

INCARNATIONAL FRUIT

INCARNATIONAL FRUIT:
AUTHORIZATION AND WOMEN'S ANONYMOUS SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
DEVOTIONAL WRITING

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Abstract

This dissertation asserts that women's anonymity in seventeenth-century devotional texts functions as a performance to be understood rather than a mystery to be solved.

Anonymity has long been framed as merely a protean form of authorship or a barrier to the recovery of a lost literary history. The archive frequently renders anonymity invisible or reveals anonymity at the moment of its undoing; however, this study of women's anonymity contends that, although women applied anonymity to avoid the stigma of print, their anonymity functions less as a blind than as a frame to emphasize those traits they wished most to expose.

In my first and second chapters, I demonstrate how the anonymous *Eliza's Babes* (1652) and the nearly anonymous An Collins's *Divine Songs and Meditacion* (1653) use the anonymous text to replace the signification of sick, infertile, and therefore volatile female bodies with an imitative production of devotion that constitutes the text as a divinely-restored, alternatively-productive body through which they relate to God and reader. Readers' positive reception of this devotional re-signification of the body's productivity countermands stereotypes readers hold against women writing, affirms the woman writer as faithful, and reincorporates both reader and writer in a corporate body of believers through their mutual participation in devotional practices. My third chapter affirms the perceived authority of anonymity's corporate voice through the exploration of George Hickee's retroactive attribution of several late seventeenth-century anonymous devotional texts to Susanna Hopton. I argue that the derivative nature of the anonymous devotional collections invests them with a corporate voice Hickee finds to be a valuable asset in his defense of Hopton's devotional acumen.

Drawing together scholarship on seventeenth-century relationality and intersubjectivity, readership, devotion, and women's health, this study reconsiders the signification of women's anonymity and their unoriginality as a tool that facilitates agentive reading and rehabilitates women's claim to corporate belonging.

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INTRODUCTION

Introducing my research to new acquaintances follows an odd, but compelling pattern. I explain that I study early modern literature written by women anonymously and they interject, “Because women were forced to write under a pseudonym, right!” It seems that most people’s knowledge about women’s writing can be summed up by the popular misquote “For most of history, Anonymous was a woman.”¹ And yet, despite the commonly accepted convention that women must have written anonymously, the study of the anonymous text and the study of women’s writing have come to seem mutually exclusive.

The desire to know more about women writing before 1800 encourages us to attempt to undo anonymity to authenticate writers’ identities; but when attribution remains elusive, anonymity raises questions about the authenticity of a text’s gendered voice. Marcy L. North suggests that we struggle to canonize anonymous texts written by women because standard scholarly frameworks cannot help but essentialize the anonymous female voice. North writes, “Anonymity contributes to the illusion of an authentic and essential female voice and author by hiding a ventriloquist, by giving credence to postures of humility and discretion, and by seeming to free the woman to

¹ Virginia Woolf writes, “I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman. It was a woman Edward Fitzgerald, I think, suggested who made the ballads and the folksongs, crooning them to her children, beguiling her spinning with them, or the length of the winter’s night.” Woolf imagines a world in which women receive credit for the contributions they have made to our literary history and suggests that they have not received this credit to date because they have been denied the ability to attribute their work. See Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015), 38.

speak and write.”² She explains how bibliographical precedent strengthens this illusion by dictating that anonymous works are categorized as “male” unless female authorship can be proven. When discussing texts in which the gender of the author is disputed, scholars often rely on standards of gender authenticity to which suspected male authors are rarely subjected.

Early modern authorship conventions also trouble our attempts to identify anonymous texts written by women. North suggests that, because of the power differential between men and women, women may not have found voicing men as powerful a mode of authorship as men found voicing women. She writes,

Since authorship was gendered masculine in the period, any woman’s publication could be read (and some were) as an act of ventriloquism, as a woman imitating a man. This gendering of authorship may have dissuaded women from pursuing more comprehensive acts of gender disguise.³

At every turn, the anonymous text flouts our attempts to uncover an anonymous feminist ur-text.

The wide array of texts that have complicated gendered attribution has prompted a reconsideration of the narrative that insists that women were forced to write anonymously. Michel Foucault’s essay “What is an Author?” has fundamentally shaped the modern understanding of what it means to author a work. Foucault posits that what he

² North, *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor Stuart England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 213.

³ North, *Anonymous*, 220. Cross-dressing was a familiar early modern trope and North cites evidence that women wrote under male pseudonyms before the latter half of the seventeenth century. North notes that the success of women writers remaining unidentified as a woman would speak to their success as writers, but their invisibility as women helps us little in our attempts to better catalogue the breadth of women writers. She also examines evidence that suggests that there were significant barriers to women writing anonymously, such as the relationship between anonymity and female shame. See North, “Reading the Anonymous Female Voice” in *Anonymous*, 211-56.

terms the “author-function” inscribes one’s ownership of one’s creative work.⁴ He suggests that the legal ramifications of the advent of print forced anonymity to give way to authorship. Within this framework, anonymity is incompatible with the functions of authorship.⁵ Foucault’s narrative is persuasive, but he provides little evidence to support his hypothesis.⁶ In reality, research on the nature of authorship in the Renaissance reveals that anonymity continued to flourish well into the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century.⁷ Studies also demonstrate that instead of being exclusive to a single demographic, anonymity served as a productively flexible mode of authorship for a

⁴ Foucault, “What is an Author?” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 108.

⁵ Of Foucault’s essay, Brian Vickers, interested in attribution, states, “As a model of scholarly research into authorship problems in Renaissance drama, it is hard to think of anything more irrelevant, or more destructive,” but those interested in early modern anonymity are more forgiving. Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 400. North notes “Roland Barthes’s theory of the author’s death and Michel Foucault’s theory of the author-function open the way for my analysis, but in the end I argue that their theories marginalize anonymity as an ordinary state and a less functional convention.” North, *Anonymous*, 25. Mark Robson sides with Lisa Freinkel who comments “In his treatment of the author-function, Foucault loses sight of the *reader’s* function.” Freinkel, *Reading Shakespeare’s Will: The Theology of Figure from Augustine to the Sonnets* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), xvi. Quoted in Robson, “The Ethics of Anonymity,” in *Anonymity in Early Modern England: ‘What’s in a Name?’*, eds. Janet Wright Starnes and Barbara Howard Traister (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 168.

⁶ Foucault writes, “There was a time when the texts that we today call ‘literary’ (narratives, stories, epics, tragedies, comedies) were accepted, put into circulation, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author; their anonymity caused no difficulties since their ancientness, whether real or imagined, was regarded as a sufficient guarantee of their status.... A reversal occurred in the seventeenth or eighteenth century ... literary discourses came to be accepted only when endowed with the author function. We now ask of each poetic or fictional text: From where does it come, who wrote it, when, under what circumstances, or beginning with what design.” Foucault’s text does not include footnotes and so it is difficult to verify which sources he had in mind when he made these claims but, as generalizations, they are largely inaccurate. Foucault, “What is an Author?” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 109.

⁷ See the collection of essays edited by Robert J. Griffin, *The Faces of Anonymity: Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publication from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

diversity of writers.⁸ In the introduction to a collection of essays exploring anonymous publication from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, Robert J. Griffin encourages scholars to recognize that

anonymity is not simply a residual characteristic of oral or manuscript culture, but continues for several centuries to be a dominant form, perhaps the norm, of print culture as well. Anonymity was not always a form of ethical, or religious, or socially imposed self-effacement, but had commercial uses as well. It intersects with different social and cultural contexts across several centuries.⁹

Griffin's emphasis on the "use" of anonymity highlights the vitality of anonymous authorship. Further, North's research suggests the voice of an anonymous woman was central to the kinds of rich experimentation anonymity made possible. She writes,

As a trope of authorship, "women's anonymity" was central to the function of early modern anonymity; it allowed authors to test the limits of voice and authenticity, to delineate transgressive and socially acceptable acts of authorship, and to explore and constrict relationships between gender and authorship.¹⁰

What becomes clear in these early stages of anonymity scholarship is the applicability of the old truism about the pursuit of knowledge: the more we learn, the less we seem to know.

Suspended between material and theoretical studies, and between attribution and readership studies, the anonymous text illuminates significant fissures in our attempts to make sense of texts and the selves revealed in them. My project attempts to address some of these fissures by exploring new ways of looking in the archive. Drawing together studies of anonymity, devotionality, and readership, this study reconsiders the function of

⁸ See the Introduction to North, *Anonymous*, 1-34.

⁹ Griffin, introduction to *Faces*, 15.

¹⁰ North, *Anonymous*, 212.

anonymity in a selection of anonymous devotionals written by women by interrogating the relationship between the authorization of their voices, their texts, and their bodies in our theories about anonymous writing by early modern women. The so-called Eliza, author of *Eliza's Babes: or The Virgin's Offering* (1652), for example, claims God's transformation of her embodied desire into a sanctifying passion for Him as the authorization of her collection of devotional poems and meditations. Does she fear publishing under her own name? The invalid An Collins, author of *Divine Songs and Meditations* (1653), writes a collection of devotional poems and meditations to sensitize her readers to the "fruit most rare" of God's favour in her mind, which she fears her continuing illness renders illegible.¹¹ She predicts her own descent into obscurity. Does she undersell her text because she has internalized misogyny? Susannah Hopton converted to Catholicism after the beheading of King Charles I and converted back to the Church of England following the coronation of King Charles II. After reconverting to Protestantism, she writes letters and devotionals that defend her serial conversions against charges of female intemperance. Does anonymity support her cause? Why does her publisher hasten to reveal her identity after her death?

In each of the texts I study, women anticipate their audiences' misreading of their gendered bodies and turn to anonymous devotion and the sanction of the divine to teach readers a new body language. These authors suggest that the overwhelming presence of the incarnational God in their bodies imbues even their texts with his presence. I argue

¹¹ Collins, "Another Song (The Winter of my infancy)," in *Divine Songs and Meditations*, ed. Sidney Gottlieb (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1996), 55, l. 28. All references are to this edition.

their anonymity admits the supernatural and mediates the relationship they develop between themselves and their readers through that supernatural perspective of their God rather than the worldly perspective of readers' prejudices. The authors write from this new perspective, desiring that the supernatural influence of the Word made flesh (that is, both Jesus and the devotional texts made material through the Holy Spirit's presence in the women's bodies) will influence the reader to admit God's transforming spirit into themselves just like the author has. Such an admission will result in the reader having their own understanding of their bodies remade in the image of God, resulting in their inclusion in a broader community of the body of Christ. The anonymous text becomes a substitutive fruitful body seeding faith in writer and reader alike.

Anonymity in the Archive

These days, we struggle to see the productivity of anonymous early modern texts because, despite the wealth of anonymous texts now available to us through databases like *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*, modern treatments of these books continue to marginalize the texts' anonymous origins. North notes, "the relegation of anonymity to a footnote in modern editions of older texts has succeeded in obscuring anonymity's paratextual functionality—that is, its contribution to the conventions and textual frames that announce and justify a text's production."¹² Consequently, anonymous texts continue to play the role of the unexamined id in pre-modern textual studies—they firmly shape our received notions of the text, but in ways that seem impenetrable to us as scholars. In

¹² North, *Anonymous*, 8. See Gerard Genette's discussion of the interpretation of the paratext in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).

Griffin's examination of anonymity in the archive, he suggests we struggle to acknowledge anonymity in our scholarship because it defies our critical assumptions:

Anonymity...puts in question, not only historiographical narratives, but also almost all of our ingrained assumptions and procedures for dealing with texts. The twin poles of literary study remain the author and the work; interpretation grounds works through historical and biographical contextualization. But what if the author isn't there?¹³

Our inability to think about texts sans author has resulted in the invisibility of numerous potentially valuable works because the eclipse of the author has resulted in an overwhelming confirmation bias in archival research. This confirmation bias has disproportionately marginalized an approach to authorship which, taken in the context of the archive as a whole, may actually play a significant role.¹⁴ We will not know the difference these texts make to our scholarly frameworks until we begin to look at the archive differently.

One of the ways to start looking at the archive differently is to start looking *in* the archive differently. Griffin argues one must cultivate a better understanding of the archive, but also “be alert to the way previous interpretations have shaped one’s own presuppositions.”¹⁵ Griffin suggests new information be allowed to modify standard

¹³ Robert J. Griffin, “Working with Anonymity: A Theory of Theory vs. Archive,” *Literature Compass* 4, no. 2 (2007): 466.

¹⁴ For example, of the approximately 132,600 titles collected in Early English Books Online (EEBO), 20,392 are authored by Anon. This number does not include texts that provide the authors’ initials or any other ambiguously authored texts. No effort has been made to differentiate through tags or some other means between texts where the author has chosen to identify themselves as Anon or the editor has provided that identifier in the absence of a named author. If the text was originally published anonymously, but the author is now known, *EEBO* identifies the text only by the author’s name and provides no reference to the text’s original anonymity. The nature of a text’s anonymity must be discerned by examining the paratextual materials of each text one by one or stumbled upon, as North does, in the footnotes of modern editions. See North, *Anonymous*, 8.

¹⁵ Griffin, “Working,” 463.

suppositions by placing that new information in concert with the standard suppositions and “allowing them to mutually modify each other.”¹⁶ This practice will lead to adjustments in our reading practices that can be painstaking but fruitful. North lays the groundwork for continuing archival research on the anonymous text by outlining various streams of anonymity in early modern textual studies. Like Griffin, North acknowledges that the primary barrier to studying the anonymous text is that its meaning is driven by context, the pursuit of which is difficult because of the vicissitudes of time and archival collections.¹⁷

Both Griffin and North conclude that while this lack of historical context can be problematic, from another perspective it also provides authorization to develop new patterns of engagement with the text, ones that emphasize each text’s unique attributes. Early modern studies has witnessed the benefits of this approach in the increasing popularity of setting studies of material culture alongside early modern literary research. Nancy Selleck argues the implementation of this “field-based” approach to research provides the means to relate theoretical constructs “more specifically, concretely, and reciprocally to their contexts.”¹⁸ Though the breadth and complexity of anonymous texts can seem prohibitive to beginning this kind of study, Griffin’s, Selleck’s, and North’s research indicates the important work is done, not by selecting the perfect entry point, but

¹⁶ Griffin, “Working,” 465.

¹⁷ See the Introduction to North’s *The Anonymous Renaissance*, particularly the section “Recovering Anonymity from the Modern Edition,” 5-12.

¹⁸ Nancy Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 15, 15.

by beginning wherever we are, examining the ways texts meet or do not meet our expectations, and considering how this information modifies what we think we know about the other texts in our purview.

My interest in anonymity in the archive began while I was taking a course on early modern devotional literature.¹⁹ In this course I was introduced to classic male writers like John Donne, George Herbert, and Richard Crashaw, but I was also introduced to the anonymously authored *Eliza's Babes* (1652) and An Collins's *Divine Songs and Meditations* (1653). Though Collins gives readers her name, she anticipates her readers will encounter her as "the Auther...unknown" (9, l. 52). Scholars have scoured both texts for identifying details but have been unable to determine either author's identity.²⁰ In

¹⁹ I attended Mary Silcox's course, ENG 737: Rhetoric and Subject in Early Modern Devotional Poetry (graduate course, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Winter 2013).

²⁰ What little we know about Collins, we know from an autobiographical address to the reader and tantalizing personal comments throughout her text, information that Sidney Gottlieb describes as "both skimpy and slippery." Gottlieb, introduction to *Divine Songs and Meditations*, vii. The slippery nature of this skimpy evidence is highlighted by disagreements over Collins's religious affiliation: Maureen Bell, George Parfitt, and Simon Shepherd, as well as Helen Wilcox suggest she may have had Calvinist leanings. See Bell, Parfitt, and Shepherd, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Women Writers 1580-1720* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 53; and Wilcox, "An Collins," in *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, eds. Elspeth Graham et al. (New York: Routledge, 1989), 55. But Germain Greer, Susan Hastings, Jeslyn Medoff, and Melinda Sansone suggest that "if not actually a Catholic, [Collins] was devoutly anti-Calvinist," an assertion that David Norbrook repeats in his selection of Renaissance verse. See Greer, et al., *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Verse* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989), 148; and Norbrook, *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse: 1509- 1659*, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen (London: Penguin, 1992), 881. Gottlieb and Bronwen Price suggest Collins's sympathies may lie with the Quakers. See Gottlieb, introduction to *Divine Songs and Meditations*, xvii; and Price, "'The Image of Her Mind': The Self, Dissent, and Femininity in An Collins's *Divine Songs and Meditations*," *Women's Writing* 9, no. 2 (2002): 251.

Likewise, scholars have attempted to identify Eliza by autobiographical hints that pepper her text. L. E. Semler suggests that "the strident character of the implied author as seen through the text, her inclusion of family matters and family members' initials, and her anticipation in her Preface of a critical backlash for publishing her book...all suggest that in 1652 the work would have been less anonymous than it is now." L. E. Semler, "Who is the Mother of *Eliza's Babes* (1652)? 'Eliza,' George Wither, and Elizabeth Emerson," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 99, no. 4 (October 2000): 518. Semler develops the argument that Eliza is George Wither's wife, Elizabeth, but his theory remains contested.

both texts, the authors demarcate their experiences of grace through the disfunction and function of female bodies. Mimicking leading scholarship on these texts, we treated the text's anonymity as a form of abjection, an unhappily necessary defense mechanism against those threatened by public devotional fervour enacted by female bodies. For example, in a frequently cited analysis of *Eliza's Babes*, Helen Wilcox suggests Eliza's devotional subject position "offers a freedom to the speaker that is all the more notable when the voice is female."²¹ Erica Longfellow cautions, however, such assertions about women's "freedom" make assumptions about the privacy of certain forms of authorship as a justification for entrance into print that are not always grounded in the reality of seventeenth-century print culture. Writing about *Eliza's Babes*, Longfellow poses these questions: "How aware is Eliza herself of the gendering of her voice? Does she register a sense of transgression with regard to her writing? How closely is this transgression linked with gender?"²² To these questions, I also add, "How closely is anonymity linked with a sense of gendered transgression?"

North identifies a narrow type of anonymity used "readily and conscientiously" by women, in which authors employ a female pseudonym or initials accompanied by an identification of or apology for the author's sex.²³ Regarding women who explicitly gender their anonymous authorship, North posits,

²¹ Helen Wilcox, "My Soule in Silence"? Devotional Representations of Renaissance Englishwomen," in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*, eds. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 14.

²² Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 123-24.

²³ North, *Anonymous*, 214.

The fact that both attribution and anonymity were potentially transgressive for women authors certainly explains why initials combined with gender identification were so popular with them; they allowed women to speak from a middle ground between anonymity and attribution, where the risks of both disguise and openness could be avoided.²⁴

Hoping to probe the qualities of this middle ground further, I sought additional devotional texts written anonymously by women. Attempting to avoid foregone conclusions about how a woman's voice sounds when she talks about embodied devotionality, I looked for any anonymous text that relied on the body to express its devotion.

“Author...Unknown”: Encountering the Female “Anonymous”

I was unable to locate other collections of anonymous devotional poetry written by women.²⁵ Instead, my search was overwhelmed by devotional primers and their intensive discussions of the posture of believers engaging in worship. It was while researching the link between religious lyric poetry and devotional manuals that I stumbled across the works of Susanna Hopton. In 1654, the Catholic Henry Turberville dedicated his *Manuel of Controversies* (1654) to a “perfectly vertuous Mistris S. H.,” a young woman named Susanna Hopton who had recently converted to Catholicism.²⁶ Hopton converted back to Protestantism some time in 1660 or 1661. In 1710, after

²⁴ North, 220.

²⁵ I looked through several annotated bibliographical anthologies of women's writing, such as Greer et al., eds., *Kissing the Rod*; Kate Aughterson, ed., *Renaissance Women: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Martin Randall, ed., *Women Writers in Renaissance England: An Annotated Anthology* (London: Longman, 2010). I also browsed Samuel Halkett and John Laing, comp. *The Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1926-1962); and Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550-1700* (New York: Routledge, 2004). In addition, I conducted several EEBO searches with variations on gentlewom* and anon* that produced over 300 results. Many were fascinating, few were relevant.

²⁶ Henry Turberville, *A Manuel of Controversies Clearly Demonstrating the Truth of Catholique Religion* (Douay, 1654), A2r.

Hopton's death, her friend and editor, George Hickes, revealed Hopton to be the anonymous author of two popular devotional manuals, *Daily Devotions, Consisting of Thanksgivings, Confessions, and Prayers* (1673) and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1700). He also published a letter that Hopton had written to her former confessor soon after her second conversion defending her return to the Church of England in *A Second Collection of Controversial Letters Relating to the Church of England and the Church of Rome* (1710). According to Hickes's introduction, Hopton had insisted her texts remain anonymous and her letter unpublished until after her death.

In the letter Hickes published, Hopton dismisses out of hand the assumption that her re-conversion is a symptom of female inconstancy. Instead she contrasts the ministrations of her confessor, whom she accuses of taking advantage of the turmoil in the church and her youth, with the actions of her husband who encouraged her to reason between the two traditions by providing her with books. Speaking of her husband, Hopton writes,

He also put into my Hands the controversial Books of the ablest and clearest *English Writers*, in Defence of the Church of *England* against her Adversaries of your Church: And as I took time to try and examine all things, so I make no doubt but I have chosen the best.²⁷

Hopton's letter argues that reading, particularly Protestant reading, releases women from the fetters of gender discrimination by giving them the resources to discern Truth for themselves. Hickes endorses Hopton's claims by assuring his reader he had "above

²⁷ Susanna Hopton, "A Letter Written by a Lady to a Romish Priest, Upon her Return from the Church of Rome to the Church of England," in *A Second Collection of Controversial Letters Relating to the Church of England, and the Church of Rome*, ed. George Hickes (London, 1710), 149.

twenty Popish Authors, which she left me, and some of them with Marginal Notes in her own Hand.”²⁸ Hickeys’s biography constructs the image of a woman reader who combats spiritual misogyny by materializing the impact of her reading through the production of text.²⁹ He argues *Daily Devotions* and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* are characteristic of her devotional practices.

Hopton’s blunt discussion of the way that misogyny and reading intersect in her devotional responses affirms my interpretation of how Eliza’s and Collins’s texts also meet misogyny directed towards feminized devotion. Like Hopton, Eliza and Collins demonstrate a concern their texts will be read oppositionally because they are written by women. The author of *Eliza’s Babes* struggles with the illicit nature of women’s publication and describes the inception of her collection of poetry as being like a surprise virgin pregnancy. Her poetry embodies a tension between the fear of social condemnation of an unsanctioned pregnancy and a loyalty to her lover. Despite the expected criticism from her readers, Eliza submits to the will of her heavenly lover who has seeded her womb with his productive grace and publishes her collection of devotional “babes.” In

²⁸ George Hickeys, “To the Reader,” in *A Second Collection of Controversial Letters Relating to the Church of England and the Church of Rome* (London, 1710), ix.

²⁹ For more on the controversies between Catholic and Protestant readers and texts, see Francis Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999); Eamon Duffy’s *Reformation Divided: Catholics, Protestants and the Conversion of England* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Molly Murray, *The Poetics of Conversion in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009); Michael C. Questier, *Conversion, Politics, and Religion in England, 1580-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); Ethan Shagan, ed., *Catholics and the “Protestant Nation”: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005); and Allison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999). Mark Rankin has also recently published a fascinating discussion of how the Elizabethan regime read Catholic texts forensically so as to prosecute Catholic recusants. See Rankin, “Richard Topcliffe and the Book Culture of the Elizabethan Catholic Underground,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 72 (2019): 492-536.

Divine Songs and Meditations, Collins speaks of isolation caused by feminized bodily impairment. Using the language of the garden borrowed from *Canticles*, Collins describes her mind as a garden “enclosed fast” (“Another Song (The Winter of my infancy)” 55, l. 26) that is “Apt to produce a fruit most rare, / That is not common with every woman / That fruitfull are” (55, l. 28-30). While Hopton, Eliza, and Collins recognize their femininity as a social disadvantage, all three eventually claim God’s special grace as a counter to those effects.

In turn, their anonymity becomes a defense of those claims. Hopton’s editor breaks her anonymity because doing so allows him to extend the communal voice cultivated in her anonymous devotional texts as further evidence of her constancy. The universality of her texts’ voice and the non-partisan acceptance it garnered from the Christian community serve as further proof her words should be credited to her as a those of a believer and not dismissed as those of a woman. While each of the authors I study recognizes her femininity, they all eventually use devotional anonymity to turn away from gender as a meaningful determinant of identity. Eliza’s persona is distinctly gendered, but in one of her final meditations, Eliza also exclaims, “Peace! Present now no more to me (to take my spirit from the height of felicity) that I am a creature of a weaker sex, a woman.”³⁰ She argues that living by faith remakes people into the likeness of the Son and concludes, “then thou wilt make all thy people as Kings and Priests. Kings are men, and men are Kings; and Souls have no sex” (“The Royall Priest-hood,” 133). Her

³⁰ “The Royall Priest-hood,” in *Eliza’s Babes, or, The Virgin’s Offering (1652): A Critical Edition*, ed. L. E. Semler (Madison, NJ: Associated UP, 2001), 132. All references are to this edition.

anonymity reinforces this new identity by preventing her identification with earthly identifiers. Collins consistently addresses her bodily affliction in gendered terms but uses poetry to demonstrate how God relieves the burden of gendered expectations about a body's productivity by locating its usefulness in its productive devotion not sexual fertility. Collins too embraces her anonymity as a means to enforce a spiritual identity. In each case, the feminized voices of the authors turn away from their gendered identities and authorize their texts through their devotional acumen instead. How then are we to understand these texts? The authors suggest their anonymous texts, which substitute for the alleged disfunction of their bodies, prevent the misreading of their embodied spirituality.

Conscientious Sameness and Seventeenth-Century Identity Formation

Unfortunately, the misreading of these women's spirituality continues to be an ongoing concern. The works of Eliza and Collins were virtually absent from the canon until being rediscovered in the latter half of the twentieth century.³¹ Hopton enjoyed a measure of popularity through the inclusion of her poems in anthologies of women's writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but underwent a rapid change in fortunes when, in 1932, Gladys Wade became sceptical of the abilities of the "unlearned Mrs. Hopton" and

³¹ For a discussion of scholarly attention paid to *Eliza's Babes*, see Longfellow, "Public Worship and Private Thanks in *Eliza's Babes*" in *Women and Religious Writing*, 122-48; and the first chapter of this thesis. For a discussion of Collins's text, see Gottlieb, introduction. See also Stanley Stewart's reconsideration of Collins's publication history and his contributions to in "An Collins: Fiction and Artifact," in *An Collins and the Historical Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2016), 23-38; and my own discussion of this history in the second chapter of this thesis.

suggested Thomas Traherne might be responsible for her works.³² Even after being adopted into Traherne's canon, *Daily Devotions* was frequently disregarded. Because it combines original meditations with material excerpted and adapted from other authors, it easily earned the stigma of being a derivative text. Even when intrigued by the feminine voice of Eliza and Collins's texts, scholars are put off Eliza and Collins's poetry for similar reasons. Eliza's poems are simple and repetitive. Collins is frequently didactic. Hopton's devotions are collected out of other sources. These texts do not offer much in the way of ingenious content and we know nothing about who has written them. Therefore, they are often excluded from the canon of literary greats. Again, we are faced with the issue of undoing a text's anonymity or risking its place in the canon altogether.

Emerging studies of early modern devotional texts suggest, however, that conscientious sameness was a valued quality of early modern devotional writing. In his study of early modern life-writing, Adam Smyth argues that while manuscripts often appear to be lacking autobiographical details,

those details are expressed, paradoxically, through other people's words and other people's lives.... While criticism inclines us to expect and value a subjectivity founded on difference and individuality, commonplace books reveal the degree to which a compiler's identity might be constructed through a process of alignment with other figures, narratives, and events; through a pursuit of parallels; through an interest in sameness, not difference.³³

Recognizing the pervasive influence of reading for commonplaces encourages us to reconsider our understanding of the relationship between reading and writing. Reading

³² G. I. Wade, preface to *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne* (London: Dobell, 1932), xvi. See my discussion of this bibliographic history in my third chapter.

³³ Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 5-6.

and writing can seem like a question of the chicken or the egg but, when modern scholars approach a text, they emphasize the text as a product of an author who inspires other authors. In contrast, studies of devotional reading and writing suggest that when early modern believers approached a text, they emphasized the text as a product for readers, who might respond by creating a collection of their reading.³⁴ Eliza and Collins manifest this trend in their repetitive and didactic prose. Both argue they have put their writing skills in service to effectively communicate God's words, and their formal structures also demonstrate that debt to scripture and devotional manuals. The timeline of Hopton's work also evidences this process. Her letter describes how reading devotion encourages her toward godliness, which she then evidences by writing more devotional texts to affect more people to godliness.

These women's assertions that repetitive reading practices become a form of physical, as well as mental or spiritual discipline, through the act of copying words onto a page, echoes the arguments of more popular devotional authors. For example, Bishop Lewis Bayley's *The Practice of Piety* (1612) also seems to assume that texts which seek to properly position the reader toward God could be a particularly good influence on

³⁴ For a discussion of early modern reading habits more generally see Peter Mack, "Rhetoric, Ethics and Reading in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (February 2005): 1-21; the oft-cited article by Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy," *Past & Present* 129 (November 1990): 30-78; and Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). For a discussion of women's reading habits, see Victoria Burke, "'My Poor Returns': Devotional Manuscripts by Seventeenth-Century Women," *Parergon* 29, no. 2 (2012): 47-68; and David McKitterick, "Women and their Books in Seventeenth-Century England: The Case of Elizabeth Puckering," *The Library* 1, no. 4 (December 2000): 359-80. For a discussion of devotional reading habits, see Jeremy Schildt, "'In my Private Reading of the Scriptures': Protestant Bible-reading in England, circa 1580-1720," in *Private and Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2016), 189-209.

people's disaffected humoral bodies, as well as their souls. The book was a seventeenth-century best-seller, circulating in over forty editions in England alone by 1649. In it, Bayley imagines sanctification as a kind of death and rebirth modelled after Christ's death and resurrection.³⁵ Nandra Perry suggests that reciting the incarnation of Christ trains the believer in a form of divine body language:

In this scenario, sanctification plays out like a species of signification, or rather resignification, in which the believer learns to read his or her sinful body and revise it into conformity with the divine image. In this literary rather than literal understanding of the imitation of Christ, the believer enacts a kind of reverse incarnation, a gradual translation from flesh to Word in which the body is transformed from a sinful, self-referential surface into a sacred signifier. The "practice of pietie" is thus a reorientation rather than a rejection of the body, a realignment of the senses to reflect their original (unfallen) relationship to transcendent reality.³⁶

³⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines sanctification as "The action of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying or making holy the believer, by the implanting within him of the Christian graces and the destruction of the sinful affections. Also, the condition or process of being so sanctified." *OED Online*, s.v. "sanctification, n.," last modified March 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/170474. Sanctification is a foundational affirmation of the Christian's whole reliance on God. The term originates in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 in which Paul reminds the Thessalonian church that the virtues he encourages them to pursue are only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (KJV). The Geneva Bible includes a footnote on sanctify that explains that it means to: "Separate you from the world, and make you holy to himself through his spirit, in Christ in whom only you shall attain unto that true peace." Because the process of sanctification involves a discussion of the origins of the fruit of the Spirit in a believer's life, it is a crucial theological foundation for each of the poets that I study, but Collins provides the most explicit discussion of the process of sanctification in "The Discourse." She discusses sanctification throughout the poem, but a telling description occurs midway through the poem. Collins writes,

The graces of the Spirit will appeare,
And spring up in his heart thats Sanctifide,
And these the fruits of Righteousnesse will beare,
Which in his conversacion are discride,
These graces hath he that is Sanctifide,
A detestacion of iniquity,
And love to goodnesse, Zeale and Purity.... (28, l. 652-58)

For a contemporary, in-depth discussion of sanctification, see the Belgic Confession of Faith (1561), article 24, "The Sanctification of Sinners," in *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss (New Haven: Yale UP, 2003), 2:417.

³⁶ Nandra Perry, *Imitatio Christi: The Poetics of Piety in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 117.

According to Bayley, reading a devotional text becomes the means to regulate the body because the believer learns to reinterpret the signification of the body in godly ways. One of the ways believers accomplished this reinterpretation was by compiling textual evidence of God's faithfulness from scripture to counteract the sensory evidence given to them by the world.

This again required a new form of reading. Although private scriptural reading was essential to the practice of Protestant faith, the Bible is large and complex and posed difficulties to clergy and lay-readers alike.³⁷ A constellation of devotional texts developed to address these difficulties by admonishing believers in active reading practices. The use of commonplace books became a particularly valuable tool that encouraged readers to glean personally meaningful excerpts from the scriptures.³⁸ What emerges from the study of commonplace books is a commitment to reading as a "goal-oriented pursuit: a means of spiritual self-discipline and examination directed towards questions of assurance of salvation and the manner of the godly life."³⁹ Devotional reading prescriptions recognize that bad reading can be dangerous and attempt to mitigate those ill effects by putting strict boundaries around good reading using specific reading practices.

³⁷ For illustrations of these difficulties, see Lori Anne Ferrell, *The Bible and the People* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2008). For more on the tension between clergy and lay-readers see Kate Narveson, "'Their Practice Bringeth Little Profit': Clerical Anxieties about Lay Scriptural Reading in Early Modern England," in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2016), 165-88.

³⁸ Earle Havens has remarked, "commonplace-books were essentially practical, written extensions of the larger enterprise of reading itself, in the *legere* sense of gathering, selecting, and collecting." Havens, *Commonplace-Books: A History of Manuscript and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, 2001), 9.

³⁹ Schildt, "In my Private Reading," 208.

Writers often applied formal structures of writing to help readers ingest the text. John Donne demonstrates this process well in *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1624) in which he reads the progression of illness in his body like the offices in a book of hours. Nancy Selleck notes that the formal structures of each of Donne's devotions—Meditation, Expostulation, Prayer—enact a kind of “digestive process.”⁴⁰ In each Meditation, Donne presents himself alone and self-contained, but the Expostulations break into this isolation through complaint. Selleck describes Donne as “forcing an interaction by stuffing his text with God's, speaking its language, constantly quoting biblical figures, and moving through this ‘travaile’ to a new position informed by what he now understands as God's viewpoint.”⁴¹ The Prayers exhibit the end product of this digestion to be a new condition at peace within the divine will. Selleck reflects on this transformation as an example of a “dialogized body.”⁴² She is interested in the way this process shows the self to be inherently relational and constituted by that relationality. I am more interested in the way Donne uses these formal structures, particularly his ingestion of scripture, to process that relationality and to effect it on himself as a reader who writes. Donne's literary digestion points to the devotional text as a receptacle through which to process one's humors. Selleck notes the purgative qualities of the text.

⁴⁰ Selleck, *Interpersonal*, 81. In a similar argument, Katie Jo LaRiviere's describes the genre of *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* as a variation on the devotional practice of *Lectio Divina*, in which Donne maps “scripture onto his ‘self,’ the Word onto his words” (324). LaRiviere, “*Lectio Divina* and ‘Profitable’ Reading in Donne's *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*,” *Philological Quarterly* 96, no. 3 (2017), 323-48.

⁴¹ Selleck, 81.

⁴² Selleck, 80.

It becomes “an active engagement of inner space with an external force that rights it.”⁴³ Selleck notes how scriptures serve the function of the externally effective force, but I would like to note that, even just generally, the written text functions similarly. By writing down his meditations, the text reminds Donne as he writes and presumably rereads that he is being purged through his continual digestion through textual reflection.

Treating reading as a productive activity that moves the body directs our literary attention to theories of the body in early modern literature. Scholars have begun to re-examine the dominance of psychophysiology in the early modern period as an essential aspect of Renaissance self-fashioning. Michael Schoenfeldt argues that Galenic physiology provided the discourse that “render[ed] inwardness tangible.”⁴⁴ Schoenfeldt concentrates on “moments of eating and excreting as urgent but quotidian occasions for demarcating the porous cusp between self and other, and between matter and spirit.”⁴⁵ With similar attention to the body as a point of exchange, Gail Kern Paster attempts to recover the historical particularity of early modern emotional self-experience by tracing an ecology of passions which link the internal liquids of the four humours—blood, choler, black bile, and phlegm—to elemental materials outside of the body. Paster explains, “In an important sense, the passions actually *were* liquid forces of nature, because, in this cosmology, the stuff of the outside world and the stuff of the body were

⁴³ Selleck, 81-82.

⁴⁴ Michael C. Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 38.

⁴⁵ Schoenfeldt, 38.

composed of the same elemental materials.”⁴⁶ Paster claims the cosmological insistence upon the relation between inner and outer, body and world, results in an oscillation between metaphorical and literal comparisons of external phenomenon working on the internal emotions: “Passion is a change of inner state knowable *as* and also *by means of* changes, defined as broadly as possible, in the outer world.”⁴⁷ Within this framework, reading the body’s external signals is of a piece with knowing a person’s inner state.⁴⁸

Paster suggests the open, porous character of the humoral body necessitated a body’s social constraint. She suggests if the body can be characterized by physical openness, but also emotional instability and volatility, then

We can understand why humoral subjectivity would be characterized by a high degree of emotional lability and why the call for emotional regulation by self and by external social disciplines such as civil codes of conduct should assume such emphasis. It is not merely that self-control was understood as good in and of itself—though certainly there was and is reason to understand it in those terms—but that the internal forces of humors and passions working against it were perceived to be so strong.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 4.

⁴⁷ Paster, 9.

⁴⁸ For further discussion of the significance of early modern bodies and their humors see Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan, eds., *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007); Charles H. Parker, “Diseased Bodies, Defiled Souls: Corporality and Religious Difference in the Reformation,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 1265-97; Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993); Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson, eds., *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); William W. E. Slights, *The Heart in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008); and Richard Sugg, *Smoke of the Soul: Medicine, Physiology, and Religion in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013). See also early modern discussions of the senses, such as Richard Brathwaite’s *Essaies Upon the Five Senses* (London, 1620) and the modern critical response to texts like Brathwaite’s such as Wietse de Boer and Christine Gottler, eds., *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2013) and Wes Folkerth, *The Sound of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁴⁹ Paster, *Humoring*, 19.

The period's insistence upon the inherent waywardness of the sinful body leads to the popularity of courtesy manuals that exhort social constraint as the means to overcome one's natural shortcomings. Susanne Scholz notes the period's power relations occasion "the major reorganization of the human frame."⁵⁰ She writes,

Behaviour manuals were mainly preoccupied with the question of how to translate 'abstract potential' into 'concrete historical embodiment,' how to inscribe a catalogue of virtues such as those provided by the writings of St Paul and Augustine and the moral philosophy of Aristotle, Seneca, and Cicero on the surface of the body.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Susanne Scholz, *Body Narratives: Writing the Nation and Fashioning the Subject in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 15.

⁵¹ Scholz, 16. This obsession with mapping virtue onto the body can be seen in the second book of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590). See A. C. Hamilton, ed., *The Faerie Queen* (London: Longman, 1977). All references are to this edition. Spenser explores the necessity of properly ordering oneself against vice throughout "Of Temperance," but the body's role in this enterprise becomes most pronounced when the knights are given a tour of the Castle of Alma. Beginning with the hall managed by Diet, the tour provides a psychophysiological map of the body's functions from the stomach or liver, the seat of the passions in the kitchen, through the heart, the seat of affections in the parlour, to the brain, the seat of reason at the top of the highest tower. Spenser contrasts Alma's Castle, "all happy peace and good gouvernement" (2.11.2.4) to Maleger's "sinful vellenage" that seeks to overtake the castle's five defensive towers, the senses. A. C. Hamilton explores Maleger as a representative of Original Sin, an assertion that he supports by gesturing to the symbolic details of Arthur's struggle against Maleger. He writes that the riddles of Maleger's nature, designed to defeat "reasons reach" (2.1.40.1), "suggest that Maleger is the old Adam in us, against whom Paul laments: 'O wretched man that I am, who shal deliver me from the bodie of this death?' (Rom. 7.24)" (167). Maleger's doubling of Arthur throughout the canto further suggests that Arthur battles himself. Finally, Arthur, "nigh his wits end" (2.11.44.1), and also his physical limits, despairs of defeating Maleger until he remembers Maleger's weakness and executes the killing blow by crushing the breath from the body and throwing him in the lake. This defeat, which mirrors Hercules's contest with Antaeus, signals the defeat of the flesh by reason, but the added step of immersion suggests the final regenerative necessity of baptism. Near death, Arthur returns to the safety of the castle to be nursed back to health. Only his association with Alma, self-governance, prevents him from succumbing to the injuries inflicted by Maleger. For more on mapping the body see Amanda Taylor, "The Compounded Body: Bodily Knowledge Production in the Works of Andreas Vesalius and Edmund Spenser," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 2018): 154-82. Lewis H. Miller provides a concise discussion of the disagreement over Arthur's significance in relation to Guyon and Maleger in "Arthur, Maleger, and History in the Allegorical Context," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (January 1966): 176-87. See also David Lee Miller, "Temperance, Interpretation, and "the bodie of this death": Pauline Allegory in *The Faerie Queene*, Book II," *English Literary Renaissance* 46, no. 3 (Autumn 2016): 376-400.

Poetry became a significant means through which to accomplish this task. The growing role text plays in the work of self-governance tracks with the ascendance of early modern English literature more generally. Art becomes the means to effect physical restraint on oneself and others. Beginning with George Puttenham's *Art of English Poesy* (1588), the English rhetorical tradition became increasingly linked to that of the courtesy genre with the result that, in the early modern period, the defence of poetry becomes a means to speak about language and persuasiveness, but also the interactions between one's self and the Other.⁵² Wayne Rebhorn explores how moderating governance translates into rhetoric when Puttenham argues that the king's sovereign will—his ability to direct both the thoughts and actions of his subjects—provides the model for rhetorical discourse in the period.⁵³ Taking up courtesy's civilizing project, early modern rhetoric works to refine the art of persuasion: "it is language (accompanied by supporting looks and gestures) as it is used to move people that constitutes the essential subject of all the works in the discourse."⁵⁴ In turn, these creative developments infused "book" with the meaning-

⁵² See Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn's discussion of Puttenham's influence on the literary tradition in the introduction to *The Art of English Poesy: A Critical Edition*, eds. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007), 25. For a discussion of the relation between poetry and courtliness, see David Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978).

⁵³ See Wayne A. Rebhorn, "Bound to Rule," in *The Emperor of Men's Minds: Literature and the Renaissance Discourse of Rhetoric* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995), 23-79. See also Ethan H. Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion, and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011).

⁵⁴ Wayne A. Rebhorn, *The Emperor of Men's Minds*, 3.

making function of the body in that, like the body, it mediated between a person's inward thoughts and feelings and the Other's reception of those ideas.⁵⁵

Understanding books to be bodies is a long tradition in English literature.

Puttenham dreams of literary figures made in his own ideal image—references to books as progeny abound—but poetry's corporeality is most fully realized in Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*. First, Sidney argues poetry must be honoured as “the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges.”⁵⁶ His reference to a first light-giver recalls the myth in which Prometheus takes pity on the suffering humans and gives them fire. In some variations, the fire serves to cook the meat Zeus rejects as a sacrifice. By doubling his nourishing metaphors, Sidney emphasizes the physicality of early modern imagination (seated in the humors) and lends that character to the muse, Poetry. Then he describes poetry as the skin that contains the imagination: “And truly even Plato whosoever well considereth shall find that in the body of his work, though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin, as it were, and the beauty depended most of poetry” (213, l. 69-72). Tragedy he describes as that which “openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue” (230, l. 744-45). Just as the body contains one's humors and reveals their working in the body, poetry reveals the humors in the imagination; poetry's

⁵⁵ See also Robert Cockcroft, *Rhetorical Affect in Early Modern Writing: Renaissance Passions Reconsidered* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

⁵⁶ Sir Philip Sidney, “The Defence of Poesy,” in *Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 213, l. 39-41. All references are to this edition.

body makes philosophical ideas present to the reader. Thus poetry's works and parts are also rendered discoverable by Sidney's "anatomies" (219, l. 291).⁵⁷

The most significant consequence of Sidney's embodiment of poetry is his articulation of the consequent reproductive qualities with which poetry is imbued.⁵⁸ He writes,

For any understanding knoweth the skill of each artificer standeth in that *idea* or fore-conceit of the work and not the work itself. And that the poet hath that *idea* is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he had imagined them. Which delivering forth also is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air; but so far substantially it worketh, not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him. (216-17, l. 193-201)

Here Sidney demonstrates that the potency of poetry's body lies in its ability to produce not one Cyrus but many Cyruses in the world.⁵⁹ Sidney capitalizes on early modern reproductive commonplaces, that to reproduce is to live forever, to authorize his poetry, as well.⁶⁰ By doing so, he demonstrates poetry to be much more than ornament for ideas.

⁵⁷ For more on the metaphorical significance of autopsy, see Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London: Routledge, 1995) and David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, eds., *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁵⁸ For a discussion of male authors appropriating metaphors of female reproduction, see Katherine Eisaman Maus, "A Womb of His Own: Male Renaissance Poets in the Female Body," in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, edited by Douglas Brookes (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 89-108.

⁵⁹ The *Cyropaedia* was a renowned classical mirror for princes. Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*, trans. Wayne Ambler (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2015).

⁶⁰ This treatment of the body in early modern literature goes beyond Sidney. For example, Jonson makes explicit his investment in the body as a literary device when he commemorates the death of his son saying, "here doth lie/ Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry" (147, l. 9-10). His description of his son as poetry underscores his treatment of the body as a literary device throughout his career. In *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), for example, the body's movement through a place becomes the drama's organizing trope and the farce originates in those characters who refuse to recognize their hyperbolic excesses; the play's honesty is derived from characters like Ursula who, uncomfortably vocal about her physical boundaries—"I am all fire and fat...I shall e'en melt away to the first woman, a rib again" (2.2.51-52)—keeps the fair running through her bawdy pragmatism. His much earlier play *Volpone* (1605) presages *Bartholomew Fair*'s

Poetry has affect. Poetry renders ideas communicable, providing them with substance, longevity, and, most importantly, motility. So in this period, Neoplatonic and classical models of poetry writing and Galenic humoral theories combine in a theorization of the reading and writing process that emphasizes literary communication as the means through which to affect the body. Writers of devotional texts seek to intervene in this process to co-opt the body, mind, and soul for good.

Ethical Mimesis and the Communicable Text

While Sidney sees the communicability of the text as significant, a source of “particular excellency” (216, l. 198), book bodies could also threaten the community’s cohesion. Recent studies in early modern theatre, for example, explore the social ramifications of the humoral text through theories of contagion.⁶¹ In the introduction to a collection of essays on contagion on the Shakespearean stage, Darryl Chalk and Mary Floyd-Wilson explain,

early modern writers devoted constant attention to the possibility of contagious transmission, the notion that someone might be infected or transformed by the presence of others, through various kinds of exchange, or if exposed to certain ideas, practices, or environmental conditions, and they often did so in ways not limited to medical inquiry or the narrow study of a particular disease.⁶²

privileging of the body as a locus of meaning by exploring the consequences of reading and misreading the body. The legacy hunters’ humiliation, Celia’s imprisonment, and Mosca’s betrayal are all symptoms of characters’ attempts to manipulate the body’s signification.

⁶¹ See Tanya Pollard, *Drugs and Theatre in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005). For a discussion of anti-theatricality in early modern England, see Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) and Laura Levine, *Men in Women’s Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization from 1579 to 1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). For a collection of primary source discussions of early modern theatre, see Tanya Pollard, *Shakespeare’s Theatre: A Sourcebook* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004).

⁶² Darryl Chalk and Mary Floyd-Wilson, eds., *Contagion and the Shakespearean Stage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1.

Anti-theatrical writing is consumed with the idea of theatre, and its concentrated engagement with the audience, as a source of contagion. Jennie Votava describes these fears as “more than ‘mere’ metaphor” and highlights attempts by anti-theatrical polemicists to effectively diagnose the “moral plague” that theatre threatened to unleash.⁶³ In *Plays Confuted in Five Acts* (1582), Stephen Gosson describes the effects of a play as a touch that tickles, flatters, and ravishes the audience, inciting them to mob-driven lust:

Though the thinge it selfe bee able to allure vs, yet it is so sette out with sweetnes of words ... with Phrases, so pickt, so pure, so proper; with action, so smothe so liuely, so wanton; that the poyson creeping on secretly without grieffe chookes vs at last, and hurleth vs down in a dead sleepe.⁶⁴

According to Gosson, the touch of theatre’s “phrases” infects the audience like a poison, unnoticed and unhindered, until, at last, it strikes them dead.⁶⁵ Complementing Votava’s analysis of theatre’s poisonous touch, Kristin Kayem Polster examines the alchemical qualities of ink and its treatment as a poisonous fifth humour in early modern sonnets and dramas. Polster notes,

For early moderns, writing began with the precise, anatomical slicing of a goose feather, with the crushing of oak galls into wine or rainwater, with the application of heat and ferrous sulfate. These raw organic materials underwent a rather violent

⁶³ Jennie Votava, “Comedy, the Senses, and Social Contagion in *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* and *The Comedy of Errors*,” in *Contagion on the Shakespearean Stage*, ed. Darryl Chalk and Mary Floyd-Wilson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 26, 26-27.

⁶⁴ Stephen Gosson, *Plaues confuted in five actions* (London, 1582), D8v-E1r. Quoted in Votava, “Comedy,” 29.

⁶⁵ For more on Gosson, see Arthur F. Kinney, *Markets of Bawdrie: The Dramatic Criticism of Stephen Gosson* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1974) and Tracey Hill, “‘He hath changed his copy’: Anti-theatrical Writing and the Turncoat Player,” *Critical Survey* 9, no. 3 (1997): 59-77. For a discussion of contemporary critiques of anti-theatricalism, see Melinda Gough, “Jonson’s Siren Stage,” *Studies in Philology* 96, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 68-95.

transformation to fill the inkwells of early modern writers. As a result of that mystical concoction, the fluid inside these vessels *became* humoral.⁶⁶

Polster's study examines sonnets and plays that are filled with inky letters that stain women's virtues even as they memorialize their innocence. Both Polster and Votava figure the humoral affect of text as dangerous.

But does all ink stain? At one point in her study, Polster notes "Though not all texts are poisonous all texts are penetrative," but how she differentiates the two is unclear.⁶⁷ Polster's study, which only examines notoriously volatile media like love poetry, letters, and plays, cannot help but to accentuate the dangers of inky humours. Likewise, Votava seems to suggest that penetrability is always threatening. Summarizing Gosson's final arguments, Votava writes,

Gosson's exploration of the final cause of theater—or its ultimate purpose—likewise condemns the contaminating connections forged by comedy. The end point of theater's emotional contagion is the undermining of individual rationality.⁶⁸

Votava's analysis suggests that what Gosson finds threatening about the theatre is the way that its community threatens the individual. She suggests Gosson believes the only cure for theater to be exclusionary self-interest and textual exile. This seems a counter-intuitive argument to make about a text that positions its own mimetic authority as the cure to theatre's humoral evils. Votava suggests that although Gosson orders his arguments according to Aristotle's four causes, his greatest debt is to Plato. As Héloïse

⁶⁶ Kristen Kayem Polster, "The Fifth Humor: Ink, Texts, and the Early Modern Body" (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2012), 11.

⁶⁷ Polster, 149.

⁶⁸ Votava, "Comedy," 30.

Sénéchal describes it, his argument was that “mimesis was a degradation of reality, that theater encouraged unwholesome imitation in those beholding it and that fiction had no valid ontological status of its own, being in essence indistinguishable from lying.”⁶⁹

While I agree Gosson believed theater to be a source of “unwholesome imitation,” I suspect his complaint was more with theatre’s degradation of the ethical function of mimesis, rather than with mimesis itself or the connections it forged.

Like Gosson’s text, most early modern devotional texts assume worldly texts will infect the reader with worldly desires, but in a reprisal of Augustinian spiritualism they frequently reprioritize love, right desire, and the Other over knowledge and one’s self in the rehabilitation of wrong desire. Debora Shuger develops a model for applying a distinctly religious framework to a broader cultural context by developing the concept of “habits of thought,” which she defines as “a culture’s interpretive categories and their internal relations, which underlie specific beliefs, ideas, and values”: “[subjects] are considered *in relation to* God and the human soul.”⁷⁰ Shuger also argues that Renaissance spirituality, shaped by Augustine, develops the belief that “spiritual life is primarily a matter of the heart and will, that love is more important than knowledge.”⁷¹ She concludes, “Sin therefore results from defective love rather than ignorance and is healed

⁶⁹ Héloïse Sénéchal, “The Antitheatrical Criticism of Stephen Gosson,” *Literature Compass* 1 (2004): 2.

⁷⁰ Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 9, 6. The word became obsolete during the early modern period, but writers of Middle English devotional texts use the term “conversacioun” to reference their spiritual being or way of being in the world. See *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. “conversacioun, n.,” accessed March 29, 2021, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED9627>. Part of our difficulty is that early modern writers do not seem to have developed an alternative word for this concept.

⁷¹ Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988), 8.

not by suppressing emotion but by redirecting it.”⁷² Devotional literature attempts to redirect readers’ desires by showing them the filth of their sin in contrast to the delightful possibilities available to them in and through the reciprocation of Christ’s love. What results is not merely a transcendental experience; ideal sanctification entails the devotion of one’s body, mind and soul to God, which also results in the believer loving their neighbour as themselves. The Great Commandment’s dual emphases on love for the divine and immediate Other as the moment at which people are closest to God—proximity to God being the ultimate expression of one’s personhood—places a paradoxical emphasis on the Other at the heart of early modern concepts of selfhood. Early modern devotional authors’ metaphoric negotiations with the ineffable thus also signify their negotiations with the Other.

To that end, Shuger’s recalibration of the relationship between subjectivity and desire, where to desire is to experience selfhood, offers a helpful starting point from which to reassess the problem of the threatening Other in popular genres. The study of individual subjectivity frequently poses problems for modern scholars because too often early modern authors, particularly early modern women writers, negate their singularity at the moment they take up a mantle of authority;⁷³ but if, as Shuger argues, devotion or

⁷² Shuger, 8.

⁷³ For more discussion of women’s subjectivity, see Jean R. Brink, ed., *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England* (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1993); Mary E. Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove and Karen Nelson, eds., *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2000); Kate Chedgozy, Melanie Hansen, and Suzanne Trill, eds., *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1997); Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992); Christina Luckyj, *‘A Moving Rhetoricke’: Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002); Lynette McGrath, *Subjectivity and Women’s Poetry*

even subjection—not self-knowledge—defines selfhood, then models of desire, especially those which receive empowerment through one’s subjection to an authority, provide a much stronger framework through which to assess early modern relationality.⁷⁴

Thus in Gosson’s text, the mob’s self-serving lust threatens not one’s individual rationality but one’s relational impulse to love one’s neighbour and, therefore, God.

Gosson’s rhetorical formality also betrays the assumption that rhetorical structure will rehabilitate the ordering of one’s desires.

Reading Towards the Sacred Other

The texts I study also seek to reorder readers’ desires through their rhetorical devotionality. For example, the tension in Collins’s poetry is driven by her attempts to use poetry to reinterpret the sense of her body’s pain into joy through devotion. Poems like “A Song Exciting to Spiritual Alacrity” (47-49) and “Another Song exciting to

in *Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); and Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, eds., *Representing Women*.

⁷⁴ One can trace the development of the treatment of early modern subjectivity through a series of scholarly works and the responses to them, beginning (for my purposes at least) with Stephen Greenblatt’s *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) and Cynthia Marshall’s response in *Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2002). Recent work has been attempting to reconcile the two aspects of the fashioned/shattered self through an analysis of the self in relation to the Other. This work goes by different names and appears in unexpected places but shares a commitment to understanding how people and texts relate to others as simultaneously strange and familiar. Shuger describes this quality as “personalist” (*Habits* 263), Nancy Selleck describes what she studies as the *Interpersonal Idiom* (11), Constance M. Furey calls it “poetic relationality” in *Poetic Relations: Intimacy and Faith in the English Reformation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 11. Other words used are “intermental” (Fludernik 689), “intersubjectivity” and “dialogically organised” (Cosslett, Lury, and Summerfield 4), “conversional” (Piper 67). The rich variety of work being done on this topic in different spheres suggests that there is something compelling about this mode of inquiry that we are still working to uncover. See Monika Fludernik, “Collective Minds in Fact and Fiction: Intermental Thought and Group Consciousness in Early Modern Narrative,” *Poetics Today* 35, no.4 (Winter 2014); Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield, *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* (Routledge, 2000); and Andrew Piper, “Novel Devotions: Conversional Reading, Computational Modeling, and the Modern Novel,” *New Literary History* 46, no.1 (Winter 2015): 63-98.

spiritual Mirth” (49-51) suggest she wrote them so that future acts of reading might activate joy when under threat of despair. She seems to be using her poems to store up good humors in a vessel not as easily threatened by her bodily afflictions. The devotional emphasis on the function of processing one’s faith through the addition of reading highlights how we have been looking at early modern texts backwards. We have been looking to understand early modern selfhood by looking for notable authors, but these texts suggest that looking at how texts seek to construct excellent readers would be much more productive.

Research by Constance M. Furey suggests that shifting our perspective from author to reader might be particularly fruitful when considering devotional literature because Calvinist theology also promoted a perspectival shift in believers, from considering oneself as the author of one’s existence to the reader of it. Furey explains how Calvin taught that original sin deluded humans into thinking of themselves as self-sufficient: “unaware of our own limits and abilities, we view ourselves as creators rather than as beings created by another.”⁷⁵ In contrast, “Calvin taught that faith is transformative because faith shifts the focus from humanity to God, replacing a deluded sense of independence with an awareness of humanity’s total dependence on the Almighty.”⁷⁶ The proper reading of scripture became the essential means through which to cultivate that divinely inspired perspective in the hearts of believers.

⁷⁵ Furey, *Poetic Relations*, 11.

⁷⁶ Furey, 11. For more on the impact of Calvin’s teachings see Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).

Similarly, Gary Kuchar explores how sacramental devotion's hyperbolized longing for the divine Other teaches its readers how to experience themselves as properly desiring subjects. He situates the author's devotional engagements within sacred communities, but ultimately he focuses on the individual's attempts to contemplate the divine.⁷⁷ Shuger shares Kuchar's conviction that passionate rhetoric transforms the desires of the heart, but she differs from Kuchar by suggesting that the concept of self-awareness—such as Kuchar cultivates—fails to adequately account for the soul in the development of the early modern self. Shuger argues the early modern self should be imagined “as love or the response of the soul to God's pull.”⁷⁸ She too limits her articulation of devotional aesthetic to “God, Self, and Psyche.”⁷⁹ Of course, authorship, by necessity of its function, demonstrates the formulation of some sort of subjectivity; nevertheless, my readings in the period, which reveal the devotional author's persistent attempts to recuperate a dialogue with the transcendent Other, require us to focus much greater attention on the tension between sacred rhetoric and the period's contemplation of community, before we can better understand the individual's construction of their selfhood.

By highlighting the contradictory nature of the sinful self, devotional literature emphasizes that readers cannot attain closeness to God except by meditating on the

⁷⁷ Gary Kuchar, *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2005).

⁷⁸ Shuger, *Sacred*, 11.

⁷⁹ The title of Chapter 5 of Shuger's *Sacred Rhetoric* is “God, Self, and Psyche: The Theological Bases of the Grand Style.”

divinity of his person. John Donne's "Holy Sonnet 171 (Batter my heart)" (1633) for example, captures the moment in the devotional process when the sinful heart, not yet captive to God, panics in contemplation of his greatness.

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for, you
As yet but knocke, breathe, shine, and seeke to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow mee, and bend
Your force, to breake, blowe, burn and make me new.⁸⁰

The poem's locution involves the reader in its violence. Its consonance pounds at the reader's ear in a staccato rhythm that mimics the apocalyptic beating Donne asks God to dole out. The enjambment makes its verse seem to progress in fits and starts. But, most unsettling, the perspective masks the provenance of the violence. Because Donne has yet to experience God's action, the poem leaves unclear whether its violence is actually a characteristic of God's love, suggesting the more likely possibility that his fear and resulting self-flagellation is a symptom of his sin.⁸¹ Kuchar suggests, "Indeed, the excessive fantasies of beating and sodomization are simultaneously an admission of his failure to desire God *feelingly* and an effort to reignite that desire by breaking down the illusion that one can maintain a claim to being without him."⁸² Donne's rhetorical

⁸⁰ John Donne, *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (New York: New York UP, 1968), 344, l. 1-4.

⁸¹ Camille Well Slight discusses the poem as evidence of "conscience in operation" in "Notaries, Sponges, and Looking-glasses: Conscience in Early Modern England," *English Literary Renaissance* 8, no. 2 (1998), 245. For more on affect in Donne's poems see Kimberly Anne Coles, "The Matter of Belief in John Donne's Holy Sonnets," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2015): 899-931; and Naya Tsentourou, "Signs and Groans: Attending to the Passions in Early Modern Prayer," *Literature Compass* 12, no. 6 (2015): 262-73.

⁸² Kuchar, *Divine Subjection*, 228.

Untun'd, unstrung" (289, l. 21-22). I suggest the creative exhaustion experienced in the penultimate stanza changes the nature of the poet's demands, which in turn brings about the reconciliation offered by the rhyming couplet at the conclusion of the final verse. Until the final stanza, the poet's despair results from his devotions' failure to "pierce" (288, l. 1) the ear of God and his poem centres upon his attempts to force a divine response; only after the poet finally relents and submits himself to God's tuning does he begin to experience God's favour,

That so thy favours granting my request,
They and my minde may chime,
And mend my ryme. (289, l. 28-30).

Thus the poem's title might not refer to God's denial of the poet—as Herbert's editors suggest—but to the poet's requisite denial of himself, a surprising swap that yet seems to fit with the paradoxical metaphors of "Prayer (I)" or the formal experience of "Easter Wings."⁸⁵ Like those poems, as well as Donne's "Batter my heart," the poem's rhetorical figurations conform to Shuger's suggestion that "the passionate expression of feeling communicates the presence of God; the language of passion with its figures and tropes is also the language of divine disclosure," by invoking a devoted response through the creative exploration of God's divinity.⁸⁶ "Deniall" expands the critical possibilities made available by Shuger's definition of sacred rhetoric's function, by figuring creative fatigue

⁸⁵ George Ryley expands on the title, "That is, the effects of God's denying audience to prayer," though Wilcox notes "implied too is the speaker's unjust denial of God's care." *Mr. Herbert's Temple and Church Militant Explained and Improved*, ed. Maureen Boyd and Cedric C. Brown (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 100. Wilcox, ed., *George Herbert*, 289.

⁸⁶ Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric*, 11. See also James Bromley, "Intimacy and the Body in Seventeenth-Century Religious Devotion," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11, no. 1, 2005, n.p.

as its antithesis. Herbert's emphasis on the necessity of God's music playing in our lives insists that all creative endeavours generate from God's first creative act. To deny his affective presence is to both lack faith and do bad work.

The burgeoning print market of the English Renaissance capitalized on the hermeneutic possibilities made available by the English Reformation to bring an array of topics to the reading public. In turn, this proliferation of text served to further heighten anxieties surrounding a reader's interpretive practices. Sir Thomas Browne, for example, attempts to curb criticism of his *Religio Medici* (1642), both a spiritual meditation and a defense of his medical profession, by making light of the ambitious breadth of his work. He apologizes for the "many things delivered Rhetorically, many expressions therein meerely Tropicall and as they best illustrate my intention," but then also resists critique by defending the Mystery of the Biblical myth as the inspiration for creative license taken by classical philosophy and popular romance, as well as himself.⁸⁷ He uses similar logic to defend the sanctification of his medical practice. Browne grapples with the correspondence between human imagination and divine transcendence when he meditates on the mysteries of the Biblical myth:

I confesse there are in Scriptures stories that doe exceed the fables of Poets, and to a captious Reader sound like *Garagantua* or *Bevis*.... yet is all this of an easie possibility, if we conceive a divine concourse or an influence but from the little finger of the Almighty. (26)

Browne's editors note that Gargantua is a giant in the sixteenth-century writings of François Rabelais, and Bevis a knight from medieval romances (155), both obviously

⁸⁷ Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici and Hydriotapphia, or Urne-Buriall*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Ramie Targoff (New York: New York Review Book, 2012), 4. All references are to this edition.

symbols of creative excess. But in mocking the “captious Reader’s” comparison of Old Testament miracle to the medieval romance’s imaginative follies, Browne does not seem to suggest that they are wrong, rather that they are simple-minded. He concludes by reminding the reader of their fallibility: “It is impossible that, either in the discourse of man, or in the infallible voyce of God, to the weakness of our apprehension, there should not appeare irregularities, contradiction, and antinomies” (26). Thus Browne does not reject the similitude between human and divine creative practices; he simply requires that human creativity admit its obligation to the divine scale within which it finds all meaning.

Early modern depictions of the Fall suggest, however, that delusions of grandeur are the greatest weakness of the human race. Authors focus their interpretive attention on Eve’s temptation and frequently figure Satan grooming her lust for power in advance of her actual fall. Like George Herbert’s “Deniall,” Francis Quarles’s *Emblemes* (1635) figures the soul as an instrument that must be tuned to the divine, but before he can tune the soul, the reader must first recognize their need for grace.⁸⁸ Quarles forces this recognition in his first emblem by structuring its meditation as a re-enactment of the Fall, in which the reader must speak the part of both actors—Eve and Satan. The emblem’s title, “Every man is tempted, when he is drawne away by his own lust, and enticed,” suggests the dialogue’s dual parts serve as an analogy for a person’s inner struggle

⁸⁸ Francis Quarles, *Emblemes* (London, 1635). See Jantina Ellens, “‘Skrue up the Heightened Pegs of Thy Sublime Theorboe’: Tuning the Senses in Quarles’s *Emblemes* (1635),” *Emblematica: Essays in Word and Image* 1 (2017): 1-29.

against their own lust.⁸⁹ Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1674) similarly emphasizes Eve's selfish fascination with autonomy as the instigator of her sin. Before Eve finally gives in to Satan's temptations, she already makes herself vulnerable to his lies by separating herself physically from her husband. Eve crowns her fall with self-directed speech in which she decides to share her new-found knowledge with Adam to prevent him from replacing her. Eve concludes to herself, "So dear I love him, that with him all deaths / I could endure, without him live no life."⁹⁰ Upon her Fall, she determines to relate to her husband through sinful knowledge, not the loving desire they shared before.⁹¹ These authors characterize Eve's sinfulness as a self-idolizing autonomy that perverts one's love of self and love of another to a selfish death wish.

Yet by modeling their characters' return to godly examples, the authors also proffer hope to their readers. By contrasting Adam and Eve's accusatory bickering at the end of the ninth book with the deferential dialogues shared by God the Father and Son throughout the epic, Milton emphasizes the solitary consequences of turning a dialogue into self-aggrandizement; nevertheless, after they are judged, rightly-directed words between the human couple bring repentance and peace. Finally attuning himself to God's

⁸⁹ Quarles, *Emblemes*, 5.

⁹⁰ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1971), 9.832-33. All references are to this edition.

⁹¹ Much has been made of the "food politics and culinary poetics" (Appelbaum 239) of *Paradise Lost*. For a discussion of Eve's participation in the fall and its relation to food, taste, and the reinterpretation of her body, see Robert Appelbaum, "Eve's and Adam's 'Apple': Horticulture, Taste, and the Flesh of the Forbidden Fruit in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (December 2002): 221-39; Margo Swiss, "Repairing Androgyny: Eve's Tears in *Paradise Lost*," in *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton*, eds. Margo Swiss and David A. Kent (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2002), 261-83; and Amy Tigner, "Eating with Eve," *Milton Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (December 2010): 239-53.

judgments and promises, Adam convinces Eve to pray with him in repentance with the result that

from the mercy-seat above
Prevenient grace descending had removed
The stony from their hearts, and made new flesh
Regenerate grow instead. (11.2-5)

Likewise, John Donne pleads for God's voice to overwhelm his heart, dead in sin. He wishes that, as God did for Lazarus, he would call Donne out of the grave with a loud voice. He reflects on the power of God's voice, concluding "*The Lord thundred from heaven, it might bee heard; But this voice, thy voice, is also a mightie voice; not only mightie in power, it may be heard, nor mightie in obligation, it should be heard; but mightie in operation, it will be heard.*"⁹² Donne wishes God's words would bind him to obedience. Further, he attempts to secure his binding by also subjecting his rhetoric to the divine examples God has set out for him. He concludes, "and therefore hast thou bestowed a whole *Psalm* upon us, to leade us to the consideration of thy *voice*."⁹³ Psalm 29, which Donne cites in a footnote to this excerpt, recalls the power of God's Word at creation as a means to invoke his people to praise: "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the Lord is upon many waters" (Ps. 29:3 KJV). The reference to God's Word hovering over the waters would have been an unmistakable reference to the Genesis account of creation in which "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2 KJV) as well as John's retelling of that account in the first

⁹² John Donne, "21. Expostulation," in *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, ed. Anthony Raspa. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1975), 113.

⁹³ Donne, 113.

chapter of his gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1 KJV). The psalm’s reference to God’s voice over the waters prophesies Christ’s redemption of creation in the Word become flesh. By citing God’s redemptive rhetoric as a template for his work, Donne suggests his *Devotions* borrows from the operational might of God’s speech by mimicking his rhetorical creativity.

Kuchar seems to figure this use of scriptural rhetoric as a lonely endeavour, in which “the orant is figured in God-like terms insofar as his language is said to hold dominion over its auditors.”⁹⁴ As noted above, Rebhorn has demonstrated the Renaissance’s dictatorial interpretation of rhetorician as monarch. But an emphasis on discipline, within a context structured by the Christian ideal, undermines the egomaniacal possibilities inherent in this conceptualisation of authority and authorship. The call and response of the psalm’s structure, in which the priest calls the people to praise, the congregation recites God’s majesty, and then the priest responds with God’s blessing, best demonstrates a three-part dialogue between a speaker, their respondents, and God that early modern devotional authors attempt to model in their own relationship with their readers and the Divine: Herbert and Quarles attempt to tune their reader’s soul; Donne asks the reader to accompany him through the valley of the shadow of death; Milton invites the reader into his vivid imagining of the biblical narrative. Thus their desire for God becomes their mode of interaction with the divine, but also with the reader. To be

⁹⁴ Kuchar, *Divine Subjection*, 3.

effective in their devotional goals, each author requires that they engender familiarity between themselves and the reader to serve as a trustworthy source through which to encounter God.

The use of reading to over-ride an indulgent internal perspective inspired a poetic selfhood heavily invested in the relationality of poetics. Furey's examination of authorship through the lens of relational poetics demonstrates how, particularly for marginalized authors, "the authority of the writer depends on the text's ability to inscribe relationships with and for the reader."⁹⁵ In a Coda, Furey addresses the role spirituality played in her study. Furey quotes the title poem from Christian Wiman's *My Bright Abyss*, a collection by a poet who also struggles with the problem of poetry and belief, to focus her study. Wiman writes,

My God my bright abyss
Into which all my longing will not go
Once more I come to the edge of all I know
And believing nothing believe in this.⁹⁶

Furey recounts how, for years, Wiman ended the final line of the poem with a colon ("And believing nothing believe in this:") and considered it unfinished. Eventually, Wiman came to peace with the struggle between faith and poetry and completed the poem by changing the colon to a period. Furey finds the minute change in the grammatical conclusion of Wiman's final "this" deeply profound. Furey concludes: "the poem affirms that belief in nothing *is* belief in this, not in tenets of faith such as the

⁹⁵ Furey, *Poetic Relations*, 56.

⁹⁶ Christian Wiman, *My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2013). Quoted in Furey, *Poetic Relations*, 171.

existence of God or the salvific death and resurrection of Christ, but in the relations the poem itself inscribes.”⁹⁷ Furey seems to be making the argument that relationality is a function of poetry which remains, even when the spiritual force behind it seems unutterable.

R.V. Young describes the belief that “behind what is visible, beyond what can be articulated, there is not nothing, but something—the unexpected gift, the unmerited favour” as an underlying “notion of grace.”⁹⁸ While it might be possible to separate the notion of grace from Christian spirituality in our discussion of modern poetry, I do not think it possible to separate the notion of grace from one’s relationship with God in the discussion of early modern devotional poetry because, inherent to the idea of that relationality, is the early modern notion of God’s gracious response to his people. Young suggests the absent presence is essential to the responsive character of biblical poetics:

The spiritual dynamic of biblical poetics finds in the scriptural text not the dead trace of an absent presence, but the living voice of embodied Logos. The poet seeks to rewrite the Word of God in his own imitation or version of the ‘scripture,’ thus inscribing the word—Christ’s name and presence—in his own soul in the blood of the Lamb.⁹⁹

The women I study in this project experience embodied Logos as an authorization for their anonymity. They invoke a poetics of grace that uses the absence created by their anonymity to invoke the living voice of God instead. The title page of *Eliza’s Babes* says as much in its description of its author as “a LADY, who onely desires to advance the

⁹⁷ Furey, 171.

⁹⁸ R. V. Young, *Doctrine and Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Poetry: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000) 5, 5.

⁹⁹ Young, 169.

glory of GOD, and not her own.” She says quite blatantly that her only identity is in the glory of God. Collins, too, suggests the “image of her mind” (“The Discourse,” 9, l. 53) is found in the 102-stanza creedal poem that instructs the reader in the finer points of Protestant theology.

Reading for Community

It can be tempting to fall back on discussions of early modern selfhood when contemplating the authorial integrity anonymous women attempt to claim for themselves as writers. But the authors I study serve as a corrective to this tendency by pointing again to the function of the reader in enforcing the author’s construction of themselves. The liturgical force of their anonymous texts, awaiting a reader to accommodate their praise, highlights the ways each relies on its readers to activate it. Readers’ participation with the author in praise authorizes the text by proving the devotional acumen she sets out to defend and welcoming her into a community of believers. If self-absorption was considered to be the ultimate sin, demonstrated through the dialogues of the fall, community is the benefit to be sought. Within this framework, the goal of self-improvement is to restore people to open communion between members of the body of Christ.¹⁰⁰ Devotional texts serve this goal by reorienting believers’ perspectives. They place believers in the midst of a redemptive narrative in which their pain and suffering takes on a new, more hopeful significance. What is so interesting about these poets, then,

¹⁰⁰ As Selleck writes, “disease is not seen as a foreign presence within the body, but as a condition of what has become the body itself,” the only remedy is to become something new again. *The Interpersonal Idiom*, 58.

is that they seek a renewed relationship not only with God, but also with their readers, and that they use the literary character of their relationship with God to create that fellowship with other believers.

In his study of the theology of Christian worship, Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that inherent in the activity of worship is the understanding that God is a listener and, consequently, that in worship we implore him to respond.¹⁰¹ As Ramie Targoff's *Common Prayer* has made clear, early modern devotional writers were deeply influenced by the liturgy and vice versa.¹⁰² This concept of God as a listener, and our interactions with him as responsive to that knowledge of Him listening, imbues devotional writing as well. Readers are being asked to model God's responsiveness. Just as God listens and is moved, so too should readers listen and be moved. If they listen as God does, they are ushered into the kingdom by modelling themselves after God. So devotionality mediates the relationship with God, but also joins the author and reader in a restored community under God's dominion. The text becomes authorized in community.

In an anonymous text, the community's authorization becomes even more valuable, but recognizing this contingency as characteristic of a devotional identity also helps to illuminate the effectiveness of anonymity in the texts I study. Devotionality requires a response, but so too does anonymity. Mark Robson suggests that where attribution defines the world by what is known, anonymity invites the reader to take up

¹⁰¹ See Nicholas Wolterstorff, "God as One Who Participates in Mutual Address," in *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 53-71.

¹⁰² See Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

the position of Levinas's "third relation" between the Self and the Other in which "the Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign."¹⁰³ Relying on Maurice Blanchot parsing Levinas in Blanchot's essay "Connaissance de l'inconnu [Knowledge of the Unknown]," Robson notes how Blanchot interprets the third relation as a means to leave space for the unknown or strange. Robson argues, "Transcending appropriation and fusion, for Blanchot the Unknown marks a human, finite relation without relation."¹⁰⁴ In contrast to attribution, which often becomes an act of ascription, Robson advocates for "a way of thinking about anonymity that would allow us to take account of this relation without relation, but without immediately domesticating it as another principle of explanation within a critical economy."¹⁰⁵ A proper approach to anonymity, Robson argues, will serve to preserve its strange-ness. The key to such an approach is found by insisting on the act of reading as an ethical endeavour. Robson quotes Lisa Freinkel who argues, "In his treatment of the author-function, Foucault loses sight of the *reader's* function. He loses sight, that is to say, of reading *as* authorization: as that activity according to which empirical beginnings are yoked to transcendent ends."¹⁰⁶ Robson then applies the recognition of the authorization of the reader to anonymity studies arguing, "it is this question of reading as authorization, and of the principles which seemingly inform such readings (and upon which depends their own authority as readings), that should give

¹⁰³ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1969), 194. Quoted in Robson, "The Ethics of Anonymity," 172.

¹⁰⁴ Robson, 172.

¹⁰⁵ Robson, 173.

¹⁰⁶ Freinkel, *Reading Shakespeare's Will: The Theology of figure from Augustine to the Sonnets* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), xvi. Quoted in Robson, 168.

us pause in the context of the attribution of formerly anonymous texts.”¹⁰⁷ Anonymity is an aspect of how the text is presented to the reader, and therefore it should be regarded not as something to be undone, but as something whose strangeness should be considered an essential element of the meaning-making apparatus available to the text. Selleck argues that one of the benefits of a relational text is that it objectifies the self in such a way as to invite a more in-depth self-reflection.¹⁰⁸ Anonymous devotion makes the author into a cipher, directing the relationality of the text towards God because there is no other form of relation available. All others are rejected.

For the women I study, the relational authority granted by devotion was especially empowering because it reinforced their value as image bearers of the resurrected Christ. Instead of bearing witness to their own earthly sinfulness, they become beacons of God’s elected grace. Returning to the questions Longfellow posed about *Eliza’s Babes*, what their desire to be identified by grace suggests is that, while the authors are aware of their gender and register a sense of transgression with their writing that is linked to gender, their means of ameliorating the transgression is linked to devotional writing, which mitigates that transgression by replacing their earthly body devoted to sin with a textual body devoted to God. The engagement of a community of believers through text also reinterprets the alienating transgression of publication into a communally sanctioned display of faithfulness.

¹⁰⁷ Robson, 168.

¹⁰⁸ Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom*, 15-16.

These authors' authorization of themselves through their anonymous interactions with a faith community suggests that, as early modern scholars, we must pay more attention to religion as a determinant of identity. Janel Mueller comes to a similar realization when studying Katherine Parr's religious prose work *The Lamentation of the Sinner* (1547). In the course of her study of this text, Mueller came across an odd metaphor, "the book of the crucifix," which she unsuccessfully attempted to interpret through the lens of gender and age. Mueller recalls, "After I [also] found the book of the crucifix metaphor in [a sermon by John] Fisher, my feminist scholar's hypothesis about its uniquely autobiographical expressiveness for Katherine Parr lay pretty much in ruins."¹⁰⁹ To add insult to injury, there was an "utter paucity" of other self-referential markings in Parr's text.¹¹⁰ Mueller concludes that the primary determinant of difference between Parr's text and Fisher's sermon was religious. This discovery led Mueller to reconsider whether gender is a helpful identifying marker when interpreting religious texts by women authors. Mueller notes, "At best, gender in the two texts in question is a matter of inference from authorial positioning."¹¹¹ The circuitous route that led Mueller to her conclusion resembles similar false starts in my own research. I began my research with the goal of studying women writers' voices and instead have come to conclude that not only is gender not a helpful determinant of identity in these texts, but that the women I study go so far as to reject those readers who insist on reading them as "women" by the

¹⁰⁹ Janel Mueller, "Complications of Intertextuality: John Fisher, Katherine Parr, and 'The Book of the Crucifix,'" in Summers and Peabworth, *Representing Women*, 31.

¹¹⁰ Mueller, 31.

¹¹¹ Mueller, 37.

end of the text. Instead they, like Parr, deploy their identity to construct what Mueller terms “a generic and genderless Christian responding to the message of salvation through faith in Christ crucified.”¹¹² The religious determinant places focus on the author as “everyman,” universalized, before God. Mueller acknowledges that the work required to re-establish the validity of religion as a determinant of identity is difficult, especially “given the sweeping negativism of Freudian and post-Freudian, Marxian, and modern secular predispositions regarding religion.”¹¹³ Yet she insists that positing religion as a “materialized factor” of identity—that is, an aspect of identity that has real and measurable impact—helps to highlight previously invisible differentiating characteristics of texts:

positing religion as a materialized factor might help to make legible and intelligible certain currently underattended-to aspects of massively deployed social energies in sixteenth- and earlier seventeenth-century England. Although iconoclasm has drawn appreciable scholarly attention, the long-sustained contestations over sacramental dogma and its attendant modalities of worship (themselves encoded in and as bodily practices) have not yet done so.¹¹⁴

This study attempts to do this work by paying attention to the way the record of devotional practices allows women to create embodied identities for themselves which resist the misogynist assumptions normally attendant upon a women’s writing project.

¹¹² Mueller, 38.

¹¹³ Mueller, 41.

¹¹⁴ Mueller, 41. For more discussion of the ways that religion and culture intersect see David Cressy and Lori Ann Ferrell, eds., *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1996); and Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger, eds., *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997).

Conclusion

The following chapters explore how disciplining one's rhetoric to scripture and popular devotional tropes tempers the illicit qualities of published femininity. Rhetorical formality is made to signify spiritual obedience and rehabilitates the feminine voice by authorizing the feminine through its performance of submission to rhetorical tropes. My chapters illuminate the benefits of such a performance by demonstrating how, in the works of Eliza, Collins, and Hopton, the authors circumvent misogynist critique by embracing an anonymous scriptural rhetoric that amplifies their commitment to spiritual gratification above all others. I develop this argument by carefully examining the authors' descriptions of the ways they expect to be read and their responses to those expectations. Each chapter follows a similar organizational pattern. The texts I study have each received popular attention, recently, in the case of Eliza and Collins, and in the past in Hopton's case. In each chapter, I examine the contexts through which Eliza's, Collins's, and Hopton's texts and their anonymity have been read and then compare this to how the authors anticipate themselves and their texts to be read. I conduct a close reading of the tropes the authors employ to construct their anonymous spiritual identity and explore how the authors use the construction of their anonymous identity to shape their readers' reception of themselves and their texts. My approach suggests that an increasing misunderstanding of anonymous authorship and devotional reading practices has resulted in a gap in our ability to grasp how the anonymous authors I study employ anonymous scriptural rhetoric as a frame through which to organize their readers' reception of their

text. This gap limits our ability to read these texts at all, let alone to acknowledge the publication of an anonymous devotional text as the authoritative, relational act it is.

My first chapter examines how the anonymous author of *Eliza's Babes: or The Virgin's Offering* (1652) responds to ingrained assumptions about the inherent dysfunction of women's desires by presenting her poetry as a scriptural echo. Eliza predicates her poetic persona on a responsiveness to God's love and remediates the signification of her desires by presenting herself as an echo of biblical figures like the beloved in Canticles and the Virgin Mary. Aligning herself with these tropes provides Eliza with the means to defend her reproduction of devotion in print as a natural consequence of her union with Christ. Eliza argues that if she is to be a good mother to her poetic "babes," she must provide for their upbringing accordingly. Drawing these themes into her contemporary context, Eliza relies on tropes from popular seventeenth-century mother's manuals in which women, anticipating their untimely deaths, fulfilled their duty to raise virtuous children by publishing maternal instructions. Like the virtuous mothers of the mother's manuals, Eliza argues that she, too, must print her devotion or risk her ability to fulfil her duty to her God-given children. Each refiguration of Eliza's identity draws her closer to the ultimate conclusion that her identity is found in Christ's desire for her as a believer and not the world's sense of who she is as a woman. Eliza's reinterpretation of her role through scripture enables her to finally conclude "Souls have no sex" ("The Royall Priest-hood," 133). Throughout, Eliza calls her readers to re-evaluate their relationship with her and her text. They must recognize that she is subservient to Christ by demonstrating their willingness to subject themselves to her

vision of the world. Eliza's anonymity becomes the final guarantee of this renewed perspective. Even as readers resist Eliza's revisioning of herself, they are prevented from rejecting it because her anonymity bars access to any other. The only identity available to her readers is the persona she provides them on her frontispiece, that of "a LADY, who onely desires to advance the glory of GOD, and not her own."

My second chapter examines poetry by a woman who grapples with being forced into anonymity by illness. Like Eliza, An Collins relies on a devotional identity to renegotiate the signification of feminized illness and ends up embracing her resulting anonymity in the publication of *Divine Songs and Meditations* (1653). Although Collins finds herself sick, confined to bed, and plagued by debilitating despair, she resists the popular assumption that such afflictions are symptomatic of a guilty conscience resisting repentance. Instead, she uses the anonymous identity afforded by illness to divorce herself from earthly identifiers. Her anonymity amplifies the devotional fervour displayed in her text as the exemplification of her godly calling. She argues that her collection of devotional lyrics, created during periods of respite from affliction, provide a store of devotional zeal whose comforts teach her to contain the affect of despair. Further, her anonymous spiritual identity becomes a point of connection between herself and a faith community fragmented by the civil wars. The personal comforts she experiences by becoming identified with Christ serve as a universal salve for any believing reader who, like Collins, feels anonymous and rejected. Scholars often worry over the harmful metonymy of the body politic's influence on individuals, but Collins positions her personal anonymized comforts as the ideal mode through which to communicate a

metonymic remedy to the body of believers. Their mutual recognition of each other as believers receptive to God's comforts becomes a communal salve for their lonely souls.

Finally, my third chapter examines the works of Susanna Hopton, which were published anonymously during her lifetime and then re-released with attribution after her death. Susanna Hopton had converted to Catholicism as a young woman and then converted back to the Church of England some ten years later. She is the dedicatee of a Catholic controversialist text, the disputed author of two anonymous devotional texts published during her lifetime, and the reported author of a letter said to have been written to her former confessor soon after her return to the Church of England but published by her editor after her death. This chapter argues that Hopton's editor's attribution of anonymous devotional texts to Susanna Hopton extends the desirable authority of their anonymous communal devotion to her posthumously. A woman's double conversion would make her integrity and constancy doubly suspect; but her claimed authorship of anonymous devotional texts authenticates the Protestant identity she claims in her letter. The possibility that she was the author of those devotionals allows her editor to retroactively construct her reliable participation in the Protestant corporate identity the devotionals exhibit. This chapter examines how a woman, assuming the qualities of community formation inherent to devotion, constructs a corporate identity for herself out of anonymous devotion despite contradictory biographical evidence. This case proves the desirable aspects of anonymity that my project has promoted all along. Anonymous devotion allows Hopton to replace the signification of her compromised, converted feminine body with the faithful Protestant textuality displayed in her texts. In resistance

to Catholic stereotypes which threaten the veracity of her claim to conversion, Hopton demonstrates her authorial agency through her performative submission to Protestant rhetoric. The attribution of anonymous devotion to Hopton becomes a further performance. The tension between attribution and anonymity in Hopton's authorial legacy demonstrates how anonymity's polyvocality is one of its greatest strengths.

These studies demonstrate how a renewed understanding of anonymity's fluidity allows women the freedom to extend the boundaries of the signification of traditional femininity. Although North's scholarship demonstrates that anonymous women writers were not provided nearly the same breadth of exploratory identities available to male anonymous writers, my study examines some of the freedoms made available to anonymous women devotional writers, nonetheless. By exploring how anonymity both reflects and explodes expectations of women's humility, this study examines the performative tension inherent to any early modern woman's entrance into print. This study also re-emphasizes the role of the reader in granting authorization to women's various personas. By agreeing to read these women writers as they ask, we become participants in the identity formation they pursue.

In turn, our participation in these women's attempts to re-envision their place in the world opens up new perspectives through which we, too, might reimagine the early modern cultural landscape. These authors' engagement with the otherwise quotidian contents of early modern devotional writing reveals the unremarkable or iterative as a margin of authority early modern scholarship has yet to fully contemplate. And the way anonymity becomes an expression of this authoritative marginality reinterprets what it

means to form an identity. This reinterpretation of identity formation holds implications for how we continue to imagine early modern meaning making, especially in terms of how we imagine authors navigating between their conception of themselves as both separate and beholden to the other.

CHAPTER 1: *ELIZA'S BABES: OR THE VIRGINS-OFFERING (1652) AND DESIRE*

When first the motion came into my minde, that these Babes of mine should be sent into the world; I would faine have suppress that motion, for divers reasons which may be imagined, by them, that shall read them: But especially by those, that knew my disposition. But rising one day, from my Devotions, it was suggested to my consideration, that those desires were not given me, to be kept in private, to my self, but for the good of others.¹

By describing the internal motion of her desires as “babes” in her prefatory “To the Reader,” the virgin “Eliza,” anonymous author of *Eliza's Babes: or The Virgin's Offering* (1652), shifts the locus of internal motive force to the womb. “Motion,” William W. E. Slights explains, was thought of as a “motive force in the mind or some part of the body, especially the heart, which could come to dominate a person's actions.”² The heart played this role because it “was the unique residence of the conscience, the voice of God within each person, and hence the only organ, anatomical or political, that could afford direct union with the Almighty.”³ Eliza's collection of poetry begs to differ. Eliza locates the presence of God within her womb by likening the awakening of her desires to the feeling of quickening, the first feelings of a baby's movements in the womb. This imagery is not unusual: authors often celebrated their literary fecundity by portraying themselves as pregnant with a desire that gives birth to a text. Philip Sidney links this creative ability to man's identity as an image of the divine:

¹ *Eliza's Babes, or The Virgin's Offering: A Critical Edition*, ed. L. E. Semler (Madison, NJ: Associated UP, 2001), 57. All references are to this edition.

² William W. E. Slights, *The Heart in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 78.

³ Slights, 12.

Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature; but rather give right honour to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth surpassing her doings.⁴

But Eliza's identification with the social and material weight of a woman's virginity changes the tone of her engagement with this trope. Unlike male authors who triumphed in their impregnation by the muse, Eliza expresses surprise and dismay upon feeling the first motions of the "babes" because she recognizes both the physical toll of pregnancy on the female body and the social stigma faced by unwed mothers.⁵ Yet the uniqueness of

⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, "The Defence of Poesie," in *Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 217, l. 202-207. All references to Sidney's works are to this edition. Likewise, the speaker of *Astrophil and Stella* ends his first sonnet pregnant with a wit that must give birth to poetry:

Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,
"Fool," said my muse to me; "look in thy heart, and write." (153, l. 12-14)

See Deanna Smid's discussion of this passage in "The Imagination Gendered: Pregnancy and Creation in William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*," in *The Imagination in Early Modern English Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2017): 79-109. See also Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004); Jeffery Masten, *Textual Intercourse: Collaboration, Authorship and Sexualities in Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997); L. E. Semler, "The Protestant Birth Ethic: Aesthetic, Political, and Religious Contexts for *Eliza's Babes* (1652)," *English Literary Renaissance* 30, no. 3 (2000): 432-456; and Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993).

⁵ For a history of infanticide in the early modern period see Dianne Berg, "Monstrous Un-Making: Maternal Infanticide and Female Agency in Early Modern England," in *Medieval and Early Modern Murder: Legal, Literary, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Larissa Tracy (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2018), 417-433; Ann-Marie Kilday, *A History of Infanticide in Britain, c. 1600 to the Present* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); Randall Martin, "English Child-Murder News and the Culture of Equity," in *Masculinities, Violence, Childhood: Attending to Early Modern Women—And Men, Proceedings of the 2006 Symposium*, eds. Amy E. Leonard and Karen L. Nelson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 267-282; and Keith Wrightson, "Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-Century England," *Local Population Studies* 15 (1975): 10-22. For a discussion of infanticide and the imagination, see Stephanie Chamberlain, "Fantasizing Infanticide: Lady Macbeth and the Murdering Mother in Early Modern England," *College Literature* 32, no. 3 (2005): 72-91; Mark Fortier, "Married with Children: *The Winter's Tale* and Social History; or, Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-Century England," *Modern Language Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (1996): 579-603; Donna J. Long, "'It is a lovely bonne I make to thee': Mary Carey's 'abortive Birth' as Recuperative Religious Lyric," in *Discovering and (Re)Covering the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric*, eds. Eugene R. Cunnar and Jeffrey Johnson (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2001), 248-72; and Susan C. Staub, "Early Modern Medea: Representations of Child Murder in the Street

Eliza's Babes lies in its author's willingness to embody the muse and explore her own spirituality through the lens of female desire and the maternal body. Through this lens, Eliza develops an argument in which the womb provides exclusive access to direct union with the Almighty.

The author's approach is intriguing because, as her fears about the consequences of an unwanted pregnancy imply, female sexual desire was highly suspect in the early modern period. According to early modern theology, Eve's wanton desire, which led her away from community with God and her husband, became the impetus for all future sin. According to early modern medicine, women's desires also posed a danger to their health. Their illnesses were frequently diagnosed as symptoms of an unruly womb.⁶ Eliza's collection of poems engages both these stigmas in her discussion of her desires and, as her collection is inspired in the womb of an isolated virgin, it is strongly invested in moderating her readers' reception of her desires and their fruits. Eliza defends herself by encouraging readers to view her text as the product of God's divine intervention in her body through the immaculate conception of her desires. Divine intervention remediates Eliza's desires because, by claiming God as the father of her poem-babes, she implicates Him in the changes in her body.

Literature of Seventeenth-Century England," in *Maternal Measures: Figuring Care-Giving in the Early Modern Period*, eds. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 333-47.

⁶ See Michelle M. Dowd and Thomas Festa, eds., *Early Modern Women on the Fall: An Anthology* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012); and Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1982). See also Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008); Patricia Demers, *Women's Writing in English: Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); and Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004).

My assertion about the inherent femininity of the text's author understandably raises questions about the authorship of this text and particularly the authenticity of its author's gender. Because Eliza frequently reiterates the connections between the maternal form and her poetry, it can be easy to interpret Eliza's conception of her authorial desires as uniquely feminine, as many scholars have; however, near the end of her meditations, Eliza eventually concludes that "Souls have no sex" ("The Royall Priest-hood" 133). Eliza's striking assertion complicates the narrative of Eliza's femininity and has muddied modern scholarly responses to her authorship. While some scholars treat her use of gender as transformative, others note that her insularity and eventual rejection of her femininity problematize her classification as a proto-feminist because she resists the classification of a woman writer who writes both about and for other women. For example, Helen Wilcox suggests Eliza's devotional subject position "offers a freedom to the speaker that is all the more notable when the voice is female."⁷ L. E. Semler argues "The Royall Priest-hood" demonstrates Eliza's claim to a transsexual subjectivity which, through her hope and belief in the promises of the New Testament covenant offered through Christ's death and resurrection, allows her to inhabit "the masculinity of their expression;"⁸ however, Longfellow suggests that any celebration of the apparently transgressive qualities of Eliza's poetry demands further interrogation of Eliza's awareness of her gender, whether she registers a sense of transgression with regard to her

⁷ Wilcox, "'My Soule in Silence'? Devotional Representations of Renaissance Englishwomen," in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*, eds. Claude J Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 14.

⁸ Semler, "The Protestant Birth Ethic," 454.

writing, and how closely this transgression is linked to her gender. Longfellow also turns her attention to “The Royall Priest-hood,” but challenges the notion that this text provides an example of women’s textual freedom. Longfellow notes that while Eliza’s heavy reliance on the imagery of the mystical marriage (which often emphasized the femininity of the soul) makes her final rejection of a gendered soul radical in a devotional sense, Eliza’s single-minded interiority “hardly constitutes a call to arms for all women who cannot speak.”⁹

As these critiques demonstrate, the significance of the author’s gendered claims is difficult to parse conclusively because *Eliza’s Babes* was published anonymously. *Eliza’s Babes* does not reveal the author’s family name and gives vague descriptions of her family. She provides the initials of two sisters (or possibly one sister, later married), references the deaths of her father and brother, and mentions her apparent visit to Elizabeth of Bohemia at The Hague. The visit to The Hague and the frontispiece’s assertion that the text was “Written by a LADY” suggests she was at least of gentry status. Readers are left no way to confirm that Eliza was, indeed, a woman. In addition to scant biographical evidence, little information is to be gleaned from the bibliographic record of *Eliza’s Babes*. There are two extant copies of *Eliza’s Babes*. One complete text is included in the Thomason Tracts at the British Library.¹⁰ The other copy is held by the

⁹ Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 148. Women who cannot speak continue to pose problems for those attempting to read and edit women’s writing. See Christina Luckyj, *‘A Moving Rhetoricke’: Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002); Sarah C. E. Ross and Paul Salzman, eds., *Editing Early Modern Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016); and Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, eds., *Representing Women*.

¹⁰ Shelfmark, E 1289 [1].

University of Illinois Library.¹¹ Semler reports that the copy held by the University of Illinois Library lacks the final page, sig. G7r, and the accompanying catchword on sig. G6v, but except for that difference the two copies are “manifestly identical in every detail and, therefore, most probably of the same print run.”¹² The book is not mentioned in the Stationer’s Register. In fact, we find no archival reference to the book until it is mentioned in the 1834 auction catalogue for Richard Heber’s library, where it is listed as “scarce.”¹³ Semler’s article also brings to light the catalogue’s now frequently-quoted description of *Eliza’s Babes*: “*Eliza’s Babes* were certainly not legitimate, as far as regards her poetry, whatever be their piety....[S]he pities some of her female friends who were peopling the world to their own suffering. She peopled the world to the suffering of her readers.”¹⁴ The text was not heard of again until a few of her poems were collected in *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women’s Verse* (1988) and *Virtue of Necessity: English Women’s Writing 1649-1688* (1989). Since the publication of those two anthologies, Eliza’s poems have slowly gained a small readership, which was greatly aided by the publication of a critical edition by L. E. Semler in 2001. Yet a growing body of scholarship on *Eliza’s Babes* has continued to struggle to characterize Eliza.¹⁵

¹¹ Shelfmark, 821/EL48.

¹² Semler, “Who is the Mother of *Eliza’s Babes* (1652)? ‘Eliza,’ George Wither, and Elizabeth Emerson.” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 99, no. 4 (2000): 513.

¹³ Quoted in Semler, “Who,” 513.

¹⁴ Semler, 513.

¹⁵ Helen Wilcox launched the study of Eliza’s work in “‘My Soule in Silence’?” Like Wilcox, scholars frequently consider Eliza alongside other women writers: see Lyn Bennett, “Women, Writing, and Healing: Rhetoric, Religion, and Illness in An Collins, ‘Eliza,’ and Anna Trapnel,” *Journal of Medical Humanities* 36, no. 2 (2015): 157-70; Elizabeth Clarke in “Ejaculation or Virgin Birth? The Gendering of the Religious Lyric in the Interregnum,” in *“This Double Voice”: Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, ed. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke (New York: St. Martin’s, 2000), 208-29; Susan Comilang, “Through

The depth of the author's anonymity means *Eliza's Babes* resists the kinds of categorization literary scholars typically employ when analyzing a text: we are unclear about her class, her politics, her religious affiliations, even, despite her assertions, her gender. Semler has tried to identify Eliza by assessing the reputation of her publisher and linking it to theological implications he discerns in her text.¹⁶ Semler also suggests "Eliza" might be George Withers's wife, Elizabeth Emerson, but again his hypothesis is based on religious and political affinities between Withers and Eliza and not on the few identifying characteristics in the book.¹⁷ Erica Longfellow rejects Semler's extrapolations

the Closet: Private Devotion and the Shaping of Female Subjectivity in the Religious Recess," *Renaissance and Reformation* 39, no. 3 (2003), 79-96; Patricia Demers, "The Genres of Early Modern Women's Writing," in *Women's Writing in English*, 159-73; Demers, "Penseroso Triptych: 'Eliza,' An Collins, Elizabeth Major," in *Discovering and (Re)Covering the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, 185-204; and Claire Gheeraert-Graffeulle, "L'Accomplissement des Prophéties: La Jérusalem Céleste dans la Poésie Féminine Anglaise au Milieu du XVIIe Siècle," in *Les Voix de Dieu: Littérature et Prophétie en Angleterre et en France à l'Âge Baroque*, eds. Line Coggegnies et al. (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2008), 181-97. Semler's contributions to the field are also significant. In addition to a critical edition of *Eliza's Babes*, Semler has written a number of scholarly studies of Eliza: "Creative Adoption in *Eliza's Babes* (1652): Puritan Refigurations of Sibbes, Herrick, and Herbert," in *Centered on the Word: Literature, Scripture, and the Tudor-Stuart Middle Way*, eds. Daniel W. Doerksen and Christopher Hodgkins (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 319-45; "The Creed of *Eliza's Babes* (1652): Nakedness, Adam, and Divinity," *Albion* 33, no. 2 (2001): 185-217; "The Protestant Birth Ethic"; "What God Hath Joined, Let No Man Separate: *Eliza's Babes* and the Puritan Double Marriage," *Ben Jonson Journal* 9 (2002): 171-91; and "Who is the Mother of *Eliza's Babes* (1652)?" Semler's work paved the way for more individual studies of *Eliza's Babes*. See Erica Longfellow, "*Eliza's Babes*: Poetry 'Proceeding from Divinity' in Seventeenth-Century England," *Gender and History* 14, no. 2 (2002): 242-65 and her chapter length study of *Eliza's Babes*, "Public Worship and Private Thanks in *Eliza's Babes*," in *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 122-48. See also Michael Rex, "Eyes on the Prize: The Search for Personal Space and Stability through Religious Devotion in *Eliza's Babes*," in *Discovering and (Re)Covering the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric*, 205-30; and Kamille Stone Stanton, "The Anonymous 'Eliza': A Puritan Virgin Poet Internalizes Seventeenth-Century English Absolutism," *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 9, no. 1 (2010): 71-85. *Eliza's Babes* has also since been included in a number of anthologies including Robyn Bolam, ed., *Eliza's Babes: Four Centuries of Women's Poetry in English, c. 1500-1900* (Tarsset: Bloodaxe, 2005); and Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550-1700* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁶ *Eliza's Babes* was printed in 1652 by M. S., or Matthew Simmons, who sold books from his house next door to the Golden Lion in Aldersgate Street from the 1630s until his death in 1654. Simmons was a frequent publisher of sectarian texts, a reputation that suggests to Semler that Eliza also may have had allegiances with various non-conforming sects. Semler, "The Protestant Birth Ethic," 445.

¹⁷ See Semler, "Who is the Mother of *Eliza's Babes* (1652)?" 513-36.

of Eliza's theology by citing the well-documented overlap between the particularities of conformist and non-conformist theologies in the seventeenth century. She suggests that any affinities between Eliza's theological commitments and those of other devotional writers are inconclusive without further evidence.¹⁸ Neither Longfellow nor other scholars have been able to conclusively identify other potential Elizas.

In response to Semler, Longfellow argues that attempts to identify the "real" Eliza bury the lead. Instead, Longfellow argues that scholars should consider why Eliza might have chosen to remain anonymous. She suggests Eliza's concealed identity serves as a defense against accusations of unwomanly behaviour. She argues that Eliza anticipates accusations that she is proud and, "to defend herself, she reaches for the protective metaphor of marriage to Christ, through which she cleverly connects her 'private' and 'public' activity under the unimpeachable authority of a divine husband."¹⁹ Essentially, Longfellow argues Eliza's anonymity hides her behind the authority of her divine spouse.²⁰ Longfellow's argument draws attention to the intentionality of Eliza's anonymity but continues to categorize Eliza's anonymity as a failure to identify herself and an attempt to hide herself from the reader.

This chapter considers how Eliza might wield her anonymity to accentuate the elements of her character which she believes to be essential to her readers' understanding

¹⁸ See Longfellow's rejection of the Elizabeth Wither theory in "Public Worship and Private Thanks in *Eliza's Babes*," in *Women and Religious Writing*, 122-48. For more discussion of the overlap between orthodox and sectarian beliefs see Deborah K. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

¹⁹ Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing*, 137.

²⁰ For a discussion of marriage tropes in *Eliza's Babes* see Comilang, "Through the Closet," 79-96; and L. E. Semler, "The Creed of *Eliza's Babes* (1652)," 185-217; and "What God Hath Joined," 171-91.

of the text.²¹ While her anonymity might be a defensive socio-political manoeuvre, it also displays the transformative faith of one who “will close the eyes of [her] Soul, to mortality, and will not open them but to eternity” (“The Royall Priest-hood” 133). For example, Longfellow quotes the author statement included on the title page of *Eliza’s Babes* as a demonstration of Eliza’s defensiveness. The title page describes its author as “a LADY, who onely desires to advance the glory of GOD, and not her own.” According to Longfellow, this statement highlights Eliza’s unwillingness to identify herself with her project; however, I argue that while this statement does not identify Eliza according to conventional autobiographical standards, its assertions that the author is a woman—a lady—who strongly desires God reveal exactly what the author means the reader to know about herself. Her insistence upon identifying herself through terms that only point the reader to God suggests that her “real” identity is irrelevant and, to the extent it might advance her own glory, counterproductive. Instead, the identifying markers Eliza provides point the reader towards God. Her presentation of womanhood demonstrates

²¹ In making this argument, I follow methodologies described by Marcy L. North who highlights anonymity’s “paratextual functionality—that is, its contribution to the conventions and textual frames that announce and justify a text’s production.” North, *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor Stuart England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 8. I also resist treating the anonymity as a field in and of itself. Jaime Goodrich discusses the pitfalls of identifying texts by their mode of authorship in the context of translation studies: “viewing translation as a field in and of itself poses problems due to the incoherence of translation as a sphere. . . . Michaela Wolf has offered a way past this problem by proposing the term ‘translation space’ in recognition of the fact that ‘the translation field or space is always situated *between* various fields, such as the literary field, academic field, political field and others.’ Wolf’s description of the interaction between translation and these fields is very helpful for understanding early modern religious translation since economic, religious, and political factors shaped this sphere and the functional habitus that existed within it.” Jaime Goodrich, *Faithful Translators: Authorship, Gender and Religion in Early Modern England* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2014), 10. Similar to translation, anonymity also often functions in the midst of several fields of interaction. Sometimes anonymity deliberately obscures an author’s boundaries in order to extend the text’s sphere of influence.

how she has been made new through Christ. Her anonymity prevents any readers' attempts to resurrect her old self.²²

In Galatians, Paul describes the finding of one's identity in Christ as a means of undoing cultural divisions. He asserts, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:28-29 KJV). Eliza's anonymity asserts her claim to this promise and the remediation of her gender proves it. *Eliza's Babes* provides fascinating insight into the way women's bodies signified, and the burden placed on the women acting as signs. Her engagement with the gendered framing of her desire and its fulfillment demonstrates the ways devotion slowly removes the barriers to a fully realized personhood in Christ. Her collection culminates with anticipation of the minimization of gender difference as a sign of the coming kingdom. Ultimately, Eliza's anonymous desire for God deprioritizes the question of whether or not Eliza was "really" a woman, whatever that might mean, in favour of exploring her gendered authorship as a deliberate construct through which to unlock a more free, ungendered mode of being.

²² My reading of Eliza's confession as an autobiographical account relies on scholarship by Brooke Conti who notes that research on autobiography "supports the current consensus that autobiography is not a genre at all, if by "genre" we mean a collection of works with meaningfully similar formal characteristics. Rather, autobiography is a device or tool that can be used for a variety of different ends; in the confession of faith, it operates as a forensic response to questions of religious identity or assurance." Conti, *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 12. As a helpful corollary, Patricia Pender describes self-effacement as a kind of self-formation in "From Self-Effacement to Sprezzatura: Modesty and Manipulation," in *Early Modern Women's Writing and the Rhetoric of Modesty* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 16-35.

For ease of use, I concur with the decision to address the author of *Eliza's Babes* as Eliza and refer to her with feminine pronouns because, whatever the author's gender orientation, the gendering of the speaker in *Eliza's Babes* demonstrates the author's desire for the reader to engage with the text as the product of a woman writer. Eliza's presentation of her text as "babes" manipulates standard Protestant theology to mitigate concerns about female devotional authorship. Her desire for God demonstrates his preauthorization of her devotion, but it also demonstrates the rehabilitation of her sexual desires through childbearing. Modelling herself on the Canticles's Beloved and its Marian fulfillment, Eliza demonstrates how Christ's grace moulds her desires to him and remediates feminine desire through his spiritual penetration. Children were considered a sign of a healthy marital relationship and proof of God's favour towards the women that bore them. Eliza's "babes" prove the intimacy of her relationship with Christ. *Eliza's Babes* also relies heavily on tropes borrowed from mothers' manuals in which women attempt to discharge their maternal duties to nurture virtue in their children through the production of text. Eliza draws on social norms governing a mother's duty to her children to further support her access to print. This rhetorical positioning allows her to assert her desire to publish as a devotional calling, a physical necessity, and a moral duty—all sustained by God. The writer of *Eliza's Babes* reads desire, devotion, and its affect from a woman's perspective and then rereads her body's health and her textual production through discussions of women's duty to reproduce faithful believers. Her text demonstrates the ways in which devotion satisfies women's desires, makes them

productive in the worldly sense of the term, but ultimately, through imaginative release, removes them from those discourses altogether.

Specifically, this chapter demonstrate how, like many popular male contemporary writers of devotional poetry, Eliza engages the trope of poetry as scriptural echo and requires her readers to recognize that echo in her text as proof of her God-given desire to praise him. God's embrace of her desire provides her with the spiritual standing from which to push back on traditional prohibitions against women's unruliness, including its expression in writing. I then demonstrate how Eliza's submission to that desire allows her to reclaim from male poets empowered biblical models of femininity like that of the Beloved in Canticles and the Virgin Mary and emphasize the devoted mother's special access to spiritual fecundity. Eliza's insistence upon the immaculate conception of her desire to publish allows her to promote her text as a necessary response to Christ, the Word become Flesh, and an earthly manifestation of their union. Finally, through an exploration of her text as an adaptation of the mother's manual genre, I demonstrate how her presentation of her collection as "babes" reimagines the publication of her collection as a fulfillment of the mother's obligation to these God-given children which, again, signals her virtue. By positioning her collection at the intersection of devotional genres, theories of women's health, and a mother's duty, Eliza presents her *Babes* as a vector of divine revelation manifested in word. Such a figuration of the text insists that it may no longer be read as the fruit of the body of a woman (troubling) but as that of a believer (acceptable).

This rhetorical positioning of her text as a divine echo pushes back against readers' prohibitions against her writing. Eliza offers up her devotional poems as an instructive model for moulding oneself to God's desires, and her anonymity reinforces this aim. Being slowly remade into the image of God is the goal of all Christian devotion, but Eliza's crafting of her anonymous desire to shape both herself and her reader into his likeness is a uniquely successful means to accomplish this goal.²³ To be skeptical of her text is to be skeptical of God's freedom to distribute his grace as he wills. Rather, the reader must attempt to see both her and her text as God might see them and, through the Christian duty to image God, read her text in kind.

“To Those Unlike a Christian”: The Agency of Gender and Devotion

That Eliza is deeply invested in her readers' reception of her text is evident from the many ways her text anticipates criticism. The second paragraph of her address to the reader begins by imagining those “unlike a Christian” saying “I wrote them, for my owne glory” (57). Later she mimes another critic who grumbles “others may be as thankfull as shee, though they talk not so much of it” (58). And still later she muses to her babes, “some may say to you, unlesse you had been more curiously drest, or more finely shap'd,

²³ Nandra Perry notes how, in Lewis Bayly's *The Practice of Piety* (1613), “the body is a privileged locus of meaning not only because it is the primary sign and site of divine intervention for the individual believer...but also because it is the organizing metaphor for his or her assimilation to the divine nature and incorporation into the community of faith. In this scenario, sanctification plays out like a species of signification, or rather re-signification, in which the believer learns to read his or her sinful body and revise it into conformity with the divine image.” Eliza's text demonstrates a similar connection between the body's sanctification and its signification. Her re-signification of her body through its anonymous embodiment of biblically sanctioned feminine tropes handily demonstrates her sanctification. Nandra Perry, “Reading the Body Natural in *The Practice of Piety*,” in *Imitatio Christi: The Poetics of Piety in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 117.

your Mother might have kept you in obscurity” (58). Each of the criticisms she imagines—that she is self-seeking or too out-spoken, or that her poetry is clumsy and not fit for public expression—anticipates a gendered critique of her writing.²⁴ But Eliza counters their misogyny by reciting her spiritual resume: “I like a Christian, will tell them; I therefore sent them abroad; for such a strict union is there betwixt my deare God and mee, that his glory is mine, and mine is his” (57). And to those who grumble about her excessive thankfulness she vows to “Let them know that if they did rightly apprehend the infinite mercies of God to them, they could not be silent” (58). Eliza authorizes her text by locating it within the Christian tradition that assumed true faith was exemplified by a believer’s grateful response to God in praise.²⁵ Her candid acceptance of her text’s aesthetic shortcomings attempts to forestall her readers’ opprobrium by resisting the categories of critique they wish to subject her to: her poetic skill or lack thereof, simply

²⁴ Eliza seems to be employing some of the techniques familiarized by pamphlet culture in the framing of her defense, particularly in her use of the voices of her critics to frame her response. Pamphlet culture was well-established by the 1650s and the charges brought against women and the techniques through which they were responded to had permeated the culture. See Anna Bayman, “Voices in Early Seventeenth Century Pamphlet Literature,” in *Women and Writing, c. 1340-c. 1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, eds. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2010), 196-210. Semler discusses the contexts of Eliza’s writing in “The Protestant Birth Ethic.” See also Patricia Demers, “Penseroso Triptych.” For a demonstration of the kinds of critiques a woman writing might expect, see Barbara K. Lewalski, “Female Text, Male Reader Response: Contemporary Marginalia in Rachel Speght’s *A Mouzell for Melastomus*,” in Summers and Peabworth, *Representing Women*, 136-162. For a discussion of how other women negotiated the tensions inherent to women’s humility see Ivy Schweitzer, “Anne Bradstreet Wrestles with the Renaissance,” *Early American Literature* 23, no. 3 (1988): 291-312; and Danielle Clarke, “The Politics of Translation and Gender in the Countess of Pembroke’s ‘Antonie’,” *Translation and Literature* 6, no. 2 (1997): 149-166.

²⁵ Micheline White illuminates the “sacrifice of praise” as a trope of post-Reformation psalmody. This trend expressed the Reformation’s redirection of the penitential work of the Roman Catholic faith to a Protestant emphasis on the works of thanksgiving in response to grace. These discussions centred upon a reprioritization of God’s grace initiated by the theological reforms led by John Calvin and Martin Luther. As Eliza does here, most early modern Protestant devotional authors describe their poetry to some extent as responding to a duty to praise. White, “Dismantling Catholic Primers and Reforming Private Prayer: Anne Lock, Hezekiah’s Song and Psalm 50/51,” in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2016), 93-113.

put, has no relevance in the discussion of her text's value. The best she can say of her babes is "you want none of your limbs, and your cloaths are of rich materials" (58); yet she persists in writing, declaring "Go you must, to praise him, that gave you me" (58). According to Eliza, her text's shortcomings only highlight the greatness of God's mercies which have authorized and motivated her to write.

Eliza claims that passion for God's praise is *the* motivating force behind *Eliza's Babes*. After addressing the naysayers, Eliza urges her audience to "bestow your first affections on my Almighty Prince" (57). She explains, "I cannot be content, to be happy alone, I wish you all blessed too; nor can I smother up those great and infinite blessings, that I have received from him, with private thanks" (57). After explaining the numerous ways "that Great Prince of Heaven and Earth" (57-58) saved her from misery she exclaims,

And was so great a Prince, not ashamed to avow so great affection and love to mee, and shall I be ashamed to returne him publique thanks, for such infinite and publique favours? No: I will not, but with all my minde, heart, and soule, I blesse and praise my Almighty God, for so great benefits, bestowed on me, his unworthy servant. Methinks it is not enough for my selfe onely to doe it, but I must send out my *Babes*, to doe it with mee, and for me. (58)

Eliza subsumes her entire being, "minde, heart, and soule," to the praise and thanksgiving of her Saviour and not only that, but also sends out her Babes to do her praise, "with mee, and for me."²⁶ Her actions are entirely a thankful response to God's grace in her life.

²⁶ Some critics suggest that poetry like Eliza's, which authorizes itself by subjecting her feminine identity to God's, celebrates an internalization of the patriarchy; but scholarship by Margaret Ezell and others notes the importance of paying attention to these women's voices despite differences in convictions or we risk marginalizing the voices of early modern women ourselves. For example, Suzanne Trill, Kate Chedgzoy, and Melanie Osborne explain, "While [we] have no wish to underestimate the effect of social restrictions upon early modern women writers, it is our belief, with Ezell, that the current 'canon' of women's literature, even if inadvertently, replicates the problematics of the exclusion of women from the traditional,

In developing this line of thought, Eliza strongly relies on the early modern commonplace that God communicates himself to his people by seeding the desire for himself in believers' hearts. Deborah K. Shuger describes how both Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes, pinnacles of the early modern English faith tradition, assumed "faith presupposes love, grasps its object by loving it."²⁷ Andrewes insists "if we love him not, we know him not" and Shuger argues that the opposite—that we love him and therefore know him—also held true.²⁸ The logic of these commonplaces was bound together by the axiom of self-warranting love, that is, "the soul's love for Christ (a love possible because of his prior love for us) guarantees its fulfillment."²⁹ Eliza's introductory examination of

male canon...For perhaps the most crucial problem with the current construction of the 'female literary tradition' is the latent anxiety about whether or not 'our literary forebearers were 'good' feminists', which has led to many early women writers being dismissed as either 'ideologically unsound or being too acceptable to the male establishment' (Ezell)." Trill, Chedgzoy, Osborne, eds., *Lay By Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen: Writing Women in England, 1500-1700* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 2. See also Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

²⁷ Shuger, "Richard Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes, and the Boundaries of Reason," in *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 64.

²⁸ Andrewes, *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes* (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1854), 3:149. Quoted in Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 64.

²⁹ Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 64-65. See also, Ramie Targoff, "Reading Prayer: Spontaneity and Conformity," in *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 36-56. For many scholars, a renewed appreciation for desire and its affect has led to a re-examination of the body in early modern culture and, in turn, a reconsideration of the humerality of devotion. See Mary Floyd-Wilson, Gail Kern Paster, and Katherine Rowe, eds., *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Sean McDowell, "The View from the Interior: The New Body Scholarship in Renaissance/Early Modern Studies," *Literature Compass* 3, no. 4 (2006): 778-91; Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993); Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions on the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); and Michael Schoenfeldt, *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999). For a discussion of the psychosomatic and the soul, see Jennifer Clement, "The Art of Feeling in Seventeenth Century English Sermons," *English Studies* 98, no. 7 (2017): 675-88; and Kimberley Anne Coles, "The Matter of Belief in John Donne's Holy Sonnets," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no. 3 (2015): 899-931. Coles's article is particularly helpful for how she situates her discussion of Donne's soul in the field of new body studies.

her desire for God legitimates her devotional work because, according to the axiom of self-warranting love, her desire for God is possible only because he planted that desire within her first.

Eliza's opening poem, "Psalm 56. Vers. 10" (58-59), an epigrammatic meditation on Psalm 56:10, clarifies her position on poetry as a means to publicly acknowledge her gratitude for his love. The first four lines of the poem put the cited passage to verse. Psalm 56:10 in the King James Bible reads, "In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word," which Eliza rewrites into a personal meditation that emphasizes the joy to be found in experiencing God:

*I Glory in the word of God,
To praise it I accord.
With joy I will declare abroad,
The goodness of the Lord. (58-59, l. 1-4)*

The initial "I" of the first line of poetry sets Eliza's quatrain off from the rest of the poem [Figure. 1]. The indentation of the large capital causes the six-line verse that follows to have the appearance of standing on its own. The content of the sestet reinforces its difference from the quatrain by shifting focus from the speaker's celebration of her calling to its defense. In the sestet, Eliza anticipates naysayers and responds,

*All you that goodness doe disdain,
Goe; read not here:
And if you doe; I tell you plaine,
I doe not care.
For why? above your reach my soule is plac't
And your odd words shall not my minde distaste. (59, l. 5-10)*

In the psalm versification, the lines run in an eight syllable, six syllable pattern but, in the second verse, Eliza cuts the second line to 4 syllables, as if she is literally cutting short

her detractors' words. The spondaic rhythm of "Goe; read" (l. 6) also sharply interrupts the otherwise smooth regularity of her poem's iambic rhythm. After dismissing her detractors, she draws her readers' focus back to her calling by returning to an iambic rhythm in a pentameter couplet. The final couplet reiterates the placement of her soul "above your reach" and chastises the reader for the ineffectiveness of their "odd words." "Odd words" might flow well as an iambic foot, but the half-rhyme of "odd" and "word" also suggests a spondaic rhythm. The spondaic rhythm interrupts the poetic flow and highlights Eliza's concern for the imperfect use of one's literary skill.

The lines of prose Eliza appends to her poem elaborate on her concern that readers might think she affects a love for the divine to showcase her poetic skill. She assures the reader, "And when you read these lines, mistake not a Divine affection, for a Poeticall fancy; for I affect not to express my fancy, but I would have my fancy express my affection" (59). In Eliza's text, the transition to prose frequently signals an emphatic response that she incorporates as a circumspect reflection on the more immediate issues her poetry addresses. Her series of full-length prose meditations, which she appends to her collection of poetry, deploys a similar strategy. Here, the prose response to her verses reiterates that her poetry serves the primary purpose of showcasing her love for the Lord. With what seems like artlessness, Eliza insists her only motivation is the praise of God.

Nevertheless, by claiming her text reflects God's revelation in her heart, Eliza situates herself within a poetic tradition, even as she resists an aesthetic critique of her text. By dictating the relationship between "divine affection" and "poeticall fancy," Eliza demonstrates a concern for how her own interaction with the devotional tradition impacts

the display of her affections and situates her text within the poetic traditions of George Herbert and *The Temple*'s regeneration of the poetic genre by way of devotional meditation and the contemplative tradition. In *Halelviah* (1641), George Wither, with whose work Eliza demonstrates some familiarity, describes this kind of poetry as one that “delivers commodious Truths, and things Really necessary, in as plain, and in as universall tearmes, as it can possibly devise” by imitating the examples provided by the Prophets, Songs and Hymns celebrated in the Christian tradition.³⁰ Wither includes himself in a line of poets such as “Mr. Sandys, Mr. Harbert, Mr. Quarles, and some others” who have recently attempted to redeem poetry from its profanation “by tuning their Muses to divine Strains, and by employing them in their proper work.”³¹ Wither's reference to poetry that tunes the Muses to divine strains echoes a description of poetry provided by Francis Quarles in *Emblemes*.³² In the prefatory materials of his book, Quarles describes his talent as a theorbo, a large lute, and his poetry as a “grave Strayne.”³³ In the opening emblem of his book, Quarles rouses his soul to tune its music to higher strains:

Skrue up the heightned pegs
Of thy Sublime Theorboe foure notes higher,
And higher yet....

³⁰ Wither, *Halelviah* (London, 1641), A9r. All references are to this edition. See Semler's discussion of the overlap between Eliza and Wither's texts in “Who is the Mother of *Eliza's Babes* (1652)?” For a discussion of the influence of biblical genres on early modern poetics, see Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

³¹ Wither, A11r.

³² Wither claims Quarles as a contemporary in *Halelviah* and the literary tradition also frequently treats them as contemporaries within the same emblematic devotional tradition. See Arthur H. Nethercot, “The Literary Legend of Francis Quarles,” *Modern Philology* 20, no. 3 (1923): 225-40.

³³ Quarles, *Emblemes* (London, 1635), A2r.

Invoke no Muse; Let heav'n be thy *Apollo*.³⁴

Of course, tuning here understands harmony in terms of the Greek notion of “relative proportion, of an order that consists in the ratios of quantities to each other, rather than of a notion of blending that depends on the *simultaneous* effects of separate or even warring elements.”³⁵ Quarles alludes to this kind of relationality when he defends his emblems as “*Hieroglyphicks*” (A3r) that mirror the natural emblems of creation: “Before knowledge of letters, GOD was knowne by *Hieroglyphicks*; And, indeed, what are the Heavens, the Earth, nay every Creature, but *Hieroglyphicks* and *Emblemes* of His Glory?”³⁶ Quarles suggests his artistic combination of image and meaning mirrors the kind of natural revelation God employs in creation.³⁷

Early modern devotional texts also encouraged readers to develop a proper sense of relative proportion to accurately interpret their poetry. Barbara Lewalski suggests Protestant writers drew their aesthetic from scripture, relating the wit of their emblems to God not themselves.³⁸ Thus what Jeremy Schildt calls “the skills of biblical devotion” were in high demand as well:

Reading the Bible was a skill to be inculcated and readers needed (and demanded) to be equipped with the necessary tools for making sense of God’s Word in their lives. Here, biblical paratext and the pages of advice literature served not only to

³⁴ Quarles, 1, l. 2-4, 7.

³⁵ John Hollander, *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 27.

³⁶ Quarles, *Emblemes*, A3r.

³⁷ See Michael Bath, *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture* (London: Longman, 1994); and Jantina Ellens, “‘Skruue up the Heightened Pegs of Thy Sublime Theorboe’: Tuning the Senses in Quarles’s Emblemes (1635),” *Emblematika: Essays in Word and Image* 1 (2017): 111-39.

³⁸ See Barbara K. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1979).

assist and encourage but also circumscribe and readers were taught to read the Bible in a particular way.³⁹

The idea that biblical reading must also be circumscribed echoed in the Protestant reformation of the liturgy, as well. Ramie Targoff attributes the rebirth of the religious lyric in the seventeenth century to the meditative priorities introduced by the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549):

When the two central principles that governed the texts of the Book of Common Prayer—the intertwining of the singular I and the collective we, and the absolute preference for formalized over spontaneous voice—are conjoined in the early 1600s with a belief in the liturgical power of eloquent verse, the possibility for a new form of poetry is released into the world.⁴⁰

As Targoff's study demonstrates, contrary to our received beliefs about the private nature of early modern Protestant spirituality, early modern devotional texts were deeply concerned by possible heresies enacted during believers' private worship and responded with attempts to govern believers' speech through liturgical and, later, poetic interventions.

Appealing to poetry as a means through which to tune the reader to the spiritual in the ordinary, Quarles and Wither also participate in a tradition of occasional meditation that had grown in popularity in the seventeenth century.⁴¹ Though the natural world and one's natural perceptions were always suspect, authors of occasional meditations allowed

³⁹ Jeremy Schildt, "In my Private Reading of the Scriptures': Protestant Bible-Reading in England, circa 1580-1720," in *Private and Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2016), 194, 194.

⁴⁰ Targoff, *Common Prayer*, 87.

⁴¹ See Misako Matsuda, "Devotional Emblems and Protestant Meditation in Hamlet," *English Studies* 98, no. 6 (2017): 562-584; and Frank Livingstone Huntley, *Bishop Joseph Hall and Protestant Meditation in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study with the text of "Art of Divine Meditation" (1606) and "Occasional Meditation" (1633)* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1981).

that a believer's senses could be trained to perceive the spiritual even in the natural, but the line between spiritual and worldly perception could often be fine.⁴² Still, at the core of these interventions was the assumption that scriptural imitation was the highest form of praise. No poet was more thoughtful about the tension between worldly poetics and devotional commitments than George Herbert. Herbert was nobly born and had been trained for statesmanship, but turned to the clergy instead; nevertheless, his poetry betrays a strong awareness of what has been given up and a need to reckon with his calling to the clergy through wordplay. Poems like "The Quidditie," "Jordan" (I), and "Jordan" (II), and "A True Hymne" grapple with a poet's devotion. Jonathan Post writes,

The desire by Herbert to claim authorship is almost instinctive, and is one of the decisive trademarks of his being a poet in the early seventeenth century; but so too is Herbert's priestly admission that he is merely an agent enabling the circulation of language to honour the ultimate Creator.⁴³

Herbert's ultimate allegiance allows him to recognize the beauty in simplicity as well as in art. Indeed, Herbert often experiences God calling him to plain devotion, if not plain speaking. "Jordan" (II) rehearses the speaker's frenzied attempts to describe God, but in

⁴² For more on the seventeenth-century devotional lyric tradition see Eugene R. Cunnar and Jeffrey Johnson, eds., *Discovering and (Re)Covering the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2001); Roland Greene, "Sir Philip Sidney's Psalms, the Sixteenth-Century Psalter, and the Nature of Lyric," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 30, no. 1 (1990): 19-40; Jonathan F. S. Post, *English Lyric Poetry: The Early Seventeenth-Century* (London: Routledge, 1999); Sophie Read, *Eucharist and the Poetic Imagination in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013); John R. Roberts, ed., *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century English Religious Lyric* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994); Deborah Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988); and, of course, Barbara K. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*; and Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1962).

⁴³ Post, *English Lyric Poetry*, 151.

the final lines God calls him to recognize how his own ambition was costing him the experience of grace:

But while I bustled, I might heare a friend
Whisper, *How wide is all this long pretence!*
There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd:
*Copie out onely that, and save expense.*⁴⁴

Likewise, in Herbert's "A true Hymne," three words circle the speaker's head—"My Joy, My Life, My Crown" (576, l. 1)—but they seem to the speaker too cheap for good poetry. Through the movements of the verses, however, the speaker comes to realize that even easy words, sincerely spoken, "may take part / Among the best in art" (576, l. 7-8). In the final stanza, the speaker recognizes that God can make much of even his smallest words of devotion. Having given himself over to plain speaking, the speaker's deepest fear seems to burst out of him: "*O, could I love!*" (576, l. 20). God's one-word response—"Loved." (576, l. 20)—teaches the poet that "Although the verse be somewhat scant, / God doth supplie the want" (l. 17-18). These poems highlight a contrast between the poet's words and God's, where God's speech contains more power in a single word than the poet can achieve in his thousands. Herbert's poetry suspects overly demonstrative poetry of an artifice that moves the poet away from the powerful plain speech with which his God ministers to him. Thus Herbert's own carefully crafted plainness can be understood to echo God's artful speech to his people.

The echo becomes a significant trope in understanding Herbert's relation to God, but also later poets' relation to Herbert. A commendatory poem written by John Polwhele

⁴⁴ Hebert, "Jordan" (II), in *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), 95, l. 15-18. All references are to this edition.

describes Herbert as the architect of a Temple “stil echoinge his praise;”⁴⁵ but Cardell Goodman describes his relationship to Herbert as a sequence of echoes as well: “It shall bee honour enough for mee,” he wrote, “to bee accompted His [Herbert’s] Eccho, endeavouring to say something after him, though I reach no farther, than to the repetition of half words and sentences.”⁴⁶ Regarding the reverberation of echoes in Herbert’s poetry and that of his disciples, Wilcox writes,

This pattern of inspiration—Christ and the Bible as the models for Herbert, and Herbert the model for the later poets—reminds us that, in the early modern period, to create was indeed to copy. What mattered was to choose the right model and to copy the ideal, or the ‘love’ as Herbert puts it in ‘Jordan’ (II), behind the poetry.⁴⁷

The echoes of Herbert’s devotion in Eliza’s work inform our reading of her poetry. Eliza also devotes herself to plain-speaking, though with much less appreciation of the poetic craft than Herbert demonstrates. In “My Bill of Thanks to Mr. C” (96), the lines, “The heart, not phrase, God doth esteem, / To him my heart in them are seen” (96, l. 3-4) less artfully echo Herbert’s declaration in “A true Hymne”: “The fineness which a hymne or psalme affords, / Is, when the soul unto the lines accord” (576, l. 9-10).⁴⁸ By emphasizing these devotional tropes in her text, she situates herself in a tradition that prioritizes affect over aesthetic; but for Eliza, the reader’s imitation of God’s readership is even more

⁴⁵ John Polwhele, “On Mr Herberts Devine poeme the church,” Bodleian MS English poet f. 16, f. 11r, l. 3. Quoted in Wilcox, “The ‘Fineness’ of Devotional Poetry,” 73.

⁴⁶ Cardell Goodman, *Beauty in Raggs*, ed. R. J. Roberts (Reading: University of Reading, 1958), xiv. Quoted in Wilcox, 73.

⁴⁷ Wilcox, 73.

⁴⁸ For more on the similarities between Eliza’s text and Herbert, see Semler, “Creative Adoption in *Eliza’s Babes* (1652).”

important than her own imitation of God's authorship. Eliza belabours the importance of affection over aesthetic, asking,

What though it be not rarely penn'd?
'Tis the intention of my heart,
That I in it to you impart. (96, l. 20-22)

Eliza suggests her plain style makes the intentions of her heart clear and that this should be acceptable to readers because, in valuing "the heart, not phrase," they model God's perspective. By encouraging her readers to accept her poetry, like God has accepted her, Eliza's poetry extends the fundamental importance of the poetic echo from writing poetry to reading poetry.

Eliza emphasizes a new mode of reading in her devotional poetry because it is through scriptural reading that a new mode of devotional personhood opens up for her. Gary Kuchar has suggested that the rhetorical figure most crucial to early modern writers' fashioning of the *imago Dei* is hyperbole:

hyperbole—the figure of excess, exaggeration or overstatement—provides an answer to the question of how one should give expression to the profound sense of lack and thus the experience of unquenchable longing one feels before God. For these writers, being a properly desiring devotional subject means being an excessively, hyperbolically desiring subject.⁴⁹

But for women devotional writers, the devotional calling to excessive, hyperbolic desire conflicts with their social role. Eliza's modesty about her writing demonstrates her continued awareness of the stigma held by readers against women writing. As a proper English lady, she recognizes that conventions of female modesty conflict with

⁴⁹ Kuchar, *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2005), 20.

representations of devotionality and her text spends significant energies parsing her negotiation of these conflicting representations of female desire. Eliza follows “Psalm 56. Vers. 10” with a series of poems beginning with “The Invocation” (59), “The Request” (59-60), and “The Answer” (60-61) and uses the ordering of the poems to narrate the revelation of her “Divine affection[s]” (59).⁵⁰

Eliza’s poems read as if she is trying to convince not only her readers, but also herself of the truth of her claims. “The Invocation” entreats the “Sacred Muse” (59, l. 1) to “make you a stay / Within the closet of my brest” (59, l. 2-3). Halfway through the poem she turns from addressing the Sacred Muse to addressing her own mind. “Aspire, aspire, my minde, aspire,” she writes, “From earthly things unto the higher. / Set not thy minde on base desires” (59, l. 9-11). The repetition of “aspire” in the middle of the poem punctuates her contemplation of the Sacred Muse. She attempts to reorient her desires towards heaven by concluding her brief allusion to base desires with a seven-line description of heaven’s attributes and her soul’s longing to escape this world “to that sweet place, / Where glory is” (59, l. 17-18). “The Request” (59-60), which follows

⁵⁰ Eliza’s ordering of these poems seems to be modelled on Herbert’s processional ordering of *The Temple*. According to Stanley Fish, Herbert’s ordering of *The Temple* combines both “surprise” and “strategy” in a catechetical structure that invites readers into a pre-programmed experience of the mysteries of faith:

The temporal experience of Herbert’s reader is a function of the poem’s spatial (that is, ordered) design, but that design is in turn the working out in time of a design that was made in eternity. The restlessness of individual poems is stabilized in the firm outlines of *The Temple*’s structure, but that structure is itself unstable and is left for its true author to finish, in the confidence that he has already finished it. The members of the Church Militant strive to raise themselves into a holy building, but that building already stand in the perfect body of that master-builder who is responsible for their very strivings.

This tension between the strategy of the speaker and the surprise of the reader, embedded in a Christian apocalyptic notion of the already/not yet of the kingdom ushered in by Christ, becomes an essential aspect of the devotional tradition spawned by Herbert’s text, a tradition that you will see that Eliza also participates in. See *The Living Temple: George Herbert and Catechizing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 169.

immediately after, pleads for assurance that her longing for heaven is not in vain: “Come Sweet Spirit expell my feare, / Assure me that thou hast a care / Of me, and of my giddy youth” (59, l. 1-3). She also asks for assurance that his Spirit will direct her to Truth and will protect her from harm. These poems highlight how Eliza grounds her devotion on the experience of a deficit that incites fear of insecurity and loss. Instead of wallowing in that loss, however, Eliza uses poetry to push back her feelings of despair. She draws strength from meditations on God’s promise that he has not left those he loves alone:

Then shall my spirit be at rest,
And with sweet thoughts my soule be bleste;
When that I know, thou lovest me,
And that my youth shall guided be,
By that Spirit. (60, l. 7-11)

Deborah Shuger identifies a circularity of despair and abandonment as a larger trend in English Reformation conceptions of desire. She notes that within seventeenth-century religious texts, “Faith is structured by deferment and contradiction,” but also notes, “the logic of deferment does not eddy out into a vortex of endless expectations but circles back on itself to declare what is deferred is also present.”⁵¹ “The Answer” (60-61)

⁵¹ Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 86. The eucharist is a particularly loaded example of how what is deferred becomes present again in the material and literary. Sophie Read describes how disagreements over the phrase “This is my body” in the context of Christ’s absent/present body and the communion loaf had significant metaphoric consequences, in addition to its theological impacts. Read, introduction to *Eucharist and the Poetic Imagination*, 1-39. For further discussion of how loss becomes constitutive in early modern literature, see Gary Kuchar, *The Poetry of Religious Sorrow in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008). The material significance of a metaphoric absent presence is particularly felt in our discussions of early modern women’s writing. Demers highlights the productiveness of “religious melancholy” in the works of Eliza, An Collins and Elizabeth Major: “As I read [these authors], the culture of violence and chaos they inhabited, where the fates of occlusion, neglect, and retirement had been assigned to them...the theological inculcation of guilt does not heighten feelings of neediness and powerlessness. Their melancholy is not passive; rather, it intensifies their anticipation of heaven.” *Women’s Writing in English*, 160, 161. Jennifer Summit’s discussion of the constitutive nature of loss in terms of women’s authorship is particularly enlightening:

The process by which the woman writer becomes an embodiment of loss is captured in my title, *Lost Property*, which is the British equivalent of the American term ‘lost and found.’ Where ‘lost

demonstrates this resolution through its assurance that the desire for God anticipates the experience of his affections. The poem begins,

His Spirit much thou dost desire,
His Spirit much he will inspire.
What thou desirest, that shall be,
Thou hast thy wishes granted thee. (60, l. 1-4)

Eliza acknowledges that though she might not feel God's presence, her desire for Him and her poetic response to that desire effect his presence. Eliza anticipates a gendered critique of her text and meets it by demonstrating how her devotion attunes herself to God. Her poetry's simple poetic style affiliates her with a poetic tradition patterned on scripture. By inviting her audience to read within her poetry the echoes of that tradition, her collection begins to formulate a new identity for herself predicated on the presentation of her responsive desire for God's love as a sign of his favour and an authorization of her praise.

Embodying a New Desire: Canticles and the Marian Muse

Eliza's devotional reading teaches her to re-imagine her desire as an echo of God's desires by reading herself into a narrative of divine affection towards women. Eliza's anonymity creates a blank slate on which she then re-writes her bodily experience

and found' suggests a narrative of loss and recovery similar to the Freudian narrative of *fort-da*—an object is lost and then is found again—'lost property' suggests a different narrative, not so much one of recovery as a process by which objects become designated and gain their identity as embodiments of loss. Loss, then, becomes their defining property, and the term 'lost property' turns them into palpable emblems of alienation. Likewise, this book argues that the woman writer in medieval and early modern England became a 'lost property' insofar as she was defined through her exteriority to literary tradition. But in the process, she gave shape to new models of writing and authorship that became foundational to English literary history.

Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 21.

into the figures of the Canticles' Beloved, the Virgin Mary, and the Nursing Mother of the Church, an epithet applied to Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, but that handily sums up the macrocosmic implications inherent to the early modern figuration of a mother's duty to her children.⁵²

Canticles, also referred to as the Song of Solomon and the Song of Songs, is an epithalamion written by Solomon to his beloved virgin bride. Early modern believers attempted to make sense of the text's highly eroticized content by interpreting the text as an analogical discussion of Christ's love for the church and/or a particular soul.⁵³ George Wither describes two main principles that governed the interpretation of the Canticles. First, the Canticles were to be "interpreted spiritually as a representation of 'the rauishing contentments of the *diuine Loue*.' Second, the reader must believe, '*that Iesus Christ is he, who in this Song professeth an intire affection, not onely to the whole Mysticall body of the faithfull, but euen to euery member of it in particular.*'"⁵⁴ Eliza's paraphrase of the second chapter of Canticles, "Canticles 2" (66), demonstrates this kind of interpretation. The second chapter of Canticles describes the Beloved's adoration of her lover. She

⁵² See "Relation of the Coronation of the King of Bohemia, etc., with the Ceremonies and Prayers," *Mercurius Gallo-Belgicus*, xiii, 97-104. Cologne, 1619. Quoted in Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 58. The event is also discussed by Catherine Gray, "The Zealous Mother: Dorothy Leigh and the Godly Family," in *Women Writers and Public Debate in 17th Century Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 61; and Valerie Wayne, "Advice for Women from Mothers and Patriarchs," 62.

⁵³ See Stanley Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden: The Tradition and Image in Seventeenth-Century Poetry* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966); Lissa Beauchamp, "Canticles' Rhetoric of the Eroticized Soul and the Inscribed Body in Renaissance English Poetry" (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2003). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I; and Noam Flinker, *The Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000).

⁵⁴ Wither, *Hymnes and Songs of the Church (1623) and The Psalmes of David (1632)* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), 32-33, 36-37 (Song 10), 42-43 (Song 13); *The Schollers Purgatory*, in *Miscellaneous Works*, vol. 1, esp. 48-58. Quoted in Semler, introduction to *Eliza's Babes*, 29.

describes how he invites her to come away with him into the fertile hills and revels in the feel of his embrace and the sound of his voice. The chapter ends with the Beloved's declaration "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (Song of Sol. 2:16 KJV). Eliza's paraphrase interprets this chapter as an invitation to find spiritual solace:

The Winter is past, the Summer is come, I will now solace my selfe in the
Vineyards of my beloved; for he will guide me here by his Counsell, and at length
receive me to his Glory. (66)

Her emphasis on his guiding counsel and her retreat to glory drives home her reading of this passage as a personalized message to believers that foreshadows their rapture into heaven.

Elsewhere in the text, Eliza embraces the eroticism of the Canticles. In "The Lover" (77-78), Eliza haughtily compares the traits of her lover to those of her friend's:

Come let us now to each discover
Who is our friend, and who our Lover,
What? art thou asham'd of thine,
I tell thee true, Ime not of mine. (77, l. 1-4)

She goes on to describe the many traits of her lover that please and satisfy her, including a comparison between her lover and the rose and lily, a comparison that mirrors descriptions of the lover in Canticles 2. Eliza describes his "pleasant haire" (78, l. 13), "faire sweet lovely face" (78, l. 14), and the arrows that shoot from his "pleasing eyes" (78, l. 15) to pierce her heart.⁵⁵ Again, George Wither's examination of how Canticles serves a believer's devotion illuminates Eliza's text. Stanley Stewart explains in his

⁵⁵ Comilang describes Eliza's response as a "slight blazon" in "Through the Closet," 84. For more on the blazon and the Song of Songs in women's devotional writing, see Sharon Achinstein, "Romance of the Spirit: Female Sexuality and Religious Desire in Early Modern England," *ELH* 69, no. 2 (2002): 413-38.

seminal examination of the role of the Song of Songs in early modern culture that Wither defended Canticles' eroticism as a proper means to stimulate readers' affections to God. Wither declares, "Such is the mercy of God, that hee taketh advantage, even of our naturall affections to beget in our soules an apprehension of his love, and of the mysteries, which tend to our true happinesse."⁵⁶ Stewart argues that, according to Wither, "'*divine Love*,' the true subject matter of the Song of Songs and whatever eroticism was to be found in the work, was the proper vehicle to reach man's highest faculty with truth."⁵⁷ When focused on Christ, Eliza suggests, desires accentuate the intensity of devotion. For example, in "The Dart" (75-76), Eliza fantasizes about being wounded by the "God of Love" (75, l. 2). She exclaims,

I'le dye for love
Of thee above,
Then should I bee
Made one with thee. (76, l. 9-12)

Death was a well-known euphemism for sexual climax in the seventeenth century, but here and throughout her poems' erotic meditations, Eliza substitutes poetic death for the climax that makes her one with her lover.⁵⁸ The final verse of the poem extends the four-syllable structure of the previous verses into an eight-syllable epitaph for the woman who died of love. Eliza writes,

By a bright beam, shot from above,
She did ascend to her great Love,
And was content of love to dye,

⁵⁶ Wither, "The Song of Songs," in *The Hymnes and Songs of the Church* (London, 1623), 31. Quoted in Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden*, 6.

⁵⁷ Stewart, 6.

⁵⁸ See also "The Sun Beams" (86) and "The Soules Agitation" (111).

Shot with a dart of Heavens bright eye. (76, l. 17-20)

Rehearsing her death allows her to relish her climactic release in anticipation of the penetration of the dart.⁵⁹ The change in the last verse's pace, from a hectic iambic dimeter to the more free-flowing tetrameter, performs that release. In *Sex before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England*, James M. Bromley and Will Stockton discuss how language carries out the act in early modern literature:

We maintain that admitting the element of indeterminacy within sex overcomes this impasse between readings oriented toward reception and those oriented toward intention. It also reorients the discussion about intentionality and definition by recasting sex as something *spoken* rather than merely spoken *about*. Linda Williams explains the crucial distinction in her book on sex in modern film: 'Speaking *about* sex presumes a stable object of investigation; *speaking sex* implies that the very speaking forms part of sex's discursive construction.' In its relationship to the material realities of bodies, sex only comes to be through speech, which is to say through language, and this language includes that of the texts under investigation as well as that used by the critic. Put another way, language does not simply make sex mean; it more simply makes sex.⁶⁰

The benefits of linguistic indeterminacy between meaning and making extend beyond sex. Devotional authors frequently employed this technique in their devotion so that language did not simply make "devotion" mean; it also more simply makes devotion. We see that in Eliza's writing, which not only speaks about devotion, but also speaks

⁵⁹ Gary Kuchar suggests in *Divine Subjection* that Donne's rhetorical fantasies in "Batter my Heart" become an expression of his loneliness and the reiteration of his painful attempts to break into a relationship with the divine Other. See my discussion of Kuchar and Donne in the introduction of this thesis. Eliza's repeated rehearsals of death display a similar impulse. See also Michael C. Schoenfeldt, "The Poetry of Supplication: Toward a Cultural Poetics of the Religious Lyric," in *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century English Religious Lyric*, ed. John R. Roberts (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 75-104.

⁶⁰ Will Stockton and James M. Bromley, "Introduction: Figuring Early Modern Sex," in *Sex Before Sex: Figuring the Act in Early Modern England*, eds. James M. Bromley and Will Stockton (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 7. See also, Linda Williams, *Screening Sex* (Durham: Duke UP, 2008), 10.

devotion. Here, Eliza combines these two fields of indeterminacy so that her devotional language makes sex, but in contrast to the threatening indeterminacy offered by earthly satisfaction, God's love constitutes her through his acts of love.⁶¹

Eliza's expression of her desires through the trope of the Beloved allows her to secure the reading of her anonymous poetic body as a signifier of heavenly desire over worldly affect. "The Lover" concludes with Eliza celebrating how the reciprocal love between herself and her Prince secures her soul in the next life. Her final verse boasts,

Into his glory hee'l take mee,
This doe I know, this shall you see
And now you know my loved friend,
My loves begun, it will not end. (78, l. 33-6)

By insisting that one of the greatest joys of this divine love is that "it will not end" (l.36), Eliza assumes the constitution of herself through her desire. Shuger highlights the idea that desire constitutes the early modern self in her discussion of Hooker's and Andrewes's participatory theologies. After introducing the concept of self-warranting love, in which desire for God is preceded by his love for the believer, Shuger discusses the religious subjectivity that this kind of approach constructs. She notes that the consequences of a theology of self-warranting love, "while never explicitly rejecting salvation by faith alone, [ends] up making faith equivalent to the desire to believe, the longing for holiness and obedience."⁶² This shift signals the crucial moment at which the

⁶¹ For a broader discussion of the intersection of meaning in sex and devotion see Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1986): 399-439; and Jonathan Gibson's discussion of "passion-oriented" penitent meditation in "Katherine Parr, Princess Elizabeth and the Crucified Christ," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing*, eds. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 33-50.

⁶² Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 83.

requirements of faith slip from the cognitive to the affective realm and the experience of the self becomes constituted through the experience of absence and longing, in other words, desire. Shuger concludes that English seventeenth-century religious orthodoxy experienced the pneumatic self “as desire rather than law.”⁶³

Recognizing that the early modern self was experienced as an affect not an object has radical implications for how we interpret representations of the self in early modern literature. Shuger notes how “[the pneumatic self] is permeable, hollow, not a ‘thing’ but an emptiness needing to be filled from without—a representation of the self evocative (to the contemporary reader, at least) of the female body.”⁶⁴ Male authors frequently figure their feminized self as a receptacle for their ego. Research on female sexuality and religious desire in women’s writing suggests, however, that the evocativeness of the female body as a figuration of the self was not lost on women either. Sharon Achinstein explores how women devotional writers often empower their writing by figuring themselves as receptacles for divine eroticism. She argues women devotional writers drew on the symmetries between heroic romance and the heroism of Christian fortitude to figure their devotion as the fulfilment of a divine heroic romance. Achinstein notes, “[the heroic romance genre] became deployed by a feminine devotional tradition precisely because it worked to accommodate erotic desires as agency.”⁶⁵ Women’s claim that their

⁶³ Shuger, 257.

⁶⁴ Shuger, 257. For more on early modern desire see Craig A. Berry and Heather Richardson Hayton, eds., *Translating Desire in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005); Judith Haber, *Desire and Dramatic Form in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009); and Robert Whalen, *Reading, Desire, and the Eucharist in Early Modern Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

⁶⁵ Achinstein, “Romance of the Spirit,” 435.

devotion was an erotic response to God's love provided them with both spiritual and generic authorization to publish that love.

Eliza demonstrates the understanding of herself as constituted by her desire in the extent to which she narrates herself as a receptacle for God's affections in order to sanction her active devotional response. In her meditation, "Upon the Temptation of the doubting of Heaven" (125-127), Eliza contemplates how a self constituted by law limits her joy. Exploring the origins of her doubt, Eliza wonders if "that pernicious enemy, seeks to perswade me that [the holy Writ] is a fancy of a studious braine, and writ to keep people in awe to human obedience" (126); but she reasons,

I will tell him to cease his labour: for if that which I beleeeve to be the holy word of God, be a fancy of any braine, it is so just and pleasing to my soul, that with all my power and might; I will endeavour to lead my life according to the direction of that exact and royall Law. (126)

She uses the force of the desire scripture enflames in her—its "pleasing" qualities—as the key evidence in her defence of her desire. She later continues,

Tempter goe! Reason and experience teacheth us to see, that likeness breeds love; our Souls, our minds (for such things there are) can never love nor delight in what is not; but our Souls affect eternall glory, then sure such a thing there is. (126)

Essentially, Eliza declares, "I desire, therefore I am;" but the fear of what her desire makes her to be and the fear of a misreading of her desire made easier by anonymity linger in moments of pessimism in her poetry.

The dark side of the self-constituting nature of desire was that unexamined desires might also lead one into temptation and consequent damnation—as Eliza's worries about "that pernicious enemy" (126) suggest. Women's desires were particularly threatening. In the meditation, "The Soules Agitation" (111-112), Eliza imagines how her competing

desires shape two competing personhoods within her. On the one hand she is a “creature of rare composition, one part of thine owne divine spirit, the other of earth purified, by thy heavenly art, and built up fit for a Temple for thy divine greatnesse to inhabite” (111), but on the other, she is a woman of “vile condition, in which by my too much yeelding to please my earthly companion ... have thereby made my self subject to all painfull diseases, yea to mortality, by my intemperance” (111).⁶⁶ In “Anguish” (60-61), Eliza reveals that she struggles to accept fully the comfort the axiom of self-warranting love extends because that comfort depends on the steadfastness of her desire. Eliza laments,

From this distraction, Lord my poor soul bring,
That still thy heavenly praises, I may sing. (60, l. 1-2)

She fears a decrease in her desire leaves her susceptible to worldly influences.

Eliza’s poetry reveals that she is particularly concerned by medical distractions.

Eliza links her distracted desires to a distemper or imbalance in her humours:

For this distemper doth my soul affright;
My Lord it takes from me, all my delight,
And pleasure that I had, in serving thee. (60, l. 3-5)

A distemper was often diagnosed when someone began to display volatile behaviours such as rampant sexuality, anger or despair because, according to the humoral model of the body still popular in the seventeenth century, outrageous behaviours were symptomatic of an imbalance of the four humours or tempers within the receptacle of the

⁶⁶ Like most early modern believers, Eliza reads Eve’s sin and its punishments onto her own feminized body. For exemplary depictions of the feminization of Original Sin and its punishments see Quarles, Emblem 1 in Book 1, *Emblemes*, 4-7; and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. See also, Theresa M. DiPasquale, *Refiguring the Sacred Feminine: The Poems of John Donne, Aemilia Lanyer, and John Milton* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2008).

body.⁶⁷ Women were thought to be particularly susceptible to ill humours because physicians diagnosed menstruation and lactation as a failure to efficiently process the humours, resulting in the leaking of the humours from the body.⁶⁸ In addition, these mental and physical ailments were thought to be rectified by adjustments to a woman's humours via the amendment of her menstrual cycle through sexual intercourse. Because women's humours were thought to be regulated through sexual intercourse, virgins were thought to be particularly endangered by their humours.⁶⁹ By linking the characteristics of women's sexuality to their humours, the Galenic system laid a pallor of illness over women's expressions of their sexual desire. Physicians argued that the leaking of humours proved the weakness of the female vessel. The frequent irregularities common to a woman's cycle only confirmed the weakness of the female condition and the fickleness of her sexual desires. Demonstrating the complementary nature of religion to physiology in the early modern period, William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament into English in 1526 references a husband's duty to honour his wife as the

⁶⁷ See Schoenfeldt, "Bodies of Rule: Embodiment and Interiority in Early Modern England," in *Bodies and Selves*, 1-39.

⁶⁸ Jean Marie Lutes examines Helkiah Crooke's discussion of the female body in *Microcosmographia* (1615). She notes that Crooke strongly endorsed the Hippocratic dictum, "that the wombs of women are causes of all disease." About a section Crooke entitled "Of the wonderfull consent betweene the wombe, and almost all the parts of women's bodies," Lutes notes "Crooke blames the womb for the failure of almost every organ in a woman's body: 'The wombe being affected there follow manifest signs of distemper in all parts of the body, as the Brayne, the Heart, the Liver, and Kidneyes, the Bladder, the Gutes, the Sharebones.'" Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia or a Description of a Body of a Man, Together with the Controversies Thereto Belonging* (London, 1615), 252. Quoted in Lutes, "Negotiating Theology and Gynecology: Anne Bradstreet's Representations of the Female Body," *Signs* 22, no. 2 (1997): 317. See also John Sadler's *The Sick Womans Private Looking-Glasse* (London, 1636).

⁶⁹ Speculation about Queen Elizabeth I's virginity was one particularly potent expression of these anxieties. See Kaara L. Peterson, "Elizabeth I's Virginity and the Body of Evidence: Jonson's Notorious Crux," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68 (2015): 840-71.

“weaker vessel.” The incorporation of this phrase into the King James translation of the Bible cemented its place in popular discourse.⁷⁰ Thus when in “Anguish,” Eliza fears her distractions and distempers leave her susceptible to “vaine folly” (61, l. 6) and “vaine pleasures” (l. 11) she expresses fear about her vulnerability as a desiring woman.

Eliza believes herself especially vulnerable to a passionate human relationship that draws her away from God. The prose meditation “The Temptation” (105-108) indicates Eliza began to experience distempers from a young age. She reveals that just when her peers began to indulge in “the vaine delights of this wicked world ... which others call pleasures” (105-106), she was struck by a “heavy dulness” (106) that seeped “into all the powers of thy soul & body, inforcing thee as it were to leave those earthly vanishes, because neither soul nor body could take delight in those things ... then in the height of this distemper wert thou my soul almost brought to the pit of despair” (106). Eliza’s reference to the deadening of her passions just as her peers gained maturity suggests she suffers from some form of feminine distemper, possibly even a virgin’s disease. The most frequent female sickness to afflict young women like Eliza was called green sickness or chlorosis. Green sickness was diagnosed in virgins who failed to menstruate.⁷¹ Though several remedies could be prescribed, physicians believed sexual intercourse “to be the most effective cure as it would open up the veins of the womb,

⁷⁰ See Anthony Fletcher’s discussion of this phenomenon in “The Weaker Vessel,” in *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1995), 60-82.

⁷¹ According to Dawson, they believed that “when the menstrual flow was obstructed an excess of blood and seed would collect within the body and eventually putrefy.” Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender*, 49.

releasing the trapped menses and seed.”⁷² The resulting pregnancy signified women’s sexual health. Thus women’s reproductive organs were figured not only as empty space, but also a receptacle for female desires that would fester when left untended. Concerns about the consequences of leaving women’s desires to fester pressured young women into marriage because to avoid marriage would not only pull at the fabric of society, but also put their health in jeopardy.

Yet Eliza resists the earthly remedy to her distempers. She suggests that attempts to relieve distempers through passionate affairs only intensify the soul’s distraction. In a poem addressed “To a Lady unfaithfull” (90-91), Eliza accuses an acquaintance who has entered into a human relationship of committing adultery against God through the pursuit of a reckless sexuality. Eliza admonishes the woman for carousing with her “wanton Paramour” (90, l. 8). She charges that, “with his unlawfull love you pleas’d your selfe” (90, l. 9) and suggests that in giving in to earthly passion the woman contributes to her illness. Eliza encourages the “Lady unfaithful” to seek treatment by devoting herself to her “Prince” (90, l. 1), an obvious allusion to the Canticles’ Lover.⁷³ In fact, Eliza

⁷² Dawson, 50.

⁷³ Even when Eliza later learns that she might be given in marriage, she recoils, crying out to God “My Lord, hast thou given me away?” (“The Gift,” 92, l. 1). After struggling to understand God’s decision to engage her to another, Eliza concludes that because of her and her husband’s mutual devotion to Christ, God has granted her their marriage as a gift. In “Promise Performed” (93-94), Eliza exclaims

My Lord, thou hast perform’d most free
What in thy word thou promis’d me.
That if thy Kingdome first sought wee,
All things on earth should added bee. (93, l. 1-4)

Eliza interprets her marriage as further demonstration of God’s favour. She argues that, in response to her faithfulness, Christ provides her with an earthly relationship built upon their mutual satisfaction in Christ. Though she never says so explicitly, Eliza seems to cast her husband in the role of Joseph, a chaste and willing support to her Marian calling. In a poem tellingly titled “Not a Husband, though never so excelling in goodness to us, must detaine our desires from Heaven” (94), Eliza reminds her spouse “He lent me but awhile to you / And now I must bid you adieu” (94, l. 15-16). In “The Gift” (92), she insists, “My body

describes her distempers as God's preparation of her soul to love Him. "The Temptation" argues, "That heaviness was then a bitter pill to purge my Soul from the grosse humours of earthly love, that afterwards she may be made more fit and apt to receive the sweet blisse of thine everlasting love" (107).⁷⁴ The poem reinterprets the problem of the woman as a leaky vessel into a promise that she will be made a receptacle for his grace. Instead of driving her towards an earthly lover, Eliza believes her distempers drive her into the arms of Jesus. In her meditation "On Earthly Love" (109-110), Eliza exclaims, "My Lord! My soule is ravisht with the contemplation of thy heavenly love" (109). Christ's love delivers her from earthly passions by satisfying them with heavenly delights.

Eliza mitigates the threatening vulnerability of her worldly body through not only the sanctified subjectivity of desire's agency, but also the productivity divine desire generates. Her collection's title broadcasts how the divine satisfaction of her desires produces spiritual fruit in the form of poetic praise, otherwise known as her "babes." Characterizing her poems as children allows Eliza's poetry to meet the two-fold expectation her discussion of feminine devotion and desire invites. First, faithful Protestant believers bore a burden to demonstrate their faith through acts of thanksgiving. Second, cultural narratives insisted children were the natural product of a healthy marriage. Eliza combines these expectations by writing public thanksgivings she insists are babes born of Christ's desires seeded in her soul.

here he may retain, / My heart in heaven, with thee must reigne" (92, l. 11-12). Eliza reserves her enduring passion for her heavenly Lover.

⁷⁴ Interpretations of illness as a purgative of the soul were common. See my chapter on An Collins.

Eliza overcomes the stigma of being an unwed mother by aligning the conception of her poem-babes with the immaculate conception in the Virgin Mary. Like the Virgin Mary, Eliza miraculously falls pregnant outside of wedlock and, like Mary, anticipates social sanctions for her apparent waywardness. Traditionally, the angel's message of good news occurred during a period of quiet reflection, just as Eliza finds clarity after rising from her devotions and, following Mary's example, submits herself to God's will. Despite the threat of personal repercussions, Eliza welcomes her poem-babes into the world. The Marian trope would have been a natural progression from her description of her desire through the language of the Canticles because Mary's annunciation was believed to be an historical fulfillment of the ideal love between God and his church and/or the individual soul to which King Solomon gives expression in the Canticles. According to this tradition, the annunciation of Mary serves as a foretaste of the healing God promised when he cursed the serpent after the Fall and Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden. Mary's giving birth to the promised Messiah makes that future union of God and human possible.⁷⁵ Mary's pregnancy also demonstrates the fulfillment of the desires expressed in the voice of the Beloved in the Song of Songs.⁷⁶ Furthermore, both the bride and Mary respond to their desire for God's intercession with songs that glorify God and

⁷⁵ See Stewart, "The Enclosed Garden," in *The Enclosed Garden*, 31-59. See also Ruben Espinosa's discussion of the post-Reformation refiguration of Marian signification in *Masculinity and Marian Efficacy in Shakespeare's England* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁷⁶ See Stewart, "Time," in *The Enclosed Garden*, 97-149. Stewart writes "the Song of Songs was more than a history, for unlike most histories, this narrative described the trinity of past, present, and future. Moreover, it revealed the triune quality of every human event, which was seen as recapitulative, adumbrative, and immediate." *The Enclosed Garden*, 97.

foreshadow Christ's victory over all sin and injustice.⁷⁷ Thus the Marian bride serves as an image of the flourishing of a divine love that looks forward to Christ's apocalyptic return while also bearing witness to his grace-filled presence in the here and now.⁷⁸ Noam Flinker argues that the tradition of polysemous reading in the Canticles, "to which the writers of the English Renaissance seem to have had intuitive access," had been one of balance between various extremes of specific traditions:

Even though each specific text can often be situated at some specific point between the polarities of profane and holy, oral and written, carnal and allegorical, domestic and apocalyptic, present and future, the effect of the pattern has been to maintain the archetype in a fully polysemous, indeterminant form.⁷⁹

Eliza demonstrates the fruitfulness of this tradition in her use of it as a lens through which to read feminine desire. Through the Canticles, the experience of her dysfunctional feminine body becomes holy, allegorical, and apocalyptic, a present expression of divine affect and a textual fulfillment of promises for the future; nevertheless, one of the most significant consequences of the Renaissance appreciation for Canticles' polysemous and indeterminant form is the way this mode of reading in Canticles evolves into a mode of reading beyond Canticles. When Eliza extends the poetics of Canticles to her embodiment of the Virgin Mary's annunciation, she directs her readers to engage with her poems, her "babes," using this similar mode of polysemous indeterminate form.

⁷⁷ See Song of Sol. 6:2-3 and Mary's Song, often called the Magnificat, in Luke 1:46-55.

⁷⁸ For more on Marian theology in the early modern period see Victoria Brownlee, "Literal and Spiritual Births: Mary as Mother in Seventeenth-Century Women's Writing," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68 (2015): 1297-1326; Donna S. Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001); and Beth Kreitzer, *Reforming Mary: Changing Images of the Virgin Mary in Lutheran Sermons of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004).

⁷⁹ Flinker, *Song of Songs*, 30, 29-30.

Eliza accomplishes an apocalyptic restoration of her feminine desires by associating her womb with the empty grave at Easter. “On Easter Day” (69) opens with the image of Christ rising from “the bed of earth” (69, l. 2) and then imagines how the resurrection transforms the womb, like the grave, from a festering cavern to a nurturing vessel. Eliza laments how the mother’s womb transmits mortality to her offspring, even from Mary to Jesus: “From Mothers wombe thou cam’st to be / A Creature of Mortality” (69, l. 7-8); but she also celebrates how Christ’s resurrection remakes the grave into a purifying womb: “From womb of earth, thou rais’d shalt bee, / A creature like the Deity” (69, l. 9-10). Her poem exclaims,

In grave, thou needs fear no decay.
Those glorious beams hath made the earth,
A place to give thee a new birth. (69, l. 4-6)⁸⁰

For Eliza, Easter signifies everything her collection celebrates: Christ’s beam comes down, penetrates stricken earthen bodies, and remakes the womb, normally a site of death, into a vehicle of immortality. In response to such riches, Eliza insists she cannot help but to offer up her praise. Again, she turns to Marian imagery to figure her actions as the proper response of a God-honouring woman. Upon the release of her poem-babes into print, Eliza returns them to God by offering them as doves to the Lord (“The Virgin’s Offering,” 62, l. 7), which mimics Mary’s purification sacrifice at the temple following

⁸⁰ Eliza’s use of “thou” in this poem demonstrates the polysemous indeterminacy that reading through the Canticles invites. Her poem opens with a distance between her soul and/or the reader, “why dost thou sleep” (l.1) and Christ, “The bed of earth, could not him keep” (l. 2). But this distance contracts in her later discussion of the dual nature of “thou”: “From Mothers wombe thou cam’st to be / A Creature of Mortality; From wombe of earth, thou rais’d shalt bee, / A Creature like the Deity” (l. 7-10). The contraction of meaning in Eliza’s use of “thou” wonderfully evokes a multiplicity of references, including the hypostatic union of Christ, the soul as *imago Dei*, and readers’ responsibility to identify with the poetic “thou.”

Christ's birth.⁸¹ Once released into the world, the poems witness to God's divine love and anticipate the renewal that has been promised on the occasion of Christ's apocalyptic return. Eliza insists that directing one's desires towards God results in offspring that must then also be offered up as a sacrifice of praise to God.

Eliza's embodiment of the Marian muse allows her to experience sanctification as a resignification of feminine desire that remediates more traditional modes of representation. In the Reformed theological tradition, Mary's conception by the Holy Spirit consummates the divine impulse to bridge the distance between divine and the human, but in the literary tradition, meditation on the Marian trope serves to acknowledge the distance between the human and the divine. Eliza's embodiment of the Marian muse draws these two modes together in her experience of an absent presence that necessitates anonymity but privileges that sacrifice through God's responsiveness to her devotion. Her poetry is derived from the desire constituted by the distance between the divine and human that she experiences overwhelmingly in the inadequacies of being a woman and an author; yet her poetry, as a marker of her desire, also assures her that her heart has been seeded by God with his productive grace signified in a poetic responsiveness that remediates her embodied dysfunction. Her anonymity becomes an expression of her willingness to allow him to signify himself in her.

Eliza's interpolation of the Marian muse echoes Donne's blazon of the young Elizabeth Drury in *Anniversaries*, and criticism of these poems helps to illuminate Eliza's

⁸¹ See Luke 2:22. In addition to being offered as a sacrifice for purification, doves were also thought to be a sign of God's promise. God sent a dove as a sign to Noah after the Flood (Genesis 8) and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove at Jesus's baptism (Luke 3:22).

use of this trope. Terry G. Sherwood argues that, in Elizabeth Drury, “we find the quasi-divine god-likeness of the soul before the Fall; her death then participates in the Fall, and her return is a preservation. Donne’s praise of her celebrates the regenerate soul deserving the reward of heavenly bliss.”⁸² Sherwood argues that Donne develops his discussion of the stations of the soul in terms of the idea of woman, particularly through the idealized Virgin Mary. But Donne has faced significant criticism for his (mis)appropriation of the likeness of the Virgin Mary in his poems. Of particular concern to Donne’s contemporaries, like Jonson, as well as modern critics like Maureen Sabine, is Donne’s apparent deification of an anonymous girl, his placing of her in the role of the Virgin Mary, in his anatomy of the world.⁸³ Sherwood suggests such critiques miss Donne’s intention; rather, Donne identifies Drury with the Virgin Mary precisely because she serves as an absented model for a series of iconologies that hinge on the moment at which God re-enters the world through the conception of his one and only son. Donne multiplies the existential weight of Drury’s loss, not only because it serves as a reminder of the fickleness of human mortality (and the hope for resurrection), but also because Drury’s reverberant association with Mary reminds readers of the many ways their expectations remain unfulfilled in this world. Donne layers losses that are made more difficult because they echo other losses, yet simultaneously signal a promised resolution.⁸⁴

⁸² Terry G. Sherwood, *The Self in Early Modern Literature: For the Common Good* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2007), 159.

⁸³ Sherwood, 159.

⁸⁴ For a discussion of the poetic function of mimesis in Donne’s poems see, Theresa M. DiPasquale, “Sacramental Poetics and Right Reading in the *Anniversaries*,” in *Refiguring the Sacred Feminine*, 64-77;

Eliza accomplishes something similar through her anonymous presentation of herself as a virgin in her text. Her text identifies itself in its sub-title as *The Virgin's Offering* but reveals the many ways her virgin femininity contributes to her fallenness. She appears proud and overly impassioned, while her poetry seems ill-formed and unrefined. She is hardly an ideal. But following Shuger's model of religious despair, in which the logic of deferment "circles back on itself to declare what is deferred is also present," both Donne and Eliza make present what is deferred through their celebration of the printed text.⁸⁵ Donne addresses the critiques of his first *Anniversary* by making clear in his second that although "'poetry is only produced by a chaste muse' and the 'dead girl is his poetic source' she becomes the 'animating spirit' of the world."⁸⁶ Sherwood reads the girl's ability to propagate texts through her sexual purity as an obvious reference to the Virgin Mary's asexual procreation, and further, a shadowy template of the Holy Spirit's work in the soul.⁸⁷ Despite the seeming inter-relatedness of virginity, fertility, and feminine agency, Donne's poetry demonstrates how even such profuse praise of a

Robert C. Evans, "Lyric Grief in Donne and Jonson," in *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton*, eds. Margo Swiss and David A. Kent (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Press, 2002), 42-68; Cecilia Infante, "Donne's Incarnate Muse and His Claim to Poetic Control in 'Sapho to Philaenis,'" in Summers and Pebworth, *Representing Women*, 93-106; and Gary Kuchar, *Divine Subjection*.

⁸⁵ Shuger, *Habits of Thought*, 86.

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992), 112. Quoted in Sherwood, *The Self*, 161.

⁸⁷ Sherwood traces the series of parallels which link the Virgin Mary's body to the procreative work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's soul as they function in Donne's sermons: "The Son is generated and conceived eternally in the Father's mind; the Spirit proceeds eternally from both Father and Son. The Son is generated temporally by the Holy Ghost, first in Mary's womb, later in each believer's soul, where conception occurs." Sherwood, *The Self*, 162. This series of linkages highlights how ideas about a virgin's conception link the concept of the muse to the visitation of the Holy Spirit. Thus Donne's desire for the Holy Spirit is fulfilled by the consummation of the muse.

woman's productivity can negate her agency. Donne's feminist intensity, for example, is reduced by the fact that his muse, while providing a fecund environment for his poetry, is nearly anonymous, dead, and only re-enlivened by Donne's poetic recreation, which reduces Elizabeth Drury to an object of virtue rather than its agent. In contrast, Eliza, while also anonymous and frequently deferred, foregrounds her agency by re-embodiment the role of the Marian muse herself. Eliza removes the middleman. She becomes her own muse, visited by the Holy Spirit and conceiving poems in her mind that are the direct offspring of that visitation. In a telling contrast to earthly love, which perpetually seeks that which it desires without satisfaction, Eliza concludes that her spiritual delight demonstrates her fulfillment. Eliza describes her redemption as a withdrawal from "tormenting passion, and by the addition of thy heavenly love, which thou didst leave in the room thereof; thou repairedst in me the breaches that that unrulie passion had made" ("On Earthly Love" 110). Although Eliza's weakened womb continues to re-assert humanity's sin through the perpetuation of mortality, the power of Christ's pregnant grace, established through the Resurrection and now made at home in her through the impregnation of divine desire, promises to make her a vessel of his redemption, just as he redeems the earth's tomb.

The Macrocosmic Implications of a Mother's Duty

By figuring her poems as children, Eliza's collection demonstrates not only her spiritual fecundity, but also her humoral stability. If green sickness presaged a young woman's developing fecundity, pregnancy proved it. Children were believed to be the evidence of a productive marriage. According to Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford,

“childbirth within wedlock was a *rite de passage* in female adulthood.”⁸⁸ They report that “After marriage, in most cases, women conceived quickly and bore babies within ten months.”⁸⁹ Eliza suggests the existence of her poems proves the consummation of her marriage to Christ. Furthermore, childbearing was considered to be God’s stamp of approval on a woman. Mendelson and Crawford reveal that women who did not fall pregnant immediately began to worry, “for barrenness was seen as an unhappy female condition, perhaps even, as the Bible suggested, a punishment for sin.”⁹⁰ That Eliza produces her babes suggests she finds favour in God’s eyes. Not only that, Eliza interprets the production of her poem-babes as the ultimate reminder of Christ’s remediation of her sinful desires. As Mendelson and Crawford note, when Eve gave in to her false desires and ate of the tree in the centre of Eden, God cursed her saying “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children” (Gen. 3:16 KJV). God’s impregnation of Mary and her mythically painless birth signalled the eventual abatement of this curse. Eliza highlights the painlessness of her labour to prove that Christ’s love has lifted the curse on her womb, as well. In “To a Lady that bragg’d of her Children” (101-102), Eliza chides the lady, “Thine at their birth did pain thee bring, / When mine are born, I set and sing...Mine banish from me dreadfull care” (102, l. 5-6, 10). Unlike the anguish experienced by women impregnated by earthly men,

⁸⁸ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 153.

⁸⁹ Mendelson and Crawford, 149.

⁹⁰ Mendelson and Crawford, 149-150.

Eliza's divine pregnancy fills her with joy. The woman's curse, first felt by Eve upon her temptation, is lifted from Eliza through Christ's intercession.⁹¹

Of course, Eliza is not physically a mother, but she draws on the rhetorical tropes of women's duty in motherhood, expressed by the growing seventeenth-century genre of mother's manuals, to imagine an obligation to publish. Eliza's reconfiguration of spiritual tropes convinces her readers to see her not as the world does, as a barren woman, but as God has made her, as a heavenly mother. By inviting her readers into an imaginative space in which her poems prove the reproductive health he has granted her, she creates an expectation of maternal care. From an earthly perspective she is obligated to nurture that health by birthing her poems into the world through publication. But because he has redeemed her, she also retains a spiritual obligation to return her public gratitude to God. As the dual title of her text makes clear, *Eliza's Babes: Or the Virgins-Offering*, serves both these purposes. As babes, the collection of poems proves her claims to reproductive health. More importantly, as an offering of thanks, they acknowledge that the source of that health is Christ's redemption.

As the saying goes, a mother's work is never done, and Eliza's text acknowledges the ongoing burden borne by faithful mothers on this side of heaven. A popular reading

⁹¹ Several studies have examined subjectivity and the biological function of women's bodies in early modern women's texts. See Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies*; Cathy Hampton, "Unpicking Female Exemplarity; Or, the Usefulness of Body Stories: Reassessing Female Communal Identity in Two Early Modern French Texts," *Modern Language Review* 102, no. 2 (2007): 381-96; Donna J. Long, "'It is a lovely bonne,'" 248-72; Donna J. Long, "Maternal Elegies by Mary Carey, Lucy Hastings, Gertrude Thimelby and Alice Thornton" in *Speaking Grief*, eds. Margo Swiss and David Kent (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2002), 153-76; and Valerie Worth-Stylianou, "Telling Tales of Death in Childbirth: The Interface between Fiction and Medical Treatises in Early Modern France," *Women: A Culture Review* 17, no. 3 (2006): 325-40.

of Timothy 2:15 argued a mother was saved by the bearing of children and successfully raising them to faith, but women's perceived inferiority problematized their monopoly on childbearing and fostered a cultural discourse that became obsessed with monitoring the transmission of virtue via the mother's body.⁹² Mother's manuals, a genre of writing by women that became popular in the early seventeenth-century, responded to this concern by recording virtuous mothers' instructions to their children. The roots of the genre can be found in even earlier texts like Thomas More's "To Candidus: How to Choose a Wife" and Erasmus's *Puerpera*. In his sixteenth-century poem, More warns his pupil against the female body's ability to transmit moral flaws by advising his student that when he chooses a partner he must examine, first, the woman's mother and then his potential spouse. He writes,

Vt mater optimis
Sit culta moribus,
Cuius tenellula
Mores puellula
Insugat, exprimat.⁹³

In the *Yale Edition of The Complete Works of Thomas More*, the editors translate this sentence as "See to it that her mother is revered for the excellence of her character which is sucked in and expressed by her tender and impressionable little girl;"⁹⁴ but earlier

⁹² See Valerie A. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles, and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1986); Naomi M. Miller and Naomi Yavneh, *Maternal Measures: Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); and Victoria Sparey, "Identity-Formation and the Breastfeeding Mother in Renaissance Generative Discourses and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*," *Social History of Medicine* 25, no. 4 (2012): 777-94.

⁹³ Thomas More, "To Candidus: How to Choose a Wife," in *Complete Works* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1963), 3.2:184.

⁹⁴ More, 185.

translations emphasize the reference to breastfeeding in More's juxtaposition of "Insugat, exprimat." Arthur Cayley's 1808 translation glosses this sentence as,

First scrutinize her birth,
—Be sure her mothers mild:
Oft with her milk her worth
The mother gives her child.⁹⁵

Cayley's translation emphasizes the culpability of the maternal body in the production of feminine virtue in More's text. By insisting on the mother's role in the transmission of virtue from mother to daughter, More predicates the success of a domestic space on a woman's ability to reproduce her own virtue in the bodies of her children.⁹⁶

In 1606, Erasmus's sixteenth-century Latin colloquy, *Puerpera*, written upon a woman's lying in, was translated by William Burton as "A Dialogue of a Woman in Childe-bed," in his *Seven Dialogues both pithie and profitable*.⁹⁷ In the dialogue, Eutrapilus chastises Fabulla for putting her child to nurse, but Fabulla, citing common custom, questions his assertion that she causes her child harm. In response, Eutrapilus and Fabulla engage in a winding debate in which Eutrapilus instructs Fabulla on the nature of the soul and its relationship with the body. He attempts to convince her that putting a son to nurse risks his successful upbringing. In a section labelled "What the soule is to the body," Fabulla attempts to distract Eutrapilus by accusing him of mixing his metaphors by first arguing that the body is the soul's house and then its instrument.

⁹⁵ Thomas More, "To Candidus," in *Memoirs of Sir Thomas More*, ed. Arthur Cayley (London, 1808), 1-2:265.

⁹⁶ See the discussion of this poem in *A Companion to Thomas More*, eds. A. D. Cousins and Damian Grace (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2009), 80.

⁹⁷ Burton, "A Dialogue of a Woman in Childe-Bed," in *Seven Dialogues both pithie and profitable* [A translation of Erasmus's colloquy *Puerpera*] (London, 1606), L1r-O1v. All references are to this edition.

Instead of becoming flustered, Eutrapilus calmly instructs Fabulla on the history of the debates about the body and the soul and concludes by affirming his primary point, that “which soeuer of all these you list to call it, it will followe thereupon, that the actions of the minde are hindered by the affections of the body” (M3v). Eventually, Eutrapilus builds this assertion into a defense of the necessity of a mother breastfeeding her own children. He concludes,

The better part of mother-hood is the nursing of the tender babe. For it is not nursed onlie with milke, but also with the sweete scente or smell of the mothers bodie, it craveth the same liquour that it was familiarly acquainted withall before, which it sucked in the bodie, and whereby it grew together. And I am of this minde, that in children, wit is corrupted by the nature of the Milke which they sucke; euen as we see in plants and fruites, their nature is chaunged, and altered, euen by the moysture of the earth which doth nourish them. (N4r)

Fabulla resists her body’s duty to her children’s salvation, arguing that this puts undue pressure on the mother, but Eutrapilus fails to pity her and finally appeals to Paul’s injunction in 1 Timothy 2:15 that a mother is saved by the bearing of children she successfully raises up into faith. At this final point, Fabulla bursts out, “But this is not in the mothers power, that the children shall continue in faith and godliness” (O1r).

Eutrapilus agrees with her—“it may be so”—but continues to insist upon the mother’s duty: “but for all that, vigilant admonition is of such force, that Paul thinkes it to be laide to the mothers charge, if their children degenerate from godly course” (O1r). By growing a conversation about breastfeeding into a broader discussion of the relationship between

the body and the soul and the generation of virtue, Erasmus's colloquy demonstrates the potency of the mother's body in the theological/philosophical debates of his day.⁹⁸

In "The Invincible Souldier" (118-119), Eliza locates herself within a contemporary matrilineal tradition of Christ-followers from whom she has inherited her faith and with whom she identifies her own evangelistic enterprise. Specifically, Eliza gives thanks for her mother, "who knew thy service was perfect freedom" (118). She describes her mother's service as that of a soldier, one who

used her authority of love, to bring her children under the obedience of that Generall, whom she serv'd, and to make me love him in my child-hood, whom her experience had taught to love and admire; inforc'd me to read his Royall story, wherein I might see his victorious conquest, who was never foil'd." (118)

Her mother's love for God inspires Eliza's love for God, which Eliza then passes down to her poem-babes. In arguing that her text carries on a tradition of matrilineal evangelism, Eliza draws on a growing genre of books that negotiated a mother's duty to her children into a license to publish. Between the years 1604 and 1624, five separate women responded to their maternal duty by publishing their advice to their children. These texts formed an incredibly popular early seventeenth-century genre. Dorothy Leigh's, for example, went through twenty-three editions after its publication in 1616.⁹⁹ Of the five,

⁹⁸ Valerie Wayne summarizes this passage as the recruitment of mothers "in the ideological maintenance of their children through 'vigilant admonition,'" but I wonder if this description is too flippant a summary of the complex series of emotions that Eutrapilus's arguments evokes in *Fabulla*. By writing his treatise on breastfeeding as a two-part debate between a man and his newly delivered friend, Erasmus lends a rational, human voice to describe the burden that societal ideals, even those he supports, place on women and their bodies. In Erasmus's text, women are no longer allowed to be passive recipients of virtue; they must be active participants in the transmission of virtue. Furthermore, their bodies become the vehicle for this transmission. If they refuse this responsibility, they are seen to be shirking their God-given duty and denying his blessings to the coming generations. Wayne, "Advice for Women and Patriarchs," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge U, 1996), 61.

⁹⁹ For more on mother's manuals, see Sylvia Brown, ed., *Women's Writing in Stuart England: The Mother's Legacies of Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Joscelin, and Elizabeth Richardson* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999);

all but one were published posthumously, written by women anticipating their own deaths. The exception, Elizabeth Clinton's *The Countesse of Clinton's Nursery* (1622), may have been influenced by Erasmus's colloquy because she claims to write her treatise on breastfeeding to assuage her own guilt for putting all eighteen of her children to nurse.¹⁰⁰ In each of the remaining four texts—Elizabeth Grymston's *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives* (1604), Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing* (1616), M. R.'s *The Mothers Counsell* (1623), and Elizabeth Jocelin's *The Mothers Legacie* (1624)—the writer justifies publication as an alternative embodiment of her duty to instruct her children in preparation for her absence.¹⁰¹ They do not explicitly name their texts as substitutes for the maternal body, per se, but when a text is frequently characterized as the embodiment of the mother's virtue in a culture that believes the physical body to be a representation of one's character, it becomes clear that producing

Victoria Brownlee, "Literal and Spiritual Births"; Catharine Gray, "Feeding on the Seed of the Woman: Dorothy Leigh and the Figure of Maternal Dissent," *ELH* 68, no. 3 (2001): 563-92; Kristen Poole, "The Fittest Closet for All Goodness: Authorial Strategies of Jacobean Mothers' Manuals," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 35, no. 1 (1995): 69-88; Paul Salzman, *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006); Edith Snook, "Dorothy Leigh, the 'Laborious Bee,' and the Work of Literacy in Seventeenth-Century England" in *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2017), 57-82; Rachel Trubowitz, *Nation and Nurture in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012); and Valerie Wayne, "Advice for Women from Mothers and Patriarchs."

¹⁰⁰ Elizabeth Clinton, *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie* (London, 1622).

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Grymston, *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives* (London, 1604); Dorothy Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing* (London, 1616); M. R., *The Mothers Counsell* (London, 1623); and Elizabeth Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacie* (London, 1624). All references are to these editions. For a discussion of female exemplarity in commemorations after their deaths, see Femke Molekamp, "Seventeenth-Century Funeral Sermons and Exemplary Female Devotion: Gendered Spaces and Histories," *Renaissance and Reformation* 35, no. 1 (2012): 43-63; and Joan Larsen Klein, ed., *Daughters, Wives, and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992). For a discussion of absence as a feminine devotional trope, see Judith Scherer Herz, "Aemilia Lanyer and the Pathos of Literary History" in Summers and Peabworth, *Representing Women*, 121-35 and Summit, *Lost Property*; and for a theoretical treatment of the absent women in literature more generally, see Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

physical copy is just as important to the writerly project as the intellectual and spiritual direction offered within its pages.

The texts demonstrate their investment in the book as a replacement for the nurturing presence of the mother's bodily duty to her children in various ways. Grymeston suggests this reading when she describes her text as "the true portrature of thy mothers minde."¹⁰² Likewise, on the frontispiece of M.R.'s *The Mother's Counsell OR, Liue within Compasse*, which she dedicates to her two daughters, two women occupy the centre of a compass labelled "Modesty." The compass in which these women stand is arranged within a series of rings around the women that are broken into four quadrants. Radiating from the centre, the quadrants are labelled—"In Chastitie," "In Temperance," "In Beautie," and "In Humilitie"—and then the categories are broadly defined. The virtues' opposites—"Wantonnesse," "Madnesse," "Odiousnesse" and "Pride"—are labelled outside of the compass in the outermost corners of each quadrant, suggesting the central image figures the ideal. In the central image, the older woman proffers a book to her daughter. By illustrating the transmission of modesty as the sharing of a book, the frontispiece seems to invest the book with the nurturing qualities usually reserved for mothers' specifically physical interactions with their children.¹⁰³ Similarly, Elizabeth Jocelin explains that she writes because she was expecting her first child and fearing, with prescience, she would not survive its birth, she sought to provide her child with a

¹⁰² Grymeston, *Miscellanea*, A3v.

¹⁰³ For an exploration of the intertextual relationship between *A Mother Counsell* and grammar school boys' notebooks, see Elizabeth Ann Mackay, "Rhetorical Intertextualities of M. R.'s *The Mothers Counsell, or Live Within Compasse*," *Women Writer's Project: The Blog*, <https://wvp.northeastern.edu/blog/mothers-counsell/>

mother's presence through her writing instead. Her editor, Thomas Goad, opens her text lamenting that women are prevented from disposing of their temporal estate like men; but he places her in the role of an inheritance-giver by constructing her written advice as a spiritual inheritance more valuable than any "corruptible riches."¹⁰⁴ Jocelin's text was eventually brought to print by Thomas Goad, who describes it as a "deputed Mother for instruction, and for solace a twinne-like sister, issuing from the same Parent, and seeing the light about the same time."¹⁰⁵

But as Dorothy Leigh's opening address demonstrates, attempting to secure one's children's inheritance in text came with its own insecurities. Leigh admits that simply addressing her concerns about her children in writing assuaged her fear of death for a little while, "but as no contentment in the world continueth long, so sodainly there arose a new care in my minde, how this scroule should bee kept for my children: for they were too young to receive it, my selfe too old to keepe it."¹⁰⁶ Leigh's fears speak to the two-fold duty at stake in the production of the mother's manual. Not only does the text become a vessel for a mother's virtue, but it must also reproduce that virtue in the child-reader or risk the insubstantiation of the mother's virtue. Leigh secures her children's legacy by dedicating her text to Elizabeth Stuart who was named "a nursing mother of the [Protestant] Church" in a prayer at her coronation as the Queen of Bohemia.¹⁰⁷ In doing

¹⁰⁴ Goad, "The Approbation," in *The Mothers Legacie*, A3v.

¹⁰⁵ Goad, A6r. For more on Jocelin's relationship with Goad see Teresa Feroli, "'Infelix Simulacrum': The Rewriting of Loss in Elizabeth Jocelin's *The Mothers Legacie*," *ELH* 61, no. 1 (1994): 89-102. See also Sylvia Brown, ed., *Women's Writing in Stuart England*.

¹⁰⁶ Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing*, A3v.

¹⁰⁷ "Relation of the Coronation of the King of Bohemia, etc., with the Ceremonies and Prayers," *Mercurius Gallo-Belgicus*, xiii, 97-104. Cologne, 1619. Quoted in Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in*

so, she attempts to secure the transmission of her virtue to her children by asking the Queen to step in as a substitute mother to her children. The Queen's patronage of the text secures the text's longevity so it may, in turn, fulfil Leigh's duty to transmit virtue to her children. Likewise, Goad's "Approbation" points to the affective goal of the mother's manual. In Jocelin's case, he suggests its unfinished qualities evoke a compensatory readerly response: "Which composure because it commeth forth imperfect from the pen, doth the more expect to be supplied and made up by practice and execution."¹⁰⁸ Even Goad's own response to the text demonstrates the way cultural poetics of mother's manuals initiated an expectation of response from the reader.

But as with all other aspects of her exploration of the feminine persona, Eliza demonstrates how Christ's influence on the mother's manual begins to release it from its earthly, death-tainted constraints. Mother's manuals were typically written by women anticipating their deaths and published posthumously. To a certain extent, Eliza's anonymity replicates a mother's posthumous absence; but in "To my Doves" (62-63), Eliza reveals that she, too, intended to release her doves, that is, her poems, upon her death but realizes that "offer'd now, you sure must be, / A Sacrifice of thanks from mee" (63, l. 5-6). She continues,

When we are dead, we cannot give,
Our offering must be while we live.
Two Doves, no Phenix, you must be. (63, l. 7-9)

Jacobean England (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 58. The event is also discussed by Catherine Gray, "The Zealous Mother: Dorothy Leigh and the Godly Family," in *Women Writers and Public Debate in 17th Century Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 61; and Valerie Wayne, "Advice for Women from Mothers and Patriarchs," 62.

¹⁰⁸ Goad, "The Approbation," in *The Mothers Legacie*, A6r-v.

Eliza's rejection of the phoenix suggests that a woman's praise in death is not good enough. True worship requires a living sacrifice whose active, present thanksgiving provokes a potent response in the reader. Eliza expresses a similar sentiment in her address to the reader. Even after acknowledging her poems' short-comings, Eliza concludes, "I dare not say, I am loth to let you goe: Go you must, to praise him, that gave you me" (58). In spite of all the potential shortfalls of publishing, Eliza insists her thankfulness is so great it cannot be held back. Although Eliza does her best to address her readers' concerns about her entrance into print by using gendered tropes familiar to her audience to prove her health, her entrance into print through an imaginative framework demonstrates to readers that their own restrictions stem from the pursuit of earthly desires that are ultimately limiting and unnecessary. Instead, God's love has allowed her to reimagine her heart "now free, from all desire, / But what is kindled by heavens fire" ("To my Doves," 63, l. 13-4) and they must do the same. Eliza's anonymity maintains the semblance of a prerequisite absence that necessitates women's access to print, but unlike other mothers' virtuous advice, the access of Eliza's babes or doves to print is not predicated upon her death. Eliza's insistence upon God's redemption of her mortal body transforms her self-negation into a productive freedom that grants her and her text a living agency. Through the interchangeability of virgin and mother motifs in *Eliza's Babes: or The Virgin's Offering*, Eliza demonstrates how her anonymity allows her to personify multiple characters at once. The fluidity of her poetry's overlapping images deliberately obscures the author's boundaries and extends her sphere of influence.

Conclusion

The final three meditations of Eliza's collection invite the reader to consider the full extent of the freedoms that the earlier portions of her collection only hint at. The last three meditations of Eliza's collection, "The Royall Priesthood" (132-133), "The secure Pavillion" (133), and "A Question" (134) are set off from the rest of the collection by a horizontal line across the page between "The Royall Priesthood" and the preceding meditation. "The Royal Priesthood" begins,

Peace! Present now no more to me (to take my spirit from the height of felicity) that I am a creature of a weaker sex, a woman. For my God! If I must live after the example of thy blessed Apostle, I must live by faith, and faith makes things to come as present; and thou hast said by thy servant, that we shall be like thy blessed Son: then thou wilt make all thy people as Kings and Priests, Kings are men, and men are Kings; and Souls have no sex. (132-33)

When analyzing this meditation, it can be tempting to stop reading at the phrase "And Souls have no sex," but this is not nearly the end of Eliza's thought process. Eliza's assertion that souls have no sex serves as a pivot between her musings on the concepts of the public office of kingship and its impact on the inner state of one's soul. She continues,

The hidden man of the heart, makes us capable of being Kings; for I have heard it is that within makes the man; then are we by election capable of as great a dignity as any mortall man. (133)

If the "we" in that final line can be interpreted to mean "elect women" as a contrast to "any mortall man" (which I believe it can), then this passage becomes less a claim to a "spiritual inheritance...that genders God's children male," as Semler argues, than an

argument against those categories all together.¹⁰⁹ According to Eliza, kingship becomes an inner state determined by “the hidden man of the heart,” a hidden heart Eliza has bared wholly to her reader throughout her text.

Eliza’s reference to the dignity gained through her election brings the discussion back to her examination of her desires, which she has demonstrated to be proof of her election via Christ’s facilitation of those desires in her and her consequent renewal through his response to them. Her modification of devotional genres, scriptural tropes, and mother’s manuals to promote her entrance into public devotion all demonstrate how she lives a life that has been freed of the usual constraints. Her assertion echoes Romans 8, in which the apostle Paul describes how election leads to the glorification of believers through Christ’s intercession on their behalf. Paul declares that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2 KJV) and also,

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you ... For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Rom. 8:11, 14-17 KJV)

Eliza has already demonstrated the myriad ways the Spirit quickens her mortal body and, using that evidence, she now firmly states the significance of those assertions that free her from bondage and raise her to glory through her association with Christ. Romans 8,

¹⁰⁹ Semler, “The Protestant Birth Ethic,” 454.

which encourages the believer to leave behind the trappings of the flesh, also explains how she transforms her gendered expressions of desire into an ungendered proclamation of Christ's affirming grace. Instead, as Longfellow argues, "although she insists on her marriage to the 'Prince,' ultimately she does not legitimise her writing through her gender but rather in spite of it."¹¹⁰ Eliza concludes her meditation by again defining herself according to her obligation to praise. Imagining herself finally raised to heaven, she writes, "And as a Royall Priest must I be to thee; ever offering up the sweet incense of my praises to thy divine Majesty, for thy infinite mercies to me, thy unworthy servant" (133).

If her meditation on "The Royall Priest-hood" frees her from the constraints of gender, her penultimate meditation, "The secure Pavillion," frees her from concerns about others' loose talk, which has plagued her throughout her text. She resolves,

My God, Thy children need not now pray that those lips may be put to silence that speak grievous things against them; they have long since had a friend, and thou a servant, that sent up his petitions to thee for that, and if he had been ravisht with a present answer from thee, he cryes out; O how great is thy goodnesse, that thou hast laid up in store for them that fear thee, before the Sons of men, that would dishonour thy servants. (133)

Again, Eliza reiterates how Jesus mediates between his people and God so they are delivered from earthly sanctions that might afflict them, and she is comforted by the

¹¹⁰ Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing*, 141. In making this argument, Eliza highlights a fissure in the scholarship that frequently assumes women's religious convictions are inherently problematic. Suzanne Trill explains "While it is necessary to recognise that Christianity exerted a predominantly negative influence upon women's social position, it is also important that we do not erase all sense of female agency or assume that they were simply oppressed by religion." Suzanne Trill, "Women and the Construction of Femininity," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 32. See also Femke Molekamp, *Women and the Bible in the Early Modern England: Religious Reading and Writing* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013).

words of Psalm 31:19 in which the psalmist meditates on the goodness of the Lord promised to those who seek his refuge: “Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!” (Ps. 31:19 KJV). Eliza places the words of the psalmist in Jesus’s mouth to redress the hate-filled responses her text had previously elicited.

Finally, “The Question” reiterates Eliza’s desire to leave earth for heaven by wondering “What business on earth is worth detaining a Soul from Heaven, that is prepar’d with desire to come from earth, to live in heaven with thee” (134) but her questioning stance reinforces her resolve to put her trust in God’s greater plans. Thus we see that Eliza sources the primary determinant of her identity in her election, not her gender or her social standing. Specifically, she defines herself according to her resolve to defend that faith because of, but also in spite of, the pain it has caused her. Not only has her discussion of God’s grace elevated her above those other categories of value, but she even calls into question their relevance as categories of evaluation altogether.

Eliza’s re-envisioning of her identity through devotion impacts her relationship with her readers because, if they insist on evaluating her and her text according to her gender or outspokenness, they demonstrate their continued affinity with the flesh (“For they that after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5 KJV)); if they evaluate her text according to the biblical paradigm they have been called to throughout the text, they too might experience the Spirit’s fulfillment. Similar to Eliza’s re-evaluation of marriage, which she finds amenable so long as their love remains subservient to Christ’s will, Eliza asks her readers

to re-evaluate their relationship with her and her text as one that is also subservient to Christ by demonstrating their willingness to subject themselves to her vision of the world. As long as both parties remember that their relationship is cemented in Christ's will, it will remain God-glorifying. Readers' positive reactions to her text extend her collection's significance far beyond a personal expression of divine grace. By allowing Eliza's apocalyptic vision to re-orient readers into a similarly self-negating or, more accurately, Other-promoting posture, they themselves come to embody the full societal impact of the reading practice Eliza's text promotes.

Eliza's anonymity becomes the final guarantee of the renewed author-reader relationship her text pursues. If readers seek to criticize Eliza, they are prevented from doing so because they do not know who she is. Furthermore, even if they have a favourable disposition towards her, they are still prevented from falling back onto the old standard of evaluating her text. Instead, the absence created by her anonymity creates a desire for identification, a desire Eliza evokes as a foretaste of our desire for God. Likewise, she guides the reader's response, so our attempts to sate our desire to know her teach us instead to know God and, only through that knowledge, know her. Thus absenting herself from the text via anonymity serves as another affirmation that her earthly standing is, for the most part, irrelevant to her readers' experience of the text. Constance Furey argues that marginalized authors' authorization of their texts is based on a relational poetics that "depends on the relationships it can claim and create."¹¹¹ In this

¹¹¹ Constance M. Furey, *Poetic Relations: Intimacy and Faith in the English Reformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 23. My introduction expands on my understanding of relational poetics, but a definition of what is called intersubjectivity by Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield provides a helpful corollary to that discussion in the context of *Eliza's Babes*:

case, Eliza's explication of her exemplary relationship with Christ serves her attempts to authorize her text by conforming her readers' responses to her text according to his response to her. Eliza's anonymity becomes another means to reinforce her reader's dependence on God's perspective because there simply is none other available.

Her collection reiterates the relationality of her text through a final poem that concludes the collection as a whole. Obviously modelled after Herbert's "Easter Wings," Eliza's "Wings" (134) finally offers up her doves as the sacrifice she promises in her subtitle's reference to the virgin's offering. Shaped into two verses consisting of lines of decreasing length, the poem celebrates her "Doves" (134, l. 1) ability to fly "to that Invincible Rock" (134, l. 2) that keeps them secure from enemies. Hiding in the rock finally removes the last vestiges of Eliza's insecurity from her voice and she directs her doves that "you may without any gaul tell them, / You are plac'd beyond their envies reach" (134, l. 10-11). Though she invokes the remembrance of her gall in her dismissal of it, she also reinforces her distance from it by finally locating herself outside of the world. Whereas her other poems draw her back to earth, her final poem situates her firmly within God's grasp so she may conclude her collection with the assertion:

And with that blest Apostle may say
'Tis a small matter for me to be judg'd
By you, or of mans judgement
The Lord is Judge of all;
He judgeth me, and I

Intersubjectivity, then, implies that the narration of a life or a self can never be confined to a single, isolated subjecthood. Others are an integral part of consciousness, events and the production of a narrative. Or, put more abstractly, the narration of a self cannot be understood in isolation from an other it acknowledges, implicitly or explicitly, and with which it is in a constitutive relationship.

Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield, *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories, Methods* (London: Routledge, 2000), 4.

Am safe under
His powerfull Wings. (134, l. 12-18)

In the end, Eliza's text dismisses all but her most powerful relationship, that which is between herself and God. By locating her final "I" "safe under / His powerfull Wings" her text finally accomplishes what she longs for most—her complete disconnection from the taint of the world. Her poetry effects that which she longs for. By careful reading and response, Eliza believes herself to be loved by Christ and impregnated by the Holy Spirit, which remediates her sinful desires and produces spiritual fruit in her womb. She demonstrates the ways biblical reading makes her body better, not just metaphorically, but in reality as well.

Yet despite Eliza's insistence upon the affective relationality of a living sacrifice, the reader cannot help but experience the conclusion of her collection as a disappointment. Her introductory materials invite the reader into intimacies we feel her poetic clichés never fully explore. Even at the conclusion of extensive study, her collection prompts her readers to ask, as Semler does in his article title, "Who is the Mother of *Eliza's Babes*?" Instead of worrying over this inconsistency, it is helpful to recognize reader uneasiness as an affect the text invites. Remember, Eliza has utterly rejected worldly aesthetic criticism based on the author's grandness: *Eliza's Babes* requires that, to know its author fully, readers conform themselves to the standard set by her heavenly Father and then echo him in their reading of her. This reading practice is as difficult for modern readers as it was for Eliza's contemporaries because, as Herbert's poetry makes clear, devotional poetics require the reader to learn a humble and self-mortifying way of reading that often conflicts with social or critical training. But when

we practice this form of reading, the reader fills the absence left by Eliza's removal with their own affect. As in the mother's manuals she models, the reader completes the self-substantiating affect Eliza's poetics presumes. By allowing the seeds of her faith to bloom in our own hearts, we propagate the spiritual babies she foretells, not through our knowledge of her, but through the desire her absence instills within us.

CHAPTER 2: THE IMAGE OF THE MIND IN AN COLLINS'S *DIVINE SONGS AND MEDITACIONES* (1653)

Christian Reader,

I inform you, that by divine Providence, I have been restrained from bodily employments, suting with my disposicion, which enforced me to a retired Course of life; Wherein it pleased God to give me such inlargednesse of mind, and activity of spirit, so that this seeming desolate condicion, proved to me most delightfull: To be breif, I became affected to Poetry, insomuch that I proceeded to practise the same; and though the helps I had therein were small, yet the thing it self appeared unto me so amiable, as that it enflamed my faculties, to put forth themselvs, in a practise so pleasing.¹

In the opening paragraph of An Collins's *Divine Songs and Meditacions* (1653), quoted above, she reports she had been "restrained from bodily employments" and "enforced...to a retired Course of life" (1) that had left her bereft and heavily afflicted; yet her poems increasingly celebrate a vibrant life of the mind that reinvigorates her pain-dulled spirits. Her text strikes a contrast between bodily restraint and a poetry-emboldened spirit. In the excerpt above, the colon after "delightfull" (1) acts as a hinge between two descriptions of a single event that equates God's gracious influence in her mind with her discovery of poetry. The reading of poetry becomes the agent of God's will to enflame her faculties and rouse her mind and spirit. Her responsive production of poetry provides a new sensation upon which to predicate her mind's relationship with the world: it transforms a "seeming desolate condicion" (1) into one that proves "most delightfull" (1).

¹ An Collins, "To the Reader," in *Divine Songs and Meditacions*, ed. Sidney Gottlieb (Tempe: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1996), 1. All references are to this edition.

But as the second paragraph of her address to the reader makes clear, the true benefit of poetry is not found in “prophane Histories” (1), that is, fictional narratives; rather, “it was the manifestacion of Divine Truth, or rather the Truth it self, that reduced my mind to a peacefull temper, and spirituall calmnesse, taking up my thoughts for Theologicall employments” (1). Collins’s “Theologicall employments” (1) fueled the poetic reinvigoration of her mind. After explaining the benefits of the “manifestacion of Divine Truth” (1) in her mind, Collins draws her reader’s attention to the text at hand: “Witnesse hereof, this Discourse, Songs and Meditacions, following; which I have set forth (as I trust) for the benifit, and comfort of others” (1). She suggests that her own text seeks to extend the comforts she received from scripture to any other Christians who are, like her, “of disconsolat Spirits” (1). Her address ends by assuring her readers she keeps them in her prayers “to God through Jesus Christ; whose I am, and in him” (2). Her final statement locates both the source of her identity and her impulse towards relationality in Jesus.

In “The Discourse” (8-30) Collins expands on the relational impulses of her text. She details four reasons that move her to produce poetry. The first two concern her relationship with God and the second two her relationship with her readers. She argues that her chief aims are, first, to praise God (9, l. 29-35) and, second, not to squander the meagre talents he has bequeathed to her (9, l. 36-42). Her third aim is to induce her family to read scripture. Though they “do better works neglect” (9, l. 45), she reasons that their “willingnesse to heare what I could say” (9, l. 47) might draw them to read her poems and thereby “read the Scriptures touched in this book” (9, l. 49). Her fourth and

final aim addresses “any one, / Who may by accident hereafter find, / This” (9, l. 50-52).

Collins suggests that even readers with whom she has no relationship might receive comfort from the text:

...though to them the Auther bee unknown,
Yet seeing here, the image of her mind;
They may conjecture how she was inclin'd:
And further note, that God doth Grace bestow,
Vpon his servants, though hee keeps them low. (9, l. 52-56)

Although there may be no relation between Collins and her future readers, she reasons that she is revealed to readers through “the image of her mind” (9, l. 53). What they see “here” (9, l. 53) reveals her inclinations and, in that revelation, will comfort them. Collins insists that even reading strangers may be comforted by her because, through her text, they may know her.

Collins’s confidence in the relatability of the image of her mind has generated significant interest in her text, in large part because she has become an author unknown.²

² The sole extant copy of *Divine Songs and Meditations*, which now resides at the Huntington Library, was printed as an octavo edition by Richard Bishop in London (St. Peter’s, Paul’s Wharf) in 1653. We know very little about the book’s original owner(s). According to Sidney Gottlieb, there is a signature in a mid-seventeenth-century hand at the top of the page headed “To the Reader,” but only the first name “William” is clear. Gottlieb, introduction to *Divine Songs and Meditations*, xiv. Other signatures and notations indicate later owners and track the progress of the book through different collections. At some point before 1815, the book was rebound in calf extra and six blank filler leaves were added, which have since accumulated an assortment of notes by cataloguers, collectors, scribes and scholars. Stanley Stewart traces the sale of the book during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through the libraries of Thomas Park, Thomas Hill, Longman, James Midgeley, Sir Mark Masterman Sykes, Thomas Thorpe, and Richard Heber. During this time, several poems from the text were excerpted and included in anthologies of notable seventeenth-century verse; however, by the time S. Austin Allibone included reference to Anne Collins in his *Critical Dictionary of English Literature* (1899), the book had disappeared. In 1924, it was rediscovered when it was removed from the library at Britwell Court and sold by Sotheby to A. S. W. Rosenbach, who acted on behalf of Henry E. Huntington. W. Scott Howard argues that the key factors in the book’s sale history were “the volume’s cropping and polished calf rebinding; increasingly emphatic claims for the uniqueness of the 1653 text; declining sales prices; and subsequent rumours (beginning in 1834 with the first edition of Lowndes’s *Bibliographer’s Manual*) of the legendary 1658 *Divine Songs and Meditations*.” W. Scott Howard, Appendix A: “‘An dearest’ volume: Richard Bishop’s *Divine Songs and Meditations*,” in *An Collins and the Historical Imagination*, ed. W. Scott Howard (London: Routledge, 2016), 203.

Despite her conviction, we are unsure what she gestures to when she indicates that strangers might know her, “seeing here, the image of her mind” (9, l. 53). It can be tempting to read Collins’s reference to the “image of her mind” as an invitation to read her text for biographical clues. Scholars frequently attempt to sift Collins’s text for evidence of her earthly identity but attempts to identify her have been unsuccessful because the details she shares about her earthly self are subjective and spare.³ Yet Collins’s description of herself as an unknown author whose mind is yet knowable to her readers seems to anticipate her text’s construction of a meaningful identity despite biographical obscurity. This discrepancy illuminates a gap between the significance of the anonymity of Collins’s authorship and the anonymity of the voice she constructs in her text. Writing on the qualities of the female voice in early modern texts, Marcy L. North notes this gap as a common feature of feminized anonymity, arguing, “anonymity worked to generalize the female voice much more so than it did the male voice.... Anonymous ‘female authorship’ offered the poet a slightly broader spectrum of voices

Though Lowndes raised a spectre of a second edition of *Divine Songs and Meditations*, further proof of the second edition remains to be discovered. See also Sidney Gottlieb, introduction to *Divine Songs and Meditations*, vii-xix; and Stanley Stewart, “An Collins: Fiction or Artifact,” in Howard, *An Collins*, 23-38.

³ Stanley Stewart observes, “From the outset...An Collins’s work has been read autobiographically. The focus has been on her ‘mentall powers,’ on her ‘exercise,’ her ‘thoughts,’ her physical problems, and her spiritual quest.” Stewart, “An Collins: Fiction or Artifact,” 28. For examples of recent autobiographical readings of Collins’s text see the collection of essays in W. Scott Howard, ed., *An Collins and the Historical Imagination*; Kala Hirtle, “An Collins’ *Divine Songs and Meditations* as a Pain Narrative: Exploring the Relationship Between Early Modern Writing and Pain,” *Verso: An Undergraduate Journal of Literary Criticism* (2010), n.p., <https://ojs.library.dal.ca/verso/article/view/536>; Bronwen Price, “‘The image of her mind’: the self, dissent, and femininity in An Collins’s *Divine Songs and Meditations*,” *Women’s Writing* 9, no. 2 (2002): 249-266; and Sarah E. Skwire, “Women, Writers, Sufferers: Anne Conway and An Collins,” *Literature and Medicine* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 1-23.

and the opportunity to address a wider variety of topics unapologetically.”⁴ North encourages scholars to consider the female voice as separate from female authorship, particularly in the context of anonymity:

In light of anonymity’s contribution to the construction of the early modern female voice and the vulnerability of the female voice to stereotyping, it might prove necessary to begin expanding the canon by recognizing the female voice and female authorship as two different conventions that do not always work together. This approach would, I believe, lead to a greater understanding of both the anonymous voice and author, and it would encourage scholars to see anonymity not as the obstacle between the voice and the author but as a function of both conventions.⁵

While Collins’s actual anonymity is most likely a convention of female authorship, the anonymity she imagines for herself in the text engages anonymity as a desirable convention of her voice. Recognizing Collins’s anonymity as a convention of the female voice creates an opportunity to re-examine the ambition in the voice she embodies in her text. This chapter will explore the ambition in Collins’s anonymity by examining how the writing of an anonymous confession serves as an act of self-fashioning and community engagement that co-opts the marginality of the anonymous femininity she was expected to inhabit.

Collins’s voice often seems drowned out by her confessional interests. The confessional section of “The Discourse,” together with the first poem of her collection, the confessional “The Preface,” comprise nearly a third of the collection’s entire length.⁶

⁴ North, *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor Stuart England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 255.

⁵ North, 256.

⁶ 31 of the 96 pages of the original text.

Compared to the lyrical writing in her songs and meditations, these sections are highly didactic and borrow heavily from other confessional documents, particularly The Westminster Confession.⁷ It can be tempting to pit the revelatory style of her songs and meditations against the style of her confessional poems, as many critics have done. For example, Sidney Gottlieb, when describing the tone of Collins's collection, writes, "The poems in *Divine Songs and Meditations* are often stylistically and structurally interesting; some are prosaic and dully catechistical, but others are lyrical and dramatic."⁸ Modern critics often set the catechetical against the dramatic in their readings of Collins, but my first section illustrates how these patterns of criticism minimize the generative quality of Collins's catechism and her songs' dependence on that vitality for their dynamism.

Recent scholarship on early modern life writing invites us to reconsider the significance of Collins's seemingly dry and derivative catechetical poems. Autobiography theory recognizes that the act of narrating one's life may function as a means to fashion one's self rather than to describe an inherent identity. But where modern autobiography theory is shaped by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theories of the self that presuppose a self-oriented construction of identity, scholarship grounded in early modern concepts of the self more readily acknowledges the interdependencies between a

⁷ The Westminster Confession of Faith is a document written by 121 clergyman who assembled in 1643 at Westminster Abbey to write a reformed confession for the Church of England. The first edition of the confession was finally published in 1646. It has served as a foundational document for the Church of England ever since but was also adopted by a number of other sister or daughter denominations such as the Presbyterians and the Baptists. See Westminster Assembly, *The Humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines*, London, 1646; and "The Westminster Confession," in *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2003), 2:601-649. Mary Morrissey discusses how Collins's text selectively discloses her sources in "What An Collins Was Reading," *Women's Writing* 19, no. 4 (November 2012): 467-486.

⁸ Gottlieb, introduction to *Divine Songs and Meditations*, xiii.

self and its communities.⁹ Early modern life writing often appears to be lacking in autobiographical details, but research reveals that “those details are expressed, paradoxically, through other people's words and other people's lives.”¹⁰ By expressing selfhood in terms of the other, early modern life writing “locate[s] selfhood beyond subjective experience, in the experience of the other,” which results in a “field-based, contingent identity.”¹¹ This exploration of the contingency of subject and object grounds authorship in the relational: “instead of questions of public influence, private self-expression, familiarity, ownership, or social networks, this model of authorship depends on the relationships it can claim and create.”¹² The suggestion that early modern life writing is “a retrospective, mediated, intertextual process” encourages us to consider Collins’s anonymous confessional poems and the lyrics that accompany them as autobiographical excesses.¹³

I argue that the devotional fervour of Collins’s poetry demonstrates an abundance of self-expression that aims to counteract the lonely isolation of her illness. Collins describes her experience of illness as a kind of personal vacancy, a “desolate condition” (1) in which “*Being through weakness to the house confin’d, / My mentall powers*

⁹ See Nancy Selleck’s intervention in the scholarship of early modern selfhood in *The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008). See also Constance M. Furey, *Poetic Relations: Intimacy and Faith in the English Reformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017). A shift towards a more relational understanding of the modern self also seems to be underway. See Judith Butler’s *The Force of Non-Violence* (New York: Verso, 2020).

¹⁰ Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 5.

¹¹ Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom*, 1-2, 61.

¹² Furey, *Poetic Relations*, 23.

¹³ Smyth, *Autobiography*, 3.

seeming long to sleep" (3, l. 1-2). In my first chapter, I demonstrate how Eliza writes herself in relationship to her reader through her re-embodiment of the absent feminine muse. I demonstrate how Eliza's characterization of feminized devotional desire authorizes an anonymous persona by demonstrating how the absence created by that anonymity evokes a desire for God. Eliza wishes to be known only as an embodiment of that desire. Collins does not take this approach. Collins, afflicted by illness and isolation, wants to know her readers and be known by them but fears that what her feeble body signifies condemns her to further solitude; but Collins learns to wield her anonymity by using it to selectively disclose aspects of her character. Collins's selective disclosure attempts to present her in the best light. This chapter draws together scholarship on early modern confessions of faith and life writing to argue that Collins's articulation of the affect of her "Theologicall employments" (1) against the signification of her illness insists that her reader understand the doctrine she presents in her poems, especially "The Discourse," as the foundation of her authorial persona and the relationality she locates in "the image of her mind" (9, l. 53). The fervour of her poems reveals a desire to draw a community to herself through the faith-based relationality her confessions pursue.

Collins's confessions, as a demonstration of willful connection with others, must be considered as a demonstration of autobiographical agency. Studies on the intersection of life writing and confessions of faith in early modern texts highlight how, in confessions of faith, autobiography "operates as a forensic response to questions of

religious identity or assurance.”¹⁴ For example, in the political works of seventeenth-century male writers, confessions of faith seem to burst into a text at moments of deep uncertainty. Brooke Conti describes how John Milton, in *The Reason of Church-Government Urged against Prelaty* (1642),

sandwiches his brief admission to some feelings of self-doubt between two strong declarations of what he is “determin’d” to do, and he has hardly begun to consider the reasons for his uncertainty (is it his natural disposition? or something else?) before he dismisses the entire discussion with a shrugging “who can help it?”¹⁵

Conti concludes, “More than trying to convince his readers ... Milton is trying to convince himself.”¹⁶ Although Collins shares Milton’s fears about the signification of earthly affliction, her confession embraces the persuasiveness of orthodox theological statements. Her emphasis on confession as an echo of divine revelation locates her agency in her relationship with God to combat despair and uncertainty. Collins’s anonymous devotional identity becomes the means to reconfigure the relational capacities of herself and her text.

Collins’s confessional poetry authorizes itself in her relationship with God and, in my second section, I illustrate how the exercise of “theological employments” in her songs and meditations strengthens Collins’s mind against earthly afflictions that normally feed a spiral of despair. Her newfound strength enables her to produce a devotional text that becomes a store of devotional fervour. The materialization of God’s promises in her

¹⁴ Brooke Conti, *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 12.

¹⁵ Conti, 82-83.

¹⁶ Conti, 87.

past ability to produce a poetic response to God sustains her even during present and future periods of ongoing affliction. Her poems' assurances that God does not forsake his own relieve the mental burden of conscience that exacerbates physical afflictions. Collins's collection provides an alternate signification of God's present comfort against the signification of feelings of loneliness, despair, or abandonment attendant upon women afflicted by physical illness. The collection's embodiment of a confessional perspective provides her with physical proof of God's faithfulness through which to re-interpret present suffering and cultivate future hope.

Collins's anticipation of anonymity reinforces the retrospective, mediated, and intertextual identity she seeks to construct for herself. Her collection re-examines past experiences through a scriptural lens to both mitigate the claim that the earth might make on her and amplify the affect of God's presence in her legacy. In my third section, I demonstrate how, in celebrating the possibility her readers will recognize "the image of her mind" "though to them the Auther bee unknown," (9, l. 53, 52) and that, in seeing the image of her mind, "They may conjecture how she was inclin'd: / And further note, that God doth Grace bestow, / Vpon his servants, though hee keeps them low" (9, l. 54-56), Collins asserts that her text more than signifies herself to the reader because what it signifies is her total allegiance to God in whom her true identity rests. Instead of inviting her reader into a relationship predicated upon her earthly suffering, Collins invites her reader into a relationship predicated upon the inspiring relationality of mutual devotion to God.

Finally, I argue that Collins's anticipation of anonymous recognition, while taking into account the limitations of earthly communication, foreshadows the world's eventual remediation. Her suggestion that her poetic devotion illuminates the mind of an author unknown anticipates the day when she and her readers will be wholly recognizable to each other in the new heaven and the new earth. Collins argues that this assurance of eventual recognition and mutual understanding is the ultimate comfort available to believers who still inhabit the earth and should serve, therefore, to encourage them in the spiritual discipline for which her poems advocate. By understanding the ways Collins seeks to comfort her readers through a celebration of anonymity, we come to see how anonymity allows the author to cultivate a particular relationship with the reader, in this case predicated on the signification of her mind in her text instead of the signification of her failing body.

Confessional Autobiography in "The Discourse"

Scholars' misunderstanding of the qualities of the mind Collins alludes to in the opening sequences of "The Discourse" has confused our evaluation of the poem's autobiographical content. "The Discourse" is mainly a confessional poem—nearly three-quarters of the 102 stanzas are confessional in nature—but its introduction also contains a description of Collins's affliction with a vividness that frequently overshadows, at least for modern readers, the contents of the rest of the poem. After suggesting that strangers may see for themselves the image of her mind and in that image find comfort, Collins launches into a description of her discomforts:

Even in my Cradle did my Crosses breed,

And so grew up with me, unto this day,
Whereof variety of Cares proceed,
Which of my selfe, I never could alay,
Nor yet their multiplying brood destray,
For one distemper could no sooner dy,
But many others would his roome supply. (10, l. 57-63).

She notes how the summer's day, "though chearfull in it selfe, / Was wearisom, and tedious, unto me" (10, l. 71-72) and ruefully concludes "Now if the summers day, cause no delight, / How irksome think you was the winters night" (10, l. 76-77). Her descriptions invite her readers into the experience of her suffering, and yet Collins stops short of fully articulating her despair:

'Twere to no end, but altogether vain,
My several crosses namely to express,
To rub the scar would but encrease the pain,
And words of pittie would no grieffe release,
But rather aggravate my heaviness. (10, l. 78-82)

She suggests that recounting her causes for despair only enflames the hurt.

Despite or perhaps even because of Collins's resistance to the affect of her suffering and her apparent attempts to limit her recollections of it, scholars read Collins's invitation to see the image of her mind as an invitation to read her suffering autobiographically. In an attempt to "take An Collins—cautiously—at her word," Sarah Skwire examines Collins's text through the perspective of her chronic illness.¹⁷ Examining possible references to menstruation and infertility in "Another Song (The Winter of my infancy)" (55-57), Skwire concludes these references may be "intentional

¹⁷ Skwire, "Women, Writers, Sufferers," 12.

and perhaps autobiographical.”¹⁸ But I would suggest that restricting our reading of the autobiographical in *Divine Songs and Meditations* to Collins’s earthly reminiscences prioritizes her identification with an earthly identity Collins actively resists.

Psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity encourage us to imagine disclosures of pain as moments of extreme authenticity in which the unconscious breaks into the otherwise controlled or superficial environment of a text or self. Much of early scholarship on women’s writing, often motivated by Virginia Woolf’s insistence that anonymous must have been a woman, sought to situate women’s writing as a kind of canonical subconscious.¹⁹ Collins’s own increasing popularity coincided with the rise of second-wave feminism and the influence of that movement can be traced through the kinds of excerpts from Collins anthologized in the late twentieth century, as well as scholarly interactions with her text that placed a heavy emphasis on Collins’s “passive femininity.”²⁰ The combination of the exceptional quality and accessibility of *Kissing the Rod* and *Her Own Life* cemented their role as seminal texts in the study of early modern women’s writing and, in serving as a first point of contact for many readers, their presentation of the sources has played an especially significant role in shaping the

¹⁸ Skwire, 13.

¹⁹ See Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008). For a critique of this mindset, see Margaret Ezell, “A Tradition of Our Own: Writing Women’s Literary History in the Twentieth Century,” in *Writing Women’s Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), 14-38. See also Christine Luckyj, *‘A Moving Rhetorick’: Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

²⁰ Helen Wilcox, “An Collins,” in *In Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen*, eds. Elspeth Graham, Helen Hinds, Elaine Hobby, and Helen Wilcox (New York: Routledge, 1989), 56. Robert C. Evans meticulously catalogues how the successes and failures of accurately editing Collins’s text in editions published between the sixties and the nineties have impacted Collins’s reception. See Robert C. Evans, “The Collins Legacy: Representations by Scholars and Editors Since 1653,” in *An Collins and the Historical Imagination*, 171-90.

reception of these texts. *Kissing the Rod* focuses the reader's attention on the autobiographical, feminine vulnerability displayed in Collins's text.

Though Germaine Greer's introduction to An Collins explains that "Unable to participate in normal female employments she turned first to 'prophane Histories' and then to 'Theological employments' in the form of poetry," the selections chosen from *Divine Songs and Meditations* mask the full impact of the theological turn and didacticism in her poetry.²¹ For example, Greer included all but eight stanzas of "The Preface," but the stanzas she excluded are those that provide a discussion of the crucial theological context for Collins's otherwise personal defense of her text. Greer indicates the exclusion with an ellipsis at the end of the second stanza and through the change in line numbers at the left of the page but does not address the content of the material that has been omitted. Selections from "The Discourse," Collins's other catechetical poem, are not included at all. Instead, Greer's selection from the "The Preface" is followed directly by the full text of "Another Song (The Winter of my infancy)," one of the most arresting and frequently discussed poems in Collins's collection. When read within the whole of *Divine Songs and Meditations*, the emotive elements of "Another Song (The Winter of my infancy)" are tempered by the surrounding theological poems, but that context is lost in this anthology. Of course, every anthology will be limited by its editorial scope, and Greer notes that any such attempt at selection is "draconian and can

²¹ Germaine Greer, "An Collins," *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Women's Verse*, eds. Germaine Greer et al. (New York: Farrar Straus, 1988), 148.

be extremely distorting.”²² In the case of Collins, the editor’s decisions limit evidence of Collins’s conscious engagement with theological concerns.

The editors of *Her Own Life* demonstrate a similar bias towards the emotionality of women’s texts in their introduction to Collins. Helen Wilcox emphasizes Collins’s delight in poetry that she describes as “an almost passionate pleasure.”²³ Noting Collins’s use of garden imagery, she concludes that “The language of devotion, rich with Old Testament imagery of the female soul and the awaited ‘beloved,’ is given a particularly self-conscious and vivid treatment by this poet who writes from an avowedly passive femininity.”²⁴ As in *Kissing the Rod*, the Collins poems anthologized in *Her Own Life* emphasize the stereotypically feminine (i.e. emotionally charged) characteristics of her poems. The editors of *Her Own Life* include a greater quantity of selections from Collins’s collection, including a portion of “The Discourse,” but again they exclude the three-quarters of this poem that provide a systematic explication of her faith. The editors note this exclusion, but their framing of the remainder of the poem, which “examines the ‘grounds of true religion,’ those ‘sacred principles’ ... Collins ‘got by heart’ ... to discover ‘true delight,’” obscures the methodical nature of her engagement with those themes through the editors’ emphasis on her references to her “heart” and “true delight.”²⁵

²² Greer, *Kissing the Rod*, xvi.

²³ Wilcox, “An Collins,” 52.

²⁴ Wilcox, 53.

²⁵ Wilcox, 59.

Sidney Gottlieb's introduction to his 1996 edition of *Divine Songs and Meditations* provides a helpful corrective to this emphasis on Collins's emotive femininity through his discussion of Collins's purposefulness, and yet he too struggles to articulate what Collins's purposefulness aims towards. Gottlieb attributes Collins's emphasis on mind over matter as a means to oppose gendered criticism, suggesting "her constant emphasis on knowledge...both implicitly and explicitly contests the conventional pronouncements on women's limited intellectual capacity."²⁶ To a certain extent, this is true. Collins seems aware that her readers will perceive her as weak because of her gender and cultivation of a feminized voice in her text. She describes her soul using feminine pronouns and makes references to a body possibly afflicted by feminine illness. In "Another Song (The Winter of my infancy)" (55-57), she claims her mind is "Apt to produce a fruit most rare, / That is not common with every woman / That fruitfull are" (55-56, l. 28-30). But her reasons for writing and her pride in the knowledge she produces reach far beyond proving a woman's intellectual capacities.

Because little scholarship has been done on the explicit construction of Collins's textual identity aside from her gender, an over-determination of the influence of gender on her identity continues to skew our ability to read her text well; but as critical understanding of the diversity of women's voices grows, Collins scholarship has begun the work of accommodating disparate aspects of her character into our discussion of her text. For example, Mary Eleanor Norcliffe situates her scholarship as a potential "balancing point between the Wilcox view of Collins as representing female passivity

²⁶ Gottlieb, introduction to *Divine Songs and Meditations*, xii.

and Gottlieb's view of her as bold."²⁷ As Norcliffe explains, the problem with our reading of Collins is not necessarily that either Wilcox or Gottlieb is wrong, but that attempts to mediate "the active/passive paradox of the Christian's role as the product of an everlasting love that is realized through suffering" suppress how a generative "tension inherent in [Collins's] combination of love and obedience, always under the scrutiny of intelligence, informs and energizes her poetry."²⁸ Again, this assertion of the energy of Collins's poems raises the question of her collection's purposefulness that continues to plague Collins scholarship—"To what end does Collins write?"

Our ability to answer the question of Collins's purposiveness is complicated because we struggle to understand the genre of her text. Ann Hurley notes how the variety of Collins's lyrics make her collection resistant to classification:

An Collins is a philosophical, even didactic, poet, less interested in creating an arresting image or immediacy of narrative voice than in crafting a plain style suitable for the specific mix of exaltation and reflection that marks her verse. As such she scarcely stands out in the seventeenth century meditative tradition as we have been taught to describe it, defined by figures like Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne and derived, on the one hand, from a courtly, largely European and Catholic, tradition emphasizing the graphically vivid participation in heroic scenes like the Crucifixion and, on the other, from the Protestant tradition of the anguished confrontation of a single human soul with God. Neither criterion, the graphic nor the immediate, serves us well when responding to the poetry of a poet like Collins.²⁹

²⁷ Mary Eleanor Norcliffe, "Garden and Antigarden in the Song of Songs and *Divine Songs and Meditations*," in Howard, *An Collins*, 101.

²⁸ Norcliffe, 101.

²⁹ Ann Hurley, "An Collins: The Tradition of the Religious Lyric, Modified or Corrected?" in *Discovering and (Re)Covering the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*, eds. Eugene R. Cunnar and Jeffrey Johnson (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2001), 231.

Collins's disinterest in creating an "arresting image," whether in regard to her person or her genre, makes the reading of her text within familiar critical traditions difficult; yet Hurley cautions against using the ill-fitting nature of her poetry as evidence of the secondary or marginal status of Collins's verse. Instead, she advocates for taking Collins's poetry as an occasion for expanding our understanding of devotional genres to include "a sensitivity to the didactic voice and to the moods and methods that sustain it."³⁰ This expansion would most likely include those things that might position Collins in opposition to Herbert:

attention to doctrine as subject matter; attention to the speaker's spiritual state, unmediated by a persona; greater stress on the listeners as an intended, not inadvertent, audience with shared concerns; verse that is woven from departures from and returns to acknowledged, rather than digested, biblical sources; greater attention to subtle ranges of tone, especially in its modulations from reflection to exaltation and back again; and greater attention to the role of metrics in the creation of such variations in tone.³¹

Such attention to doctrine, the speaker's spiritual state, and an awareness of an intended listener's reception of the text illuminates how moments of fractured disclosure, like those we see in Collins's stilted descriptions of her suffering, might demonstrate her active suppression of individuality. This suppression of her individuality fosters reader reception of the text as a work in conformity to an established tradition. The performance of conformity might be rendered particularly necessary because of the author's gender, but North's scholarship on the artistic advantages of women voiced anonymously also

³⁰ Hurley, 232.

³¹ Hurley, 246-247. On the other hand, Helen Wilcox conducts a close reading of Collins's debt to the school of Herbert. See Helen Wilcox, "The 'Fineness' of Devotional Poetry: An Collins and the School of Herbert," in Howard, *An Collins*, 71-85.

suggests how the affectation of a female voice that is paradoxically both passive and active might serve as a foil to the powerful divine persona with which her poems attempt to associate her.³²

From this perspective, Collins's refusal to engage with her readers on the topic of her suffering or frailty, in favour of the devotionality with which she seeks to identify herself in her text, figures her narratives of suffering as the antithesis to her identity. Her refusal to wallow in her pain becomes an act of narrative control. This interpretation of fractured disclosure as an attempt at further narrative control corresponds to similar conclusions in narratology. Narratologists refer to an effect they call "the disnarrated": "to put it most generally, terms, phrases, and passages that consider what did not or does not take place ('this could've happened but didn't'; 'this didn't happen but could've')." ³³ Disnarrative "foregrounds ways of creating a situation or ordering an experience, [it] emphasizes the realities of representation as opposed to the representation of realities.... The disnarrated provides one of the important means for emphasizing tellability: this narrative is worth narrating because *it* could have been otherwise, because *it* usually is otherwise, because *it* was *not* otherwise."³⁴ Collins's discussion of despair and suffering that could have existed, did exist, but is not, because of her poetry, functions as the disnarrated. The disnarrated in Collins's text foregrounds her ability to order her

³² North writes, "As a trope of authorship, 'women's anonymity' was central to the function of early modern anonymity; it allowed authors to test the limits of voice and authenticity, to delineate transgressive and socially acceptable acts of authorship, and to explore and construct relationships between gender and authorship." North, *Anonymous*, 212.

³³ Gerald Prince, "The Disnarrated," *Style* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 3

³⁴ Prince, 5. For a discussion of disnarrative in early modern confessions of faith written by prominent seventeenth-century men see Brooke Conti, *Confessions of Faith*.

experience through poetry and highlights the reality of her poetry's representation of her mental landscape. It emphasizes the worthiness of her confessional poetry because it demonstrates the despair that could have been but is not.

Disnarrative in Collins's confessional poems highlights how Collins's confession employs conventions of anonymity to selectively disclose a confessional identity grounded in God's comforts. "The Discourse" opens with self-deprecation: Collins asks her reader to "Dain to survay her works that worthlesse seem" (8, l. 6) and insists that any errors the reader encounters should be considered as "want of Art, not true intent of mind" (8, l. 21). Then Collins suggests that when reading strangers see "the image of her mind,"

They may conjecture how she was inclin'd:
And further note, that God doth Grace bestow,
Vpon his servants, though hee keeps them low (9, l. 53-56)

In these opening stanzas, anonymity becomes a vector of heightened disclosure because, in the vacuum created by the obscuring of an authorial persona, proof of God's gracious comforts shines forth.

Collins's performative anonymity sets the stage for us to read other moments of nondisclosure as similarly significant. When Collins begins to quantify her suffering, "Even in my Cradle did my Crosses breed" (10, l. 57), she stops short in fear that remembering will "rub the scar" (10, l. 80). Instead, she provides a brief summary of her suffering:

So (to be briefe) I spent my infancy,
And part of freshest yeares, as hath been sayd
Partaking then of nothing cheerfully
Being through frailty apt to be affraid,

And likely still distempered or dismaid,
Through present sence of some calamity,
Or preconcept of future misery. (10-11, l. 85-91)

Despite her resistance to the effects of despair, her recollections of frailty end with the limp dactylic “misery” (11, l. 91), which threatens the regular rhythm of her poem’s iambic pentameter. The limited details Collins shares about her earthly suffering tantalize because their disclosure performs the barrier suffering erects between Collins and her readers. As Collins describes her suffering, she recalls how it erodes her ability to communicate effectively and she stops short of the self-annihilation she understands to be its product.

Instead of wallowing in self-pity, Collins turns once again to a recollection of God’s comforts:

But as the longest winter hath an end
So did this fruitlesse discontent expire,
And God in mercy some refreshing send,
whereby I learn’d his goodnesse to admire,
And also larger blessings to desire;
For those that once, have tasted grace indeed,
Will thirst for more, and crave it till they speed. (11, l. 92-98)

Unlike her descriptions of misery, the exposure to God’s goodness whets her appetite again: the pace of the stanza’s descriptions of God’s mercies trips lyrically, until the final long “e” sound in “speed” (11, l. 98) encourages the reader to draw out the vowel of the word so it seems to expand beyond the limits of the meter. In contrast to the heavy burden of despair, God’s mercies invite her to experience life again. They teach her to admire goodness. They incite desire. They create a “thirst for more” that provokes “speed” (11, l. 98) in the recipient. The revelation of God’s comforts becomes the means

to fortify herself against the destructive affect of her earthly body. Where Collins experiences the recollections of her earthly existence as a degradation of her sense of self, she experiences God's goodness in her soul through the revelation of his Truth as life-bringing. Acts of willful nondisclosure block the flow of earthly despair in favour of divine comfort.

The problem with the kind of relationality Collins offers her reader through her confession of faith is that readers may struggle to read the connectivity in confession. Fortunately, Collins anticipates this obstacle and addresses it as she continues through "The Discourse." She seems worried that she has too rapidly revealed her taste for grace and therefore threatened her readers' ability to fully relate to her comforts. Noting, "But that I may proceed Methodicall" (11, l. 99), Collins restores the systematic tone of her account with a return to a stolid iambic pentameter. Her desire to fastidiously demonstrate the steps by which she became enflamed to faith suggests the recollection of the revelations to her mind serves as a reminder for herself, but more importantly for any reader who hopes to follow in the footsteps of her transformation. As she notes at the beginning of "The Discourse," Collins writes to justify herself, but also to initiate anyone who reads her text into the comforting knowledge that has renewed her.

So Collins describes how, "When first the restlesse wanderings of my minde, / Began to settle" (11, l. 100-101), it found exercise in "ponder[ing] what Worth ech day, / The sence of Heareing should to it convey" (11, l. 104-105). She lived, however, "where profaneness did abound, / Where little goodnesse might be seen or heard" (11, l. 106-107) and so found those consolations to be "unsound" (11, l. 108). Yet "Haveing to godliness

no great regard” (11, l. 109) and prevented “through ignorance” from seeking “better exercise” (11, l. 111), she sought out “plesant histories” (11, l. 112). Collins admits she knew they were “fain’d” (11, l. 113) but reasoned that “although they were not true, / They were convenient being moralized” (11, l. 115-116). She cannot resist calling them “vanities” (11, l. 117) after the fact, however. Vanities are problematic, her stanzas go on to explain, because they cloud the soul’s sight of heaven. Thankfully, “the Sun of righteousness” (12, l. 124) eventually intervened.

The revelation of Christ’s righteousness to her mind becomes the impetus for Collins’s total transformation. Christ’s intervention awakens her mind and the revelation of divine understanding returns to her the use of her faculties:

[His] blessed beames my mind eradiates
And makes it sensible of pietie,
And so by consequence communicates
Celestiall health to ev’ry faculty:
Expeling palpable obscurity;
Which made my soule uncapable of grace,
Which now she much desires for to imbrace. (12, l. 127-33).

Collins rejects the former vanities with which she attempted to exercise her mind and turns instead to devotion:

If cross disgrace or dismall accident,
Indignity or loss, befalleth mee,
Immediatly distempers to prevent,
I cald to mind how all things orderd bee,
Appointed, and disposed, as we see,
By Gods most gracious providence, which is,
I am perswaded, for the good of his. (12-13, l. 148-54)

Collins uses the recitation of the assurance of God's goodness to mitigate her despair.

Although she admits that against sorrows she is "not so firm" (13, l. 155), she insists that "hope will help mee quickly to exclu'd [them]" (13, l. 159).

Finally, Collins is moved to praise. In response to "these favours" (13, l. 162), she describes how her soul "hath recolected all her powers, / To praise the auther of this blissfull peace" (13, l. 163-164). The revelation of his promises to her mind completely reorders her experience of the world. Whereas she had been controlled by her physical suffering, fear, and despair, the revelation of God's promises teaches her to reinterpret her earthly experiences through that lens and, in doing so, she gains the ability to anticipate God's comforts despite her ongoing cares.

His revelation becomes the template for her own praise and the means through which she cultivates a relationship with others. Collins hopes her collection's proof of the productivity of the affect of Christ's divine comforts will draw curious readers to pursue the knowledge her confession provides. After describing the personal transformation incited by God's revelations to her, Collins determines to "go on with my Discourse" (14, l. 197). Her proposition suggests that the previous explanations were only prefatory materials to the main concern of "The Discourse," that is the reiteration of the process by which knowledge became affect:

So now I will go on with my Discourse,
When knowledge, plesant to my soul became,
Unto Gods word, I often had recourse,
Being informed rightly that the same;
Would bee as fuell to encrease the flame
Of holy Zeal, which must with knowledg dwell,
For without other, neither can do well. (14, l. 197-203)

Collins's acceptance of the affect of divine knowledge leads her to pursue further understanding:

Then sought I carefully to understand,
The grounds of true Religion, which impart
Divine Discreshion, which goes far beyand,
All civill policy or humane Art;
Which sacred principles I got by heart:
Which much enabled me to apprehend,
The sence of that whereto I shall attend. (14, l. 204-210)

Divine disclosure, Collins argues, satisfies her soul and increases her zeal, and the continuing pursuit of the knowledge of the divine fuels a continuing perpetuation of that zeal that enflames her mind. The contrast she draws between civil policy or humane art and the "Divine Discreshion" (l. 206) revealed in the grounds of true religion seeks to affirm for any disbelieving readers the higher quality of her discourse. Remember, Collins hopes her personal confession will entice "Kindred" (9, l. 44) who "better works neglect" (9, l. 45) to "read the Scriptures touched in this book" (9, l. 49). She has already discussed her experience with the enticements of prophane art. Articulating the better qualities of divine art is therefore a necessary aspect of convincing her readers to accept her claims. This personal amplification of divine disclosure should be seen as the purest declaration of Collins's purpose in writing *Divine Songs and Meditacions*. Knowledge of God comforts her mind. She seeks to record the principles that precipitate that comfort to perpetuate the zeal the comfort brings about. "The Discourse" records the Truth of God's promises, and her collection as a whole then perpetuates zeal. Her anticipation that her readers may accept her claim on divine affect and likewise require the knowledge to claim it for themselves motivates the rest of "The Discourse."

What follows is a fairly standard confession of faith, beginning with a discussion of the nature of God and the persons of the Trinity; but her confessional approach is both personally relevant and systematically significant as it reveals the catechetical content that undergirds the zeal she expresses in her more lyrical poems. Reformed theological discourse assumes that knowledge finds its source in God and therefore any attempt to understand the world or oneself must begin with an understanding of God.³⁵ Collins assumes this logic when, after confessing her knowledge of God, she proceeds to attempt to understand herself: “Next unto God, my selfe I sought to know” (16, l. 246). This ordering of confession within “The Discourse” makes clear that Collins believes herself to be knowable through the knowledge she seeks about God. But again, Collins deprioritizes the disclosure of her self, “a thing not so facile, as some suppose,” (16, l. 247) in favour of disclosing her purpose instead:

But that I may the faster forward goe,
I leave to speak, what may bee said of those,
And haste to that I purpose to disclose:
Which being well considered may convert,
To lowest thoughts, the proudest haughty heart. (16, l. 248-52)

³⁵ Pre-modern discussions of the conscience made much of the etymology of the word conscience, which came from the Latin “con” and “scire,” implying a “knowing with some other.” William Perkins, one of the foremost writers on the conscience in the seventeenth century made much of the etymological implications of knowing with: “Perkins asserts that the *knowing with* takes place between the individual and God: ‘God knowes perfectly all the doings of man, though they be never so hid and concealed: and man by a gifte given him of God, knows together with God, the same things of himselfe: and this gift is named Conscience.’” Perkins predicates the early modern understanding of how one has knowledge of one’s self, one’s conscience/consciousness, upon the model of God’s knowledge of his people and the ethics of the relationship he forms with them so as to know them better. William Perkins, *A Discourse of Conscience* (London, 1596). Quoted in Abraham Stoll, *Conscience in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017), 8.

Collins's offhand reference to those who underappreciate her suggests a higher regard for herself than we often credit Collins with; nevertheless, her commitment to her reader's conversion determines the focus of the rest of her confession. She emphasizes humanity's vanity through a retelling of the Fall into sin, God's resulting judgement, and a reflection on the saving perfection of Christ. This leads, in turn, to an articulation of the processes of faith, beginning with a recognition of one's depravity through the revelation of the law and a discussion of salvation through the processes of justification, sanctification, and repentance. They aim the reader towards a better understanding of how humans may understand themselves through their relation to God.

This content borrows heavily from other confessions, and when it is compounded again by her apparent reluctance to elaborate on the knowledge of herself, her insistence on discussing universal truth over personal truth can be read as evasive; but broader studies of early modern life writing suggest that individual expressions of corporate conformity often function as autobiographically significant. Marginal notes in personal almanacs, for example, are frequently inspired by the printed information on the page, yet scholars have begun to consider them as evidence of life-writing. In an edition of George Wharton's almanac *Hemeroscopeion* (1651), for example, Isabella Twysden made a series of marginal notes on topics that include politics, astrology, and her personal health,³⁶ but, as Adam Smyth notes, Twysden includes no notes that do not have some

³⁶ Isabella Twysden, diary in almanac, BL Add MS 34169, British Library. See also, F. W. Bennit, "The Diary of Isabella, Wife of Sir Roger Twysden, Baronet, of Royden Hall, East Peckam, 1645-1651," *Archeologia Cantiana: Being Transactions of the Kent Archeological Society* 51 (1939): 113-36; and Adam Smyth, "Almanacs and Annotators," in *Autobiography in Early Modern England*, 15-56.

precedence in the printed pages of the almanac.³⁷ Nevertheless, Smyth advocates for considering the record keeping sanctioned by almanacs as a form of life-writing:

The writing of individuality through the adoption of shared, public templates invokes the dual meaning of identity as both sameness and uniqueness, and recalls that apparent combination of liberty and constraint in Catherine Belsey's note that to "be a subject is to have access to signifying practice, to identify with the 'I' who speaks," while necessarily also being "held in place in a specific discourse, a specific knowledge, by the meanings available there."³⁸

Likewise, Collins's personal adoption of shared, public templates of hope against private despair negotiates an identity out of the tensions between sameness and uniqueness.

"The Discourse" never returns to a discussion of Collins's "self" (16, l. 246) or "the image of her mind" (9, l. 53). Instead, in the final stanza she claims "The Discourse" as a personal confession of her conformity to a universal Truth:

This much touching the ground of Truth I hold,
Which sith at first they rectified my mind,
I will not cast them off, as worn and old,
Nor will be so alone to them confind
As not admit of things of higher kind;
But will as God shall light dispence to mee,
(By ayd divine) walk up to each degree. (30, l. 708-14)

Again Collins emphasizes the significance of her text through constructive non-disclosure that amplifies the active conforming of herself to a confessional identity. Collins's insistence upon the relationality of her confession further supports her claims to confessional subjectivity. From studies of confessions of faith in the early modern period, we know they often occur at moments of deep insecurity. In each of the confessions of

³⁷ Smyth, 52.

³⁸ Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 5. Quoted in Smyth, *Autobiography*, 52. For more on almanacs see Bernard Capp, *English Almanacs, 1500-1800: Astrology and the Popular Press* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979).

faith Brooke Conti studies, the authors “all appear to turn to autobiography from a sense of external pressure—in an effort to prove their orthodoxy, their salvation, or simply their belief that God is on their side;”³⁹ but while these confessions are purported to expose the personal truth of a believer’s position, they rarely do that cleanly:

A subject’s external shows were regarded as communicating one kind of private and otherwise inaccessible truth, that of loyalty, but as being illegible when it came to another kind of private truth, that of his religious beliefs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, [the authors considered] simultaneously declare their beliefs and refuse to declare their beliefs, expressing the desire for transparency alongside a deep skepticism that such transparency is possible.⁴⁰

For many of these authors, the existence of these two kinds of truth creates a conflict in the confession. These pressures manifest in the “fragmentary, elusive, or contradictory nature of the autobiographical passages.”⁴¹ Conti argues,

attending to such disnarrative moments and situating each work within its political and biographical context can shed light not only on each individual autobiography but also on the larger textual phenomenon in which they participate—a phenomenon born of their authors’ attempts to articulate an authentic religious identity while negotiating competing political, personal, and psychological demands.⁴²

Conti’s analysis draws attention to how confessions highlight moments in which tensions between personal identity and relational ambitions undermine the stability of the narrative as a whole.

But scholarship also suggests that relationality of authorship is inflected by gender. Constance M. Furey suggests men pursued a relationality of authorship

³⁹ Conti, *Confessions of Faith*, 12.

⁴⁰ Conti, 6.

⁴¹ Conti, 6.

⁴² Conti, 6.

predicated on similarity: “men could ground their authorship on the claim that they had the capacity to conform to a model, that they could presume likeness and thus aspire to do what great men before them had already done.”⁴³ Thus the ambiguities of men’s religious identities, in the moments of confession Conti highlights, threatened their capacity to conform to a model of masculine religious commitment and made it necessary that their autobiographical narratives do the work of convincing not only others, but also themselves, of their conformity. In contrast, women’s authorship began with the “presumption of difference [and] was grounded in their ability to successfully establish a relationship to a venerable authority.”⁴⁴ Moments of disnarrative in Collins’s confession function constructively rather than destructively because the fragmentary, elusive, or contradictory elements in her text demonstrate moments in which she excises elements of her earthly identity that threaten the relational goals of her text.

Smyth believes women, who more frequently wrote on their health than men, recorded a “(sometimes tentative) subjectivity” by journaling about the state of their bodies.⁴⁵ While Collins seems to recognize the subjectivity available to a woman through a discussion of her health, she also demonstrates a resistance to the implications of that subjectivity through the work of confession because, although discussions of women’s health might provide them with a subjectivity, that subjectivity was troubled by the

⁴³ Furey, *Poetic Relations*, 25.

⁴⁴ Furey, 25.

⁴⁵ Smyth, *Autobiography*, 53. Almanacs written by Mary Holden in 1688 and 1689, and Sarah Jinner in 1658, 1659, and 1664 participated in this process by encouraging medical self-reflection. See Adam Smyth, “Almanacs and Annotators,” in *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 15-56.

entanglement of women's health with the question of their virtue.⁴⁶ Collins's attention to her fertility in the way she contrasts the poetic "offspring of my mind" (5, l. 79) with ill-breeding crosses in her youth (10, l. 57) suggests an awareness of these implications; yet Collins resists the implications of this narrative by refusing to make the connection between ill health and moral failure in her text. For many writers, this connection was inherent in Eve's participation in the Fall;⁴⁷ but unlike her contemporaries, Collins refuses to discuss Eve's specific culpability for original sin.⁴⁸ Musing on the origins of sin, Collins writes,

As all men in the state of nature be,
And have been ever since mans wofull fall,
Who was created first, from bondage free,
Untill by sinn he thrust himself in thrall;
By whose transgression we were stained all,
Not only all men but all parts of man,
Corrupted was: since sin to reign began. (16, l. 267-73).

Collins's emphasis on the universal reach of sin's influence and her refusal to attribute original sin specifically to women demonstrates how Collins substitutes the subjectivity

⁴⁶ According to early modern medicine, any sign of illness might also be a sign of sin. Women's fertility or infertility was thought to be particularly significant. For a discussion of the signification of women's fertility, see Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998).

⁴⁷ See my discussion of the implications of Eve's fall on discussions of women's health in my first chapter, "Eliza's Babes and Desire." See also Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008); Patricia Demers, *Women's Writing in English: Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Michelle M. Dowd and Thomas Festa, eds., *Early Modern Women on the Fall: An Anthology* (Tempe: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012); and Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004).

⁴⁸ Susanna B. Mintz also interprets this refusal to assign blame for physical suffering as an expression of "a kind of disability subjectivity, a sense of self worked out according to, rather than in spite of, the specifics of her corporeal experience." Susannah B. Mintz, "An Collins and the Disabled Self," in Howard, *An Collins*, 56.

made available to her through a confession of her comforts in the revelation of God's promises over that made available to her through the signification of her sick, female body. Her poems prove her faithfulness and her fruitfulness.

Collins's collection thus embraces constructed non-disclosure as the means through which to develop an identity more suited to her goals. Collins's anonymous female voice invites readers to acknowledge, and even embrace, the constructedness of her confessional identity as a demonstration of her conformity to the identity made available through God's relationship with her. Her insistence upon the importance of communicating her confession to her readers demonstrates her conviction that the knowledge contained in her confession changes how she engages with the world and with others. Her identity is no longer predicated upon isolation resulting in despair, but upon the communication of hope and comfort in pursuit of belonging.

“Exciting to spirituall Alacrity”: The Affect of Anonymous Devotion

Collins also articulates the identity her poetry promotes in the way that her lyrics explore the affect of having knowledge of God's comforts. In “The Discourse,” Collins argues that knowledge and zeal function cooperatively: “being informed rightly.../ Would bee as fuell to encrease the flame / Of holy Zeal, which must with knowledg dwell, / For without other, neither can do well” (14, l. 200-203); but for one who is “*through weakness to the house confin'd*” (3, l. 1) and whose “*mental powers seem[ed] long to sleep*” (3, l. 2), the engagement with zeal is difficult. Early modern theories of melancholy suggested that despair was caused by some latent sin plaguing the believer's

conscience.⁴⁹ Collins's melancholic tendencies implicated her conscience, and her physical weakness prevented her from performing acts of thankfulness that might have counteracted those insecurities, leading to a cycle of despair that would have caused her to question whether her despair was a symptom of a lack of faith; but Collins's collection of poetry breaks this cycle by re-enacting God's promise that, as Collins quotes in her letter to the reader, "*He doth not leave nor forsake them. Heb. 13.5. But causeth all things to work for theyr good. Rom. 8.28*" (1). Her confessional poems articulate the substance of that promise and her lyrics then employ the recitation of poetic confession as a means to recall the promises God makes to her. The affirmation of his promises comforts her soul and, in the provision of comfort, "communicates / Celestiall health to ev'ry faculty" ("The Discourse," 12, l. 129-30).

Collins cannot help but respond with praise. Although she gives no indication that her physical discomforts are alleviated, the understanding that her suffering is not the result of God's punishment relieves a burden of guilt, nonetheless. Collins figures her poetry as a storehouse for the affect of divine revelation by teaching her to reread her suffering through the lens of promise rather than condemnation. Her poems evidence a history of God's favour through their signification of her faithful productivity. The knowledge of God's favour, coupled with the evidence of his comforts latent in her poetry, provides her with the means to sustain an interpretation of her suffering founded on the expansiveness of God's perspective rather than on her own limited earthly

⁴⁹ The similarities between the symptoms of religious sorrow and melancholic distempers led many to confuse them, instituting a kind of "feedback loop, in which the symptoms of melancholy and conscience blend, forming an intractably feverish and intemperate state of mind." Abraham Stoll, *Conscience*, 55.

perspective. They sustain her to resist the mental despair of abandonment and allow her to reconfigure her perception of herself as a persecuted believer, not a punished sinner.

Again, Collins's anonymity contributes to the construction of this believing identity. Her anonymous lyrics reduce her identification with the world because she equates that path with loneliness and, ultimately, self-annihilation. Instead, her lyrics amplify her performative conformity to God's perspective and allow her to express an active identification with Christ unconfused by earthly identifiers. The first song in *Divine Songs and Meditations*, "A Song expressing their happiness who have Communion with Christ" (31-35), elaborates on how the revelation of God's word in Collins's mind relieves the burden of despair by refining her mind until it reflects Christ's. The song opens by describing the mind wandering in a garden "scorched with distracting care" (31, l. 1). Any shade the garden offers is provided by "fruitlesse Trees, false fear, despair, / And melancholy" (31, l. 3-4). This desolate garden is also inhabited by Sorrow, "The Nurce of Discontents, / And *Murmering* her Mayd / Whose harsh unpleasant noise / All mentall fruits destroyes" (31, l. 12-15). Collins deftly employs the dissonance of what a garden should be and what hers is to underscore the desolation of her mental landscape. Unwilling to endure the fruitlessness of fear, despair and melancholy any longer, Collins seeks a change: she resists the "abortive" (31, l. 20) nature of despair and seeks out the "true intelligence" (31, l. 23) of God's love for her.

Her search leads her to the affirmation of "this sweet truth divine / *Who formed thee is thine*" (31, l. 24-25). She finds her identity in her claim to belong to her creator. The comfort that "He too, thats Lord of all / Will thee beloved call, / Though all else

prove unkind” (31, l. 27-29) becomes the impetus for an utter reversal of her mind’s setting. Perceiving that she is not and never was alone, she learns to praise “though Sesterns dry I find” (31, l. 32) because the assurance of God’s favour provides refreshment to her mind even in the midst of suffering. The stanzas that follow echo the Song of Songs, a formative example of biblical poetry in early modern literature, demonstrating her interpolation of herself into biblical genres of praise.⁵⁰ The Lover knocks at the soul’s door using a paraphrase of the Lover’s entreaty in Canticles 5:

Open to me my Love,
My Sister, and my Dove,
My Locks with Dew wet are. (32, l. 59-61)

The soul rebuffs her Saviour, “But tasting once how sweet he is, / And smelling his perfumes, / Long can she not his presence misse, / But grieffe her strainth consumes” (32-33, l. 65-68). She finally admits him, and he showers her with an abundance of gifts:

For when he visits one
He cometh not alone,
But brings abundant grace
True Light, and Holynesse,
And Spirit to expresse
Ones wants in every case. (33, l. 69-74)

Yet Collins warns, he is a jealous lover and “will stay / With single hearts alone, / Who [Lust] their former mate, / Doe quite exterminate” (33, l. 83-86). Using the discourse of

⁵⁰ For more on the significance of the Song of Songs in the Renaissance, see Lissa Beauchamp, “Canticles’ Rhetoric of the Eroticized Soul and the Inscribed Body in Renaissance English Poetry” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2003), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses A&I; Noam Flinker, *Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature: Kisses of their Mouths* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000); and Stanley Stewart, *The Enclosed Garden* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966).

the Lover and his Beloved, Collins reimagines the revelation of God's knowledge to her soul as a form of courtship that requires her to reject all other attachments.⁵¹

Collins makes clear her relationship with her Saviour is not one of passive acceptance but active flourishing through the conforming of oneself to Christ. Those who desire “the firme fruition / Of his Sweet presence” (33, l. 82-3) must “Crucifie” (33, l. 89) “the flesh.../ With its affections vile” (33, l. 89-90). By submitting her own flesh to the torture and death Christ experienced, she imagines herself accessing the power of his incarnated life. The process by which one accesses Christ has been shown by Janel M. Mueller to be both hermeneutically and rhetorically significant. Mueller suggests that “how to apprehend the relation of one's own body to the body of Christ emerges as the proving ground on which rival [sixteenth-century] Christian faiths struggle to vindicate their access to a supreme truth of being.”⁵² Mueller argues that the Marian Protestant martyrs' contemplation of burning at the stake invoked a new ontology of presence, to replace the doctrine of transubstantiation they were rejecting:

By hallowing the experiences of torture and death as the outward and visible signs of inner steadfastness in witnessing to divine truth and by projecting a no less embodied afterlife in company with God, these Protestants recast human identity and its potential for participation in divinity as a new species of sacramentalism founded in the material social life of self-cognizant, self-directed human bodies and the dynamic of completion that such life would undergo hereafter.⁵³

⁵¹ For further discussion of this poem, see Norcliffe, “Garden and Antigarden;” and Skwire, “Women, Writers, Sufferers.”

⁵² See Janel M. Mueller, “Pain, Persecution, and the Construction of Selfhood,” in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, eds. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 168.

⁵³ Mueller, 171-72.

According to Mueller, the discursiveness of early Protestant accounts of martyrdom provided seventeenth-century Protestant poets with a form of identity-making, “which proceeds by catalytic testing through bodily pain. The self’s being and presence are confirmed *in extremis* by holding fast to God’s truth as its truth.”⁵⁴ This form of testing provides some explanation for the valuation of devotional pain in poems like Donne’s “Batter my Heart” and Herbert’s “The Agony.”⁵⁵

Collins’s insistence that her body’s suffering imitates Christ’s suffering similarly re-enacts this new ontology of presence. The painful conformity of her flesh to Christ’s enables a purer identity that replaces her former condition:

Then grounds of truth are sought
New Principles are wrought
Of grace and holinesse,
Which plantings of the heart
Will spring in every part,
And so it selfe expresse. (33, l. 91-6)

Her reference to the “grounds of truth,” (33, l. 91) mirrors her reference to the “ground of Truth” (30, l. 708) to which she holds in the final stanza of “The Discourse.” The overlap between the two poems suggests that the change of mind she details in “A Song expressing their happiness” continues the process of constructive non-disclosure begun in

⁵⁴ Mueller, 180.

⁵⁵ For more on Donne’s and Herbert’s figurations of the self, see Judith H. Anderson, “Body of Death: The Pauline Inheritance in Donne’s Sermons, Spenser’s Malegar, and Milton’s Sin and Death,” in *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Jennifer Vaught (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 171-192; John Stachniewski, “John Donne: The Despair of the ‘Holy Sonnets’,” *ELH* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1981): 677-705; and A. E. Watkins, “Typology and the Self in George Herbert’s ‘Affliction’ Poems,” *George Herbert Journal* 31, no.1/2 (Fall 2007): 63-82.

“The Discourse.” She rejects the old desolation and through acts of poetic devotion raises conformity to “New Principles / Of grace and holinesse” (33, l. 92-93) in its place.

Again, it can be tempting to see this rejection of individuation as a rejection of selfhood, but Collins makes no such claim despite her continued anonymity. Instead, her anonymity, like every other part of her earthly experience, becomes transformed through the likeness to Christ. “A Song expressing their happinesse” celebrates the revelation of spiritual knowledge first introduced in “The Discourse” as a means to cultivate new hope, “grace and holinesse...plantings of the heart” (33, l. 93-94). These new plantings of the heart contrast with the scorched earth of her first stanza. Against the fear, pain, and lack of agency in the opening stanza of “A Song expressing their happinesse,” her later stanzas stabilize her conception of this new “selfe” (33, l. 96) in her relationship with Christ. Her soul appears as “the Moone when full of Light” (33, l. 99), infused “With that inherent grace / Thats darted from the Face / Of Christ, that Sunne divine” (34, l. 101-103). Christ’s grace frees her from the egocentricity of her own despair and, instead, she becomes illuminated by the reflection of his goodness.

Collins is enthralled not just by the reflection of Christ’s physical beauty in this moment, as we see in other texts like “The Lover” in *Eliza’s Babes*, but even more by the impact of his grace in her mind, “Which hath a purging power / Corruption to devour, / And Conscience to refine” (34, l. 104-6).⁵⁶ Collins’s lyrics thus extend the confessional conformity she seeks to enact in “The Discourse.” Her lyrics demonstrate how her mind, strengthened through the confessional knowledge embodied in her devotional poetry,

⁵⁶ See my discussion of “The Lover” in my first chapter.

enacts further conformity to Christ through the performance of devotion. Donne demonstrates a similar rhetorical affect in his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. Like Collins, Donne grapples with the spiritual implications of afflictions, and his devotions enable him to encounter that despair through the assimilation of his rhetoric to God's. Nancy Selleck describes his devotional methodology as a kind of digestive process:

In the Meditations, Donne presents himself (or man) in a singular, isolated state, and the sense of aloneness and self-containment leaves him abject and disconnected. Then in the Expostulations, he breaks that isolation, engaging in what looks on the page like a dialogized process of complaint, forcing an interaction by stuffing his text with God's, speaking its language, constantly quoting biblical figures, and moving through this "travaile" to a new position informed by what he now understands as God's viewpoint. Finally, the Prayers represent a new, corrected condition, a state of calm and relaxation that claims a oneness with the wider context of divine will.⁵⁷

Donne makes tangible a spiritual change through a rhetorical processing of himself through devotional poetics. Like Donne, Collins uses the active conforming of herself to God's textual presence as a means to achieve a unity with God she finds utterly transformative.

In a way, though, Collins's anonymity makes her poetic conformity more successful, if less rhetorically interesting, than Donne's. Anonymity amplifies her subjectivity's susceptibility to God's will. Where part of Donne's spiritual struggle is that he must actively resist a willful desire for individuation, Collins experiences the opposite.⁵⁸ For Collins, the emptiness of herself apart from God becomes a void that threatens to completely overwhelm her. She relies on the process of devotionality to

⁵⁷ Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom*, 81.

⁵⁸ See Conti's discussion of Donne's struggle against individuation in "Conversion and Confession in Donne's Prose," in *Confessions of Faith*, 50-74.

substantiate herself against the self-annihilation of worldly despair or the empty signification of her infertility. The reminders of Christ's nearness allow her to nurture her new "plantings of the heart" (33, l. 94) against these existential threats.

Further, the signification of anonymity becomes transformed by this devotional processing. Where the absence of earthly identifiers had formerly signified her isolation, their absence in the light of Christ's revelations allows her to become a more perfect reflection of Christ. By reconfiguring the signification of anonymity from one of earthly insignificance to heavenly recognition, she gains a new perspective through which to interpret all other forms of disenfranchisement. No longer a bystander to her own life, Collins finds herself called to faithful action by the revelation of his grace:

They that are thus compleat with Grace
And know that they are so,
For Glory must set Sayle apace
Whilst wind doth fitly blow,
Now is the tide of Love,
Now doth the Angell move;
If that there be defect
That Soul which sin doth wound,
Here now is healing found,
If she no time neglect. (34, l. 113-21)

Experiences of pain are thus transformed into opportunities to repent and receive comfort. Through devotional activity that continually aligns her with Christ, Collins begins to experience agency again, and the desire to continue to experience that agency fuels her zeal to further align herself with Christ. Collins's increasing alignment with Christ, which she alludes to in her introductory embrace of anonymity and forceful rejection of an old self, allows her to become more fully illuminated by God's grace. "The Discourse" demonstrates the knowledge by which this new self is recognized, but Collins's

devotional lyrics activate the benefits of this new self. Her poems' reiteration of the comfort of a godly perspective and their substantiation of the ways it mitigates her suffering confirm her claims to renewal. As a whole, Collins's anonymous lyrics serve her zealous pursuit of Christ's likeness by performing acts of spiritual discipline that remind her of the Truth they convey. The activity required to produce this devotion then materializes her satisfaction as evidence of his grace against the evidence of care, comfortlessness, and abandonment that threatens to overwhelm her mind.

Substantiating this satisfaction is vitally important because, as Collins knows from personal experience, periods of affliction on this earth are as unavoidable as the seasons. In "A Song shewing the Mercies of God to his people, by interlacing cordiall Comforts with fatherly Chastisments" (35-37), Collins outlines the necessity of storing up the experience of God's favour to sustain the mind during periods of affliction. For Collins, our trust in the regularity of the seasons provides an excellent metaphor through which to anticipate the ebb and flow of affliction and godly comfort. Collins describes how the sun influences the changing of seasons from the barrenness of winter to the fruitfulness of summer and applies this pattern to the cycle of suffering and the influence of the "Son of righteousness" (35, l. 15) in her life:

So though that in the Winter
Of sharp Afflictions, fruits seem to dy,
And for that space, the life of Grace
Remayneth in the Root only;
Yet when the Son of Righteousness clear
Shall make Summer with us, our spirits to chear,
Warming our hearts with the sense of his favour,
Then must our flowers of piety savour,
And then the fruits of righteousnesse
We to the glory of God must expresse. (35-36, l. 11-20)

Just as the winter gives way to summer under the sun's influence, so too does a feeling of abandonment give way to the experience of God's recognition and favour. Further, the natural reliability of the sun's influence telegraphs the reliability of its Creator and his grace. She goes on to discuss how, like the sun's warming of the earth to fruition, the warmth of the Sun/Son's favour draws out the spirit into the body, exciting both to activity again:

And as when Night is passed,
The Sun ascending our Hemisphear,
Ill fumes devouers, and opes the powers
Which in our bodies are, and there
He draws out the spirits of moving and sence
As from the center, to the circumference;
So that the exterior parts are delighted,
And unto mocion and action excited,
And hence it is that with more delight
We undergo labor by day then by night. (36, l. 21-30)

A rejuvenation in spirit translates to physical relief. Collins uses the pattern of agricultural seasons as a model for her response to spiritual seasons. Just as farmers make hay when the sun shines, so she calls her readers to store up comforts when the "Son" shines. She argues that when the faculties of the mind are opened and stirred up to "spirituall mocion" (36, l. 37), they must "make towards God with devocion" (36, l. 38). Collins's use of agricultural metaphors demonstrates how, in the light of Christ's revelation, even her knowledge of affliction has been transformed. Collins's suffering is no longer described as an interminable desolation like that which opens "A Song expressing their happinesse who have Communion with Christ." Affliction in "A Song shewing the Mercies of God" is bounded by natural metaphors that render periods of illness as dormancy—natural, of a limited time frame, a precursor to new growth. Her

devotion becomes an embodiment of her spiritual relief in material form, a storehouse of good feelings to be drawn upon during poor seasons:

when we feel Gods favour...
Store must we gather while such gleams do last
Against our tryalls sharp winterly blasts. (36, l. 41, 45-46).

Collins's poetry transforms the experience of physical affliction by bounding it within the context of God's favour and, in doing so, materializes God's grace despite continuing affliction. This argument suggests that her lyrics serve as such devotional stores that attest to God's goodness and sustain believers in the midst of afflictions. In periods of despair, her devotion becomes the means through which to "approach the Throne of Grace" (37, l. 54):

First taking words to our selves to declare
How dead to goodnesse by nature we are,
Then seeking by him who for us did merit
To be enliv'd by his quickening Spirit,
Whose flame doth light our Spark of Grace,
Whereby we may behold his pleased face. (37, l. 55-60)

Produced during a period of refreshment, Collins's lyrics prove that a previous season of affliction had been brought to an end. Thus even when Collins finds herself in the midst of another period of despair, the devotional store cultivated by devotional knowledge displayed in "The Discourse" and held in trust by her lyrics reminds the reader that God's grace is true, reliable, and will return, which Collins believes will serve as an existential comfort even in the midst of immediate pain.

Collins acknowledges that some might think singing an incongruous pastime for those as despairing as she, but she argues that those who are in despair have the most to

gain by engaging in songs of praise. In “A Song demonstrating The vanities of Earthly things” (41-42), the lyric opens with a question:

Shall Sadnesse perswade me never to sing
But leave unto Syrens that excellent thing. (41, l. 1-2)

The speaker responds emphatically,

No that may not be, for truely I find,
The sanguin complexion to mirth is enclin'd. (41, l. 3-4)

In fact, she argues those in despair may have a greater reason to praise because God mandates that “joy may be mixed with prayer and praise” (41, l. 8). Collins explores the motivations of traditional purveyors of lyrics like epicures or scholars but concludes their sources of pleasure are fleeting and material, causing them to miss the immaterial pleasures experienced by “they that delight in Divinity” (42, l. 33), because, for them, “much heavenly comfort in this life may gain, / And when it is ended their joyes shall remain” (42, l. 35-36). Collins argues believers have much more to gain from singing songs about God than anyone singing songs about the world.⁵⁹ While the poetic celebration of earthly excellence can seem only to extend the duration of its pleasure, poetic celebration when applied to the truly immortal comforts of God’s love secures enduring pleasures.⁶⁰ The affirmation of the benefits of meditating on godly things leads the poem to an abrupt close. The speaker realizes that to speak of earthly things at any length is “folly, therefore I have don, / Concluding, all’s vanity under the Sun” (42, l. 39-

⁵⁹ The contrasting of the pursuit of godly knowledge to earthly knowledge was a common theme in early modern devotional texts. See Margaret Turnbull, “George Herbert and John Jewel: ‘Vanie’ (I), ‘The Agonie,’ and ‘Divinitie,’” *George Herbert Journal* 26, no.1/2 (Fall 2002): 83-93.

⁶⁰ See also “Another Song exciting to spirituall Mirth” (49-51) which makes the argument that “lascivious joy” is as sinister as excessive Grief because it draws people to sensuality.

40). Her poem promotes a new heavenward form of artistic endeavour that celebrates the kind of joy her songs promote while also recognizing the consequences of failing to participate in this kind of song-making.

The cheeky ending of “The vanities of Earthly things” belies a serious concern of the collection as a whole: not only does poetry function to effect comfort, but it does so by responsibly constraining despair even in those who appear to be crowned by earthly triumphs. In “Another Song (Having restrained Discontent)” (57-58), Collins practices the poetic restraint of her discontents through the cultivation of knowledge. She describes “looking to outward things” (57, l. 7) and finding only more reasons for Sorrow to abound. Even those who have “externall happinesse” (57, l. 15) lack “inward grace; / Nor are their minds with knowledg pollisht” (57, l. 16-17). Consequently,

Distrustfullnesse doth there frequent
For Ignorance the cause of error
May also be the cause of terror. (57, l. 22-24)

In contrast,

Where saving Knowledg doth abide,
The peace of Conscience also dwells
And many Vertues more beside
Which all absurdities expels,
And fills the Soule with joy Celestiall
That shee regards not things Terrestiall. (58, l. 37-42)

Her poem’s reiteration of the affect of “saving Knowledg” (58, l. 37) protects and fortifies the mind against earthly discontents because its recitation of that knowledge retrains the soul to look for satisfaction not on earth but in heaven. This retraining of the soul’s perspective impacts the mind’s ability to process its sensual experiences. Collins concludes,

Which when I well considered
My grieffe for outward crosses ceast,
Being not much discouraged
Although afflictions still encreast,
Knowing right well that tribulacion
No token is of Reprobacion. (58, l. 49-54)

Collins molds her anonymous persona in this song to consist of purely “greife” (58, l. 50) and “outward crosses” (58, l. 50). This, it appears, is her only identity before she embraced God’s grace. Anonymity serves to accentuate her conversion and vivification by thus limiting her earthly marks of identification. This lyric teaches Collins to reassess the means through which she judges happiness, her own as well as others’. While others may appear happy, without the grace and knowledge of God their happiness is empty; while Collins may appear afflicted, her experience of God’s grace and her knowledge of his care prepare her for “joy Celestiall” (58, l. 41). Her lyric thus serves as a guard against existential grief brought about by others’ earthly joys. Her lyric’s reiteration of God’s comforts enforces a godly perspective that relieves the emotional burden of suffering from affliction. She no longer must wonder if it signifies God’s disfavour.

Later poems demonstrate how the iteration of these comforts provides a poetic re-processing of affect. While Collins continues to suffer from ill-health, her poems continue to evidence God’s favour, a comfort she draws upon to sustain the joy she seeks to induce. In “A Song exciting to spirituall Alacrity” (47-49), Collins explores the necessity of continuing to arouse joy through devotion. The opening stanza contrasts the affect of joy to the affect of despair:

Discomforts will the heart contract
And joy will cause it to dilate;
That every part its part may act,

A heart enlarg'd must animate. (47, l. 1-4).

The second stanza describes in brief the experience of despair as being “planted...in sorrow’s shade” (l. 6), enduring “blasts of cloudy care” (l. 7), making one “unfit for action” (l. 8); but, as in “The Discourse,” Collins refuses to speak of her sorrows in detail:

The ill effects of fruitlesse greife
Are in this place no further shown,
Because the meanes of true releife
Is more convenient to be known. (47, l. 9-12).

This verse reiterates the fruitlessness of retelling one’s grief. Instead, Collins again locates her comfort in finding relief outside herself. She describes how God’s comforts secure for the mind a hiding place that is, metaphorically, out of the wind, supplied with water, wine and food, “which life eternall brings” (48, l. 32). Again, Collins affirms the necessity of being satisfied by God rather than earthly reasoning. God’s comforts strengthen the soul to withstand all afflictions, both internal and external. In fact, Collins is convinced affliction functions to strengthen the faith of God’s people because it secures their reliance on him:

The sence of Love-Eternall, doth,
With Love, Obedience still produce,
Which active is, and passive both,
So suffrings are of speciall use.

Bearing the soule with joy and peace,
Through true beleeving, evermore,
Whose sweet contentments take encrease,
From heavens never-fayling store. (48-49, l. 57-64)

This conclusion reverses the signification of Collins’s despair. Whereas the experience of suffering is first experienced as punishing abandonment, the same experience processed through anonymous devotion is reinterpreted as a sign of purposeful relationality. The

rehearsal of this change augments comfort and joy and strengthens its affect. She thus substitutes the affect of her text on her mind for the affect of her body.

Collins further rehabilitates the signification of her body through this new perspective. The rehearsal of the promise of God's comforts fortifies Collins to combat mental despair and to bear the burden of physical affliction more easily. In "Another Song (The Winter of my infancy)" (55-57), Collins grapples with how to respond when anticipated seasons of relief fail to arrive. Returning to the seasonal imagery she employs in "A Song shewing the Mercies of God to his people," Collins describes how the regularity of the seasons gave her false hope that "suddenly the Spring would hast" (55, l. 2). Unfortunately, "it was not so, but contrary" (55, l. 11):

Thus is my Spring now almost past in heavinesse
The Sky of my pleasure's over-cast with sad distresse
For by a comfortlesse Eclips,
Disconsolacion and sore vexacion,
My blossom nips. (55, l. 21-25)

As readers understand from earlier poems, her mind has previously experienced this exposure as harsh and unforgiving; however, having now been fortified by devotional exercise, Collins once again echoes Canticles and insists upon her security as maintained by a supply of God's grace:

Yet as a garden is my mind enclosed fast
Being to safety so confind from storm and blast
Apt to produce a fruit most rare,
That is not common with every woman
That fruitfull are. (55, l. 26-30)⁶¹

⁶¹ Nearly every piece of critical writing on An Collins's devotional collection references this poem. In celebration of its significance, a recent collection of essays on *Divine Songs and Meditations* also includes a collaboratively annotated edition of "Another Song (The Winter of My Infancy)." See W. Scott Howard et al., Appendix B: "Another Song. The Winter of my infancy," in Howard, *An Collins*, 215-224. For a

In the security of God's care and despite her springtime drought, the walled garden of Collins's mind proves fruitful. Her fruits include "A Love of goodnesse" (56, l. 31) and "Dislike to sin" (56, l. 32), which grow "in spight of misery" (56, l. 33) and "Which Grace doth nourish and cause to flourish / Continually" (56, l. 34-35). These fruits give Collins hope that summer will still come, and yet

Admit the worst it be not so, but stormy too,
Ile learn my selfe to undergo more then I doe
And still content my self with this
Sweet Meditacion and Contemplacion
Of heavenly blis. (56, l. 51-55)

The pleasures of this contemplation, Collins insists, extend far beyond any earthly form of measurement—"Neither Logician nor Rhetorician / Can well define" (l. 59-60). Her lyrics demonstrate how, even when a period of affliction stretches much longer than expected, the stores of God's unlimited grace accessed through devotion sustain her. Collins proclaims that her productivity, and therefore her ability to externally signify her value, are no longer measured according to earthly systems such as women's sexual fertility or social standing. Rather, Collins's anonymous devotion ushers her into an alternate system of value in which her worth is predicated on her mind's ability to sustain her faith through poems in time of favour and endurance in seasons of drought.

survey of ways that this poem is approached, also see W. Scott Howard, "An Collins and the Politics of Mourning," in *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton*, eds. Margo Swiss and David A. Kent (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2002), 177-196; Price, "The image of her mind;" Skwire, "Women, Writers, Sufferers," and Helen Wilcox, "My Soule in Silence? Devotional Representations of Renaissance Englishwomen," in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*, eds. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 9-23.

Relating to the Remnant

In the final verse of her collection's first lyric, "A Song expressing their happinesse who have Communion with Christ," readers come to understand that the subjectivity with which she engages her audience is available only to her and us through Collins's identification with God. It is God's revelation to Collins that initiates a relational engagement with an audience beyond herself. Concluding her lyric, Collins declares that, "They that are thus compleat with Grace / And know that they are so" (34, l. 113-114) will soon have it "be reveald / What erst hath been conceald" (34, l. 123-4), particularly "The reason wherefore she / Is seated in a place so low, / Not from all troubles free" (34, l. 130-132). Her final stanza recognizes the repercussions of her current anonymity but anticipates the satiation of the soul's desire for knowledge—"they shall secrets know" (35, l. 138)—and in that comfort calls to arms all who suffer in faith:

Such need not pine with cares
Seeing all things are theirs,
If they are Christs indeed;
Therefore let such confesse
They are not comfortlesse,
Nor left in time of Need. (35, l. 139-144)

Identifying herself as Christ's beloved provides Collins the means through which to engage the world victoriously despite its limited knowledge of her earthly identity.

The end of all this mental discipline, Collins argues, is that the experience of God's comforts in this life serves up a foretaste of heaven on earth. In "A Song manifesting The Saints eternall Happinesse" (42-46), Collins describes the sound mind as one "Whose object is Eternall joy / Or Heavens Happinesse" (42-43, l. 3-4). "Such healthfull hearts" (43, l. 5) sustain their spirits by thinking on the promise of "Everlasting

Life, / A blessed State which never shall / be cumbered with strife” (43, l. 10-12). Of course, sustaining hope is necessary because “in every calling is / A tedious wearinesse” (43, l. 33-34). Even if one is relieved of “Afflictions which externall are, / Or crosses corporall” (44, l. 39-40),

...if the soule
Be sencible of sin
It cannot be but such will have
Enough to do within (44, l. 41-44).

Yet if the “Saints” (45, l. 99) finish their course successfully, they are rewarded with freedom and righteousness that translate their whole being:⁶²

Bodies which here
Are matters thick and grosse,
Attaining to this happinesse,
Are freed from their drosse:
And as the Sunn
Appeares in brightest Sky,
So every body glorifi'd
Shall be for clarity,
And likewise be impassible,
Uncapable of pain
Having agility to move,
Whose vigour shall remain. (45, l. 73-84)

Likewise,

Glorified Soules,
Are fild with all delight,
Because the spring of Beuty is
The object of their sight (45, l. 85-88)

⁶² Readers should not read this reference to “Saints” as meaning venerated person like those found in the Catholic or Eastern Orthodox traditions. The Protestant tradition is deeply opposed to the veneration of saints. Instead, “Saints” should be understood as a generic term meaning “all believers,” as demonstrated, for example, by its usage in the introductory address in Romans, “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints” (Rom. 1:7 KJV).

Ultimately, these benefits are desirable because they enable Collins to participate in a community through spiritual solidarity with other believers.

Throughout Collins's lyrics, her easy transition between singular and plural referents invites readers to locate themselves alongside Collins in her descriptions of experiencing cycles of despair and fruition. Although the poem begins with the singular referent, "Sound is the Minde" (42, l. 1) Collins safeguards that singular mind's security "In thinking on the Rest which for / Gods peeples doth remain" (43, l. 7-8). Individual security is located in the sense of belonging amongst God's people. Collins's anonymity allows fellow believers to see themselves in the poetic "I/we" she cultivates in her text. Furthermore, her assurance that she will be recognizable to this community of like-minded believers suggests that, like the periods of despair and isolation she characterizes as seasonal dormancy, periods of anonymity will also give way to communal devotionality that foreshadow what the body of believers will experience at the end of time. Thus Collins's anonymity amplifies her conformity to Christ, but also reinforces her readers' conformity to Christ because the anonymous identity promoted by her faithful persona is unrelatable without it. When readers accept this new heavenly perspective, a world of corporate relationality opens up before them.

Following the stanzas detailing the resurrection of the body and glorification of the soul in "A Song manifesting The Saints eternall Happinesse," Collins moves to give "Briefly a word / Of place and company, / Which Saints in Glory shall enjoy" (45, l. 97-99), noting how "The whole Assembly / Of Saints" (46, l. 106-107) will be gathered together in "heavenly / Ierusalem" (45, l. 100-101). The pleasures of this place, Collins

explains, will be made available to the assembly “Because their patient sufferings / He richly will reward” (46, l. 111-12). Collins implies that part of the recompense for isolated, earthly suffering is eternal, communal comfort, not just through each individual’s union with Christ, but through union with the eternal community of Saints that the love of Christ makes available.

This vision of eternal community becomes the authorization for the communal action Collins invokes in her final stanza of “A Song manifesting The Saints eternall Happinesse.” Collins admonishes readers to secure their hope “by striving to be cleane / As Christ our Lord is pure” (46, l. 123-24) and bearing “their crosses chearfully / Because a substance they expect” (46, l. 126-27). Again, the rehearsal of God’s comforts becomes a call to arms to conform oneself to Christ and thus bear suffering with ease. But now this call to arms extends beyond Collins’s own personal subjectivity to all who read her text; by likewise conforming themselves to Christ, they too may join Collins in everlasting community with God. The promise of their future incorporation authorizes her present call to arms.

Her poems make clear that one of the more difficult consequences of her illness is that it results in seclusion and loneliness. I noted that in “This song sheweth that God is the strength of his People, whence they have support and comfort,” Collins conducts a “review of mentall store” (52, l. 6). She concludes that the one comfort that stands out “As in a Cabinet or Chest / One jewell may exceed the rest” (52, l. 9-10) is that “God is the Rock of his Elect” (52, l. 11). Her song proceeds to contrast the comfort of God’s strength, refreshment, and friendship with that of one’s friends. She concedes “One may

have freinds, who have a will / To further his felicity” (54, l. 66-67), but suggests they will still leave a person wanting “Because of imbecility, / In power and ability” (54, l. 69-70). Collins is drawn to God’s lasting favour because the favour of friends is fleeting. We find a similar theme in “A Song declaring that a Christian may finde tru Love only where tru Grace is” (37-41). The lyric opens with the declaration,

No Knot of Friendship long can hold
Save that which Grace hath ty’d,
For other causes prove but cold
When their effects are try’d;
For God who loveth unity
Doth cause the onely union,
Which makes them of one Family
Of one mind and communion. (37, l. 1-8)

This introduction foregrounds the church of Christ, “one Family / Of one mind and communion” (37, l. 7-8), as the ideal intimate relationship. The poem goes on to lament the ways that “The link of consanguinity” (38, l. 29) has been contaminated “By reason of the Enmity / Between the womans Seed / And mans infernall enemy, / The Serpent and his breed” (38, l. 25-28). Because the wicked hate God’s children, Collins explains, they seek groundless means to undermine them, “And those that strongest grace attain, / Whereby sin is vanquished, / By Sathan and his cursed train / Are most contraried” (39, l. 49-52).

But Collins’s poems mitigate the hurt of friends’ betrayal through the solidarity she invokes between herself and other members of God’s elect. Her recognition that “God is the Rock of his Elect” (52, l. 11) prompts a change to first-person plural: pondering God’s sustaining power, Collins notes “Did not our Rock preserve us still” (52, l. 31), “From this our Rock proceeds likewise” (53, l. 36), and “So this our Rock

refreshing yeelds” (53, l. 41). Collins’s relationship with God thus becomes the foundation for a renewed relationship with any reader who shares her spiritual commitments. In turn, this renewed sense of community provides Collins with further encouragement in her faith despite signs to the contrary:

Therefore my soule do thou depend,
Upon that Rock which will not move,
When all created help shall end
Thy Rock impregnable will prove,
Whom still embrace with ardent Love. (54, l. 86-90)

Just as her affiliation with God heals her despair and its signification in her body, the influence of God’s comfort in her mind also rehabilitates her relationship with her community.

She comforts herself and her readers with the knowledge that their true worth is determined in community with God and each other, not the world. In “Another Song (Excessive worldly Greife)” (59-63), Collins laments how those who are elect are set apart from the world and experience persecution from their peers because they display no worldly virtues. Again, she speaks to an unspecified audience of those who attempt to be virtuous and yet are not preferred in the world. What is interesting is that, although they remain unidentified, they become known to each other through their spiritual virtues: “Therefore let such whose vertu favours merits, / Shew their divinly magnanimous spirits” (59, l. 25-26). By encouraging believers to recognize in each other “their divinly magnanimous spirits” (59, l. 26) through their demonstration of heavenly virtues, not earthly identifiers, Collins models the kind of heavenly perspective-taking her anonymity requires. Out of this shared anonymity, Collins creates a sense of solidarity with the

unrecognized, virtuous rejected and then finds the remediation of this communal loneliness in their mutual adoration of God.

For who loves God above all things, not one
Who understands not that in him alone
All causes that may move affections are,
Glimpses wherof his creatures doe declare,
This being so, who can be troubled
When as his gifts are undervalued,
Seeing the giver of all things likewise
For want of knowledg many underprise. (59-60, l. 29-36)

The shared affirmation of knowledge serves as the means to reinterpret the signification of their rejection. She acknowledges they are undervalued only because, ultimately, their accusers first undervalue God. The collective recognition of this truth remediates the communal rifts of earthly rejection and develops a community of believers predicated on their amplification of heavenly virtues based on their relationship with Christ.

Through the revelation of God's favour, Collins's rejection by her worldly community no longer signifies abandonment, but a deeply held communal bond that transcends earthly codes of relationship. In "A Song declaring that a Christian may finde tru Love only where tru Grace is" (37-41), this perspective reinterprets the signification of her community relations:

Therefore let no true hearted one
 Releife at need expect,
From opposits to vertue known,
 Who can him not afect:
For his internall ornaments,
 Will ever lovely make him
Though all things pleasing outward sence
 Should utterly forsake him. (40, l. 89-96)

The point, Collins insists, is that believers must choose their friends wisely:

In choise of Freinds let such therefore
Prefer the godly wise,
To whom he may impart the store
That in his bosome lies...

Gods children to each other should
Most open hearted bee;
Who by the same precepts are rul'd,
And in one Faith agree,
Who shall in true felicity,
Where nothing shall offend them
Together dwell eternally,
To which I do commend them. (40-41, l. 97-100, 105-112)

Collins's definition of what it means to choose friends wisely illuminates her own attempts to relate to her readers. She chooses to impart to them her devotional store. She discloses the divine precepts that rule her and to invite her readers into like-minded choice of conformity. Their acceptance of these promises ushers them into the safety of the comforts she experiences. The world has refused to recognize their identity as having significance. Again, the turn to God provides an alternative identity not based on worldly values or markers. The alternate identity is based on God recognizing them and their response to him in living a godly life.

Collins's civil war poems expound on the advantages of this community by exploring its significance not just to her personally, but to the whole realm of civic engagement. Throughout her poems, Collins takes strife—personal, spiritual, and physical—and turns it into an occasion to promote redemptive action, but this impulse takes on extra urgency in her poems written on the occasion of the civil war. In “A Song composed in time of the Civill Warr, when the wicked did much insult over the godly” (60-63), Collins extrapolates the personal lessons she learns from the struggle between

affliction and hope and applies them to civil unrest. Collins opens the poem by lamenting her lack of prophetic gifts and skill in poetry. She recognizes she cannot “With *Sibells*...Devine / Of future things to treat / Nor with *Parnassus* Virgins Nine / Compose in Poëms neat” (60, l. 1-4). She also laments that she cannot sing with Deborah, an Old Testament heroine who composed a song of victory when, through God’s intervention, the land received rest (60, l. 9-10). But Collins concludes that to wait for the right skills or opportunity and fail to speak allows evil to flourish: “Therefore who can, and will not speak / Betimes in Truths defence, / In time they shall their luster lose / As cloth most foully staind” (60, l. 17-18, 23-24). In this moment, she rejects her anonymous insignificance as an adequate excuse not to write. Because she has the means to speak, she must.

The following stanzas, which describe the tactics of the “Foes of Truth” (61, l. 25), demonstrate that Collins takes up this mantle of truth-telling despite the barriers to her writing to demonstrate her affiliation with Truth and its community. In doing so, Collins presents herself as a kind of alternate spokesperson or prophet of Truth who is granted authority to speak, not by her mythic speaking skills or profound joy, but by her perseverance despite affliction. In fact, Collins cites her unassuming resistance to despair as evidence of God’s preservation of a remnant of believers. God’s preservation of a “faithful remnant” is a theme throughout scripture. In Romans 10 and 11, Paul refutes the suggestion that Old Testament Israel’s neglect of God’s righteousness, as described by the prophets, results in God’s neglect of his people by referring his audience back to the evidence of God’s faithfulness in spite of his people’s unfaithfulness. Paul retells the

narrative of 1 Kings 19-1:18 in which a despairing Elijah begrudges God for preserving him as the singular remnant of believers in Israel. Paul quotes Elijah's complaint and the Lord's response:

Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. (Rom. 11: 3-4 KJV).

God's revelation to Elijah serves to both bolster and admonish him for his flagging faith, and Paul retells the narrative to similar ends in his address: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5 KJV).

Collins's characterization of her poetry as evidence of her perseverance in faith despite periods of deprivation, isolation, and seeming abandonment characterizes her as a member of this faithful remnant.

Again, Collins uses images borrowed from the seasons of gardening to defend a period of dormancy as indicative not of rejection but of promise:

How-ever Truth to fade appeare,
Yet can shee never fall,
Her Freinds have no abiding here,
And may seem wasted all;
Yet shall a holy Seed remain
The Truth to vindicate,
Who will the wronged Right regain
And Order elevate. (62, l. 65-72)

Collins's early acknowledgment of her anonymity rests like an unacknowledged seed planted at the heart of this poem: although her personal claim to fame has faded (if it ever existed) the mere presence of her poetry continues to affirm the enduring nature of God's promises and retrospectively elevates her in her readers' regard.

Further, in this stanza, Collins's use of the plural "Freinds" to refer to a remaining community of believers invokes a community of the followers of Truth around her despite their current separation. Her poetry's ability to reveal that community despite its dormancy secures Collins's hope for apocalyptic reunion and restitution. She imagines their reunion as a period in which,

...the Earth with blessings flow,
And Knowledg shall abound.
The *Cause* that's now derided so,
Shall then most just be found. (62, l. 77-80)

This vision of future revelation provides Collins with the means to reinterpret present suffering as a precursor to the day of final judgement. Theologians such as John Owens believed the civil wars and the Interregnum to be the realization of political reckoning anticipated by an apocalyptic reading of the New Testament. Collins gestures towards these views in her anticipation of a complete flourishing of evil (62, l. 81-88), the Jews' final acceptance of Jesus (63, l. 93-94), and the fall of "New Babel" (63, l. 95-96);⁶³ but the vision ends on a hopeful note, with Collins imagining the final flourishing of Truth as a cultivated and productive field of grain in which there are no weeds:

Then Truth will spread and high appeare,
As grain when weeds are gon,
Which may the Saints afflicted cheare
Oft thinking hereupon;
Sith they have union with that sort
To whom all good is ty'd
They can in no wise want support

⁶³ See Katherine Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979). See also Martyn Calvin Cowan, *John Owen and the Civil War Apocalypse: Preaching, Prophecy and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

Though most severely try'd. (63, l. 97-104)⁶⁴

This vision imagines the completion of a parable Jesus tells in Matthew 13:24-30. In this parable, Jesus describes a field of grain enemies sow with weeds in the night. The servants are unable to differentiate between the young weeds and grains and so the master instructs them to wait until both are fully grown so the harvesters may more easily harvest the wheat and burn the weeds. That onlookers are unable to differentiate between the weeds and the wheat until their fruits mature seems highly significant in the context of Collins's anonymity and the invisibility of the remnant with whom she identifies herself. Collins seems to reference this parable in her description of her mind "as a garden...enclosed fast" (55, l. 26) that is yet beset by weeds of "prophanesse" (56, l. 37) in "Another Song (The Winter of my infancy);" nevertheless, the final lines of "A Song composed in time of the Civill Warr," which looks forward to the day when "Truth will spread and high appeare / As grain when weeds are gon" (63, l. 97-98), anticipate the fulfilment of God's cultivation of Collins's mind and the day when the whole community of believers, the field of wheat, will flourish without the stifling presence of weeds.

Collins's incorporation of present suffering into an apocalyptic narrative of hope becomes the means through which she assures her community of the need to hold firm to the faith. Her poem extends the techniques she uses to reconfigure her personal struggles with physical infirmity and despair to build solidarity with other believers. Her anonymous poetry amplifies the echoes of biblical narrative in her work to construct an alternate perspective through which to interpret present, communal experiences of

⁶⁴ Susanna Hopton also makes extensive use of this parable. See my discussion in Chapter 3.

affliction and seeming abandonment as a foretaste of ultimate recognition and renewal. How Collins's interaction with personal anonymity translates to a discussion of her relationship with her community and the body politic illustrates how a reinterpretation of the signification of anonymity extends far beyond the personal. Even apocalyptic unmaking becomes the opportunity for growth.

Collins reiterates the importance of sharing the stories of God's goodness to his faithful as a means to strengthen the corporate community of believers in her second civil war poem, "Another Song (Time past we understood by story)" (63-65). In this poem, Collins rehearses the story of the Reformation as God's intercession on behalf of Truth. The opening lines of the poem invite the remnant audience invoked in "A Song composed in time of the Civill Warr" to reinterpret their experience of affliction as a manifestation of God's present intervention in the world. She explains that,

Time past we understood by story
The strength of Sin a Land to waste,
Now God to manifest his Glory
The truth hereof did let us taste. (63, l. 1-4)

She argues that the taste of sin's wasting power, which they previously understood only by story, supplies them with discernment "To stop the Course of Prophanacion / And so make way for Reformacion" (63, l. 13-14). This poem juxtaposes that which the remnant may understand through words and that which they may understand by experience.

Following stanzas demonstrate how "He that watcheth to devour" (64, l. 15) resists the remnant's reformation by turning the use of rhetoric against them:

he strait improves his power
This worthy work to nullify
With Sophistry and Tiranny. (64, l. 17-19)

Satan's followers mislead "Great multitudes" (64, l. 43) through their "Elocution / And Hellish Logick" (64, l. 22-23), "false Reports" (64, l. 29), and "A Lying Spirit" (64, l. 36) that

mis-informed
The common-people, who suppose
If things went on to be reformed
They should their ancient Customs lose,
And be beside to courses ty'd
Which they nor yet their Fathers knew,
And so be wrapt in fangles new. (64, l. 36-42)

The result is the progressive rejection of truth, piety, and finally community:

With mallice, ignorance combined,
And both at Truth their fury vents;
First Piety as Enemy
They persecute, oppose, revile,
Then Freind as well as Foe they spoyle. (64-65, l. 45-49)

The consequences of this rejection are a land devastated and friends deprived of their homes, meeting untimely ends, or fainting from want of necessities (65, l. 50-56). The words of Satan's followers lead to the utter destruction of God's people's livelihoods. And yet God preserves for himself "A people to record his praise, / Who sith they were therefore reserved / Must to the heighth their Spirits raise" (65, l. 58-60). Their duty, Collins notes, is to "magnify his lenity" (65, l. 61). Collins redeems narrative through the words of the remnant that counteract the confusion sown by Satan's misdirection. The praise of the remnant, who have been "safely brought...through the fire" (65, l. 62), bears witness to the divine faithfulness that many before had only hoped for.

Their profession of "the Light of Truth" (65, l. 66) also illuminates the answers that were hoped for, "When lesser knowledg was disclos'd" (65, l. 70). The remnant's

witnessing of the fulfillment of God's promises, as in the time of Elijah and Paul's letter to the Romans, becomes the proof for future generations that God does hold true to his Word. Collins calls the remnant to a duty to praise:

Who are preserv'd from foes outrageous,
Noting the Lords unfound-out wayes,
Should strive to leave to after-ages
Some memorandums of his praise,
That others may admiring say
Unsearchable his judgments are,
As do his works always declare. (65, l. 71-77)

Collins invites her readers who identify with the duty she outlines to take up the mantle of praise she describes in her collection. Their praise thus becomes the manifestation of God's promises in the present, but also the future. Just as Collins's devotions become a storehouse of personal praise, the collective praise of the remnant also becomes a communal storehouse in times of affliction.

These two civil war songs translate her response to personal suffering into an antidote to communal disintegration. Her rejection of earthly markers through Collins's embrace of anonymity allows her to model a new way of engaging with the world that focuses on future redemption, not the mere distractions of earthly distinctions. Analyses of early modern diseases of the body politic suggest bodies were "imbued with cosmic significance, participating within a system of correspondences between the body of man, or microcosm, and the larger body of the universe, or macrocosm."⁶⁵ William Spates expands Jonathan Gil Harris's notion of the early modern "body-centered episteme" by

⁶⁵ Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 2.

exploring how it provided a metonymic relationality through which to, ideally, establish a place and a hierarchy for everything in the world.⁶⁶ Spates notes that, at the introduction of the word “disease” to the English language, disease did not refer to bodily ailments at all, but rather “to imbalances that could take place at a micro- or macrocosmic level.”⁶⁷ Spates concludes, “The resulting system of analogies created a complex network of associations that linked disease, excretion, decay, death, and sin.”⁶⁸ This system of meaning can be seen in the way Collins describes the decapitation that results from civil unrest:

He whom the highest Title graces
From hearing slanders was not free,
Which Scruple bred, and put the Head
With primest members so at bate
Which did the Body dislocate. (64, l. 31-35)

This seems to be an obvious allusion to the beheading of King Charles two years before the collection’s publication, but just as obviously this reference to the conflict between the head and its “members” interprets the beheading as a metonym for the consequences felt by the body politic as well.

Spates’s examination of the diseased body politic leaves no room in which to engage the equally important positive network of associations—health, nourishment, fertility, resurrection, and sanctification—that are also inherent in the interrelation of

⁶⁶ William Spates, “Shakespeare and the Irony of Early Modern Disease Metaphor and Metonymy,” in *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Jennifer C. Vaught (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 155.

⁶⁷ Spates, 155.

⁶⁸ Spates, 158.

microcosm and macrocosm.⁶⁹ I suggest that a recognition of the interrelation of microcosm to macrocosm also warrants a reconsideration of the public import of private devotions because it illuminates how the presentation of a microcosmic remediation of the individual might have powerful implications for the health of the body politic. In her civil war lyrics, which conclude her collection of songs, Collins demonstrates how the seemingly solitary faithfulness of a believer she explores in “The Discourse” and her songs functions as a means to recuperate the corporate body of worshippers. Her lone voice recording praise to God invokes a whole body of believers to witness to God’s faithfulness.

Collins’s anticipation of anonymity, while recognizing the limitations of earthly communication, thus foreshadows the world’s eventual remediation. Collins’s suggestion that her anonymous poetic devotion precipitates a relationship between herself and her reader anticipates the day when they will be wholly recognizable to each other in the new heaven and the new earth. By leaving her text as a record of her praise, despite her trials, she positions herself as a part of the remnant that withstands the afflictions of Satan’s mistruths and records for posterity God’s faithfulness. The ability to accomplish this task through her poems, whose effectiveness is not limited by time or place, finally helps us to

⁶⁹ While Spates interprets the micro-macrocosmic relationality in terms of Galenic medicine, it is also helpful to note that this kind of relationality is inherent to the Christian worldview in which believers relate their bodies to Christ’s body and through that relationality are ushered into a new body of believers. These homologies suggest the particular rhetorical potency of embodied devotionality. See Laila Abdalla, “‘My Body to Warente...’: Linguistic Corporeality in Chaucer’s Pardoner,” in *Rhetorics of Bodily Disease and Health in Medieval and Early Modern England*, ed. Jennifer C. Vaught (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 65-86; and Kimberly Anne Coles, “The Death of the Author (and the Appropriation of her Text): The Case of Anne Askew’s *Examinations*,” in *Religion, Reform, and Women’s Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 17-44.

understand why she seems to be comfortable with the inevitability of her anonymity. Her reflections on the role of the remnant demonstrate that Collins believes her true calling to be God's witness in obscurity. Her ability to cultivate devotionality in her readers, "though...the Auther bee unknown" (9, l. 52), signals the success of her attempt because it means God's faithfulness is readily apparent in the praise she records in her text and needs no supplementary evidence. Collins argues that this assurance of eventual recognition and mutual understanding is the ultimate comfort available to believers who still inhabit the earth and should serve, therefore, to encourage them in the spiritual discipline for which her poems advocate.

Conclusion

A positive response from Collins's readers to the comforts her collection extends authorizes the hope and future-looking redemptive action her text anticipates. As Collins recognizes the necessity of exercising devotion, she calls her reader to practice the same. Her set of five meditations that follow her civil war poems invites her readers to participate in the devotional work in which her collection engages. "The first Meditation" (66-69) opens with a morning exercise that calls the soul to resist the drowsiness of the flesh and wake up to reflect on its natural estate, "How dangerous and damnable it is" (66, l. 14). The poem opens with the speaker addressing "my Soule" (66, l.1) a referent repeated midway through the poem, "Consider this my soule" (68, l. 61). As a meditation, the poem is spoken to Collins's own soul, but as each reader reads, the soul being addressed is the reader's own, invited to participate in the process of reflection. The meditation describes the Fall as the introduction of a kind of "loathsom Leprocy" (67, l.

28) into the body and soul that corrupts both completely. She suggests that while the bodily suffering that ensues is troubling, “The Soules Callamities exceedeth this” (67, l. 39) because the soul’s suffering is multiplied when the conscience “runs the soule in errors manifold” (67, l. 44) and “Either accusing unto desperacion, / Or elce benumbed, cannot instigate / Nor put the Soule in mind of reformacion” (67, l. 50-52). Though some still spend their time in mirth and play, “Yet,” Collins continues, “can they have no sound contentment here,”

In midst of laughter oft the heart is sad:
This world is full of woe & hellish feare
And yeelds forth nothing long to make us glad
As they that in the state of nature dy
Passe but from misery to misery. (68, l. 55-60)

These lines dwell on how the failings of the body feed into the distress of the soul by tormenting the conscience; but they also insist that even when people have healthy bodies, they are not free from affliction, demonstrating the universal importance of the comforts her devotions offer. The plurality of her referent is emphasized when, in the fourteenth stanza, she slips into first-person plural, “Sin must not in our mortall bodies raign / It must expelled be although with pain” (l. 69, 83-84). “The First Meditation” assumes the relevance of her devotional endeavours to all, not just those afflicted by physical suffering.

Collins’s call to expel sin from “our mortall bodies” (69, l. 83) functions as a turning point, after which she no longer addresses just her own soul but a broader audience consisting of “They that are called here to Holinesse” (69, l. 95). As she often does she encourages the audience to relish the “Taste of blessedness” (69, l. 97) in that,

Thy Conscience shall be at Tranquility
And in the Life to com thou shalt enjoy
The sweet fruicion of the Trinity,
Society with Saints then shalt thou have,
Which in this life thou didst so often crave. (69, l. 99-102)

The “Taste of blessednesse” (69, l. 97) gestures towards the renewal of the mind’s ability to sense goodness again, an ability previously numbed by despair. The promise of a tranquil conscience suggests a release from distempers. This renewal prefigures the soul’s experience of the “sweet fruicion of the Trinity” (69, l. 100), an ultimate model for Christian mutuality that also provides the template for the communion of the saints. Thus the “Taste of blessednesse” (69, l. 97) provides a foretaste of personal renewal but also corporate renewal. In blending the stanza’s reference to her soul and the souls of the broader audience, she signals their already blossoming affinities. The embrace of anonymized spiritual discipline remedies not only bodily affliction and religious despair, but also the rejection, loneliness, and lack of community that those symptoms often exacerbated in herself and her reader.

The final verse of “The First Meditation” suggests Collins’s text plays a key role in the access to community she invites readers to crave:

Let this then stir thee up to purity,
Newnesse of life, speedy Conversion,
To Holinesse and to integrity,
Make conscience of impure thoughts unknown
Pray in the Spirit with sweet Contemplacion
Be vigilant for to avoid Temptacion. (69, l. 103-108)

Again, Collins’s poem ends with a call to action, but the directions to conversion suggest they apply to a reader more than to herself because her meditation invites her reader to participate in the conversionary process already demonstrated in “The Preface” and “The

Discourse.” An audience’s ability to relate to the new confessional subjectivity she performs in her lyrics demonstrates the success of her ability to transform her earthly anonymity into a vector of godly relationality. Their participation in her relational work of community formation also affirms the productivity of her devotion. As her insistence upon a devotional “store” attests, it is not good enough to know the promises that are extended to believers; they must be acted upon.

Collins’s meditations become the fruition of her confessional store by cultivating her faith in her readers. “The Preamble” and “The second Meditation” (70-75) serve as a second public witness to God’s goodness. The Preamble functions like a chorus setting the scene for the dramatic argument of “The second Meditation.” Set off by italics, it describes the speaker buffeted “*Amid the Ocean of Adversity*” (70, l. 1):

*Neare whelmed in the Waves of sore Vexacion,
Tormented with the Floods of Misery,
And almost in the Gulfe of Despairacion,
Neare destitute of Comfort, full of Woes,
This was her Case that did the same compose.* (70, l. 2-6)

Yet God preserved her and causes “*the Son of Righteousnesse to shine / Upon his Child that seemed desolate*” (70, l. 9-10). In response to God’s gracious deliverance, the speaker “*Sings as follows with alacrity*” (70, l. 12). In “The Preamble,” Collins refers to herself in the third person. The effect is to pull back from training a spotlight on her own unique person and situation. Instead, in “The second Meditation,” she dramatizes the difference between the godly and the ungodly, describing each sort in the third person and then quoting the contrasting representative voice of each when confronted with

adversity. The speaker describes the perspective of “earthly muckworms [who] can in no wise know” (71, l. 19) the “endlesse happnesse” (71, l. 18) of being excited to godliness:

Being of the Holy Spirit destitute,
They favour onely earthly things below;
Who shall with them of saving Grace dispute,
Shall find them capable of nothing lesse
Though Christianity they do professe. (71, l. 20-24)

The speaker concludes the “earthly muckworms” are welcome to “The Fatnesse of the Earth” (71, l. 26) because, at the end of their days, they will be “bereft of all but miseries” (71, l. 33) as “their sweet delight with mortall life decayes” (71, l. 34). In contrast,

They that are godly and regenerate,
Endu’d with saving Knowledg, Faith, and Love,
When they a future blisse premeditate,
It doth all bitter passion quite remove;
Though oft they feel the want of outward things
Their heavenly meditacions, comfort brings. (71, l. 37-42)

The difference between these two factions is a result of their perspectives. With sight unclouded by “earthly pleasures and commodities / But oftentimes...annoyed / With sundry kinds of great Calammities” (72, l. 50-52), true believers receive comfort because, “by their inward light they plainly see / How vain all transitory pleasures bee” (72, l. 47-48). Their assurance of God’s faithfulness allows them to endure earthly trials: “Doubtlesse they be, his knowledg that obtain, / No Losse may countervail their blessed Gain” (72, l. 59-60).

This saving knowledge results in contrasting responses to the development of new afflictions. When faced with affliction, those unacquainted with God’s sustaining grace quickly devolve into self-pitying speeches: “O will the Lord absent himself for ever? / Will he vouchsafe his mercy to me never? / What is the cause I am afflicted so?” (72, l.

71-73); but the godly quickly recognize their human culpability, confess their sin to God, and throw themselves on Christ's mercy. The speaker resolves to act according to these insights:

I will forthwith abandon and repent,
Not onely palpable iniquities,
But also all allowance or consent
To sinfull mocions or infirmities;
And when my heart and wayes reformed be,
God will with-hold nothing that's good from me. (73, l. 91-96)

The poem requires readers to examine their personal responses to calamity as it rehearses the responses of the damned and the redeemed. By clearly articulating the difference between a worldly and a godly response to earthly afflictions, the speaker forces a human reader, prone to neglecting the divine resonances of their temporal experiences, to engage with the existential implications of earthly actions. This perspective-taking advances in the reader a continually unfolding awareness of the benefits of rejecting earthly markers and embracing heavenly ones that Collins's anonymity has promoted all along. But the speaker also actively restrains the expression of earthly complaints in the poem by resolving to only "breifly show a carnall mind" (74, l. 121). Again, this act of rhetorical non-disclosure models for the reader the necessity of actively constraining earthly affect to allow a heavenly perspective to flourish.

"The third Meditacion" (75-77) encourages the audience to hold fast to the promises reiterated in the first and second meditations amid an experience of God's prolonged absence. The poem begins in the first person but, as Collins's poems so often do, quickly expands its referent to the first-person plural, inviting her audience to participate in the exercise of encouragement she enacts in the meditation. Again, the

anonymous devotional persona she effects throughout her collection enables this expansion. The absence of a clearly distinguished authorial persona creates a vacuum within which the reader can more easily experience themselves as the I that speaks. The opening stanza of the meditation imagines the soul to have already experienced the feeling of God's prolonged absence. In the opening line, Collins commands,

Faint not my Soule, but wait thou on the Lord
Though he a while his answer may suspend,
Yet know (according to his blessed word)
He will vouchsafe refreshing in the end,
Yea though he seem for to withdraw his grace,
And doth not alwaies show his pleasing face. (75, l. 1-6)

But in the second stanza, Collins draws upon the dependability of even a clouded sun "And other works of Nature" (75, l. 10) to comfort a plural "we" (75, l. 8) with the natural world's testament to God's reliability. It is as if the mere recitation of God's faithfulness reminds Collins of the community of believers who are likewise suffering in solitude:

So it is no small mercy, though we see
Gods Countenance not alwaies shining bright,
That by the same our minds enlightned be,
And our affections guided by that Light,
And whilst the winter-fruits as it were we find
In Pacience, Sufferings, and Peace of mind. (75, l. 13-18)

Collins's solidarity with her community in suffering empowers her to a solidarity in comforts as well. Collins imagines this solidarity provides the energy required for the community to more adequately witness their comforts to their enemies, "Lest it rejoyce the wicked this to see, / Who think the wayes of grace unpleasant be" (76, l. 23-24). Again, she contrasts the fleeting qualities of "pleasures vain" (76, l. 30), like earthly

music that conveys “Unto the outward eare some melody, / But no true joy comes to the heart thereby” (76, l. 35-36), with the heartfelt joy of the soul who worships God. Collins suggests to the soul, “If...the Lord thy Porcion be / Delight’st his Word and sacred Covenants” (77, l. 49-50). Because she shifts so quickly and easily from singular to plural in these meditations, her lack of individuation contributes to the effect of her speaking as and for any afflicted soul.

The poem’s conclusion returns to a focus on the individual soul, now within the context of its responsibility to the community of believers. Because the soul belongs to this community of believers charged to witness to God’s goodness to the faithful, each soul has the responsibility to live by their happiness in Him:

Deadnesse of spirit that thou mayst avoyd,
The lively means of godlynesse embrace,
And cease not seeking though thou be delayd,
But wait till God do manifest his grace,
For thy deliverance, prefix no day,
But patiently the Lords due leisure stay. (77, l. 73-78)

The dialogic second-person referent implies the communal context of this call to action and reminds the soul of its solidarity with other believers despite its experience in isolation.

Because of the way Collins’s meditations reinforce the metonymic relationship between her soul and her community, we can also read meditations in which she speaks to the soul alone as community oriented. In “The fourth Meditacion” (78-81), Collins reiterates the necessity of seeing God’s influence on the mind as a medicine. Her description of “our manifold Temptacions” (78, l. 25) as “nothing but thy scouring Purgacions...Confected by so Skilfull a Physician / Who will not have their bitternesse

abated, / Till thy ill humors be evacuated” (78, l. 26, 28-30) echoes the description of sanctification in “The Discourse.” There she describes how,

Corruption of our nature purged is,
By vertue of Christs Precious Blood only
Which when by Saving Faith applyed is,
Serves as a corrasive to mortifie
And kill the power of inniquity. (28, l. 624-628)

But where Collins’s use of the first-person plural “our” in “The Discourse” seeks to identify her beliefs with a larger spiritual framework, her use of the second-person singular “thy” in “The fourth Meditation” invites each reader to participate in this work of interpolating one’s experiences into this spiritual framework she has identified. The poem instructs the soul in the actions to be undertaken to conform one’s mind to the confessional knowledge that her collection espouses and reiterates the importance of finding one’s meaning solely in God. It becomes a succinct reiteration of the confessional process her collection traces. The community-oriented nature of her other meditations allows us to see that even her personal discussions with her own soul are community-oriented discourse. Collins does not treat personal discussions with her soul as private. Rather her anonymous account of suffering functions to publicly witness to habits of thought that observing readers are invited and enabled to participate in.

Collins’s final meditation, “The fifth Meditacion” (81-85), concludes the collection with one final affirmation of the sustaining nature of God’s character. After listing once more the attributes of God, Collins implores her readers to locate their hope in God. The poem concludes by providing “directions” (84, l. 112) to “whoso will in Heart and Life preserve” (84, l. 111), including charges to “purge out inniquities” (84, l.

113), “have Faith in Christ, and Love / Of God” (84, l. 115-116), demonstrate “Humility” (84, l. 117) and “Obedience” (84, l. 119) and “skilfulnesse in that most blessed Art / Of walking with the Lord with upright heart” (84, l. 125-126). The display of these skills will join the believer “In union with the Trinity divine” (84, l. 130), which we should recognize from previous lyrics as a figuration of the relational ideal her collection pursues.⁷⁰ At this, Collins draws her meditation to an abrupt close. She acknowledges that the happiness that she promotes “one may feel far better then expresse” (85, l. 132) and seems to apologize for becoming carried away by her happiness, “left whilst being wrapt above my sphere, / With sweetnesse of the Theame, I should appeare / Quite to forget the nature of a Song” (85, l. 133-135), or overburdening her audience and concludes,

My thoughts theyr workings, speedily suspends,
And at this time my Meditacion ends. (85, l. 137-138)

This poem re-enacts one last time the affect of her devotion. After describing the character of God and the steps that must be taken to carry out the devotion her collection calls her reader to, she demonstrates the rapturous happiness such devotion invites. Her abrupt renunciation of words’ ability to fully capture the essence of the joy she writes about issues one final challenge to her reader to move beyond words into the experience of joy she can only paraphrase in her poems.

The final poem in *Divine Songs and Meditacions* reiterates one last time that her joy, and her ability to successfully invite her readers into participating in that joy, is located first and foremost in her association with God. “Verses on the twelfth Chapter of

⁷⁰ See, for example, “The first Meditacion” (66-69).

Ecclesiastes” (85-88) specifically critiques the belief that the soul dies with the body.⁷¹ She briefly appeals to the proper reading of scripture before, once more, hastening to draw her collection to a close by drawing attention back to her original goal, which she describes as the desire to “stir up youth their God to mind, / Before effects of evill dayes they find” (87, l. 77-78). This reiteration of her goals affirms the inherent relationality her text pursues. The poem concludes with the acknowledgment that “Yea use of many books are wearisome” (88, l. 80) and therefore

Of all the matter, then the End let’s hear,
Keep Gods commandements with son-like fear. (88, l. 83-84)

Once again, she locates her ability to connect successfully with her reader in their mutual dedication to and authenticity within God. Creating a mental drama that invites participation from her readers, Collins authorizes the new perception of her mind she seeks to create in her text. By expressing her selfhood in terms of the experience of the other, Collins “locate[s] selfhood beyond subjective experience,” evaluating the signification of herself and her text through their active conformity to and creation of communities of devotion.⁷² If the image of her mind is the confessional identity she seeks, identification with the remnant becomes a special expression of that image.

⁷¹ For a discussion of Collins’s participation in the mortalism debates see Johnathan Pope, “An Collins and the Seventeenth-Century Mortalism Controversy,” *SEL Studies in English Literature* 56, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 131-148. See also Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1972); Brian Cummings, *Mortal Thoughts: Religion, Secularity, and Identity in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013); and Richard Sugg, *The Smoke of the Soul: Medicine, Physiology, and Religion in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁷² Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom*, 1-2.

Engaging her community with the image of her mind despite the absence of any other information about herself demonstrates the fulfillment of her text's purpose because Collins believes the ability to perceive the fruits of her mind's labours in all their fullness is available only to the elect. By helping her readers prove their election through her text, she also affirms her own ageless participation in the community of saints. Collins's hopes are thus fulfilled through her text's community-affirming endeavours. Research on early modern representations of human bodies has often focused on either healthy bodies functioning healthfully or sick bodies given over to sickness, but Collins's text supplies an examination of a sick body functioning healthfully and the means through which she maintains that health rhetorically and strives to spread that health persuasively to others. The signification of Collins's text substitutes for the signification of her body, whose dysfunction resulted in her isolation. Through the intervention of the Word made flesh—speaking not only in terms of Christ, but also in terms of the divine inspiration of scripture stored in her devotion—Collins finds her soul revived within her and her mind active again. In her devotion, Collins discovers the means to constitute a collection of poems that are more than just words on a page; they become “the image of her mind” (9, l. 53), an idealized embodiment of the satisfaction that the influence of scripture allows her to claim and create.

There has been some confusion in recent years about the personal implications of one's orthodoxy. Elizabeth Clarke, for example, writing on Collins among other writers, proposes, “It is difficult ... to escape the conclusion that, even during the momentous, liberating years of the English Revolution, a woman's commitment to religion was

judged more by her obedience to orthodoxy, than by her personal engagement with theology.”⁷³ Clarke’s conclusion assumes that a commitment to orthodoxy precludes a personal engagement with theology; but my discussion of Collins’s text has demonstrated that her orthodoxy is so personal it becomes the means through which she constitutes herself to the reader. Likewise, as Kimberley Ann Coles demonstrates in her study of Anne Askew’s *Examinations*, a woman’s single-minded focus on God’s scriptural revelation to her, rather than the received interpretations of the church, had a profound impact on the formulation of the early modern reformed conscience.⁷⁴ And as R. V. Young makes clear in his own examination of the significance of scripture in the seventeenth century, “the Bible is important not as a source of subjective revelations, but as a means of integrating the individual with the larger community of fellow believers, past and future as well as present.”⁷⁵ Of course, Collins’s “convictions are inflected in her writing by her female position,” as Coles says of Askew, but if we downplay her convictions, we miss the kernel of her self-expression that fills out this position.⁷⁶

Collins’s negotiation of her anonymity demonstrates how God heals her through a reorientation of herself. Her devotion provides her with comfort in the face of her devotion and that revelation of comfort allows her to build a relationship with a

⁷³ Elizabeth Clarke, “The Legacy of Mothers and Others: Women’s Theological Writing, 1640-60,” in *Religion in Revolutionary England*, eds. Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2006), 86.

⁷⁴ Coles, “The Death of the Author,” 17-44.

⁷⁵ R. V. Young, *Doctrine and Devotion in Seventeenth Century Poetry: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 176.

⁷⁶ Coles, “The Death of the Author,” 19.

community of believers. Collins's embrace of a willful nondisclosure that amplifies her conformity to a confessional identity allows her to materialize her assurance of salvation through the production of devotional poetry. Her text bears witness to the working out of her salvation through its reactivation of an afflicted mind that, while previously caught up in despair, may now bear the fruits of her faith, not only through her songs' ability to "excite" her own soul in times of affliction, but also through their ability to comfort the souls of her readers with the witness her text provides. Collins suggests that her readers' acquiescence to her text's knowledge production demonstrates their mutual participation in the communion of the saints. This mutual participation also helps to overcome the isolation she previously experienced because of her desolate condition.

As in our study of Eliza, Collins demonstrates a receptiveness to a devotional identity that actively resists association with the world. This devotional resistance requires that we revisit our assumptions about why women wrote anonymously. Scholars have assumed Collins wrote anonymously to avoid the stigma of a woman writer exposing herself publicly, but Collins's suggestion that her interiority will be open to her readers seems to demand that readers recognize her exposure. Further, she seems to embrace the intimacy with her reader that anonymous spiritual nakedness enables. She reinforces the strength of her mind through the reiteration of her devotional identity and surrounds herself with a community of believers. Collins's embrace of anonymity is founded on a recognition that, in this life, anonymity is often the by-product of the devotional commitments she shares with her community, while she also looks forward to

a life in which she and her broader community will become wholly recognizable to each other through the mediation of their knowledge in God.

Again, like Eliza's devotionality, Collins's devotionality trains her readers to acknowledge these truths. A reader's ability to read the image of her mind in her text in spite of her anonymity serves as the ultimate test of readers' adaptation to the experiential perspicuity of Collins's text because, if they have submitted to her teachings, they will be able to welcome her into a fellowship of believers based on the worth of her spiritual fruits. The quality of their fellowship will not be limited by the worth of her unknown biography. But where Eliza's anonymity initiates a longing that encourages the reader to acknowledge their desire for God, Collins's anonymity invites the reader to re-read the experience of longing as a signifier of their already/not yet participation in the body of believers.

CHAPTER 3: THE CORPORATE VOICE IN THE WORKS OF SUSANNA HOPTON

Perhaps you'll impute my Change to the inconstancy of my Sex; but though I may be subject to that, as well as other Infirmities of Human Nature, and the weaker Sex, yet I can with a safe Conscience declare, that of all Weaknesses belonging to the one or the other, I think I am as little subject to any, as inconstancy; for which I have Contempt in the highest degree. I look upon fickleness as one of the most deplorable Infirmities, as well as dangerous, where it is habitual; and therefore have always guarded against it. And I speak it to the praise of God, in whom alone is no shadow of Change, I have been ever true and constant to my King, and to my Friends, in all Fortunes and Changes: And therefore to be only fickle in the great Concern of Religion, and Things relating to my Soul, is as improbable, I hope, as I am sure it would be miserable. No, I humbly thank my God, my love to that hath always been constant, though I have varied in the Opinion of Things that I thought best secured my eternal Happiness. Heaven was always the Mark I ever aimed at; and though through mistake of the wrong for the right Way, I have for some time gone astray, yet my Heart was ever fixed there, and in the love and search of Truth.¹

The young Susanna Hopton converted to Catholicism, much to her family's chagrin, some time in the early 1650s but, under the ministrations of her Protestant husband, converted back to the Church of England around 1660. Hopton lived a life of noteworthy generosity but relative obscurity before passing away at the age of eighty-one on July 12, 1709.² Within a year of her death, however, Hopton's friend, George Hickes, published a letter in *A Second Collection of Controversial Letters Relating to the Church*

¹ Hopton, "A Letter Written by a Lady to a Romish Priest, Upon her Return from the Church of Rome to the Church of England," in *A Second Collection of Controversial Letters Relating to the Church of England and the Church of Rome*, ed. by George Hickes (London, 1710), 119. All references are to this edition.

² Hopton supported several non-juring clergy in her lifetime and left a long list of beneficiaries in her will. George Hickes recollects her generosity in her gift of books to him in his biography of her in his address "To the Reader" in *A Second Collection of Letters*, a characteristic which later biographers also frequently emphasize. George Hickes, "To the Reader," to *A Second Collection of Controversial Letters Relating to the Church of England and the Church of Rome*, ed. by George Hickes (London, 1710), ix. See also Julia J. Smith, "Susanna Hopton: A Biographical Account," *Notes and Queries* 38, no. 2 (1991): 165-72.

of England, and the Church of ROME (1710) that he claimed was penned by Hopton in defense of her return to Protestantism to her former Roman Catholic confessor, Henry Turberville, soon after her re-conversion. Hicke's introduction to the letter also revealed Hopton to be the author of two popular devotional texts, *Daily Devotions, Consisting of Thanksgivings, Confessions, and Prayers* (1673) and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1700), both of which had been published anonymously during her lifetime. Hopton's defense of her conversion and Hicke's support of that defense by attributing to her these two, formerly anonymous devotional texts would come to have a significant impact on Hopton's posthumous reputation.

In the opening argument of her letter, quoted as the epigraph to this chapter, Hopton anticipates her reader's misreading of her conversion and attempts to defend herself against his reproach. Hopton's concern is that her readers may "impute my Change to the inconstancy of my Sex" (119), and she emphatically resists this characterization. Hopton insists that whatever the nature of her weakness, as both a sinful human and a woman, she has not been inconstant. She argues that fickleness becomes "dangerous, where it is habitual; and therefore [I] have always guarded against it" (119). In demonstrating herself to be guarded against intemperance, Hopton resists early modern English generalizations that frequently coded conversion to Catholicism as an expression of the weakness of a disorderly woman. By their very natures, both Catholics and women were considered unruly: "similar yet different, familiar yet threatening, oppressively restricted at the level of prescription yet maneuvering to achieve some influence and

autonomy in practice, talked about yet talking back.”³ While frequently the similitude between Catholics and disorderly women was a feature of the cultural imaginary, this figuration had real implications for all women living under its authority.⁴ Within the broader framework of seventeenth-century England, regardless of denomination, women were imagined to be weaker than men and therefore more susceptible to humoral forces within and without.⁵ Hopton’s conversion to Catholicism, and then her second conversion back to Protestantism, would have enacted and re-enacted this plasticity. Given “the gendered habit of mind”—for example, the association of a particular religious expression with licentious women—her multiple conversions would have suggested a tendency towards infidelity or, at the very least, indiscretion.⁶ Such changeability would have called into question not only Hopton’s grasp of womanly virtues like faithfulness and temperance, but also the stability of her very self.

But Hopton resists the dissolution of her self in conversion by reasoning that if she is obviously “ever true and constant to my King, and to my Friends” (119), she must

³ Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Cornell UP, 1999), 8.

⁴ For a broader discussion of religious conversion and gender identity, see Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith, eds., *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2017); and Jeffrey Shoulson, *Fictions of Conversion: Jews, Christians, and Cultures of Change in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

⁵ For a discussion of the humoral impact on gendered bodies, see Lesel Dawson, *Lovesickness and Gender in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008); Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects: Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004); and Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993). For a discussion of the body, its humors and its relation to the environment see Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett A. Sullivan, eds., *Environment and Embodiment in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁶ David Underdown, *A Freeborn People: Politics and the Nation in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford UP, 1996), 62.

be that much more so in matters of the faith: “And therefore to be only fickle in the great Concern of Religion, and Things relating to my Soul, is as improbable, I hope, as I am sure it would be miserable” (119). Hopton secures her sense of self in the persistence of her community relationships and their claims on her. Community and its authority play an important but often neglected role in the process of conversion:

Conversion is a transgressive act, a crossing of boundaries that both creates and destroys identities. Many discussions of conversion concentrate exclusively upon the convert: his or her motivations and interests. However, the discourse of conversion is usually not that of the convert, but rather an expression of a discursive structure already in place; the convert is spoken for and spoken of by the institutional authorities that create and confer the new identity. The entire project of conversion is aimed at creating this new subject that is not only a subject to itself, an “I” (however we attempt to define it), but also a subject to (subjugated) and a subject of (knowledge).⁷

Hopton resists the relational implications of her conversion to Catholicism by exclaiming on her fidelity to king and neighbours that spans her time as a Catholic; and yet, her text contends with the reality that she lived under an alternate religious authority for the past decade and that her Protestant Royalist neighbours might yet reject her for her apostasy and its latent signification in her feminine body.

Her textual presence would also have been suspect because she had been the dedicatee of a popular Catholic text, *A Manuel of Controversies* (1654), written by her former confessor, Henry Turberville. *A Manuel of Controversies* was a Catholic

⁷ Joshua Levinson, “Changing Minds—Changing Bodies: The Gendered Subject of Conversion,” in *Religious Conversion: History, Experience and Meaning*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Miri Rubin (London: Routledge, 2016), 123. Levinson’s article discusses discourses of conversion in late antique Judaism, but his definition of conversion demonstrates an understanding of the tension between the self and the other that is helpful in a broader Judeo-Christian context. For a discussion of how the Christian literary tradition, and consequently narratives of identity-formation, are influenced by the Jewish midrashic tradition, see Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004); and Noam Flinker, *The Song of Songs in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000).

controversialist text that used a grammar-school question and answer format to present a defense of the Catholic faith in simple terms.⁸ Turberville dedicated his *Manuel* to its first readers who he claims demonstrated their exemplarity by converting to Catholicism and becoming defenders of his text. He names one of the dedicatees “the perfectly vertuous Mistris S. H.” (A2r), which scholars assume to mean Susanna Hopton.⁹ Hopton’s letter resists identification as a Catholic woman, however, by writing her textual self ex post facto as subject to Protestant authority. Her letter rehearses the stereotypes of women’s ready conversion to Catholicism to exculpate her of past, youthful mistakes, but insists “though through mistake of the wrong for the right Way, I have for some time gone

⁸ Henry Turberville, *A Manuel of Controversies, Clearly Demonstrating the Truth of Catholick Religion* (Douai, 1654). All references are to this edition. Turberville is also known for his publication of *Abridgment of Christian Doctrine* (Doway, 1649) which became known simply as the “Doway catechism.” Turberville’s catechism had a significant influence on the development of subsequent catholic catechisms, but *A Manuel of Controversies* was his most popular text during his lifetime. See Thompson Cooper and D. Milburn, “Turberville, Henry (c. 1607–1678), Roman Catholic priest,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004; online ed. 2008), <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/27827>. The publication of *A Manuel* incited a number of responses including Henry Hammond’s “An Account of H.T. his Appendix to His Manual of Controversies,” in *A Reply to the Catholick Gentlemans Answer to the Most Materiall Parts of the Book of Schisme* (London, 1654); and John Tombes, *Romanism discussed, or, An answer to the nine first articles of H.T. his Manual of controversies* (London, 1660). But the study of counter-reformation polemic in seventeenth-century England continues to receive only sparing attention. See Lowell Gallagher, ed., *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); and Arthur F. Marotti, *Religious Ideology and Cultural Fantasy: Catholic and anti-Catholic discourses in Early Modern England*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005). Some of the best scholarship on the topic comes obliquely through the discussion of conversion. Molly Murray provides a comprehensive discussion of recent developments in the scholarship of seventeenth-century English Catholicism in the introduction to *The Poetics of Conversion in Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), 1-35. See also, Boyd M. Berry, “Two Restoration Responses to the Roman Church: Thomas Traherne and Mrs. Susanna Hopton,” *Ben Jonson Journal* 7, no. 1 (2000): 225-46; Michael Heyd, “‘Double Conversions’ in the Early Modern Period: The Road to Religious Scepticism?” in *Religious Conversion: History, Experience and Meaning*, eds. Ira Katznelson and Miri Rubin (London: Routledge, 2016), 233-59; and Holly Crawford Pickett, “Motion Rhetoric in Serial Conversion Narratives: Religion and Change in Early Modern England,” in *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Lowell Gallagher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 84-112.

⁹ See “Susanna Hopton: Education, Conflict, Conversion,” in *The Orlando Project: Feminist Literary History and Digital Humanities* (Cambridge UP), <http://orlando.cambridge.org/>.

astray, yet my Heart was ever fixed there, and in the love and search of Truth” (119).

Hopton enacts her subjectification by overwriting her formerly Catholic textuality and the indeterminate signification of her female body with her letter’s demonstration of herself as a submissive wife clearly incorporated into the Protestant community.

Hopton’s response undermines the claims Henry Turberville has on her. The letter performs her mastery over Catholic discourse through her critical re-reading of her former confessor’s arguments in the context of Protestant controversialist texts. She turns the tables on the teacher-convert relationship in which Turberville had engaged Hopton. After recalling how her feminine vulnerability led her into Catholicism and her disappointment led her out again, she deflects these lessons back onto the Catholic church in the form of a misogynist lesson:

O Sir! how happy would it be for you, and for the Christian World, if your Church would learn her Modesty in being silent, where the Scriptures and Antiquity say nothing; nor make doubtful, and disputable *School-points*, much less such as are improbable, false, or absurd Doctrines, *Articles of Faith*. (130)

Hopton’s admonition suggests his feminine church might be a better target for his lessons than she. She proceeds to systematically compare Turberville’s (mis)representations of the church’s exceptionalism to its mundane realities. Hopton rarely cites sources in support of her argument, though she frequently echoes familiar anti-Catholic discourses.¹⁰ In declining to locate her arguments in specific texts, she presents them as general observations: she also makes it seem apparent that Turberville knew these

¹⁰ The stereotypical nature of her criticisms makes it difficult to pinpoint exact texts but her criticisms are reminiscent of popular Protestant rebuttals, such as William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants A Safe VVay to Salvation* (Oxford, 1638); Hammond, “An Account of H. T.”; Tombes, *Romanism Discussed*.

inconsistencies and chose not to address them, accusing him of converting her under false pretenses. Her attack on his methods reconsiders the sincerity of the friendship he claims when, in his address to the reader, Turberville describes the “desir’d satisfaction of some judicious and strong reasoning friends, who could not perhaps have so easily been perswaded to their own good by any long Rhetorical argumentation, as by this short and syllogistical way” (a3r). Turberville’s dedication suggests Hopton is one of these “judicious and strong reasoning Friends.” He also suggests that “The wished effect it wrought in them, gives me some hope, if seriously perused, it may also work the like in many others” (a3r). Hopton’s re-reading of his text in her letter demonstrates how a continued serious perusal of his text actually draws one into the Protestant faith.

But again, the agency of conversion is not in removing oneself from an authority, but in choosing which authority to submit oneself to. Hopton describes how she was encouraged to re-read Turberville’s text by her husband. Hopton had married the Protestant Richard Hopton while she was still a Catholic and credits him for not pressuring her to immediately convert.¹¹ Instead, he encouraged her to read widely in both Protestant and Catholic texts and discern for herself which was best: “he bid me set whatever I thought amiss in the Church of *England*, against the Faults I began to discern in your Church, and then to judge impartially, which I thought had the fewest and least”

¹¹ Though Susanna Hopton (née Harvey) lays claim to matrimonial bliss in her letter, the story of Susanna Harvey’s betrothal to Richard Hopton is not without some intrigue. In February 1653/4, a deed is issued by which Richard Hopton undertakes to pay “sixty pounds a year for the life of Susanna Harvey” but it contains the proviso that “it would be made void if she should ‘implead sue Question molest or trouble the sayd Richard Hopton for or by reason or pretence of any Engagement promise or Contract of Marriage.’” Susanna Harvey and Richard Hopton married on June 13, 1655 at St Peter Paul’s Wharf in London. See HCRO, LC Deeds, R93/8177. Quoted in Julia J. Smith, “Susanna Hopton,” 169.

(149). Where Turberville had oversimplified the controversies so as to persuade Hopton of the Catholic church's pre-eminence, Hopton's husband introduced her to the complexities of the arguments and did not erase the faults of either church. Hopton's husband's gentle ministrations encourage her to be judicious and engage herself in strong reasoning. Her husband's pragmatism appeals to Hopton and his confidence in her ability to reason with these arguments reveals to Hopton how disempowering Turberville's methods had been. Convinced by her husband's arguments as well as his methods, Hopton converted back to Protestantism.

In doing so, Hopton substituted a Protestant husband for a Catholic confessor. Marriage was one of the basic units of Protestant authority and, as many studies have demonstrated, the patriarchal authority it granted the husband was often used to authorize authoritarianism, especially because of the tropes of unruly women;¹² but within scripture, marriage serves as a metaphor for Christ's willingness to sacrifice himself for the church and the believer's loving response to that sacrifice. In early modern culture, marriage is therefore also imagined to be an ideal embodiment of spiritual commitment. Hopton's insistence that she was not coerced into a second conversion acknowledges the authoritarianism to which women were frequently subjected in marriage but presents her own conversion as a willing response to her marriage's expression of the Christian ideal.

¹² See Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998); and Deborah Shuger, "Nursing Fathers: Patriarchy as a Cultural Ideal," in *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 218-50. For an examination of women's experimentation with the agency of spiritual submission, see Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*, Cambridge UP, 2004.

While Hopton links Catholic literacy with immodesty, she contains her continued outspokenness within the role of a responsive Protestant wife.

To understand how reading oneself into submission could be empowering, we must revisit the agency early moderns invested in echoing other texts in their writing. Including excerpts collected out of other texts was common practice in early modern writing. This practice was facilitated by commonplacing, one of the most basic forms of grammar school literacy training, in which students were taught to excerpt notable phrases out of the texts they read and collect them under a series of personally relevant headings in a commonplace book. Grammar school taught boys to collect their own commonplaces, but collections of commonplaces were also published for readers' edification and use when writing.¹³ The agency made available by commonplacing becomes especially clear when we recognize these compilations to be expressions of agentive reading, not writing. That early modern reading "was always goal-orientated" is demonstrated by an oft-cited analysis of Gabriel Harvey's *Livy* by Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton.¹⁴ They note that the presence of reading apparatuses in Harvey's library demonstrates that,

[Reading] was conducted under conditions of strenuous attentiveness; it employed job-related equipment (both machinery and techniques) designed for efficient absorption and processing of the matter read; it was normally carried out in the company of a colleague or student; and it was a public performance, rather than a private meditation, in its aims and character.¹⁵

¹³ See Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

¹⁴ Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read his *Livy*," *Past & Present* 129 (November 1990): 30.

¹⁵ Jardine and Grafton, 30-31.

In contrast to the modern assumptions that reading is a passive and personal activity, these technologies show early modern reading to be active and public.¹⁶ Although not everyone had access to the kinds of technologies used by Harvey, their mere existence should give us pause in how we might imagine “private meditation” to function if reading is almost always geared towards a relational experience, even if the performance of that relation takes place only within the mind of an individual reader.

The performativity of reading is particularly relevant to how we imagine the reading practices evidenced in early modern religious collections. In the past, books of religious commonplaces in particular have often been dismissed as derivative; but as early modern scholarship has begun to reconsider the intersection of autobiography, religious confession, and identity, as I have done in my first and second chapters, we have also begun to recognize the ways these texts construct an identity out of similarity rather than difference. As Adam Smyth notes,

early modern life-writers, while certainly sometimes sketching what might plausibly be called interiority or inwardness, also constructed selfhood through a process of identifying, even overlapping, with other figures, narratives, and events, and by looking out into the world, rather than within.¹⁷

Studies of early modern religious commonplace manuscripts suggest commonplacing was used to conform oneself to God through the collection of scripture and devotional

¹⁶ For a more recent study of reading publics, see Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Shakespeare's Reading Audiences: Early Modern Books and Audience Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017); and Jennifer Richards, *Voices and Books in the English Renaissance: A New History of Reading* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2019). In particular, Richards pushes back against the common assumption that early modern reading was silent and invites readers to “learn from and use the *immersive* printed books of the past to imagine the books of the future, and how we might read them.” Richards, *Voices and Books*, 2.

¹⁷ Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 11.

excerpts. In the diary of Elianor Stockton, for example, commonplace headings such as “som scriptures by which God hath bin pleased to comfort me when I have been cast doune under the sight & senc of many sins” and “Som evidenses of saveing faith as God hath given them in at seaverall times” demonstrate the work she does to collect verses out of the Bible to sustain her faith after the sudden death of her teenage daughter.¹⁸ She demonstrates the practical nature of these headings by complementing her scriptural excerpts with personal reflections, private covenants, records of the deaths of family members, and thanksgivings for God’s providence.¹⁹ As I have also already demonstrated, moments in which text spans the distance between the reader and God demonstrate how expressing oneself through the voices of other texts becomes the means through which to participate in a corporate identity by constructing oneself in conformity with one’s community. Using the words of another as one’s own constructs a corporate voice in one’s text.

Hopton’s submission of herself to Protestant textual authority gives her the tools to read Turberville’s “*School-points*” or “absurd Doctrines” (“A Letter” 130) with greater agency because, although her arguments are not original (they echo anti-Catholic

¹⁸ Quoted in Jeremy Schildt, “‘In my Private Reading of the Scriptures’: Protestant Bible-reading in England, circa 1580-1720,” in *Private and Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2016), 197.

¹⁹ For more on the intersection of spirituality and reading practices, see Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript, and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011); Sabrina Corbellini, Magriet Hoogvliet, and Bart Ramakers, eds., *Discovering the Riches of the Word: Religious Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000); Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, eds., *Private and Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Britain*; and Mary Hampson Patterson, *Domesticating the Reformation: Protestant Best-Sellers, Private Devotion, and the Revolution of English Piety* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2006).

arguments promoted in many Protestant controversial texts), Hopton is empowered by the ability to write herself anew by speaking in the voice of her preferred religious community. Hopton's attempts at asserting rhetorical control over her self continue to subjugate her to forces outside of her control, but by superimposing the signification of the text over her body she attempts to replace the indeterminate signification of her formerly Catholic womanhood, and the judgement it invites from others, with her letter's faithfully Protestant textuality and her submission to the judgement of the believing community to which she belongs.²⁰ In this case, Nancy Selleck's concept of "the interpersonal idiom" is of great service in understanding the implications of submitting oneself to an alternate authority in the early modern context. Selleck notes how "Renaissance usage characteristically defines selfhood as the experience of an *other*" and the social context of this selfhood objectifies, rather than subjectifies the self.²¹ The difference is that "an objectified self has its origins in an external or secondary perspective, as the object of another's perception, understanding, recognition."²² In the context of Shakespeare's plays, Selleck clarifies why this distinction is so necessary to our understanding of early modern identity:

²⁰ For more on women's reading and self-determination, see Victoria E. Burke, "'My Poor Returns': Devotional Manuscripts by Seventeenth-Century Women," *Parergon* 29, no. 2 (2012): 47-68; David McKitterick, "Women and their Books in Seventeenth-Century England: The Case of Elizabeth Puckering," *The Library* 1, no. 4 (2000): 359-80; Kate Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England: Gender and Self-Definition in an Emergent Writing Culture* (London: Routledge, 2016); and Edith Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2017).

²¹ Nancy Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 8.

²² Selleck, 8.

To resubsume this [interpersonal] dimension under the heading of “subjectivity” —to call it a “subjectivity effect”—is to obscure what Shakespeare manages to suggest about the “self” that goes beyond subjectivity: namely, the way that objectification creates an ongoing dependence of selfhood on specific others. This is not merely a semantic issue: to equate selfhood with subjectivity is to speak of it wholly in terms of the first-person experience. But to *be* an object is not only to *experience* oneself as an object. There is something left over—one is not only an object to oneself, but to others, and those others have legs. To say this is to get at the ineffable and uncontrollable aspects of Renaissance selfhood—those that cannot help but get lost when English culture coins an abstract “self” that seems to represent what it is to *be* a self, but that really only represent what it is to elide the other.²³

Selleck acknowledges modern resistance to the objectification of the self, such as that demonstrated in Levinson’s automatic equation of “subject to” to “subjugate,” (quoted earlier in this chapter) but notes, “Where we see objectification as undermining, even catastrophic, for selfhood, English Renaissance writers could see it as constitutive and crucial, a problem perhaps, but also a solution.”²⁴ Hopton had already been objectified, as in the common usage meaning “to degrade or demote...to the status of mere object” by Turberville in his *Manuel of Controversies*;²⁵ but her letter demonstrates how that objectification, the incorporation of herself out of the texts of others, becomes a solution to the indeterminacy of her double conversion. But this begs the question: how should we read Hickeys’ attribution of anonymous devotional works to Hopton?

The anonymous devotional texts Hickeys attributes to Hopton in 1710 perform a substitution of the text for the author to an even greater degree than her letter. *Daily Devotions* is a commonplace book of devotional poems. The person responsible for the

²³ Selleck, 121-122.

²⁴ Levinson, “Changing Minds,” 123. Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom*, 9.

²⁵ *OED Online*, s.v. “objectify, v.,” last modified July 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/129625.

text is so nearly absent from the text it might seem more accurate to describe them as a compiler or collector than an author. Further complicating the question of the text's authorship, the attribution of the text changed between editions. The 1673 edition is attributed to "a humble penitent," but later editions are attributed to "A late Reverend Divine of the Church of England," before Hickes finally attributes the text to Hopton in 1710.²⁶ *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1700) is a near replica of a popular Catholic Book of Hours published in 1668.²⁷ Hickes, who edited *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1700) and wrote the text's introduction, subordinates the authority of the text's unnamed "Reformer" (a4v) to the authority of the original text and its author, performing the insignificance of the reformer's identity by relegating his discussion of their attributes to the last paragraph of his 32-page introduction: "But all this while I have been speaking of the Book, I had almost forgot the devout Reformer of it."²⁸ Even his description of the "Reformer"'s exemplary devotionality, however, positions the revisor as an extension of the text. The near-exact replication of the original text by such a worthy person becomes the conclusive demonstration of the text's devotional authority and further reason for any readers to likewise submit themselves to its liturgical affect. The author's identity becomes subordinated to the text's liturgy.

²⁶ See *The Humble Penitent: Or Daily Devotions, Consisting of Thanksgivings, Confessions, and Prayers* (London, 1682).

²⁷ Compare *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices*, ed. George Hickes (London, 1700) to William Birchley (John Austin), *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (Paris, 1668).

²⁸ Hickes, "To the Reader," in *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (London, 1700), a4v. All references are to this edition.

Theology of worship defines liturgy as the means through which a church “becomes itself, becomes conscious of itself, and confesses itself as a distinctive entity.”²⁹ Individual speakers are incorporated into the body of worshippers who become the manifestation of the church on earth through their participation in the liturgy. Worship thus incorporates a group of believers into an entity or object through the worship of God. But different theological convictions, that is, differences in the ways believers conceive of their relationship with God, will result in different interpretations of the significance of liturgical actions. The Protestant Reformation resulted in significant re-evaluations of liturgy as a corporate affair, as Ramie Targoff explains in her groundbreaking study of *The Book of Common Prayer*:

Whereas the Catholic Primers were largely oriented toward providing lay worshippers with devotional texts for use either at home or during public liturgical services, this Protestant version sought to transform the public liturgy into a complete text for domestic use; instead of the church supplying a space for private worship, the home was now imagined as an additional site for common prayer.³⁰

For example, in the revised 1552 edition, a series of petitions transformed formerly individual speech of the Catholic Mass to corporate speech of Protestant liturgy by replacing “my” with “our” and “me” with “us.”³¹ But the popularity of texts like the original *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1668) among Protestant audiences suggests *The Book of Common Prayer* alone did not satisfy the Protestant appetite for

²⁹ Jean-Jaques von Allmen, *Worship: Its Theology and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1655), 42.

³⁰ Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 34.

³¹ Targoff, 29.

texts that facilitated corporate worship in the domestic sphere. The texts attributed to Hopton reflect a desire to meet this need through their combination of liturgy and domestic devotional genres. In both texts, anonymity amplifies the author's incorporation with the communal worship signified in the texts and more effectively facilitates corporate worship in the domestic sphere.

The devotional community's acceptance of the texts as authoritative assured the author's inclusion in that community. I suggest that when Hickes attributes these popular texts to Hopton, the value of this attribution is not in claiming them as evidence of her authorial prowess but in extending to her the authority of the corporate voice with which the anonymous texts speak.³² By 1710, the texts Hickes attributes to Hopton had long been lauded as representative of sound Protestant devotionality; by posthumously attributing these texts to Hopton, Hickes extends the anonymous signification of the texts' Protestant authority to Hopton. The attribution of these anonymous texts to Hopton amplifies the corporate voice she cultivates in her letter and supports Hickes's characterization of her well-rounded devotionality in his introduction. Further, the way those anonymous, communally voiced texts benefit Hopton's reputation highlights how her objectification becomes a form of corporate-voiced anonymity. Although Hopton's

³² As Marcy L. North's examination of the anonymous female voice demonstrates, to more carefully read the significance of anonymity it is necessary to understand that voice and authorship are "two different conventions that do not always work together": "This approach would, I believe, lead to a greater understanding of both the anonymous voice and author, and it would encourage scholars to see anonymity not as the obstacle between the voice and the author but as a function of both conventions." When both attribution and anonymity are understood as conventions of authorship, we come to recognize that attribution does not necessarily undo anonymity. Further, we come to realize that the ambiguity these conflicting conventions invite might be an expression of the "ambiguity in anonymity." North, *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor Stuart England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 256, 256, 99.

letter was not published anonymously, she nevertheless performs an erasure of herself within it that echoes the erasure of the author in the anonymous texts attributed to her. She subordinates any expression of individuality, especially the possibility that conversion might differentiate her from her community, to her identification with her community through the echoes of their voices in her text. Hickes's attribution of the anonymous devotionals promotes her community's absorption of her identity.

In my earlier chapters, I noted that anonymity functions as a frame for the identity a woman writer wished to promote. I argued that, in Eliza and Collins's works, the anonymous frame amplifies a woman's identity as a believer by casting a spotlight on her faithful participation in a community of believers through the devotional echo of scripture in her work. As we begin to recover a better understanding of the ways early modern relationality promotes individual communication of a corporate identity, especially when expressed in anonymous authorship and its relational objectification of the voices of others in text, we regain a perspective from which to appreciate the advantages anonymity provided to Hopton's authorial reputation. Since the early modern period, the figure of the author has become inflected by the totalizing narrative of a genius linked to individual originality that has overwhelmed earlier narratives' emphasis on the influence of communal relationality on the authorial self. This misunderstanding of the interplay between subject and object, self and community, and individuality and relationality has resulted in a misunderstanding of Hopton's considerable reputation and her eventual excision from the canon. In this chapter, I examine how the signification of anonymity enhances Hopton's authoritative claims to community. In the past, scholars have treated

the anonymity of the texts attributed to Hopton as a patriarchal imposition on women's authorship, while also treating the attribution of the anonymous texts as the exaggerated promotional technique of an over-eager editor. These approaches imagine anonymity to be an emptiness waiting to be filled up, but these attempts to fill in these texts with the "real" Hopton have resulted in a further erosion of her authorial reputation. In contrast, I suggest we approach the tension between anonymity and attribution as a performance to be understood. As studies of anonymity have demonstrated, anonymity's polyvocality is one of its greatest strengths. Anonymous religious texts demonstrate this strength by allowing the individual to speak with the voice of an authoritative community and to construct themselves as a member of that community.

In this chapter, I consider how Hopton represents herself in her letter to her former confessor printed in *A Second Collection* (1710), and her devotions, *Daily Devotions* and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1700), by reading herself into her community. I also consider how the devotional texts attributed to her employ a corporate voice that seems to speak for and with community. By comparing Hickeys's representations of Hopton in his introduction, and its biographical reverberations in criticism, to the representations of Hopton in her letter and the representations of authorship presented in the texts attributed to her, this chapter demonstrates how Hickeys manipulates the signification of anonymous authorship to enhance Hopton's authorial claims. By understanding the ways the texts allow Hopton to claim and create a community around herself, we will come to see the ways that speaking anonymously,

without a name but with a voice, becomes the means through which to empower women as the community.³³

Caught Between Anonymity and Attribution

By necessity, discussions of Hopton's authorship hinge upon representations of her that were published either second-hand or second-hand and posthumously. Hopton's identity is obscured in Turberville's dedication of *A Manuel of Controversies*, and the two texts later attributed to her were published anonymously during her lifetime. Susanna Hopton is finally mentioned by name when George Hicke introduces her to his readers in the preface of his *A Second Collection of Controversial Letters Relating to the Church of England, and the Church of ROME* (1710). Hicke appends Hopton's letter to his own collection of correspondences as a supplementary defense of Protestantism's desirability when compared to Catholicism. In his introduction, Hicke claims Hopton is the author of the letter he publishes, but he also reveals her to be the author of the two anonymous devotional texts published during her lifetime and the author of two other manuscripts, readied for print, that he has in his possession. After Hicke's death in 1715, Hicke's executor Nathaniel Spinckes published the two manuscript texts attributed to Hopton that he found in Hicke's papers in *A Collection of Meditations and Devotions, In Three Parts* (1717).³⁴ Again, Susanna Hopton is not named on the text's title page. Instead, the text is

³³ Constance M. Furey argues that the ability to claim and create a relationship is a foundational aspect of relational poetics. Furey, *Poetic Relations: Intimacy and Faith in the English Reformation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 23.

³⁴ Susanna Hopton, *A Collection of Meditations and Devotions, In Three Parts. I. Meditations on Creation. II. Meditations and Devotions on the Life of Christ. III. Daily Devotions and Thanksgivings, &c.*, ed. George Hicke (London, 1717).

attributed to “The First Reformer of the Devotions in *The Ancient Way of Offices*.” To a certain extent, Hopton’s authorial persona can seem like a fiction created by Hickes.

Since Hickes revealed her to have been the author of the two devotional texts published in her lifetime and he is also the source for her later works, parsing his representation of Hopton is essential for understanding her authorial persona.

Hickes’s promotion of Hopton’s work and the distance between Hopton’s outspokenness in her letter and her near anonymity raise questions about his impartiality in regards to Hopton’s legacy. In his address “To the Reader” in *A Second Collection*, Hickes claims Hopton’s skills in defense demonstrate her “Genius,” but his discussion of Hopton’s ingenuity mixes uneasily with his own self-promotion.³⁵ He explains how the letter came into his possession when Hopton allowed him to copy it,

fourteen Years ago at her own House, and as soon as I had thoughts of printing it with my own, I sent her Notice of it, and asked her Consent, with Liberty to revise it: Both which she gave me, with a Commis[s]ion to alter anything in it I thought was not so right, or proper, or so clear, as it should be. In a Controversial Letter written about nine and forty Years ago the Reader will imagine there must be several old, and now unfashionable Words, and Expressions taken out of Authors before that time: These I took the Liberty to change for others, more in present use, and a little to alter the Method of her Letter, and also to enlarge it here, and there in a few places where I thought it was too short; but I have not in the least altered her Notions, or the Substance of what she wrote, nor added any thing new to it, but an Answer to an Objection against the Church of England now very much in fashion among the *Roman Catholicks*... (ix-x)

I break off the quotation, but Hickes continues with an explanation of the “Objection” and reasons it was necessary to include it in his adaptation of Hopton’s letter. It served the larger project of his collection and its discourse with the (other) “Lady” to whom the

³⁵ Hickes, “To the Reader,” in *A Second Collection*, ix. All references are to this edition.

collection as a whole is addressed. Given how much Hickes seems to modify the text (despite his assertions otherwise), his modern readers might feel inclined to wonder what, if anything, remains of Susanna Hopton's genius in his copy of her letter.

This concern is warranted when we assume her genius to be expressed in the letter's writing; but a second look at his descriptions reveals that Hickes locates Hopton's genius in the letter's expression of her reading. Hickes makes significant effort to authenticate Hopton's readerly excellence with objective evidence. He frequently remarks on Hopton's "Diligence in reading" (x) and how reading made her "diligent in collecting what she liked out of our Writers" (ix). He notes he has

above twenty Popish Authors, which she left me, and some of them with Marginal Notes in her own Hand. And on the other side she was very well versed in Bishop *Moreten's*, Archbishop *Laud's*, and Mr. *Chillingworth's* Works, and *Ranchin's* Review of the Co[u]ncil of *Trent*, thought worthy to be put into English by those two famous Men Doctor *Christopher Potter*, and Dr. *Gerard Langbaine*. (ix)

He also highlights "some borrowed Expressions, which she took out of *the Antidote of Popery*" (ix) that the discerning reader will note in her letter. These illustrations demonstrate that, according to Hickes, Hopton's skillfulness is expressed in her ability to read carefully and incorporate those readings into her own text. They also show Hickes's attempts to provide material evidence in support of his claims. Hopton's skills as a reader become the means through which Hickes demonstrates her well-roundedness to her own readers. Hickes notes, "she was not less studious in reading Books of Devotion, and gathering the choicest Flowers out of them" (x). This is the context in which Hickes reveals Hopton to be the author of the two devotional collections, *Daily Devotions* and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1700). Both texts were popular and had gone

through several reprints since their publications.³⁶ If valued on the basis of their authorship, they are derivative, collected out of the work of others; but when they are evaluated as samples of comprehensive reading, Hickes shows them to be exemplary.

Like his praise of Hopton's genius, however, Hickes's attribution of these texts to Hopton comes across as tainted by his own investment in her exemplarity. Hopton was an apparently devout but relatively unknown woman.³⁷ It seems unlikely she would have had the skill or connections to have published these texts, especially since *Daily Devotions* had already been attributed to a deceased clergyman.³⁸ Hickes tries to explain away the discrepancies in *Daily Devotions*'s reception history in his address: "This edition" (*Second Collection* xi)—speaking of the edition of *Daily Devotions* printed "at London by Jonathan Edwin, 1673" (x)—"I conceive might be occasioned by a M.S. Copy out of a deceased Clergy-Man's Study, who was taken to be the Author thereof" (xi). Hickes recalls a conversation with Hopton in which she confirms that a final poem added to later editions of the text was not of her hand; but he also notes that a hymn at the end, taken from "Lauds for our Saviour's Office" in the devotional text *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices*, was in her hand. Hickes knows this because, as he delightedly reveals about that text, "I may now tell the World, she was the Reformer" (xi). Hickes had also edited the formerly unattributed reformation of the Catholic *Devotions in the*

³⁶ For a discussion of the publication history of Hopton's texts, see Julia J. Smith, "Introductory Note," in *Susanna Hopton I and II*, ed. Julia J. Smith (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), ix-xxiii.

³⁷ See Julia J. Smith's biographies of Susanna Hopton in "Susanna Hopton," and "Introductory Note."

³⁸ The title page of the first edition attributes the text to "an Humble Penitent." See *Daily Devotions* (London, 1673). There are no extant copies of a second edition, nor is there evidence of one, but the title page of the so-called third edition attributes the text to "a late Reverend Divine of the Church of England." See *The Humble Penitent* (London, 1682).

Ancient Way of Offices (published ten years before) but had only hinted at the reformer's identity in that edition. Upon revealing Hopton to have been the reformer of *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* in *A Second Collection*, Hickes concludes, "which confirms me in my conjecture, that the DAILY DEVOTIONS *consisting of Thanksgivings, &c.* thers, was printed from a MS. of a venerable deceased Clergy-man of *Herefordshire*, with whom she had intimate Correspondence, and who esteemed the admirable DEVOTIONS *in the daily way of Offices*, as much as she did" (xi). How this confirms his conjecture is unclear, but Hickes also reveals that he has two more manuscripts of her composition, "both Books of Devotion; one in her own Hand, and the other in English *Hexameron*, transcribed fair, and ready for the Press, Entituled, *Meditations upon God's Works in the Creation of the World*" (xi). We assume these are the manuscripts Nathaniel Spinckes publishes after Hickes's death in *A Collection of Meditations and Devotions, In Three Parts. I. Meditations on Creation. II. Meditations and Devotions on the Life of Christ. III. Daily Devotions and Thanksgivings, &c* (1717). Again, the point is that Hickes presents Hopton as an author to prove her exemplary readership.

Although Hickes argues strongly for an appreciation of her readership, his account of Hopton is soon absorbed into others' narratives of women's writing, starting in the eighteenth century. In his *Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain* (1752), George Ballard recollects the praise George Hickes and Nathaniel Spinckes give in their editions of Hopton's works, but he also relays the praise of another of their shared friends, Mr. William Brome of Ewithington in the county of Hereford, who had served as Hopton's executor. Ballard defends Hopton's poetic skill by recalling the pleasure he had

“perusing a MS. in her own hand writing, containing several sorts of poems on various subjects, which have given me farther demonstration of her piety and ingenuity.”³⁹

Ballard also quotes a letter Brome had written expressing Hopton’s character:

she was an excellent casuist and divine. She had a sound judgment, tenacious memory, and a ready wit. Her discourse and stile upon serious matters was strong, eloquent and nervous: upon pleasant subjects, witty and facetious: and when it required an edge, was as sharp as a razor. For she knew exactly well what was proper to be said upon any occasion, or to any company.⁴⁰

Unlike Hickes, who praises Hopton’s ability to collect words out of texts, Ballard’s description emphasizes Hopton’s skill in distributing those words appropriately. As Margaret Ezell has noted, Ballard’s method of selecting women valorizes a very particular eighteenth-century ideal. In Hopton’s case, his description begins to shift the emphasis away from her virtuosic reading and onto her skill as a writer of virtue.⁴¹

Ballard’s biography of Hopton was formative and versions of it are included in several other collections of notable women. These later adaptations accentuate the consequences of the changes Ballard makes to the construction of Mrs. Hopton’s genius. In Ballard’s opening paragraphs, he describes Hopton as “a woman of an excellent understanding, fine wit, and solid judgment.”⁴² He continues,

No particular care was taken to improve these talents by a proper education, yet such was her own industry and application, that hardly any defect, or

³⁹ George Ballard, *Memoirs of several ladies of Great Britain, who have been celebrated for their writings or skill in the learned languages arts and sciences* (Oxford, 1752), 394.

⁴⁰ Ballard, 395.

⁴¹ Ezell’s work in this area has been formative to the criticism of women’s writing. See Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Writing Women’s Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993). For a review of the continuing significance of the work to which Ezell’s arguments gave birth, see Devoney Looser, “Why I’m still writing women’s literary history,” *Minnesota Review* 71-72 (2009): 220-27.

⁴² Ballard, *Memoirs*, 389.

disadvantage of this kind was observable to the world, tho' she herself frequently took notice of it, and lamented it.⁴³

As if to convince the reader of her prowess in spite of her humility, Ballard concludes the paragraph, "She made such surprizing acquisitions in the studies of theology, that a great divine assures us, 'she attained to a skill in that sacred science, not much inferior to that of the best divines.'"⁴⁴

Later biographies take up Ballard's description, but their echoes highlight a growing disregard for her skill as a reader and the evidence Hicke presents to support those claims. Mary Hays (1807) quotes Ballard's description of Hopton's "'excellent understanding, fine wit, and...solid judgement,'" but subtly shifts the emphasis in her summary of Hopton's education.⁴⁵ In Hays's account, the emphasis on performative humility becomes a suggestion of effort: "These talents had, it appears, been but little improved by education; a disadvantage which she was accustomed to lament; but which, by intense application, she was enabled to overcome."⁴⁶ Hays repeats Ballard's echo of Hicke's commendation, but where Ballard took Hicke's praise as an end in itself, Hays turns Hicke's praise to a recollection of Hopton's generous support of Hicke and other members of the clergy. She interprets the list of Hopton's books Hicke cites as evidence of Hopton's generosity, not readership. In the anonymous *English Churchwomen of the Seventeenth Century* (1846), the praise of Hopton's genius becomes even more

⁴³ Ballard, 389.

⁴⁴ George Hicke, "To the Reader," in *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices*, a4v. Quoted in Ballard, *Memoirs*, 389-90.

⁴⁵ Mary Hays, *Female Biography. First American Edition. Volume 2* (Philadelphia, 1807), 434.

⁴⁶ Hays, 434.

circumspect. The biographer writes, “she is said to have been ‘a woman of an excellent understanding, fine wit, and solid judgement,’ and by her own pains she repaired the neglect of her education, though she always herself lamented its incompleteness.”⁴⁷

Although the biography recalls the numerous books Hopton collected and filled with manuscript notes, again the recollection serves a discussion of her generosity towards the clergy and not her genius.⁴⁸ As time passes, Hickes’s evidence of Hopton’s “diligence in reading” is buried under a narrative of her excellent character.⁴⁹

But by misrepresenting Hopton’s sharing of texts as disinterested generosity instead of vested curiosity, Hopton’s later biographers set the stage for twentieth-century editors’ complete loss of confidence in Hopton’s skill. In 1932, G. I. Wade argues the two additional texts published in *A Collection of Meditations and Devotions, In Three Parts. I. Meditations on Creation. II. Meditations and Devotions on the Life of Christ. III. Daily Devotions and Thanksgivings, &c.* (1717), which Hickes and Spinckes had attributed to Hopton, had actually been written by Thomas Traherne. In the preface to *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne* (1932), G. I. Wade demonstrates that the second title attributed to Hopton in Spinckes’s *A Collection of Meditations and Devotions*, that is *The Meditation and Devotions on the Life of Christ*, is actually a longer version of Philip Traherne’s *The Soul’s Communion with her Saviour* (1685).⁵⁰ In the preface to the 1685

⁴⁷ *English Churchwomen of the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1846), 111.

⁴⁸ *English Churchwomen*, 113.

⁴⁹ Hickes, *A Second Collection*, x.

⁵⁰ See G. I. Wade, ed., *The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne* (London: Dobell, 1932).

edition of *The Soul's Communion with her Saviour*, Philip Traherne describes how he had written these devotions for the benefit of

A most excellent Person, eminent (not to mention her quality, which is very considerabl) as wel for her Devotion as Intelligence, being, by a just and rational Conviction of those gross Errors and Forgeries, on and by which the *Church* (or rather, *Court*) of *Rome* hath founded and upheld her Greatness, reclaimed from her Communion to that of the Church of *England*.⁵¹

He claims the printed edition has been “reduced...that the Religious Peruser may more regularly pass throu the entire History.”⁵² Wade makes much of this claim that Philip had “reduced” the text. Noting that the text had been written for a person “reclaimed” from the Church of Rome to the Church of England, Wade reasons

—that is for Mrs. Hopton. These *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, then, had been written for Mrs. Hopton, either by Philip Traherne, as the Preface implies, or by Thomas Traherne, as I believe, and certainly not by Mrs. Hopton herself.⁵³

In addition, Wade builds an argument for Thomas Traherne’s authorship of *Meditations on the Creation*, the third title Spinckes attributes to Hopton in *A Collection of Meditations and Devotions*, upon the indeterminacy of Hopton’s authorial abilities. For Wade, Spinckes’s false attribution of *Meditations on the Life of Christ* witnesses to a comprehensive false narrative of authorship that undermines Hopton’s authorial claims. Wade’s introduction raises questions about the legitimacy of Hopton’s reception history

⁵¹ Philip Traherne, *The Soul's Communion with her Saviour* (London, 1685), A4v.

⁵² Traherne, A6r.

⁵³ Wade, *The Poetical Works*, xiv-xv. Philip and Thomas Traherne were brothers and Philip married Hopton’s niece on August 25, 1670. In *Thomas Traherne*, Wade develops the observations she makes in the preface to the Dobell edition of *Poeticall Works* into a narrative of a deep spiritual relationship between Hopton and the Trahernes that allows her to rationalize the attribution of *Daily Devotions* and the texts Spinckes attributes to Hopton to Thomas Traherne. See Wade, ed., *Thomas Traherne* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1944).

and notes, “neither of Mrs. Hopton’s books published in her lifetime was an original writing...Moreover, Dr. Hickes and Nathaniel Spinckes both expressly tell us that she was ‘not learnedly educated.’”⁵⁴ She reiterates this point after reviewing the reception history of *The Meditations on the Life of Christ*: “In her lifetime she published no original work (the one controversial Letter in Dr. Hickes’s collection having been greatly revised and added to by him).”⁵⁵ For Wade, the unoriginality of Hopton’s work proves the limits of her education:

These *Meditations* are full of allusions and full of scientific facts such as it would be natural to find in a young University graduate but very astonishing to find in the unlearned Mrs. Hopton. The allusions to Ambrose and Lactantius, and to ‘the Philosophers’ and ‘the anatomists,’ the very wide English vocabulary, phrases such as ‘Tears are a Collyrium which doth clear the Eyes of the Soul,’ the evident knowledge of contemporary physiology and physics—in short, the whole foundation of learning on which these *Meditations* are built, testify that whoever did write them, it was not our shrewd and intelligent but unlearned Mrs. Hopton.⁵⁶

The concerns Wade raises about Hopton’s legacy are legitimate, and the inconsistencies make it seem difficult to know anything “for certain” about the authenticity of Hopton’s authorial claims.

Thus where Hopton’s reputation had been founded upon the demonstration of her genius despite her lack of education, it is finally dismantled by the assumption that her lack of education made that genius impossible. A later edition of Thomas Traherne’s works, published by H. M. Margoliouth in 1958, ascribes *Meditations on the Six Days of Creation* to Thomas Traherne without mention of the former claim for Hopton. Instead,

⁵⁴ Wade, *The Poetical Works*, xiv.

⁵⁵ Wade, xvi.

⁵⁶ Wade, xvi.

in his preface, he alludes to the ascription made by Miss Wade and concludes “Her arguments are strong.”⁵⁷ Julia J. Smith eventually published an article exposing the historical inaccuracies inherent to the assumptions Wade makes in support of Thomas Traherne’s authorship claims and, in a later chapter, Smith alludes to the consequences that Wade’s assumptions had on Hopton and Traherne scholarship by referring to them as “biographical myths.”⁵⁸ In particular, Smith highlights legitimate reasons to question the relationship between Philip Traherne and Hopton upon which Wade builds her case. Smith located Hopton’s signed and marked-up copy of John Austin’s *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1672) that Hopton presumably used when reforming the text.⁵⁹ Smith’s research has also begun to draw attention to the existence of letters addressed to and from Hopton that demonstrate her personal commitments to theological debate.⁶⁰ And yet, until a facsimile edition of Hopton’s works was published by Julia Smith in 2010, the only recent discussion of Hopton’s authorship could be found in Jan Ross’s *The Works of Thomas Traherne* (2005).⁶¹

⁵⁷ H. M. Margoliouth, ed., *Thomas Traherne: Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), xvi.

⁵⁸ See Smith, “Susanna Hopton;” and “Foreword: Traherne and Historical Contingency,” in *Traherne and Seventeenth-Century Thought*, eds. Elizabeth S. Dodd and Cassandra Gorman (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2016), xvii.

⁵⁹ This text resides at the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge University. The words, “Susanna Hopton her book,” are written on the inside cover, across from the title page. Class no. C.20.33, Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge University.

⁶⁰ A copy of a letter, “sent by Mrs Hopton in her own name to her Bro[the]r Mr Geers a Serjeant at Law,” survives in a collection of Nonjuring letters as Bodleian MS Eng. hist. b. 2, ff. 176-80. See “Susanna Hopton,” in *The Orlando Project*. Copies of letters sent by Hickes to Hopton also survive in the collection “Papers of George Hickes,” MS 3171, held by Lambeth Palace Library.

⁶¹ Julia J. Smith, ed., *Susanna Hopton I and II*. Jan Ross, ed., *The Complete Works of Thomas Traherne*, 5 vols. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005). Ross defends the inclusion of the contested “Meditation on the Six Days of the Creation” among Traherne’s works despite its inconclusive authorship because while “the question of authorship may never be conclusively settled...it must be reconsidered and debated, and the

Despite the considerable reputation of the works attributed to her in the seventeenth century and her personal reputation in the eighteenth, Hopton's work has not been included in a printed anthology of women's writing since the nineteenth century. Hopton's history reads like a textbook case of the tensions between anonymity and attribution. Although attribution of the anonymous texts allows us to claim more texts for women, attribution also raises questions about those claims that are often shaped by gender bias, either early modern or contemporary. Further, Hopton's original editor, Hickes, mediates her voice to the extent that we are not sure where or how to locate her in the text. The history of Hopton's reception suggests that the attribution of a formerly anonymous text to a woman creates more problems than it solves.

Reading into a Corporate Community

Most of the research on Hopton in the last century has focused on solving the problems of Hopton's attribution by recovering a semblance of historical certainty about the relationship between herself and Philip Traherne as the lynchpin between Hopton's and Thomas Traherne's works; but there are obvious and increasing limitations on fully reclaiming this history due to the distance across time. Further, the pursuit of historical certainty has frequently required scholars to minimize or set aside Hickes's seemingly overenthusiastic representations of Hopton's authorship as if they are a stumbling block

only way to do so is to have the text of *Meditations on the Six Days of the Creation* accessible." Ross argues, "the complete *Meditations* needs to be re-examined within the context of Traherne's works, especially more recent manuscript discoveries; it is included therefore to give scholars the opportunity to do so. It is imperative also that it be examined within the context of devotional works assigned to Susanna Hopton." Ross, ed., *Thomas Traherne*, 4:lil-lili, xlix.

to scholarship. Similar tensions between history and representation in annals of English Catholicism stymied Francis Dolan's work until she realized that "the dearth of historical certainty and the superabundance of representation are twinned methodological advantages."⁶² Dolan grappled with balancing the abundance of fictionalized accounts of English Catholics with the minimal historical evidence of them in the seventeenth century. Taking a different approach to those focused on recovering the lost history of seventeenth-century English Catholics, Dolan came to the conclusion that "representations ... are not less reliable forms of evidence—colorful elaborations on or illustrations of less slippery 'facts'—but, for the most part, the only available evidence. Furthermore, perceptions and representations participate in cultural process whether or not they are 'accurate.'"⁶³ Dolan's arguments prompt us to reconsider scholarship's disregard for the representations of authorship provided in the works attributed to Hopton and to probe instead how the presentation of works attributed to Hopton, as representations of perceptions of authorship, participated in the processes of the cultural imagination whether they were accurate or not.

In her figuration as a Catholic reader and then a Protestant reader, Hopton's reading strategies signify her attachment to her community, and thus representations of her reading may also be read as performative identity formation. Representations of Hopton in Turberville's dedication of *A Manuel of Controversies* and her response to that representation in her letter illuminate how Hopton is trained to evacuate her textual

⁶² Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 4.

⁶³ Dolan, 4.

persona in favour of a corporate voice, but they also illuminate how her invocation of a corporate voice demonstrates agency. I suggest that her evacuation of an individual textual persona in favour of a corporate identity functions as a kind of anonymity, in which she allows the authority of the text to evoke an identity for her that is fully constituted by her relation to a community. An anonymized corporate identity would be desirable because it mitigates the perception of a threatening individuation that a double conversion invited. The tension between Catholic and Protestant reading strategies in Hopton's letter demonstrates her attempt to wrest control over the signification of herself in text away from the Catholic Henry Turberville by re-objectifying herself and Turberville's text as subjects of Protestant authority and the practices of Protestant knowledge formation.

Performing this objectification of an opponent's text in one's own was a common practice in early modern controversial texts. Marcy L. North notes how, in the intentional mirroring of styles in the works of late Elizabethan controversialists, authors are more concerned with "the identification of character and with the public or institutional control of truth than they are with the delineation of individual intellectual property."⁶⁴ So the

⁶⁴ Marcy L. North, "N.D Versus O. E.: Anonymity's Moral Ambiguity in Elizabethan Catholic Controversy," *Criticism* 40, no. 3 (1998): 371. These concerns were also demonstrated by debates over how different religious practices were "glossed," as Ethan Shagan describes it or, in the words of Molly Murray, the problem of "shared 'words' but debated 'sense.'" Ethan Shagan, "English Catholic history in context," in *Catholics and the "Protestant Nation": Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England*, ed. Ethan Shagan (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005), 13; and Murray, *The Poetics of Conversion*, 163. The focus on how things were said required audiences to be good readers of people as well as texts because the same words and phrases were often used by both sides. The result, as Frances Dolan notes, is that the absence of external identifiers allowing observers to distinguish between Catholics and Protestants led to a strong emphasis on the discursiveness of people and one's ability to "read" people's convictions. See Dolan, introduction to *Whores of Babylon*, 1-15.

incorporation of an opponent's argument into one's own becomes the means through which to claim authority over those texts. Hopton's letter responds to many of the arguments Turberville puts forward in his text, in a format and tone that echoes the methods of reading he asks his reader to model in his prefatory materials; but when Hopton incorporates Turberville's arguments into her own, she does not claim her own authority over his text. To do so would be to admit a similarity to stereotyped unruly Catholic femininity that Hopton consciously resists in her letter. Instead, she submits them both to the authority of popular Protestant talking points by overwriting her own voice with the voice of Protestant authorities. Invoking Protestant authority in her text allows her to read into Turberville's texts the arguments that had been missed by the two of them when she was still reading as a Catholic. That Hopton learns this strategy from her husband allows her performance of this reading tactic to also figure her in the role of "dutiful wife," against any lingering suspicions about the inconstancy of formerly Catholic women. Her letter does not make a new identity for herself so much as reconciles its disparate parts through the reading practices she learns. Ultimately, these representations of her as a reader substitute the authoritative relationality of corporate Protestantism voiced in her text for the indeterminate significance of her converted feminized individuality.

To understand how the corporate voice of Hopton's letter resists individuation, we must first understand the stakes of conversion. As Levinson's definition of conversion makes clear, conversion entails a moment in which an individual separates themselves from one community and submits to another. Any discussion of the foreign in early

modern society demonstrates that moments of separation from one's community were the site of profound vulnerability.⁶⁵ In both Turberville's dedication and Hopton's letter, the potential individuation of conversion is combatted by imagining conversion to be the means through which one rejoins one's true community. Hopton uses reading strategies to resist the claims the Catholic community makes on her in Turberville's text and to rewrite herself into an enduring relationship with the Protestant church.

In the dedication of *A Manuel of Controversies*, which he dedicates to Hopton, Turberville idealizes his dedicatees' interactions with his text as those who respond to the

⁶⁵ These concerns are carefully illuminated by Kim Hall's discussion of the intersection of racial otherness and the unruliness of gender in early modern travel narratives. She notes, "At first only a culminating sign of physical oddity and natural disorderliness, blackness begins to represent the destructive potential of strangeness, disorder, and variety, particularly when intertwined with the familiar, and familiarly threatening, unruliness of gender." Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Cornell UP, 1996), 28. Tropes of foreign blackness and unruly femininity, then, become a means to defamiliarize threats to the commonwealth back home. Jonathan Gil Harris notes a "bifurcation" of signification in English engagement with tropes of the Jewish infiltration and the woman's tongue as both "the source of the body politic's illness and its health, dangerously alien and 'one of us,' an intolerable deviance and an indispensable adjunct of political authority." Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 80, 107. As previously noted, Frances Dolan notes similar patterns in her examination of anti-Catholic tropes. See Dolan, introduction to *Whores of Babylon*, 1-15. These tropes come full circle in English accounts of religious conversion and the insecurities they invoked. Recent scholarship on early modern British Catholicism "complicates the received view of Catholicism as a foreign entity in religious, political, and intellectual history of England. In fact, the elaborations of certain members of the English Catholic Church contributed greatly to shape many of the issues that we tend to see as quintessentially 'English,' and, to an extent, as quintessentially 'Protestant.'" Stefania Tutino, "Obedience and Consent: Thomas White and English Catholicism, 1640-1660," in *Redrawing the Map of Early Modern English Catholicism*, ed. Lowell Gallagher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 309. But the continuing necessity of such scholarship also highlights the potency of anti-Catholic stereotypes in early modern Protestant discourse. Many serial converts combatted these tropes by figuring their conversions as intra-faith conversion rather than inter-faith conversions. See Michael Heyd, "'Double Conversions' in the Early Modern Period"; Keith P. Luria, "The Politics of Protestant Conversion to Catholicism in Seventeenth-Century France," in *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*, ed. Peter van der Veer (New York: Routledge, 1996), 23-46; Murray, *The Poetics of Conversion*; Pickett, "Motion Rhetoric in Serial Conversion Narratives;" Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); and Lieke Stelling, *Religious Conversion in Early Modern English Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2019).

friendship he extends in it. His dedication opens by contrasting the rhetorical methods of a “Master of Rhetorick” and a “better Friend of Truth”:

I think him a better Friend of Truth (especially in Controverted points) that makes a little of much, by summing up the substance of things disputed into heads, proving his Positives, and solving others Negatives, with short intelligible Arguments and Answers. (a2r)

Turberville’s description divides the Master of Rhetorick from Truth and suggests that Turberville’s own plain-speaking text can be trusted over a more artfully persuasive text. This simplicity becomes the foundation for a community of plain speakers who, through the comforting assurance of his friendship, seek “Truth” together. Of course, Turberville’s strong grasp of rhetorical methodology, the “summing up the substance of things disputed into Heads” (a2r) or commonplaces, provides Turberville with the appearance of persuasive plain speaking. In the seventeenth century, a reliance on “school-points” (as Hopton calls them in “A Letter” 130) was a common Jesuit evangelistic practice designed to give new converts talking points that avoided the more complicated nuances of religious differentiation.⁶⁶ Commonplacing also involved the reader in the text. In a treatise on the educational role of commonplace books, *De ratione studii* (1511), Erasmus shifts the purpose of the commonplace book from the pursuit of reading and memorization to production: “The student is initiated into patterns of

⁶⁶ In particular, this technique allowed Turberville to avoid inconvenient stereotypes about the coerciveness of Jesuit rhetoric. Jesuits were perceived to be a particularly cutthroat branch of the Catholic church and they were deeply mistrusted by Protestants, but also more moderate Catholics. See Peter Burke, “The Black Legend of the Jesuits: An Essay in the History of Social Stereotypes,” in *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy*, ed. Simon Ditchfield (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 165-82. See also the primary source accounts collected in John Patrick Donnelly, ed. and trans., “Jesuits in the Eyes of their Enemies” in *Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period, 1540-1640*, 231-258 (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006).

expression rather than into a method of rational thinking. Ideas are generated by linguistic variation, rather than by logical inference.”⁶⁷ Through the work of commonplacing, young readers were taught to nurture the seeds of their own ideas by training them like young, espaliered trees to classical rhetorical structures. Following Erasmus, Juan Luis Vives takes the transformative purpose of commonplaces one step further when, in *De conscribendis epistolis* (1534), he envisions a student who has internalized his commonplaces to such a degree that eventually he may jettison his texts and address the subject matter in his own voice.⁶⁸ Hopton, who lacked the formal education that might have conditioned her to the rhetorical affect of such methods, responds to Turberville’s ministrations by converting to Catholicism and becoming involved in the production of his text. Turberville notes how his dedicatees were “the first whose patience perused it, in a rough hand” (a2r) and he describes how he has now “somewhat smooth’d it by the Presse, and chiefly in obedience to your commands” (a2v). Finally, he offers it to their “ingenius Patronage” (a2v). Turberville creates an identity for himself out of the friendship he cultivates with the people he converts.⁶⁹ The dedicatees’ friendship with

⁶⁷ Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 104. See Desiderius Erasmus, “De Ratione Studii,” in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. Craig Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 2:661-92.

⁶⁸ Juan Luis Vives, *De Conscribendis Epistolis*, ed. Charles Fantazzi, vol. 3 in *Selected Works of J. L. Vives*, ed. C. Matheussen (Leiden: Brill, 1989). Commonplacing was a common feature of early modern literature, but the contributions of Catholic writers to this aspect of English literary culture have often been underestimated. For more on Catholic contributions to English literary culture, see Allison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999); and Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁶⁹ Paolo Broggio argues that the Counter-Reformation encouraged an approach to friendship in which it became “a refuge for individuals and a powerful means by which to discover one’s own identity.” Paolo Broggio, “Peace and Friendship in Early Modern Catholic Europe: Towards a Political History of Human Relations in Counter-Reformation Culture (1580-1650),” in *Friendship and Sociability in Premodern Europe: Contexts, Concepts, and Expressions*, eds. Amyrose McCue Gill and Sarah Rolfe Prodan (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2014), 234-35. This argument builds on those of John Bossy who argued that pre-Tridentine religion met a need for community in the midst of a culture

him becomes a confirmation of the effectiveness of his evangelistic methods and he secures his textual identity in their affirmation of his friendship.

However, Turberville's rhetorical methods also cultivate an intimacy with his readers so they become actively invested in the meaning-making project of the text.

Turberville's dedication constitutes him as an object of their friendship but, by writing that friendship into existence in the pages of his book, he also objectifies his dedicatees.

About the generation of self by an other in Donne's *Devotions*, Selleck writes,

We have little in the way of theoretical language with which to address that kind of interpenetration of self and world, and critical discussions often fall back on an idea of a more individual self and its own (implicitly independent) agency. But what of a self whose action is not only in reference to another but generated by the other? What of the self as sponge, or to take Donne's increasingly frequent figure, the self that digests, assimilates, and is continually reconstituted by the other—that *needs* to be so reconstituted? Certainly there is agency here, but it only works in conjunction with another agent.⁷⁰

Donne's *Devotions* shows the process of reading and writing as a form of digestion, perhaps also social ingestion. He is alone, he takes on God's perspective, he is at peace in his better understanding of his context. By demonstrating that his readers have become invested in the creation of his text, Turberville shows how his text anticipates the process of reading and writing as a form of social ingestion. He objectifies Hopton in his text by presenting her as the product of his text's affect. Thus Turberville's friendship becomes

dominated by conflict. See John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976); and "The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200-1700," *Past and Present* 100 (1983): 29-61. Turberville incorporates this sense of communal belonging and personal individuation in the extension of friendship he makes to his readers in his address.

⁷⁰ Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom*, 80.

the means through which to objectify his readers, and their textual identity becomes an expression of his.

Hopton's letter upon her re-conversion to Protestantism provides an effective critique of Turberville's text because she pushes back on her objectification in his text, undermining his identity as an ideal confidant and hers as an ideal convert. Like Turberville, she opens her letter by affirming their friendship:

Sir, I have ever had much honour for your Person, and have found your Friendship so largely expressed to me in your care of my Welfare, that I can neither be so ungrateful, as to forget it, or so unjust as not to acknowledge it.
(118)

But her affirmation of their intimacy quickly becomes a double-edged sword she wields against him. Turberville's previous confidence in her character becomes proof of her constancy in the present. And her respect for his breadth of knowledge becomes proof that he must have withheld from her the arguments that eventually led her to return to the Church of England. Because Turberville had used Hopton as an exemplary convert in *A Manuel of Controversies*, Hopton now uses Turberville's earlier "obedience to [her] commands" (*Manuel* a2v) to authorize her letter as a continuation of that intervention. She argues that his misrepresentations of controversial topics prevented her from accomplishing an accurate reading of *A Manuel of Controversies* and her letter now attempts to remedy this oversight.⁷¹ In effect, Turberville preauthorizes her letter because

⁷¹ One of the few accusations that Hopton levels against Turberville outright is against the Catholic international missions. She accuses the Catholic church of forcing conversions in the East Indies and misrepresenting Jesus to the Chinese. Hopton also makes specific reference to the reports on the Spanish Mission written by Bartolomé de las Casas. See Hopton, "A Letter Written by a Lady," 140-42; and Bartolomé de las Casas, *The Tears of the Indians: being a historical and true account of the cruel massacres and slaughters of above twenty millions of innocent people* (London, 1656). Other anti-Jesuit English primary sources demonstrate this was a common critique of Jesuit missions: for a collection of

he invests her with the duty to read his text responsively. The history of their relationship and her recollections of their friendship in her letter become the means through which she secures the sincerity of her present engagement with his text.

Hopton's defense of her constancy occurs within this context. Hopton uses the topic of constancy to reread Turberville's friendship through the misogynist lens of anti-Catholic rhetoric. Women were often thought of as more volatile and were imagined to be less anchored to their communities; people therefore believed them to be more susceptible to the influence of Catholic missions. As Dolan writes,

The assumption that women were more likely than men to stick with Catholicism, or to convert to it, often corresponded to the assumption that women were illiterate and unlearned, and thus were loyal to a religion that coddled their incapacities, or, in the case of converts, were vulnerable to one that preyed on their ignorance. Furthermore, it was widely believed that Catholicism lured women with its ritual paraphernalia, offering them trinkets and toys rather than a Bible they could not read.⁷²

primary sources reporting on the Jesuit missions abroad, see John Patrick Donnelly, ed. and trans., "Jesuit Missions in Asia and the Americas" in *Jesuit Writings of the Early Modern Period, 1540-1640* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 64-130. For a discussion of the polemical significance of reports on Catholic missions, see Peter Burke, "The Black Legend of the Jesuits: An Essay in the History of Social Stereotypes," in *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy*, ed. Simon Ditchfield (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 165-182; and Keith P. Luria, "Narrating women's Catholic conversions in seventeenth-century Vietnam," in *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern England*, eds. Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2017), 195-215.

⁷² Dolan, *Whores of Babylon*, 27. In *A Protestant Antidote against Popery* (1674) addressed to "a Young Lady By a Person of Honour," the author speaks with derision of the flattery that young women have come to expect from those who wish to address them and their religious convictions: "so obliging is the common courtesie of *England* to Ladies, that it allows them to pretend to all praises as their due, though few deserve any as their *right*. In a word, our *English Ladies* must have their *Characters* writ, just as the *Dutch Madams* have their Pictures drawn, that is, very handsome, though they themselves be never so ugly." *A Protestant Antidote*, 2. But, as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie notes in her popular TED talk "The Danger of a Single Story," "the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue..." Contributing to the virulence of stereotypes against women who were Catholics was that parts of those stereotypes were true. Research by Claire Canavan and Helen Smith demonstrates that women were more likely to convert to Catholicism and that they were also more likely to convert others. See Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story," July 2009 for TEDGlobal, 18:33, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story; and Clair Canavan and Helen Smith, "'The Needle May Convert More than the Pen': Women and the Work of Conversion in

Hopton gestures towards these stereotypes in her rereading of Turberville's instruction as a form of spiritual grooming. She suggests that when he simplified the controversial topics he presented to her, he took advantage of her youth, her poorer education as a woman, and the vulnerability of the feminized Church of England during the Interregnum, to deliberately lead her out of the security of her community:

You had two great advantages over me, the Eclipse of the Church of *England*, and my own Youth; which was too weak to discern her as she now is, and then really was in her self, cleaned from those Mists and Clouds of Error, with which like the Sun, she was surrounded and obscured to the greatest degree. In truth, *Sir*, when I look back upon those unhappy Times, and consider how the [word indistinct] new Lights dazed the Eyes of many, and indisposed them from discerning the pure light of Truth; and how the Enthusiasms of Pretenders to the Spirit passed for Divine Inspirations, I hope I may be excused for having wandred out of the way in those distracted Times. (119-120)

Hopton's discussion of the eclipse of the Church of England and the mists and fogs that obscured the church blends the humorality of her own misguided youth with the civil wars' effect on the English church. Women, by their nature, were notoriously more susceptible to humoral interference, especially when they were young.⁷³ By overtly feminizing the Church of England and describing the troubles that afflicted the church as clouds and mists, Hopton extends the humorality of the female body to the church. Mists and fogs, related to an excess of moisture in the air, were also thought to be portents of natural disasters, as were eclipses, and the apocalyptic resonances of the civil wars were well rehearsed in civil war pamphlets.⁷⁴ Hopton's recollection of the impact of these

Early Modern England," in *Conversions: Gender and Religious Change in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Simon Ditchfield and Helen Smith (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2017), 105-26.

⁷³ See Lesel Dawson's discussion of the tropes of lovesickness in *Lovesickness and Gender*.

⁷⁴ See Sophie Chiari, *Shakespeare's Representation of Weather, Climate, and Environment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2019); and Rebecca Totaro, *Meteorology and Physiology in Early Modern Culture:*

forces on her youth and the Church of England performs the sympathetic relations between one's body and one's community by suggesting that the vulnerability of her religious community left her susceptible to Turberville's ministrations and the church weakened by her seeming rejection.

Hopton suggests that Turberville's knowledge of these intimacies makes him more guilty, not less. She accuses him of taking advantage of the best of her desires, especially the ancient desire for a "Catholick Church" (120) characterized by "Unity without Division, Light for Darkness; Truth, even the ancient Catholick and Apostolick Truth, instead of Errors; Certainty and Satisfaction instead of Uncertainty and Doubts; and wholesome Food instead of Poison" (120). This was the ideal that both sides of the schism hoped for. The debate was whether it could be found within the Roman Catholic tradition or within the Protestant tradition. Hopton's description of her desires further highlights her young, feminine, idealistic vulnerability; desiring God but struggling to discern truth for herself, she humbly submits herself to a seemingly godly authority. Her innocence absolves her but convicts him.

Her descriptions of her youth suggest she had been meek and compliant, but his misrepresentations of the truth have necessitated an outspoken response. Recounting

Earthquakes, Human Identity, and Textual Representation (New York: Routledge, 2018). Eclipses were easily predicted in the seventeenth century and frequently featured in popular literatures. Elizabeth DeBold describes almanacs by William Lily and Nicholas Culpepper which anticipate the 1652 eclipse as a portent of pestilence, famine, and war. David H. Levy describes the prevalence of eclipse imagery in Shakespeare's tragedies. See DeBold, "Black Monday: the Great Solar Eclipse of 1652," *The Collation: Research and Exploration at the Folger* (blog), Folger Shakespeare Library, August 22, 2017, <https://collation.folger.edu/2017/08/black-monday-great-solar-eclipse-1652/>; and David H. Levy, "These Late Eclipses," in *The Sky in Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Springer, 2011), 27-44.

Turberville's betrayal of her trust occasions Hopton's sharp rebuke. The tone of Hopton's letter transitions from nostalgic recollection to bitter disappointment:

But alas, *Sir*, I have been greatly disappointed, for I have found Plenty, great Plenty of Tares there, which grow so thick, that in truth they almost choak the good Seed of God's most holy Word. Your Church was represented to me as an Heaven, or Paradise upon Earth, as all Peace and Purity; but how little have I, to my great Misfortune, found of all, or either of these, which upon your Authority I expected to find there. (120)

Hopton's denunciation of Turberville's presentation of the character of his church, coupled with an affirmation of his authority, unmasks the self-serving nature of his friendly and accessible persona in *A Manuel of Controversies*. Instead of embracing the unity he taught, Hopton accuses Turberville's misrepresentations of luring her out of her community and contributing even further to its divisions. Hopton attempts to undo the harm perpetrated against the Protestant community by Turberville. Undermining the integrity of her past commitments forms the first step in the work of reading herself into a present commitment. At one point, her letter begins to sound like a Dear John letter:

Sir, it is matter of great Humiliation to me, to think I must leave a Church to which I was engaged, and in which through Mistake, I thought my Soul safe. But having, by God's Grace, discovered my Error, and how dangerous it is to persevere in it against my Convictions, I think my self obliged to acknowledge my own Weakness and Ignorance in being misled; and rather to take Shame to my self as an humble Penitent, than stand out any longer against the Truth. (125)

This confession verbalizes the lengths and the depths of her commitment to the true Church by highlighting her willingness to take on the shame of broken commitments and do what is right. By rebuffing Turberville, Hopton extricates herself from the authority of the Catholic Church by retroactively reimagining her decade-long commitment as a mere broken engagement that cannot be prevented given her steadfast commitment to Truth.

Thus her letter's castigation of Turberville also becomes the means through which she performs her belonging to a Protestant community. Hopton reimagines Turberville's friendship, but she also re-imagines his rhetorical methods. Her letter acknowledges the frequently coercive methods of Jesuit training: "But though it was my good Fortune to be proselyted by you, yet how many Thousands are misled into those superstitious Errors by other Guides; who allow not their Disciples, when once reconciled, any farther use of their Reason" (124). Hopton implies that this kind of restriction is necessary because arguments in favour of Catholicism are ultimately unreasonable. She argues that, despite his own cultivation of her reason, it eventually led her away from Rome again:

After I set my self to examine and enquire, I found some false and groundless, others dangerous, and some uncertain and dubious Doctrines imposed by your Church upon the Belief of her Children, as necessary to Salvation. I need not mention them all to you, or insist upon them: For the single Doctrine of *Transubstantiation* is enough to fright any one, who considers it, from your Worship, and by consequence from your Church. For can I be sure not to commit Idolatry at the Mass? (124-125)

His investment in her reason implicates him in her conclusions. Again, she invokes his good impressions of her to authorize her arguments: "I hope you will not impute my Change to Rashness, or presuming upon my own Understanding; for I assure you, *Sir*, it is the effect of long, and serious search and deliberation" (125-26). Although his encouragements fueled her reading, they were not ultimately sufficient for her reason. Hopton then proceeds to demonstrate these insufficiencies by rereading Turberville's "school-points" (130) through the lens of Protestant controversy.

Each article of Turberville's *Manuel* follows a standard format. Turberville provides a brief synopsis of the issue at hand and then provides several arguments in

favour of his position; he follows with evidence out of the works of the Church Fathers; and then concludes the discussion with a section entitled “Objections Solved,” in which he poses common objections to the Roman perspective and answers them.⁷⁵ Hopton addresses many of the issues Turberville covers in his text, including the continuous and visible succession of the Roman church, its claims to unity, universality, and infallibility, the supremacy of the Pope and the church’s claim to Apostolic tradition, its position on schism and heresy and, of course, concerns about the Catholic Mass and other sore points of Catholic mysticism like Purgatory, Prayers for the Dead and to the Saints, Indulgences, Relics, and the use of Sacred Images.

Her treatment of all these issues is framed by her fundamental concern for Turberville’s definition of the Roman Church’s Unity and Universality. She had been lured out of the English Church by the promise of Roman Catholic unity and the Universality of the Roman Church, and upon the disappointment of these hopes she performs her renewed commitment to Protestantism by asserting her resemblance to and unity with the English Church. Her most succinct declaration of faith addresses herself to this issue:

And I here declare, and profess, that I believe all that the Universal Church taught and believed as Matters of Faith for the first Five Hundred Years; and particularly

⁷⁵ For an example of “Objections Solved,” see Turberville, *A Manuel of Controversies*, 33-34. This question and answer format became popular in seventeenth-century religious controversies. A search of the *Early English Books Online* shows that the number of works in the database containing the term “Objections” and its variants in their titles spikes to 212 works in 1640-1649 compared to the 23 works containing the term “Objections” in the title in the previous decade (1630-1639). Likewise, the number of works containing the term “Answered” or its variants in its title spikes to 2571 works in 1640-1649 compared to the previous decade’s 259 works. Although this evidence provides a primarily surface level reading of the debates occurring in the seventeenth century, I believe that the prominence of “Objections...Answered” in titles published leading up to and into the interregnum demonstrates a dramatic increase in the popularity of a particular form of rhetorical debate.

I believe all that is in the Confession of Faith made by Pope *Gregory the First*, in which I can find none of the Twelve new Articles that are in the Creed of Pope *Pius IV*. But I find that the present Church of *Rome* doth not agree with the Universal Church of God for the first Five or Six Hundred Years. She hath not Antiquity, Universality, and Succession of her side, nor can I believe her to be the Catholic Church, either as Catholick signifies *Universal Church*, or as it signifies a *sound and pure Church* which hath the ancient Apostolick Faith, Worship, and Government. (126)

Hopton's arguments directly refute the claims Turberville makes in his *Manuel*. In the *Manuel's* Article IV, "The true Church demonstrated by her Unity and Universality," Turberville addresses the argument that "the church of *Rome* is both perfectly one, and also *universal* for time and place" (61). After providing evidence in support of this argument, he summarizes his response to the objections that "The *Roman Catholique Church* is a particular Church, therefore it is not Catholique or Universal" (62).

Turberville writes:

I distinguish your antecedent, the *Roman Church*, as taken only for the congregation of *Rome*, or Italy, is a particular Church, I grant; as taken for the whole collection of Churches, holding communion with the Sea of *Rome*, I deny it: For so it is an universal church, containing all particular churches, as all the parts are contained in the whole, and in this acception also it is call'd the *Roman Church*, because the particular Roman Church is the Mother Church, and hath a power of Headship and Jurisdiction over all the rest. (62)

Although Turberville provides "Evidence out of the Fathers" as a subheading of argumentation, "Objections Solved" do not reference these sources. His responses are constructed as self-evident and his reasons brook no disagreement or further discussion. They train the reader to repeat the talking points uncritically. Hopton's discussion of the universality of the Roman Church, however, uses Protestant talking points to read between the lines of his argument. She follows her declaration with a succinct rejection of Turberville's arguments:

First, She is not Catholick, as Catholick signifies the *Universal* Church, because she, and all the Churches within her Pale and Communion, are but a part, and perhaps not above the Twentieth part of Christendom, or of the Universal Church dispersed over all the Earth. Nor is she, and the Churches in Communion with her Catholick, as the word signifies Sound and Pure, but a Corrupt, Unfound, Impure part of the Universal Church. Corrupt, as our learned Writers have shewn, in Doctrine, Worship, and Government, having receded from the Rule of Scriptures, and from the true, ancient, Catholick Tradition, to which all Churches ought to be conformed, and according to which I wish she were by a happy Reformation made, as conformable as ours. (126-127)

Although Hopton makes it clear that these arguments have been shaped by extensive “search and deliberation,” her statements claim the arguments of “our learned Writers” as her own by declining to cite them directly. Her declaration demonstrates that her arguments are informed by a Protestant knowledge base that has become so much a part of her own self that she no longer differentiates between their arguments and her own. Her embodiment of the voice of the Protestant controversialists demonstrates her belonging to the corporate community of Protestant believers. This construction anonymizes the author. Although her letter obviously invokes an authorial persona, Hopton evacuate her individuality in favour of the corporate voice of the Protestant community. Even when she claims to speak as an “I,” the intertextuality of her “I”-persona demonstrates that she speaks as a “we.” Thus the flexing of an anonymized, Catholic-inflected “I”-persona becomes the means through which she becomes incorporated into a corporate Protestant voice. Research has demonstrated that anonymity frequently manifests paradox: “Anonymity more often functions to combine or collapse the old and the new; it facilitates the appropriation of past conventions and encourages

experimentation with the standards of the present.”⁷⁶ For Hopton, anonymity becomes the means through which to conflate the Catholic “I” and the Protestant “we” by submitting her marginalized “I” to the authority of the Protestant “we.” Her acknowledgment of her former Catholicism becomes the grounds upon which she builds her Protestant identity. Paradoxically, Hopton claims individual agency by submitting herself to the authority of her community.

Like her concern about readers attributing her change to “the inconstancy of my Sex” (119), her fear that they might also attribute it to “rashness, or presuming upon my own Understanding” (125-126) highlights how Hopton writes against her individuation. Hopton’s concerns testify to the truth of Levinson’s argument that conversion is as much, if not more about the community than it is about the individual. Hopton seems profoundly concerned that her conversions will be read as acts of individuation, especially because feminine inconstancy undermines the security of the marital relationship, the basic unit of relationality upon which early modern community was built.⁷⁷ Likewise, to presume upon one’s own understanding would be to reject the authoritative corporate knowledge upon which any act of real “knowing” was thought to

⁷⁶ North, *Anonymous*, 4.

⁷⁷ These concerns are frequently dramatized in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English plays about women’s infidelity; see, for example, the anonymous *Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham*, Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Winter’s Tale*, Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, and Ben Jonson’s *Volpone*. These stories emphasize how economic stability is inherently threatened by women’s sexuality. See Lyn Bennett, “The Homosocial Economies of *A Woman Killed With Kindness*,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 24, no. 2 (2000): 35-60; Lloyd Bonfield, “Seeking connections between kinship and the law in early modern England,” *Continuity and Change* 25, no. 1 (2010): 49-82; Mark Fortier, “Married with Children: *The Winter’s Tale* and Social History; or, Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-Century England,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (1996): 579-603; and Lena Cowen Orlin, *Private Matters and Public Culture in Post-Reformation England* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994).

be based. The truth is that, because she had a female body, her ability to maintain control over herself would always be in question. Early modern women were already considered to be more susceptible to the influences of their environment and internal weather.⁷⁸

Though conceptions of people's bodies, and especially women's bodies, changed over the course of the seventeenth century through the tensions between traditional Galenic medicine and emerging anatomical discourses, the inferiority of women's bodies spiritually, anatomically, and agentively remained relatively unchallenged throughout the century. Women were the first to fall into sin, their bodies were the anatomical inversion or inferior presentation of the male, and their humoral, predisposed to passivity, made them prone to illness.⁷⁹ The particular weaknesses of the female body were also imbued with cultural values: as Suzanne Scholz notes, "an allegedly universalist selfhood emerged through the exclusion of materiality, corporeality, and 'nature,' all of which were implicitly feminized."⁸⁰ These figurations had the result that women were inherently less privy to cultural capital.

Hopton's vocal resistance to her inclusion within feminized anti-Catholic stereotypes demonstrates how conversion amplified early modern mistrust of the feminine. Her re-conversion to Protestantism would have undermined her credibility even

⁷⁸ See Susanne Scholz, *Body Narratives: Writing the Nation and Fashioning the Subject in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Mary Fissell, *Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004); and Floyd-Wilson and Sullivan, eds., *Environment and Embodiment*.

⁷⁹ See Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies, and Families in Early Modern England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004); Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998); and Anthony Fletcher, "The Weaker Vessel," in *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1995), 60-83.

⁸⁰ Scholz, *Body Narratives*, 57.

further by confirming the culture's worst fears about women's changeability. While single converts needed to convince their community of their new commitment, serial converts faced a more intense scrutiny of their ability to commit altogether, because "an interesting feature of the phenomenon of conversion is the fact that, whether or not it explicitly attributes human change to divine agency, it religiously and politically enacts human choice."⁸¹ Converting to Catholicism raised questions about her fidelity, but re-converting to Protestantism, as a woman no less, would have raised the concern that she was pathologically unable to commit, that is, unable to fulfill the key task of womanhood, which is to be one who submits to authority. Because fidelity was what being a woman signified, her questionable fidelity threatened her very nature. Although she was attempting to ground her conversion in the truth of her commitments, this identity was unstable because her ability to commit was unsecured.

In response, Hopton ensures the sincerity of her converted submission by rooting her Protestant textuality within marriage. She concludes her argument by revealing that her husband had encouraged her in the reading practices she demonstrates in her letter. Her descriptions of her husband's ministrations contrast sharply with Turberville's reductive "school points" and "absurd Doctrines" (130). Where Turberville took advantage of Hopton's poor education to control her loyalties, Hopton's husband undertakes the project of rounding out her education with forbearance. Hopton recalls,

⁸¹ Marotti, *Religious Ideology*, 98. Further, the act of choice highlights the disunities inherent to a serially converted identity: "By repeating the conversion process, serial converts highlight the fundamental discontinuities inherent in that process and the resultant challenges to the constitution of an identity in the face of those disunities." Pickett, "Motion Rhetoric," 84.

“He never went about by Fallacy or Force, to reduce me, but indeavoured to rectify my Errors by fair, rational, and gentle Christian Methods, with all Tenderness and Discretion, as well as continual Care and Diligence to convince me that I was in the Wrong” (149). Hopton’s use of “reduce” recalls how the similitude between herself and Turberville’s text resulted in the reduction of herself when he, by fallacy and force, reduced his arguments into headings.

In contrast, Hopton’s husband encouraged her to compare the “Faith, and Worship, and Discipline” (149) of the two Churches, as well as to compare their faults. He also encouraged her to read more comprehensively—“He also put into my Hands the controversial Books of the ablest and clearest *English* Writers, in Defence of the Church of *England* against her Adversaries of your Church” (149)—and he put her in contact with the great divines of England, many of whom she continued to converse with by letter after her conversion.⁸² The actions of Hopton’s husband result in an expansion of her self, rather than her reduction. That Hopton’s husband trusts her to discern truth well demonstrates how Hopton characterizes their marriage as the epitome of marital love and respect that Protestantism idealized but did not often accommodate. Women’s outspokenness was often framed as highly threatening to men:

Men’s control of women’s speech, an aspect of their potency, was at the heart of the early modern gender system. Speech takes us to the centre of the issues of patriarchal authority, for it proposes and initiates. Speech represents personal agency. The woman who speaks neither in reply to a man nor in submissive request acts as an independent being who may well, it is assumed, end up with

⁸² A copy of a letter, “sent by Mrs Hopton in her own name to her Bro[the]r Mr Geers a Serjeant at Law” is held in a collection of Nonjuring letters at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. hist. b. 2, ff. 176-80. Copies of letters sent by Hickes to Hopton also survive in the collection “Papers of George Hickes,” MS 3171, held by Lambeth Palace Library.

another man than her husband in her bed. Thus every incident of verbal assertiveness could awake the spectre of adultery and the dissolution of patriarchal order.⁸³

Hopton anticipates these accusations in the rebuttal she addresses to her former confessor: “I know you impute my return, which you call Apostacy, to my Husband, and charge him with it, and the Ruine of my Soul” (148). But again, Hopton uses anti-Catholic stereotypes to reflect this concern back against her relationship with Turberville. Catholic priests were often imagined as threatening, foreign influences. As noted, polemicists and lay-persons alike imagined the threat these outsiders posed in terms of exotic sexuality and their ability to disrupt heterosexual community structures. Hopton’s letter insists her marriage is built on a foundation of mutual trust and admiration. In particular, she depicts her conversion as the result of an abundance of freedom and trust given her by her husband. By proactively imagining Turberville as trying to convince her that her conversion was a result of her husband’s coercion, she frames any of Turberville’s eventual responses to her conversion as attempts to undermine her marriage.

Although by her own account Turberville was a kind and generous person for whom Hopton maintained a deep respect, her critique of his arguments through tropes of sexually disruptive Catholicism demonstrates her awareness that the performativity of herself as “woman” dictates readers’ reception of her sincerity. That early modern women are aware of themselves as performing a role of ‘woman’ within a broader narrative of

⁸³ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England 1500-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1995), 12.

gender difference becomes clear in the scholarship of Kimberley Ann Coles. She argues that “women who produce [the figure of ‘woman’] within their texts frequently do so self-consciously, and with an eye toward the readership that will receive them.”⁸⁴ Coles limits her study to the figure of the religious woman in early Reformation discourse, but her argument that the figure of the religious woman “accrues its power through the meanings that the category of ‘woman’ invokes” and that it secures the accrual of power through circumstances of religious transition has implications for later representations of early modern religious women:

The figure [of ‘woman’] relies upon the circumstances of religious transition—and the extent to which the pre-existing category of ‘woman’ can be used to articulate both the instabilities and ideals of the radical change that is taking place. This is precisely why the figure can trouble the existing terms of religion and politics but hardly disturb the system governing gender. Further, the figure tends to mediate the public reception of women’s religious texts more than their authorial expression (this too explains why gynocritical strategies are not very productive in reading these texts).⁸⁵

Hopton inhabits the figure of “woman” to mediate the public reception of her religious text, but I suggest she figures herself as an exemplary female reader to specifically target her reader’s reception of the signification of her female body.

We have recognized for some time that the signification of women’s bodies is implicated in their textual signification, especially in the treatment of those textual products as inherently inferior or compromised. In her discussion of the “allegedly

⁸⁴ Kimberly Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women’s Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 10.

⁸⁵ Coles, 10, 11.

universalist selfhood” that emerged through the exclusion of the implicitly feminine, that is, “through the exclusion of materiality, corporeality, and ‘nature,’” Scholz notes,

bodies were being reconceptualized in a way that matched the requirements of this binary logic of identity formation: the human being about to become a subject was endowed with a virtually incorporeal body, while the non-subject was declared to inhabit a 'corporeal' body that was part of the “natural” world. In so far as women could acquire the status of a “self,” they were regarded as inferior on the vertical scale of perfection, an inferiority owing to the fact that their self-relation was modelled on the masculine self-relation, and was thus not genuinely self-determined.⁸⁶

Hopton attempts to resist the material signification of her feminine body by extracting her signification into text, but, in this case, I do not believe this power-move embraces or would even find useful the incorporeality or masculinization offered by the apparently ideal, masculine self. Hopton’s double conversions made her vulnerable precisely because they put her at one remove from the cultural figurations that gave her credibility. Seeking further opportunity to bend her gender or signify even less corporeality would be to cut anchor and drift away from the landmarks of identity she relied upon to signify herself in text. Rather, Hopton presents her text as an alternate material body that secures her signification of ideal “woman” through her performative submission of her voice to that of her community.⁸⁷ Her explication of her reading practices as an expression of her

⁸⁶ Scholz, *Body Narratives*, 57, 57, 57.

⁸⁷ The representation of women in text and early modern women’s negotiation of the signification of “woman” is a growing and productive field of study, see Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women’s Writing*; Helen Smith, *Grossly Material Things’: Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012); Christina Luckyj, *A Moving Rhetorick’: Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002); Snook, *Women, Reading and the Cultural Politics*; and Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth, eds., *Representing Women in Renaissance England* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997). Although women had more limited access to publication, recent anthologies of women’s writing have also sought to renegotiate the terms of women’s entry into the canon with a particular concern for mitigating the ways that former discussions of women’s writing have, perhaps inadvertently, replicated the exclusion of women from the traditional male canon. See Suzanne Trill, Kate

husband's authority reinforces her claim on the role of dutiful wife. Her performative submission offers Hopton the ability to engage in agentive reading practices to secure herself within her community.

Ultimately, the sincerity of her marriage commitment becomes another symbol of her enduring commitment to God. Hopton writes,

I must confess I love him [her husband] truly, and passionately, as I conceive it to be my Duty; but I hope I love God, and my Salvation more; and I am sure he loves not God so little, nor any worldly Interest so much, as to persuade me to any thing he thought would hurt my Soul, though he might Gain the whole World by it. (148-149)

By framing their love for each other as an expression of their duty, Hopton incorporates her marriage into her letter's narration of her singular commitment to Truth. Although Turberville might wish to cast doubt on her present commitments, she insists they are as real as her past ones. Once again, she secures the reader's appreciation for the authentic expression of her agency in Turberville's former attestations to it in the preface to *A Manuel of Controversies*. Because she frames her present commitments as an extension of the pursuit of Truth Turberville once praised, Turberville cannot disregard the veracity of her present commitments without also undermining the veracity of her former commitments. To say she merely ventriloquizes her husband in her present representation of conversion might also be to suggest she merely ventriloquized Turberville in her former conversion. Either way, she comes out of the conversation a Protestant.

Chedgzoy and Melanie Osborne, eds., *Lay By Your Needles Ladies, Take the Pen: Writing Women in England, 1500-1700* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

Her positioning of her letter as a continuation of readerly training suggests that her husband only continued the project Turberville initiated and, therefore, Turberville cannot be unhappy when her reading reaps inadvertent results:

Sir, from this short account of it, I hope it will appear to you, that it was not my love to him, but to Truth, and the God of Truth, that made me return to my first Mother; in which I did no more than the great Mr. *Chillingworth*, and many other seduced and sincere lovers of Truth have done. (149)

William Chillingworth was a well-known serial convert who had wavered between Catholicism and Protestantism for years. His defense of his re-conversion to Protestantism became a popular anti-Catholic polemic.⁸⁸ Even in her final acknowledgement of her double conversion, an inherently community-breaking activity, Hopton finds community. Reading gives her access to a community of voices with whom she identifies. She uses the corporate voice of her community in text to overwrite the individuating effects of double conversion. While her particular voice invited questions about her fidelity, the authority made available by anonymizing herself and speaking, instead, with her community secures her claim to an enduring commitment to God, which ultimately secures her identity again.

“A Singular Ornament to our Communion”: The Exemplarity of Anonymous Devotionality

In his address to the reader in *A Second Collection*, Hicke suggests that the context of Hopton’s letter requires no real introduction because it speaks for itself:

What was the occasion of her Fall, and what by God’s Blessing of her Recovery, I need say nothing; because she gives an Account of both in her Letter, in which the

⁸⁸ See Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants*.

Reader will find she had very well studied the Controversies between the two Churches, and very well understood it. (viii)

He does fear, however, that his reader will question Hopton's abilities. To that end, he provides the list of her books of controversy that contain her marginal notes and points out "some borrowed Expressions, which she took out of *the Antidote of Popery*" (ix). In the previous section, I suggested Hopton erases her sources from the text to demonstrate to her former confessor her complete absorption into a Protestant corporate voice. But Hickes's text, oriented towards a broad Protestant audience, inserts these sources back into the discourse of her text to ensure that a more generalized audience will also recognize the way her letter speaks in a corporate Protestant voice against her Roman Catholic former confessor. He makes sure to note that when she died she left to Hickes

above Twenty Popish Authors...and some with Marginal Notes in her own Hand. And on the other side she was very well versed in *Bishop Moreten's*, Archbishop *Laud's*, and Mr. *Chillingworth's* Works, and *Ranchin's* Review of the Co[u]ncil of *Trent*, thought to be worthy to be put into English by those two famous Men Doctor *Christopher Potter*, and Dr. *Gerard Langbaine*, the great Ornaments of *Queen's College in Oxford*: The latter of which translated it into English at the request of the former, and dedicated his Translation to him, which he published at *Oxford*, 1638. (ix)⁸⁹

Hickes's promotion of Hopton's reading practices ensures that Hopton's audience will read the evidence of her readerly acumen in her text and understand these echoes to be demonstrations of her submission to Protestant authority.

⁸⁹ While serving as Bishop of Durham, Thomas Morton published *The Lords Supper* (London, 1652). An edition of the Archbishop of Canterbury's private devotions was published and frequently republished after his death, see William Laud, *Officium quotidianum: or, A manual of private devotions* (London, 1649). Finally, Gerard Langbaine's translation of Ranchin's text was published, as Hickes notes, by the Oxford University printers in 1638. See Guillaume Ranchin, *A Reievv of the Councell of Trent* (Oxford, 1638). I have searched for and have been unable to locate annotated copies of these texts, yet I hold out hope that one day we might locate Hopton's copies of these texts.

Hickes attributes the formerly anonymous *Daily Devotions* and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1700) to Hopton in the context of this performative submission to Protestant authority. As I have already noted, some scholars have assumed that what is valuable about attributing the texts to Hopton is the act of attribution itself. We interpret the act of attribution as a rough equivalent to asserting property rights but, logically, unless we know the value of the property, the simple assertion of rights is not a compelling reason to attribute value, especially when women's authorship was often perceived as an encumbrance on the value of the text. As I note in my introduction, this prompts the question: what is the value of the texts Hickes attributes to Hopton? Hickes cites them as evidence of Hopton's readerly genius. He places a high value on the demonstration of compositional skills through the commonplacing techniques illustrated in *Daily Devotions*. Hickes also values the editorial techniques demonstrated by the reformer of *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices*. But why this genius in reading is as exemplary as he claims is not clear without a much broader understanding of early modern devotional culture.

While promoters of the Reformation claimed to encourage believers to cultivate their own personal relationship with God, they were also afraid of the laity's uneducated interpretive interventions and the heresy they might unwittingly perpetrate. For example, studies that trace the evolution of the reader in light of the Protestant Reformation argue that "Scriptural ambiguity, rather than empowering priests and bishops, provided

lay readers with an opportunity for their own interpretative interventions.”⁹⁰ The church responded to the inadequacies of layperson readership through liturgy. Liturgies are public, habitual practices in the organized church. Many people, believers included, have the misconception that liturgy exists to satisfy the needs and desires of the individual congregant, but Christian liturgical theology assumes the church enacts liturgy to engage in worship, a relational act directed towards God. Thus Reformed liturgy enacts the theology of the church: “liturgy is like music in that one acquires some particular liturgical know-how by being inducted into a social practice for the exercise of this know-how.”⁹¹ In early modern England, the firm belief in the transformational power of the “social practice” of “liturgical know-how” becomes the justification for forcefully promoting public worship: “what appears to be a simple request for an untaxing and potentially unmeaningful participation in a weekly service turns out to be a strategy to transform the worshipper’s soul.”⁹² Modern scholarship can be quick to judge the rituals of liturgy to be constraining, but a comparison of liturgy’s iterative textuality with the culture’s scholastic emphasis on identity formation through textual similitude suggests liturgy might also be read as enriching and formative.⁹³ What I find particularly striking is how the early Reformed English liturgy embraces literacy as the antidote to lay heresy.

⁹⁰ Stephen B. Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), 29.

⁹¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2015), 8.

⁹² Targoff, *Common Prayer*, 4.

⁹³ For example, Ethan Shagan argues, “In a Protestant religious context, where original sin cast such a long shadow upon human morality, ethical moderation was seen as virtually impossible to achieve, so moderation was constantly externalised: human beings naturally tended to sinful excesses, hence the *via media* required the coercive power of ministers and magistrates.” Shagan, *The Rule of Moderation:*

Early modern English Protestant liturgy trains laypersons by cultivating in them an understanding of how to read scripture critically and effectively so they are equipped for more active participation in worship. In fact, according to the writers of *The Book of Common Prayer*, reading is liturgical worship. The prefatory “Concerning the Service of the Church” opens with a lament for the corruption of the divine service. According to the writers, the Ancient Fathers

so ordered the [divine service], that all the whole Bible (or the greatest part thereof) should be read over every year; intending thereby, that the Clergy, and especially such as were Ministers in the congregation, should (by often reading, and meditation in God’s word) be stirred up to godliness themselves, and be more able to exhort others by wholesome doctrine, and to confute them that were Adversaries to the truth; and further, that the people (by daily hearing of holy Scripture read in the Church) might continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be more inflamed with the love of his true Religion.⁹⁴

By implication, ungodliness, unwholesome doctrines, schism, and a disregard for true Religion are the result of a limited exposure to scripture, such as when daily readings are supplanted by “uncertain Stories, and Legends, with multitude Responds, Verses, vain

Violence, Religion, and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 7-8. In the context of women and religion, Elizabeth Clarke contrasts a commitment to orthodoxy with a personal engagement with theology as if they are mutually exclusive: “it is difficult, therefore, to escape the conclusion that, even during the momentous, liberating years of the English Revolution, a woman’s commitment to religion was judged more by her obedience to orthodoxy, than by her personal engagement with theology.” Elizabeth Clarke, “The legacy of mothers and others: women’s theological writing, 1640-60,” in *Religion in Revolutionary England*, eds. Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007), 86. Not all critics see the repetitive nature of theological discipline as inherently threatening, however. In “Ethics of Elfland,” G. K. Chesterton frames the desire for originality to be a flaw of human cynicism:

But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, ‘Do it again’ to the sun; and every evening, ‘Do it again’ to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them. It may be that He has the eternal appetite of infancy; for we have sinned and grown old, and our Father is younger than we. The repetition in Nature may not be a mere recurrence; it may be a theatrical *encore*.”

G. K. Chesterton, “The Ethics of Elfland,” in *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lane Company, 1908), 106-107.

⁹⁴ *Book of Common Prayer* (Cambridge, 1662), B5r-B5v.

Repetitions, Commemorations, and Synodals,” with the result that, “when any Book of the Bible was begun, after three of four Chapters were read out, all the rest were unread.”⁹⁵ In both the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions, the power differential between God and his people requires some form of performative mediation. To assume otherwise would be to profoundly disrespect God. But where the Catholic liturgy excluded the layperson from direct communication with God out of reverence for his authority expressed in the papacy, the Protestant liturgy emphasizes how scripture invites God’s people to approach his throne through the mediation offered in Jesus as the Word become flesh. The focus of performative mediation is placed on relating to Christ through scripture.

If engaging personally with scripture becomes the means through which to speak with God on his terms, teaching laypeople to read scripture well becomes an essential aspect of teaching people to know God as he reveals himself to them. For example, the offices of *The Book of Common Prayer* address the dearth of laypersons’ scriptural reading by developing a calendar of readings in scripture as well as composing orders in which the minister is prompted to style worship out of quotations from scripture. The directions for “The Order for Morning Prayer” instruct “At the beginning of Morning Prayer the Minister shall read with a loud voice some one, or more of these Sentences of the scriptures, that follow. And then he shall say that which is written after the said Sentences.”⁹⁶ The selected passages are expressions of contrition taken out of the psalms,

⁹⁵ *Common Prayer.*, C2v, C2v.

⁹⁶ *Common Prayer*, D1r.

the prophets, the gospels, and the epistles. The minister is to then address the congregation, “Dearly beloved brethren, the Scripture moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge, and confess our manifold sins and wickedness...”⁹⁷ Following his recitation of the purpose of confession, that is, to reveal oneself to God and receive mercy and grace, the minister is to lead the congregation in a “general Confession to be said of the whole Congregation after the Minister all kneeling” in which, together, they address God directly.⁹⁸ “The Order of the Morning Prayer” demonstrates how, following the example set forth by the Ancient Fathers as described by the writers of the “Preface,” the minister exposes the congregation to scripture and its significance, so they may respond together to its call to worship. Although the service involves the mediation of a minister, his preaching in the vernacular and explaining the meaning of scripture and its implications for worship, with laypeople participating in its processes, encouraged laypeople to develop a personally meaningful relationship with scripture.⁹⁹

The demonstration of Hopton’s reading acumen, through the attribution of devotional collections developed on a foundation of commonplace techniques, thus highlights Hopton’s genius because reading acumen is synonymous with devotional integrity in the early modern English Reformed tradition. Further, the corporate identity

⁹⁷ *Common Prayer*, D1r.

⁹⁸ *Common Prayer*, D1v.

⁹⁹ For more on the kinds of reading practices this approach invites, see Justin Champion, “‘Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Holy Scriptures’: Biblical Criticism, Clerical Learning and Lay Readers, c. 1650-1720,” in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, eds. Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 208-30; Eugene R. Kintgen, “Reading in a Religious Setting,” in *Reading in Tudor England* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 99-139; and Nandra Perry, *Imitatio Christi: The Poetics of Piety in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014).

expressed by *The Book of Common Prayer*'s liturgical frameworks corroborates the corporate identity Hopton develops in her letter. Whether Hopton actually wrote the devotional texts attributed to her is therefore, for my purposes, irrelevant: what does require attention is the way their attribution authorizes Hopton's self ex post facto as an object of Protestant devotionality that "has its origins in an external or secondary perspective, as the object of another's perceptions, understanding, recognition."¹⁰⁰ By extending the corporate authority embodied in the anonymous authorship of *Daily Devotions* and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1700) to Hopton, Hicke's attribution demonstrates how anonymity enhances the relationality of Hopton's authorial persona through the corporate voice it invokes.

Daily Devotions invokes a corporate voice by combining domestic devotional genres within a liturgical framework. The first edition presents the text as a replica of someone's private commonplace book of devotions. The devotions chart a way through the basic devotional postures of the Christian life, a popular theme of seventeenth-century devotions, but instead of compiling a series of original poems, *Daily Devotions* collects a series of excerpted texts and places them into the frame of the Christian life.¹⁰¹ The collection opens with several psalm paraphrases, entitled "Devotions and Meditations to

¹⁰⁰ Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom*, 8.

¹⁰¹ This was a common devotional practice. Herbert's *The Temple* is a particularly original demonstration of this technique which had a significant impact on the development of devotional genres. See Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie, eds., *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*; Helen Wilcox, "The 'fineness' of Devotional Poetry: An Collins and the School of Herbert," in *An Collins and the Historical Imagination*, ed. W. Scott Howard (London: Routledge, 2016), 71-85; and R. V. Young, *Doctrine and Devotion in Seventeenth Century Poetry: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

be used as we go to Church” (1-9), “Devotions in the Church” (10-12), and “After Church” (12-16).¹⁰² The meditation following, “DEVOTIONS comprising all our Duties” (17-23), employs a collect prayer as a segue into a confession of gratitude for Reformed doctrine and supplication for aid in following Reformed doctrines. The speaker prays, “As thou hast given me a rule to pray, give me the spirit of prayer, to pray by that rule; that I may praise thee abundantly for the Lords prayer” (17), and then continues immediately after, “I praise thee for causing me to be born in a Reformed Church” (17). The meditation that follows, “A PARAPHRASE upon the Objective Hymn of Praise” (24-32), paraphrases the *Benedicite*, also known as *Benedicite, omnia opera Domini* or the Song of Creation, a canticle often used in the Catholic liturgy of the hours and in Anglican worship. The paraphrase is followed by a poem of thanksgiving, “Thanksgivings for all Persons and Times” (33-42) and then a hymn. “An Hymn to Jesus, wherein the the [sic] Soul may expatiate it self with delight in him” (43-45) is followed by a prayer for the third hour and a greatly expanded “Prayer to the Holy Ghost, out of St. Augustine” (55-59).¹⁰³ These excerpts are followed by a series of prayers for the sixth and ninth hours, followed by “Additional Devotions for the Evening” (78-81) and “Compline” (82-84), “A Prayer for Lent” (84-90), “Daily Thanksgiving” (90-106), “A Prayer for *Christmas*-day” (107-109), “A Prayer for *Easter*-day” (109-112), and “A Prayer upon the Day of Pentecost” (113-114). The collection then turns the reader’s

¹⁰² *Daily Devotions* (London, 1673). All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁰³ This hymn might be a paraphrase of Bernard of Clairvaux’s “Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee,” with which it shares a common first line and similar themes. A copy of Hopton’s version of the hymn is also included under the title “Delights of the Minde,” in Samuel Speed, *Prison-Pietie, or, Meditations Divine and Moral* (London, 1677), 139-40.

attention to the preparation of the heart for suffering and death, through the practices of confession and lament. It collects “A confession of sin out of Bishop *Andrews*” (115-123) and the “Deprecations of Bishop *Andrews*” (124-127) with “Intercessions for all Mankind” (128-130) and beseeches God for the conversion of “Turks, Jews, and Heathens to the Truth” (128) and for strength for his church. “A Christians Dedication of himself unto God” (131-134) opens with the confession “I That am a wretched sinner” (131), and “A Prayer for the acceptation of acts of Humiliation or Abstinence on Fasting-Days” (135-137) invokes Christ’s sustaining example as a model for believers’ own denial of themselves when observing the holy calendar. “Evening Thoughts and Exercises to Bedward” (138-143) uses a series of questions to prompt readers to interrogate their souls’ priorities based on the premise that “our life is one day shorter than it was in the Morning, and what if it be our last?” (138). “A Prayer against Affliction” (144) and “A Brief Soliloquy by way of Admonition” (145) use the contemplation of illness to draw the reader finally into “An Exercise Preparative to a good Death, consisting of several Acts of Piety” (146-162) including “Submission ... Thanksgiving ... Confessions ... Prayer ... [and] Petition” (146). The breadth of reading in scriptures and other texts provides an excellent template for devotions. The incorporation of its various genres demonstrates a careful attention to reading oneself into a rightly ordered relationship with God. Psalm collage and psalm paraphrase evidence a careful knowledge of their sources. The mediation of the private devotions of Bernard of Clairvaux and Augustine and the inclusion of excerpts out of the devotions of Bishop *Andrewes* exhibit a desire to read and be read with these exemplars of spirituality.

But the internal arrangement of the excerpts also echoes the liturgy, complicating readers' reception of the voice of the "humble penitent" as a private one. For example, "Devotions and Meditations to be used as we go to Church" (1), which opens *Daily Devotions*, combines psalm collages and psalm paraphrases, a private devotional genre, into an original preparatory office, a liturgical formula for entering into corporate worship. The poem opens with a recitation of Psalm 122 followed by a *Gloria Patri*. Psalm 122 is one of a series of fifteen songs of ascent from Psalm 120 to 134 that the Israelites would sing on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem or possibly while ascending Mount Zion or the steps of the Temple. The genre of songs of ascent was absorbed into the Christian tradition, and Psalm 122 was frequently used as a choral introit, the part of the opening of the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist that is spoken or sung. The introit is followed in *Daily Devotions* by a condensed version of Psalm 84, another frequently versified psalm, followed by another *Gloria Patri*. These two hymns are followed by a psalm collage of praise that meditates on the goodness of being in God's presence.¹⁰⁴ An excerpt drawn from the first paragraphs following the second hymn demonstrates how Hopton stitches together a diversity of texts into a congruent whole:

[Psalm 65:4:] Blessed is the man whom thou chusest and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy Courts: We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy House, even of thy holy Temple.

[Psalm 87:2:] The Lord loveth the Gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

[Psalm 5: 7-8:] Therefore I will come into thy House in the multitude of thy mercies, and in thy fear will I worship towards thy holy Temple.

Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, make thy way strait before my face.

¹⁰⁴ Psalms 65, 87, 5, 27, 26, 32, 48, 43, 42, 57, 62, 63, 100, 118, Ecclesiastes 36:14, Psalms 99, 29, 95, 5 and possibly Psalms 35 and 96. All references are to the King James Version.

[Psalm 27:4:] One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life; to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his Temple. (3-4)

While psalm collages like these sound scriptural, they are in fact original, creative compositions that require a high degree of familiarity with the scriptural text and a keen compositional eye.¹⁰⁵ That compositional eye can be seen in this collage in the way Hopton stitches together references to the psalmist's longing for God's house, his Temple, and the dwellings of Jacob. It can also be seen in what is left out. All the scriptural references in this poem are taken from the King James Bible; however, in the King James Bible, Psalm 5:7 begins with "But" not "Therefore" and, in verse 8, the psalmist also asks the Lord lead him "in righteousness *because of mine enemies.*" These slight modifications demonstrate that Hopton does not simply copy verses onto the page but arranges them according to a narrative order that directs the attention of readers towards their participation in the assembly of believers even when they conduct private devotions.

From the psalm collage of praise, Hopton transitions into a psalm paraphrase of confession spoken in the first person but addressed as if spoken within an assembly of believers. Psalm paraphrase can highlight artistic license "by expanding a single biblical text into didactic, theological, or even political speech."¹⁰⁶ Hopton applies the artfulness of paraphrase to involve the corporate body of believers in her singular confession. The

¹⁰⁵ Susan Felch defends the artistry required in the construction of psalm collages in "'Halff a Scrypture Woman': Heteroglossia and Female Authorial Agency in Prayers by Lady Elizabeth Tyrwhit, Anne Lock, and Anne Wheathill," *English Women, Religion, and Textual Production, 1500-1625*, ed. Micheline White (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 151.

¹⁰⁶ Felch, "'Halff a Scrypture Woman,'" 153.

psalm paraphrase returns the reader to a consideration of Psalm 5:7 and expands the expressed desire to worship in the Temple into an improvised meditation on the experience of worshipping amidst a body of believers:

In thy fear do I worship thee in [this] thy holy Temple: desiring to praise thee in the great Congregation, before much people.

Here, O, Lord, in the beauty of Holiness I approach, to worship thee among thy Saints in the great Assembly. (7)

These lines reference Psalm 35:18, “I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people,” and Psalm 96:9, “O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth,” but combine them in order to amplify the resonances of corporate worship in which the psalmic ‘I’ participates.¹⁰⁷ Hopton begins the confession by associating herself with the sins of Israel, which the prophet laments in Ezekiel 22:8, “Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths.” The prophet goes on to elaborate on the atrocities of the Israelite profanations. Hopton, however, expands her lament with a confession of sins particular to her own situation. I quote the paraphrase in full to give a better impression of the work,

For I have profaned thy Sabbaths.
Defiled thy Sanctuary.
Polluted thine holy Ordinances.
Dishonoured my Profession.
Been cold in my Prayers.
Dull in my Praises.
Careless and censorious in my Hearing
Extremely negligent in my Meditation.
Miserably distracted in all.

¹⁰⁷ The use of biblical poetics invigorates Hopton’s psalms through her invocation of God’s voice. As R. V. Young writes, “The spiritual dynamic of biblical poetics finds in the scriptural text not the dead trace of an absent presence, but the living voice of embodied Logos. The poet seeks to rewrite the Word of God in his own imitation or version of ‘scripture’ thus inscribing the word—Christ’s name and presence—in his own soul in the blood of the Lamb.” *Doctrine and Devotion*, 169.

So that I have deserved a curse rather than a blessing from thee.
But O merciful Father.
Tender and compassionate Lord.
Jesus my Saviour.
Most Blessed and holy Spirit.
By thy Grace I return unto my heart, and with all my heart I return unto
thee.
Hear O Lord, and have mercy upon me.
Pardon all my sins, and let them not hinder the ascending of my prayers
and praises unto thee: nor the descending of thy mercies and graces (now) upon
me. (7-8)

These lines are not from scripture, but they demonstrate an attention to scriptural forms that combine with a lyrical expression of God's favour. The speaker's collective voice summarizes the desolation of those "Miserably distracted in all" (8), recognizing that "I have deserved a curse rather than a blessing from thee" (8), but then contrasts the list of failures with the attributes of God that carry the speaker out of the depths of despair and into a state of contrition. The temptation can be to read these texts as a personalization of the psalms, particularly when a line such as "By thy Grace I return unto my heart, and with all my heart I return unto thee" (8) reminds the reader of Hopton's reconversion, but the genre of the psalms universalizes and publicizes private emotions for the edification of the corporate body of believers. Therefore, writing in the manner of the psalms would, in fact, provide Hopton with the means to universalize and publicize her personal feelings in a scripturally sanctioned mode. Far from such psalmic constructions being derivative or conventional, the authoritative underpinnings of the psalms provide private access to public forms of liturgical discourse.¹⁰⁸ This creative psalm ends with another psalm

¹⁰⁸ For more discussion of psalm paraphrase in early modern literature see Susan M. Felch, ed., *Elizabeth Tyrewhit's Morning and Evening Prayers* (London: Routledge, 2008); Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*; and Margaret Hannay, ed., *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700. Volume 2: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (London: Routledge, 2016); and Russel M. Hillier, "'Send Back Thy Fire

collage of praise excerpted from Psalm 119 and then concludes with a final prayer that neatly summarizes the corporate resonances in such personalized expressions of devotion:

O that thou wouldst fill my heart, with all the love of all the Souls, that ever were, are, or shall be; that I might offer it up now unto thee; with all the love of Angels and glorified Saints; for thou hast shewed more mercy to me than to them.
For I have offended thee more than all.
Give me therefore the love and obedience of them all, to offer it up now unto thee. *Amen.* (9)

This final prayer bespeaks a deep desire to express a love that can be encompassed only through corporate worship. Her desire that her heart would be filled with the love “of all the Souls, that ever were, are, or shall be” (9) imagines her full participation in the communion of saints that the scriptures anticipate will be achieved upon Christ’s second coming. She imagines her prayers as a means through which to access that corporate voice and offer it as praise back to God.

The soul’s desire for expressions of corporate love frames the inclusion of the texts that follow as much more than a simple collection of texts. Rather, their inclusion attempts to invoke “the love of all the Souls” through liturgical commonplacing. While commonplaces provide readers with the means to speak of themselves in the voice of others, and liturgy provides the means to speak of themselves with the voices of others, the commonplacing of the liturgy combines these forms of agency so the text becomes able to speak a communal identity through the voices of others. Susan Felch’s discussion

Again’: Praise, Music, and Poetry in the Lyrics of George Herbert,” *The Modern Language Review* 111, no. 3 (2016): 633-64.

of M. M. Bakhtin's heteroglossia in the context of early modern devotional intertextuality provides a helpful explanation of how a writer constructs a corporate voice in a collected work. Bakhtin suggests that the other is always implicated in one's speech. Felch explains:

Bakhtin refuses to release speech or writing either from its embeddedness in social contexts or from its communicative functions. Language is never one's own; it is never neutral but instead is always 'shot through with intentions and accents.... [I]t is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others.' Furthermore, language is directed both towards objects and towards others. It is embedded in prepositions: it speaks *about* the world *to* other people.¹⁰⁹

Felch argues that one of the consequences of heteroglossia is that authorial agency should be judged "not by the distance or independence from sources, but rather by the use an author makes of the multiple voices that inevitably surround her."¹¹⁰ The concept of heteroglossia helps to highlight how *Daily Devotions* comes to embody a corporate voice of liturgical worship that is both powerful and desirable. The collection of a multiplicity of sources into a single liturgical framework demonstrates an idealized spiritual discipline. For example, in the collection's "Prayer upon the Third Hour" (45), the poem invokes the model of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion as an example of ideal devotion. Christ's fervent and submissive prayer becomes a model for corporate devotionality:

¹⁰⁹ Bakhtin, "Discourse on the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 293-294. Quoted in Felch, "Half a Scripture Woman," 158.

¹¹⁰ Felch, 159. Hannibal Hamlin elaborates on how the discussion of heteroglossia and polyphony intervenes in critical debates on "the vocal complexity of lyrics." See Hannibal Hamlin, "My Tongue Shall Speak: The Voices of the Psalms," *Renaissance Studies* 29, no. 4 (2015): 510; and Heather Dubrow, *The Challenges of Orpheus: Lyric Poetry and Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008). Interpretations of Bakhtin's "heteroglossia" have also become increasingly important to discussions of early modern relationality. See Nancy Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom*.

O thou who didst pray prostrate on the earth, and didst repeat the same prayer thrice: Grant I beseech thee, that by the outward gesture of our bodies, we may encrease the inward devotion of our minds; and in often repeating the same prayer, may still advance to new degrees of pious affections; make me in all things resigned unto thee. (47)

This prayer invests ritual, liturgical expression with the ability to effect one's inner devotion. By speaking with the corporate "we," it implicates each individual's actions in the success of the corporate body's worship. The speaker's ability to slip easily between the singular to the plural denotes how singularity becomes embedded in the plural.

By forging a singularity of purpose in the varied devotional writings of a number of authors in the collection, and by demonstrating the speaker's own active association of her devotion with these texts through her creative interventions in their meaning, Hopton's collection successfully models Jesus's divine example of complete submission through iterative postures and speech acts. Of course, the model of Jesus's love is the best expression of totalizing love available to Christians, and therefore the attempt to model Christ's love for the church as a corporate body becomes the highest demonstration of love towards God. The writer's anonymity amplifies the text's expression of a corporate identity. As the speaker identifies the highest expression of love with "the love of all the Souls" (9), the identification of the author by anything but her devotion would be counter-intuitive. As it stands, the description "a humble penitent" identifies the speaker with her desire to submit herself wholly to God, which as liturgy demonstrates can be achieved only by participating in the body of worshippers enacted through the liturgy the text seeks to recreate. Anonymity allows the speaker to be identified through her affiliation with the community of believers constructed in the text.

While *Daily Devotions* enacts corporate worship in the privacy of one's personal devotions, the reformer's edition of *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices*, first published in 1700, provides for devotions among small groups of domestic worshippers. The original *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices*, 1668, published under the pseudonym William Birchley by the convert to Catholicism and popular controversialist, John Austin, combines the traditional structure and some of the contents of the Primer (from the office of the Blessed Virgin Mary) with original compositions, including some forty hymns.¹¹¹ Although the divine offices were maligned for their repetitiveness, the popularity of lay devotional texts, even among Protestants, demonstrates that they offered something of value to seventeenth-century readers. In a preface to the second edition of *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1672), John Sergeant promotes *Devotions* as a text that appeals to Catholics and Protestants:

'Tis a Book which Catholiks use with very great Devotion and Benefit. The moderate Protestant will find nothing in it he can with reason dislike, nor the passionate Zealot which he can justly traduce. 'Tis the most Substantial part of Divinity render'd usefully Practical. 'Tis the ripe Production of an ardently enflamed Will exprest by an excellently clear Understanding; yet so, that only the Heart seems to speak and not the Brain. In a word, 'tis the Best Matter deliver'd in the Best Manner.¹¹²

¹¹¹ For more on John Austin and his works, see J. Blom and F. Blom, "Austin, John [*pseud.* William Birchley]," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004; online ed. 2008), <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/908>; Eilish Gregory, "John Austin and the Catholic response to the English Commonwealth," *The Seventeenth Century* (2020): n.p., doi: 10.1080/0268117X.2020.1761871; Shell, "Intimate Worship: John Austin's Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices," in *Private and Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2016), 259-280; and Allison Shell, "Seraphic Discourse, Mystical Bodies: John Austin's Original Psalms," in *Mysticism and Reform, 1400-1750*, eds. Sara S. Poor and Nigel Smith (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 220-40.

¹¹² William Birchley (John Austin), *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (Roan, 1672), A2v.

Hickes's introductory paragraphs of the "Address to the Reader" in the newly reformed edition of *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* of 1700 also notes the ecumenical popularity of Austin's text. He notes it went through four unreformed editions and five more editions after it was reformed by Theophilus Dorrington in *Reform'd Devotions* (1687), in addition to its inclusion in a number of texts that fail to attribute the text to Austin appropriately. In a profusion of praise, Hickes presents the latest anonymous reformation of the text to the reader and muses it might prove to be so popular that "it will have many Editions, and perhaps as many, as any Book of Devotion in what Language soever, except the Psalter, ever had" (A2v).

Hickes's enthusiasm for the text is expressly tied to its encouragement of corporate worship expressed through liturgy. Though Dorrington's reformation of the text was popular, Hickes anticipates Hopton's edition being even more popular because she preserves the liturgical elements from Austin's text, elements Dorrington had removed. In the preface to *Reform'd Devotion*, Dorrington expresses a deep mistrust of the Catholic breviary. His repeated contrast of Roman "form and method" with the Truth of the "primitive Ages of Christianity" and the "truly ancient and Apostolick Church" illustrates his conception of the individual devotion of post-Reformation English believers as radically at odds with the corrupted liturgies of the Roman church.¹¹³ For him, practices like the observance of hours and monastic-like antiphonal readings are Roman

¹¹³ Theophilus Dorrington, *Reform'd Devotions* (London, 1687), A6r, A6v, A10r. See my discussion of early church practices in seventeenth-century devotion in Jantina Ellens, "Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices: Medieval Domestic Devotion in the Seventeenth Century," *Religions* 10, no. 10 (2019): n.p. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10100546>.

innovations that must be separated from the universal Christian devotion of the apostolic tradition, because the universal Christian experience instituted by the early church is a matter of one's heart and mind, not a particular set of practices. Dorrington contracts the four offices of matins, lauds, vespers, and compline into two, an office for the morning and one for the evening. He also excises a number of the liturgical elements like the versicles, antiphon, and other responsories. Instead, Dorrington's offices consist of three meditations, each interspersed with hymns and petitions. He omits Austin's psalm paraphrases because,

they consisted of but some Sentences of the truly Canonical Scriptures, joyn'd without distinction with other Sentences... Besides, I did not alwaies think them exactly suited to the places they held; and I think the absence of them may be reckon'd well enough supply'd by the pertinent Sentences of holy Scripture which I have through the whole Book mixed with the matter of it.¹¹⁴

Dorrington suggests the intentional omission of schismatic materials from the text makes his text more universally appealing than Austin's:

there being so much excellent and useful matter still left, what is separated may the better be spar'd. And the leaving out those principles renders the book more generally useful, since now it is become so to those of our Church, while they will meet with nothing in it, but what they can assent to: And it may still, if they please, be useful to those of the other Communion, since the peculiar principles, which they have receiv'd are only left out, and the remaining matter is what all sober Christians may agree in.¹¹⁵

Dorrington preserves few elements from Austin's text unchanged.

One of the most significant consequences of Dorrington's changes is a disregard for communal worship. Austin's text opens with some directions for use, presuming that

¹¹⁴ Dorrington, *Reform'd Devotions*, A7v.

¹¹⁵ Dorrington, A9v.

“When one says his Pray’rs alone, the circumstances are free to be govern’d by his own devotion. But if two say together, ‘tis convenient they agree on some Rules,” which Austin then provides.¹¹⁶ Like Austin, Dorrington offers “a few things for Direction in the use of [*Reform’d Devotions*]” but, unlike Austin, his directions assume the text will be used by readers in “private Devotions” and focuses on encouraging a singular reader in private acts of meditation.¹¹⁷ In support of this method, he cites the advice of “a late prudent Author, who has written *A Method and Order for private Devotion*,” which is the secondary title of Edward Wettenhall’s popular *Enter into Thy Closet* (1666).¹¹⁸ Dorrington makes no mention of a communal method for the use of the text and his earlier admission to omitting anything even potentially schismatic from his text suggests that references to communal worship might also be a casualty of Dorrington’s pursuit of a universal baseline of worship.

At the very least, Hickes assumes Dorrington’s edition intentionally constrains communal worship and he opposes this constraint in his promotion of the reformed edition of *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* he published in 1700. Hickes describes how some worshippers believed Dorrington’s text constrained corporate worship too heavily and, in comparison to Austin’s, Mr. Dorrington’s method “was not so enflaming, nor fitted for the great and delightful Benefit of mutual and alternate Devotions, for which the divine Author (so I cannot but call him) seemed principally to contrive his

¹¹⁶ Birchley, *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (1668), A2r.

¹¹⁷ Dorrington, *Reform’d Devotions*, A10r, A10r.

¹¹⁸ Dorrington, A10v. See Edward Wettenhall, *Enter into Thy Closet, or A Method and Order for Private Devotion* (London, 1666).

Book, though it is no less fit for solitary Devotions, than that of *Mr. Dorrington* is” (A3r).

According to Hickes, these

devout Persons, who were skilful in divine Offices, and curious in the Theory, as well as constant in the practice of Devotions...chose to mark with their Pencils, whatever was amiss in the unreform'd Devotions, that they might use them for their own private Benefit in the Author's own Method, rather than in that of Mr. Dorrington. (A2v-A3r)

Hickes promotes the text to these readers, “especially of those who delight in the more Heaven-like way of Worship; I mean in alternate or choral Devotion” (A3v). Suggesting that the primary purpose of Hopton's reformed *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* is to preserve the worship among two or more people that Austin's text promotes, Hickes describes the ideal readers of the text as a Master or Mistress of a Family “or any two or more religious Persons, who happen to live in the same House, or Neighbourhood, or to Travel together in the same Journey, to exercise themselves in at vacant Times” (A4r). While Hickes values Dorrington's private devotions as worthy and notable, he defends the 1700 edition for making communal devotion more accessible to the Protestant reader.

Defending the anonymous reformer's readmission of Austin's liturgical elements into the text, Hickes argues the liturgy echoes ancient forms of apostolic worship, one of the most highly idealized forms of corporate worship in the early modern church. He describes,

Versicles, Responsories, and Antiphons, as Such; with which the Psalms make up that most venerable edifying, and elevating way of alternate or social Devotion, which was used in the best and purest Ages of Christianity, and [which] truly resembles the Worship and Devotions of the great Choire of Saints and Angels in the Church Triumphant, that most glorious Jerusalem, which is above. (A3v)

He recommends the use of set hours of devotion,

to restore the ancient practice of Devotion, which was in use among the Jews and the Primitive Christians, among whom the distinction of Hours for Prayer was not the effect of Superstition, but a rational Institution, in which they agreed as it were by common Inspiration, as the best means of advancing Piety, and Devotion. (A8v-A9r)

He defends choral response or alternate reading of scripture and the antiphons on the same grounds, pointing out that choral response is preferred by the Reformers as well as Austin, according to the tradition of the early church and scripture: “The Primitive Church had them both from the Synagogue; and there are many Examples of both to be found in the Book of *Psalms*” (A10v). Hickes defends Hopton’s restoration of pre-Reformation devotional practices to Protestant worship by reconstructing them as a rational, early Christian institution crafted upon the foundation of scripture. Arguing for the unity of seventeenth-century liturgical practice with the practices of the early apostolic church, he authorizes this latest, lightly revised edition of a Catholic book of hours by grounding its liturgical practices in a history of ideal corporate Protestant worship.

Within this context, Hopton’s ability to parse between Catholic innovation and Reformed apostolic truth demonstrates her embodiment of an ideal participation in Protestant corporate worship. He describes how the anonymous reformer

hath a mighty *genius* for Divinity; and though never bred in Scholastick Education, yet by Conversation with learned Clergy-Men, and reading the best Divinity Books, hath attained to a Skill in the Sacred Science, not much inferior to that of the best Divines. (a4v)

That is, the reformer is able to participate in spiritual discourse adeptly. Hickes also reveals that the reformer “hath already given the World one Book of Devotions, which hath been well received in Three, or Four Editions, and will leave it another, for which

Posterity will bless the Author's name" (a5r). The positive reception of Hopton's former work serves as further evidence of her acceptance by the Protestant devotional community, and the reputation of her former work provides an argument for the acceptance of the present work. Finally, Hickes describes the reformer's personal piety:

It is...one whose House is a Temple, and whose Family is a Church, or Religious Society, and whose Hands are daily lifted up unto Heaven, with Alms, as well as Prayers; one who Religiously observes all the Orders of the Church, that concern the People, and wishes, that those were better observed, which concern the Priests; one who more particularly keeps with most exact Observance, all the Fasts and Festivals of the Church, and for the great Ends for which they are enjoined; in a word, One who is a great Example of Christian Piety, and a singular Ornament to our *Communion*, in this degenerate Age; and among the many and most serious good Wishes I have for the *Church of England*, this is, and always shall be one, that all her Sons and Daughters were Such. (a5r-a5v)

Hickes's description of the reformer as "a singular Ornament to our *Communion*" demonstrates how he characterizes Hopton as the object he wishes the liturgy of *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* to produce. Again, the reformer's anonymity serves the liturgy's construction of individuals as communal participants in corporate forms of worship. Hopton is made to embody the characteristics of the text such that her identity is subsumed by the liturgy she produced. Anonymity allows the reformer to be identified as a product of the text, and she becomes an entity of the corporate worship the text promotes.

These discussions of the corporate identities invoked by the authorial personas of *Daily Devotions* and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* reveal that, whether or not Hopton produced the texts, Hickes's attribution of the texts promotes the kind of identification through corporate identity she promotes in her letter. The forms of devotion demonstrated in *Daily Devotions* and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* promote

readers' positive reception of the claims Hopton makes in her letter. And yet, Hickeys' attribution of the devotional texts to Hopton does not undo the function anonymity serves. The anonymity of the texts continues to play a key role in the corporate identities the texts promote. Instead, Hickeys' attribution extends the potency of a corporate Protestant identity to Hopton, as retroactive evidence that her claims to a Protestant identity in her letter are supported by the devotional acuity demonstrated in the texts attributed to her. To that end, Hickeys' affirmation of the texts' popularity provides another affirmation of Hopton's corporate identity.

Conclusion

Not only do the texts attributed to Hopton evidence participation in a corporate Protestant identity through their navigation of intertextual devotional genres, but their popularity with Protestant readers also demonstrates their further participation in a Protestant community of believers. This interplay between attribution, anonymity, and the claims they make on a corporate identity highlights the relationality of the authorship Hopton claims. In her discussion of relational authorship, Constance M. Furey notes how we can become confused by a text's oblique references to an author: "The search for an author, trying to discern faint and even nonexistent tracks, piecing together scant clues in order to solve a mystery, focuses attention on a single person. It thereby fails to linger where the text itself directs our attention."¹¹⁹ In contrast, Furey argues for a model of

¹¹⁹ Furey, *Poetic Relations*, 22.

authorship that “depends on the relationships it can claim and create.”¹²⁰ Furey examines Mary Sidney Herbert’s psalm translations and concludes,

Instead of articulating a single, vertical bond between petitioner and God, the translated psalms create horizontal as well as vertical relationships: just as the psalmist gives the speaker words to express his or her own interiority, the speaker who translates and poeticizes the psalms makes the words of Scripture available to the reader.¹²¹

Likewise, I would argue the reader’s acceptance of the speaker’s devotional offering then authorizes the speaker as a member of their community and as a fellow participant in the corporate body of worshippers. For Hopton, this relational authorization is particularly valuable because her identity was destabilized by her double conversions.

Thus we come to see how claiming anonymity becomes the means through which Hopton secures her relational identity. When we view anonymity as a performance, we can see how it enables a polyvocal expression of similarity that is highly valuable to marginalized people for whom expressions of difference could be dangerous. Anonymity, however, which signifies similarity through the erasure of interpersonal difference, secures identity. This is especially true for Hopton. While a woman’s double conversion would make her integrity and constancy doubly suspect, the retroactive construction of a reliable participation in Protestant corporate identity authenticates her claims to the Protestant identity she makes in her text. We can struggle to see the relational authority of the anonymous text because we struggle to see anonymity as relational. But the liturgical interventions in *Daily Devotions* (1673) and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices*

¹²⁰ Furey, 23.

¹²¹ Furey, 33.

(1700) demonstrate that the anonymity of liturgy provides opportunities for individuals to participate in corporate worship and therefore locate their identity in their relationality with God and fellow believers. Since God's identity was thought to be the presence that secures all things, anonymous relationality to God provides the means through which to aspire to his characteristics as one's own. As I have sought to demonstrate in both my previous chapters, as well as this one, when we forget to read for these relational implications, we fail to engage with the text itself and how it communicates. Eliza and Collins use anonymous authorship to secure devotional relationality with their readers against misogynist assumptions that isolate them. Likewise, Hopton, either in her letter or in Hickeys's retroactive attribution of anonymous liturgies to her, secures the indeterminacy of her doubly converted femininity in the corporate identity expressed through anonymous participation in the worship of God. Anonymity secures the success of the relational identity these women pursue.

CONCLUSION

This project began with a conversation about authenticating gendered anonymous voices. I asked, “Does anonymity support an anonymous woman writer’s cause?” and “Why does an anonymous woman’s publisher hasten to reveal her identity after her death?” and “How closely is anonymity linked with a sense of gendered transgression?” These questions led me on a journey through the archive to answers I had not anticipated. To my surprise, I found that while anonymous female-voiced authors demonstrate an inherent defensiveness against the stigma associated with women in print, they counteracted those stereotypes through the propagation of gendered anonymity. The women I studied treat anonymity, the exclusion of their name from their text, as the means to amplify the devotional identity they wish their text to promote.

Many studies have shown that early modern womanhood was consistently imagined as the inverse model of personhood;¹ but anonymously gendered devotionality challenges the stigma of womanhood by demonstrating how assuming a persona characterized by its vacuity makes a woman a prime receptacle for the overflow of God’s grace. By requiring readers to identify themselves by their devotion, An Collins, Susanna Hopton, and the author or *Eliza’s Babes* introduce a new norm through which to engage the feminine voice, a norm characterized by abundance, receptivity, and community rather than desolation. Thus women’s anonymity is linked to a sense of gendered transgression but not in the way critics and literary historians have commonly assumed:

¹ See Eve Keller, *Generating Bodies and Gendered Selves: The Rhetoric of Reproduction in Early Modern England*.

gendered anonymity is not used as a blind. It is used as a frame that emphasizes those aspects of character that authors and editors wish to expose.

The anonymous author of *Eliza's Babes*, the subject of my first chapter, argues that while anonymity is a consequence of the female condition (at least in early modern religio-medical parlance), in Christ even the female condition is relieved of its burden of sinful signification. Through devotion, Eliza reclaims the anonymous voice of the female muse as a model of agentive speech that allows her to echo divine revelation more perfectly in her texts. Doing so releases her from the stigma of being an unwed mother of devotional babes and proclaims her a faithful, fruitful believer instead.

The authors discussed in my second and third chapters embrace anonymity's benefits even more enthusiastically than Eliza. In my second chapter, I demonstrate how An Collins's anonymity becomes the means to selectively construct a devotional identity that mitigates the signification of her sick body. Her devotionality also provides her with access to a community of believers. Not only does faithful anonymity affirm her as a vector of the divine echo—as Eliza's anonymity does—but it also affirms her in the eyes of a community for whom her personal remediation becomes a symbolic affirmation of the communal body's hope for renewal.

My third chapter traces the value of the anonymous voice even beyond the anonymous text. In my study of Susanna Hopton's works, I demonstrate how her editor extends to Hopton the authority of communally-voiced devotion in the anonymous *Daily Devotions* and *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* as a means to strengthen her claim to Protestant corporate belonging.

As a whole, my study corroborates Marcy L. North's suggestion that there are benefits to separating our interpretation of the anonymous condition of a text from the conventions governing the anonymous voice. While the women I study admit to being forced to write anonymously because of the worldly fear of female wantonness expressed through print, their anonymous female voices invoke divine agency. Divine agency, made at home in them through their humble vulnerability to God's grace, counteracts the stigma of their compromised femininity.

One of the most notable demonstrations of their devotional acumen lies in how these women authorize their texts. The authors I study frequently discuss how devotional reading practices produced changes in their experience of their bodies. Reading and writing were thought of as productive activities. The authors promote their texts as echoes of scripture. Thus the texts substantiate the women authors' active alignment of themselves with God's will. Their texts are presented to both God and reader as the fruits of their devoted bodies' labours.

Further, their insistence that this process of devotional affiliation can be communicated through text in a way that their audience might also experience divine comfort supports their argument that the textual application of scripture counteracts the sensory evidence of the world. Readers are invited to relate to the author according to the evidence of God's favour provided in the text rather than according to worldly norms. By acquiescing to the imposition of these norms on the readers' own perspectives, readers submit to the devotional reconfiguration of themselves the writers claim to have similarly undergone. This devotional refiguration imposes further alignment between the reader

and writer and affirms, again, the authority of the anonymous woman's voice. As demonstrated in each of my chapters, anonymity allows the woman author to manage readers' interpretations of her voice by constructively disclosing information about herself only through the formal elements of the text.

These women's investment in the affect of devotional reading prompts a renewed consideration of how early moderns perceived the relationship between books and bodies, particularly the relationship between "good" books and "bad" bodies. In my introduction, I demonstrate how, because the book becomes infused with the meaning-making function of the body, it becomes implicated in the ethical functions of mimesis. Studies focusing on "bad" books or volatile sources have suggested mimesis was treated as inherently threatening because of its coercive impact on an individual's rationality, but my research suggests it is more accurately the worldly corruption of mimetic intention that early moderns found threatening.² It was assumed that a text had the ability to conform a reader to its message so, when textual affect was corrupted by a "bad" source, its corruption of the relational impulse would result in the audience's corruption. In contrast, in the context of a "good" book or authoritative source, the text's ability to reproduce its message in the reader, enforcing social cohesion against other corrupting influences, was precisely what made the text so compelling and authoritative.

My study thus foregrounds the relationality of a text, that is, the author's ability to claim and create relationships with the reader through the text, as a primary expression of a text's function. In prioritizing the study of a text's relationality, my research reflects a

² See my introductory discussion of scholarship by Votava and Kayem Polster.

recent renaissance in how we understand the ethics of early modern textual discourse. Discussions of the construction or deconstruction of the authorial self have held sway over the study of early modern discourse since the 1980s; only recently have scholars begun to find ways to talk about the text as dialogic. Consequently, we have also begun to examine how what happens between agentive actors interacting through text impacts the way subjects and objects are iterated in the process of reading and writing. Nancy Selleck, for example, notes how early modern selves are constructed as objects of others, instituting “an ongoing dependence of selfhood on specific others.”³ Approaching this concept from another angle, Adam Smyth examines how intersubjective dependencies are constructed rhetorically. Intertextual references reinforce similarities between texts to signal an author’s trustworthiness and authority through the sense of familiarity the similarities invoke.⁴ Constance M. Furey’s work highlights how the desire to create a sense of familiarity in one’s writing illuminates networks of association that are used to authorize even marginalized writers. These writers gained authority through the relationships they could claim and create through rhetorical as well as relational networks of meaning.⁵ These themes are powerful on their own but, when drawn together, they provide a new perspective through which to recognize how text substantiates the relationality authors pursue with their audiences.

³ Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom in Shakespeare, Donne, and Early Modern Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 122.

⁴ See Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005).

⁵ See Furey, *Poetic Relations: Intimacy and Faith in the English Reformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

Anonymity intensifies the potency of objectification, intertextuality, and relationality in the texts that I study by emphasizing how selective disclosure of authorial identity shapes readers' reception of authors and their texts' messages. Eliza, Collins, and Hopton use the selective disclosure of themselves as devotees to amplify the divine authority with which their texts seek to speak. Their readers' acceptance of this divine authority expressed in their acceptance of the text's comforts substantiates the devotional community the authors claim in their texts.

A renewed appreciation for the relationality of text also provides the means through which to reclaim a swathe of texts that have been formerly dismissed as derivative and unworthy of scholarly attention. Because we are beginning to recognize the authority referentiality bestows on authors, we gain a better understanding of the values that are foundational to the construction of the early modern canon. Recently, I was lecturing a class on the intersection of reading and faith and was exasperated to discover that our text began its discussion in the Enlightenment, as if the Romantics were the first to think about art as an expression of something otherworldly. This stance is particularly frustrating because many of the close reading techniques we take for granted were popularized by Luther and Calvin's promotion of lay close reading in their theological defense of Sola Scriptura. These practices assumed that the best way to develop a committed devotional community was to teach that community what it meant to relate more closely to God through his Word. They insisted that community formation

relied on readership.⁶ The women I study write more than a century after those first movements in the Reformation, but they continue to rely on devotional practices that were formed in those early days. They insist the best way to develop a devotional community is through the appropriate reading of their devotional texts. They also insist that, by teaching people how to relate to God, these reading practices will teach them how to relate more appropriately to each other. I argue that this insistence upon the integrity of a reading community was essential to the creation of the literary canon in seventeenth-century England.

Ironically, my defense of early modern reading practices is aided by the literary theories of a twentieth-century critic Mikhail Bakhtin. Nancy Selleck draws on Bakhtin's concept of dialogized consciousness to underscore that "to speak is necessarily to be engaged with the other's *frame of reference*, and to be shaped by it."⁷ Bakhtin suggests that when we have trouble parsing a work we should not assume the work is deficient, but that our models require further development. Bakhtin notes how, traditionally, the study of poetics had been governed by an assumption of unity, whether it be the unity of language as a system or the internal unity of the person from whom an utterance originates. Yet "the centripetal forces of the life of language embodied in 'unitary

⁶ See Luther's discussion of how to read well in *A Methodicall Preface Prefixed before the Epistle of S. Paule to the Romanes* (London, 1594). Calvin also insists that every person is responsible to know God through the reading of his Word: "But howe soeuer it bee, let vs not say, I am no clerke, I haue not bene at schoole; for beholde, the lawe is set foorth to all folke both litle and great; God woulde haue vs all to bee instructed therein." Calvin, *The Sermons of M. John Calvin vpon the fifth booke of Moses called Deuteronomie*, trans. Arthur Golding (London, 1583), 1044. See Ramie Targoff's discussion of the ramifications of these teachings in the English context in *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁷ Selleck, *The Interpersonal Idiom*, 3.

language' operate in the midst of heteroglossia.... [E]very utterance participates in both."⁸ His theories allow scholars the means to discuss textual differentiation as being in relationship with a centralized means of communication. Bahktin's insistence upon the polyvocality of singular texts reinforces North's assertion that the condition of anonymity can be separated from the conventions of the anonymous female voice in a way that still produces meaning. It also highlights the energy invested in every text navigating between the fundamentals of unifying language and utter polyvocality.

Until recently, we have struggled to recognize seventeenth-century devotional texts that do not conform to the standards set by metaphysical poets as anything but marginal contributors to the literary landscape. A surging appreciation for polyvocality has allowed for a renewed interest in the contributions that marginalized texts make to the diversity of early modern literary expression, but this has still not allowed our criticism to bridge the moat of genius protecting the reputation of a small canon of male devotional writers. Bahktin proposes that marginalized texts contribute to the unifying and centralizing work of a culture's "unitary language" precisely because of their polyvocality. Recognizing how marginalized texts contribute to the construction of the canon allows us to see the polyvocality of the anonymous texts as even more significant and formidable than expected. Not only do they promote a diversity of voices, but they also contribute to a centralization and unification of literary meaning through the construction of an authoritative voice based on their coherence with scripture. This

⁸ Bahktin, "Discourse in the Novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 271, 272.

encompassing, scripturally-determined, authoritative voice contributes to the literary unity against which the metaphysical poets demonstrate their originality.

The prescriptive unities pursued by the anonymous voices of the women writers I study are different from the passionate echoes of scripture exhibited in the works of Herbert and Donne; nevertheless, the impulse towards didacticism and their assumption that didactic literature is deeply moving raise questions about how we evaluate the meaningfulness of early modern devotion as a genre. Pursuing answers to the questions these texts raise could help revise our definitions of early modern devotionality and its goals. Eliza, Collins, and Hopton perceive the social cohesion affected by their scriptural didacticism to be of utmost importance because they believed that expressing the remediation of the self through devotion might also recuperate a fractured community. Ultimately, how we understand the relational metonymy of a person and their community impacts how we understand both history and canonicity. The seventeenth century is often described in terms of fragmentation. Even our periodization often divides the century between the late renaissance and long eighteenth century, with the interregnum floating between the two; however, Eliza, Collins and Hopton, who wrote across and beyond the interregnum and were read into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were attempting to rehabilitate that fragmentation through an authoritative appeal to corporate devotionality. I look forward to continuing to pursue a greater understanding of how seventeenth-century believers imagined themselves in an enduring community through text.

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