinvolvement in the affective scene. I began with the suggestion that figures of speaking are a response to places of difficulty in the gospel, sites that resist even the illusion of transparency or immediacy. As a reading of Southwell, Lodge's insistence on the limits of prosopopoeia to promote devotional identification might be some indication that something remains unsettled or unsettling in the reader's relationship with Southwell's Magdalen. For if prosopopoeia and apostrophe are responses to hermeneutic friction, they also generate it, risking catachresis at every turn.

(COLLATION, OR: REPAIR)

At the climax of his work, Southwell once more invests in the pressure exerted on the present by dwelling in long time as a property of scriptural hermeneutics. Just before Christ appears at last, the narrator apostrophizes him in a desperate defense of Mary's desire: "To what end, O sweet Lord, doest thou thus suspend hir longinges, prolong hir desires, and martyr hir with these tedious delaies?" (H5^v) By now this is the reader's own question – but Southwell has already answered it. Not only do holy desires increase by delay, but delay itself gives to desire an interpretive force, by making time and space for the process of reading. An analogy emerges between Southwell's method – his own suspension and delay – and the

apparent belatedness of Christ's appearance to Mary, between the sweetness of extended dwelling in the text of scripture and the sweetness of Christ himself. When Christ does finally appear to Mary, she makes, of course, one last mistake – taking him for a gardener, she asks him, too, whether he might know where her lord's body has been laid. The outrageousness of her misprision is at first an opportunity for the narrator to excoriate her – how could she not recognize him for whom she has so longed? “But,” Southwell writes, “thy mistaking hath in it a farther mysterie” (H7^v). The consonance of *mistake* and *mysterie* in sound contravenes their dissonance in sense – once more, Mary's error of belief provides an opportunity. This time, the occasion is a more conventionally exegetical one, in which Southwell takes advantage of the figure of Christ as Gardener to explore his typological association with the first gardener, Adam – Christ who sows salvation to cancel Adam's condemnation, Christ who labored in death to provide the fruits of the heavenly banquet to come. “For this,” Southwell writes, meaning this reading in *mysterie*, this interpretive gesture, “for this also was *Mary* permitted to mystake, that we might be infourmed of the mysterie, and see how aptlie the course of our redemption did answeere the process of our condemnation” (H8^v-I1^r).

“O woonderfull effectes of *Maries* love!” (H6^v). Southwell can't stop commenting on the strangeness, the wonder, the unexampledness, of the “effectes” of Mary's passion for Christ. There is one more wonderful effect to come, of course – in the moment of recognition, the anagnorisis, as it were, that transforms Mary's tragedy into a comedy of devotional ecstasy. The dilated desire that has yawned for fulfillment all this time at last reaches its climax. When Christ at last says Mary's name, at last she turns and *sees* him, in the scene of salvific interpellation that creates in her “so strange an alteration [...] as if she had

been wholly new made when she was only named” (K7^r). Her strange alteration repeats the trope that characterizes the *strange effectes* of her love – in some sense, the affective moment of Southwell’s text lies just beyond language, registered in his repeated insistence on the inarticulable. In only the single word of Mary’s name – the little word spoken by the Word, as Southwell wonderingly observes (K7^v) – can the full erotic potential of the prolonged period of Mary’s longing at last achieve some release: “And as all this while she hath sought without finding, wepte withoute comferte, and called without answer: so now thou satisfiest her seeking with thy coming, her teares with thy triumph, and all hir cries with this one word, *Mary*” (K7^r). In the voice of god, interpellation becomes consummation, becomes erotic and literary climax.

Or, as it turns out, not quite a climax, or not the last: after this exuberant erotic communion, the *noli me tangere* that inevitably arrives registers as tragedy, as a scene of devastation. Ventriloquizing the bafflement of commentators on this verse, anticipating perhaps the reader’s own shock, hurt, disappointment at the evident violence of Christ’s prohibition, Southwell’s narrator launches an indignant protest:

O Iesu what mysterie is in this? [...] If the multitude of hir tears have won that favor for hir eies, and hir longing to heare thee so great a recompence to hir eares, why doost thou not admitte her hands to touch, & hir mouth to kisse thy holy feete, sithe the one with many plaints and the other with their readinesse to all services, seem to have earned no lesse reward. (L3^r-L4^r)

In querying the *mysterie* of Christ’s words, Southwell continues to make explicit the interpretive posture of the work – as in the mystery of Mary’s mistaking, the interpretive crux must be dwelled in. The answer to the question will be the conventional one of the commentary tradition: that Mary has failed to proceed from devotion to Christ in his humanity to devotion to Christ in his divinity, so that “eyes” and “ears” stand in for spiritual

perception whereas in “mouth” and “hands” is located the fleshly grasp that is prohibited. To resolve the pain of the apparent rebuff, then, Southwell first ventriloquizes Christ, expanding on his words in a mild chastisement of Mary’s ongoing misprision: “O *Mary* know the difference betweene a glorious and a mortall body, betweene the condition of a momentarie and of an eternall life” (L4^r). This lesson in trinitarian spirituality may be the standard line on the *noli me tangere* – but for Southwell and others this cannot suffice, and the binary opposition between the glorious and the mortal, between sensible and spiritual touch, is not as stark as it at first appears.

For Southwell, the interpretive crux is also an affective one. As though the prohibition of touch is too unbearable to sustain, Southwell looks to collation as a method of repair. He makes recourse to the text of Matthew in the work’s sole moment of deviation from the Johannine account – an act of collation far from unusual in itself, but exceptional in *Mary Magdalen’s Funeral Tears*.

But as she was in this perplexed manner, now falling, now rising in her own uncertainties, shee findeth on the waie, the other holy women that first came with hir to the grave, whom the angels had now assured of Christes resurrection. And as they passed all forwardes towards the Disciples: *Behold Jesus met them, saieng: All hail. But they came neere, and tooke hold of his feete, and adored him. Then Jesus said to them, feare not. Go tell my brethren, that they goe into Galilee, there they shall see me.* (M1^v)

Southwell sutures the events of John to those of Matthew with this brief narrative – in which Mary *finds* the other two Marys *on the way*. Her finding returns us to Gregory’s *inventio*:

Southwell’s act of interpretive collation encoded in Mary’s discovery that repairs her solitude and prepares for the moment of touch that John alone prohibits. Southwell characterizes his act of collation – of finding on the way through scripture – as a curative gesture inherent to the scene itself: “But O most milde phisition,” he apostrophizes Christ, “wel knowest thou

that thy sharp corrosie, with bitter smart angred hir tender wound, which beeing rather caused, by unwitting ignorance then wilfull error, was assoone cured as knowne” (M2^r). This touch is the source of Mary’s ultimate “satisfaction” – it precipitates the ecstatic, even orgasmic, climax of the whole work. This careful affective physics, in which pain is recompensed with perfect pleasure, the injury of absence cured by the miracle of presence, is for Southwell the purpose of interpretation. The exegetical gesture of collation, in which Matthew supplies an absent encounter, could likewise be described as a “cure” to the “corrosie” of John, the “requital” of John’s “refusall.” It is an act of intimate mercy on Southwell’s part.

What has happened between *corrosie* and *cure* is, in some sense, a reorientation of the logic of embodiment itself – a transformation of the devastated space of mourning conditioned by Mary’s fixation on Christ’s fleshly body and by the reduction of embodiment to flesh alone, into a new mode of ensouled embodiment, the restoration of Ignatius’ “whole composite self” and the recuperation of *all* the senses into the interpretive frame of the dialectic between inner and outer, spiritual and material, figurative and literal. For Augustine, too, collation provides relief from the exegetical and affective difficulty of the text of John: “Who could be so absurd,” he writes in his homily on the passage, “as to affirm that He was willing indeed to be touched by the disciples before He ascended to the Father, but refused it in the case of women till after his ascension?”⁹² But it is impossible to “run into such folly” because of the account in Matthew:

This was passed over by John, but declared as the truth by Matthew. It remains, therefore, that some sacred mystery must lie concealed in these words, and whether

⁹² Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. John Gibb and James Innes, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 7 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 437.

we discover it [*quod sive inveniamus*] or utterly fail to do so [*invenire*], yet we ought to be in no doubt as to its actual existence.⁹³

Inventio is once again at stake in the process of interpretation. For Augustine, the mystery lies in determining at what moment Mary Magdalene developed an adequate understanding of the Trinity:

[T]he words, “Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my father,” had this meaning, [...] that in this way Christ wished Himself to be believed on; in other words, to be touched spiritually, that He and the Father are one. For He has ascended to the Father, to the inward perception [*intimis sensibus*] of him who has made such progress in the knowledge of Christ that he acknowledges Him as equal with the Father: in any other way He is not rightly touched, that is to say, in any other way He is not rightly believed on. But Mary might have still so believed as to account Him unequal with the Father, and this certainly is forbidden her by the words, “Touch me not;” that is, Believe not thus on me according to thy present notions; let not your thoughts stretch outwards to what I have been made in thy behalf, without passing beyond to that whereby thou hast thyself been made.⁹⁴

The *intimus sensus* on which Augustine calls here invokes the “inner senses” of both the body and the text of scripture as developed by Origen – the spiritual reading of Christ’s presence that both depends on and supersedes Mary’s more material desire for his bodily presence.

The “inequality with the Father” that is forbidden by the *noli me tangere*, according to Augustine, is Mary’s mistake of Christ in his humanity for Christ in his divinity – a failure, in other words, of Trinitarian doctrine. Augustine interprets the prohibition further as an injunction to transcendence – a transcendence, moreover, with a futural orientation: “believe not [...] according to thy *present* notions”; “pass *beyond*.” Allowing her thought to “stretch outwards,” gesturally like touch, toward the incarnational Christ is only the first movement in a becoming, toward the almost apophatic “that whereby,” the demonstrative pronoun

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 437-8. Latin from the *Patrologia Latina* online, vol. 35, Tractatus CXXI.3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 438.

standing in for the threefold divinity that stands behind and before all created things. In going on to collate John with Matthew, Augustine suggests that Mary and the other women must by the time of embracing Christ's feet have likewise embraced this Trinitarian extension of thought, must have passed beyond the incarnational moment to, paradoxically, the time of belief in which embodied touch is not only not forbidden, but commended. To believe and to touch "rightly," then, is not to depart from the body but rather to *return* to it.

Similarly, Lancelot Andrewes' Easter sermons on John 20 (1620, 1621, and 1622) explicitly turn the problem of the nature of touch toward a problem of textual interpretation.⁹⁵ He develops a mode of affective philology as a means of mediating an embodied encounter that can only be fully developed in its exegetical unfolding. Even "to take her as we finde her in the Text, and to looke no whither else," Andrewes argues in the first of these sermons, is to discover Mary Magdalen in her entire love, which "wee cannot but commend" in spite of her errors of faith. As we find her: our interpretation as inventional as her finding of Christ, we dwell in the text as she does by the tomb. In his second sermon, on the single verse, *Dicit ei Iesus, Noli me tangere*, Andrewes makes a useful if overdetermined joke out of his own repetition of the word "touch." Discussing the tradition of commentary on John 20, he writes that he will provide three "senses" for Christ's prohibition, "and they have great *Authors*, all three, *Chrysostom, Gregorie, Augustine*. I will touch them all three, and you may take your choyce of them; or if you please, take them all" (Ccc5^v). There is an echo here of Augustine's analogy between touch and belief, which Andrewes expands to include the mechanics of collation and citation. The pun is a capacious one: the careful collation of "Authors" is an act of delicate touch, lighting on each in turn,

⁹⁵ In *XCVI Sermons* (London: Richard Badger, 1631), Bbb4^r-Eee3^r.

text and authority alike. Interpretive “touch” in a sermon occurs in multiple media: as the act of reading that generated the sermon’s argument; as the prosopopoetic act of oratory that communicates the preacher’s touch to his congregation; as the record in text of that touch and its performance. It is an act both of reception and of transmission – as he says of Mary’s *dilectio*, he means to “Commend it in her, commend it to you,” his hearers or readers (Bbb5⁵). Hence his strain to find in the *noli me tangere* as a “repulse” and “cold salutation for an *Easter-day* morning” some greater comfort than an utterance that “marres all ; turnes all out and in” (Ccc4⁶). Against that potential damage, he balances Christ’s injunction to Mary to go and tell the other disciples of the resurrection, the foundational moment of her instantiation as *apostola apostolorum*: “the *Text* is like the *time* of the yeare : the morning somewhat fresh, but a faire day after : *Noli me tangere*, the *Repulse*, is the *sharpe morning* : *Vade & dic*, the welcome Message, the *faire day* (we spake of) that makes all well againe” (Ccc4⁷). Andrewes is close here to Southwell’s corrosie and cure: liturgical time comes into contact with the vividly felt experience of seasonal and diurnal time in the movement between the bracingly astringent prohibition, with its play of *morning* on *mourning*, and the warmth of Mary’s apostolic commission. Yet Andrewes hews close to his text, and is careful not to admit the possibility of actual touch into his meditation on it. For Andrewes, the “cure” is not in touch but in the apostolic commission itself. “Touch” for him is pure method, pure thought: the means by which he constructs his arguments, the generative conceptual matter from which he can produce his sense of what takes place in the transformation of flesh into spirit. Mary’s task of annunciation, analogous to the preacher’s task of interpretation, creates here a sweet moment of identification between Andrewes and the Magdalen. To read Andrewes through Augustine, one of his own *Authors*, I’d further suggest that this exegetical touch is an

embodied practice of the *intimus sensus*, at once an act of reading oriented toward the textual interior, and an intimate sensibility to the experience of that text in its literal materiality.

As Debora Shuger expresses it, in early modern Magdalen narratives, “the movement from desire to enjoyment, from deferred longing to loving union, configures knowledge as an erotic praxis.”⁹⁶ Not only diegetically, for the longing Magdalen, but also for the reader, whose procedure through interpretation – motivated by her own devotional desire – brings her into a queer kind of *loving union* with the text she reads. Reading, too, is an erotic praxis. Mary Carruthers, in her study of *sweetness* as a term of aesthetics in the middle ages, suggests – companionably with Shuger – that a sensibility of sweetness, as a “definable sensory phenomenon,” coordinates feeling with perception, with affect, bodily sense, and knowledge; bringing to a kind of aesthetic fruition the ambiguity that always resided in the Latin *sentire*.⁹⁷ To feel and to know are not so dissimilar; to desire is not merely to lack but to move toward the sweetness of knowledge. If dilation implies an opening, the generation of space, of capacity, it’s the rhetorical maneuvers of prosopopoeia (and of apostrophe) that seek to fill and amplify that space and give it meaning, make it legible. Yet Southwell’s investment in Mary’s spatial and cognitive stasis – “*But Mary stood alone at the sepulchre weeping*” – stalls the time of Augustine’s futurity, Andrewes’ tactile interpretive repair, Shuger’s “movement.” Mary’s intensity of affect is her way of *refusing* to move, or to move on. This is in some way the answer to Southwell’s earlier question: the end to which Christ suspends Mary’s longings, prolongs her desires, martyrs her with delay. In the dilation of desire resides the time and space of exegesis. In the dilation of a gospel scene in meditative

⁹⁶ The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 187.

⁹⁷ “Sweetness,” *Speculum* 81 (2006), 999.

prose, in the pounding of the spices of scripture, Southwell undertakes a mode of reading and of writing that assumes afflicted desire and feeling in long time as the very ground of both reading and writing. In the exegetical analogy between the senses of the ensouled body and the senses of scripture, reading is necessarily an embodied, phenomenal event – to read is to *feel* the thing read; feeling is in turn an act of interpretation. What, then, is Mary Magdalen's desire for Christ but the reader's desire for the text she reads?

III. Time as a Psalm: Anne Lock's Recalcitrant Poetics

The title of Anne Lock's 1560 sonnet sequence provides two generic matrices through which to read it: *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner, Written in Manner of a Paraphrase Upon the 51. Psalm of David*.⁹⁸ As a meditation, it promises the kind of extended, dilatory dwelling that Southwell's reading of John 20 offers; as a paraphrase, however, it takes up David's voice in a way that promises a different kind of intimacy with the text, interpretive to be sure but close enough to be faithful to the voice it inhabits, to speak with that same voice. In contrast to Southwell's interrogative mode, his dialogic excavation of the gospel text, Lock's approach will keep her close to the surface, insisting on the text's own terms, reluctant to define or justify them, content merely to repeat them – and repeat them, and repeat them, her own method of spice-pounding. Lock, too, dilates her text, but unlike Southwell's copious elaboration, hers is a resistant poetics of reiteration, what I am calling “recalcitrance”: she digs in her heels.

Dilation and prosopopoeia thus produce in Lock a different kind of “time bind,” and consequently a different erotics of reading. Her twenty-six sonnets dilate the time of the psalm, rendering reading into form: following a five-sonnet preface “expressing the passionate mind of the penitent sinner,” she devotes to each verse one, occasionally two sonnets. The inarticulate utterance of these sonnets extends the time of David's verse, dwelling in each of its movements at length. They seek in these procedures a way of coping

⁹⁸ In *Sermons of John Calvin, upon the Songe that Ezechias Made*, trans. Anne Lock (London: John Day, 1560), Ai-viii.

with despair by reorienting its laborious narcissism toward the submissive posture of faith – not a way out of bad feeling altogether, and certainly not a route to perfect cure. For Lock’s sequence never lays hold of the object of its desire. The feeling of grace for which it “groape[s] about” (2.11, 12) never arrives, and the sequence ends with the same desire – or “craving” in Lock’s favored term – with which it begins. It ends, in fact, with the fear that all its craving cries might be “in vaine” (26.14), its unanswered request for assurance to the contrary hanging in the silence that follows. The “FINIS” that closes this sequence is almost comical, so necessarily unfinished is its project.

Lock’s sequence is appended to her translations of four sermons by John Calvin, meditations on the relation between spiritual and bodily illness that emerge from his reading of Hezekiah’s illness and recovery in Isaiah 38. As the publisher’s note on the *Meditation’s* title page suggests, it shares an affinity with those sermons: “it wel agreth with the same argument.”⁹⁹ Adapting the resources of Calvin’s thought in order to address herself to the dilemmas of despair through her reading of a penitential psalm, Lock offers a mode of reading that, like Mary Magdalen before the empty tomb of Christ, refuses to move on. In dwelling in her text, she makes dwelling in the body problematic: while as her dedicatory epistle says, “He [...] that cureth the sicke minde, or preserveth it from disease, cureth or preserveth not onely minde, but bodye also” (A2”), her sonnets present such a cure as a much less certain outcome. Her reluctance to resolve her sequence, to lay a confident claim

⁹⁹ *Sermons* A1^r. Day’s note reads in full, “I have added this meditation folowyng unto the ende of this boke, not as a parcell of maister Calvines worke, but for that it wel agreth with the same argument, and was delivered me by my frend with whom I knew I might be so bolde to use & publishe as it pleased me.” Misreadings of this note as Lock’s rather than Day’s have contributed to an unnecessary degree of confusion challenges to Lock’s authorship of her sequence.

to the grace it seeks, I argue, presents us not only with a model of reading but with a way of understanding, of living with and in, spiritual and emotional disorder.

(TIME AS A PSALM)

In the eleventh book of the *Confessions*, Augustine gives an account of the nature of time. This is in part an apologia for the *Confessions* itself: “Lord, since eternity is yours,” Augustine begins, “are you ignorant of the things that I say to you, or do you see only at a certain time what is done in time? Why then do I *set out in order* before you this account of so many deeds? [*Cur ego tibi tot rerum narrationes digero?*]”.¹⁰⁰ (He persistently reiterates the conviction that no “confession” can be instructive to an omniscient god, but here he introduces the problem of order, and a new dimension of the problem emerges: not only, “why am I telling you this?” but also, specifically, “why have I arranged these things according to an order, a sequence in time?” What, in other words, is narrative temporality to timeless divinity? It is not only the phenomena of cognition in time that interest Augustine, though these will be his primary focus, but how that experience of time, that “setting out in order,” makes it possible to “rouse up toward you my own affections [*affectum*], and those of other men who read this (R 277; L 2.208). Whatever time is, whatever it is that happens when we experience time and put that experience into language, that is what makes it possible to direct “affectus,” affection, feeling, toward god. Affect, too, is an experience of time.

The problem is immense, and close to inexpressible: “What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone who does ask me, I do not know” (R 287). Time is primarily an experience; we “know” what it is because we perceive a difference

¹⁰⁰ *Confessions* 11.1; *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Image Books, 1960), 277. Latin from the Loeb edition, ed. and trans. William Watts, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912), 2.208. Further citations parenthetically.

between past, present, and future. But even to speak of “past, present, and future” is catachretic. Rather, “it might properly be said,” Augustine writes, “that there are three times: the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things future [*praesens de praeteritis, praesens de praesentibus, praesens de futuris*]. These three are present in the soul [*anima*]” (R 293, L 2.252). Time is a perceptual phenomenon (“in the soul”), and takes shape in, essentially, verb tenses: the teacher of rhetoric makes recourse to the protocols of grammar to mediate the vastness of the problem before him.

Reading, like narrative and grammar, is a concession to creaturely temporality: the uncreated Word is eternal, but becomes intimate with created time in its works of creation, and when it is incarnated in Christ, and when it is expressed through scripture: “Thus in the Gospel he speaks through the flesh, and this word sounded outwardly in the ears of men, so that it might be believed, and sought inwardly, and found in the eternal Truth” (R 283). Here Augustine comes close to conflating the incarnation of Christ with the utterance of the gospel: the sensory threshold of the flesh, like the interpretive threshold of the letter of the text, makes possible the approximation of intimacy with divinity in reading.

So, when Augustine requires a model to demonstrate how cognition copes with the passing of time, he turns to the phenomenal experience of a psalm:

I am about to recite a psalm that I know. Before I begin, my expectation extends over the entire psalm. Once I have begun, my memory extends over as much of it as I shall separate off and assign to the past. The life of this action of mine is distended into memory by reason of the part I have spoken and into forethought by reason of the part I am about to speak. But attention is actually present and that which was to be is borne along by it so as to become past. The more this is done and done again, so much the more is memory lengthened by a shortening of expectation, until the entire expectation is exhausted. When this is done the whole action is completed and passes into memory. What takes place in the whole psalm takes place also in each of its parts and in each of its syllables. (R 301-2)

In the recitation of the psalm, reading becomes voicing; the figurative absorption of the reader by the prosopopoeic “T” literalized in at least one register. To experience time in the psalm is to approach the timeless word of god the only way it is possible to do so: from the catachresis-generating position of fallen cognition. Yet even in this understanding, Augustine remains unwilling to let go of a model in which time unfolds uniformly, and more or less in a straight line. What would it take to throw a wrench into the works? What would it take to resist the unfolding of time in the psalm?

(SYLLABLE)

Lock’s is a voice that halts, that hesitates, a stuttering voice whose recitation does *not* run smoothly on, absorbing the future through the present into the past in a continuous gesture.

Augustine defines the present as a punctual moment with no extension:

If any point of time is conceived that can no longer be divided into even the most minute parts of a moment, that alone it is which may be called the present. It flies with such speed from the future into the past that it cannot be extended by even a trifling amount. For if it is extended, it is divided into past and future. The present has no space. (R 289)

Lock’s sonnets attempt to force the present to endure, reducing time to the syllable, the most minute semantic unit: “crye,” for example, and also “now.” Now, and now, and now, the repeated syllable that seeks to dwell at length in a single moment, reluctant to allow it to fulfill its tendency toward “non-being.” But this is at the same time a present without presence; the repetition of the syllable cannot effectuate and can scarcely even demand what it desires.

Lock's dilatory method emphasizes the way that, in Augustine's terms, what happens in the whole psalm happens also in each of its parts – each verse expanding into an entire sonnet, which sometimes interprets the verse and sometimes departs from it, but often, and most interestingly to me, simply reiterates its terms, pounding out its language in a repetitive lexicon of hard Germanic monosyllables that exert a frictional drag on the time of the psalm. She performs her commitment to monosyllables in the very terms she uses to describe the sonnets' mode of utterance: the "oft-repeted grone," or, frequently, a "crye," repeated over and over, "crye and crye againe." If it is a "confused crye" (5.3), that may be all to the good – the real fear is that it may turn out to be "vaine," a "not availyng crye" (4.11), as a despair-infected conscience argues it is. Yet in the continuous present of the soul's peril, the cry continues – "in present perill to be lost" (4.8), in the seventh sonnet the "crye" extends its now across a line-break and between quatrains, seeking to sustain the radical present of the voicing of desperation: "now in peril and in present fere, / I crye" (7.4-5).

This desire to sustain the present of a single utterance extends itself into the poems' mode of reading, as they pound out single words of the psalm, sounding them again and again – often as monosyllables, as in the relentless repetition of "wash" in the eighth sonnet, on the verse, "Washe me yet more from my wickednes, and clense me from my sinne":

So foule is sinne and lothesome in thy sighte,
 So foule with sinne I see my selfe to be,
 That till from sinne I may be **washed** white,
 So foule I dare not, Lorde, approche to thee.
 Ofte hath thy mercie **washed** me before,
 Thou madest me cleane: but I am foule againe.
 Yet **washe** me Lorde againe, and **washe** me more,
Washe me, O Lord, and do away the staine
 Of vggly sinnes that in my soule appere.
 Let flow thy ple[n]tuious streames of clensing grace.

Washe me againe, yea **washe** me euery where,
 Both leproous bodie and defiled face.
 Yea **washe** me all, for I am all vncleane.
 And from my sin, Lord, cleanse me ones againe.

The poem begins by situating itself in time – a subjunctive anticipation of a possible future in the third line, an assured present perfect in the fifth – but then it invests in the imperatives of the present, repeating again and again the psalm’s own plea and adding little of interpretive or glossatory value, and nothing like resolution or forward movement. The poem wants to stay in the little *now* of the syllable, the minutest unit. (Read it aloud: it is overwhelmingly composed of monosyllables.) Rather than seek to explicate or comprehend the sense of “wash” in this context, the sonnet registers in repetition a desire to sustain the present of a single utterance. The same could be said for “foule,” for “sinne,” for the relation between all three of these terms. Pounding out the single word of the psalm both seeks to release its full significance and threatens to unmake meaning altogether, washing the word clean out of its proper sense, so that it becomes mere sound – or perhaps not *mere* at all. Reiteration materializes *wash*, sounds it out so fully that it becomes more like action than a word, onomatopoetically imitating the cleansing it articulates as the object of desire. And more: the gentleness of “wash” becomes abrasive in anxious repetition, an obsessive kind of excoiation. That mimetic rendering is itself a way of understanding desire – the pleasure here, if you can call it that, is not in the washing but the wanting of it.

(SONNET)

The sixth sonnet, which opens the sequence proper following the five prefatory poems, theorizes this mode of repetition as a means of registering the mechanics of despairing

desire: on the first verse of David's psalm, "Have mercie upon me (O my God) after thy great mercy," Lock writes:

Have mercy, God, for thy great mercies sake,
 O God: my God, unto my shame I say,
 Beynge fled from thee, so as I dred to take
 Thy name in wretched mouth, and feare to pray
 Or aske the mercy that I have abused.
 But, God of mercy, let me come to thee:
 Not for justice, that justly am accusde:
 Which selfe word Justice so amaseth me,
 That scarce I dare thy mercy sound againe,
 But mercie, Lord, yet suffer me to crave.
 Mercie is thine: Let me not crye in vaine,
 Thy great mercie for my great fault to have.
 Have mercie, God, pitie my penitence
 With greater mercie than my great offence.

It reads like an account of an approach-avoidance conflict. The plea for mercy, then the retreat from it into dread and fear of that very plea. Then the approach again – "let me come to thee" – and again retreat: "scarce I dare thy mercy sound againe." Yet however scarcely daring, the sonnet repeats the word "mercy" ten times – *sounding* it again and again, in both senses of speaking it aloud and testing its depth. As in the eighth sonnet, repetition materializes the word while always rendering it as a kind of fearful reticence that expresses a desire to remain at the threshold of desire: "mercie, lord, yet suffer me to *crave*." Not to have, but to crave – seeking not presence or possession but *craving*, desire itself, so that the poem is an account not of desire's progression toward seizure of its object, but of the continuous experience of a *crying* that is also a *craving*. Craving and crying are bound together by alliteration and by formal and syntactic parallel: "yet suffer me to crave" / "let me not crye in vaine." The inarticulate monosyllabic voicing of want registers the relationship between

“sounding” and “scarcely daring” as the entire subject of the poem. The reluctance to sound remains in tension with the refusal to stop sounding – the “oft-repeted grone” that renders David’s prosopopeias (as Sidney calls the Psalms)¹⁰¹ as a voice at once insistent and incoherent in its repeated emphasis on a limited bank of terms.

Meanwhile, the logic of the poem disregards the formal divisions of its rhyme scheme. While it concludes with a syntactically discrete couplet that more or less restates the verse, providing a kind of summation, the poem’s movement of approach and retreat, approach and retreat, is out of sync with the units of quatrain, octave, and sestet. Like many of the poems in the sequence, it defies the kind of reading we’ve been taught to perform (and teach our students to perform) in our inheritance of the sonnet tradition. This logical disobedience to form performs the tension it describes, the speaker’s reluctance to lay claim to utterance competing with the irreducible necessity of prayer. This sonnet’s expression of a wholly submissive mode of desire thus encodes itself as a poetics of recalcitrance not only in the single word but in the logical mechanics of the poem as a whole. What takes place in each of the sonnet’s parts takes place also in the whole sonnet, to paraphrase Augustine.

Dwelling in the monosyllable, and resisting in retreating logic the propulsive force of form, become acts of recalcitrant reading that resist the ordinary unfolding of time. Demonstrating that neither time nor reading can be measured as a linear or continuous forward movement, Lock’s sonnets prefer to stand still rather than move on. The sonnet and the psalm are in a tense temporal relationship in this regard, the sonnet producing a formal alternative to the psalm’s continuity. Or rather, the sonnet proposes a method of reading the psalm that acknowledges the inadequacy of a model of continuity to devotional reading.

¹⁰¹ Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy* (London: William Ponsonby, 1595), B4^v.

(SEQUENCE)

The sequence is broken out of its retrenchment in the present of reading by an interpretive crisis: the purging hyssop of the seventh verse cannot be left to its material literalism; it requires the interpretive gesture of typology to make adequate use of it. So, in the fourteenth sonnet, for the first time the sequence must cope with time on a grand scale:

With swete Hysope besprinkle thou my sprite:
 Not such hysope, nor so besprinkle me,
 As law unperfect shade of perfect lyght
 Did use as an apointed signe to be
 Foreshewing figure of thy grace behight.
 With death and bloodshed of thine only sonne,
 The swete hysope, cleanse me defyled wyght.
 Sprinkle my soule. And when thou so haste done,
 Bedewd with droppes of mercy and of grace,
 I shalbe cleane as cleansed of my synne.
 Ah wash me, Lord: for I am foule alas:
 That only canst, Lord, wash me well within,
 Wash me, O Lord: when I am washed soe,
 I shalbe whiter than the whitest snowe.

Suddenly, impelled by the necessity of the text, this poem introduces movement in multiple tenses. “*Not* such hyssop”: abjuring the literal past of the law along with the literal sense of the verse, the sequence’s characteristic present-tense imperatives (as well as those of the psalm itself) are reimagined as the figurative fulfillment of the old letter in the call for purification in Christ’s sacrifice (6-8). And at last, a future comes into view: the *I shall be* of the psalm becomes an even more radical future in the terms of Christian soteriology, a homely little auxiliary calling on nothing less than salvation. Of course, this future is also provisional, even grammatically: the future tenses that close out the poem are mainly

perfects, and when they are simple they are heavily predicated. The complex clausal subordination of the sonnet's final sentence reveals the contingency of any projection of a purified future. If this sequence has a turning point, it is here. This sonnet and the ensuing ones depart from the text of the psalm in their interpretive maneuvers, creating new possibilities and reaching toward not only their own futures but a complete conception of salvational history. And it is perhaps this turn that enables the sequence to invest in the eloquence required of the voice that emerges in the psalm's promise to teach, to preach and to praise. From its early reticence, reluctance, and retrenchment, the sequence opens into scenes of potential in a newly empowered voice. "Lo," reads sonnet 20, "I shall preach the justice of thy law: / By mercy saved, thy mercy I shall tell"; the 21st concludes, "God of my health, from bloud I saved so, / Shall spread thy prayse for all the world to know." The self-excoriation of the early poems in which "despair before my ruthfull eye / Spredes forth my sinne & shame" (3.3-4) is transformed into an outwardly-oriented eloquence that "spreads *praise*," punning on a relation between praise as gospel, as the preaching of good news, and praise as epideixis, the rhetorical mode inherited through a long poetic tradition. The present of the utterance and its salvific future are sutured together in the time of the voicing of these promises. Not insignificantly in poems by a woman, they also lay a powerful claim to the prerogative of preaching.

Yet the final poems retreat into a renewed sense of incapacity: "My speache doth faile to utter thee my smart" (22.4). Even the pangs of despair cannot be spoken, let alone discarded in favor of a more graceful utterance. "I can not pray ... Ne can I rise" (22.9-10). Not, in any case, without the prevenient "movyng ayde" of God (22.9). Throughout, the sonnets' refusal to move has been configured as a need to *be* moved. Even the final sonnets,

with their eschatological reach (25) and typological reimagining of sacrifice (26), return at last to the craven, craving place of the prefatory sonnets in the sequence's very last lines:

"Restore my feling of thy grace againe: / Assure my soule, I crave it not in vaine" (26.13-14).

This terminal couplet insists one last time on the reiterative structure of feelings of grace – *again*, again. Closing on the lingering possibility of vanity, it remains unassured, either content to remain or by necessity remaining in the submissive pose of desire. "Restore ... again": and again, and again. The psalm, after all, will not be read only once. The poems, like the psalm, anticipate their own revoicing, the reiteration of their acts of reading, and in reading the continual reenactment of their recalcitrance in hermeneutic and soteriological time.

(INARTICULACY, OR: SPEECH IN THE FLESH PRISON)

The resistance to the unfolding of time encoded in Lock's repetitive monosyllables and the recursive disobedient logical procedure of her sonnets is also a resistance to the protocols of rhetoric. Lock's attitude toward eloquence is that of Calvin in the sermons she translates – one dimension of how the sequence "well agreth," in Day's terms, with the "argument" of the sermons. In his sermon on Hezekiah's confused cries, Calvin observes with delicious irony that "to make an arte of Rhethorick of the praiers of the faithful, it is a great abuse" (D2^r): *abusio*, a term proper to rhetoric, turned against rhetoric. Calvin urges that the devout resist the temptation to believe that because they cannot pray eloquently, they are alienated from god: "When [we] shall fele [ourselves] in suche trouble that [we] can not bring forth one worde to pray to God ... at the least, let us chatter, that is to say, let us cast forth grones and sighes." *Grone*, *sigh*: Lock adapts Calvin's mellifluous French lexicon (*gémissement*, *soupir*) to her

so-English monosyllables, the *grone* that characterizes the recalcitrant repetitive utterance of her sequence.¹⁰² Though we be “so wrapped in, and tangled,” her translation of Calvin assures us, “that we cannot bring forth one perfect sentence, so that men also understand not what we would say, yet God will hear us well enough” (D2^{r-v}). (Let that comfort you in dark hours of writing.)

Characterized as inarticulate, however ironic that may be in such wrought utterances as these sonnets, they thus call on this special amenity of disabled speech to devotional feeling. And Lock makes clear that the inarticulate is not only the domain of speech, but an interpretive method. Her cries and grones describe not only the sonnets’ mode of utterance, but their means of approach to the psalm – not glossing or excavating its meaning, but repeating its key words again and again, a chattering kind of reading. Time in the psalm on Augustine’s model is broken open, the “perfect sentence” of his grammar of temporality fractured, by Lock’s oft-repeted groan, in an activity that presents itself as passivity, a technical acuity that presents itself as inarticulate, incapable, *confused* (her term and Calvin’s).

It is this acuity that enables Lock to find her way through the central problem of despair: that it is a *feeling* – and so is grace. For Calvin (in the *Institutes*), the confidence of true faith is a “peasable quietnesse,” yet even “the faythfull have a perpetuall stryfe with their owne distrustfulnesse, far from setlynge their consciences.” At the same time, “the reprobate are sometime moved with *the same feeling* that the elect are, so that in their own judgment they are nothing different from the electe” (my emphasis).¹⁰³ The problem ensues that if despair is a *feeling*, it poses an irresolvable dilemma of discernment: how to transmute feeling into

¹⁰² *Sermons de Jehan Calvin sur le cantique que fait le bon roy Ezechias* (Geneva: François Estienne for Estienne Robinet, 1562), c.iii.

¹⁰³ *Institutes* 3.2.17; all citations from *The Institution of Christian Religion*, trans. Thomas Norton (London: Reinolde Wolfe and Richard Harison, 1561).

knowledge. How is the troubled soul to know the source of her trouble? Is she in that “epitome of hell,” as Robert Burton calls it, the spiritual death that creeps backward into the living body, or is she merely stranded in the doubtful prison of the flesh?¹⁰⁴

For Calvin, the incoherent language of prayer that is incomprehensible to men but fully available to God emerges from a broader investment in Pauline models of the body and of language. In the Hezekiah sermons, the business of utterance is intimately bound up with the problems of illness and death, both of the mortal body, in some sense always ill, and concerning the more urgent matter of afflictions of the soul. The inarticulate utterance is located at a site where problems of interpretation and expression meet problems of embodiment: the imminence of death emerges as the immanence of mortality in language. Calvin’s citation of Romans 8 begins to make this clear: “For we knowe that everie creature groneth with us also, and travaileth in paine together unto this present. And not onely the creature, but we also which have the first frutes of the Spirit, even we do sigh in our selves, waiting for the adopcion, even the redemption of our bodie” (Rom. 8:22-3 [Geneva]). For Paul, to be intimate with bodily death as the condition of faith in life in the spirit – to “mortifie the dedes of the bodie by the Spirit” (Rom. 8:13) – is to be available to the inspiration that results in this groaning and sighing: “we knowe not what to praie as we oght: but the Spirit it self maketh request for us with sighs, which can not be expressed” (Rom 8:26). In Hezekiah’s anguished affliction, Calvin confronts this central problem of dwelling in a body that is always dying, always marked by death: that “we know what is our true being: not to dwel in this world,” in this body (B3^v). For the believer, being in the body is always an experience of alienation: “while we live by faith we are as it were absent from God” (B4^r).

¹⁰⁴ *Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review Books, 2001), 1242.

Calvin here cites one of the key texts of the sermons, 2 Corinthians 5, in which Paul acknowledges that we “love rather to remove out of the bodie, and to dwell with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). Another of Calvin’s pet texts, Romans 7, describes “the bodie of this death” (Rom 7:24) as a prison from which we long for release.

This longing for escape from the prison of the flesh poses a serious problem: “we have occasion to desire it,” Calvin writes, and “to lament our life, not in way of despeir, but because we ought to hate and abhorre sin. We ought also to desire God to draw us out of this so miserable captivitie wherein we ar, as s. Paul sheweth us his example” (B3^v, with marginal citation of Rom. 7). *Not in way of despeir*: Calvin simultaneously acknowledges and declines to resolve the central dilemma: what is the difference between faithful yearning toward God and sinful despairing suicidality? The difficulty posed here by living in the body is that the opposite of despair is not tranquility; grace too is a condition of “miserable captivitie.” If, to the degree that faith entails the expectation of an eventual return home to dwelling with god, such yearning might be termed “hope,” from within the body of death hope in such a form will still feel like the desolation of exile, alienation, absence.

Lock’s poems find their way through this problem of knowledge, discernment, true faith, and grace through acts of reading characterized as self-excoriation. In the third sonnet, “despeir before my ruthefull eye / Spredes forth my sinne & shame” (3.3-4), performing the same work of disclosure that conscience does in the tenth sonnet, where “with sharpned knife” it “Doth splat my ripped hert, and jayes abrode / The lothesome secretes of my filthy life” (10.9-11). The difference is that conscience displays the filth of the soul’s interior “before the face of God” (10.12) while the circuit of despair is wholly narcissistic – despair speaks in its own voice, but the circle of address is limited to the self-involved consciousness

of the speaker. This is the trap that the sonnets seek to escape, and the only way out of the self-involved bind of desperate thinking is through submission to the text of scripture. In Lock's sequence, reading rendered into form does the work of the knife of conscience: in intimate collaboration, hermeneutics and poetics become the sharp instruments that lay the despairing heart open in the movement of penitential desire toward not fulfillment but exposure. What's especially striking about the image of the knife that lays the heart open is that it is superficially indistinguishable from suicide; to dismiss the resemblance as merely metaphorical would be to avoid confronting the dilemma of discernment posed by the relation between the feeling of despair and the feeling of true faith.

For Calvin, "the knowledge of fayth standeth rather in certaintie than in comprehending," that is, confidence in discernment (3.2.14). But to the degree that there is any confidence in Lock's sequence, it is not so much a firm assurance as a total giving over, not passive but submissive – not only to god but to his text, to the text of the psalm that exerts all the apparent agency of the sequence. Erotic abjection, coded through self-excoriation, is the devotional posture that makes it possible to cope with the loathsomeness of dwelling in the flesh. And it is also a theory of reading: what it feels like to be topped by scripture.

(LITERARY HISTORY)

In one of the most serious critical treatments Lock has received, Roland Greene argues that Lock's mode of dilating the psalm is both a specifically Calvinist and a specifically feminine approach that "refuses invention," in the modern sense of creativity and originality, to the degree that her poems become "virtually illegible" on the terms of literary history, and indeed demand redefining the terms of that history in order to recognize her as a point of

origin of English devotional poetics.¹⁰⁵ Yet he nevertheless produces a reading that depends to an astonishing degree on two intimately related sets of assumptions: one straightforwardly misogynist, the other literary-historical. I hope this claim will be obviously outrageous in its casual misogyny: “[Lock’s] is a poetics of female-gendered textual reproduction more than male-gendered creation, of enlargement more than originality, and provides an alternative to the dominant tradition of poetic writing in English” (155). Got it? Women reproduce; men *create*. With no wish to excuse Greene from responsibility for such an antediluvian gesture, I do want to call attention to how easily it emerges from any account of the “dominant tradition” to which Greene offers Lock as a counterexample.

Greene writes that Lock’s sequence “refuses invention,” by which he means that “this poem [*sic*] expands its model [the psalm] twelvefold while struggling to say almost nothing new,” rather than innovating on the psalm, as Wyatt or Mary Sidney creates “an adaptation that is original in some way” (158). That is, he equates “invention” with at least some degree of “originality.” This refusal of originality is explicitly gendered: “Working with a scriptural original, one of the first female poets to be published in English will likely have a much less proprietary hold on invention than these secular male poets [Wyatt, Gascoigne, et al.] – and of course, they are the real precursors of the double-edged view propounded by Herbert,” in which invention accompanies fidelity to divinity (161). (He appears to have forgotten by now his own gesture to Mary Sidney.) The gendered view of the female author who is – naturally, unremarkably – incapable of the work a set of male poets spanning a

¹⁰⁵ “Anne Lock’s *Meditation*: Invention Versus Dilation and the Founding of Puritan Poetics,” in *Form and Reform in Renaissance England: Essays in Honor of Barbara Kiefer Lewalski*, eds. Amy Boesky and Mary Thomas Crane (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), 153-171. Further citations parenthetically. A lightly adapted version of this essay also appears in the chapter on “Invention” in Greene’s recent *Five Words: Critical Semantics in the Age of Shakespeare and Cervantes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 15-40.

hundred years are heirs to thus lightly assumes a given developmental narrative of English poetics. Yet Greene begs the question, assuming first that his definition of invention as roughly equivalent to originality is appropriate to the period and the poetics under consideration, and further assuming the givenness of a trajectory of literary history that is in fact contingent, conditioned by five hundred years of reception, scholarship, and academic institutionalization. His premises are in fact back-formations: invention becomes originality when viewed from the vantage of modernity, the same vantage that allows us to assume that a developmental narrative that runs easily from Wyatt to Herbert is in the first place accurate and in the second place was always inevitable. The gendered claim thus emerges as heavily overdetermined. Greene is not saying something true about Anne Lock; he is recapitulating a prefabricated literary historiography.

Greene characterizes Lock as an exception to literary history, as a curious and curiously feminized anomaly lying outside it; at the end of his essay he then suggests a means of reinscribing her into a different lineage: citing Milton and Taylor, he observes that “every reformed poet who thinks of poems as material to be disposed for penitence or praise, rather than as the tokens of individual experience, owes something to her astonishingly early encounter with these alternatives,” and Lock becomes “an important episode in the incipient history of Protestant poetics” (167). In a similarly recuperative vein, Kim Coles’ reading of Lock confronts the misogynist critical tradition that seeks to exclude her, that is, confronts the misogynist claims that undergird the logic of exceptionality, by insisting on Lock’s influence within the existing tradition.¹⁰⁶ That is, in an intently feminist project, Coles reproduces the very literary history that makes such a recuperative project necessary to begin

¹⁰⁶ Religion, Reform, and Women’s Writing in Early Modern England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

with. In this structural sense, if only in this sense, her feminist literary history is identical to Greene's misogynist one. But what is important about these sonnets lies not in their influence but something like their *failure to influence*: in their habits of figuration and argument, they point away from the sonnet tradition as we know it. Lock's approach in the *Meditation* is precisely inventional, in the properly historicized sense of the word: she "finds" her matter in the psalm itself. Greene's reluctance to see such invention as a "creative" act neglects the central irony of the sonnets' art: the highly wrought utterance that characterizes itself as inarticulate, the procedure in reading that would prefer not to proceed. Lock's recalcitrance provides a productive friction not only to the temporality of reading, in which it slows down and dilates Augustine's inexorable temporal mechanics, but to the narrative of literary history. She interrupts the easy unfolding of the genealogical line from Wyatt to Herbert, and to take her seriously requires that we reconsider our received ideas about the tradition we in turn have inherited. Such a reconsideration would not revise the canon by resituating Lock within that genealogical line, positing her as a progenitor for Donne and Herbert or for Milton and Taylor (another kind of reproductivity), but rather might require the imagining of an alternative history that isn't, the genealogy that failed to unfold. I am interested in what that alternative history might have to teach us about our reading practices.

(IMPASSE // CREATIVITY)

It may require Aemilia Lanyer, the subject of my next chapter, to demonstrate what might be particularly *feminist* about recalcitrance, what makes it a productive model for women in particular, critiques of (hetero)patriarchy in particular. For now I'd like to turn to what Lock offers to reading in the contemporary academy. Lock's recalcitrant poetics might have any

number of things to teach us: about how we read poetry, about how we think about the relation between form and feeling, about how we encode our encounters with the texts we read in our own rhetorical gestures and formal maneuvers. I'd like to turn these possibilities toward another: what Lock's wrangling with the problems of spiritual disorder might have to offer to thinking through, or with, emotional disorder.

Ann Cvetkovich's recent book, *Depression: A Public Feeling*, half memoir and half cultural studies essay, makes an affirming case for bringing the emotional experiences of what I'll call (though she, importantly, doesn't) mental illness into the sphere of intellectual labor. As she describes it, her book is "about how to live a better life by embracing rather than glossing over bad feelings. [...] It asks how it might be possible to tarry with the negative as a part of daily practice, cultural production, and political activism."¹⁰⁷ Where I find her especially useful in thinking about depression as not only the object but the subject of that labor is in her construction of depression as an "impasse" through which the only path is what she calls "creativity." But what she means by *creativity* is not its usual sense of original, individual artistic inspiration and genius, but the banal movement through the everyday: doing the dishes as an act of self-repair (or, as it is in my own life, more often an act of rebellion). "Creativity," that is, in a sense much closer to that of *inventio* as "finding":

With its spatial connotations of being at a "dead end" or "no exit," impasse captures the notion of depression as a state of being "stuck," of not being able to figure out what to do or why to do it. [...] Defined in relation to notions of blockage or impasse, creativity can be thought of as a form of movement, movement that maneuvers the mind inside or around an impasse, even if that movement sometimes seems backward or like a form of retreat. [...] My goal in exploring the relation between depression and academic careers is thus to create more space for creative thought, for whatever it is that provides more pleasure or happiness, even if its

¹⁰⁷ *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 3.

immediate professional or social gains are not obvious. More space for “creativity” also means a higher tolerance for “impasse,” which is sometimes the only route to new thinking [...]. If we can come to know each other through our depression, then perhaps we can use it to make forms of sociability that not only move us forward past our moments of impasse but understand impasse itself to be a state that has productive potential.¹⁰⁸

Cvetkovich’s turn to the language of “cure,” “happiness,” “productivity,” and “movement” seems to be at least as much an index of the poverty of our vocabulary for surviving in bad feeling as it is the naïve optimism it resembles. As my reading of Lock and Calvin perhaps indicates, I am much more hesitant to use such terms, even as placeholders, than Cvetkovich is here. If the opposite of despair is not hope but a means of coping with the condition of alienation that is dwelling in the body, I might say that the opposite of depression is not happiness but a means of coping with the condition of stuckness. (I think Cvetkovich would agree with that, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding.) To see what the consequences of such coping might be for reading, I’d like to take up her suggestion of “impasse” as its own model of thought, one that carries a kind of radical alternative to the interpretive and institutional procedures in which we have all been brought up. I have described how for Lock, inarticulacy and repetition are the mechanisms by which reading and writing might lay the soul open before god, not move toward grace but provide the means of dwelling in the craving space anterior to it; in its ironic rhetorical investment in reluctance and incapacity to speak, it has an intimate resonance with Cvetkovich’s “creativity.”

A much more contemporary sonnet, Isabel Cole’s “sonnet, which unfortunately will not fit on a post-it note,” more explicitly renders this daily kind of creativity into form:

¹⁰⁸ Cvetkovich, 20-23.

Wash every dish and empty out the rack.
 Fold or hang each garment with the care
 that it prefers. Tell yourself the air
 is sweet to your skin. Exercise the knack
 which you attempted to abandon. Crack
 an egg and eat what it becomes. Wear
 a pendant. Clean the bathtub. Wash your hair.
 Drink water. Leave your bed. Do not go back.

Remember all the soggy, blurred-out days.
 Remember what you know: this is such stuff
 as life is made on, which could pass you by
 again, which has devised so many ways
 to leave you. Make that memory be enough.
 It won't be. It may never be. Try.¹⁰⁹

Like Lock's readings of the psalm, Cole's poem is designed to be repeated, the imperatives registering an iterative kind of daily list-making. It won't fit on a post-it, so say it to yourself to remember ("Remember ... Remember") how to move through your home, because though theoretically "you know," you do forget, and then having remembered, forget again. Its imperatives flirt with the risk of trite advice, but held back by heavy enjambment – verbs in the octave creeping ever closer to the end of the line – they become a kind of tired self-talk, the work of hauling oneself into the small acts of a day rendered as the work of hauling oneself across a line-break. Their monosyllables recall Lock's; the three sentences of the eighth line especially measuring out a movement that can scarcely be called that – if leaving the bed and not going back is a monumental act of will, the measure of these monosyllables belies it. And desire, as such, never even enters in – unless it is in the self-cancelling longing to go back to bed.

¹⁰⁹ Like Day, I'll say that this sonnet was delivered me by a friend with whom I knew I might be so bolde to use & publishe as it pleased me.

This is not quite the knife of conscience, but it is a depression poem that does not believe in cure: the terminal “Try,” with its understanding of the never-enoughness of the sestet’s reminders, comes in an unknowable tone. Or rather a variable one: its mood depends on the reader’s. I have repeated this sonnet, in any case, on many soggy, blurred-out days. Every time I fold my laundry: a deep breath, and “fold or hang each garment,” I say to myself, or wryly to the cat, knowing I’m being too literal but needing the act of folding laundry to stand in for figuration. When life devises ways to leave you, the poem suggests, the only response is to remain in the present of a self-talking not-quite-movement through the most banal kind of creativity.

It strikes me that Lock, Cvetkovich, and Cole between them gesture to a space in which it might become more possible to be honest about the conditions under which our work proceeds, in terms of our attachments to the texts we read, our procedures in reading them, and our relationships to the historical time in which we are with them. In the first chapter of her book, following the memoir, Cvetkovich seeks in early Christian *acedia* an analogue to modern depression; I would like to follow her in this maneuver, taking up her suggestion that the “resources of history might be at least as generative as new pills and medical diagnoses.”¹¹⁰ Cvetkovich suggests that Cassian’s fourth-century monastic writing on *acedia* “might be relevant for understanding contemporary depression, not necessarily because *acedia* and depression are the same, but because their unexpected juxtaposition produces insights about contemporary practices of contemplation and action that unsettle received wisdom about depression as a medical condition.”¹¹¹ While I have a different – less openly hostile, more compromised, more contradictory – relation to the medical model of

¹¹⁰ Cvetkovich, 90.

¹¹¹ Cvetkovich, 87.

mental illness than Cvetkovich does, not least in being willing to call it illness, I value her commitment to seeking in the past ways of being in emotional disorder. Isabel's sonnet is one such investment in the resources of (literary) history: writing in a deep poetic tradition in order to address herself to the present, a present that like Lock's has a sensibility of a future without being willing to project anything into it, her crisp imperative articulations are a little haunted, a little ironized, archaized, by the formal maneuvers of the sonnet.

If I have a correction to offer to Cvetkovich's reading, it's in her dismissal of early modernity as a generative site: "The Renaissance construction of melancholy as creative is accompanied by its secularization. [...] Even alteritist models that embrace melancholy's negativity tend to be secular, and one potential value of turning to *acedia* rather than melancholy to historicize depression and political feelings is to explore whether its sacred and religious dimensions can be useful rather than a liability."¹¹² Not entirely her fault: she accepts the conventional "continuist histories" of melancholy offered by scholars since at least Panofsky, in which melancholy takes on a positive gloss as the figure of male creative genius—creativity on an order that would exclude Cvetkovich's (and, I'd argue, Lock's) model. But when we understand the early modern period as the halcyon moment of secularization, we risk losing the resources of its sacred traditions. This is another way of accounting for the way Lock's sequence is constantly at risk of slipping out of view or being denied its place in our reading: it defies any easy secularization narrative that would evacuate god from the sonnet tradition. (To account for why Donne's or Milton's devotional sonnets have not encountered this problem, we need only return to the casual assumptions of Greene's essay.) And when we understand melancholy as the *sine qua non* of Renaissance

¹¹² Cvetkovich, 89.

understandings of emotional disorder, we risk losing models like Lock's that sit uneasily with that much earlier medical model.

Cvetkovich also offers an alternative to the usual understanding of the relation between early theology and our critical present, in which the sacred and the premodern are always a *pre*history of something else, instructive to the degree that they help us to understand "secular" "modernity." I want to ask, what other ways of being with the past than imagining ourselves as its unfolded future might emerge from a study of a work like Lock's? In the era of surface reading and big data, what might we learn about our own critical practice from her readerly recalcitrance? What might her self-excoriating way of suturing reading to writing provide us toward recuperating the features of reparative reading that are neither nice nor comfortable? And what politics does she offer? What kind of a wrench might she help us to throw into the works of a profession that conditions our reading to be as forward-moving as are the institutional protocols of productivity? These questions will, I imagine, remain open for some time. For now what I know is that Lock has borne me company in my own impasse, has encouraged me to be more submissive in my interpretive gestures, less concerned with mastery, and perhaps most importantly, as another friend who is currently at work on a depression sonnet sequence put it, awed by her first reading of Lock, "She gives me permission to be still."

IV. Precarious Typology: Aemilia Lanyer and the Poetics of Failure

For some time it has been a central tenet of queer literay historiography that an investment in the pleasure of the past, in the affects associated with attachment to, desire for, love of past objects, with *touching* those objects, produces a queer relationship to time. Carla Freccero and Aranye Fradenburg argued in their watershed introduction to *Premodern Sexualities* in 1996 “both that contemporary thinking has enormous relevance to the study of *past pleasures* and that study of *past pleasures* can in some cases powerfully address or reframe contemporary practices and problems.” The circuit of pleasure between past and present works to produce a second-order pleasure in the very temporality of this study: “The past may not *be* the present, but it is sometimes *in* the present, haunting, even if only through our uncertain knowledges of it, our hopes of surviving and living well.” The future-orientation of “hope” – the claim we can make on the future by means of the past that haunts us in the present – secures Fradenburg and Freccero’s method as “work to affirm the *pleasures* of mortal creatures.”¹¹³ Carolyn Dinshaw, most prominently, has continued this line of thought, first in *Getting Medieval* (1999) and quite recently in *How Soon Is Now?* (2012), where she commits to the “queer potential” of “time itself” in a study of medievalist amateurism,

¹¹³ ‘Introduction: Caxton, Foucault, and the Pleasures of History,’ in *Premodern Sexualities*, eds. Fradenburg and Freccero (New York: Routledge, 1996), xxi. Emphases on ‘pleasure’ mine.

with emphasis on *amare*. Love of the past object is what secures it in the now; what motivates the “wondrous, marvelous” queerness of time.¹¹⁴

But what if the past is not a site of pleasure, or if past pleasure itself registers as loss? The concluding poem of Aemilia Lanyer’s 1611 volume *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, “The Description of Cooke-ham” is, most basically, a lament. The interest of its unusual feminized pastoral and its interest in women’s readership, not to mention the intensity of its eroticism, sometimes occlude the simple availability of its nostalgic sorrow for a lost world. Its most frequent terms are injunctions to memory to preserve what cannot come again; its refrain is “pleasures past,” insisting not only on the pleasure that has passed, but on the irreducible pastness of pleasure. The poem’s nostalgic mode registers loss and failure in a way that remains obscure to us so long as we train our focus on sites of positive agency and positive affect. As Heather Love has observed in a beautiful revision of Stephen Greenblatt’s infamous declaration of desire, “The effort to recapture the past is doomed from the start. To reconstruct the past, we build on ruins; to bring it to life, we chase after the fugitive dead.”¹¹⁵ For Love, the disposition of the queer literary historian is one of doomed longing, doubly doomed by the gulf of time and by cultural impediments to queer desire of all kinds: “While contact with the dead is impossible, queer history is marked by a double impossibility: we will never possess the dead; our longing for them is also marked by the historical impossibility of same-sex desire.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ How Soon Is Now? : Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 4.

¹¹⁵ Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 8.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

With Love, I identify loss and failure as necessary sites for queer reading. Loss is a problem likewise proper to the study of premodern women's writing – as Jennifer Summit has argued, the place of the woman writer in the English canon has been constituted in and through figures of loss since the canon's very inception.¹¹⁷ I suggest that our task is less to resuscitate or recuperate the lost or the failed than it is to develop a mode of reading that can sustain investment in those devastated sites themselves. In this chapter I return to the questions I posed to Sedgwick's essay on the reparative in my introduction: what is the status of the reparative when its object is loss or failure, when it can be neither ameliorative nor, in the most straightforward sense, pleasurable? What happens when the reparative encounters the irreparable?

Love approaches the problem by addressing herself to the queer poetics of loss in those moments when "texts [...] resist our advances."¹¹⁸ Her concern is with queer literary figures who *refuse* – to be brought into the fold of a narrative of progress, to be used as exempla, even to cooperate with critical desires to understand them in the modern terms of queerness at all. Aemilia Lanyer does not turn her back on the critic who approaches her – quite to the contrary, she *strenuously* reaches for a congenial interpretive audience, most notably in the intimate imperatives of her several dedicatory poems. Yet her own interest in the irrecoverable brings her into a vexed and generative space, in which she is both aligned with the modern critic who wants to attend to and dwell with the problems of loss, and in which she and her poetry remain beyond our reach. My reading of "Cooke-ham" here attempts both to make space for Lanyer's queer poetics of failure, and to begin to grapple

¹¹⁷ *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

¹¹⁸ *Feeling Backward* 8.

with the problem – political as much as it is methodological – of how to relate to her poem across the ruined landscape of four hundred years of history.

In order to address “Cooke-ham,” I read Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, in which Lanyer undertakes a feminist exegesis on the Passion of Christ in the context of a projection of female devotional community – and the loss of that community under the pressures of the heteropatriarchal class and property structures of her culture. The movement of Lanyer’s volume between a radical feminist eschatological vision and a proleptic lament for its failure, I argue, articulates an uneasy cohabitation of competing claims: one of resistance to the impossibility of female community in this world, and the other a theological investment in the political potential of the apocalyptic world to come. *Salve Deus* appeared in a single quarto edition of 1611, which exists in nine copies that display differences indicative of deliberate tailoring for specific patrons.¹¹⁹ Those differences are symptomatic of the volume’s most heavily-commented feature: the conspicuousness of its bids for the attention and patronage of a range of the English court’s most socially and literarily powerful women.¹²⁰ Of its eleven prefatory addresses, nine are dedicated to individual women including Queen Anne, Lucy Russell, and Mary Sidney, the most notable and most prolific patrons of the arts in the Jacobean court. The 1,800-line “Salve Deus Rex

¹¹⁹ See Susanne Woods’ “Textual Introduction” to her edition of Lanyer’s book for the Oxford Women Writers series: *The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), xlvii-li. Unless otherwise indicated, all of my own citations of Lanyer in this essay are taken from this edition.

¹²⁰ See e.g. Barbara Lewalski, “Of God and Good Women: The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer,” in *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1985), 203-224; Kari Boyd McBride, “Sacred Celebration: The Patronage Poems,” in *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre, and the Canon*, ed. Marshall Grossman (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 60-82; 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*, eds. Mary E. Burke et al. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 38-57.

Judaeorum,” the volume’s centerpiece, dedicates significant space to encomia to Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland, and the final poem, two hundred lines of a “Description of Cooke-ham,” extols the Countess and her daughter Anne in a nostalgic meditation on a brief season that Lanyer spent with them on the eponymous country estate.¹²¹ In addition to the obviously mercenary intent of such claims on the readerly and material resources of its addressees, *Salve Deus* projects and even seeks to enact a community of devout reading women that stands in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly male-dominated world of English letters in the early seventeenth century. Two further prefatory addresses, one “To all vertuous Ladies in generall,” and the other “To the vertuous Reader,” implicitly feminine, broaden the volume’s remit beyond the highest echelons of society and stake explicit claims for the priority of women’s readership when it comes to scripture.

It’s worth taking a moment to remark on the simple *radicalism* of the volume’s endeavor. The coordination of Lanyer’s feminist exegetical mission in “Salve Deus” itself with the book’s projection of a community of committed women readers of scripture marks a claim-staking both for a theology of femininity and for the readerly capacity of women that is entirely unique in its own cultural moment, and rare enough in any other. The project seems doomed to failure from the start – and indeed, its final poem’s lament for the loss of a community of reading women, its protest against the social, economic, and political barriers that stand between women, appear to be keenly conscious of precisely such a failure. Yet that failure itself motivates Lanyer’s poetics of feminist futurity – her book’s project is in part to resist the damaging forces of material exigency in the present world in order to put aesthetic and political stock in the feminist potential of the next.

¹²¹ I distinguish the volume and its central poem by referring to the titles of the former in italics and the latter in quotation marks.

In addition to material support, Lanyer's volume calls for a hermeneutics of intimacy, issues an invitation to bring her book into relationship with a broader economy – material, intellectual, and spiritual – of women's reading. Here, Sedgwick's reparative reading provides a valuable resource in its implicit understanding of reading as relationship. What does it mean, for example, to cohabit with loss and failure, or with the dangerous capacities of language? The title of this chapter is one way of naming the difficulty of cohabitation: the precarity of being in relationship with damage, of a cathexis whose object may cause more pain than pleasure. Sara Ahmed, in her feminist critique of the discourse of happiness, provides an idiom in which to think this problem through the figure of the "feminist killjoy" whose failure or refusal to find prescribed objects of happiness fulfilling exposes her to the accusation of being a destroyer of happiness.¹²² In an exfoliation of the figure of finding resonant with this project's interests in both repetition and *inventio*, Ahmed observes how

feminism by refusing to go along with public displays of happiness can participate in the widening of horizons in which it is possible to *find* things. Feminism does not guarantee what we will *find* [...]. It simply opens up the places where we can look. [...] The public investment in happiness is an investment in a very particular and narrow model of the good; being happy requires a commitment to *find* what [Shulamith] Firestone brilliantly describes as a "narrow difficult-to-*find* alley" of human experience.¹²³

Lanyer's project in *Salve Deus* is to pursue just such a discontented feminist *inventio*: to respond to dissatisfaction with available models of devotion and community among women by first prying open the horizon of possibility, and then insisting on remaining in expressions of lament, grief, and nostalgia when those possibilities turn out to be foreclosed.

¹²² "Feminist Killjoys," in *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 69-70, emphases mine.

(RITUALS OF INTIMATE READING)

Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum persistently poses the question of what it might really take to engage in intimate readerly relationships, what the hermeneutics of such textual intimacy might demand from a reader. The volume's dedicatory poems address themselves directly to the development of an idiom of embodied, often erotic interpretive gesture. Lanyer's frequent imperatives urge her dedicatees not only to "behold," "viewe," and "look," but also to reach for, touch, embrace, and receive her book – and with it, metonymically, Christ himself. She instructs Queen Anne to see that her daughter read *Salve Deus*, "Desiring that this Booke Her hands may kisse," and "her blessed thoughts this book imbrace" (Queen 142, 144). Lanyer's characteristic flair for ambiguous syntax here holds in suspension the relation between subject and object: does the book kiss the Princess Elizabeth's hands (as in a gesture of fealty by textual proxy), or do her hands kiss the book (as in a gesture of benediction)? Do her thoughts embrace the book, or the book her thoughts? The poem is uninterested in resolving these questions. Instead, these lines' suspended ambiguity describes a desire for intensely proximate intimacy between the reader and the text she reads, the book she holds in her hands in all its materiality – an intimacy in which she is both subject and object of her own reading.

Elsewhere, Lanyer exhorts the Countess Dowager of Kent to "Take this faire Bridegroom in your soules pure bed" (42), the Countess of Suffolk to "feede" on "heavenly food" (51), and Anne Clifford to "infolde" the figure of Christ in the "armes" of her "soule" (118), to "lodge him in the closet of your heart" (143) – a collection of imperatives that simultaneously underline the eroticism of readerly intimacy and bring it into contact with the eucharistic doctrines of presence that make a figure of internalizing Christ so readily

available. The erotics of these invitations remind us that everything in these dedicatory poems turns on a question of desire. Like all dedications, they perform the speech-act of giving – but they also demand a gesture in return, one that the poet-as-celebrant cannot guarantee. Lanyer asks for acts of intimate, embodied exegesis that alone can make the reading of a poem analogous to the reception of the body and blood of Christ. The ritual of reading, in these poems, is always in their future – uncertain, not yet apprehended, like any object of desire. Their future-orientation will develop into a more fully articulated poetics of typology and eschatology in “Salve Deus” and in “The Description of Cooke-ham,” where the book’s hermeneutic commitments begin to move more strenuously from staking a claim for women’s readerly relationships in the present, material world, toward staking one for a feminist hereafter.

In order to open an interpretive field for Lanyer’s radical exegetics, I return to Origen, for whom the coordination of the senses of the body and the senses of scripture is much more than a felicitously available pun. In making recourse to figures of interiority like “the armes of your soule” and “the closet of your heart,” Lanyer avails herself of a conception of the ensouled body that the Christian tradition owes largely to Origen’s model of a spiritual interiority, in which the soul’s disposition toward divinity operates by a language of bodily disposition: “Let us,” he writes, “stretch forth the hands of our soul as of our body to God, that the Lord [...] may also give us the Word with His power, by whom we may be enabled to make clear from our treatise a sound understanding of the name and nature of love” (219-20). Lanyer’s prefatory poems take ample advantage of this potential of scriptural hermeneutics to generate embodied intimacy. In her long allegorical poem in praise of Mary Sidney, Lanyer implores her to “Receive him here by my unworthy hand”

(221), marking once more her investment in reading as an act of embodied reception as well as, and at the same time as, an intellectual act of interpretation figured as sacrament. Like so many of her pronouns and deictics, the object of “receive” here is capacious in its metonymic movement: by this gesture, she offers her book as a material object (one referent); the book serves as a vehicle for her exegesis on the Passion (a second referent), which through interpretation reveals the presence of Christ (a third). This textual figure of the eucharist depends on the attention Lanyer calls to the gesture by which it takes place – the imperative reach of the author that anticipates but cannot guarantee the reciprocal reach of the reader, the embodied act that seeks to provoke but cannot secure an interpretive one. “And reade his paths of faire humility,” the poem continues, with the echo in “reade” of “tread” registering the tense intimacy between readerly reception and embodied enactment (222). As when Lanyer instructs Lucy Russell that her “soule may reade / Salvation” (13-14), in the senses both of reading *about* salvation and reading *as* salvation (ambiguity hanging on the line-break), in the poem to Sidney, “reading” itself constitutes a devout act, an *imitatio Christi* that in turn calls attention to the mimetic impulse at the heart both of all poetry and of all devotion. Is this what Origen means when he asks, in the commentary on the Gospel of John, “what kind of intelligence we must have to understand fully the discourse stored in the earthen treasure of ordinary speech,” the figure within the vessel of the literal text?¹²⁴ Answering his own question, Origen cites Saint Paul’s pronouncement that “We have the intelligence of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). As in the English translation – the Geneva reads

¹²⁴ Origen, *Commentary on John, Book I* in *Origen*, ed. and trans. Joseph W. Trigg (London: Routledge, 1998), 109. For Origen’s “earthen treasure” figure, see 2 Cor. 4:1-7, where Paul conflates in the figure of “treasure in earthen vessels” both the capacity of gospel as text and the capacity of the base material of humanity to exceed itself in preaching that gospel – that is, for Paul here as elsewhere, the body and spirit of scripture and of human being are so nearly analogous as to be almost identical.

“minde” for intelligence – Paul’s syntax in Greek (*noun christou echomen*) introduces its own ambiguity: to have “mind of Christ” might mean either to share some intellectual capacity with Christ (to be of Christ’s mind), or more conventionally, to have Christ *in* mind, to have a mind disposed toward Christ. The point, of course, is in that ambiguity: a mind disposed toward Christ, in the act of interpretation, reveals the presence of Christ, the figure within the letter, the spirit within the body of scripture. The Christological poetics of Lanyer’s imperatives in the dedicatory poems takes up the potential of a discourse of the “promise of presence” that defines gospel for Origen – the embodied reach encoded in Lanyer’s eucharistic gestures operates to motivate the movement of reading in time that is so crucial to Origen’s understanding of gospel. For the Christian hermeneutics in which these poems are engaged, desire functions on the play not only between presence and absence, but between presence and futurity. In the encounter of the desiring ensouled body with the movement of a text’s own dialectic of interiority and exteriority, figure and letter, in this temporal frame, reading becomes a mechanics not only of signification but of temporality.

(FEMINIST TYPOLOGY)

In a temporal play that aims to capture some of the immanence of futurity in the present time of reading, “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” begins with the end: the encomium to the Countess of Cumberland that serves as its incipit grades quickly into a hundred-line vision of Christ in Majesty that situates the Countess’s own personal apocalypse in the more general doom. Already in its second stanza anticipating the flight of the Countess’s soul to heaven, the poem locates itself squarely in the world: “These lines on earth record thy reverend name: / And to this taske I mean my Muse to tie” (12-13). But “of the world,”

Lanyer writes to the Countess, “thou seem’st to have no part” (44). Inscribing her patroness in the same metaphysical orbit with Christ, she lends the epideictic mode a distinctly eschatological cast:

Tis He that doth behold thy inward cares,
And will regard the sorrowes of thy Soule;
Tis He that guides thy feet from Sathan’s snares,
And in his Wisedome, doth thy waies controule:
He through afflictions, still thy Minde prepares,
And all thy glorious Trialls will enroule:
That when the darke daies of terror shall appeare,
Thou as the Sunne shalt shine; or much more cleare. (49-56)

The final pun on “sun” and “son” yokes together the beholding, guiding figure of Christ with the Countess beheld and guided; literally inscribed (“enrouled”) in the book of judgement, the Countess is transformed by apocalypse into a beacon to rival Christ’s own. This union of the two subjects of her address permits the operation of the dilatory time of Lanyer’s poem – in the stanza following, she tells the Countess that “thou from him shalt never be estrang’d, / When he shall come in glory, that was solde / For all our sinnes; we happily are chang’d” (60-62). Here the perpetuity of communion with Christ rubs up against the fundamental *change* – change so radical as to be unspeakable – of apocalypse.¹²⁵ The collision of the final clause’s present tense with the futurity of the preceding lines enacts that paradox of end-times – not yet, not yet, but so close and so longed-for that it emerges in the poem’s very grammar.

What, then, ties Lanyer’s earthly lines to the radical futurity of the apocalypse she envisions? “Salve Deus” comes with its own guide to figurative reading, in its intimations

¹²⁵ See, for example, 1 Cor. 15, with its litany of typological analogies and oppositions between the fallen world and the new heaven and earth of apocalypse.

that its reader's – and especially the Countess's – exegetical capacity will fulfill its meaning, and in its warnings of the dangers of an excess of literalism. The marginal notes throughout the poem – six in all – that call attention to its moments of direct address to the Countess serve to punctuate Lanyer's meditations on scripture with the conspicuousness of their audience. It's in her reading mind that the poem will be fulfilled:

This with the eie of Faith thou maist behold,
Deere Spouse of Christ, and more than I can write;
And here both Griefe and Joy thou maist unfold,
To viewe thy Love in this most heavy plight[.] (1169-72)

Origen's inner senses are in demand here, disguised as a humility topos that apologizes for the poverty of Lanyer's verse, its incapacity to register adequately the presence of Christ without the reader's faithful eye. The Countess's interpretive faith fulfills what the words on the page alone cannot accomplish. Casting the Countess as "Spouse" in the hermeneutic role of the Church, Lanyer calls on the embodied senses to expand the sense of her poem, and anticipates the mystical marriage of the Countess with Christ in the meditation on the Song of Songs (1289-1336). There, near the end of her poem, Lanyer returns to the register of readerly offering and interiority that governs the volume's prefatory poems:

Ah! Give me leave (good Lady) now to leave
This taske of Beauty which I tooke in hand,
I cannot wade so deepe, I may deceave
My selfe, before I can attaine the land;
Therefore (good Madame) in your heart I leave
His perfect picture, where it still shall stand,
Deepely engraved in that holy shrine
Environed with love and thoughts divine. (1321-8)

The picture of Christ – Lanyer's famously feminizing blazon "upon the Canticles" executed in the preceding stanzas – attains "perfection" only in and by its shrine in the Countess's

heart. Its deep engraving is an act of inscription that is, perhaps paradoxically, also an act of reading. This interiorizing mode stands in stark contrast to the stupid literalism of Christ's captors, who "tell his Words, though farre from his intent, / And what his Speeches were, not what he meant" (655-6). The mark of the infidel is an incapacity to interpret figure, a failure to move through the literal sense into the more capacious – and salvific – domain of exegesis.¹²⁶ The "eye of Faith," by contrast, in its powerful readerly capacity, analogizes the body of the reader with the Church, that "holy shrine" where love and thought are of a piece, and which is capable of holding presence perfectly.

This interiorizing mode of reading motivates the poem's sweeping final gesture of a feminist typology that posits the Countess as the fulfillment of the Old Testament figures of Deborah, Judith, Esther, Susannah, and the Queen of Sheba. First bestowing a radical form of female sacerdotal authority on the Countess by way of analogy to Saint Peter and his keys, the "Spirituell powre [...] giv'n to thee" (1369-70), Lanyer imagines the Countess as having the power to "heale the soules" of sinners and "all griefes" generally (1371, 1382), to cast out evil spirits (1377-80), to "convert" (1392) the masses to be saved at the end of days:

That by this meanes thou mai'st in time recover

¹²⁶ This complaint depends on a deep anti-Semitism – a tendency toward the literal is just one more bestial feature of the "Jewes" (used pejoratively at 545), violent refusers of the savior who are described as "Monsters" (497), "Jewish Wolves" (684), and "Hel-hounds" (689). Lanyer is drawing on a long Christian tradition of understanding the alleged Jewish overemphasis on the literal sense of scripture as, in Lanyer's words, a "learned Ignorance" that can "apprehend / No light of grace" but only "Zeale, Lawes, Religion," where *religion* stands in for an excess of arbitrary legalism (546-8). The Pauline typological system from which all exegesis descends guarantees that this supercessionary hermeneutic bigotry will be central to Christian approaches to scriptural interpretation. The cultural and theological implications of this are as complicated as they are disturbing – especially as inherited by the contemporary "Pauline turn" in early modern studies and political philosophy alike, as theorists such as Alain Badiou and literary critics including Julia Reinhard Lupton take up Pauline "universalism" as a political good with too little care for the damage that inheres in the very concept.

Those weake lost sheepe that did so long transgresse,
 Presenting them unto thy dearest Lover;
 That when he brings them backe unto his fold,
 In their conversion then he may behold

Thy beauty shining brighter than the Sunne[.] (1396-1401)

By this astonishing subordination, Lanyer creates the final judgement of the saved as a figure for the virtues of the Countess. This eschatological gesture fulfills the one that opened the poem; the Countess's apocalypse bookends the Passion of Christ. The time of the poem thus dilates between its persistent, distended "now" – the suffering of Christ is constantly beginning, in the present tense, throughout "Salve Deus" – and this sweeping futurity of the Countess's end-time enthronement.

It's this temporal mechanism that enables Lanyer's feminist typology: casting backward, now, she collects out of scripture types for the Countess to fulfill. Deborah and Judith waged worldly war, but "thou farre greater warre do'st still maintaine / Against that many headed monster Sinne" (1489-90); for Deborah's "one worthy deed," the Countess has performed uncountable (1497-8); for Judith's "one Conquest," the Countess has "the Conquest of all Conquests wonne, / When to thy Conscience Hell can lay no crime" (1499-1502). Lanyer counterposes the Countess against Esther by means of the stock distinctions in Christian exegesis between the New and Old testaments in the supercession of heart over body, "Love" over "Feare" (1521), moral allegory over literal narrative (1511-1528). Susannah is "not to be compar'd to thee," so far does the Countess's chastity outshine that of her antetype (1541). Finally and most stunningly, the Queen of Sheba, "this faire map of majestie and might, / Was but a figure of thy deerest Love, / Borne t'expresse that true and heavenly light / That doth all other joyes imperfect prove" (1609-12). The Countess *is* the

figurative fulfillment of a reading of the Song of Songs. To return to my discussion of Origen on love and the Song of Songs, Lanyer here invests in an exegetical discourse of figure and expression in order to orient her address to the Countess. Or, to see it from another angle, she invests her intimacy (or her desire for intimacy) with the Countess in her intimacy with the interpretive maneuvers of typology. An act of reading becomes a mode of generating a poetics of intimate address.

The narrow focus of Lanyer's poem on the female figures of scripture is a radical one in its own right – she performs in exegesis the community of women's readership that she projects in the prefatory poems. Yet as the volume moves from the dedicatory poems' calls for radical, metaphysical intimacy, through the feminist typology and eschatology of "Salve Deus," and finally into the nostalgic lament of "The Description of Cooke-ham," it develops an uneasy coordination of contradictory affects and temporalities. That is, the future of communal female readership toward which the dedications look forward is the lamented past of "Cooke-ham," a poem constituted in a catalogue of losses and motivated by a different poetics of typology, one far less certain of its capacity to secure in the material world the metaphysical vision of intimacy it promotes.

(PLEASURES PAST)

"Salve Deus" closes with a pair of gestures in the rhymed couplets of its two final stanzas that urge the present-tense intimacy of poet, poem, and patron:

But my weake Muse desireth now to rest,
Folding up all their Beauties in your breast. (1831-2)

You are the Articke Starre that guides my hand,
All what I am, I rest at your command. (1839-40)

In the first couplet, the speaker imagines her reader literally internalizing not merely the poem, but her poetic imagination itself; the final tender gesture of personal fealty in the second orients that imagination by the reader as polestar. Taken together, they evoke a kind of intersubjective feedback loop – a textual intimacy in which the movement of poetic imagination is secured by the “all-reviving beautie” of Christ that is the poem’s touchstone throughout. But even as “Salve Deus” ends with this affectionate intimacy, “The Description of Cooke-ham” begins, across the page, with *Farewell*.¹²⁷ The cohabitation of confiding explicit and valedictory lament in a single page-opening produces an affective and interpretive tension; the synoptic availability of both to the reader indicates an instability at the center of the book she holds in her hands.

I’d like to articulate this movement in Lanyer’s volume between claims on intimacy and voicings of loss in terms of the tension in the developing field of queer affect theory between calls for attention to a reparative *now*, and calls for acknowledgement of loss and failure, with their tendency to stick recalcitrantly in the past. Sedgwick calls on the disposition of reparative reading as a means of rejecting – or simply surviving – the undifferentiated unfolding of patrilineal time proper to the hermeneutics of paranoia, with its imperatives to *beyond*. She further suggests that the reparative is congenial to a queer time and space in which lives – and, perhaps, texts – “slide up more intimately alongside one another than can any lives that are moving forward according to the regular schedule of the generations,” in the “present fullness of a becoming whose arc may extend no further.”¹²⁸ The reparative depends, too – and this, as we have seen, is crucial for Lanyer – on the close

¹²⁷ *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (London: Valentine Simmes for Richard Bonian, 1611), sigs. H1v-H2r.

¹²⁸ *Touching Feeling* 149.

coordination of affect with touch and texture that *Touching Feeling* in its very title insists on. As Sedgwick puts it, what “texture and affect, touching and feeling [...] have in common is that [...] both are irreducibly phenomenological.”¹²⁹ In associating this embodied, affective phenomenology with close-reading, Sedgwick is close here to Elizabeth Freeman’s reading of Dipesh Chakrabarty on close-reading as a “grasp of detail [that] produces affective histories,” an embodied affective reach toward text (rather than perception through it). Lanyer’s prefatory poems call strongly on a language of what Freeman calls “bodily motion (a grasp, a clutch, a refusal to let go),” the almost outrageous intimate attachment that Freeman signals *queer*.¹³⁰ In Carolyn Dinshaw’s now-commonplace “touch across time,” the queerness of an intimate relation structured by anachronism activates the possibility that in our felt encounters with the texts of the past, time and difference might collapse.¹³¹ Yet these approaches to readerly attachment threaten to fall into an undifferentiated now that cannot account for the movement of history and its losses, a now that overemphasizes plenitude and presence, and at the same time forecloses possibilities for an ethics of the future.

Modern readers of Lanyer who have viewed her and her book as, at best, in need of recuperation into a narrative of feminist progress or, at worst, unamenable to such a progress narrative and thus in need of suspicious critique, have tended to require of *Salve Deus* both a transparency and a uniformity of affect and investment that it quite simply does not exhibit. As Jonathan Goldberg has argued, one of the failures of the feminist

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 21

¹³⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 18. Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), xx.

¹³¹ Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); “Temporalities,” in *Oxford Twenty-first Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

recuperation projects of the 1980's and 90's was an excess of investment in, precisely, recuperation: in discoveries of premodern female agency, of what Goldberg derisively calls "good women" who frictionlessly slide into narratives of progress, of "proto-bourgeois individualism" that too often comes packaged in a tacit assumption of heteronormativity.¹³² I have said that Lanyer strenuously reaches for a congenial audience, and she does, to such an extent that it would be almost cruel to refuse to hear that call. Yet to think we know what it means when we hear it is at best naïve, at worst a form of historical and interpretive violence. One way of more attentively approaching Lanyer would be to circumvent recuperation by the path of repair – in the uneasy, capacious sense in which Sedgwick uses the term. As Sedgwick writes of Melanie Klein's "depressive position" – the infant's defense posture against unassimilable anxieties – the repaired object of reading would be "something like a whole – though, I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*."¹³³ The task at hand, for Sedgwick as for Love, is to step out of the pernicious binary between presence and absence that inheres in the suspicions of deconstruction, and to find a new means of addressing ourselves to the gulfs and fissures of texts that remain, in some degree, irrecoverable.

It is in this sense that I want to read Lanyer as a feminist killjoy, in Ahmed's definition, which also entails the necessity of killing joy to feminism, that is, a resistance to the "good women" logic of recuperative feminist readings. Beginning with the superficially banal observation that "consciousness-raising" – first tool of feminist work – is "raising consciousness of unhappiness," she further notes that "Feminism involves political

¹³² *Desiring Women Writing: English Renaissance Examples* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 11.

¹³³ *Touching Feeling* 128, emphasis original.

consciousness of what women are asked to give up for consciousness.”¹³⁴ That is, to recognize what one has been deprived of by the orientation of “happy” life toward, for example, marriage, property, and reproduction, to develop awareness as a feminist, is to acknowledge a loss. “To even recognize such loss is to mourn,” Ahmed writes, “which is why it can be easier to avoid recognition. Feminist subjects in refusing to be well-adjusted not only mourn the losses but in mourning open up other possibilities for living, as openings that we inherit over generations.”¹³⁵ Throughout her essay, Ahmed uses the language of “inheritance” to describe a particularly non-reproductive, non-genealogical transmission of thought among women through history: we “inherit” feminist thought along different lines than biological lineality; when we find our feminism, we are enfolded into a different relationship to history than the one we were born into. And it hurts. This is what Lanyer pursues in *Salve Deus*: a way of sustaining a model of feminist time by sustaining what feels bad about it.

The *Farewell* with which “The Description of Cooke-ham” begins is one such gulf. The object of that initial valediction is, most literally, the country estate – but the poem begins with a string of ambiguously subordinated clauses in which the space of Cooke-ham is contiguous, if not coterminous, with the Countess of Cumberland’s pun-amenable *grace*:

Farewell (sweet *Cooke-ham*) where I first obtain’d
 Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain’d;
 And where the Muses gave their full consent,
 I should have powre the virtuous to content:
 Where princely Palace will’d me to indite,
 The sacred Storie of the Soules delight. (1-6)

¹³⁴ *Promise*, 70.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

The repetition of relative *where* – four times in these lines – spatializes the relationship of poet and patron, grounding it in *place*. Cooke-ham and her “Grace” the Countess occupy parallel positions, in the first two lines, as its antecedent. The pursuit of that parallel as ambiguity further unites place and patron in their capacity to generate sacred writing: the readiest reading of “where” in the third and fifth lines is by reference to the estate, yet the more immediate antecedent for both is the capacious grace of the Countess. The awkward pun on “Palace” – the estate of Cooke-ham; the Countess as Pallas Athena – further secures the union, now volitional (“will’d me”), between place and person, environment and relationship. It’s from this volitional environment that Lanyer’s poetry emerges: “Yet you (great Lady) Mistris of that Place, / From whose desires did spring this work of Grace, / Vouchsafe to think upon those pleasures past” (11-12). The metonymic movement of the poem’s opening lines from “where” to “whose” – from place to person – secures the logic of the pathetic fallacy to follow, in which the very land genuflects to the presiding influence of the Countess. Yet unlike Ben Jonson’s “To Penshurst,” the poem to which it is most often compared, “Cooke-ham” persistently draws attention to the speaker’s consciousness as the motor of its dominant figure: “Oh how (*me thought*) against you thither came, / Each part did *seeme* some new delight to frame!” (17-18, emphasis mine). Lanyer reads the land like a poem – or, indeed, like a presence-generating gospel.

The significance of that reading emerges in the tension between worldly and eternal temporalities that structures Lanyer’s injunction to the Countess to “Vouchsafe to think upon those pleasures past.” The line encapsulates the paradox of the entire volume, with its imperative demanding the presence, if only in thought, of a pleasure that in the same gesture is relegated to an irrecoverable past. (Typically, the syntax is ambiguous: in *vouchsafe* an

indicative possibility, subordinate but suggestive, too tentative to be expressed outright, haunts that imperative as those pleasures past haunt the poem.) The lines continue as a lament in the terms of typology: “As fleeting worldly Joyes that could not last: / Or, as dimme shadowes of celestiall pleasures, / Which are desir’d above all earthly treasures” (14-16). So much turns on that *or*. To think on past pleasure might be to dwell on it, in it, to occupy in the present the space of memory and sustain that occupation – to inhabit the paradox that memory can entertain sustainedly what is fleeting, what cannot last. But the status of joy – the status, for that matter, of thought and of memory; the status of worldliness, of the pastness of pleasure – all are balanced, on that *or*, between nostalgia and futurity, between loss and promise. The *dimme shadowes* of life lived in this world will be fulfilled, in the world to come, as another order of pleasure entirely. The language of typology – figure and its forecast fulfillment – seeks to repair the damage of the material world by making recourse to the world to come. It is difficult, however, to believe in that desultorily passive subordinate clause: *are desir’d*? By whom? It reads like a tired catechistic ventriloquy, limp by comparison to the pleading imperative that opens the passage. Just as *Farewell* stands in stark, irresolvable contrast to the final lines of “Salve Deus,” this nostalgic typology is a far cry from that poem’s bold eschatological vision.

In Lanyer’s case, to the impossibility of desire for an erotics of reading in a female community is added the problem of class – every woman she addresses by name in *Salve Deus* belongs to an echelon of society whose firmly-guarded boundaries will always thwart the poet’s desire for intimate proximity to them. To paraphrase Sedgwick’s spatial language, there is no *beside*, for Lanyer – only *below*. But in Lanyer’s own words, “Why not?” (Cookeham 113). In the middle of “The Description of Cooke-ham” comes an impassioned

objection to the barriers posed by social class to intimate friendship, hinged on that startlingly radical *Why not?*. Killjoy Lanyer won't accept the commonplace. "Parters in honor," social equals, she counterintuitively writes, are "Neerer in show, yet farther off in love" than in the potential affective bond between a woman of lower status and one of higher. For, Lanyer contends, when it comes to love, "the lowest always are above" (108-110).¹³⁶ That paradox depends on a figure of orientation in which the view of the heavens – as both cosmos and salvation – from the vantage of a lowly creature embraces a greater scope than from that of an exalted one:

But whither am I carried in conceit?
My wit too weake to conster of the great.
Why not? although we are but borne of earth,
We may behold the Heavens, despising death;
And loving heaven that is so farre above,
May in the end vouchsafe us entire love. (111-16)

The end-time orientation of these lines projects the view from below as simultaneously a view of the end. Though "cast [...] downe into so lowe a frame" by "Unconstant Fortune," though "our great friends we cannot dayly see" (103-5), Lanyer argues, lowly lovers of the great have the double advantage of, first, being enforced to a holy humility, and, second, being oriented toward the heavens. That orientation grants the worldly creature – "but borne of earth" – the capacity to embrace both her social betters and divinity, the former on the way to the latter, to envision the new world of love in the creator. The promise of reciprocity – the "entire love" of Christian salvation – likewise runs down the heavenly hierarchy in a

¹³⁶ Amy Greenstadt likewise reads this passage as a radical moment that calls attention to the incommensurability of the social hierarchy and Lanyer's imagination of a devotional-affective one: "Aemilia Lanyer's Pathetic Phallacy," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 8:1 (2000), 70.

levelling gesture toward the perfect equality of “the end,” the apocalyptic future of celestial pleasures in which the intimacies yearned for by “Cooke-ham” will be realized.

These lines are followed by a surprising logical turn : “*Therefore* sweet Memorie doe thou retaine / Those pleasures past, which will not turne againe” (117-18, emphasis mine). How is it that an injunction to memory, another invocation of the irreducible pastness of pleasure, follows logically from the class-critique’s soteriological vision of futurity? The poem wants to *feel backward* – memory is tasked with dwelling in a lost past in order to secure its permanence, sustain those things “Whereof depriv’d, I evermore must grieve, / Hating blind Fortune, careless to relieve” (125-6). The endurance of grief – grief as the affective instantiation of the past in the present – is not set against, but rather *necessary* to the poem’s erotic eschatology, its only means of imagining futurity at all.

As the capaciously ambiguous invocation of “Fortune” suggests, however, there is more to the problem than social status as such – the poem also launches a more implicit critique of the heteropatriarchal economies of marriage and property that stand in the way of women’s community. The intimacy with Anne Clifford that is the subject of some of the poem’s most passionate moments is, like the other pleasures of Cooke-ham’s feminist pastoral, periodized in an irrecoverable past, cordoned off from the present by the event of Anne’s marriage to the Earl of Dorset:

And that sweet Lady sprung from *Cliffords* race,
Of noble *Bedfords* blood, faire st[r]eame of Grace;
To honorable *Dorset* now espows’d,
In whose faire breast true virtue then was hous’d:
Oh what delight did my weake spirits find
In those pure parts of her well framed mind:
And yet it grieves me that I cannot be
Neere unto her [...] (93-100)

In this encomium lurks the grief of the temporality of intimacy cut short: the *then* of virtue counterposed against the *now* of espousal limns *delight*'s pastness with nostalgia for a social order conceivable only outside, only before, the exiling fact of marriage that makes proximity – *neereness* – impossible between women. As Katherine Philips will write in a letter fifty years later, “I find too there are few friendships in the world Marriage-proof.”¹³⁷ It is the coincidence of marriage and property law, moreover, that makes Cooke-ham an illusory space – while Lanyer goes to great lengths to paint the Countess of Cumberland as the sovereign figure of its landscape, which genuflects to her presence and from which she can see “A Prospect fit to please the eyes of Kings” (72), the basic reality is that Lanyer and her patrons are living on borrowed time. Cooke-ham is a crown estate, leased to the Countess’s brother, where she is permitted to stay during her estrangement from her husband (and thus from the property ties granted her by marriage), and which does not belong in any real or legal sense to the women who inhabit it in the idealized world that Lanyer’s poem reaches toward.

The figurative registers of the poem acknowledge the impossibility of that reach, the unreality of that world. The ostensibly comfortable pastoral of Lanyer’s pathetic fallacy is haunted by the incapacity of figure to adequately secure the precarious world to which it is addressed. In “Cooke-ham,” she performs a critique of the very power of figurative language on which “Salve Deus” depends. In the gradual breakdown of the poem’s figurative economy, it becomes clear how necessary, after all, is a mode of reading that can incorporate a sense of latent dangers – that is, to prevent a reparative mode from devolving into simple

¹³⁷ Philips, *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus* (London: W. B. for Bernard Lintott, 1705), 57. I owe this citation to Harriette Andreadis, “Re-Configuring Early Modern Friendship: Katherine Philips and Homoerotic Desire,” *SEL* 46:3 (2006), 532.

naïveté, we require some degree of suspicion. To the degree that figure has the power to disguise potential sites of loss, discomfort, pain, and even violence, Lanyer's argument in "Cooke-ham" insinuates, it poses a threat to any project that seeks to resist or repair those things.

This precarity can be observed in the gradual breakdown of the pathetic fallacy that is the poem's primary figurative resource. The key figure of that pathetic fallacy is the Christological oak tree that stands at the metonymic center of the landscape of Cooke-ham, overseeing the devotional reading of the three women and the illusory sovereignty of the Countess. Incongruously compared to both a cedar (57) and a palm (61), catch-all scriptural tree-figures, the oak would, like Christ crucified, "spread his armes abroad, / Desirous that you there should make abode" (61-2), a protective dwelling "Joying his happinesse" to be so (66). The vantage from beneath the tree grants to the Countess the sweeping gaze of sovereignty:

[T]here being seated, you might plainly see,
Hills, vales, and woods, as if on bended knee
They had appeard, your honour to salute,
Or to preferre some strange unlook'd for sute:
All interlac'd with brookes and christall springs,
A prospect fit to please the eyes of Kings:
And thirteene shires appear'd all in your sight,
Europe could not affoord much more delight. (67-74)

The poem's vexed relationship with heteropatriarchal property law surfaces in the deep irony of this claim to a form of sovereignty entirely unavailable to any woman of the period, and locally unavailable to the Countess. Yet Lanyer's characteristically counterfactual syntax – *as if* – works hard to imagine the genuflecting landscape all the same. It is crucially this ground of illusory sovereignty in which the practice of devotional reading comes avidly to life:

What was there then but gave you all content,
 While you the time in meditation spent,
 Of their Creators powre, which there you saw,
 In all his Creatures held a perfit Law;

[...]

In these sweet woods how often did you walke,
 With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
 Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
 To meditate what you therein did see: (75-84)

The emphasis on *meditation* recalls Southwell's Ignatian craft, drawing out of the experience of reading a phenomenal experience of the events of scripture – the Countess not only walks with Christ (recalling Mary Sidney's reading or treading the paths of salvation), but receives the Law with Moses, sings psalms with David, and feeds the impoverished with Joseph (85-92). The dilatory *time* of that meditation, in which the Countess and these Old and New Testament figures become contemporaneous, dwelling together in the gardens of Cookeham, suspends the scene in an expansive *now* – but a now that finds resistance in the past tenses of the passage. In the governing figure of reading, the metonymic intimacy of "holy Writ" with the tree still further consolidates the environmental relation among women, scripture, and landscape. It is this figure that collapses under the weight of its own impossibility in the poem's climactic affective emergency.

The poem's most overtly reparative gesture is also its most notoriously difficult moment, its clearest index of failure, and its most dangerously overburdened figure. In the course of taking leave of the estate, Lanyer, or rather the figure of her whom I will call Aemilia by way of distinguishing persona from poet, experiences a moment of radical affective disorientation, centered on the oak tree:

But specially the love of that faire tree,
 That first and last you did vouchsafe to see:

In which it pleas'd you oft to take the ayre,
 With noble *Dorset*, then a virgin faire:
 Where many a learned Booke was read and skand
 To this faire tree, taking me by the hand,
 You did repeat the pleasures which had past,
 Seeming to grieve they could no longer last.
 And with a chaste, yet loving kisse tooke leave,
 Of which sweet kisse I did it soone bereave:
 Scorning a sencelesse creature should possesse
 So rare a favour, so great happinesse. (157-68)

The first time I taught “Cooke-ham,” in the moment of difficulty that characterizes encounters with this challenging passage, one of my students made the astute observation that Aemilia’s outrage at the Countess’s bestowal of her kiss is outrage at the discovery that the Countess’s relation to the land differs from Aemilia’s. That is, for Aemilia, Cooke-ham is a composite: landscape, female community, and devotional reading are one single environment. That’s the point of the pathetic fallacy. The moment of the kiss, however, calls attention to the incapacity of figure to genuinely create or guarantee environment. The Countess’s affection, directed to the “senceless creature” rather than the sensible one, excludes Aemilia from the scene of erotic attachment. It is to the tree *as a tree* – or perhaps at most as overseer of her illusory sovereignty – that the Countess is attached, not to the tree as Aemilia understands it: as the figure that secures the feminist-exegetical world of Cooke-ham. In retrieving the phenomenal trace of the kiss from the tree, and in the affects of scorn (167), fear (170), ingratitude (171), and vengeful spite (174-5) that ensue from that act, Aemilia collapses into the failure of the imagined world of Cooke-ham, the stark fact that “nothing’s free from Fortune’s scorn” (176). Temporarily – and ineffectually – appropriating to herself the agency of Fortune, she reenacts on the tree the act of deprivation that the Countess has just inflicted on her. In this moment of pain and failure, the tree has ceased to

be the Christological guarantor of spiritual communion among women, as well as of the Countess's sovereign prospect over the estate and its environs – it has, in other words, lost its capacity *as figure*. And Aemilia's attempted gesture of repair proves an excruciating one.

The potential for violence in the instability of figurative language becomes vividly available in the figure of Philomela, the nightingale who “with her sundry leyes” appears early in the poem to “praise” the Countess and Cooke-ham, “that delightfull place” (31-2). She is, at first glance, merely a slim piece of poetic diction. But she appears again in the second, valedictory half of the pathetic fallacy, where “Faire *Philomela* leaves her mournfull Ditty, / Drownd in dead sleepe, yet can procure no pittie” (189-90). Silenced, Philomela here more strongly recalls the violence of her Ovidian origin, reminds us that she is not merely a stock pastoral trope but also a memorial to rape and dismemberment. In the context of the poem's explicit challenge to class hierarchies and its implicit one to the marriage economy, the slightest pressure on such a figure detonates a latent horror. The precarity of undertaking life and reading in women's community becomes starkly clear in the silenced, anaesthetized, unpitied figure of Philomela that serves as a reminder that even in these apparently innocuous country gardens, a woman's tongue might be being ripped out beneath the thin veneer of a cliché. Her silence in Lanyer's figure suspends her story at the point of its most heightened violence, where not only is she tongueless, but her relation to her sister has been brutally ruptured – reunion and revenge remain suspended in a tentative future that lies outside the figurative limits of “Cooke-ham.”

As Ahmed observes, “Feminist archives are full of scenes of domesticity in which domestic objects, happy objects, become alien, even menacing.”¹³⁸ Cooke-ham is in a strange

¹³⁸ *Promise*, 77.

way *not* a domestic space in this poem: the house is scarcely mentioned, in preference for the land, a cultivated landscape disguised as a wilderness. The poem's primary figures conspicuously avoid the categories of domicile and of property to a degree that brings them apophatically into the frame; when they cannot sustain avoidance any longer, they break down. The beloved tree becomes a despised enemy; sweet Philomel becomes an awful warning. The poem concludes with a less obviously precarious figure. The foregrounding of the speaker's imagination in the poem's opening, as well as the problematic affect that accompanies the tree-kiss's failed gesture of repair, finds an echo in the unsatisfying final lines of the poem:

This last farewell to *Cooke-ham* here I give,
 When I am dead thy name in this may live,
 Wherein I have perform'd her noble hest,
 Whose virtues lodge in my unworthy breast,
 And ever shall, so long as life remaines,
 Tying my heart to her by those rich chaines. (205-10)

These lines attempt to preserve the coordination of the figure of the Countess with the space of the estate – encoded in the pronomial shift in the abrupt transition from apostrophe of the manor-house to third-person declaration of devotion to its sometime mistress. The “chaines” of virtue here recall the “golden chaine” by which, in the eschatological dream-vision of Mary Sidney in majesty, Sidney is “Fast ti'd” to the Graces (“The Authors Dreame” 7).¹³⁹ Yet following the loss and social violence of the lines that precede it, the final claim to

¹³⁹ Marie Loughlin sensitively reads this coordination of apocalyptic figures as one way of circumventing Lanyer criticism's “tendency to construct a rigid opposition between the poems' spiritual and material concerns, between the values of the world and the ethics of Christianity” in an essay that richly understands Lanyer's project as a collaboration between worldliness and transcendence. Yet Loughlin's reading is so optimistic, so invested in the radical future toward which Lanyer's book gestures, that it cannot quite observe those places where her poetry encounters insurmountable difficulty or irrecoverable loss. To that degree,

perpetual intimacy, with its weak figure, rings false. In the course of the poem, Lanyer has launched a critique of just such figures as the one she closes with – these lines thus attempt to disguise the permanence of their own loss as once more, the imaginative gestures of Lanyer’s sad typology resist her material reality. So far as any record can tell, her patronage relationship with the Countess of Cumberland and her daughter ended with or around the publication of *Salve Deus*. She never published again, and no other verse of hers is extant. But in the very friction of resistance, in the unresolved tension between one movement of her poem and another, the Christological poetics of typology and eschatology enable her to imagine another order – for all its losses, her book projects beyond itself a possible future, inapprehensible but anticipated, secured not by the material economies of life in this world but by faith in the next. Failure and futurity cohabit in Lanyer’s book – uneasily, like Sedgwick’s warring siblings – holding in suspension the competing claims of worldly political economy and the divine new order to come. *Salve Deus* responds to loss and failure with the gestures of a typology that can both hold and sustain losses in the present and promise a future in which repair may become possible.

Salve Deus is a site where the problems of “feeling backward” and those of reparative reading productively collide. The readiest site for seeking language for a poetics of emergency, especially given its recent ascendancy in early modern studies, is political theology.¹⁴⁰ Yet the likes of Carl Schmitt prove distinctly unfriendly to this endeavor, and not

she merely replaces the *patrilineal* time of paranoia with a *matrilineal* genealogy. “‘Fast ti’d unto them in a Golden Chaine’: Typology, Apocalypse, and Women’s Genealogy in Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53:1 (2000), 133-79.

¹⁴⁰ See especially Julia Reinhard Lupton, *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). Lupton’s self-identification as a political “moderate” with serious investments in the universalist potential of the modern liberal

only because an autocratic theory of sovereignty quickly begins to look absurd in the context of early modern women's relationships to state authority – as for Lanyer's community of women at Cooke-ham, sovereignty for all early modern women is at best illusory, and at worst violently disempowering. Like the seductively pastoral figure of Philomela, discourses of sovereignty in this context too easily disguise the threats of damage, loss, and failure that they carry with them as their political condition. But there is a further problem with political theology's reliance on a narrative of secularization – divine authority transmuted in modernity into temporal political authority, to put it crudely – that prohibits the modern critic access to a theological program like Lanyer's, except to view it as an obsolete relic of a culture whose ethical and hermeneutic tools are no longer relevant. For Lanyer, theology is an *alternative* to politics as she knows it. Far from being “innocuous” (Valerie Traub) or “unexceptionable” (Erica Longfellow), Lanyer's casting of her desire for female relationships, for a community of reading women, within the hermeneutic fields central to theology is politically, theologically, and poetically radical.¹⁴¹ So much so, perhaps, that it not only met no known friendly audience in her own time, but has gone largely unremarked by most modern criticism.

If Lanyer does not, in Love's sense, refuse our advances, her trajectory does take a path that runs counter to the narratives of progress and secularization that lead from her cultural moment to our own. But to treat Lanyer's book as merely a testament to that

nation-state as our last best political hope is perhaps case in point for my reluctance to pursue this line of thought.

¹⁴¹ Traub uses the charge of “innocuousness” (innocuous *because* theological) to exclude Lanyer from her survey of early modern lesbian eroticism, while Longfellow declares Lanyer's Calvinist theology “unexceptionable” as a function of her volume's mercenary qualities. Traub, *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 26; Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6.

abandoned past, indeed to address any body of texts of the past as merely historical documents, denies them agency in the present – and tells a pernicious lie about the felt phenomena of our lives with them, the affective activity of our scenes of reading. Her future is not our present; we are not, in Sedgwick’s terms, aligned in the unfolding time of patrilineality. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* does, however, provoke the question: what politics of feminist poetics might emerge from a *feeling backward* that could tolerate these disjunctures, that could seek in the alienation of the past the intimacy of an uneasily-reassembled *now*? In the passage of her essay from which this dissertation takes its epigraph, Sara Ahmed reads the Sophy of Rousseau’s *Émile* as a cautionary tale for feminists: Sophy’s curiosity and imagination and above all her reading are targeted for reprogramming because, according to Rousseau, they make her unhappy. Or rather, they are so targeted because her unhappiness disrupts the marriage plot for which she is destined. As Ahmed observes, “If Sophy were to become too imaginative, we would not get our happy ending, premised on Sophy being given to *Émile*.” Rousseau explicitly strips her of imagination in favor of happiness. What Lanyer has done in “Cooke-ham” is to refuse such a resolution: her feminist finding is that the only way forward is a look backward; a holding on to dissatisfaction and grief that alone can expose the structures that impede her project. I’ll let Ahmed conclude for me:

Feminist readers might want to challenge this association between unhappiness and female imagination, which in the moral economy of happiness, makes female imagination a bad thing. But if we do not operate in this economy – that is, if we do not assume that happiness is what is good – then we can read the link between female imagination and unhappiness differently. We might explore how imagination is what allows women to be liberated from happiness and the narrowness of its horizons. We might want the girls to read the books that enable them to be overwhelmed with grief.¹⁴²

¹⁴² *Promise*, 62.

V. Coda: Katherine Philips and the Limits of Intimacy

These essays in devotional feeling have been developing toward an investment in a kind of bad affect that belongs specifically to women, toward a specifically feminist investment in refusal and recalcitrance, standing still and turning back, and they have also, more implicitly and less straightforwardly, been developing toward that feminist attitude as a specifically lesbian one. I mean “lesbian” in an old-fashioned sense, in Adrienne Rich’s sense in her essay on “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.”¹⁴³ For Rich, “lesbian existence” includes a broad range of “primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support,” including “such associations as marriage resistance” (51). Such “intensities” between women become responses to and ways of living under heteropatriarchy as “survival relationships” in which “women provide the ongoing fascination and sustenance of life,” in which “women make life endurable for each other” (56, 62). Rich’s “lesbian continuum” remains a vital resource in that it resists the ostensible stability of categories of sexual orientation or identity, insisting instead on attachment between women – that is, a social relation rather than an individual identity – as the significant political category. “Lesbian existence” on this model becomes “a source of knowledge and power” to the degree that it both resists and exposes the “social forces,” including marriage, property law, and – yes – literary history, which “wrench women’s

¹⁴³ In *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994 [1986]), 23-75.

emotional and erotic energies away from themselves and other women and from woman-identified values” (28, 35). My reading of Aemilia Lanyer has demonstrated her investment in just such a critique: *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is a bid for the sustenance of attachment between women as a social, devotional, and literary practice, and it is also an incisive critique of the structures – including marriage, property law, and literary history – that threaten such attachments.

I suggest that such resistant lesbian attachments, such *survival relationships*, might develop not only between women in their own presents, but between women across time. They might be necessarily anachronistic. The germ of the reading this final brief chapter will conduct was a simple question: *why have Aemilia Lanyer and Katherine Philips never been read together?* As the seventeenth century’s most powerful poets – and, I would argue, theorists – of intimacy between women, with their shared concerns in political economy, intimate circles of readership, and the place where a poetry of religion meets a poetry of love, their shared interest in clawing out space for the unprotected category of female friendship, their shared critiques of the institution of marriage, they seem so clearly to belong together. So I wanted to know why they have never been read together in contemporary criticism. This question quickly proves uninteresting: we already know why. The protocols of literary history prevent it: narrative and hermeneutic modes that still depend on categories of either influence and development in diachronic time or shared engagement in synchronic time prevent Lanyer and Philips from sharing the same frame, as two women who never met, whose lives barely overlapped, whose historical and cultural milieux are sharply distinct, who did not read each other, who are not locatable in relation to each other on a developmental trajectory of a literary tradition. But another interest this project has been developing is in

seeking modes of resisting and proposing alternatives to those protocols of literary history – not least because they interfere with the formation of intimacies between women.

* * *

Paula Loscocco has argued that Philips' "Donnean" poetics fails when the specularity of homoeroticism – the sameness in "homo" – encounters the Donnean ideal of neoplatonic transcendence.¹⁴⁴ It's a strange argument in its evaluative orientation, and in characterizing a poetics of marriage as successful and a poetics of intimacy between women as failed, Loscocco at least leaves herself open to a charge of lesbophobia, even if that is not actually the premise of or hidden ideology behind her argument. I genuinely can't tell. What she is right about, however, is that Philips' lyrics to Lucasia are conspicuously interested in the limits of figure and syntax, and at the same time interested in the problem of how to turn into poetry an attachment that either cannot or should not be spoken: the limits, in other words, of the utterable.

"Friendship's Mystery, to my dearest Lucasia" is in my reading a knowing experiment with outrageous figures and extremes of paradox, the point of which is both to showcase a kind of ostentatious virtuosity and to strain the limits of representation, exposing the fractures in the very intimacy it celebrates.¹⁴⁵ "Mystery" has, of course, a number of senses both sacred and secular, and many of them are operative in Philips' title: as mystical meaning, as ritual or sacrament, as a term for the significant events of the life of Christ, as equivalent to "miracle," as artisanal craft or similar practice, as a secret practice, or, in the *OED*'s most beautiful definition, succinct and encapsulating all the others: "a hidden or

¹⁴⁴ "Inventing the English Sappho: Katherine Philips's Donnean Poetry," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 102:1 (2003): 59-87.

¹⁴⁵ I read from the Folio text: *Poems* (London: J.M. for H. Herringman, 1667), G1r-v.

secret thing.”¹⁴⁶ And it has, too, a particular relationship to Pauline epistemology, as an index of the fundamental inadequacy of human language to divine things: “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,” reads 1 Corinthians 2:7, “even the hidden wisdom” (KJV). To speak of the Gospel is to “make known” its “mystery” (Ephesians 6:19). Yet to “speak mysteries” is also to speak in tongues: “For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men *to* edification [...]. He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church” (1 Cor. 14:2-4). To speak of the gospel is to make a mystery known; to speak in tongues is to speak mysteriously, incomprehensibly. In this confessionally incoherent poem in which Calvinist predestinarianism in the second stanza shares space with a ritual that out-transubstantiates the Catholic mass in the final one, the mysterious properties of “mystery” are all the more in demand: not only do the hidden elements of articles of faith remain necessarily unuttered, but no doctrine can be articulated either.

The poem begins with several glosses on “Mystery” – miracle, wonder, prodigy, religion, love – in an enticing apostrophic invitation that is also a kind of dare:

Come, my Lucasia, since we see
 That Miracles Mens faith do move,
 By wonder and by prodigy
 To the dull angry world let's prove
 There's a Religion in our Love.

¹⁴⁶ See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “mystery, n.1.” The *OED* divides its categories into “Theological” and “Non-theological” uses, but they are not so easily divided along sacred and secular lines – in the most obvious example, the *OED* perplexingly places “=miracle” (9) in the latter category.

We might understand “Religion” and “Love” as generic categories – a comment on the poetic interest that lies at the intersection of the devotional and the erotic, and an insistence that the two categories belong together, an anticipatory defiance of the modern critical tradition’s tendency to draw firm lines between *religion* and *love*. This self-consciousness is one of the poem’s great pleasures, as it proceeds in each stanza rendering a figuratively and logically ostentatious paradox, as though simply to prove it can. Apparently paratactic, apparently so different in register, what they all share, these paradoxes, is an erotics of constriction – from the temptingly kinky ornamental display of bondage and fetters to the flirtation of “greedy” angelic sensuality with the starkness of predestinarian election. The abiding concern with freedom in captivity again could be as much a remark on poetry, on the enabling constrictions of form and logic, as on intimacy.

The poem’s syntactic and logical pyrotechnics both obscure and reveal the precarity of that intimacy. For example, the third stanza’s alchemy confounds the mechanics of neoplatonic spiritual intimacy:

Our hearts are doubled by the loss,
 Here Mixture is Addition grown;
 We both diffuse, and both ingross:
 And we whose minds are so much one,
 Never, yet ever are alone.

The delicious dizziness of its figures of diffusion and engrossment, mixture and addition, that enable an account of astonishing closeness over distance, in spite of “loss,” also risks a kind of frightening loss of self. The liquid sexiness of the figures recalls Montaigne’s account of the “entire jouissance” of friendship: “It is I wot not what kind of quintessence of all this commixture, which having seized all my will, induced the same to plunge and loose it selfe in his, which likewise having seized all his will, brought it to loose and plunge it selfe in mine,

with a mutual greedinesse, and with a semblable concurrence.”¹⁴⁷ This passage alone, I think, would be enough to demonstrate Philips’ attentive reading of Florio’s Montaigne.

“Semblable concurrence” might describe the specular mutuality of the figures of “Friendship’s Mystery,” whose aim is not least resistance to Montaigne’s misogynist program, as a claim that women too are capable of friendship on this order. That resistance is of course the orientation of the defiance of Philips’ opening stanza; she goes on to enact it in the rest of the poem.

But she also introduces significant anxiety into her figures of “commixture”: “And we whose minds are so much one, / Never, yet ever are alone.” The couplet feels like a relief after the challenge of the alchemical figure, with its gesture to the neat little neoplatonic conceit of a spiritual intimacy that transcends bodies and space. But these lines can be paraphrased in at least two contradictory ways:

1. We have such a spiritual intimacy that neither of us is ever alone by herself, and we are, together, always alone as one being.
2. We have such a spiritual intimacy that we are always together, yet in some degree always irreducibly alienated from each other.

The radical claim of the first reading is interrupted by the anxiety of the second; communion and alienation cohabit the paradox. Joined minds confront the boundaries of the body: intimacy entails a kind of exile in the flesh.

As the poem proceeds, accumulating these compacted performances, it begins to look more and more like *they* are the “wonders and prodigies” called for by the poem’s opening invitation, a promise that culminates in the final sacramental figure:

¹⁴⁷ The *essayes or morall, politike and millitarie discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne*, trans. John Florio (London: Valentine Simmes for Edward Blount, 1603), I4^r, I5^r.

Our Hearts are mutual Victims laid,
 While they (such power in Friendship lies)
 Are Altars, Priests, and Off'rings made :
 And each Heart which thus kindly dies,
 Grows deathless by the Sacrifice.

The “power” in friendship is its capacity to make more of the sacrifice than simply an offering of hearts – Orinda and Lucasia are both simultaneously subject and object of the sacrifice, and not only that, but each is every element of the ritual and the whole environment that sustains it, too. Intimacy becomes a whole ecclesiology. But there is something suicidal in this figure: deathlessness requires death; victimhood brings the violence of sacrifice to the surface. Without explicitly engaging the goriness of a figure like Anne Lock’s knife of conscience that splats the ripped heart, the stanza is nevertheless haunted by just such a sharp instrument.

Yet despite its claims on transcendence and its declared ambition to express it to the world, the poem remains fully within its constricted little world of two – indeed, its most straightforward articulation of friendship defines it as a closed loop of mutual reference: “We are our selves but by rebound.” Self-referentiality risks compromising meaning: the poem may never manage to express anything to the “dull angry world” that should witness these “miracles.” The poem at once celebrates this opacity and poses it as a problem. The definitions of “Friendship” found throughout Philips’ oeuvre share that opacity, vacillating between apophasis and a kind of semiotic overflow – “that abstracted flame / Which groveling Mortals know not how to name,” elusive, capacious, “the name that doth all others comprehend.”

The “peculiar Miracles of love” described in “Wiston Vault” both evoke the transubstantial quality of friendship that secures Orinda’s inscription in Lucasia’s heart and

acknowledge how difficult it is to render into language, its *peculiarity* indexing both singularity and ineffability, perhaps even perversity – queerness – to the modern reader who finds a kind of kinship in recognizing such an articulation of love told slant. And the “temple of Divinity” projected by the poem on the naming of Anne Owen, imagined as a site of pilgrimage, makes a kind of reliquary of the poem, asks that it be understood to contain something numinous. The sensuous doctrinal riskiness of these figures is part of their ambition and part of their pleasure, yet these wonders and prodigies, these peculiar miracles, remain in their figurative renderings remarkably fragile. The virtuosic discursiveness of Philips’ paradoxes itself points to the possibility that they may turn out to be completely hollow. And “Friendship’s Mystery,” like so many of her Lucasia lyrics, depends on an apostrophic intensity that always raises the possibility that her speaker’s invitations will never receive the reciprocity they need from their addressees. (Consider the “Defense of Declared Friendship,” in which the insistence on speaking must go perpetually unanswered.)

In light of Lanyer’s poetics of precarity, “Friendship’s Mystery” might be read as a poem about the impossibility of its own conditions, its increasingly radical paradoxes gesturing toward their own incommensurability with the material conditions of friendship in the world. Its very title suggests as much: the theological valence of *mystery* reminds us that spiritual things may not be articulable in worldly terms – that this is friendship, in other words, *per speculum in aenigmate*. That worldliness that proves an obstacle to friendship is not merely conceptual, but – as for Lanyer – embodied in the institutional structures that govern social relationships. While the poem doesn’t address them explicitly, Philips’ letters to Charles Cotterell indicate a keen awareness and incisive critique of marriage as both an institutional and a social phenomenon. On Anne Owen’s impending marriage – which

would, among other things, take her literally away, out of Wales to permanent residence in Dublin – Philips writes:

I find too there are few Friendships in the World Marriage-proof; especially when the Person our Friend marries has not a Soul particularly capable of the Tenderness of that Endearment [...]: And such a Temper is so rarely found, that we may generally conclude the Marriage of a Friend to be the Funeral of a Friendship; for then all former Endearments run naturally into the Gulf of that new and strict Relation, and there, like Rivers in the Sea, they lose themselves for ever.¹⁴⁸

The Montaignean fantasy of intimate coliquefaction is recharacterized as dissolution under social pressure, the bias that tends toward marriage necessarily tending away from friendship. Philips’ understanding of the capacity of theology to provide a language for intimacy butts up against the material conditions of institutional religion that abrogate the range of intimate relationship: one of the obstacles posed to friendship by marriage is in the latter’s “Plausibility of more Duty and Religion.”¹⁴⁹ Institutional religion as *plausibility* – a relation that *can* be put into language, an intimacy that comes packaged with a robust social code and enjoys political and social recognition – enforces a “certain secret Meanness in our Souls, which mercenarily inclines our Affections to those with whom we must necessarily be oblig’d for the most part to converse, and from whom we expect the chiefest outward Conveniencies.”¹⁵⁰

The letter makes clear Philips’ keen sense of how her losses are conditioned by marriage as an institution, one produced and enforced by institutional religion. Returning to “Friendship’s Mystery” with that institutional critique in mind, the figures of wonder and prodigy that open the poem begin to look like visions of an alternative not to but within

¹⁴⁸ Letter XIII, in *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus* (London: W.B. for Bernard Lintott, 1705), 57-8.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 58.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 59.

theology – a reframing of the terms of faith for their radical potential to assert an intimacy always at risk of being rendered invisible, or annihilated altogether. Yet at the same time it reveals the precarity of that very assertion: the sacrificial altar of female intimacy is a mode of “religion in love” inconceivable within the bounds of actual, institutional religion. The poem’s sacramental imagination, its wonders and prodigies, falter on the ground of the “dull angry world” it cannot ever quite escape from.

Katherine Philips died of smallpox within a year of Anne Owen’s marriage, at just thirty-two years old. Aemilia Lanyer’s career ended with her relationship with the Countess of Cumberland and her daughter; a few failures aside – a school she tried to found, a property lawsuit that went nowhere – nothing is known of the rest of her life. Their projects invoke their own failures at the very moments when they seem most strenuously to resist and reach beyond the heteropatriarchal protocols that threaten them. Where Lanyer demonstrates the collapse of figure under those pressures in the same gesture in which she clings to the threadbare “golden chains” that might sustain women’s intimacy, for Philips the tension of a sacramental paradox articulates the fragile site where desire encounters the limits of politics, religion, and language.

* * *

Behind this reading lurks the sorrow of a thirtysomething queer, lesbian, feminist, *graduate student*, whatever you want to call me. The sorrow of the not-quite-any-longer-young, of watching my friends marry one by one, experiencing again and again the disappointment of witnessing the union of an incandescent woman to an unsatisfactory or dangerous man, knowing too well how marriage may be the funeral of a friendship, and with a broader view watching the advent of gay marriage erode even queer circles of intimacy under the

protocols of neoliberal political economy. It's a tedious, expected kind of sorrow, but a sorrow all the same. And sometimes it is a sorrow only redoubled by recognizing it in the work and thought of women three and a half centuries dead, watching the failures of the present recapitulate their ancient failures.

And yet sometimes there is in this feeling backward something intimate in its own precious way. I wrote the conference paper that was this essay's first draft in the rare book room of the British Library, with the Philips folio open on my desk next to the BL's single copy of *Salve Deus*. The latter bears a bookseller's inscriptions that date from a period when only four copies of it were known. On the flyleaf, in pencil, he has written: "Exceedingly rare." Lanyer's book and its project do remain "exceedingly rare," that which is indeed seldom seen – not only a woman's writing of divinest things, but the peculiar miracle of its witness to the community of reading women her writing sought to call into being. I have said that Lanyer's project failed, and in many important ways it did. Yet there in the reading room was this book. Despite all its losses, and against the odds, it has survived these four hundred years – exceedingly rare, a miracle indeed. And as miracles are meant to do, it inspires faith.

Despite her subsequent fame, Katherine Philips' poems and letters remain as a testament to her own sensibilities of precarity and failure in the face of the same structures that *Salve Deus* feels shaking its unstable ground. But in some inarticulable way, that faith manifests in the reading room as what Adrienne Rich calls "female bonding, which in a more conscious form might reintegrate love and power."¹⁵¹ Lanyer and Philips come into view together not on the terms of disciplinary protocol, but in the phenomenal event of an

¹⁵¹ "Compulsory Heterosexuality," 63.

afternoon in a reading room; a materially bibliographic intimacy of books literally touching and literally being touched; their frustrations become shared in a literary-historical survival relationship, in the way their volumes speak to each other, and they involve me, too. In the reading room we were, and now still are, in some way bound together.

If critical consciousness has anything to recommend it, it is in this: this dwelling with these books that refuse to be towed under by the ravages of time, the fragile projects of these poets that despite their failures persist into the present, this dwelling in relation to their pasts, their forestalled futures, and with each other in our present, that I can only call a necessary kind of survival relationship. What feminists used to call, and I think still should call, sisterhood – which is one way of naming the ethical center of this work we do. A place to begin.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- . *The Promise of Happiness*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.
- Alexander, Gavin. "Prosopopoeia." In *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, eds. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 97-114.
- Andrewes, Lancelot. *XCVI Sermons*. London: Richard Badger, 1631.
- Andreadis, Harriette. "Re-Configuring Early Modern Friendship: Katherine Philips and Homoerotic Desire." *SEL* 46:3 (2006): 523-42.
- Auerbach, Erich. "Figura." In *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*. Gloucester, MA: Paul Smith, 1973.
- Augustine of Hippo. *On Christian Teaching*. Trans. R.P.H. Green. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- . *Homilies on the Gospel of John*. Ed. Philip Schaff, trans. John Gibb and James Innes. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* vol. 7. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- . *Confessions*. Trans John K. Ryan. New York: Image Books, 1960.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. New York: New York Review Books, 2001.
- Calvin, John. *Sermons of John Calvin, upon the Songe that Ezechias Made*, trans. Anne Lock. London: John Day, 1560.
- . *The Institution of Christian Religion*, trans. Thomas Norton. London: Reinolde Wolfe and Richard Harison, 1561.
- . *Sermons de Jehan Calvin sur le cantique que fait le bon roy Ezechias*. Geneva: François Estienne for Estienne Robinet, 1562.
- Carruthers, Mary. "Sweetness." *Speculum* 81 (2006): 999-1013.
- Coles, Kimberly Anne. *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Cummings, Brian. *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- . "Metalepsis." In *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, eds. Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 217-33.

———. “Donne’s Passions: Emotion, Agency, and Language.” In *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture*, eds. Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013. 51-71.

Cvetkovich, Ann. *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
de Grazia, Margreta. “Anachronism.” In *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, eds. Brian Cummings and James Simpson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 13-32.

de Man, Paul. “Autobiography as De-facement.” *MLN* 94:5 (1979): 919-30.

Dinshaw, Carolyn. *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.

———. “Temporalities.” In *Twenty-first Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 107-23.

———. *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Donne, John. *The Divine Poems*, ed. Helen Gardner. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978.

Eden, Kathy. *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Intimacy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Enterline, Lynn. *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Fradenburg, L.O. Aranye and Carla Freccero, eds. *Premodern Sexualities*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Greene, Roland. “Anne Lock’s *Meditation*: Invention Versus Dilation and the Founding of Puritan Poetics.” In *Form and Reform in Renaissance England: Essays in Honor of Barbara Kiefer Lewalski*, eds. Amy Boesky and Mary Thomas Crane. London: Associated University Presses, 2000. 153-71.

———. *Five Words: Critical Semantics in the Age of Shakespeare and Cervantes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Goldberg, Jonathan. *Desiring Women Writing: English Renaissance Examples*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Greenstadt, Amy. “Aemilia Lanyer’s Pathetic Phallacy.” *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 8:1 (2000), 67-97.

Gregory IV. *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. David Hurst. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990.

- Ignatius of Loyola. *Personal Writings*. Ed. and trans. Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean. London: Penguin, 1996.
- Johnson, Kimberly. *Made Flesh: Sacrament and Poetics in Post-Reformation England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- Jones, Ann Rosalind and Peter Stallybrass. *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Kuchar, Gary. *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2005.
- . “Aemilia Lanyer and the Virgin’s Swoon: Theology and Iconography in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*.” *English Literary Renaissance* 37:1 (2007): 47-73.
- . *The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Lanyer, Aemilia. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. London: Valentine Simmes for Richard Bonian, 1611.
- Lewalski, Barbara Kiefer. *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Lock, Anne. *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner*. In *Sermons of John Calvin*, trans. Anne Lock. London: John Day, 1560.
- Lodge, Thomas. *Prosopopeia, Containing the teares of the holy, blessed, and sanctified Marie, the Mother of God*. London: for Edward White, 1596.
- Longfellow, Erica. *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Loscocco, Paula. “Inventing the English Sappho: Katherine Philips’ Donnean Poetry.” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 102:1 (2003): 59-87.
- Loughlin, Marie. “‘Fast ti’d unto them in a Golden Chaine’: Typology, Apocalypse, and Women’s Genealogy in Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*.” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53:1 (2000): 133-79.
- Love, Heather. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- . “Gyn/Apology: Sarah Orne Jewett’s Spinster Aesthetics.” *ESQ* 3-4 (2009): 305-34.
- Martz, Louis. *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*. Revised edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962.

- Masten, Jeffrey. "Toward a Queer Address: The Taste of Letters and Early Modern Male Friendship." *GLQ* 10:3 (2004): 367-84.
- Montaigne, Michel de. *The essayes or morall, politike, and militarie discourses of Lo: Michaell de Montaigne*, trans John Florio. London: Valentine Simmes for Edward Blount, 1603.
- Moshenska, Joe. *Feeling Pleasures: The Sense of Touch in Renaissance England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Murray, Molly. *The Poetics of Conversion in Early Modern English Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Netzley, Ryan. *Reading, Desire, and the Eucharist in Early Modern Religious Poetry*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- Nicolazzo, Sarah. "Reading Clarissa's 'Conditional Liking': A Queer Philology." *Modern Philology* 112:1 (2014): 205-25.
- Origen of Alexandria. *Origen*, ed. and trans. Rowan A. Greer. New York: Paulist Press, 1979.
———. *Origen*, ed. and trans. Joseph W. Trigg. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Parker, John. *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007.
———. "Persona." In *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, eds. Brian Cummings and James Simpson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 591-608.
- Parker, Patricia. *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
———. "Dilation and Delay: Renaissance Matrices." *Poetics Today* 5:3 (1984): 519-35.
———. *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*. London: Routledge, 1988.
———. "Othello and Hamlet: Dilation, Spying, and the 'Secret Place' of Women." *Representations* 44 (1993): 60-95.
- Paster, Gail Kern. *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Philips, Katherine. *Poems*. J.M. for H. Herringman, 1667.
———. *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus*. London: W.B. for Bernard Lintott, 1705.
- Pseudo-Dionysius. *The Complete Works*, ed. and trans. Colm Lubhéid and Paul Rorem. New York: Paulist Press, 1987.
- Puttenham, George. *The Arte of English Poesie*. London: Richard Field, 1589.
- Rambo, Shelly. *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

- Rambuss, Richard. *Closet Devotions*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- . “The Straightest Story Ever Told.” *GLQ* 17:4 (2011): 543-73.
- Read, Sophie. *Eucharist and the Poetic Imagination in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Rich, Adrienne. “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.” *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1994. 23-75.
- Schwarz, Regina. *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Shuger, Debora. *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice and Subjectivity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Sidney, Philip. *The Defense of Poesy*. London: William Ponsonby, 1595.
- Southwell, Robert. *Marie Magdalens Funerall Teares*. [Second edn.] London: John Wolfe for Gabriel Cawood, 1592.
- Summit, Jennifer. *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Traub, Valerie. *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . “The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies.” *PMLA* 128:1 (2013): 28-39.