SACRED AUTHORSHIP: SCRIPTURAL MODELS FOR EARLY MODERN BOOKS

by

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Abstract

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"Sacred Authorship: Scriptural Models for Early Modern Books" contends that representations of human authorship in the Bible provided an important set of models for the "self-fashioning" of early modern poets and prose writers. Although information about the literacy of early modern English men and women can be elusive, it is clear that they lived in a culture saturated by the English Bible. This study takes seriously the implications of an active and creative reading of the Bible for the creation of authorial personae, particularly within the context of print culture.

The scriptural culture of the English Reformation invited readers to enter into the texts of the English Bible not only as readers but also as authors. They recognized the complexities of scriptural scenes of writing, such as Moses' inscription of the law (including the first tablets, which he destroys), the collaboration among multiple authors in the Book of Psalms, and the imitation of Christ as an author by the four Evangelists. The intricacies of authorship in these figures—and their perceived authorial partnerships with God—elegantly mirrored the complex circumstances of early print culture.

The dissertation investigates practices of reading and writing often overlooked by modern scholars—such as pseudonymity, collaboration, and imitation—and considers the representation of such forms of authorship within literary texts. The study moves from an analysis of Moses' writing of the law to a discussion of Christ's "unwriting" of this law in the Passion. The major works discussed span from 1599 to 1671 and include Ester Sowernam's *Ester hath hang'd Haman* (1617), Philip and Mary Sidney's *Psalmes* (1599), Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611) and Milton's *Poems* (1645), *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Paradise Regain'd to which is added Samson Agonistes* (1671). Readings of these works within the contexts of scriptural authorship demonstrate the variety of authorial strategies for early modern writers of divine poetry and show that English authors often worked in modes of composition that they saw as intimately tied to their subject matter and circumstances of creative production.

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"what defect so ever may bee in my words is supplied in my hart"

– Mary Sidney

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Introduction

'The beginning of poetrie' was 'in the bookes of Moses & David'

In 1582 Stephen Gosson posed a foundational question for English Reformation culture—whether imaginative writing should pursue a divine or a worldly character. Gosson's anti-theatrical tract *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, in which he contrasts the literary accomplishments of the Bible with the depravity of Elizabethan theater, provides a touchstone for one thread of the literary controversies of sixteenth-century England. He argues in the strongest terms for a sacred literature, and in this rallying cry Gosson did not stand alone. He insists that since "the beginning of poetrie" is to be found in the books of Moses and David, then imaginative literature in the new Jerusalem, sixteenth-century England, ought to develop from the model laid out in Scripture (sig. E5v). Gosson's characterization of Moses and David as poets, and more specifically as authors to be imitated, points to an important set of reading and writing practices within the culture of the English Reformation. Gosson and his contemporaries, as attentive and creative readers of Scripture, discovered in the human authors represented in the Bible—Moses, David, and the four evangelists, for instance—scenes of composition and patterns of authorship that elegantly addressed the complexities of their own circumstances of literary production. Nearly a century after Gosson's *Plays Confuted*, John Milton's double book *Paradise Regain'd to which is added Samson Agonistes* (1671) reiterates the invitation to biblical precedents in the Son's reply to Satan. The Son explicitly praises not just the forms of scriptural poetry ("Our Hebrew Songs and Harps in *Babylon*") but acknowledges as well the human creators of this literature (*Paradise Regained* IV.336).

Gosson's call for an English biblical literature—which serves here as a shorthand for the vast and sophisticated consideration of this question in the second half of the sixteenth century—and Milton's enactment of it, have been documented by Lily

Campbell, Israel Baroway, Murray Roston, James Sims and Harold Fisch, who survey the development of "divine poetry and drama" from the Reformation through Milton. Barbara Lewalski's investigation of biblical genres and her pioneering contributions to the study of early modern women's writing made sixteenth-century scriptural literature available for a new generation of scholarship. Most recently, this work has been taken up in Hilary Hinds' study of the cooperative writing of radical sectarian woman, Elizabeth Mazzola's pursuit of the "sacred remains" of traditional religion in Reformation culture, Richard Rambuss's interpretation of the metaphysical poets' representations of Christ's body, and Debora Shuger's reading of the Passion narrative as an indicator of anxieties about masculinity and subjectivity. The combined findings of these scholars reveal that biblical literature was not simply a default mode of writing that mimicked the dictates of religious authority. Rather, it allowed for an investigation in print of the possibilities of authorship that regularly took its inspiration and authority from the most controversial and intricate passages and figures in the Bible. This study urges a further consideration of the scenes of writing and human authors in the Bible that allowed early modern authors to reflect on their own practices and to represent themselves as readers and writers.

There can be no doubt that the Bible was *the* book of the early modern period, influencing religious, social, and political thought. English men and women heard the Bible read, read it to themselves and their families, and listened to sermons containing biblical narratives. Kari Konkola has recently demonstrated that the thesis that English Protestants were "the people of the book" can be proven by calculating the production and circulation of religious texts in Reformation England. He shows, for example, that in the 1630s, enough Bibles were printed "to give a copy to one out of four English households, and this production took place even though there already must have been a large number of Bibles in circulation" (14). Furthermore, English Renaissance readers were creative and productive in their engagements with the Bible. Among other critical

insights, some of which laid the foundations for the many modern branches of biblical criticism, they recognized the complexities of scriptural scenes of writing. These moments of inscription include Moses' writing of the law (including the first tablets that he shatters in anger at the Israelites' return to idolatry), the collaboration among multiple authors in the Book of Psalms, and the imitation of Christ's own authorship by the four evangelists. Their sophisticated reading of such scenes indicates the shaping influence of the Bible in English Reformation culture and, more specifically, demonstrates an active interest in the problems of representing literary creation.

While information about the literacy of early modern English men and women can be elusive, it is clear that they lived in a culture saturated by English Bibles. The plural "Bibles" emphasizes an important element of this scriptural culture. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English readers encountered a rich variety of texts of the Bible, not just in the multiple (and often contentious) translations, but also in the stunning range of textual presentations, which drew on the new possibilities offered by print culture. This multiplicity in the physical form of holy writ played a central part in opening up the text to the kinds of readings that are explored below. Christopher Hill argues that the proliferation of printed Bibles encouraged individual interpretation while weakening the authority of the text. As the traditional clerical and doctrinal authorities waned, interpretation of the text demanded that readers assume some of the available authority. These readers found legitimacy for their own creative work in the layers of response and elaboration embedded within Scripture. Just as Moses begins with a text written by God and ends with a text that he writes under God's guidance, the Protestant reader of the Bible often found within it the authorization to remake God's words on his or her own page. As Debora Shuger has shown, the Bible "remained the central cultural text in England, as in the rest of Europe, through the seventeenth century" in part because "it continued to generate knowledge and narrative" (2-3).

Biblical representations of reading and writing must be explored as some of the most powerful of the many cultural sources from which poets and prose writers authorized their work.[1] Through the patterns provided by biblical authors, early modern writers—both female and male—transformed themselves from readers of the Bible to writers of literature. They authorized their texts by establishing biblical authors as precedents and by doubling themselves with biblical authors within recontextualized scriptural scenes of writing. Rivkah Zim's pathbreaking essay, "The Reformation: the Trial of God's Word" demonstrates the affinity between biblical hermeneutics and literary practices in early modern England, and establishes that literary authors were able to "exploit readers' knowledge of the Bible" and experience with hermeneutics in constructing their works (66). The chapters that follow here apply Zim's findings to a set of works that adopt biblical texts and figures as their major authorizing gestures. The situation of transfer that Zim describes, in which the tools of scriptural interpretation are brought to imaginative works—by both writers and readers—resulted from the Reformation emphasis on individual interpretation and created new ways of authorizing both writing and reading in post-Reformation England.

Conditions of literary production in the Renaissance were overwritten with issues of authority, such as the "stigma of print," the use of genres with political and doctrinal associations, the threat of censorship and its punishments, and the tension between collaboration and individualism as forms for creative effort.[2] Women writers confronted

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[1] Biblical authors may have provided models for medieval writers as well. A. J. Minnis suggests that the analysis of biblical *auctores* in medieval Bible commentaries generated ideas about "authorial roles and literary forms" in the later middle ages (160). Minnis argues that medieval writers gradually adopted the same terms to describe themselves and their writing that had been applied to biblical authors in prologues to commentaries. Citing Chaucer and Gower, Minnis claims "a writer could justify his own literary procedure or *forma tractandi* by appealing to a Scriptural model, without in any way offending against the great *auctoritas* of the Bible" (167). This connection between biblical author and medieval poet is enabled in part by an association between certain literary forms, such as psalms and wisdom literature, and the biblical writers who used them; to work in those forms outside of Scripture allowed medieval and early modern writers to claim some of the authority of their biblical creators.

[2] J. W. Saunders' 1951 essay, "The Stigma of Print," has been challenged in recent years by Nita Krevans and Steven May. Elizabeth Eisenstein and Wendy Wall address the anxieties associated with print, Annabel Patterson examines the relationship between censorship and authorial decisions, and Jeffrey Masten discusses the practice of collaborative authorship in the English Renaissance.

the additional prohibition against women's public speaking.[3] The chapters that follow examine how Renaissance authors turned to the Bible to address such issues in their work. In addition to arguing for a more accurate understanding of the range of authorial stances available to the early modern English writer, the readings suggest that the literary careers of even the major figures of the period, especially Milton, were shaped by the same tools and techniques as those used by more marginalized women writers. These models are strongly attached to a Protestant context, and within that context this study takes into account only literary (and not historical, philological, or legal) interests in Scripture. Similarly, only some of the many authorial patterns within scripture will be addressed here. For instance, prophetic writings have recently received some attention from scholars of early modern literature, and therefore do not appear in this study.[4]

Esther, David, and Christ as Models for Authorship

The following chapters focus on a small group of the many scriptural authors who offer patterns for negotiating the circumstances of early modern authorship. The first chapter considers Queen Esther as a figure of authorship as well as a marker of female authority. It concentrates on *Ester hath hang'd Haman* (1617), a pamphlet signed with the pseudonym Ester Sowernam, which was the second published response under a woman's name to Joseph Swetnam's *The Araignment of Lewde, idle, froward and unconstant women* (1615). Sowernam takes her authority to write from her use of biblical examples, from her positions as respondent to Swetnam and defender of women, and from her scriptural pseudonym and the provocative stance on gender that it allows. The chapter explores the connection between this pseudonym and the author's engagement with the category of woman within the pamphlet.

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3 Elaine Hobby argues in *Virtue of Necessity* that women's works should be read within the context of the prohibition against public speaking.

4 Phyllis Mack's *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) and Hobby's *Virtue of Necessity*, for example, consider women's prophetic writings in establishing their political identity.

The book of Esther provides Sowernam with a paradigm of secrecy perfectly suited for pseudonymous authorship. Taking Esther's intervention in the publication of decrees concerning the fate of the Jews in the Persian empire as her model, Sowernam inserts herself into the controversy over women, the *querelle des femmes*, as it unfolded in early seventeenth-century England. Although Sowernam may be unique in the extent of her adoption of a biblical persona, she participates in an important tradition of anonymous and pseudonymous works. These forms of authorship—which Sowernam shows can be active choices on the part of authors rather than attempts to evade responsibility for a work—have not been given adequate consideration in histories of authorship. Chapter One explores the significance of Sowernam's biblical pseudonym and the relationship between pseudonymity as a form of authorship and the scriptural or theological context of many unsigned works.

The second chapter takes as its focus collaborative authorship, a method that was indispensable for many literary genres, such as drama, and employed in others as a way to foreground questions about authority and originality. One center of collaboration in sixteenth-century England was the practice of psalm versification. The hundreds of such collections nearly always involved the hands of many writers, and some drew on the collaborative nature of the psalms themselves, which are attributed to several authors besides David. Chapter Two focuses on the collection of versified psalms by Philip Sidney and his sister Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, which are remarkable not just for their place as the premier metrical psalm collection of the sixteenth century, but also for their conscious engagement with practices of dual authorship. Their *Psalmes* (circa 1599) record a collaboration between Philip and Mary Sidney, but also between the Sidneys and the translators of their source texts, and between all of these writers and the original biblical text. Even within that original many voices compete and many experiences of authorship are presented.

The reception and attribution history of this collection reveals the need for a collaborative context for reading the Sidney *Psalmes*. From the earliest responses, by those who transcribed the Sidney psalms and in John Donne's poem on the collection, to the most recent critical edition, there have been competing claims about how the work was produced. Chapter Two returns this reception history of the *Psalmes* to current critical readings of the poems and the literary careers of their authors. The context of joint authorship that has always surrounded this collection is in dialogue with the importance of scenes of composition that the Sidneys built into their versions of many of the psalms. By examining the volume through the lens of biblical types of authorship it is possible to recover some of the narratives of its composition that have been disregarded by twentieth-century readers, but which are closely in tune with the ideas about sacred reading and writing that animate the Sidney psalms. These narratives of dual authorship allow us to imagine a broader range of compositional practices in which even the most canonical authors participated.

Such a reading of the *Psalmes* also contributes to current critical discourse on multiple authorship, a discussion that has neglected the importance of early modern non-dramatic works. Jeffrey Masten argues that "in a way that has not been fully recognized or conceptualized by scholars trained to organize material within post-Enlightenment paradigms of individuality, authorship, and textual property, collaboration was a prevalent mode of textual production in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, only eventually displaced by the mode of singular authorship with which we are more familiar" (4). While attention to early modern collaborations has increased significantly in recent years, allowing for a number of theoretical models and close readings, this work consistently overlooks the Sidney *Psalmes* as part of the history of collaboration. The compositional practices that created this work are thus invisible in traditional literary criticism and in the new readings of the history of authorship.

Perhaps the most meaningful biblical authors for Christian readers were the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The final two chapters examine how representations of the Passion modeled on the Gospels authorized imaginative writing. The use of the Passion narrative, and particularly the Crucifixion, as a generative biblical text during and after the English Reformation shows how powerful scriptural models could be for poets. The uneasy place of Crucifixion iconography in reformed culture made it especially attractive as a location from which to create poetry. The Passion had become an important element of Christian devotion and theology in the twelfth century, as the tradition of the *meditatio Christi* passed from the monastery into lay culture, and the Crucifixion came to dominate religious devotion and iconography up to the Reformation. While iconoclasm insisted on the submission of Crucifixion imagery and *imitatio Christi* devotion to a text-centered dispensation of grace, revisionist histories of the Reformation demonstrate that the materials of Catholic piety did not simply disappear in Protestant culture. In fact, the imagery of the Passion seems to have migrated from a central visual and liturgical position to take up residence in the emerging textual tradition of the reformed churches. At the same time, Renaissance humanist scholarship on the New Testament had made available the materials to understand the textual history of the Bible—its composition, circulation, transmission, and canonization. This knowledge, coupled with an anxiety about representation that followed from iconoclasm, deeply affected imaginative writing on the Crucifixion.

The Passion as a narrative has recently received attention from cultural critics, including Debora Shuger and Richard Rambuss, who show how representations of the death of Christ provide a view onto such issues as violence, subjectivity, eroticism, and masculinity in early modern culture. Recent work on the Passion story in early modern culture, most notably Shuger's *The Renaissance Bible*, suggests that while the Passion may not have been central to Reformation theological controversy, the death of Christ supplied, in Shuger's words, an "extradogmatic surplus of undetermined meaning—or

rather meaning capable of being determined in various ways" (5). The flexibility of significance that Shuger identifies derived in no small part from the narrative structures of the Gospels themselves, structures that allowed poets and paraphrasers of the Crucifixion to explore not just the central episode in Christian experience, but also the characteristics of poetry and literary prose needed to describe it. The Gospels are, for the English Renaissance poet, both sacred texts and literary models. As the Book of Esther supplied Sowernam with both a parallel narrative and an authorial identity, the books of the New Testament lent early modern writers notions of authorship equal in complexity to the circumstances of literary composition in which they found themselves. In addition to presenting the four evangelists as authors, the Gospels offer the most profound and daunting authorial precedent for a Christian culture, the "authorship" of Christ in the Passion.

English Renaissance authors found the Passion to be an enabling subject, one that could be depicted as though the event itself required them to write. Chapter Three shows that Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611), for example, illustrates many of the strategies that women writers in particular used to create an authorial voice, including the use of Christ as a model for authorship. Some writing women imitated Christ's behavior or created characters whose actions reflect Christ's. As Achsah Guibbory has suggested, Lanyer wrote a poem that she presented as an alternative Gospel. Chapter Three explores her role as author, and the negotiation that takes place on the pages of *Salve Deus* between her authorship and Christ's. Lanyer interacts with the text of Matthew in ways that refer to the act of writing, which suggests that women took agency in writing, and in other public roles, from biblical sources. For example, Christ sometimes assumes the author function of the poem, as when Lanyer claims his sacrifice "invites my lowely Muse / To write of Him" (lines 265-66). Her additions to the narrative allow her to address Christ in numerous apostrophes, encoding authority and reinforcing her argument that women's minds are divinely inspired and valued. Lanyer in

fact suggests that women understand and interpret the Passion more effectively than men have.

Authorial strategizing was not limited, however, to women writers or to those whom we now consider non-canonical. As a conclusion to this project, Chapter Four re-opens the discussion of John Milton's use of the Passion. The chapter traces Milton's use of a discourse of omission and supplement in his three major poetic volumes, the 1645 *Poems*, *Paradise Lost*, and the 1671 volume which joins *Paradise Regain'd* and *Samson Agonistes*, as a new strategy for reading Milton's treatment of the Passion. Contextualizing these poems within the broader tradition of contemporary Passion narratives, which often present the Crucifixion as indescribable or unspeakable, demonstrates that Milton's repeated evasions of the death of Christ force attention on the repercussions of the Passion as a narrative for poetics and for the institution of authorship.

Expanding the Histories of Authorship and Reading

The history of authorship in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, when it is not simply an unspoken category, has until recently been presented as a narrative of progress in which writers gradually gained independence from their sources and predecessors and won more control in the forms of copyright, freedom from patronage, and direction over the printing and circulation of their works. (Ben Jonson is often paradigmatic for this reading). The concept of authorship, like the concept of the self, was so familiar to twentieth-century critics in its current form that it had been difficult to outline its history or to recognize authorship practices different from our own. Major concepts of authorship in modern literature, such as the Romantic ideal of the solitary genius or the postmodern insistence on the authorless text, fit the early modern author poorly.

Varieties of authorship flourished in Tudor and Stuart England, but until recently literary criticism approached these forms selectively, privileging only those that are most closely related to other beliefs about the Renaissance, such as the emergence of the individual. Margaret Ezell cautions that "traditional literary histories have tended to behave as if the definition and classification of authorship that govern their own activities existed for earlier periods....Such a position, we need to notice, does suggest that the act of authorship is separate from the medium in which the writer worked" (*Social Authorship* 13-14). And Marcy North shows that "throughout the late medieval and early modern periods, alternative types of authoring and authorship such as collaboration, compilation, and anonymity continued to thrive" but the scope and importance of these forms have yet to be demonstrated through analysis of the literary texts that called on them (395). As the chapters that follow show, however, English authors often worked in modes of composition that they saw as intimately tied to their subject matter and circumstances of creative production.

More recent histories of authorship and reading, such as those suggested by Ezell and North, seek to understand the circumstances and concepts of authorship in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, thus allowing for more informed and nuanced readings of literature. The dominant approach to the history of authorship situates the institutionalization of professional writing, and the attendant emergence of copyright, as moments in economic and social history as well as literary history. The following chapters focus on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England not to suggest that moment as the origin of modern authorship, but instead to identify some of the important forms and styles of authorship that have been lost to modern readers and to demonstrate the value that a knowledge of these forms can have for textual, formal, and historicist interpretations of a substantial number of literary works. Martha Woodmansee's 1983 essay "The Genius and Copyright" distinguishes modern concepts of authorship from those of the early modern period by concentrating on the distinction between

craftsmanship and external inspiration—two models of composition that she identifies with the Renaissance—and the eighteenth-century emphasis on originality and ownership. While my interest is not, like Woodmansee's, the "emergence" or the economic status of the author, the history of authorship that has been constructed along these lines of inquiry provides valuable information for understanding the Renaissance literary career, as well as for modern critical representations of these careers, which have often misunderstood early modern authorship practices. Economically-based histories of authorship also provide a foundation for investigating the material conditions of literary publication, especially the importance of the marketplace of print. And although the institution of copyright falls after the period covered in this study, it will be useful to draw on discussions of copyright that question standard definitions and periodizations of authorship.

Another approach to authorship that has influenced the development of this project is the work of the structuralist and deconstructionist streams of literary criticism. Roland Barthes' famous pronouncement of "the death of the author," however, will be less applicable to the readings that follow than many current responses to his claim. Similarly, while Foucault's foundational question—What is an Author?—has yet to be answered comprehensively for the English Renaissance, there is a movement in scholarship on early modern literature to acknowledge various practices of authorship. It is also important to modify Foucault's discussion of authorship to make it more suitable to early texts and early concepts of authorship, which, as Hinds notes, differ significantly from those which formed the basis of Foucault's and Barthes' work. For example, Barthes' discussion of the death of the author is limited in relevance to works, such as Ester Sowernam's *Ester hath hang'd Haman*, that pointedly call attention to the role of the author.

For instance, Nancy Miller has argued that discussions about the death of the author have not revised concepts of authorship but rather have repressed examinations of

writing identity, with especially damaging consequences for women writers. Miller argues that because of their different relationship to subjectivity, women's relationship to writing cannot be constructed (or deconstructed) on the same terms as men's. Further, the increased interest in the reader in Barthes' work has "reduced the possibility of differentiating among readers altogether" (104). Miller's critique offers an enabling perspective for this project because many early modern texts, particularly those by women or marginal authors, insist on the category of authorship as a site of meaning; to drain significance away from it is not only to misread these texts but often to justify their dismissal from literary canons. To counter this tendency toward de-authoring, the following chapters act on Cheryl Walker's insistence on "preserving author-function not only in terms of reception theory, as Foucault would seem at one point to advocate, but also in terms of a politics of author recognition" (553).

One of the most pressing needs of scholarship on early women's texts, and one form of "author recognition," is to identify and theorize their authorizing strategies. The growing field of study concentrated on Tudor and Stuart women writers also contributes to the theorization of early modern authorship in general. The scholarship of the past two decades has too often been governed by a belief that most forms of piety, including Bible reading, socialized women into passivity. Given the wealth of texts and studies on women writers of the English Renaissance that now exists, it is possible to look at how women found the authority to write and publish literary works and, further, to bring these findings to canonical male writers of the period as a way of re-opening questions about their figurations of authorship. A new view of early modern England has emerged in the past decade that allows readers access to, as one recent anthology puts it, "Female and Male Voices."[5] This figuration signals a new approach to the study of texts by early

[5] Betty Travitsky and Anne Lake Prescott, eds., *Female and Male Voices in Early Modern England: An Anthology of Renaissance Writing* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

modern women writers as a unique field of inquiry. Newer scholarship, like the anthology edited by Prescott and Travitsky, insists on gender contextualization. Marshall Grossman's introduction to *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre, and the Canon*, articulates this "aim to move slowly toward an early modern literary history reshaped by an appreciation of the ongoing conversations among works in a gender integrated canon" (2). The chapters that follow rely on the ways of reading articulated by Travitsky, Prescott, and Grossman. This project seeks to add another dimension of inquiry to this movement by addressing questions of authorship. Evidence from women's writing about the nature of early modern authorship—that authorizing strategies were multiple, flexible, and drawn from a variety of cultural sources—also applies to male writers.

To authorize their writing, women drew on the existence of reading and writing communities (such as the court, family networks, patronage circles and religious groups), on genres that often highlighted or problematized authorship (such as letters and diaries, translation, prophecy, and devotional materials), and on social discourses about women's roles (as respondents in *querelle des femmes* literature, for example). As Mary Ellen Lamb notes, "the sometimes complex or even devious ways in which women created themselves as authors render visible the sites of resistance, the loopholes, the contradictions, the shiftings within gender ideology restricting women's language" (*Gender and Authorship* 10). The authorizing gestures matter not just for what they reveal about women's lives, but for the window they open onto the variety of authorial practices at work more broadly in Renaissance literature.

Hilary Hinds, for instance, has brought questions about authorship to her study of the writings of radical sectarian women in the seventeenth century. She calls attention to the silencing of these women in current criticism, noting that the inclusion of works by these authors would challenge not just the content of the canon but also definitions of literature. They have been excluded, Hinds explains, partly because "the context of their production could not contrast more starkly with the Romantic myth of literary creativity:

these are texts written from within a collective movement, not composed by the solitary genius" (5). Hinds suggests the significance of her study for the general reader of seventeenth-century English literature with her claim that the qualities of prophetic works by women are shared by canonical figures such as Donne, Jonson and Shakespeare. It is by returning the women's writings to their original literary contexts that we will discover more about how all early modern literature unfolded.

In addition to the histories of authorship and reading generated by critical theory and by the study of women writers, recent work on textual scholarship provides another important source of information about early modern reading and writing practices by identifying the markers of various forms and practices of authorship in early printed books. The work of Stephen Dobranski and Leah Marcus, for example, demonstrates that the production of early modern books, whether manuscript or print, involved a number of figures with varying degrees of authority: writers, printers, licensers, publishers, booksellers, and readers.[6] Marcus argues in *Unediting the Renaissance* that the material operations of creating early printed books, which reflect this sharing of authority, often disappear in modern editions. In Jeffrey Masten's words, to "attach a name to a book that did not bear one, to modernize, standardize, repunctuate, and emend in our own image the texts of another period, to elide or rewrite, often silently, the apparatus in which a text originally circulated—all of these acts relinquish and/or ignore important evidence of the culture we read" (11). New scholarship on early modern literature must take into account the material history of authorship, but is also obliged to acknowledge the limitations of authorship as a category of analysis, not only because post-structuralist criticism dictates a reading that accounts for non-authorial sources of power in a text, but also because early modern authorship practices themselves suggest that the writer of a text was by no means always the most important lens for reading and interpreting it.

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[6] North notes that "to use Foucault's notion of the 'author-function' for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature, one must add the publisher's function, the printer's function, the compiler's function, among others" (394 n10).

Roger Chartier defines this approach to the author in modern scholarship as the meeting point of several reconfigurations of the categories of writer, text, and reader, namely those of reader response theory, new historicism, and bibliography.

Marcus, Masten, and Dobranski have staked out new territory for textual scholarship first by showing that critical editions, like the works of literature they convey, must be subject to critical readings because they themselves are not neutral. Moreover, these critics insist on editing practices that make the material circumstances of composition more available to modern readers. One of the most important realizations of this new textual criticism, stated simply by Masten but borne out by research such as Margaret Ezell's examination of manuscript culture in *Social Authorship*, is that "the production of texts is a social process" (20). The readings that follow in this study have been shaped by the approach to the material text that these critics suggest. In addition to readings that are sensitive to the interpretive relevance of the textual histories of early modern books, the chapters that follow push this line of inquiry further by considering what Renaissance authors knew and thought about the textual histories of their source texts, especially the Bible. The chapters in this study are concerned both with the way that early modern readers experienced the physical forms of books, especially the Bible, and the insights into sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature that come currently from modern textual scholarship. My reading of *Samson Agonistes*, for instance, is in the tradition Margareta de Grazia has described, in which texts that had been "documents" have become "works."

From Bible Reading to Imaginative Writing

As Chartier and others have shown, readers approached books for an active encounter rather than passive instruction. The chapters that follow suggest that readers turned to the Bible with their questions about how to compose and present to the public works of imaginative literature despite the many obstacles to such an endeavor. They

found in scriptural narratives a range of tools, including styles, images, language, but also, and for this project most importantly, authorial styles and forms. Max Thomas notes that an "Elizabethan reader's approach to that poetry [of Donne, Shakespeare, Marlowe and Jonson] would be significantly different from a modern reader's approach, even in the poetry's most basic material dimensions" (402). As Thomas suggests, there are important differences not just between modern and seventeenth-century habits of reading, but also diverse kinds of reading (often deriving from the proliferation of forms and technologies of writing) within the culture of early modern English poetry.

In addition to gaining a broad sense of early modern reading practices, it will be important for the chapters that follow to develop a working sense of how the Bible was read in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England. Our evidence for such an understanding comes from the apparatus of printed Bibles, from documents that addressed the parameters of reading Scripture outlined by the church, from first-person accounts (particularly personal diaries), and from literary and devotional works in which practices of reading the Bible are reflected. The late Reformation marks a transition in ways of reading the Bible, and two recent studies have outlined some of the possibilities for this research by showing how early modern ways of reading the Bible emerged from the late medieval church and from later reform efforts. Jerry Bentley's *Humanists and Holy Writ* and Debora Shuger's *The Renaissance Bible* have established that humanist and Reformation scholarship on the Bible called forth new ways of reading Scripture: an interest in philology, an appreciation for historical and linguistic context, and a stance toward holy writ that Bentley claims ultimately resulted in a shift from religious to secular authority in the modern world. Bentley explores the early humanists' responses to Scripture, particularly their initiation of textual scholarship in an effort to produce an authoritative Greek text of the New Testament. Fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century biblical scholars recognized that the manuscripts of the New Testament varied greatly not just in minor points but also in cases of doctrinal significance (such as the *comma*

Johnanneum). While they sought to improve the text and produce a standard and authoritative edition, the work of such scholars as Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus provided an important awareness to later readers of the textual history of the Bible, an awareness that, for Milton, would be the seedbed for a radical intervention in the scriptural culture of the seventeenth century.

One of the key elements of this new scholarship was an attention to the textual history and status of holy writ. Bentley reports, for instance, that Erasmus struggled with his printer to arrange the text of his 1516 New Testament in parallel columns of Greek and Latin. This choice, and the perseverance with which Erasmus pursued his preference, demonstrates the importance of the physical form of the "new" Scriptures of the sixteenth century. Erasmus' conviction that the layout of the page bears on interpretation witnesses an important development: the willingness on the part of Protestant writers to shape the physical forms of their own texts and those of sacred text. Some of this scholarship focused on the authorship of books of the Bible. Erasmus, for instance,

> realized better than the other humanists that the scriptures were human documents, only as reliable as the human beings who transmitted them. At one point he even ventured the daring suggestion that the original authors of scripture themselves introduced error into their work. At Matt. 2:6 the evangelist reversed the meaning of prophecy quoted from Mic. 5:2. In his note to this passage Erasmus attributed the error to a slip of the memory, unlike earlier commentators, who had strived mightily to explain away the evangelist's mistake. (Bentley 142)

The humanists also circulated some of the doubts of the early church fathers as to the authority or the attribution of some books of the New Testament, including the epistles.

This investigation needs to go further, toward an examination of the literary consequences of new readings of the Bible, which have not been given adequate attention by scholarship. While Debora Shuger's work provides valuable evidence for a variety of

readings of the Bible, she overlooks an important element of the emerging scholarship on the authors of biblical books. Evidence from poetic accounts of the Passion, for instance, disproves Shuger's assertion that

> Renaissance biblical scholarship evinces almost no interest in the intentions, motives, or inner life of either the biblical writers or the texts' sacred personae....Renaissance scholars generally consider the author only as an 'authority'—as a passive witness to the events depicted in his narrative and hence the guarantor of its veracity. The author thus pertains to a prefatory note, having no further relevance to the shape of the narrative. (45)

Information that humanists and later scholars uncovered about the texts forced them to expand their thinking about the circumstances in which those texts were composed, including the role of the author. The search for models for "divine poetry" led them to an awareness of and interest in the biblical author that did not threaten that figure's authority but deepened the relevance of the Bible for literary creation.

In the later sixteenth century, reformers continued the biblical scholarship that began with the humanists, developing the philological and historical research of their predecessors. Their work, described in part by Shuger in *The Renaissance Bible*, had important cultural implications, particularly for imaginative literature. Through reading and writing about the Bible (particularly the Passion narrative), Calvin, Hugo Grotius, and others responded to issues of human authorship in the Bible and the fallibility of the texts of Holy Writ. As the humanist and reformation methods of Bible reading reached the broader English Protestant reading public, the range of possibilities for Bible reading expanded. These included literal, allegorical, typological, legal, experiential, and historical exegesis, among others. Writers of literary texts were able to call upon the habits of reading that their audiences employed, many of which were based on practices

associated with reading the Bible. Rivkah Zim notes, for instance, that typology was a tool for creating meaning not just as a reader but also as a writer. According to Zim, the

> application of typology enabled a writer to exploit correspondences between his new work and a biblical sub-text in order to invite his readers to look for hidden senses. At the same time, it enabled the writer to evade responsibility for any particular underlying sense thus construed by the reader as interpreter of his text. ("The Reformation" 88)

Zim suggests that the tools of Biblical hermeneutics shaped the development of early modern literary interpretation, noting that the habit of reading representations of historical figures as commentaries on contemporary events (such as the association between the Earl of Essex and the 1601 production of Richard II) followed a tradition of literary works in which biblical figures invite similar parallels (such as the 1561 play *Godly Queene Hester*).

The example of the Great Bible shows the impact that vernacular scriptures had on habits of reading. After the Great Bible was installed in churches in 1541, the crowds of eager readers, lookers, and listeners grew so substantial that church authorities became concerned that commentaries would begin to appear to satisfy this audience. Bonner, Bishop of London, posted a notice in St. Paul's instructing the people of London on the reading of their new Bible:

> Whosoever come hither to read should prepare himself to be edified and made better thereby: That he should join thereunto his readiness to obey the King's injunctions made in that behalf: That he bring with him Discretion, Honest Intent, Charity, Reverence, and quiet Behaviour: That there should be no such number meet together as to make a Multitude: That no Exposition be made thereupon but what is declared in the Book itself: and That it be not read with Noise in Time of Divine Service, nor that any Disputation or Contention be used at it. (quoted in Strachan 74)

While Bonner's proclamation was intended to direct the treatment of the new Bible, his language also tells us much about the changing nature of reading in the sixteenth century. Reading as it is portrayed in Bonner's instructions should be quiet, individual, and reverent. The book possesses an authority of its own (quite apart from the "King's injunctions" which are to be joined to it) and must supersede any "Exposition." The need for Bonner's pronouncement testifies that this protocol for obedient reading was not yet fully in place. Bonner's instructions also imply a natural progression from reading to writing through the Bible. Many readers of the Bible did proceed to make additions to Scripture, the "Exposition" against which Bonner cautioned, in commentaries and literary works.

"I reed of the testement, and wrett notes in it": Women and Reading[7]

The *Diary* of Lady Margaret Hoby (written during the years 1599-1605) shows her reading the Bible nearly every day, as well as hearing (and copying) sermons and devotional works such as George Gifforde's *Sermons uppon the Songe of Salomon*, and reading the Bible to others, including her mother. In addition to writing out the sermons that she heard, Hoby also writes copious notes into her Bible, a practice that reveals the close association between reading Scripture and taking up the pen to write. Her extraordinary example suggests that a richer history of women's interactions with the Bible may be waiting to be discovered. Indeed, a fuller picture of women's Bible reading will also correct the imbalanced, and often unimaginative, general account of Renaissance literacy.

In her investigation of Aemilia Lanyer's engagement with the figure of Lucrece, Barbara Bowen asks, "What if we restored to women's writing the real drama of their reading?" ("The Rape of Jesus" 107). The spirit of this question, and the project with

[7] Margaret Hoby, *Diary* 101.

which it challenges the entire field of early modern studies, motivate the discussions of women's reading and writing in the following chapters. It is still true that, as Mary Erler wrote in 1993, "the history of women's intellectual lives as readers remains to be written" (5). An important caution must be raised before proceeding, however: the category of the "woman reader" is a distinctly modern one, and somewhat inconsistent with the practices of reading that we can reconstruct. Mary Ellen Lamb's assessment of Margaret Clifford's reading, that in her "representation of books as her companions, the difference of gender is ignored; she conveys no sense of herself as a 'woman reader,'" likely holds for many female readers ("The Agency of the Split Subject" 354). The number of prohibitions specifically directed at women's reading, however, suggests that the category "women readers" has some validity in the overall history of reading.

The approach to this category in this project will depart from some of the traditional assumptions about women's intellectual lives. Much of the evidence we have of female literacy is tinged with prohibition and disapproval. Louis Wright supplies several examples, which since the time of his writing have become a familiar part of almost any rehearsal of women's reading and writing in early modern England, citing conduct manuals and humanist treatises on education that both urged women to redirect their reading from, in the words of Thomas Salter's 1579 *Mirrhor mete for all Mothers*, "hart bookes, ballades, songes, sonnettes, and ditties of daliance" to pious literature (quoted in Wright 673). Similarly, Henry VII's 1534 act specifically forbade women and the lower classes from reading the new English versions of the Bible; noble women were allowed to read it only privately.

Another tradition, however, suggests that at least part of the discourse of women's reading in early modern England may have authorized the kind of creative and productive exegesis that many women's texts record. For instance, Coverdale's preface to "the Christen reader" in his 1538 *Goostly Psalms and Spirituall Songes* followed Erasmus'

well-known plea for greater Bible reading among the laity, including an elaboration of Erasmus' inclusion of women as readers of Scripture:

> And yf women syttynge at theyr rockes, or spynnynge at the wheles, had none other songes to passe theyr tyme withall, than soch as Moses sister, Elchanas wife, Debora, and Mary the mother of Christ have song before them, they shulde be better occupied, then with hey nony nony, hey trely loly, & soch lyke fantasies. (quoted in Campbell, *Divine Poetry and Drama* 31)

Coverdale's enumeration of the "songs" of these biblical women significantly foreshadows the use of such passages by women writers later in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Moreover, other and more controversial biblical texts, such as the Book of Esther, and texts associated with male writers, such as the Psalms, were also taken up by female authors.

One of the pressing questions for the study of early modern reading practices is the issue of how active reading was, particularly for women. Frances Dolan sets a standard for further research by working from the assumption of productive reading on the part of women, the belief that women may have "appropriated what they read in inventive, unpredictable ways that made consumption a kind of production, as Roger Chartier has argued" (144).[8] For instance, Mary Ellen Lamb looks at Anne Clifford's reading of works by and for men as "a means of interpellating herself into a dominant, rather than a subordinate, subject position in her culture" ("The Agency of the Split Subject" 349). Lamb's thesis articulates an idea that appears in much of the scholarship on early modern women writers, but which also has a broader application to the history of reading. The theory holds that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English readers encountered a world of texts that largely reinforced dominant systems, such as patriarchy.

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[8] A tradition of active, productive reading on the part of women, particularly in religious contexts, has also been proposed for the middle ages. See Carol Meale, ed., *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Rather than fall in line with such systems through their reading, however, active readers entered into the discourse of these texts in ways that interrogated rather than repeated the ordering structures. Another way of interpreting the conditions of reading in early modern England is to see the potential for (and use of) radical material within conventional texts. Both of these theories have important implications for scholarship on approaches to the Bible. The repeated emphasis on multiplicity—of reading positions, practices of reading, and modern theories and histories of reading—influences the chapters that follow because it enables a consideration of materials that otherwise fall largely outside the lines constructed by Renaissance history, such as Francis Quarles' biblical paraphrases and early modern errata lists.

Information about the reading practices of early modern women comes from a variety of sources, but for the purposes of this study can be usefully divided into two categories: archival evidence (from journals and letters, as well as from wills that describe books owned by women) and literary representations of women's reading. Suzanne Hull's work explores the intersection of these categories. She discerns the history of reading by early modern women in part from dedications to specific women as well as groups of generalized female readers. Hull reports that "authors and booksellers became increasingly conscious of women readers, particularly in the 1570s and 1580s. During this time some books originally addressed to men or not to any special group were rededicated or retitled in later editions to include women" (10). Georgianna Ziegler has noted the ownership of several books by seventeenth-century Englishwomen; her research in women's book ownership, while restricted to a necessarily limited number of female readers, does provide valuable evidence. Ziegler shows that Eliza St. George, for instance, wrote her name in the front of Elizabeth Jocelin's *The Mothers Legacie* (1624); Dorothy Wylde owned Sidney's *Arcadia* (1593); Joyse Jeffreys had a copy of Lucan's *Pharsalia* (1614); and Sarah King owned the Second Folio of Shakespeare (1662) (315). Pearl Hogrefe similarly reports that "Alice Edwards owned 12 books in 1546, by an

inventory of her decease; Judith Isham of Lamport Hall, Northamptonshire, about 1636, listed 16 under the label, 'A note of my mother's books in the chest'; a woman named Walter, about 1615, gave 56 books to Ipswich Old Town Library" (148).

While such evidence suggests the rich archival work to be done in tracing these libraries and speculating about the types of reading that they supported, the chapters that follow here draw primarily on the second category of evidence, searching the texts of the period for representations of writing and reading. Such depictions are often gendered, whether the author is male, female, or of unspecified gender, as is the case for Sowernam and for the Sidneys in their collaborations. But the purpose will be not to undertake an objective evaluation of the writing and reading practices of early modern women and men, but rather to measure the literary currency that such representations held. What did they accomplish? What were the creative limits within which they existed? What relationship between the writing "inside" a work and the composition of the texts themselves could come to the surface?

To theorize a movement from reading to writing requires a cautious approach. Lamb's contention that while "writing generally represents a response to the reading of texts, whether in the form of assimilation, imitation, reformulation, or refutation, this connection between writing and reading had particular significance for early modern women" is certainly valid ("Constructions" 23). Questionable, however, is her further claim that as women were released from the rule of their husbands in interpretive matters, their growing sense "of an authoritative separate self fostered the authorship of original works" (29). Not only is the term "original works" subject to much further probing (as will be seen in the chapters that follow), but the concept that the creation of imaginative literature proceeds from a "separate self" is at odds with many practices of composition characteristic of early modern writers, both female and male.

Lamb implies a trajectory from passive to active reading, and from unsupervised reading to "original" authorship, including along the way functions such as editing,

patronizing, and translating literature. Lamb has argued that because women did not find themselves accurately reflected in anything they read, they were unable to conceive of themselves as respondents. This formulation may be insufficient, because identification is not necessarily a pre-condition to writing. Indeed, the absence of adequate portrayals of their concerns and ideas in written works could motivate writing and publication. If we accept Lamb's thesis, however, the question still exists whether it can be applied universally. While it is true that much early modern literature flattens and distorts images of women, the Bible cannot be included in this category. Knowing how any reader read the Bible is extremely difficult, and the evidence strongly cautions against assuming that any group, including women, read the Bible in one uniform way. There are two approaches, however, that yield some information about the reading practices of individual women. The first is to examine women's recorded comments about reading Scripture and the second, and more imprecise, is to read backward from imaginative works.

Works such as the Sidney *Psalmes* and *Ester hath hang'd Haman* seem to perform a number of functions in early modern culture. First, they provide fresh readings of biblical texts. They also exhibit ways that prohibitions against imaginative literature could be overcome; it is ironic that Gosson's praise of the biblical models Moses and David comes to us in a treatise against playwriting, and many early modern authors capitalized on the "loophole" of pious literature. But finally they did more than legitimize their writing through association with Scripture. They recognized in the most important book of their culture a vastness of meaning and form. In a divine context they understood acts of writing to be both foundational and filled with mystery.

Moses and the Destruction of Writing

In addition to David (whose authorship is the subject of Chapter Two), Gosson identified Moses as a founding poet in the Christian tradition. Moses, as the first human

author of Scripture and one of the most familiar writers depicted in the Hebrew Bible, can serve as an example of the ways of thinking that surrounded scriptural authors. Early modern English readers understood Moses as an author, often referring to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible as "the five books of Moses." Thomas Westerne's *The Flaming Bush. Or, An Embleme of the True Church* (1624), for instance, notes that "Amongst all the Volumes of the booke of God there is none repleate with matter of more admiration, exhortation, imitation of wonders, precepts, vertues, then the *Pentateuch, or,* 5 bookes of *Moses*" (1-2). There is also some evidence that readers interpreted Mosaic scenes of composition as complex but enabling precedents for their own literary creation. Thomas Churchyard, for instance, asserted, "Moises by some is thought the first deliverer of verse, and his sister Marie devised the exameter" (quoted in Campbell, *Divine Poetry* 55).

The Renaissance imagined Moses as it saw most biblical figures—in a variety of roles. In addition to instructing the Israelites in the law at Sinai and writing the Pentateuch, Moses led the true church out of idolatry and, for Christian readers, prefigured Jesus. And while the validity of the Mosaic law for Christian law stirred religious controversy in Reformation England, the image of Moses as a writer, the inscriber of God's words onto stone tablets, was also available. As Arnold Williams shows, "culturally, Moses was...the first historian, the first poet, even the first author; and the Book of Genesis was his first work, and consequently the first literary production in history" (3). Israel Baroway also gives a number of examples from the humanists, who saw Moses as a pattern for later writers. John Colet, for instance,

> sees the story of creation in Genesis as a poetic invention fabricated by Moses to elevate the primitive Hebrew mind to divine imitation. Far from attempting a scientific statement of the genesis of all things, Moses, he believes, accommodated himself to his rude audience, and by a judicious selectivity and arrangement of details, wrote 'after the manner of a popular

> poet, in order that he may the more adapt himself to the spirit of simple rusticity.' (462)

Baroway also cites Erasmus, who wrote "compare, if you will, the story-teller, Herodotus, with Moses; compare the story of the creation of the world, beginning with Egypt, with the stories of Diodorus" (465).

In his prefatory praise for Michael Drayton's *Moyses in a Map of his Miracles* (1604), John Beaumont solicits Moses to act as Drayton's muse. Complaining that "ingrate forgetfulnesse / Circles us round with dangers" so that "all the Saints whom God doth highly blesse, / To us are strangers" Beaumont urges Moses to intervene in the production of Drayton's work:

> Thou Patriark great, who with milde lookes
> His lab'ring Muse beholdest:
> Reach him those leaves where thou in sacred bookes
> All truth unfoldest:
> And guide (like Israel) Poets hands
> From Aegypt, from vaine Stories,
> Onely to sing of the faire promis'd lands,
> And all the glories. (355)

Beaumont's imagery echoes Gosson's appeal for the creation of divine poetry, particularly his plea to "guide" poets "from vaine Stories." Beaumont's remarkable invocation of Moses as a muse also offers Drayton a biblical author as a model for his own writing. Rather than a muse who inspires or ghost writes the text, Moses' authorship is literalized and physicalized. For example, he is implored to "Reach him those leaves." In other words, he is an imitable human precedent who wrote physical books with his own hands. At the same time, however, his status as an author of divine literature makes it possible for Moses to intervene in an extraordinary manner in Drayton's literary production. The attention that Beaumont gives to the materials of writing and the

physical circumstances in which this transaction between Moses and Drayton take place indicates the special value that biblical models—whose own writing materials and settings are often profound and difficult—had for early modern authors navigating the new world of print.

Drayton himself takes Moses as a model. Describing the biblical plague of the first-born, Drayton switches the scene back to London at the time of his own composition:

> Afflicted *London*, in sixe hundred three
> When God thy sinne so grievously did strike
> And from th'infection that did spring from thee,
> The spacious Ile was patient of the like.
> That sickly season when I undertooke
> This composition faintly to supplie,
> When thy affliction serv'd me for a booke,
> Whereby to modell *Egipts* miserie. (lines 625-32)

Drayton's explicit claim of modeling his image of Egypt on the plague afflicting contemporary London implies that he occupies a position similar to Moses, writing on a divine subject matter in an attempt to turn the suffering people away from their idolatry.

Beaumont's reading of Moses as an apt paradigm for Drayton's imitation reflects an astute exegesis of Moses' role as a writer in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. There are several instances in the Hebrew Bible in which Moses writes, generally at the direct instruction of God. The attribution to Moses of the first five books of the Bible is based on internal references to his recording the events of those books (see Exodus 17:14 and Deuteronomy 31:9 and 31:34). He is also a poet, commanded by God to set down the song that appears in Deuteronomy 32. In this project he collaborates not only with God but with his sister Miriam, whose own song appears shortly after Moses'. Most

notably, however, Moses composes the Ten Commandments, which form the basis of Jewish law.

The scenes in which Moses writes the law are fraught with authorial tension: does Moses write, or does God? In Exodus there is a vacillation over attribution: in some scenes God directs Moses' writing, supplying the content but not physically inscribing, but in others God does write. Initially God writes the laws on two stone tablets and gives them to Moses: "Thus (when the Lord had made an end of communing with Moses upon mount Sinai) he gave him two Tables of the Testimonie, even tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18).[9] Moses shatters these tablets when he sees that the Israelites have returned to idolatry, in effect un-writing what God has composed. The ability to erase, blot, destroy and prevent the completion of writing is seen by early modern authors as a fundamental tool of literary creation. Images of the destruction of writing frequently signal the foregrounding of issues of authorship. In addition to writing (or perhaps transcribing) the commandments and then destroying his writing, Moses also re-writes the stone tablets. Again, this writing unfolds under God's explicit direction. In Exodus 34:1, God commands Moses to "Hewe thee two Tables of stone, like unto ye first, and I wil write upon the Tables the wordes that were in ye first Tables." The verses that follow outline the law that God gives to Moses; the inscription of that law, however, remains clouded with a mystery similar to that which characterizes the earlier description in Exodus 31:18. At verse 27, God commands Moses to "Write thou these words" and verse 28 describes how after 40 days and nights with God, "he wrote in the Tables the wordes of ye covenant." Before sorting out the attribution of the written law, however, it is important to recognize not only the confusion about authorship that attends these crucial scenes, but also the repetition of the inscription. Scriptural scenes of writing that are multiple, such as the writing of the law and the four overlapping Gospel accounts of

[9] All references are to the Geneva Bible of 1560 unless otherwise noted.

the Passion, invite additional, supplemental narrative and poetic representations from early modern writers.

The net result of this flurry of inscription and erasure is that the first instance of human authorship in the Bible is an extremely complex one that renders the degree and nature of human participation in divine writing uncertain. This confusion over Moses' participation appears in several early modern works on Moses and the law, showing that the complications of authorship are part of the attraction of this story for readers of the Bible. Thomas Cartwright, writing in 1616, asserts that all of the attribution must rest with God alone, emphasizing that the commandments were "written by Gods owne finger at the first, in Tables of stone" (86-7 [misnumbered 74-5]).

Henry Ainsworth's *Annotations upon the first book of Moses, called Genesis* (1616), considering Moses as the author not just of the law but of the Pentateuch, claims that

> The things which Moses wrote, were not his own; but the Law of the Lord, by his hand: to him the Prophets after, bare witnes....But because his writings were the Old Testament, under which the New was veiled; and which many reading, even to this day have a veil layd upon their hart, so that they cannot fasten their eyes upon the end of that which is abolished: therfore God sent the Prophets folowing, yea his own Son, and his Apostles, to open and explayn the mysteries, which Moses had closely & breifly penned. (sig. A2v)

The chain of writing and response in the Scriptures—Moses writes the law, which first the prophets and then the apostles "open and explayn"—legitimizes Ainsworth's exegetical endeavors. Moses' composition contains, for a Christian readership, the seeds of an invitation to more human writing in a divine strain.

In other works the relationship between Moses and God as authors is not only less clear, but also much more explicitly problematized. John Weemse, for example, in *An*

Exposition of the Lawes of Moses (1632), enters into a discussion of attribution. Taking as his text a quotation from Exodus 34:1 ("And the Lord said unto Moses, hew the two Tables of Stone, like unto the first"), Weemse proposes to consider "first who wrote the Law? secondly why it was written upon stone? thirdly why upon hewen stone? forthly, why upon two Tables? lastly, why & wherefore they were so written, that this writing took up the whole Tables; so that there was no blanke left?" (13). Weemse is concerned not just to fix attribution, but also to understand the method and materials of this inaugural collaboration between God and man.

Weemse is unequivocal in his answer to the first question: "First the Lord wrote the Law: to write according to the phrase of the Scripture, is usually, to give Lawes, as Esay 10.1" (13). Weemse then curiously re-opens the query that he has just answered in such clear terms. He asks "Whether were the second Tables written by God, or by Moyses?" (13). His second answer complicates his earlier statement of attribution. The tablets

> were written by God as the first were, for Deut. 10.2. it is said I will write in the Tables, the words that were in the first Tables. But it may be said, Exod. 34.28. that Moses was with the Lord fortie dayes and fortie nights, hee did neither eate bread nor drinke water: and hee wrote upon the Tables, the words of the covenant, the ten Commandements. The words should be read this wayes, and he did neither eate nor drinke, to wit, Moses, here is a rest distinguished by the point Atnach, and he wrote upon Tables, to wit God. (14)

In other words, Weemse concludes that the first half of the description (of being in the wilderness and neither eating nor drinking) portrays Moses, while the second half (writing on the Tables) describes God's actions. While he maintains his initial belief that God alone wrote the tablets, Weemse's repetition of the question of attribution and his

admission that the text of Exodus is far from clear on this point betray at least a mild anxiety about how divine documents come to be written.

Weemse follows his second explanation with another provocative question, one that links Moses' authorship with an image of Christ as author: "What was the reason, why Christ wrote none of the New Testament with his owne hand, as the Lord wrote the ten Commandments with his owne hand?" (14-5). Weemse answers by claiming that Christ's writing the books would have caused them to be made idols; his implication here unearths another important touchstone for readers of the Bible—how to distinguish the writing of the law from the writing of the "new dispensation" of the Gospels? The final two chapters of this study consider in greater detail the image of Christ as an author and the tension between law and Gospel as forms of writing.

As Weemse's last question ("why & wherefore they were so written, that this writing took up the whole Tables; so that there was no blanke left?") makes clear, early modern readers also concerned themselves with the physical form of the law. They often repeat the commonplace that the law is most importantly written upon the hearts of God's people, rather than merely on the stone tablets. Francis Quarles even suggests a relationship between the techniques of inscription that Moses used and the technology of print in his brief poem "On the Tables of Stone":

> That stony Table could receive the print
> Of thy just Lawes; Thy Lawes were written in't:
> It could be hew'd, and letters grav'n thereon;
> Sure, Lord, my heart is harder than that Stone.

The triangulation of the laws, the material implements of their inscription, and the heart of the individual believer in this poem rely on an opposition between the vocabulary of printed books (which "receive the print") and that of scribal production ("hew'd" and "grav'n"). Quarles' poem "On a Printing-House" also draws on the terminology of printing to discuss salvation.

The world's a Printing-house: our words, our thoughts,
Our deeds, are Characters of sev'rall sizes:
Each Soule is a Compos'ter; of whose faults
The Levits are Correctors: Heav'n revises;
Death is the common Press; from whence, being driven,
W'are gather'd Sheet by Sheet, and bound for Heaven.

As Quarles suggests, error and revision are central to the process of printing, as well as to that of salvation and are linked in the Renaissance imagination. Weemse answers his question with the remark that "this writting tooke up the whole Tables, to signifie, that there was no blanke left for man to adde any thing to this Law" (19). In asking and answering such a question about the physical production of the law, Weemse invokes the potentially troubling process of supplementing divine writing with human composition.

The materials of human authorship in the Bible—digression, evasion, omission, addition, and revision, for example—became the materials and methods for scriptural modes of authorship after the English Reformation. The force and resonance of English Bibles in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in England spoke to the contemporary lives of early modern English men and women. As the technology of print revolutionized habits of reading and writing and opened the way for a broader literacy and a more equitable participation in written culture, Renaissance authors turned to the Bible's representations of human authorship on divine material, writing themselves into the traditions of Moses, David, the prophets, and the evangelists.

Chapter One

Dressed as Esther: Pseudonymity and Concealment in Ester Sowernam's *Ester hath hang'd Haman*

Scholars of early modern women writers have begun to take notice of an important pattern of influence in which women claim scriptural precedents, such as Deborah, Hannah, and Judith, as models for their own self-fashioning as authors.[1] Ann Finch, for example, knowing of no English women writers, counted biblical authors as her precedents, including "the women who sang before the ark, those who sang for David's triumphs, and Deborah, the judge and poet of Israel" (Hannay, *Silent But for the Word* 3). Bathsua Makin chose Miriam as a model: "It doth appear out of sacred writ that women were employed in most of the great transactions that happened in the world, even in reference to religion. Miriam seems to be next to Moses and Aaron. She was a great poet and philosopher," and as such an ideal predecessor for a woman who wrote on behalf of the restoration of women's education (114). Margaret Fell Fox quotes extensively from several biblical women in her *Women's Speaking Justified* (1666). The extent to which these women served as models, the reasons that they were selected, and the use of these figures by more canonical authors now remain to be explored. Through the patterns provided by biblical authors, early modern writers, both female and male, transformed themselves from readers of the Bible to writers of literature.

[1] See Hannay and Beilin in Hannay, *Silent But for the Word*; Krontiris; and Crawford.

In her work on seventeenth-century female prophets, Elaine Hobby examines the strategies by which publishing women transformed prohibitions against women's scholarly activities into permissions, even mandates, to write. Following Hobby's methods, this chapter examines the authorizing strategies behind Ester Sowernam's *Ester hath hang'd Haman: or An Answere to a lewd Pamphlet, entituled, The Arraignment of Women, With the arraignment of lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant men, and Husbands* (1617), the second published response under a woman's name to Joseph Swetnam's *The Araignment of Lewde, idle, froward and unconstant women.*[2] Reading *Ester hath hang'd Haman* alongside the biblical Book of Esther reveals the ways that a biblical pseudonym and a scripturally-based text might have been read within the context of the English *querelle des femmes*, the pamphlet controversy over the nature of women that circulated throughout early modern Europe.

Sowernam's response to Swetnam mixes the customary elements of a *querelle* defense with a unique commitment to the story and persona of the biblical Queen Esther. Like other respondents, Sowernam criticizes the flaws and logical inconsistencies in Swetnam's pamphlet, and provides her own exegesis of the relevant biblical passages concerning women. The pamphlet begins with a dedicatory letter "To all Right Honourable, Noble, and worthy Ladies, Gentlewomen, and others, vertuously disposed, of the Feminine Sexe," in which Sowernam describes reading Swetnam's invective, as well as Rachel Speght's defense—which she finds lacking—and deciding to answer him. She addresses women directly and as a group: "You are women; in Creation, noble; in Redemption, gracious; in use most blessed; be not forgetfull of your selves, nor unthankefull to that Author from whom you receive all" (sig. A3). The letter is followed by a second dedicatory epistle, "To All Worthy and Hopefull young youths of Great-Brittaine; But respectively to the best disposed and worthy Apprentices of London." In

[2] The other respondents to Swetnam were Tuvil, Munda, Speght, Newstead, and the anonymous authors of the play *Swetnam the woman-hater, arraigned by woman.*

this address Sowernam praises marriage as the best course for young men by presenting women as "Paradisian Creatures" who elevate men morally by association.

The first four chapters of *Ester hath hang'd Haman* answer Swetnam's wholly conventional attack by arguing that women were created equal and should remain equal, and that women's special place in the drama of redemption demonstrates their high standing with God. In support of these claims Sowernam cites Sarah, Rebecca, Abigail, Judith, and other biblical heroines. The second section supports her enumeration of biblical examples with secular sources on women in the ancient world. The third section, titled "The Arraignment of Joseph Swetnam, who was the Author of the *Araignment of Women*; And under his person, the arraignment of all idle, franticke, froward, and lewd men," indicts Swetnam directly and answers his objections against women, this time using legal (rather than scriptural or historical) evidence. The work concludes with a poem, "A Defence of Women, against the Author of the Arraignment of Women," signed Joane Sharp, that restates in verse Sowernam's major points.

While much of Swetnam's attack and Sowernam's response draw on the existing tradition of gender polemic, some elements of their exchange make this controversy especially noteworthy. The *querelle des femmes* existed throughout the European Renaissance, flaring occasionally in clusters of attacks and defenses.[3] Feminist scholarship on early modern history and literature has taken as one of its central topics the *querelle* and its influence. This criticism has made the texts by women writers, notably Christine de Pisan, Jane Anger, and the women of the Swetnam controversy (Sowernam, Rachel Speght, and Constantia Munda) more familiar than the texts by men, whether attacks or defenses. Linda Woodbridge's *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind* argues that the controversy over women was largely a literary game, not to be misunderstood as representing the real condition of

[3] On the English *querelle des femmes* tradition, see Rogers, Utley, and Henderson and McManus.

women in the English Renaissance. In contrast to Woodbridge's view, other critics read the pamphlets as evidence of early feminist thinking. Many of these scholars have given special attention to Swetnam and his respondents because, as Ann Rosalind Jones has argued,

> in the double role played by its feminine participants, the Swetnam controversy exhibits clear symptoms of an ideological transition: each writer adopted an acceptable woman's voice in order to be heard, but at the same time she attempted to shift the woman debate out of its old ruts....Serially, they assemble a critique of misogyny that moves the gender debate out of its old scorekeeping patterns, its listing of good women against bad ones, defined according to masculine criteria. (45)

This transition turns, in Sowernam's case on the "double voice" that Jones identifies. The pseudonymous author selects as a figure for authorship a woman who begins as an exiled orphan, ends as a queen, hides her true identity and trembles under the threat of genocide and then intercedes on behalf of her people. While taking into account the *querelle* context, this chapter also attempts to move readings of Sowernam beyond it, largely because *Ester hath hang'd Haman*, for its intense focus on rebutting Swetnam, also insists on a broader placement.[4] Reading Sowernam only as a respondent to Swetnam disables the emphasis that Sowernam puts on her authorial self-creation and representations of reading and writing in the text. The benefits that biblical models, in this case Esther, had for Renaissance writers, are not strongly present in other *querelle* pamphlets and therefore remain invisible when the *querelle* context dominates the texts.

[4] Excerpts of Sowernam in anthologies, are almost always taken from chapter seven, which contains Sowernam's most direct reply to Swetnam. See Trill, Chedgzoy and Osborne; and Moira Ferguson. An excerpt from chapter seven also represents Sowernam in her first appearance in a major anthology of English literature, *The Longman Anthology of British Literature* (New York, 1999). In *Women Writers in Renaissance England* (London, 1997) editor Randall Martin excludes "the pseudonymous duo Constantia Munda and Esther Sowernam [sic]" because "As Diane Purkiss (1992) and others have shown, Munda and Sowernam are almost certainly men responding knowingly to Swetnam for the sake of publicity and sales, whereas Rachel Speght, who also rebutted [Swetnam] in 1617, responded very differently as a real woman" (3).

Esther and Authorship

A brief summary of the book of Esther may begin to explain Sowernam's appropriation of the figure and story, and will suggest a way of reading *Ester hath hang'd Haman* that has not yet been undertaken. Set in the Persian empire, the Book of Esther opens with two banquets, one given by King Ahasuerus for the men of Susa, and a second feast hosted by his wife Vashti for the women. At the end of his banquet the King calls for Vashti to display her beauty, but she refuses to present herself.[5] Ahasuerus' advisors fear that Vashti's behavior will lead other women to disobey their husbands, and they counsel him to have it written into law that "Vashti come nomore before King Ahashuerosh: and let the King give her royal estate unto her companion that is better than she" (1:19). Ahasuerus distributes a royal decree to this effect in all the vernacular languages of the Persian kingdom. To replace Vashti, Ahasuerus chooses Esther, who conceals her identity as a Jew. Ahasuerus later elevates his counselor Haman to a position of importance. Each of the king's subjects bows down before Haman, except Esther's cousin Mordecai, who as a Jew will not bow before any man. On learning of this refusal Haman plots to destroy all of the Jews. At Mordecai's urging, Esther appears before the King, an action that is forbidden to all subjects, to plead for the Jews. Having revealed her Jewishness and won his assent, Esther joins Mordecai to oversee the writing of a decree announcing the Jews' preservation. Haman is hanged on the gallows he erected for Mordecai, and the Jews seek vengeance on their enemies.

[5] While Vashti appears less frequently than Esther in Renaissance commentaries and imaginative works, her place in the early modern imagination is similarly complex. She is, most obviously, the countertype to Esther, but she also functions as an opportunity to discuss contemporary marriage practices, an example of the disobedient woman, and even as evidence of Ahasuerus' faulty governance. Many of the commentators who discuss Vashti struggle to make sense of her brief appearance in the book of Esther and to assign moral value to it. For instance, Thomas Cooper concludes that, despite the inappropriateness of Ahasuerus' summons, Vashti ought to have obeyed the King's request. At the same time, he considers the threat of mass female disobedience on the basis of Vashti's refusal unlikely and regards her punishment as extreme. And, although Tuvil contrasts Vashti's disobedience with Esther's humility and selflessness, he still lays blame with Ahasuerus: "If *Vashti* bee disobedient, let *Assuerus* be blamed, for commanding hir that, which being contrary to the Lawes of Persia, did not beseeme hir modestie to doe" (143). Neither Swetnam nor Sowernam engage the issue, perhaps because Vashti's ambivalent moral standing suits neither cause.

This chapter contextualizes *Ester hath hang'd Haman* through an examination of seventeenth-century portrayals of Queen Esther, an investigation into the category of woman in early modern England, and reference to the material conditions of print culture for writing women. The evidence from these investigations urges a more historicized reading of authorship than has been given to early modern texts that call on biblical methods and models, many of which have become invisible to modern readers. It argues that pseudonymity was an active and viable form of authorship in the early modern period, and one that may have derived, in Sowernam's case, from the Bible, particularly the Book of Esther. In calling attention to authorship as a field of meaning, Sowernam participates fully in the literary culture of the seventeenth-century and within the specific context of the Swetnam debate. As Ton Hoenselaars notes, the "Swetnam controversy explicitly displays both the producers and the recipients in the field of literary production at work, and does so in a way that, given the nature of the discussion, uniquely brings into focus the act of negotiating a set of new assumptions and beliefs about writing, reading, and gender" (166). While Sowernam's pseudonymity wields a profound influence over readings of *Ester hath hang'd Haman*, she was not alone in her chosen method of authorship. The first edition of Swetnam's pamphlet, for instance, was signed "Thomas Tel-Troth;" Rachel Speght revealed his authorship in her *Mouzell for Melastomus*. Constantia Munda, another pseudonymous respondent to Swetnam, even created a pseudonymous mother in her dedicatory letter.

As the history of Renaissance authorship develops, more information about the uses of anonymity and pseudonymity becomes available. "Anonymous," as Jeffrey Masten argues, does not suggest that there is no author but, to the contrary, "denotes the insistence of the authorship question; though it does not identify, it marks a space for identity, a need to know 'who is speaking'" (12). The same may be said for pseudonymity, which additionally offers clues to interpret or ways of reading the identity (literal or fictional) of the speaker.

Sowernam's pseudonym works in just this way as a major source of meaning in *Ester hath hang'd Haman.* The "Ester" of *Ester hath hang'd Haman* refers both to the pseudonymous author of the pamphlet and to the model for this authorial persona, the biblical Queen Esther.[6] "Sowernam" opposes "Swe(e)tnam." In addition to the two-part pseudonym, Sowernam further complicates the authorship of the work by claiming on the title page to be "neither Maide, Wife nor Widdowe, yet really all, and therefore experienced to defend all," a phrase that has suggested male authorship to some readers. Joseph Swetnam had chastised "unmarried wantons" who made themselves "neither maidens, widowes, nor wives, but more vile then filthy channell durt fit to be swept out of the heart and suburbes of your Countrey" (27). Having turned Swetnam's invective against him in her puzzling title page signature, Sowernam also identifies herself, through the pseudonym, with a biblical woman who complicates female identity. The mystery of the author's identity invokes Esther's concealment in a biblical book that religious authorities have often considered unauthorized and dangerous. By incorporating both her model and her antagonist into her pen name, Sowernam makes her ultimate gesture of being and containing all, and being therefore authorized to speak in defense of women. "Ester Sowernam" is a strategy as much as it is a name, and as such it directs attention away from the biographical identity of the writer and toward the category of authorship. Sowernam's doubling—of Swetnam's name and title, and of the Book of Esther with her own book—enables her to move from Bible reader to polemic author.

Her work foregrounds acts of reading—her own reading of Esther, instances of reading and writing within that text, and the circulation of responses in the *querelle des femmes.* The emphasis placed on Esther in the paratext of *Ester hath hang'd Haman* (the title and the authorship signature) implies that the pamphlet will rehearse the story of

[6] The name Esther was also spelled "Ester" and "Hester" in early modern English texts, and Esther was occasionally referred to as Hadassa, another name given for Esther (see Esther 2:7). I use "Esther" to refer to the biblical Book of Esther and its central character, and "Ester" to denote Sowernam and her title. "Ester Sowernam" is one of two pseudonyms used in the pamphlet; the second is the name "Joan Sharp," signed at the end of the concluding poem.

Esther. Part of the story of Esther is retold, of course, in the title: "Ester hath hang'd Haman." Sowernam's choice of the past perfect tense to describe Esther's actions implies that her own work of writing has already effected a similar silencing of an aggressor. The writing is an action that cannot now be prevented or reversed, protecting Sowernam from reproach. In the second part of the title, "Or an Answer to a lewd Pamphlet, entituled, The Arraignment of Women. With the arraignment of lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant men, and Husbands," Sowernam substitutes her own arraignment for Swetnam's. Just as the name "Sowernam" contains the name of her adversary and its opposite, the title incorporates Swetnam's words as an element of her own critique. The title shows many of the rhetorical techniques that Sowernam uses throughout the pamphlet to construct herself as an author. Within the text, however, Esther appears in only a single sentence: "With what wisedome did Queene Hester preserve her people, and caused their enemies to be hanged" (12). Sowernam places this reference at the end of a long list of other women of the Hebrew Bible (including Sarah, Rebecca, Deborah, and Judith) and its presence alone fails to explain the choice of title and pseudonym. Sowernam's title and signature nevertheless invite readers to imagine the structural and thematic parallels between the Book of Esther and her work. She implies an analogy between Esther's defense of the Jews and her defense of women, a gesture that imagines women as a distinct social entity.

By invoking the story of Esther, Sowernam asks her audience to read two works: the Book of Esther and *Ester hath hang'd Haman.* The most provocative of her ideas exists in neither text but in the space between them, in the reader's creation of a narrative in which Esther defends not the Jews, but women. Sowernam gestures toward this third narrative in the first chapter, when she writes that "all judicious Readers shall confesse that I use more mildnesse then the cause I have in hand provoketh me unto" (sig. B1). As this disclaimer suggests, Sowernam locates the more extreme elements of feminist complaint in her readers, whom she figures as articulating what she refrains from saying

(they "shall confesse"). Sowernam's technique requires a complex and imaginative reading not just of her work but of the Bible as well. The Esther that Sowernam's readers could create, despite its important differences from most contemporary portraits of the biblical heroine, is an Esther well suited to the early modern period. She is a woman in power, with all of the complications that female leadership entails, and she is a woman who intelligently uses the written word. While it is not certain that *Ester hath hang'd Haman* was read as a proto-feminist narrative of concealment and revelation by Sowernam's audience, such an interpretation is conceivable given Sowernam's explicit interrogation of gender and manipulation of authorial persona. Without attributing all of the possible readings of *Ester* to a planned scheme on the part of the author, it is possible to situate the set of issues with which this chapter is concerned in the culture surrounding the polemic.

The Erasure of Pseudonymity in Modern Criticism

Despite its potential to shape interpretation of the text, Sowernam's pseudonymity has circumscribed recent scholarship on *Ester hath hang'd Haman* because of a fear that the author was not really a woman.[7] The only information about the author's identity comes from within the work, from Sowernam's statement that she lived in London during the terms of court and from her clearly sophisticated knowledge of the Bible.[8] Neither fact—including the writer's extensive familiarity with, and complex thinking about, the Bible—proves or disproves the attribution of female authorship. Recent studies of early modern women writers have prioritized the recovery of their texts and biographies.

[7] The relationship between Mordecai and Esther, the way they work as a team but each in their respective male and female spheres, may address questions about Sowernam's gender ambiguity. Their partnership is an example of a male-female collaboration that, in combination, can reach every audience; Sowernam's pseudonym may function in the same way because it presents femininity in a way that makes readers suspect the presence of masculinity as well.

[8] The pseudonymity of the name Ester Sowernam is so obvious that there has been no attempt (to my knowledge) to locate biographical information.

Although useful, this biographically-oriented criticism has left a strong impression on the canon that it helped to form and often accorded lesser status to authors whose biographies remain unknown. Sowernam, for example, occupies a complicated position of authorship because we lack her personal history. It is important for current scholarship to identify all possibilities concerning the pamphlet, and no definitive evidence for or against female authorship has yet been uncovered. The absence of clear authorial identity, however, can more fruitfully be seen as the strategic intention of the writer of the pamphlet. Pseudonymity was a viable mode of authorship, which, in this case, evokes the complications of authorship in the early modern period.

While the debate about the real gender behind the name Sowernam is inconclusive, the points advanced as evidence in recent scholarship on *Ester hath hang'd Haman* are themselves indicative of modern barriers to understanding early modern authorship in general. Forms of authorship such as pseudonymity and anonymity have become invisible, or seem to lie outside the realm of authorship as modern readers understand it. Further, ideas about Sowernam's authorship reveal difficulties in historicizing the category of woman in the early modern period. Difficulties of attribution often arise in the criticism on Sowernam. Three factors are taken to suggest the possibility that the pamphlet in fact was written by a man. First, the references to court activities may indicate that the writer is a law clerk or student. Second, the title page claim that Sowernam is "neither Maide, Wife nor Widdowe, yet really all, and therefore experienced to defend all" makes it impossible to categorize the author in any conventional class of women, except perhaps as a sexually deviant woman.[9] Finally, the timing of the pamphlet's publication may suggest that the publisher arranged for its writing to take advantage of the market demand for Swetnam's very popular work.

[9] The phrase "maid, wife, or widow" is conventional in English Renaissance literature. Megan Matchinske discusses its iterations in the context of *Ester hath hang'd Haman*. These include the Duke's interrogation of Mariana in *Measure for Measure*: "Why, you are nothing then, neither maid, widow, nor wife" (V.i.171).

Simon Shepherd, for instance, reads Sowernam's insistence on having written before Speght, even though her pamphlet was published after Speght's, as possible evidence of "a man taking advantage of Speght's precedent and rushing out a pamphlet in the guise of a woman" (86).

Equally problematic are critics who assume the author to have been a woman, yet neglect to account adequately for her choice of pseudonymity. Megan Matchinske, one of the few critics to engage Sowernam outside of the Swetnam controversy, nevertheless also restricts her investigation to the biographical identity and situation of the author. Matchinske imagines a scenario in which Sowernam's description of herself as "neither Maide, Wife, nor Widdowe" identifies her as an abandoned wife without legal rights. While marriage is certainly a concern sounded in *Ester*, it is striking that Matchinske can read Sowernam only after first creating a fictional biography. More useful is Matchinske's thesis that Sowernam's work contains a vision of social action and had lasting, tangible consequences for her audience, a reading that allows us to imagine Sowernam as speaking on behalf of an entire group (as Esther does for the Jews). While Matchinske can imagine the potential for social change in *Ester*, she attaches it to a version of "woman" that fails to account for Sowernam's extraordinary interrogation of this category.

Linda Woodbridge similarly treats Sowernam as a woman but fails to recognize another key intervention, her unusual authorial status. Woodbridge writes that Sowernam "may have fancied herself as an author" and that "Sowernam is more convincing when she sticks plainly to life rather than attempting literature" (94, 97). These dismissals elide some of Sowernam's most imaginative work because they cannot take seriously her pseudonymity; they undermine Woodbridge's otherwise persuasive consideration of Sowernam's relationship to the *querelle* genre. Katherine Henderson and Barbara McManus also believe that Sowernam was a real woman, but they base this belief on techniques of reading that must be questioned. They argue that no male author would

sign a woman's name because it "would enhance neither the prestige nor the sales of the work," despite the fact that female authorship seems to have fueled market interest in the *querelle* (22). They also read the pamphlet for internal evidence of the author's gender, and conclude that the "attitude toward men, and the passionate conviction" indicate a female author (21). Both readings reveal their implicit belief in a definable category of woman present across history that operates in a visible, predictable pattern. While Henderson and McManus's argument that "there is no compelling reason to discount" the claim of female authorship is persuasive, it is this *claim* of female authorship, rather than the actual gender of the writer, that matters (21).

Pseudonymity and the Category of Woman

The *querelle* provides evidence, albeit transformed through the filters of polemic or imaginative writing, of an engagement by both men and women in two important controversies, the public and private behavior of women and the definition of *woman* as a category. Sowernam and Swetnam both raise the question of the category of woman, because it is in the interest of both to do so. The texts of the seventeenth-century *querelle* prove the assertions of feminist criticism that it is not enough simply to restore women to Renaissance history without in some way rethinking that history. Works such as *Ester hath hang'd Haman* and *The Araignment of Lewde, idle, froward and unconstant women* demand a careful reading of woman because they help to historicize this category and because its boundaries and values are understood within these works as open to critique and available for redefinition. Elizabeth Spelman has addressed the "problems of exclusion in feminist thought" in the modern period, arguing for a more economically and racially inclusive (and consequently more nuanced) view of the category of "woman." Her work, although it does not directly address the many early female writers like Sowernam and Speght who opposed limited gender definitions, does raise questions about the ability to identify the category of woman. Similarly, Denise Riley's assertion

that "both a concentration on and a refusal of the identity of 'women' are essential to feminism" may explain the tension in Sowernam's work between mobilizing the category of woman for its polemic impact and arguing against the traditional boundaries of that category. As these summaries imply, more work on the conceptualization of woman in early modern English literature is needed.

Sowernam destabilizes the category of *woman*, both as it operated in early modern England and as it functions today in criticism of early female writers. Works that deliberately complicate the identities of women force us to ask who counted as a woman in the Renaissance and dramatize the difficulties of historicizing women's authorship. Further, in our recuperation of Renaissance women, what set of biographical facts constitute a woman in their accumulation? Or, in Riley's words, "which female persons under what circumstances will be heralded as 'women'" (3)? Sowernam epitomizes the flexibility of the designation *woman* because she cannot be labeled a woman writer easily and because she radically engages questions about gender categories in her work. Hilary Hinds identifies one of the key strategies for the kind of disruption in which Sowernam participates. Reading women's writing, according to Hinds, "not only requires attention to 'textuality,' but further problematizes the assumptions about the continuity of the category of women throughout history" (19). The link in Hinds' interpretation between "textuality" and the category of woman merits close attention. Sowernam's manipulation of the textual features of print culture allows her to approach the inconsistencies in her culture's definition of woman.

Joseph Swetnam also opens a view onto the definitional controversy. He advises his readers that "There are sixe kindes of women which thou shouldest take heede that thou match not thy selfe to any one of them, that is to say, good nor bad, faire nor foule, rich nor poore" (36). The broadness of his categories, the fact that all women are included by these oppositions, is the basis for his indictment of women. Swetnam's categories also reveal, however, that the subject of woman was very much up for

discussion. That a reader could imagine a woman being outside of these parameters, as Sowernam in effect positioned herself to be, means that the schemes for classifying women were to some extent fluid. This fluidity characterizes the extreme positions on the nature of women that Swetnam takes (and it is important to remember that nearly all of his points in *The Araignment* are conventional to the *querelle des femmes*). After having suggested that all women can be located in his six schemes, he then asserts that "women have more contrary sorts of behaviour then there be women, and therefore impossible for a man to know all, no nor one part of womens quallities all the daies of thy life" (39).

The name "Ester Sowernam" marks the destabilization within *Ester hath hang'd Haman* of the category of woman. The use of a female pseudonym by a writer who is a woman is no less radical, no less deserving of critical attention, than the adoption of a female pseudonym by a writer who is a man. The choice of pseudonymity for a woman is often obscured by the assumption that this method was her only option. Valerie Wayne offers the important caution that "pseudonyms mark authorial presence even as they obscure identity" (225). What a twentieth-century critic might read as a stable female, even feminist, author is, to Diane Purkiss, "the processing of woman as a theatrical role or masquerade which can never be equated with an essential woman or audible authorial voice but which, rather, troubles the very existence of such a self-identical figure" (69). Purkiss warns against a "logocentric cycle" in which a female name suggests ways of reading that "uncover female consciousness in texts, and this consciousness in turn is held to manifest the presence of a female author" (71). Purkiss provides a way to read the choice of a pseudonym as feminist method by noting that "the specificity of these pseudonyms [including names such as Jane Anger, Mary Tattle-well and Constantia Munda] rather foregrounds feminine unruliness" (84). The questions of female identity raised by the pseudonym enable Sowernam's authorship and must not be seen as flaws that exclude her from critical attention.

In contrast to the attempts in *The Araignment* to produce a "knowable" woman, Sowernam's pseudonymity connects her work to a central theme in the Book of Esther, concealment. Commentators and religious authorities have questioned the validity of the book on the basis of Esther's hidden Judaism, a choice that may have required her to break Mosaic law, privileging instead her identity as queen. In acknowledging Esther's concealment, Sowernam also drew on a broad early modern tradition in which concealment and disguise (often expressed through clothing) signal gender conflicts. Jean E. Howard and others have delineated the uses of cross-dressing in the *querelle des femmes* and other pamphlet controversies, in the theater, and in carnivals and popular protest, both as a lightning rod for the enforcement of strict gender hierarchies and a way to question their validity. Like a person wearing the clothing of the other sex, Sowernam's name offers a clear indication of gender (the female name "Ester") that is at the same time a mark of gender ambiguity, because the obviousness of the pseudonym can be read as an indication that the writer was actually male. The material conditions of print create the possibility of having a female authorship signature without the presence of a real female person. Similarly, the lengths that Queen Esther pursues to conceal her Judaism initially, which threaten her identity as a Jew, finally are rewarded by the impact of her timely revelation and the productive power it wields in the story. *Ester hath hang'd Haman* also makes productive use of the discourse of disclosure, particularly its exposure of the societal supports for misogyny. By doubling herself with Esther, Sowernam critiques binarisms, especially those concerning gender, by demonstrating substantial flexibility in the category of woman.

Renaissance Versions of Esther

Sowernam made the specific choice of Esther as a figure to represent her own authorship, and so the value of Esther as a model must be weighed in a full reading of *Ester hath hang'd Haman*. One possible resonance for Sowernam was the controversial

nature of the biblical book itself. In addition to the accepted text of the Book of Esther, there are several apocryphal chapters that are included only in the Greek. The early Christian church debated the canonicity of the entire book because it is one of only two books of the Bible that does not mention God, because the New Testament never refers to Esther, and because Purim, the Jewish festival whose origin the book describes, does not have a Christian counterpart. Some traces of this debate remained in Reformation England, and animosity toward the book and its heroine were at times fueled by opposition to the importance that Esther had within a specifically Jewish context. Luther's attitude toward the book—he is "so hostile to this book [II Maccabees] and to Esther that I could wish they did not exist at all; for they judaize too greatly and have much pagan impropriety"—demonstrates its incendiary potential (quoted in Moore, xvi). Despite its tarnished theological history within the Christian church, the Book of Esther retained some cultural and devotional currency in England in the half-century before and after Sowernam published her work. Christian readers sought to distance Esther from charges of "judaizing" and, at the same time, participated in the broader trend of interpreting the Hebrew Bible typologically by concentrating literary representations on the book as an instance of God's protection of the true church.

Changing ideas about how to present the story of Esther—from early dramatic interludes such as *A New Enterlude of Godly Queene Hester* (1561), to commentaries, to Sowernam's work—also illustrate broader shifts in ideas about how to use biblical material in literature. There is no simple narrative of progress in these works toward original authorship. The earliest Renaissance uses of the story deviate from the biblical text, as do the later treatments, which may, as in Sowernam's case, barely use the biblical source at all. Early modern discussions of the Book of Esther typically took the form of commentaries, as part of a series on many books of the Bible (although Calvin and Luther did not include the Book of Esther in their commentaries) or in paraphrases in which the book served as political allegory.

Literary paraphrases of Esther typically present the book as either an allegory proving God's protection of the church or a cautionary tale for rulers and their subordinates. Elements of the marginal notes in the Geneva Bible, especially their emphasis on God's control, the proper conduct of those in power, and the political instability of the Persian empire, circulate through many other early modern treatments of the Book of Esther. The "Argument" prefacing the book of Esther in the Geneva Bible is similarly representative of many early modern literary versions in that it fails to mention the book's heroine, focusing instead on "the great mercies of God toward his Church." Francis Quarles' *Hadassa* (1621) expands the biblical account of Esther through political commentary, claiming that the feasts in chapter one were held to appease the Persian people, who were tired of the oppressive Ahasuerus, information not found in the biblical account (or the Geneva notes). An earlier representation also linked the political aspect of Esther with the image of God's true church. W. W. Greg and Ruth Blackburn agree that in *A newe enterlude drawen oute of the holy Scripture of godly queene Hester* (printed 1561), Aman (Haman) represents Cardinal Wolsey, and the Jews stand for the monks whose monasteries Wolsey dissolved beginning in 1524. The Book of Esther served anti-Catholic sentiment as well when Thomas Cooper's *The Church's Deliverance* (1609) and Henry Care's *A word in season* (1679) compared the biblical story to the Gunpowder Plot. Cooper's interpretation of Esther's concealment, that it is in keeping with "silence, the chiefe outward ornament of women and keeper of their chastitie," illustrates the degree of Sowernam's departure from early modern representations of Esther (132).

As such examples show, interest rarely centered on Queen Esther herself. While Esther often appears in catalogs of good women, she was occasionally, as were many of the other Old Testament heroines with whom she was grouped, singled out. Sowernam, while not unique in her selection of Esther as a significant history, deviated substantially from traditional treatments. In contrast to the tradition of Esther as a conduit for God's or

Mordecai's actions in defense of the "church," Sowernam's reinterpretation of the book foregrounds the extraordinary nature of Esther's behavior. Sowernam gathers together many of the portraits of Esther in the existing sources—her strength, the political circumstances of the biblical book, and the question of canonicity—and puts them to work in the service of her own reading of Esther. If Sowernam sought a particularly feminist model for portraying Esther she would have had to look beyond the many instances of Esther in lists of good women. Sowernam could, however, have found a paradigmatic treatment of Esther in Aemilia Lanyer's list of heroines of the Hebrew Bible in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611). Lanyer uses *querelle* rhetoric in her dedication "To the Vertuous Reader," insisting that women

> *are not to regard any imputations, that they undeservedly lay upon us, no otherwise than to make use of them to our owne benefits, as spurres to vertue, making us flie all occasions that may colour their unjust speeches to passé currant. Especially considering that they have tempted even the patience of God himselfe, who gave power to wise and virtuous women, to bring downe their pride and arrogancie. As was cruell* Cesarus *by the discreet counsell of noble* Deborah, *Judge and Prophetesse of Israel: and resolution of* Jael *wife of* Heber *the Kenite: wicked* Haman, *by the divine prayers and prudent proceedings of beautifull* Hester: *blasphemous* Holofernes, *by the invincible courage, rare wisdome, and Confident carriage of* Judeth: *& the unjust Judges, by the innocency of chast* Susanna. (49)

Lanyer surpasses most *querelle exempla* by expanding her mention of Esther, both in the dedication and later in the text of the "Salve Deus" poem. At the end of the poem Lanyer addresses its dedicatee, Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, comparing her to the biblical heroines enumerated in the dedication to the readers. The reference to Esther in the second passage portrays her preparations for victory over Haman.

Though virtuous Hester *fasted three days space,*
And spent her time in prayers all that while,
That by Gods powre shee might obtaine such grace,
That shee and hers might not become a spoyle
To wicked Hamon, *in whose crabbed face*
Was seene the map of malice, envie, guile;
Her glorious garments though shee put apart,
So to present a pure and single heart

To God, in sack-cloth, ashes, and with teares;
Yet must faire Hester *needs give place to thee,*
Who hath continu'd dayes, weekes, months, and yeares,
In Gods true service.... (lines 1505-16)

In both instances, Esther appears in *Salve Deus* as an example not just of virtuous female behavior, defined here as taking action against unjust oppression, but specifically as a model to Lanyer's readers—the general "Vertuous Reader" and Margaret, Countess of Cumberland. Lanyer and Sowernam share an interest in providing a pattern of action for female readers, who, they imply, may model their behavior on that of biblical women.

Women's familiarity with the story of Esther is further evident in a brief remark in Elizabeth Jocelin's *The Mothers Legacie, To her unborne Childe* (1624). Part of Jocelin's advice to her child concerns public and private prayer, which includes (regardless of the sex of the child) the study of "Divinitie." To illustrate the benefits of this study, Jocelin writes, "If any man serve me, saith Christ, him will my father honor; If Mordecay were thought so highly honoured by Ahasuerus for a little gay trapping, what shal be done to him whom God will honour?" (7). The brevity of this remark, the way that it calls to mind the story of Esther from a single random detail, suggests that the story may have been widely present in early seventeenth-century culture. Jocelin's allusion

also underscores the variety of uses of a story such as Esther's, in this case devotional, to which reading it might be put.

Lanyer offers one representation of a proto-feminist Esther, and Jocelin implies a degree of familiarity with the story and an application specific to a female author and audience. In addition, the figure of Queen Esther appeared with some frequency, although not in great detail, in the printed literature of early seventeenth-century England. These appearances provide a backdrop to Sowernam's presentation of Esther, but equally important is an evaluation of Sowernam's intervention in the story of Esther. To trace what is new in her exegesis, it is important to recognize the degree to which she differed from her contemporaries and predecessors in understanding Esther. Looking closely at the parallels that she invokes between the biblical book and her answer to Swetnam will show, first, some of the ways that Sowernam read the Bible and, second, the value that Esther had as a figure for women's public speaking and even writing.

Within the specific context of the 1617 *querelle* only Sowernam considers Esther in a sustained way. Swetnam never mentions Esther. His brief catalog of good women includes many of the conventional female *exempla*, but his criteria for inclusion are silence and subservience. He begins with Mary, "the mother of all blisse, what wun her honour but an humble minde and her paines and love unto our Saviour Christ. Sara is commended for the earnest love that she bare to her husband, not onely for calling him Lord, but for many other quallities: Also Susanna for her chastity and for creeping on her knees to please her husband" (47). It would be difficult to fit Esther into this warped paradigm that misrepresents the Bible and seeks to transform action into submission. Certainly Sowernam takes the opposite approach in her treatment of Esther, valuing most her decision to speak.

Esther and Print

It is Esther's public speaking and contribution to the written documents that conclude the book of Esther that allow Sowernam to see her as a figure of authorship. In addition to speaking before Ahasuerus, Esther prepares two dinners as occasions for speaking to both Ahasuerus and Haman. Further, she participates directly in the writing of the final decree described in the Book of Esther, the pronouncement of protection issued on behalf of the Jews.

> Then arose Ester, and stode before the King, And said, If it please the King, and if I have founde favour in his sight, and the thing be acceptable before the King, and I please him, let it be written, that the letters of the devise of Haman the sonne of Ammedatha the Agagite may be called againe. (8:4-5)

Complications in Queen Esther's identity and speaking position—principally the contradiction between her protestations of modesty in appearing before the king and submitting to his will and the bold directive "let it be written"—allow Sowernam to open a discussion of authorship that extends beyond her own response to Swetnam. In *Ester hath hang'd Haman*, Esther's speaking is frequently, if indirectly, invoked. The Book of Esther opens with the banquet that leads to Vashti's banishment. Sowernam also begins her pamphlet with a dinner party, but in hers she is the figure of authority and the origin of discourse.[10] The scene occurs in Sowernam's first dedication, "To All Right Honourable, Noble and worthy Ladies" when she recounts that

> *there fell out a discourse concerning women, some defending, others objecting against our Sex: Upon which occasion, there happened a mention of a Pamphlet entituled* The Arraignment of Women, *which I was desirous to see. The next day a Gentleman brought me the Booke, which*

[10] The dinner party setting was a minor convention in *querelle* literature; see Michel Jeanneret's *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance* (Chicago, 1991) and Woodbridge's discussion of Elyot's *Defense of Good Women* (1540).

> *when I had superficially runne over, I found the discourse as far off from performing what the Title promised, as I found it scandalous and blasphemous: for where the Authour pretended to write against lewde, idle, and unconstant women, hee doth most impudently rage and rayle generally against all the whole sexe of women. Whereupon, I in defence of our Sexe, began an answer to that shamefull Pamphlet.* (sig. A2r-v)

Sowernam portrays herself as a reader in this passage, depicting the nature of herself as a reader and the nature of her act of reading: she "had superficially runne over" Swetnam's text. She also indicates the importance of a work's title as an interpretive check against its meaning in noting that *The Araignment* does not perform what it promises; the careful reader may then expect Sowernam's own title to explicate her text.

Sowernam uses the Bible to ground her authority and then departs from it substantially by locating a central parallel between the Book of Esther and *Ester hath hang'd Haman* in a part of the work in which she writes as a woman to other women. She creates a contrast to the biblical account in which women are the subjects of discourse, rather than its authors and responsive audience. At the beginning of "The Arraignment of Joseph Swetnam," Sowernam repeats her earlier phrase, noting that Swetnam's work "was at last delivered into my hands," as though she were the intended reader of his polemic (27). These scenes naturalize her role as respondent. Her repeated representation of herself as a reader bolsters Sowernam's authority at two crucial moments in *Ester*, the beginning of the pamphlet and the section that directly answers Swetnam's *Arraignment*. Banquets in the Book of Esther similarly serve as the occasions for Esther's dramatic accusation of Haman and her requests to preserve the Jews, and a reader with both texts in mind might well be expected to recognize the parallel.

Just as the "discourse concerning women" leads to Sowernam's writing, instances of speech in the Book of Esther are formalized in Ahasuerus' many decrees.[11] The circulation of replies in the *querelle des femmes*, and, in a larger sense, the conditions of early seventeenth-century print culture, offer a contemporary parallel to the importance of writing within the Book of Esther. The first written and published decree in the Book of Esther announces Ahasuerus' divorce from Vashti, a gesture that conflates his personal experience of marriage with law through the power of writing. Later Ahasuerus issues an order to murder the Jews, and finally Esther and Mordecai oversee the composition of another decree revoking that order. It is worth noticing two aspects of Ahasuerus' decrees—that they are written and distributed in all of the vernacular languages of the Persian empire. The biblical narrator carefully records the manner of transmission and implies a concern that the Jews could read and understand the edicts.

The designation of these decrees for particular groups through the several languages in which they were transmitted may have had a special resonance for an early modern reader aware of the operations of print culture in her own time. Benedict Anderson's description of the role of book and newspaper reading in forming "imagined communities" illustrates one of the functions of print culture, which is to individuate and define groups. For example, Anderson argues that the nation is imagined when the reader of a newspaper "is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion" (39). The readers form a group whose identity is both defined by its own qualities and defined in opposition to others. In the Book of Esther the Jews, as a sub-community within the empire, need to receive Ahasuerus' decrees in their own language. Sowernam uses print in a similar way. She makes it plain in her front matter that she writes for women, a recognizable group whose

[11] Sowernam's adoption of the book of Esther in a proto-feminist context may be grounded in the recognition that this biblical book also begins with a "discourse concerning women."

parameters are known (perhaps in an overdetermined way) but whose status as a group does not trump their standing as a minority within the dominant culture (which is partly formed, in early modern England, by emerging concepts of nationalism and language). Just as Sowernam exploits the complications of Esther's gender, the emphasis in *Ester hath hang'd Haman* on the written word illustrates some of the paradoxes of print in the early modern world. The vernacularization of print culture made it possible for women to participate in larger numbers as both writers and readers, but vernacular printing also protected patriarchal systems, much as it ensured Ahasuerus' power. Women's place within the vernacular print culture of early seventeenth-century England may mirror the situation of the Jews in the Book of Esther. They are intentionally included as an audience for writings that concern them—writings that are designed to determine their fate—but only after two members of the group intervene in the production of these documents do the events recorded in them benefit the Jews. Esther's intervention, through speech but also explicitly through writing, supplies the model for Sowernam's entrance into print.

Sowernam repeatedly addresses issues of public speaking and writing in terms of her defense of women. One of the possible readings of Esther that Sowernam opens up is an anti-patriarchal one. This is a way of reading Esther that some later writers take up, but Sowernam's version of Esther is one the first feminist interpretations. Ahasuerus' decisions about Vashti and Esther are made for him by his advisors; he is a male ruler backed by a literal patriarchy, and this combination wields real power over the lives of women. When Ahasuerus asks his advisors how to punish Vashti, one member of the council argues that she has transgressed not just against the king, but also against all of his people. The identification of the state with the king was a fundamental part of the early modern definition of patriarchy and the fear of women's insubordination motivated misogynist attacks.[12] The fear of Ahasuerus' council that Vashti's refusal will lead to the

[12] See Constance Jordan for a discussion of this phenomenon in Renaissance literature.

disobedience of all wives becomes evidence in Sowernam's defense of women. She notes that while Swetnam promises to criticize only lewd women, he has really arraigned the entire sex. It has not been noticed how apt, given Swetnam's broad attack, is Sowernam's choice of the figure of Esther. Haman threatens the Jews because one, Mordecai, refuses to bow before him. Conversely, another individual Jew, Esther, preserves them. The threat of disobedience, and the ensuing punishment of an entire group in the Book of Esther, is a clear parallel to what Sowernam might have seen as the condition of women, especially those entering into print.

Sowernam may have seen the value of subverting the distribution of misogynistic information in the light of her own pamphlet writing. Sowernam repeatedly demonstrates her awareness of the *querelle* context in which she writes, responding directly to Swetnam and to Rachel Speght, the first female respondent to Swetnam. Esther's emphasis on the power of the patriarchy to enforce its rule through vast distribution of the written word may reveal analogously the importance of Sowernam's own project of entering into print. In her inventory of accomplished women, Sowernam notes that "Carmentis a Ladie, first invented Letters, and the use of them by reading and writing," and claims that to do justice to the defense of women, "I might write more Bookes then I have yet written lines" (18, 19). Haman is hanged on the gallows that he erected for Mordecai, just as Sowernam implies that Swetnam hangs himself on his own misogynistic rhetoric.

The rhetorical champion of the Book of Esther, on the other hand, is Queen Esther. Sowernam fashions her own authorship, in part, on the bold and efficacious speaking and writing of her biblical precedent. Initially Esther hesitates to speak on behalf of the Jews, because no one may appear before the king unsummoned. Esther is rewarded, however, for approaching the king without having been called; Sowernam implies that female authors have also entered their voices into the public debate about women uninvited. Sowernam conceives of her defense of women primarily as a response

to the written materials about them, asserting confidently that having written *Ester*, "I doubt not but such as heretofore have beene so forward and lavish against women, will hereafter pull in their hornes, and have as little desire, and lesse cause so scandalously and slanderously to write against us then formerly they have" (sig. A3r). She also consistently positions herself as an author by juxtaposing her authorship with Swetnam's. For example, she initially equates their status as authors by insisting that "the Author of the Arraignment, and my selfe, in our labours doe altogether disagree" (sig. A3v). Having thus established that she too is an author, Sowernam moves away from the scaffolding of a response to Swetnam and underscores her assertion that her own work differs.

Her authorship differs in part because the rhetorical strategies Sowernam uses—quotation, retelling, repetition, and juxtaposition—are tools of biblical analysis *and* techniques of literary authorship. Sowernam exemplifies the practice that Rivkah Zim describes as the exploitation of "readers' knowledge of the Bible" and practices of reading and interpretation of the Bible (66). Her strategies enable Sowernam to use the skills of reading Scripture to re-imagine one of its stories, to relocate a biblical figure to another context, and to develop an original piece of writing with the authority of biblical context and subject matter but also with its own purpose and structure. Sowernam's exegetic strategies, the tools that she uses to read and interpret Scripture, help her to establish an authority that is not only attached to the scriptural text but which is also located in the author herself.

Sowernam's exegesis of John 8:7 in one of her dedicatory letters, in which she shifts from addressing her readers to commenting on Scripture, exemplifies this approach. In the work as a whole, Sowernam takes Esther as a model for her own writing identity. In the dedication, Sowernam patterns her authorship on an even more powerful biblical model. She explicates the gospel narrative of Christ and the woman "taken in adultery"

in terms defined both by her defense of women and by her interest in the formulation of an authorial position. Sowernam assures her male readers that

> *None are here arraigned, but such olde fornicators as came with full mouth and open cry to Jesus, and brought a woman to him taken in adultery, who when our Saviour stoopt down and wrote on the ground, they all fled away.* Joseph Swetnam saith, A man may find Pearles in dust, Pag. 47. *But if they who had fled had seene any Pearles, they would rather have stayed to have had share, then to flye and to leave the woman alone, they found some fowle reckoning against themselves in our Saviour's writing, as they shall doe who are heare arraigned.* (sig. A4v)

The scene of the woman "taken in adultery" enables Sowernam to claim Christ's support for women in a context of male persecution and slander. In this episode, the woman whom Christ defends is an adulterous woman, one who therefore occupies a position that places her, like Sowernam, who is neither maid, wife, nor widow, outside of conventional and sanctioned female behavior. Sowernam invokes another biblical woman accused of adultery, Susanna, immediately following her brief mention of Esther: "What a chast mirrour was Susanna, who rather hazarded her life, then offend against God?" (12). Sowernam found examples in both biblical episodes of women whose morality was questioned, but who were ultimately protected by the divinely-inspired actions of righteous men. Susanna is an especially powerful example for Sowernam because she speaks in her own defense, and because her story indicts the lewd and immoral behavior of men, which, as in John 8:7, is often falsely transferred to women.

The passage in John, as the only episode in the Bible in which Christ writes, legitimizes Sowernam's own writing.[13] He writes on the ground with his finger twice in

[13] Like the book of Esther, the story of the woman "taken in adultery" was not fully canonical in the 17th century. According to Jerry Bentley, Erasmus "knew that many Greek manuscripts lacked the story, and that others included it at different places. In the *Annotations* he reviewed the evidence of the Fathers: Jerome did not find the passage in all Greek manuscripts; Chrysostom and Theophylactus failed to mention it in their commentaries on John's gospel; Eusebius thought it apocryphal" (147).

this passage, once after hearing the Pharisees' accusation of the woman and again after issuing the command "let him that is among you without sinne, cast the first stone at her." Sowernam underscores the importance of this passage for *Ester hath hang'd Haman* by choosing it as one of the epigraphs on her title page in addition to engaging it within the dedication. In her reading of John she focuses attention on Christ's mysterious written words, which are never revealed in the gospel. They become an important but—because secret—protected text that acts as a parallel to her own.

By quoting the Bible Sowernam adds the authority of Scripture to her own words, legitimating them by association. Sowernam's role as author in the parallel she implies in the dedication is not analogous to that of the woman in the story, but rather to that of Christ as he writes in defense of the woman. Swetnam's words parallel those of the "olde fornicators" and Sowernam's, those of Christ. In this passage she doubles her words with Christ's and extends the biblical narrative, adding to it her arraignment of Swetnam. Christ's words enable Sowernam to distinguish herself from Swetnam and to imply that Christ takes the side of women. In a single sentence Sowernam makes the transition from the subject of her own book to the pronouncements of Christ, blurring the distinctions between the (male) readers who might be offended by her arraignment and the Pharisees who attempted to dishonor the woman. She then directly opposes Swetnam's words to Christ's and neatly closes the analogy by referring again to her work and showing it to be aligned with Christ's: "*they found some fowle reckoning against themselves in our Saviour's writing, as they shall doe who are heare arraigned.*" This example illustrates the power of Sowernam's exegesis to answer Swetnam, particularly when she appears under the protection of a biblical model.

Sowernam's use of quotation also highlights the difference between Swetnam's words and those of Scripture. She quotes Swetnam to the effect that women are a plague on men and then demands, "Out of what Scripture, out of what record, can hee prove these impious and impudent speeches? They are onely faigned and framed out of his

owne idle, giddie, furious, and franticke imaginations" (11). Just as she measures her own words against those of Scripture to demonstrate their truth, she holds Swetnam's words up to the standard of the Bible to prove their deficiencies. She contrasts her work and Swetnam's:

> Now, having examined what collection Joseph Swetnam hath wrested out of Scriptures, to dishonor and abuse all women: I am resolved, before I answere further particulars made by him against our sexe, to collect and note out of Scriptures; First, what incomparable and most excellent prerogatives God hath bestowed upon women, in honour of them, and their Creation: Secondly, what choyse God hath made of women. (4)

The difference between *wresting* and *collecting* suggests Swetnam's blasphemous treatment of the Bible, and illustrates Sowernam's delicate positioning; by portraying herself as a collector she also mitigates the more provocative statements in her work.

While much of her argument is conventional to the defenses of women (especially those written by women), Sowernam distinguishes herself by her constant emphasis on the importance of truth. She begins her answer to Swetnam by noting that it is necessary because Swetnam has misrepresented women. She immediately aligns herself with the truth of Scripture, claiming (as Speght had also done) that *The Araignment* also misrepresents the truths of the Bible. Her use of biblical and classical examples aims to correct his misconstrual of the evidence, and her own commentary on the examples similarly asserts truth over falsehood. Sowernam's diction—including words like folly, basphemy, "ridiculous jeast," dishonestly, and "profane speach"—reinforces her claim to truth. The structure of her argument follows closely in the first four chapters the order of the Christian Bible, positioning her writing as analogous to and consistent with the ultimate source of truth for her readers. Women's truthfulness, in Sowernam's view, is divine in origin. The ultimate sign of their inherent honesty, for Sowernam, is evidenced through their speaking, as when "To manifest the worthinesse of women, they have beene

chosen to performe and *publish* the most happy and joyfull benefits which ever came to man-kinde" (4; my emphasis). A wife, according to Sowernam, is "the sure signe and seale of honestie" (23).

Sowernam also calls attention to her decisions regarding Scripture, often framing her choices in terms of omissions. She notes, for instance, that "I should be over-tedious to repeate every example of most zealous, faithfull, and devout women, which I might in the new Testament, whose faith and devotion was censured by our Saviour to be without compare" (14). The language of the passage reinforces her argument that women are valued and defended by Christ and demonstrates that she has made authorial choices in presenting her material. Her omissions show her control over the text and her authority in choosing what is appropriate and necessary to make her points. They also imply that the available examples of good women are almost infinite, and that Sowernam could, if she wished, write much more.

In her second letter to the readers (prefacing chapter four), Sowernam notes that in moving from divine to secular subject matter she also chooses to take more liberties. This is not the same as saying that Scripture did not afford her, as an author, any "advantages" but that she has chosen two different authorial modes. In this paragraph Sowernam also repeats what she indicated in the dedication about the conditions of her authorship. Sowernam claims additional potential authorship: "I have not so amply and absolutely discharged my selfe in the Apologie as I would have done, if either my leisure had beene such, as I could have wished, or the time more favourable, that I might have stayed" (16). Sowernam goes on to promise that she will finish the work in the following term. In the first chapter of the second section she notes the surplus of positive examples from classical sources as well: "If I should recite and set down all the honourable records and Monuments for and of women, I might write more Bookes then I have yet written lines" (19). There is a direct correspondence in this sentence between the number of

honorable women in history and the number of books that Sowernam could write. Her authorship literally derives from their example.

Sowernam's major strategy for legitimizing her writing is to call on the model of Esther as a figure of authorship. Esther supplies a model for Sowernam because she tells the truth. The issue of women's speaking dominates Sowernam's work, appearing as well in the Book of Esther, and in fact in Swetnam's first paragraph, when he warns women, "whatsoever you think privately, I wish you to conceal it with silence, lest in starting up to find fault you prove yourselves guilty of these monstrous accusations which are here following against some women" (sig. A2). The power of truthful speech appeals to early modern authors, particularly those who write from outside of the mainstream, and the content of Esther's speech matters, because for Sowernam it can suggest not just the preservation of the Jews but the defense of women. Linda Woodbridge contends that stereotypes of "good" women in the *querelle des femmes* did not promote equality for women any more than those of "bad" women, but Sowernam's compelling method suggests that early modern readers interpreted biblical women in ways far more profound than has yet been recognized (38). The sophistication of Sowernam's reading and exegesis of the Bible allows her, in contrast to Woodbridge's assertion, to apply the materials of the Bible to the contemporary situation of English women. *Ester hath hang'd Haman* intervenes in the scriptural tradition of one of the good women cited in *querelle* literature, elaborating and redirecting the power of her public speech in the interests of women as a group with a public voice in the printed literature of their day.

Without adequate analysis of her choice of Esther and of the methodology for reading the Bible that Sowernam suggests, we also miss the opportunity to see the possibilities of social change for women that were emerging in English Protestantism. Too often in modern criticism it has been assumed that religion is a limiting construct for women, silencing them by forcing them away from original authorship. Feminist criticism in particular has often lamented that pious writing indicates the degree of

women's socialization into a patriarchal culture. None of these complaints, however, can reasonably be leveled at Sowernam's work, not because it is more feminist than other books by women in the period but because it is actively engaged with questions of public voice that are encouraged by the work's biblical source text.

Recent work on women and Protestantism suggests that religion itself was both limiting and enabling for women. Patricia Crawford's sociological criteria for considering the influence of religion on early modern women may also be applicable to readings of their literary works: "it seems as if the godly woman was the successfully socialized woman. But it we examine the lives of godly, pious women then we can see how belief could become an individual matter which women could transform into something of their own" (*Women and Religion in Early Modern England* 4). Elaine Hobby has noted that the struggle to negotiate between passivity and authority in early modern women's writing "provides the dynamic of the texts themselves" (74). In *Ester hath hang'd Haman* the play between Sowernam's assertions of her authorship (and her repeated insistence in the final pages of the pamphlet that she has "set downe the true state of the question") and her emphasis on what she has *not* written may be read in this way (46).

Chapter Two

"Davids Successors": Collaborative Method in the Sidney *Psalmes*

> Once silent reading became the norm in the scriptorium, communication among the scribes was done by signs: if a scribe required a new book to copy, he would pretend to turn over imaginary pages; if he specifically needed a psalter, he'd place his hands on his head in the shape of a crown (in reference to King David).

Alberto Manguel's anecdote shows that psalters were common enough in manuscript culture to have generated their own special signal among scribes (50). This evidence speaks to the importance of lay Bible reading before the Reformation and dramatizes the close association between the psalms and David as their author. Just as David's crown stands for him metonymically in the scribes' gesture, David stands for the Psalms. The biblical stories of David in the books of Samuel and Kings as well as in the Psalms have provided

> a large alphabet...for centuries of authors, following the biblical narrators, to draw upon, as well as wide space for individual interpretations. In fact, writers of I and II Samuel were already retelling it, taking up material about David they found in archives and folk literature to shape his story to their own hopes some 500 years after the events they describe....One thing the literary history of the David story shows is that stories can 'stretch.' (Frontain and Wojcik 1)

The redaction and elaboration of one biblical text within another creates was visible and available to early modern writers as they reworked scriptural material, such as the psalms, in their own texts. The textual history of the Bible supplied a paradigm of elaboration

and response that continued in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century printed books.

While the psalms were closely identified with David in the early modern imagination, readers also recognized that the biblical book of Psalms attributes their authorship to other psalmists as well as to David. This awareness may explain the collaborative authorship that characterized nearly all metrical psalm translations in early modern England. Like Moses and Esther, David meant many things to early modern readers. He was a prophet, a king, a repentant sinner, and a singer of psalms. The roles of prophet and psalmist are explicitly literary, and David's position as an author (of many genres, including psalms) often figured in English Renaissance representations of David. The use of the psalms as a model for pious literature has been set out in a range of works spanning from Israel Baroway's 1933 article "The Bible as Poetry in the English Renaissance" to Barbara Lewalski's *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*. Little attention has been given, however, to the particulars of David's authorship, and to the modes of literary composition associated with the writing of the Book of Psalms, chiefly collaboration.

The psalms are collaborative on several levels. First, as their speakers emphasize, responsibility for the composition of a divine song is always shared with God. Another mediator for Christian readers is the Holy Ghost. The "Argument" prefacing the psalms in the Geneva Bible reminds readers of the limited human participation: the book "is set forthe unto us by the holie Gost." Further, within the Book of Psalms there are attributions to several human authors, including but not limited to David. These psalmists were also assisted by the work of compilers, who assembled and ordered the individual songs. Finally, in the English Renaissance, psalm versifications were nearly always the work of multiple authors.

English readers recognized that in the Hebrew original the psalms are not unambiguously attributed to David. Seventy-three of them use the phrase "le-David,"

which could be translated "by David" but which might also suggest "concerning David."[1] English Bibles also reproduced specific ascriptions to other figures, some of whom may be read as authors. A marginal note at the first appearance of the word "Psalmes" notes that the book is "called the Psalmes, or Sōgs of David because *the moste parte* were made by him" (my emphasis). The Geneva discussion of attribution continues in the headnote to Psalm One, which references the composition of the book: "Whether it was Esdras, or anie other that gathered the Psalmes into a boke, it semeth he did set this Psalme first in maner of a preface." Other headnotes repeat the brief attributions contained in the Hebrew text, usually "A Psalme of David," although some psalms do not carry such notes (the Geneva translation follows the Hebrew text closely in this regard).[2]

Other psalms are associated with four other authors, the "sons of Korah" (including Heman and Ethan, to whom are attributed Psalms 88-9), Asaph, Solomon, and Moses (whose "praier" is included as Psalm 90). The wording of the Geneva headnote, slightly more ambiguous than the Hebrew "of the sons of Korah," is "committed to the sonnes of Korah." The note for the first of the psalms attributed to Asaph bears much more explicitly on the question of authorship. Using the designation "A Psalme of Asaph," the note explains that he "was either the autor, or a chief singer, to whome it was cōmitted" (note to Psalm 50). While these designations do not necessarily ascribe authorship of the psalms to Korah or Asaph, they do emphasize the important degree to which the production of the psalter—even in its original form—resulted from the hands of many participants.[3]

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[1] As the *Encyclopedia Judaica* notes, a colophon at the end of the first book of psalms (72:20) indicates the conclusion of a section associated with David's authorship (vol 13., coll. 1313-1314). At this place, according to the colophon, "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended" (JPS version).

[2] Occasionally the notes are more elaborate in their description of David's role as a divine author. The first several lines of Psalm 18, for instance, explain that it is "A Psalme of David the servant of the Lord, which spake unto the Lord the wordes of this song (in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, & from the hand of Saul)." Again, this note is part of the original Hebrew psalm, not an addition by the Geneva editors. In the headnotes and marginal notes to the psalms to which no authorship is ascribed, the Geneva editors avoid any reference to David, often substituting the generic "he" or "the prophet."

[3] Thorough accounts of works on the psalms (including expositions, paraphrases, and musical scores) appear in Rohr-Sauer, Glass, Freer, and Zim. See especially the Sternhold-Hopkins, Marot-Bèze, and Sidney versions.

This chapter examines the biblical precedent for dual authorship and the influence it had on early modern psalm collections, particularly the versified psalms by Philip and Mary Sidney. Their collection, produced some time before 1599, exemplifies the complications of authorship in this period and the value of biblical modes for literary production. The composition narrative of the Sidney psalms, including the very basic questions of how they were written (in what order, at what time, by what division of labor between brother and sister, with what purpose or intention), remains uncertain. This confusion is due both to the complex manuscript tradition of the poems and to the deep critical investments that have developed around the attribution of the collection. Many attempts have been made to reconstruct the composition of the Sidney psalms definitively, with extremely diverse results that reflect competing critical traditions. From the earliest work (including the responses of their contemporaries) to the recent critical edition of the Countess of Pembroke's works, scholarship on the *Psalmes* demonstrates the surprisingly high stakes for determining their authorship. Much of Mary Sidney's status as an author in her own right (as opposed to a translator, editor, or patron) depends on attributing at least the bulk of the Sidney psalter to her. Conversely, Philip Sidney's role in the production of the *Psalmes* has been downplayed, as though an association with the versification of the psalms might diminish some of the gleam of his more traditional literary reputation. While it is beyond the scope of this project to undertake a new investigation of the manuscripts for evidence of composition, it will be necessary to consider the traditions surrounding the writing of the Sidney psalms for what they reveal about modern critical concepts of early modern authorship practices.[4] The chapter then turns to a reading of the scenes of authorship within the Sidney *Psalmes*.

[4] It is also important to acknowledge, as Holly Laird notes, that "in a full collaboration even manuscript evidence cannot reliably tell us which is which" (*Women Coauthors* 4).

"His worde was in my tongue": The Psalms and Modes of Authorship[5]

The psalms create sites for authorship through the presence of multiple authors, the importance of the individual voice, and the emphasis on mastery of poetic forms, an important aspect of the Hebrew originals and many English versifications. English versions of the psalms are further suited for collaboration as a compositional form because they are translations. Collaboration and translation as modes of authorship have been the focus of literary theory in recent years, and this work informs the readings of the Sidney *Psalmes* that follow.

Some adjustments are necessary in order to apply the findings of this scholarship to the Sidney psalms. Holly Laird notes, for example, that the methodology for studying collaboration has only gradually evolved into a model that will be productive for readings of works such as the Sidney *Psalmes*. She notes that

> Until the late 1980s, the question about collaboration was a question about methodology: how did writers collaborate, and how could the investigator sort out their contributions (a query that turned the collaboration into a matter of two writers writing individually, one better than the other)? In the late 1980s, a few scholars (inspired by changes within pedagogy and by feminism) began to seek alternative theories of collaboration and to see it as an alternative sociocultural practice. ("The Hand Spills from the Book's Threshold" 347)

Scholars of early modern literature have taken seriously the impulse to view joint authorship as "an alternative sociocultural practice;" Jeffrey Masten's *Textual Intercourse* and Margaret Ezell's *Social Authorship* exemplify this movement. They point to the material conditions of early modern literary cultures as factors that often necessitate collaboration, while pursuing the reflections of those circumstances of production within literary works themselves. The readings of this chapter follow from their method and

[5] II Samuel 23:3

attempt to extend the theorization of early modern joint authorship by considering images of collaboration within the Bible.

Collaboration as a method of composition defined many of the most important literary projects of early modern England, including dictionaries, coterie manuscripts, the King James Bible, and the Elizabethan theater, as well as genres that, while immensely popular at the time, have faded from the critical eye, such as letters and polemics, and—especially during the 1640s and 1650s—petitions.[6] An initial survey of works listed in the *Short Title Catalogue* that report more than one author reveals hundreds of collaborative works, in every genre and subject matter.[7] In fact, a sharp distinction between individual and multi-author works cannot be made for the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In scribal culture, it is important to note "how often the role of the reader of manuscript text becomes conflated with the roles of editing, correcting, or copying the text and extending its circulation of readers" (Ezell, *Social Authorship* 40). These roles multiply and disperse the site of authorship. Similarly, Fredson Bowers cautions that for early printed books, "the difference between a single- and a multi-author collection was not clearly maintained. Kendall and Breton, for instance, published multiauthor collections under their single names; Gascoigne originally published his poems under the fiction that they had multiple authors" (250).

The collaboration between authors and other makers of books—writers of prefaces and dedications, engravers, musicians, publishers, printers, and booksellers—is also beginning to enter critical conversations about the production of English Renaissance literature. Dustin Griffin, writing on Augustan collaboration, attempts to produce a "workable taxonomy" of collaborative practices "according to the participants."

Thus, one can find 1) a professional poet working with an amateur

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[6] Dramatic works have generated much of the discussion on collaboration in early modern literature. See Masten and the chapters on collaboration and revision in Gerald Eades Bentley's *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time 1590-1642* (Princeton, 1971).

[7] This survey of multiple authorship in the seventeenth century was made possible through the kind assistance of Dione Shastid from the ESTC project and Jill Cogan at the Huntington Library.

> (Dryden with Sir Robert Howard); 2) a senior established poet helping a younger writer (Dryden correcting the poems of Walsh) or an unknown one (Johnson aiding Zachariah Williams, father of Anna Williams); 3) a pair of friends who go together as equals (Pope and Swift); 4) a pair of professionals working together as a contractual business arrangement, as did Dryden and Lee; 5) a team of professionals (or professionals and amateurs) working under the supervision of an editor or a bookseller; 6) a group of amateurs such as the coteries gathered around Rochester or Buckingham in the days of Charles II; or the Scribblers Club in the days of Queen Anne. (2-3)

The categories and examples Griffin has collected represent one of the only available systematic evaluations of Renaissance collaborations.

The Sternhold-Hopkins psalter exemplifies the importance of a reading that is sensitive to the process of composition and the nature of authorship as they are reflected in both the physical books and the literary works contained therein. Rivkah Zim details the history of this collection, noting that "the publication of Sternhold's *Certayne Psalmes* established a vogue for metrical psalm paraphrases, and Sternhold had many imitators. In 1549 John Hopkins, a young Oxford graduate, added seven of his own psalm paraphrases to the posthumous edition of Sternhold's thirty-seven psalms....There was no actual partnership between Sternhold and Hopkins" (*English Metrical Psalms* 124-5). The question whether such an "actual partnership" existed between Philip and Mary Sidney to produce their psalm versions, as we will see, has proved crucial for readings of their work. In addition to the Sternhold-Hopkins project, John Day's 1564 printed version named several contributors, according to Henry Glass's *The Story of The Psalters*. He notes that "in addition to Sternhold and Hopkins, who between them contributed 100 Psalms to the version, Whittingham wrote 12, Kethe 10, Pullain 1,

Norton 26, Wisdom 1, and 5 anonymous, total 155; five of the Psalms being duplicated" (18).

Many collaborative projects of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were also, like the Sidney *Psalmes*, translations. Like many other forms of pious writing, translations have too often been viewed as less than literary works in their own right.[8] In fact, translations consciously focus attention on the critical issues of authorship, form, and style. These modes—translation, collaboration, devotion—are in fact a dynamic resource for an inquiry into authorship because they point to the notion that "*all* writing is a form of translation as no piece of writing is purely the property of a single, originary author" (Trill 142).

Some recent revaluations of early modern translation practices move away from an earlier trend in criticism that saw translation by women—particularly of pious materials—as an indirect, feminized, and essentially silent activity. Current theorizations of translation as a form of composition concentrate on the interventions, and the moments of a refusal to intervene, in the "original" document.[9] Arguing that translations are neither merely derivative nor bound by the illogical "opposition between 'faithful' (word-for-word) and 'free' (sense for sense)," Suzanne Trill suggests that the Sidneys' choice of translation as a method merits careful attention (142). Similarly, Jonathan Goldberg casts a suspicious eye toward the praise that Mary Sidney often receives for the extreme faithfulness or literalness of her translations, primarily her translation of Petrarch's *Trionfo della Morte*. The term "literal translation," Goldberg warns, "supposes that there is something literally there in Petrarch, something so self-identical that it could simply be faithfully reproduced" (116). Goldberg's critique can be taken further to suggest that

[8] Jonathan Goldberg surveys some of the critical evaluations of women's translations.
[9] Micheline White, for instance, summarizes the earlier critical work on women's translations, re-examines the evidence used to support these views, and contributes to the development of a more sophisticated reading of religious translations by early modern women.

Mary and Philip Sidney, as translators, chose this form of authorship with the knowledge that translation calls attention to an already contested and perhaps pluralistic authorial subjectivity. Their doubleness casts light on the multiplicity of authorship within the biblical text itself.

The Sidneys' predecessors and contemporaries recognized and exploited the opportunities for poetic self-creation that the psalms provide. For example, Anne Lok's *Meditation of a Penitent Sinner Upon the 51st Psalm* (1560) paraphrases Psalm 51 by re-imagining each verse of the psalm as a sonnet.[10] Her sonnets occupy the center of the page, while the psalm itself is printed in the margins. In these two changes Lok demonstrates a simultaneous reliance on and independence from the biblical text. Lok establishes herself as a writer by departing from her biblical precedent and exhibiting her ability to shape the psalms to the needs of her text. She expands the psalm's thematization of truthful speech, using doubling and anaphora in elaborations that often bear on the issue of speaking. She insists,

> my joying tong shall talke thy praise,
> Thy name my mouth shall utter in delight,
> My voice shall sounde thy justice, and thy waies. (lines 219-21)

In Lok's hands, the psalm becomes a promise to preach in which salvation is figured as a movement from shameful to joyous speaking. She also notably adds Christ, a gesture that is conventional to the period from a theological perspective, but which might be examined further as a rhetorical strategy given the tradition of Christ as author. Lok's interventions in the original text all point toward a meditation on authorship, an exploration enabled by the biblical model of the Psalmist. Additional examples of

[10] The addition of Lok's meditations to her translation of Calvin's sermons in effect renders the combined book a collaborative work.

authorial self-fashioning through manipulation of the psalms range from Anne Askew to John Milton.[11]

Scenes of Reading and Writing in the Sidney *Psalmes*

The theme of collaborative authorship carries over from the circumstances of production into the poems themselves; a conversation about collaboration is visible in the expansions, additions, and revisions that Philip and Mary Sidney made to images within the psalms that address—or that the co-verisifiers have made to address—practices of reading and writing. These elaborations appear from the beginning of the collection, in the two dedicatory poems that accompany one manuscript of the *Psalmes*, which may have been intended for presentation to Elizabeth during a proposed visit to Wilton in 1599. These poems present varying images of collaborative writing. The first dedication, a poem to Elizabeth that begins "Even now that Care," portrays the Sidneys as joint authors from the start of the project, while the second, a dedication of the work "To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Phillip Sidney," suggests that Philip was the original author, to whose work Mary added after his death.

In "Even now that Care" Mary Sidney offers the psalms on behalf of her co-author, presenting the works "which once in two, now in one Subject goe" (line 21).[12] Although Hannay recognizes the possibility that "these lines indicate that she had worked on the *Psalmes* from the beginning: once there had been two authors; now there is only one," she does not pursue the implications of this claim (*Philip's Phoenix* 90). Mary Sidney presents the psalms to Elizabeth "in both our names" and consistently uses the plural, as in "our worke" (lines 33 and 41). But Mary Sidney's metaphor for the composition of the psalms, in which Philip "did warpe, I weav'd this webb to end,"

[11] Hannay notes the possible influence of earlier psalm versions by women on Mary Sidney's translations, including Lok, Askew, Elizabeth I, Lady Elizabeth Fane, and "women's prayers based on psalms in Thomas Bentley's *A Monument of Matrones*" ("'House-confinéd maids'" 50-51).
[12] References to the first 43 psalms are to the Rathmell edition, and the remainder, as well as the two dedicatory poems, are to the Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan edition.

complicates the initial assertion of joint writing by separating the tasks of the authors. She further widens the scope of authorship beyond her work with her brother by acknowledging "the stuffe" of the psalms is "not ours," but rather the work of "the Psalmist King" (lines 27-29). The final line of the dedication suggests that the authorship extends even to Elizabeth. She, like David and the Sidneys, will sing God's deeds through the psalms. The major image of the poem portrays the unification of king (David) and queen (Elizabeth); a union that may reflect back on the Sidney pairing.

"To the Angell spirit" also takes up their dual authorship and the broader problems of writing divine poetry as major subjects. The poem reveals a connection between the combined work of the two authors and the link in divine poetry between God and man: "So dar'd my Muse with thine it selfe combine, / as mortall stuffe with that which is divine" (lines 5-6). The larger context of these lines, however, paints a different picture of collaboration than the first dedicatory poem suggests. The psalms were "First rais'de by thy blest hand, and what is mine / inspired by thee," the speaker claims, a statement that supports the view that Mary Sidney completed what Philip had begun (lines 3-4). Similarly, she invites Philip to behold "this finish't now, thy matchlesse Muse begunne, / the rest but peec't, as left by thee undone" (lines 23-24). Further, Sidney denigrates her contribution, calling the finished product "This halfe maim'd peece" (line 18). Neither the implication of dual authorship in "Even now that Care" nor the suggestion of a secondary role for Mary Sidney in her dedication to Philip, however, ought to be taken as authoritative evidence revealing the true process of composition. Rather, it is useful to note the author speaking in very different terms about collaboration to her audience and to her co-author. Understanding the compositional process is not just a problem for modern readers but was very much an issue under negotiation in early modern representations of poetry.

In addition to these images of the joint authorship of the collection, Mary Sidney offers a scene of her composition of the dedicatory poem itself, in which

...theise dearest offrings of my hart
dissolv'd to Inke, while penn's impressions move
the bleeding veines of never dying love:
I render here: these wounding lynes of smart
sadd Characters indeed of simple love
nor Art nor Skill which abler wits doe prove,
Of my full soule receive the meanest part. (lines 78-84)

In her solo authorship, as in her partnership with her brother, Mary Sidney treads between bold self-assertion (the powerful "I render here") and demurral ("Of my full soule receive the meanest part"). Again, flexibility in the presentation of the poems and their authors allows Mary Sidney to open up a discussion of the problems of divine poetry.

The rewriting of Scripture in the Sidney *Psalmes* differs categorically from the rewriting that Sowernam typifies. While *Ester hath hang'd Haman* created a parallel text that called on the reader's knowledge of the biblical original (largely to show important similarities but ultimately to argue for a secular point), translators and versifiers of Scripture often make their claims by cleaving very closely to the original. Elaine Beilin and Anne Lake Prescott have shown that faithful translations can contain extremely radical statements, because the places that do differ from the original stand out and are weighted heavily in interpretation. As Margaret Hannay notes, "Psalm translation provided more scope for independent statement than other translation, because the ambiguous 'I' of the psalms leaves a space for the reader to insert a personal voice....Equally important is the complexity of the nested speakers" of the psalms, including the Holy Ghost, David, his later translators, and then the versifiers themselves ("'House-confinéd maids'" 47). The "ambiguous 'I'" and the "nested speakers" must also be seen as poetic circumstances that could solicit joint authorship.

One of the most important expansions in the Sidney psalms concerns images of speaking, which are highly valorized in the Hebrew originals. In psalm 51, for example,

the penitent speaker promises to create additional praises, which issue from the situation described in the psalm: "Unlock my lipps, shut up with sinnfull shame: / Then shall my mouth, O Lord, thy honor sing" (Sidney version lines 43-44). The original and additional texts created in the psalms are often figured as speech (an important biblical genre, as the Book of Esther illustrates). The psalms imagine speaking as God's defense of the righteous and a means for men and women to call out for it. For example, the Sidney version of Psalm 3 expands a passage that depicts an attack centered on the human instruments of speech:

> For thou with cruell blowes
> On Jaw-bones of my foes
> My causeless wronges hast wroken:
> Thou those mens teeth which bite, Venomd with Godless spite,
> Hast in theire malice broken. (lines 25-30)

Psalm 9 also contains a speech-oriented addition, the phrase "I once did say;" the Sidneys add this formulation, and others like it, throughout the psalms, creating a pattern that underscores the human voice in Scripture and that emphasizes their presence among the original texts of the psalms.[13] Speaking surrounds any transaction between God and man.

The main strategies for adding "original" content in the Sidney psalms are doubling and repetition. Doubling in the poems reflects the psalms' double voice, as well as the two authors of the English versification. Doubling is characteristic of the Hebrew originals, both in terms of their tight vocabulary and in the repetition of images and phrases. The psalter can be read as a collection of verse along the lines that Neil Fraistat has proposed. He argues that poems must be read within the context of the collections that they form, taking into account their position in the overall order of the collection as well as the ways that they interact, in content and form, with the other poems. Looking at the psalms as a collection allows the reader to notice that they repeat variations on several

[13] See for instance, "I say and say againe" (Psalm 25, line 75) and "I say still" (Psalm 34, line 79).

themes, including repentance, protection, deliverance, and thanksgiving. Therefore the order in which the traditional stock of images and words are presented, and the overall pattern that is formed by the psalms as a whole, become quite important.[14]

For instance, by doubling and repetition, even of seemingly unimportant words, the Sidney psalms at times link stanzas for emphasis. And, by repetition, they can show two meanings for a single word or phrase. In metrical paraphrases the verses of the psalms are not always set as individual stanzas. The need to follow generic conventions of verse forms warrants grouping together the biblical verses as the form dictates. But this regrouping can also allow ideas to be put together or drawn apart for emphasis or comparison. Psalm 31, for example, joins two biblical verses into each stanza, the first showing God's wrath and the second instructing the faithful to praise Him. The alternating pattern in the psalm itself is made more visible (and perhaps emphasized over other elements of the psalm) in the verse translation.

Explicit scenes of reading and of composition also appear in the text of the Sidney *Psalmes*. Many of the elaborations, extensions, and changes that the two authors made to the original Hebrew psalms amplify the imagery of speaking and composing already present in the biblical book. In Psalm 19, verse 4, for example, the Geneva Bible text imagines the heavens as a "line gone forth through all the earth." The Sidneys extend the metaphor:

> There be no eyne, but read the line
> From soe faire booke proceeding:
> Their wordes be sett in letters greate
> For ev'ry bodies reading.

This example is noteworthy not just because it demonstrates an impulse to expand the biblical text with images of books, which the Sidneys frequently do in the collection, but because of the questions that such a passage must raise about authority. First, and most

[14] Rathmell also notes four repetitions of meter: psalms 8 and 118, 32 and 71, 60 and 119S, and 51 and 63.

basically, how do the Sidneys authorize their elaboration of Scripture? As we will see in chapter four, the practice of adding words to Holy Writ creates important literary opportunities for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers, but at the same time carries the potential for outright heresy. Who are the authors and readers in this scene in Psalm 19? The Sidneys insert their original writing—asserting themselves as authors—into a place in the text that describes God as the author of the heavens. The passage ends with the "reading" of the heavens, creating a moment in which the reader of the Sidneys' book is brought into alignment with the reader being described inside the book. The text only exists, this scene suggests, through the overlapping authorship of God, David, the Sidneys, and the readers of their *Psalmes*.

Just as Sowernam appeals ultimately to Christ as a biblical author of higher standing than Esther, the Sidney *Psalmes* also seek out the ultimate source of all authority, including the authority of literary composition, in the Bible. They figure this source not as Christ, but as God. In Psalm 89, the psalmist (in this case Etan) praises the covenant that God has established with the house of David. The Sidney version of this psalm adds two images of inscription not present in the original Hebrew or in the Geneva version. First, as the psalmist describes the subject of David's enemies, he envisions David as a writer of laws: "all shall obay, subjected to the orders, / which his imperious hand for laws shall signe" (lines 67-68). Later, God also writes, promising to continue the covenant with David's line, "my bounty towards him, not ever linning, / I will conserve nor write my league in yeares" (lines 75-76). The Sidneys do not merely convert existing images into scenes of writing, but rather they add lines that have no direct correspondence to the original psalms in order to insert images of composition.

The ultimate author of the psalms, operating behind the proliferation of ghostly and human authors who compose and assemble the Book of Psalms, is God. The emphasis on speaking to God in the early psalms, which gives way to images of reading and especially of writing, underscores that the true source of speech and the written word

is divine. The Sidney version shows God as a writer. At times, the designation is mysterious, as in psalm 19. Another example of this technique of expansion comes in psalm 117, which departs substantially from the Hebrew and from other contemporary versions. Extending the brief psalm into a 12-line acrostic, the initial letters of which spell PRAIS THE LORD, the Sidneys also add an image of God's writing:

> H is mercies are
>
> E xpos'd to all.
>
> L ike as the word
>
> O nce he doth give,
>
> R old in record,
>
> D oth time outlyve. (lines 7-12)

In other passages they render God's writing even more explicitly. Psalm 8 exclaims,

> How through the world thy name doth shine:
>
> Thou hast of thine unmatched glory
>
> Upon the heav'ns engrav'n the story. (lines 2-4)

In the Geneva Bible version of the psalm this praise is expressed without the metaphor of inscription: "how excellent is thy Name in all the worlde: which hath set thy glorie above the heavens." Just as human speech in the psalms serves to praise of God, to plead for divine help, or to promote human treachery and deceit, God's writing appears to operate across a spectrum of meanings as well. The Sidney version of psalm 26 expands the plea, "Gather not my soule with the sinners." They again represent God's intervention on behalf of sinful humanity as an act of writing: "write not my soule / Within the sinners rowle" (lines 29-30). In this verse a metaphor of God as writer allows the image to gain more fearful permanence. As the notes to the Oxford critical edition remark, the Sidney version supplies in Psalm 40 an "original metaphor for 'the workes of thine hands' (Geneva v. 5)" in the rendering "all deedes with comfort waighing, / that thy hand-writyng hold" (443; lines 25-26).

The book that God writes is, in the psalms, the book of life. While the imagery of the book of life exists within the original Hebrew psalms and generally appears in the major Renaissance translations, the Sidneys' use of this image tends to literalize the metaphor, and often carries echoes of their own composition. For instance, in psalm 69 the phrase "let them be put out of the boke of life" (verse 28) becomes the more urgent "from out the booke be crossed," a more physical depiction of writing that renders the metaphorical book of life as a literal book in which God enters and blots names (line 85). Manuscript evidence shows that at least Mary Sidney's process of composition (and the same may have been true for Philip Sidney) followed the pattern of creation and excision represented by God's erasure of names from the book of life. The ambiguity with which God is cast in the Psalms, sometimes wrathful but often nurturing, is, in the Sidney psalms, expressed through metaphors of God as a reader and writer.

"Unediting" the Composition of the Sidney Psalms

Leah Marcus has shown convincingly that the critical editions in which Renaissance literature reaches modern readers can have a definitive influence on readings of those works. Tending to wash away the multiplicity of styles and physical forms that characterize early print culture, standardized editions present the works in books that are uniform, modern, and often stripped of important contexts that are visible in early modern editions. The recent critical edition of the works of Mary Sidney edited by Margaret Hannay, Noel Kinnamon, and Michael Brennan suffers from some of these limitations. It is remarkable, to begin, that an editorial project undertaken jointly by three scholars makes almost no mention of its subject's own collaborations. For instance, their reconstruction of Mary Sidney's writing process offers valuable insight into her use of sources, but cannot imagine a scene of composition other than that of a solitary author, reading silently and writing in isolation. It tells nothing of Philip Sidney's participation in the writing of the *Psalmes*, and relies too heavily on modern concepts of authorship. The editors conjecture that the

> early versions of her Psalms transcribed by Samuel Woodforde give us a glimpse of her working process. Not all Psalms follow this exact pattern, but she usually began with the Book of Common Prayer or with the Geneva Bible to write a preliminary version. Then she consulted the Marot / Bèze *Psaumes*, adopting some of its metres as well as direct translations from the French. She frequently replaced the wording of the Coverdale Psalter with more precise or imaginative terms, relied on the Geneva Bible where it differs from the Psalter, expanded metaphors, supplied tighter connections between images that seemed unrelated in her originals, incorporated metaphors and interpretations from scholarly commentaries, and added rhetorical flourishes, such as figures of repetition, alliteration, word play, and rhetorical questions. (13)

This description does offer an appropriate sense of the author's collaborations with other texts. Sidney's active reading and interaction with the many source texts at her disposal allows modern readers to imagine creative authorship as situated in a crowded field of texts, which can be sampled and remade, rather than writing that flows ready-made from the pen.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of dual authorship in the psalms themselves, Mary Sidney's dedicatory verses, and the contemporary and later reception of the *Psalmes*, many twentieth-century scholars exhibit a remarkable inability or unwillingness to see the psalter as a jointly-authored work. The Sidney *Psalmes* are, however, thoroughly collaborative on several levels. They acknowledge, first, in much of their imagery and style, that their biblical models are in fact collaborations between David and God. Further, the Sidneys, by drawing on a variety of sources, in effect collaborate with the authors of these works as well. The *Psalmes* are the most explicitly collaborative of Mary and Philip Sidney's works, but many of their other works were similarly produced through one form of multiple authorship or another. The survey that follows therefore

also considers the role of collaboration in some of their other works and the influence that readings of these additional collaborations have had on criticism of the *Psalmes*.

The complex manuscript tradition of the Sidney *Psalmes* has resulted in a variety of composition narratives and attributions. The work's reception history can be divided into three major stages: the circulation of manuscripts among contemporaries of the Sidneys, critical response following the first printing of the collection in 1823, and modern literary criticism, which can be further subdivided into scholarship on the collection (following J. C. A. Rathmell's 1963 edition), and attention to Mary Sidney's contribution from scholars of early modern women writers. Some critics have ascribed the entire collection to either Philip or Mary alone. A second theory suggests simultaneous joint authorship, assuming that Philip and Mary composed all of the psalms together. A different version of collaborative authorship is implied in the theory, which currently dominates, that Philip began the versification of the psalms with the intention of finishing the entire psalter and Mary completed them after his death. In considering this third possibility, Holly Laird's work again provides an important caveat. Even if we limit an investigation of the co-authorship of the Sidney psalms to a model in which Mary Sidney edited Philip's work posthumously, this relationship between writer and editor still demands attention within a collaborative framework. Within the theory of Mary Sidney's completion of Philip's text, there are further disagreements as to which psalms are Philip's and which Mary's, but the consensus (especially after Rathmell) is that Philip versified the first 43 and Mary the remaining 107 psalms. It is important to note that attributions have always been based on conjecture, not on an outright claim by either Mary or Philip.

Changes in the ascription of the psalter have reflected shifting ideas about authorial practices. Much of the contemporary evidence of the composition, including Mary Sidney's dedicatory verses and the early reception history of the psalter, suggests that the work was entirely collaborative, and perhaps conceived by its authors as a joint

project. While the critical edition of the works of Mary Sidney recently edited by Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan provides an excellent account of the psalter's history, it refrains from questioning some of the more entrenched theories, such as the belief that the first 43 psalms were written by Philip, while Mary wrote the rest and edited the entire psalter. While it is not the intention of this chapter to argue against this thesis, it is vital to recognize that the Sidney *Psalmes*, like so many other early modern works, has been edited in a way that is not disinterested in traditional methods of attribution. In other words, even the best current textual scholarship on Mary and Philip Sidney's works allows for only the most limited understanding of authorial practices.

The Manuscript Tradition and Early Reception

The extant manuscripts of the Sidney psalms attribute the authorship of the poems variously. There are 18 known extant manuscripts, most dating from 1595 to 1630.[15] Several scholars argue (based on collations) that Mary Sidney had two working copies of the psalms, one at her home in Wilton and another in London, and that the London copy "seems to have contained independent revisions which were occasionally transferred back to the original at Wilton" (Waller, *Triumph* 20-21). From these two originals flowed the existing set of manuscripts, which contain evidence of significant revisions as well as the expected minor variants. Let us stop to notice at this very early stage of describing the *Psalmes'* manuscript tradition that this history already imposes a certain narrative of composition. It places the complete set of psalms in the authorial possession of Mary Sidney alone, after Philip's death, a situation that implies that Mary completed or at the

[15] The Clarendon critical edition lists 17 manuscripts; Gavin Alexander reports the 18th manuscript.

very least revised and prepared for circulation the entire collection.[16]

Other manuscript evidence is similarly presented in the service of this narrative of composition. The manuscript that Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan use as the copy-text for their 1998 critical edition of Mary Sidney's works was transcribed by John Davies, perhaps in preparation for Elizabeth's visit to Wilton in 1599 (this is Rathmell's copy text as well). While this manuscript does not offer any attribution, Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan argue, based on their examination of the manuscript, that

> Davies began his task, not with Philip Sidney's Psalms, but with the first of the countess's paraphrases, Psalm 44 (f. 39r). This is indicated first of all by variations in the character of the hand (which is mainly Davies's throughout) and the colour of the ink, but also by the different states of wear and discoloration of the paper on which the two sets of paraphrases were written. Differences in the ink, gilding, and spacing show that the incipits and numbers were added after most of the countess's Psalms were copied. (II: 312)

This reading of the manuscript's physical features supports the attribution of the first 43 psalms to Philip and the remainder to Mary.

Another important manuscript in the same tradition as the Davies copy is a manuscript thought to be a transcription from Mary Sidney's working papers made by Samuel Woodforde in 1694/5.[17] It contains a note following Psalm 43, "hitherto Sir Philip Sidney," that, along with his note identifying his source as "the Countess of Pembroke's own working copy," effectively attributes the first 43 paraphrases to Philip

[16] Revision is one activity that, from the standpoint of later criticism, can either suggest authorship or imply a type of writing somewhat below literary authorship. For some critics, Mary Sidney's editorial work on the psalms qualifies her as an author because it shows that she rose above the level of paraphrase and translation. For others, her versions imply inexperience and the need for development before she can be viewed as a proper author. Gary Waller, for instance, praises Sidney only to reveal the latter attitude. Her revisions add up to "nothing less than a poet's self-education" (*Triumph* 23). Sidney's revisions "of her brother's psalms suggest that she used them initially as the basis for her own poetic experiments, feeling her way amongst his varied metrical patterns, and gradually developing a style and tone of her own" (24).

[17] Alexander and Hannay et al. provide stemmas of the Sidney *Psalmes*.

and psalms 44-150 to Mary.[18] Past and current editors of the works of both Philip Sidney (primarily Ringler and Rathmell) and Mary Sidney value Woodforde's ascription quite highly. As is, however, Woodforde's note reveals very little about the composition of the Sidney *Psalmes*. Even if authoritative, this brief statement does not specify whether the psalms were composed simultaneously or separately.

Furthermore, Woodforde is really an early editor and commentator, rather than a "mere" transcriber, and his work needs to be considered in this light rather than as indisputable factual evidence. We do not know whether his claim ("hitherto Sir Philip Sidney") was based on evidence in the now-lost manuscript from which he copied, or came from his own assumptions after a century of other speculation as to attribution. Among his many marginal comments, he includes surmises that psalm 46 "may be crosst because of the conclusion or last staffes not answering the rest being shorter by four verses as in the former Psalms above, which are therefore corrected" (quoted in Waller, *Mary Sidney* 167). Such speculation reminds us that Woodforde's other claims—most importantly his belief that the manuscript from which he made his transcription was Mary Sidney's working copy and his attribution of the first 43 psalms to Philip Sidney—need to be read as the suppositions of an editor rather than the testimony of an eye-witness to the composition of the *Psalmes*. Whatever Woodforde thought of the collaboration that produced the *Psalmes*, he expanded it by copying his own original poems into subsequent folios of the manuscript.

Woodforde's comments are often thought to be supported by another piece of manuscript evidence, the title of a manuscript thought to derive from the same tradition as the Woodforde manuscript (and labelled by Hannay et al *J*), which records the earliest suggestion of a composition narrative in which Mary Sidney completed the work of Philip Sidney: "The Psalmes of David translated into divers and sundry kindes of verse, more Rare and Excellent for the Method and Varietie than ever yet hath been done in

[18] It may be interesting to recall, in light of this note, the colophon to the 72nd psalm (see note 1).

English. Begun by the Noble and Learned gentleman Sir Phillip Sidney knight. and finished by the Right Honorable the Countess of Pembroke his Sister." If this manuscript was made in 1599, as the date at the end of its version of the prefatory poem "To the Angell Spirit" indicates, it was possibly done for the Countess or under her supervision, and certainly during her lifetime. It is important to note, however, that there are other manuscripts that present other versions of the composition narrative (or provide no attribution at all). These include the Trinity College, Cambridge manuscript [MS O. I. 51 (James 1075)] thought to date to the late sixteenth century, which is titled "The Psalms of David Translated into English Verse by That Noble and Virtuous Gentleman Sir Philip Sydney" and other manuscripts with similar titles. The newly described Foyle Manuscript (*R*) contains a title added in an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century hand, "Psalms of David in verse by Sir Philip Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke" (Alexander 55).

Rathmell notes that "although many of the surviving manuscripts bear only Sidney's name on the title page, the Countess' major role in the translation seems to have been generally recognized by contemporaries" (xxvi). The early reception history goes far beyond recognition, however. It shows that the *Psalmes'* first readers understood it as a jointly-authored work and read its form of composition as an element of meaning in the work. John Donne's "Upon the translation of the Psalmes by Sir Philip Syndey, and the Countesse of Pembroke his Sister" provides a contemporary analysis of the complexities of its authorship, reflecting on both the biblical pattern and the collaborative nature of the effort, for which he sees a precedent within the Hebrew originals. Donne's poem, in Jonathan Goldberg's words, "points to the union that Mary and Philip achieved as their way of reproducing a division and doubling in the source" (125). The poem merits extensive reproduction here because it raises the question of their collaboration in detail.[19]

[19] The poem originally appeared in *Poems, By J. D. with an Elegie on the Authors Death*), the second edition of Donne's poems (London: M. F. for John Marriot, 1635). Rathmell reprints the poem in his edition of the Sidney *Psalmes*.

Donne begins with a consideration of the problems of human intervention in sacred writ. Like the authors he praises here, Donne redirects his literary offering to David, a figure whose own direct speech to God stands in for Donne's.

> Fixe we our prayses therefore on this one,
> That, as thy blessed Spirit fell upon
> These Psalmes first Author in a cloven tongue;
> (For 'twas a double power by which he sung
> The highest matter in the noblest forme;)
> So thou hast cleft that spirit, to performe
> That worke againe, and shed it, here, upon
> Two, by their bloods, and by thy Spirit one;
> A Brother and a Sister, made by thee
> The Organ, where thou art the Harmony. (lines 7-16)

His first concern in the poem is to address the divisions and multiplications that produce its authorship. Donne recognizes that the divisions required by poetic creation are multiple: God from spirit, God from David, David's cloven tongue, and David from the Sidneys. Donne attributes part of the composition of the *Psalmes* to God. Donne's recognition of the collaboration between David and God in the psalms legitimates and values the multiple authorship of the Sidneys as a method for reproducing the psalms. The correlative of this multiplication of divisions, however, is that their collaboration, in Donne's view, is appropriate precisely because of their participation in a larger unity: "Two, by their bloods, and by thy Spirit one."

> Two that make one *John Baptists* holy voyce,
> And who that Psalme, *Now let the Iles rejoyce*,
> Have both translated, and apply'd it too,
> Both told us what, and taught us how to doe.
> They shew us Ilanders our joy, our King,

They tell us *why*, and teach us *how* to sing;

.....

The songs are these, which heavens high holy Muse
Whisper'd to *David*, *David* to the Jewes:
And *Davids* Successors, in holy zeale,
In formes of joy and art doe re-reveale
To us so sweetly and sincerely too,
That I must not rejoyce as I would doe
When I behold that these Psalmes are become
So well attyr'd abroad, so ill at home,
So well in Chambers, in thy Church so ill,
As I can scarce call that reform'd untill
This be reform'd; Would a whole State present
A lesser gift than some one man hath sent?
And shall our Church, unto our Spouse and King
More hoarse, more harsh than any other, sing?
For *that* we pray, we praise thy name for *this*,
Which, by this *Moses* and this *Miriam*, is
Already done; and as those Psalmes we call
(Though some have other Authors) *Davids* all:
So though some have, some may some Psalmes translate,
We thy Syndean Psalmes shall celebrate,
And, till we come th'Extemporall song to sing,
(Learn'd the first hower, that we see the King,
Who hath translated those translators) may
These their sweet learned labours, all the way
Be as our tuning, that, when hence we part

We may fall in with them, and sing our part. (lines 17-56)

Even the reader participates in the production and circulation of the psalms: Donne's poem ends on a note that extends responsibility to the readers to "fall in with them, and sing our part" (line 56). The balance between doubleness and unity matters in Donne's evaluation of the *Psalmes*. Whenever he notes their double authorship he returns to an image of unity, as when, in line 14, he notes that the authors are "Two, by their bloods, and by thy Spirit one." And, just as the words of one writer complete those of the other, they themselves are "Two that make one" (line 17). For a contemporary reader then, the Sidneys' authorship decisions are not only more clear and more familiar, but more central to a reading of the work than they are in recent criticism.

Dual authorship, for Donne, fits naturally within the broader textual condition of the psalms. In addition to his emphasis on translation, he calls attention to the transmission of the psalms, from the heavenly muse, to David, to the Jews, to "Davids Successors." Donne also acknowledges that some of the psalms were not written by David: "those Psalmes we call / (Though some have other Authors) *Davids* all" (lines 47-48). Donne's reading of the psalms as texts that have been variously handled in the Bible and by his contemporaries reflects back on the Sidneys' deft handling of the various biblical translations.

Another contemporary response to the Sidney project reinforces Donne's reading of the *Psalmes* as a collaborative project. Rather than drawing a connection to the authorial strategies of the biblical book and its writers, however, Samuel Daniel's dedication of his *Tragedie of Cleopatra* (1623) to Mary Sidney takes the Sidney's work, and their writing relationship, as its model. Daniel's "To the right honourable, the *Lady* Mary, *Countesse* of Pembrooke" patterns itself on Mary Sidney's "To the Angell Spirit," taking its vision of poetic composition from the Sidney narrative to describe a joint poetic undertaking between Mary Sidney and Daniel. Her *Tragedy of Antony* and Daniel's *Tragedie of Cleopatra*, in the vision of this poem, bind the two writers in a more loosely-

defined collaboration. Daniel, calling his drama "the labour which she did impose," presents a narrative of composition that reveals many of the interpretive sticking points in the Sidney's dual authorship of the *Psalmes* (line 1).

Daniel claims he would not have undertaken the tragedy, "Madam, had not thy well grac'd *Antony*; / (Who all alone, having remained long,) / Requir'd his *Cleopatras* company" (lines 14-16). His imagery of Sidney's male text soliciting Daniel's female text betrays some of the discomfort caused by the gender relations in the Sidney psalms even among their contemporaries. Daniel's identification with the derivative, female text of *Cleopatra* continues, drawing power from imagery and language that echoes "To the Angell Spirit." He worries that, in the form he has given Cleopatra, Anthony

> ...can scarce discerne her for his Queene,
> Finding how much she of her selfe hath lackt,
> And miss'd that grace wherein she should be seene,
> Her worth obscur'd, her spirit embased cleene,
> Yet lightning thou by thy sweete chearefulnes,
> My darke defects, which from her powres detract,
> He may her gesse by some resemblances. (lines 18-24)

Although it predates Daniel's play, Sidney's text completes and improves *Cleopatra*. The confusion of chronology in these lines may uproot another troubling aspect of the Sidney project, the dating of the composition of the psalms. Daniel also shows that he understands the stakes of the collaborative relationship. He claims a relationship to Mary Sidney that mimics her role as the living memorial to Philip, promising that "the better part of me will live, / And in that part will live thy reverent name" (lines 49-50).

That Daniel had the complexities of the Sidney collaboration in mind is clear from his direct reference, later in the dedication, to the *Psalmes*. He calls the collection

> Those Hymnes which thou does consecrate to heaven,
> Which Israels Singer to his God did frame:

Unto thy voyce Eternitie hath given,

And makes thee deare to him from whence they came. (lines 57-60)

Underscoring the role that David, God, and Mary Sidney played in creating the versified psalms, Daniel nevertheless omits Philip Sidney and his part in the writing of the *Psalmes*. To further his own desire to present himself as Mary Sidney's co-author, Daniel declares the work "that which thou maist call thine owne" (line 67). Daniel and Donne explicitly engage the Sidney project as a means of conveying the problems of collaboration in divine poetry.

Early Printed Versions: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Criticism

If the manuscript tradition raises more questions about the composition of the *Psalmes* than it answers, equal confusion characterizes the history of printed texts of the collection. There are certain watershed moments in the history of attribution, such as Rathmell's edition of the *Psalmes* (1963), after which other critics refer to the new standard opinion rather than pursuing their own research into the matter. Most recently, the attribution of the first 43 psalms to Philip Sidney and the rest, with revisions of the entire psalter, to Mary Sidney has been solidified by the *Collected Works* edited by Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan. This chapter presents other voices on attribution not to suggest that this school of thought on the matter is incorrect, but to show that it is no more well-substantiated than any other view, and that every narrative of composition is a retrospective supposition by literary scholars.

By the eighteenth century, some of the credit that Mary Sidney received for the *Psalmes* in her own day had begun to slip away. She appears in many eighteenth-century biographical dictionaries, such as George Ballard's *Memoirs of several ladies of Great Britain, who have been celebrated for their writings* (1752). Ballard (and most of the biographical notices that followed his work) notes that Mary Sidney "translated many of the psalms into English verse" but also repeats the suspicion that "she was assisted" in

this work by Gervase Babington. While Ballard questions the logic and truth of this assumption, it does show that Mary Sidney's work could be overshadowed by her gender as much as it was by her famous brother. Matilda Betham's *Biographical Dictionary of the Celebrated Women of Every Age and Country* (1804) takes much of this story from another dictionary, the *Biographium Fœmineum*, reprinting its entry on Sidney word for word, without attribution.[20] Betham omits, however, the passage disputing Babington's assistance, in effect rescinding Mary Sidney's role in the authorship of the *Psalmes*. It is important to note, however, that these critical representations of the authorship of the *Psalmes*, while they often suggest one version of authorship or another, do not take answering this question as their primary goal. For instance, when Nathan Drake calls the psalter "the joint production of sir Philip and his sister" he makes only a qualitative evaluation of the work rather than a definitive case for authorial method (113-14).

By the eighteenth century, both Philip and Mary Sidney had become established figures of the Elizabethan literary tradition, but their work together on the versification of the psalms had not achieved any interpretive fixity. In fact, their work was more than ever subject to readings based on their biographies rather than its literary qualities. Of particular concern were the issues of gender and professionalization surrounding both figures. Another crucial center of focus for this body of literature is the degree to which Mary Sidney participated in the composition of the *Arcadia*; suppositions about its authorship are often twinned with investigations of the writing of the *Psalmes*.

The question of whether Mary Sidney can be credited with the composition of the *Psalmes*, and to what extent, surfaces as a concern from the earliest biographies. But the attribution does not proceed linearly over time, as one might expect, with Mary

[20] The biographical tradition on Mary Sidney is so consistent that several early sources simply reproduce, without citation, the versions in other biographical dictionaries and collections. Jonathan Goldberg, writing about the same phenomenon in reference to Sidney's translation of Petrarch's *Trionfo della Morte*, reads in the critics "an uncanny sense of *deja lu*, as if, that is, they were reading each other, and not Mary Sidney's poem. Echoes, inside and outside quotation marks, seem to recycle the same words and thoughts, to have decided on criteria that need only be restated, in whomever's words, for their truth to be apparent" (115).

Sidney slowly winning more credit for her labor. In fact, critics often rescind attribution in the face of clear evidence for ascribing it in order to carry out other interpretive agendas. The entry in *Biographium Fœmineum* (1766) questions Mary Sidney's participation in the Psalms even without reference to Philip Sidney:

> As her genius inclined her to poetry, so she spent much of her time in that way. She translated many of the *Psalms* into *English* verse; which are still preserved in the library at *Wilton*. But we are informed by Sir *John Harrington*, and afterwards by Mr. *Wood*, and Dr. *Thomas*, that she was assisted by Dr. *Babington*, then chaplain to the family, and afterwards bishop of *Worcester*: for, say they, it was more than a woman's skill to express the sense of the *Hebrew* so right, as she hath done in her verse; or more than the *Latin* or *English* translation could give her. (190)

The first printed edition of the Sidney *Psalmes* came from the Triphook press in 1823. The editor of this collection, Samuel Singer, notes the continuing uncertainty about the attribution of the Psalms, and expresses a desire for this puzzle to be solved. He suggests in the introduction that

> it is possible that the original Autograph MS. of Sir Philip Sidney may still exist in the library at Wilton. It would have been desirable to have ascertained this, as it might prove which were versified by him, and which by his sister. This I have not been able to accomplish.

Singer's investment in the division of the psalms represents a vital moment of transition in the reception history of the collection.

The connection between brother and sister—which had once been understood, in Donne's term, as analogous to that of Moses and Miriam—took on a more romanticized cast in several nineteenth-century biographies of Mary Sidney. Louisa Costello's 1844 sketch, part of her *Memoirs of Eminent Englishwomen*, begins with an acknowledgment that "the brother and sister were as inseparable in their studies as united in their minds,

and throughout their lives appeared to be undivided in affection for each other, and for literature" (338). She notes of the *Arcadia* that "the great work which established the fame of the one conferred equal lustre on the other," and Costello goes on to make the argument (which becomes increasingly common in subsequent biographies) that Mary Sidney had a part in the composition of the romance (339). "It may even be that she herself" argues Costello, "added speeches and scenes" to the *Arcadia* (344). This suggestion is in fact one of the more mild narratives of the joint writing of that work. Although the circumstances of authorship have never received an extended consideration in criticism on either sibling, materials for such an investigation pervade their works and much of their reception history.

Costello offers an even stronger statement about the attribution of the *Psalmes*, arguing that they were written "by Lady Pembroke, occasionally assisted by her brother" (340). Some contemporary readers of the Sidney psalms credited Mary with the composition of the greater part of them. But Costello offers a version in which the project belongs to Mary, who was only "occasionally assisted by her brother" (340). While there is no evidence available to prove that Costello's account is accurate (indeed, every rendering of the composition of a literary work is conditioned by the views about authorship current at the time), it demonstrates that the story can be told in a variety of ways, to suit differing purposes.

Costello also engages some of the problems of gender that are raised by collaborative authorship. Because ideas about writing were (and remain) so thoroughly gendered, the presence of two authorial bodies (whether of the same sex, as Jeffery Masten has shown, or of different sexes) forces these issues to the surface. Costello's assertion that "the male and female poet seem occasionally to have changed characters; for some of the soliloquies in the countess's poem of 'Antonie' are worthy of a masculine pen, and equal to anything her brother ever wrote" implies as well that some of Philip Sidney's works were perhaps *not* worthy of a masculine pen (345). The problem of

categorization that Costello stumbles into when trying to give credit for male, female, and collaborative literary efforts extends well beyond the Sidneys, but they serve as a lightning rod for concerns about how to construe the act of writing. Similarly, W. H. Davenport Adams lauds "the tender, refined girlhood of the one, and the chivalrous poetic youth of the latter, [which] were fit preludes to their bright and beautiful careers—tto the pure womanhood of Mary Sidney and the splendid manhood of the hero of Zutphen" (166). In such a remark we see that Mary is not the only one to be defined more by gender than by literary accomplishment.

Despite the implications that Mary Sidney had an important, if not defining, role in the composition of the *Psalmes*, by 1845 it could already be lamented that Mary Sidney shined "only by a lustre derived from her brother" (H. T. R. 129). Arguing that Mary Sidney should be lauded "for her own sake," this biographer goes on to list as her accomplishments "that she was the presiding spirit of 'the Arcadia' of Sidney, the patroness of Daniel, the lyric poet, the sweet translator of the Psalms, and the mother of William Earl of Pembroke," all of which are only dubiously "her own" (129). What exactly it means to be a "presiding spirit," a phrase that almost recalls divine authorship, H. T. R. explains in an elaborate rendition of the composition history of the *Arcadia*. At Wilton,

> reposing from the splendid fatigues of pomp and pageantry, tranquilized by the placid enjoyments of a rural life, and listening to the suggestions of his talented sister, [Philip Sidney] began the composition of his Arcadia. Tradition tells us that a great portion of this pastoral romance was written in the neighboring woods; and, if this be true, it would appear from the dedication to her that the Countess was the companion of his excursions, and assisted him with the suggestions of her lively fancy. A desire to give all the scanty information that we can respecting this illustrious lady, and the very active part which she took in bringing this work before the public,

> will plead as an excuse for the insertion of the dedication of 'The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia'

in which Philip Sidney asserts that it is hers as much as his (133). H. T. R. is an example of the tradition that reads Mary Sidney's participation in the creation of the *Arcadia* as a kind of evidence, or at least a parallel, for the dual authorship of the *Psalmes*. Immediately following her quotation of Philip's dedication of the *Arcadia* to Mary, H. T. R. notes that "it was perhaps at this period that Sir Philip and his sister commenced that translation of the Psalms which is generally considered a joint production of these noble relatives" (133). While H. T. R. promotes the view that Mary completed the psalms after Philip's death, she continues to insist that the project was conceived as a joint effort from the start, "a work once entered upon in conjunction" (133).[21] Not surprisingly, H. T. R. also supports the assertion that Mary's revisions to the *Arcadia* gave it "the character of a joint production" (134-35).

When there is discussion of the *Arcadia*, whatever composition narrative is followed, there is often a suggestion that the psalms were written during the same period. This tends to imply that both works had some collaborative quality. Even critics who accept the narrative in which Mary Sidney finished the psalms after Philip Sidney's death are able to imagine that the psalms began as a joint project, an idea that disappears in twentieth-century criticism. For example, Aubrey Richardson's *Famous Ladies of the English Court* claims that Mary Sidney was "the translator of the Psalms, partly in conjunction with her brother" and acknowledges that some can be attributed exclusively to him: "the first forty are by Sir Philip" (81). Richardson nevertheless sees the project as a joint undertaking, again in the context of the composition of the *Arcadia*. At Wilton, according to Richardson, Philip "wrote the greater part of the '*Arcadia*,' and began, with the Countess, their joint translation of the Psalms" (83).[22]

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[21] H. T. R. also cites Aemilia Lanyer's attribution of the Sidney psalms to Mary Sidney.
[22] While some accounts exalt the level of Mary's participation in the composition of the *Arcadia*, others suggest a more mitigated role. See, for instance, Adams.

Although early critics note the collaborative nature of the production of many Sidney texts, neither Philip nor Mary Sidney tends to benefit from the acknowledgement that they were frequent co-authors. Percy Addleshaw credits Mary Sidney with full participation in the composition of the *Arcadia* from its inception. "Philip remained at Wilton for many months, and *Arcadia* was invented and written there. It is not unlikely that the dedication is only a half-truth, and that he was, in fact, not more than part author," Addleshaw claims (341). He advances this argument, however, in order to absolve Sir Philip, the subject of his biography, of the romance's shortcomings.

> That Philip carried a note-book about with him and recorded therein his fancies, even when they occurred to him on the hunting-field, hardly explains to us how so much was accomplished in so short a time. In the dedication quoted, lies the clue to the mystery. Lady Pembroke not only saw her brother write, she wrote herself, and wrote not a few pages of this book. Their joint authorship, if it can be proved, and I think the introduction goes far to prove it, would account for the rambling and often incoherent medley with which the reader is confronted. (342)

Addleshaw notes that later editors attempted to correct these faults, and that Philip himself asked on his death bed for the *Arcadia* to be destroyed. Where the *Arcadia* is attributed to the joint efforts of brother and sister, a discussion of their co-authorship of the *Psalmes* often follows. Such is the case with Addleshaw, who notes that Mary Sidney "was not new to the duties of a collaborator" as she was "part author" with Philip in "his attempt to do the impossible," that is, to versify the psalms successfully (343, 344).

More recently, Mary Ellen Lamb has noticed how remarkable Philip's title for the *Arcadia* was: "By privileging a woman as its reader, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* in its very title bestows a position as subject to a woman; it grants to her reading a determinative role in the very production of that work" (*Gender and Authorship* 21-22). Lamb constructs a narrative of progress in which Philip signifies Mary as a reader, after

which she takes on the editing of his literary works, and subsequently translates several works, an act that in turn encourages other women in the Sidney circle to write original imaginative works. Beth Wynne Fisken presents a similar line of argument: "Mary Sidney's translations of the Psalms began as an education in how to write poetry and ended in a search for wisdom....she slowly gained the confidence to develop an individual style....Eventually Sidney's growing confidence in her work encouraged her to develop original patterns of imagery" ("Mary Sidney's *Psalmes*" 166). This vision, much like Elaine Beilin's account in *Redeeming Eve* of Mary Sidney as the pivotal figure in the movement toward women's "own" writing, relegates collaborative authorship to a lesser role in a hierarchy of authorial stances and implies that, in her partnership with Philip, Mary Sidney was the lesser writer, or less a writer than an assistant.

Frances Young's 1912 biography of Mary Sidney suggests another elaborate collaboration involving Mary and Philip Sidney and Arthur Golding, a joint effort that also suggests an imbalance in authorial responsibility. Around 1582, according to Young, Philip Sidney

> undertook a translation of 'De Veritate Christiana,' a treatise written by his friend Du Plessis Mornay. As he was too busy to complete the task, however, he intrusted it to a scribe, Arthur Golding. The latter finished the undertaking, and published, in 1587, 'A Worke concerning the Truenesse of the Christian Religion.' It may have been in accordance with some plan prearranged with her brother, that Lady Pembroke undertook the translation of another of Du Plessis Mornay's essays, the *Discours de la Vie et de la Mort* (140). The scheme that Young proposes—that Sidney left a manuscript incomplete, which was then finished not by a peer collaborator but by a "scribe," and that this production was further completed by a companion translation undertaken (again in service to the initial work of Philip Sidney) by his

sister—not only obliterates the possibility of joint authorship but also relegates both of Sidney's collaborators to secondary status.

To be fair to Young, the tradition of *A Woorke concerning the Trewnesse of the Christian Religion* was, from its publication in 1587, construed along these lines. Golding, in his dedication of the completed work to Robert, Earl of Leicester, explains that Sidney, called away to military duty, and being "thus determined to followe the affayres of Chivalrie; it was his pleasure to commit the performāce of this peece of service which he had intended to the Muses or rather to Christes Church and his native Countrie, unto my charge" (sig. *4r). In Sidney's name, then, Golding claims he offers the *Woorke* to Leicester as "his and not myne" (sig. *4v). At the time of the publication, Fulke Greville objected to the finished translation on the grounds that although it was "don by an other," its title page partially credited the work to Sidney.[23] Albert Feuillerat, in his 1963 edition of Philip Sidney's prose, proposes a stylistic basis for attribution of the work, because, he argues, "a comparison of the English version with the French original at once reveals" two translators with "totally different methods" (viii). Feuillerat describes the work of one translator in terms that celebrate originality, technical skill, and independence, traits that are associated with the concept of the author as solitary genius:

> The meaning is rendered with astonishing accuracy and yet the writer gives the impression that *he is uttering his own thoughts*. The terseness of the French is preserved, nay, in many cases, improved. And from this conciseness the style derives remarkable lucidity and beauty. *One might very well suppose that the book was originally written in English.* (viii; my emphasis)

The other translator's work, in contrast, "produces a certain honest, heavy mediocrity which smells of the lamp of industrious toil without having any redeeming originality of style" (ix). And while Feuillerat admits that, since no other prose translation by Sidney

[23] Greville's letter to Walsingham in November 1586 is quoted in Skretkowicz.

exists, the attribution must be made on the basis of Golding's works, he fails to acknowledge either Golding's literary status or to engage in any kind of scholarship on the entire text of *A Woorke*, printing only the Preface to the Reader and the first six chapters (those he considers to be Sidney's). The full work would wait another ten years to appear in facsimile. The editor of that edition, F. J. Sypher, also raises the problem of attribution, given that "the five contemporary references to the book give five different answers: it is said or implied that Sidney did virtually all, a great part, some part, a small part, or none" (ix). In Feuillerat's view, true authorship can only be attributed to the man whose hands are free from the marks of "industrious toil." Sidney left the labor of completing, editing, and publishing to a "scribe" such as Golding or to his own sister. One partner attains the status of authorship while the other must be characterized as rather clumsily aiding or assisting the physical preservation of the literary genius gracing the other. The example of *A Woorke* aptly illustrates that conceptions of authorship (here translation and collaboration especially) were already open to multiple interpretations in Elizabethan literary culture. This range of possible readings emerges in later criticism as an obstacle to placing certain works and authors into histories of literature shaped largely by ahistorical notions of cultural production.

The Psalms in Two Sidneian Literary Careers

The relationship between the two Sidneys exemplifies a set of authorial practices that was endemic to early modern literature, but which has become virtually invisible to modern scholarship. The under-theorization of collaborative authorship, like that of pseudonymity, often imposes barriers to effective reading. While recent critical treatments of Mary Sidney's life and works often struggle to determine the degree to which both should be separated from those of Philip Sidney, earlier accounts offer provocative versions of the collaborations between brother and sister. These shed light on the composition of some of the works (especially the *Arcadia* and the *Psalmes*) and reveal a range of options for representing early modern authorship.

While their contemporaries could more easily accept joint authorship as a viable, indeed an intended, method of composition, modern readers exhibit discomfort about the collection and its production. As John Aubrey's *Brief Lives* has made infamous, the relationship between Mary and Philip Sidney has often made readers of their works uneasy. Aubrey's racy account of Mary's life is useful not just as an extreme example of the fear of what collaboration might portend in readings of established literary works and figures, but also because it is the account which many more serious biographies of Mary Sidney have been written to correct. Having established that Mary Sidney "was very salacious," Aubrey then cites some "old gentlemen" to the effect that "there was so great love between [Philip Sidney] and his faire sister" that "they lay together and it was thought the first Philip, earle of Pembroke, was begot by him" (33-34).[24] There is no mention in Aubrey of Mary Sidney's literary activities. Aubrey's claims, like the praise of Mary Sidney's translations as highly faithful, are highly subject to the critical reproduction that Goldberg identifies.[25]

Many critics of the Sidney *Psalmes*, ranging from Aubrey to Wendy Wall, have been disabled by an inability to imagine the "coupling" at work in the composition of the psalms as any other than a romantic or sexual one.[26] Wall interprets Mary Sidney's dedication "To the Angell Spirit" within the overall framework of her study, which examines the sexualized discourses prohibiting women's entry into print, as well as the potential for subversions of this discourse. While her claims are generally compelling, Wall's recourse to a sexualized reading of the combination of the Sidney muses, rather than one that takes the metaphors seriously as potential evidence for authorship, is wanting. The inability to theorize a joint authorship has also resulted in the artificial

[24] These passages are omitted in Clark's edition of 1898.
[25] Goldberg discusses this phenomenon in his chapter "The Countess of Pembroke's Literal Translation" in *Desiring Women Writing*.
[26] See R. E. Pritchard, "Sidney's Dedicatory Poem: To the Angel Spirit of the Most Excellent Sir Philip Sidney" in *The Explicator* 54:1 (Fall 1995): 2-4. The sexual implications of collaboratively-authored texts are explored more productively in Masten, London, and Susan Leonardi and Rebecca Pope's "(Co)Labored Li(v)es; or, Love's Labors Queered," *PMLA* 116:3 (2001): 631-37.

division of the *Psalmes* into two groups, those thought to be Philip's and those believed to be by Mary; these two groups of poems are often separated in editions and criticism.[27]

Despite their joint authorship of the *Psalmes*, and possibly of other works in their canons, the literary reputations of Philip and Mary Sidney differ strikingly. While gender is not the only factor motivating these differences, it appears as a powerful element in characterization of both literary careers from the earliest biographies to the most recent critical accounts. The issue of professionalization also arises—the degree to which Philip and Mary thought of themselves as poets and sought a literary reputation. In biographies of Philip his interest in writing often appears as a late development that is never fully realized. H. R. Fox Bourne is typical in noting that in 1579-80, "Sidney was only now commencing the authorship that was never much more than a diversion from what he regarded as the real business of his life" (203). Perhaps the main difference in the ways that the two careers are represented depends on different ways of reading collaboration as a literary method. Holly Laird insists that "even in studies of collaboration, canonical male writers can become more canonical than before" ("A Hand" 348). With his collaborations mostly ignored, Philip Sidney develops a literary reputation that far outpaces his own ambitions or productions. Meanwhile Mary Sidney, whose literary work is consistently undervalued as mere translation and collaboration, inspires in three centuries of critics an urgent demand for reconsideration as a legitimate literary figure.

Early modern and recent scholars generally consider Philip Sidney's career without substantial reference to his work on the *Psalmes*, while the same text is figured consistently as the height of Mary Sidney's career. Inclusion of the *Psalmes* in Philip Sidney's canon has varied. The 14th edition of his *Works* (1725) includes, in a postscript, the following information:

> In the GUARDIAN (No 18) is the following passage relating to our Author. 'Our gallant country-man, Sir *Philip Sidney*, was a noble example

[27] See Coburn Freer, "The Style of Sidney's Psalms," *Language and Style* 2:1 (Winter, 1969): 63-78.

> of courage and devotion. I am particularly pleased to find, that he hath translated the whole book of *Psalms* into *English* Verse. A friend of mine informs me, That he hath the Manuscript by him, which is said, in the title, to have been done *By the most noble and virtuous Gent.* Sir *Philip Sidney*, Knight. They having never been printed, I shall present the publick with one of them, which my correspondent assures me he hath faithfully transcribed, and wherein I have taken the *liberty* only to alter *one* word. (185)

The editor then prints Psalm 137.

Philip Sidney's image has changed as much as Mary Sidney's and in stories of his life, like hers, his literary role is usually emphasized less than other factors. For instance, in the nineteenth century, Sidney was valued not "as an author, but as a gratifyingly English exemplar of the chivalric gentlemanly ideal" (Gouws 252). In the twentieth century, qualifications to the myth of Sidney as the hero of Zutphen—qualifications which had been voiced by at least some biographers and critics well before the twentieth century—dominated, and Sidney's literary reputation re-emerged. For instance, Katherine Duncan-Jones admits that Sidney was not the morally ideal man that he had been portrayed as, but suggests that his poetic gifts were so great as to compensate for these flaws.

One element of his depiction that has remained somewhat constant is the belief that Philip Sidney's literary career was situated in and refracted through women, both his fictionalized female characters and the literary women involved in the production and circulation of his texts. Recent biographies of Philip and Mary Sidney by Duncan-Jones and Hannay promote this view, but it has a history that pre-dates current scholarship. Edward Thomas's *Feminine Influence on the Poets* (1911) takes Mary Sidney as a starting point in his chapter on "Poets and Friendly Women" because the Countess of Pembroke "is one of the first female relatives of a poet whom we know something like

well" (137). Thomas also heartily commends Lady Mary Sidney, Philip's mother, in his chapter on the mothers of poets. While these images of the women surrounding Sidney dwell little, if at all, on the active participation of these women in literary production, more recent treatments of the theme of "feminine influence" provide even less material evidence for women's literary activities. According to Duncan-Jones, it was (only) as "inspiration, audience, and subject-matter, [that] women occupied a central place in Sidney's birth as a writer" (19). However, the extent to which the presence of women, and the complex relationships to texts that they brought with them, influenced the shape and direction of the Sidney literary endeavor remains unclear because when questions of women's influence arise, theorization of authorship tends to recede.

Both Philip and Mary Sidney spent considerable time writing at Mary's home at Wilton. The role that Wilton plays in critical narratives of their literary development, however, reveals important differences in figurations of their respective literary careers. Philip's retirement at Wilton can be described either as productive of some of the greatest works of early modern English literature or as an emasculating punishment by Elizabeth.[28] Modern readers often lament how Mary Sidney's literary possibilities were constrained by her consignment to the domestic sphere, but when Philip Sidney was sent to Wilton the writing that he produced there made him a literary hero.

Despite the differences in descriptions of their literary careers, there are striking similarities in the manner in which both Philip and Mary conducted their literary business. For example, Mary's dedication of the *Psalmes* to Philip contains language that is similar to Philip Sidney's dedication to Mary of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Her denigration of the contribution that she has made to the project ("This halfe maim'd peece") cannot be read without acknowledging that it echoes Philip's representation of his romance. He calls the *Arcadia* an idle work and claims that it is only her wish that leads him to circulate the work, though he asks her to keep it to herself and close friends.

[28] See McCoy, Lamb, Rudenstein, Duncan-Jones, Marotti, Pask, Buxton, and Hannay.

Scholarly response to the issue of authority in the *Psalmes*, especially as it concerns Mary Sidney's contribution, generally splits between two views, one which assumes that she used her pious material as a shield behind which to assert a political opinion or venture a public literary voice, and another that sees her as implanting moments of difference, however small, into otherwise "faithful" translations in order to publish her own views. Those who read the psalms (or any translated text) as a front for the author's private messages often see them also as a step toward original composition. For instance, Beth Wynne Fisken uses the *Psalmes* as evidence of Mary Sidney's development as an author, asserting that "Mary Sidney's translations of the Psalms began as an education in how to write poetry and ended in a search for wisdom" ("Mary Sidney's *Psalmes*" 166). But in order to prove that the psalms demonstrate literary mastery Fisken must allege that the Countess of Pembroke began by studying a master, her brother, and slowly moved toward her own set of imagery, an idea that forces a separation between Philip and Mary Sidney which the joint volume denies. While both views may be useful strategies for reading women's translations, there is also a third possibility, that Sidney's text cleaves so closely to the original psalms not for safety or for a covert purpose, but to demand that the reader look at it alongside the biblical text.

The implications of a more nuanced reading of the collaboration between Philip and Mary Sidney include possibilities for a number of early modern texts that imply some kind of joint labor. Works that may be illuminated by such a reading include anonymous and pseudonymous works such as *The Women's Sharp Revenge*, "Performed by Mary Tattle-well, and Ioane Hit-him-home;" as well as those that involve a collaboration between a male "author" and a female "writer," including Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives*, a work that features texts attributed to her son and her male friends; and the preparation of women's manuscript texts, such as Anne Askew's *Examinations*, by male editors.

Re-inserting the various forms of collaboration into early modern texts also holds the potential to reveal broader forms of collaborations. Some recent scholarship provides intriguing evidence for an even wider collaborative practice within the Sidney circle, for instance. Further, greater attention to the reception of Mary Sidney's works, and of her as an author figure, inflects readings of other early modern writers, both within her circle and by those who take her as their model. Such an investigation might begin by cataloging and exploring the tradition of writing on Mary Sidney by other early modern women writers. Two important moments in this reception history are Bathsua Makin's *Essay to Revive the Ancient Education of Gentlewomen* and Aemilia Lanyer's "The Authors Dreame to the Ladie *Marie*, the Countesse Dowager of *Pembrooke*." Perhaps the most important contribution that further study of collaboration as a form of authorship in early modern England can make is not only the broadening of the categories of our study of literature, but the ability to unearth the many connections among authors and works in the production of this literature. Joint authorship rarely appears in an unproblematic or clearly delineated form, as the examples above illustrate. Its very complications, however, suggest rich possibilities for our reconstruction of the literary culture of the late English Reformation.

Chapter Three

"Th'eternall booke": Aemilia Lanyer and Inscriptions of the Passion

As the examples of *Ester hath hang'd Haman* and the Sidney *Psalmes* suggest, scriptural scenes of composition often solicit literary elaborations and rewritings, a pattern of creative response that negotiates some of the adverse conditions of early modern authorship. In some biblical narratives, it is the scriptural author who provides a model for authorship, while in others the form of a biblical book invites certain types of authorship to unfold. The final two chapters of this study examine some of the authorial formations that resulted from readings of the four canonical Gospels. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, marked by compelling and complex narrative features, invited written responses from early modern readers in part because they are already multiple; as one account builds on another in developing the story of Christ's life, there was room for extra-biblical texts on the Passion to continue in this tradition. The Gospels demonstrate that, in a narrative such as that of the life and death of Christ, many versions are possible, perhaps even necessary. Just as readers of the Book of Esther took note of its apocryphal additions, and versifiers of the psalms recognized the process of compilation that produced that biblical book, Reformation readers showed an appreciation for the unique textual features of the Gospels.

In *Oberammergau*, a chronicle of the Passion play that has been produced in Oberammergau since the seventeenth century, James Shapiro demonstrates that Passion literature sometimes exposes the "more profound problems with the Gospel narratives" (23). Medieval theologians, "confronted with the task of elaborating on the suffering of Jesus were ruefully aware that, as one put it, the Evangelists wrote 'only what was necessary about the Passion,' and 'omitted the rest'" (49). From the time of their composition through succeeding generations of readers, the Gospels have been

documents of contestation. In Christian history, a continuing line of interest in the texts of the Gospels can be traced from early church history (represented by the writing of the canonical and apocryphal Gospels) through the middle ages (when the Passion became highly valorized and was ubiquitous in meditative writing and liturgical drama) to the Renaissance, where the Crucifixion story again manifested what Debora Shuger identifies as an "extradogmatic surplus of undetermined meaning" (5). By the sixteenth century, the Passion was already a multiple and conflicted discourse available for many cultural uses. After the Reformation, representations of the Passion shifted from a predominantly visual iconography of Christ's death to a written, and often abstracted and distanced, culture of the Passion. The two chapters that follow take as their point of departure a metaphor that Shuger uses to describe the exegetical mindset of the Renaissance. She writes that, "for [Hugo] Grotius, the textual crux functions as an oddly shaped mound does in archaeology: as the surface manifestation of a buried culture" (41). The purpose of these chapters is not to uncover the cruxes in commentary that Shuger traces, but to understand their replication as devices in literature.

In addition to the textual problems that the four Gospels make available for early modern literature, the Gospels also supply several models of authorship. When readers opened a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century English Bible, they were likely to find images of the four evangelists as authors—surrounded by books and often depicted in the act of writing—on title pages and in illustrations prefacing the New Testament.[1] Such images supplemented an existing visual tradition representing the evangelists as writers, often in the process of composing the Gospels. In addition to the pictorial reminders of the human authorship of the Gospels, the circumstances of their composition sometimes emerge inside the biblical texts. The Gospel of Luke begins, for instance, with an account of the book's origin, composition, and audience. Its author writes that

> Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set foorth the story of those

[1] See Strachan, Pelikan, and Norton for examples.

> things, whereof we are fully perswaded, As they have delivered them unto us, which from the beginning saw them themselves, and were ministers of the word, It seemed good also to me (most noble Theophilus) assoone as I had searched out perfectly all things from the beginning, to write unto thee thereof from poynt to poynt, That thou mightest acknowledge the certaintie of those things, whereof thou hast beene instructed. (1:1-4)

Luke's claim to have written his Gospel only after consultation with other sources on the life and death of Christ provides a scriptural precedent for further written representations of its subject. A reader alert to this narrative could imagine undertaking a similar project because the materials for a life of Christ are characterized in this passage as available to any writer of faith and are not the sole possession of one semi-divine author.

The human authorship of the Gospels is not, however, unproblematic, and its tensions are raised in a different way at the close of the Gospel of John. Verses 24-25 of Chapter 21 serve as a postscript to the Gospel, certifying its legitimacy. An unidentified voice claims

> This is that disciple, which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and wee know that his testimonie is true. Now there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should bee written every one, I suppose the world could not conteine the bookes that should bee written, Amen.

The balance struck in this passage, between endorsement of the writing of Gospels, at least the Gospel of John, and the assurance that the acts of Christ never could be contained in books would become the axis along which post-Reformation English poets, commentators, sermon writers and polemicists constructed their own authorship of the story of Christ. One implication of this concluding metaphor, that also governs early modern Passion narratives, is that if Christ's life and death are in any sense available for

written consideration, but beyond human scope and ability, then the ultimate author of this life and its narratives is Christ himself.

This image of Christ as author exerted a particular influence over authors writing from social positions that were less than fully authorized, such as members of radical sects, political revolutionaries, and non-aristocratic women (and, indeed, these categories overlap with such frequency that they should be seen as operating in concert). The current chapter focuses on rewritings of the Passion by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English women. As a group with a unique (but by no means uniform) set of authorial concerns, they turned to the death of Christ as material from which to construct a writing self. In particular this chapter suggests a new context for reading Aemilia Lanyer's 1611 *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Lanyer authorizes her 1840-line poem on the Passion, and the 11 dedications that preface it, by interacting with three biblical authors. The first scriptural model for Lanyer's authorship is Pilate's wife, a minor figure in the book of Matthew but a major source of authorial fashioning for Lanyer, who draws on the intervention that Pilate's wife attempts to make to preserve Christ from his male judges. Pilate himself provides another model. Though not by any means a minor figure in the Passion narrative, Pilate is not generally seen as a writer. His inscription of the title "Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews" above Christ's head on the cross, however, profoundly shapes the narrative of the Crucifixion. Lanyer's adoption of a version of Pilate's phrase as the title for her book illustrates that part of her project as a poet is to rewrite this inscription, altering its terms in a Christian theological context. Finally, Lanyer's most powerful model for writing a Passion narrative is Christ, whom she represents as the true author of her own text. By confusing the distinctions between her writing and Christ's intervention in the creation of her book, Lanyer sets herself up as a Gospel writer. That she writes this Gospel as a woman is a crucial element of her innovation.

Women Writing on the Passion

As dramatic as Lanyer's entrance into the written culture of the Passion was, her work was also predicated on a tradition of English women remaking the Passion for their own unique purposes. Kari Boyd McBride describes many of the obstacles that women writers faced in the early seventeenth century and the techniques that some used to negotiate the prohibitions against women's entering into print. McBride focuses in particular on Lanyer, explaining her use of multiple means to counter the hostility toward women's public presence in writing. Lanyer legitimates her public voice, McBride claims,

> by writing about religion, one (perhaps limited) means of authorial empowerment open to seventeenth-century women; through the patronage poems that begin her work, where she positions herself favorably in relationship to the titled women they address; and by her identification throughout the *Salve Deus* with Christ, a figure at once lowly, like Lanyer, and at the same time 'king of kings,' the source of all authority in the Christian world view. Another means by which Lanyer professed poetry—one I think particularly signficant to understanding how she saw herself in relation to other poets—was her use of the pastoral mode, the literary form that had traditionally signaled a poet's debut. ("Remembering Orpheus"87)

The reading of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* that follows in this chapter considers the connections between Lanyer's association with Christ and the other, more explicitly literary, authorizing strategies that McBride enumerates. As Susanne Woods shows, *Salve Deus* "presents an image of Christ that underlies the poet's other authorizing strategies" ("Vocation and Authority" 92). If, as McBride argues, the aspiring poet enters into the pastoral mode in order to present and mourn the loss of a poetic mentor, then it may be possible to read Christ, whose death the *Salve Deus* laments, as the

authorial predecessor on whom Lanyer builds her own poem, in addition to the pastoral community of female dedicatees that McBride suggests fill this role.

While a reading of Lanyer organizes this chapter, it is important to locate her within the developing tradition of written response to the Passion by women in early modern Europe and England. Lanyer calls repeatedly on biblical precedents—primarily the women described in the Gospels as ministering to Christ—to authorize her proto-feminist revision of the Passion narrative, but she may also have been aware of an English tradition, dating back to the beginning of the medieval cult of the Crucifixion, in which women entered public discourse by offering their vision of the dying Christ. In 1373 Julian of Norwich experienced a mystic vision of Christ's Passion, an experience that, as Julian describes it, was fulfilled in the writing of two versions of what she called "shewings."

> These Revelàtions were shewed to a simple creature that cowde [knew] no letter the yeere of our Lord 1373, the eighth day of May, which creature desired afore three gifts of God. The first was mende of [attention to, understanding of] His Passion. The second was bodily sekenesse in youth at thirty yeeres of age. The third was to have of Gods gift three wounds. As in the first methought I had sume feleing in the Passion of Christe, but yet I desired more be [by] the grace of God. Methought I would have beene that time with Mary Magdalen and with other that were Crists lovers, and therefore I desired a bodily sight wherein I might have more knowledge of the bodily peynes of our Saviour, and of the comPassion our Lady and all His trew lovers that seene that time His peynes, for I would be one of them and suffer with Him. Other sight ner [nor] sheweing of God desired I never none till the soule was departid fro the body. The cause of this petition was that after the sheweing I should have the more trew minde in the Passion of Christe. (39)

While Julian differs from post-Reformation authors in her emphasis on the physical suffering of Christ and her literal participation in his pain, there are striking similarities between her writing on Christ and that of seventeenth-century women who wrote on the Passion. The opening passage above grounds the remainder of the work in the circumstances of Julian's composition. As is the case with Sowernam, little biographical information outside of the work itself exists with which to contextualize Julian and her authorship. The scene of composition that she describes in the passage above emphasizes her humility—most notably the suggestion that she could not read, a fact much debated in modern criticism on Julian—and compellingly shows her desire to become involved in the events of the Passion. Julian uses the term "desire" four times in this paragraph, and standing as it does at the head of a long, and substantially revised and expanded book, the desire that Julian articulates must in part be a wish to portray in writing the events she so adamantly and devotedly seeks to experience. It is also noteworthy that Julian references Mary Magdalen and others "that were Crists lovers," for these women will act as touchstones and points of entry into the Gospels for Lanyer and other Prostestant women writers as well.

Most crucial, however, is Julian's final statement on her authorship and the implications that it has for a reading of Lanyer. Julian summarizes and introduces the 86th and final chapter of the *Shewings* with the following headnote:

> The Good Lord shewid this booke shuld be otherwise performid than at the first writing. And for His werking He will we thus prey, Him thankand, trostand, and in Him enjoyand. And how He made this shewing because He will have it knowen, in which knoweing He will give us grace to love Him. For fifteen yeere after it was answerid that the cause of all this shewing was love, which Jhesus mote grant us. Amen. (154)

As with the vacillating attribution of the Ten Commandments—at times to Moses, and at others only to God—this passage betrays some ambiguity about the authorship of the

Shewings. According to the note, "He made this shewing," but attribution grows more complex as Julian makes her own authorship claims, when the chapter goes on to explain that "This booke is begunne be [by] Gods gift and His grace, but it is not yet performid, as to my style" (154). Julian, as she writes in the same paragraph, "toke in al His owne mening and in the swete words wher He seith full merrily, *I am ground of thi beseking*" (154). After describing her "gostly understonding" that the true meaning of the work, and all of God's meaning, was love, Julian declares "Thus endith the Revelation of love" (155).

Her book, however, does not end with this revelation, but continues for another paragraph, one which again foregrounds Julian's own acts of writing. She prays that

> This booke com not but to the hands of them that will be His faithfull lovers, and to those that will submitt them to the feith of Holy Church, and obey the holesom understondying and teching of the men that be of vertuous life, sadde age, and profound lerning. For this Revelation is hey [high] Divinitye and hey wisdam, wherfore it may not dwelle with him that is thrall to synne and to the Devill. And beware thou take not on thing after thy affection and liking and leve another, for that is the condition on an heretique. But take everything with other, and trewly understonden all is according to holy scripture and growndid in the same. (155)

Julian's instructions to the reader of her book, which anticipate Protestant guidelines for lay reading of the Scriptures, suggest a degree of ownership over the text and its interpretation. But this sense, and the presence of her "own" words closing the book, are somewhat mitigated by the final lines, in which she again attributes authorship of the *Shewings* to Christ. To those "to whome this booke shall come," Julian advises "thanke heyly and hertely our Savior Crist Jhesu that He made these shewings and revelations for the, and to the" (155).

Albrech Classen's *The Book and the Magic of Reading in the Middle Ages* confirms that the figuration of Christ as an author was available in Julian's culture:

> Both in stained glasses and in frescoes, Christ was depicted as a scribe and as a reader, as the Old and New Testament already contained specific references to reading and writing as the medium for God to make himself known to man: 'My tongue is the pen of a ready writer' (Psalms 45.2); John shows Christ writing with his finger on the ground (John 8.6), whereas Paul likens the Christian congregation to a letter (2 Cor. 3.3). Even more significantly, the *Book of Revelation* declared that a book decides the fate of the souls in eternity. (xxi)

The metaphors of Christ as scribe, reader, and book allow writers to see him also as an author and to justify their own presentations of the Passion by blurring the distinction between his writing and their own.

These metaphors survive the many doctrinal changes that characterize the transitional period between Julian and Lanyer. For instance, Janel Mueller examines the role that the Crucifixion, figured as a book, plays in Katherine Parr's *Lamentation of a Sinner* (1547). Mueller shows that, according to Parr, "her book owes its existence to another book, which she terms 'the booke of the crucifixe'. She declares: 'This crucifix is the boke, wherin God hath included all thinges and hath most compendiously written therein, all truth, profitable and necessary for our salvation'" ("Complications" 17). The Gospels also provide for a metaphor of the cross as a book, in part because the crucifix is literally a surface of inscription. Pilate writes what is in effect the first Gospel, the "INRI," upon it. Mueller locates Parr and her use of the metaphor at a moment of cultural conversions, from image-driven Catholicism to text-driven Protestantism and from scribal to print culture. As we will see, later uses of the metaphors of Christ as a book and as an author often appear in—indeed they often represent—similar moments of doctrinal and historical transition.

In 1546, at the same moment that Parr sought a metaphor in the Crucifixion to describe her book, religious authorities in London put another prominent reformer, Anne Askew, on trial for heresy, an experience that she described in writing with terms borrowed from the Gospel narratives of the Passion. A text that marks these moments of cultural and technological transition, Askew's *Examinations* describes her experiences as an early Protestant martyr. The *Examinations* also make an interesting case study for female authorship. Askew's work was first published after her death with the "elucydacyon" of John Bale and later included in John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (1563).[2] The Bale edition, in which his commentary surrounds Askew's text, repeatedly refers to Christ's temptations and interrogation as a parallel to Askew's treatment by Henry VIII's bishops. For example, after Askew replies that she "had nought to saye. For my conscyence (I thanked God) was burdened with nothynge," Bale compares her questioner to Caiphas. He marvels that "Styll foloweth thys ghostlye enemye, hys former temptacyon, and calleth upon mortall utteraunce, or utteraunce full of deathe, that he myght crye with Cayphas, Luc. 22. what nede we further testymonye? Her owne mouthe hath accused her" (45). Askew also explicitly models her replies to the interrogators on Christ's forms of response. "Then the Byshopp sayd," Askew reports, "I spake in parables. I answered it was best for hym" (94). Askew's play of silence and speech also shows that she was an astute reader of the Gospels, especially Christ's responses to Pilate and Herod. Askew responds to accusations against women speaking on religious subjects by turning the question back on her examiner. In his "elucidations" Bale legitimizes Askew's responses with examples of women speaking in Scripture (the women at the tomb and St. Jerome's correspondents) and in the early church.[3] This element of the women's Passion tradition may have influenced Lanyer. As Jacqueline Pearson notes,

[2] The circumstances of the book's composition, publication, and circulation are complex, as is common in many works of the sixteenth century, but especially in those that foreground issues of reading and writing. There is more to be learned about how the *Examinations* was written, published, and circulated. One possible direction is a reading of the *Examinations* within the collaborative framework suggested in Chapter Two.

[3] See Elaine Beilin, "Anne Askew's Self-Portrait."

Christ's "silence (another specifically feminine virtue in contemporary ideologies of gender) is vigorously emphasized" by Lanyer, "especially in contrast with the corrupt uses of language consistently attributed to the poem's other males" (46). Many of the literary affiliations between women writers and Christ turn on notions of similarity, that in Christ's humility in the Passion he was feminized and therefore especially accessible to women.[4]

Our investigation has moved from Julian's explicit investigation of the Passion, which was part of a medieval dedication to the Crucifixion as a centerpiece of devotion, to the use of the Passion by sixteenth-century women as a figurative tool for describing their own religious (and political) experiences in the English Reformation. Another tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries involves the use of Christ as an image within works of imaginative literature. Elizabeth Cary's *Tragedy of Mariam* (1613), for instance, imagines the story of Herod and his wife Mariam as a Senecan drama. Cary's *Tragedy* centers on Mariam's fate as she learns of her husband's instructions that in the event of his death Mariam also should be killed. The drama addresses the revelation of this order, and the ensuing problems of a tale "Whereof the author scarcely can be found," a textual state that was not only ideally suited for female authorship but strongly parallel to that of many biblical texts (II.iv.426). Like Askew, Cary creates a female model of Christ in the figure of Mariam, who is, like Christ, questioned by religious authorities and ultimately martyred. In the final act of the play, as the editors Barry Weller and Margaret Ferguson note, "the dying Mariam acquires symbolic features of Christ" (21). Elaine Beilin reads this convergence of Mariam and Christ as a means for Cary to suggest the location of the play in a moment of transition from old dispensation to new. "Miriam's defiance" of Herod, Beilin argues, "takes on a new dimension if seen as part of the inauguration of the new era of grace" (*Redeeming Eve* 165-66). Cary's

[4] Richard Rambuss cautions, however, against eliding the homoerotic imagery of male encounters with Christ's body by considering it always to be feminized ("Pleasure and Devotion").

reworking of the story of Mariam certainly invokes the Passion as a way to understand Mariam's death. While it does not take up the Passion as its major theme or focus, *The Tragedy of Mariam* does show that the narrative structures and images of the Crucifixion became available for a variety of literary maneuvers in early modern England, some of which were explicitly aligned with an emerging female subjectivity.

The "inauguration" that Weller and Ferguson associate with Mariam has an interesting parallel in the English Reformation. For a discussion of Lanyer that accounts for her relationship to the religious culture of early seventeenth-century England, it is important to note that Julian of Norwich was a Catholic writer, that Parr and Askew wrote at the very moment of cultural conversion to Protestantism, and that Cary converted personally to Catholicism in 1625. The locations of these women either within traditional religion or near its borders matter because their representations of the Passion could not but be influenced by the central interpretive differences in the two Christian traditions. In fact, what Susanne Woods describes as the resulting style differences in Catholic and Protestant representations of the Passion can additionally be seen as differences along gendered lines. According to Woods, Lanyer's use of poetic devices "blurs some of the doctrinal distinctions between Protestantism and Catholicism" (129). Woods avoids drawing any conclusions about Lanyer's own religious practices, but concludes that "her expression of that faith, though it contains typically Protestant language, includes visual and sensual elements more similar to her Catholic than to her Protestant predecessors" (130). Lanyer's poetry does call upon the more corporeal elements of the Passion narrative to an extent greater than that of most Protestant works, but this choice may be attributable to her general tendency to explore the paradoxes and edges of the Passion as a story, a trait that also characterizes earlier Passion narratives by women. Representing Christ across a gender boundary seems to open up more possibilities, but also to demand that contradictions within the story and the process of telling it come to the surface of the poetry. Perhaps female authors, particularly those writing from within traditional religion

or at its boundary, sought the Passion as a basis for their work precisely because it offered multiple approaches to representation. As Catherine Keohane insists, "Lanyer's choice of a religious topic should not be so quickly dismissed as convenient—either in its 'acceptability' or in its use as a cover for a larger argument" (362). It is the difficulties of the topic that most entice Lanyer's attention in the poem.

The Gospel of Aemilia Lanyer

As in Sowernam and the Sidney *Psalmes*, Lanyer's *Salve Deus* thematizes reading so that one of the processes constituative of the physical book is internalized and re-examined in the poem itself. Janel Mueller and Barbara Bowen have demonstrated the important critiques of early modern English culture that Lanyer accomplishes in the volume, in effect characterizing herself as an astute reader, and using her wide reading as the basis for her entrance into public discourse. As Mueller says, "Lanyer addresses what she represents as a highly pressing contemporary problem: how female moral agency is represented in recent English secular poetry and drama" ("Feminist Poetics" 105). Lanyer's secular reading, Mueller implies, demonstrates her abilities as a reader in preparation for a much more daring assertion on Lanyer's part—that only women (and Lanyer in particular) are capable of reading the ultimate text, the body of the crucified Christ. Mueller identifies "a pattern of fundamental misprision exhibited by all of the males in the story, friends and foes alike, while the female poet unfailingly understands" (111). Lanyer proves she is an able reader of the "Gospel" of Pilate; her title "both opposes and embraces the truth of the Gospel narrative that had been uttered uncomprehendingly, as a verbal gesture of mockery, by the soldiers who crucified Christ" and written on the cross by Pilate (Mueller 116). As Mueller shows, Lanyer adds a word to the formula, *Deus*, the force of which undermines the original intent of the phrase and turns it, in fact, into a Gospel. Lanyer begins from scriptural words that she finds in some way wanting further elaboration. Although her addition to the text is brief, it is only

through this addition that the "truth" appears in the words. Her single-word Gospel generates an entire book of poetry.

The *Salve Deus* becomes Lanyer's own Gospel. Achsah Guibbory likens Lanyer's book of good women to the "female alternative to the male nexus of power" (James I's court) created by Queen Anne (193). She extends this comparison as well into the realm of the sacred book, arguing that *Salve Deus* can been seen "as in some sense constituting an oppositional alternative to the monumental biblical project of James" (193). Lanyer's scriptural undertaking is "a true Gospel, inspired and authorized by God, offering a distinctive version of the significance of Christ's Passion" (194). Catherine Keohane puts it another way: "Lanyer constitutes within the space of the Countess [of Cumberland]'s breast a new church, a church of which the Countess will be the head, and for which Lanyer will provide the foundational text" (361). The reading of *Salve Deus* that follows in this chapter expands Guibbory's insightful reading of *Salve Deus* as a Gospel by investigating the ways that Lanyer portrays herself as a Gospel writer, including the use she makes of her various models (ranging from the canonical Matthew to the paradoxical Procula). As Guibbory shows, Lanyer authorizes her own creation of a new Gospel based on "a critical and independent reading of the Scriptures that recognizes the New Testament as not simply the word of God but a series of texts, written by men, in which all parts are not equally authoritative" (194). Lanyer fashions her reworking of the Bible by mobilizing its inherent textual frailties.[5]

This textual multiplicity suggests to Lanyer one of her key strategies for authorizing a sustained poetic treatment of the Passion. The Passion is both central to *Salve Deus* and difficult to locate within the volume; it is, as Barbara Bowen notes, "a series of texts folded in on a disappearing central narrative of the Crucifixion" ("Aemelia

[5] As with most of the works under consideration in this study, and a large number of early modern books in general, Lanyer's volume has an interesting textual history. While much more scholarship on the composition, publication, and reception of *Salve Deus* remains to be done, Susanne Woods offers a useful "Textual Introduction" in her edition of *Salve Deus*.

Lanyer" 275). Barbara Lewalksi shows that Lanyer's paratexts suggest ways of reading the narrative of the Crucifixion within a context that is more specifically centered around female virtue:

> Although the subtitle is misleading as to the contents of Lanyer's volume it properly registers her emphasis in the title poem upon the good women associated with the Passion story. Consonant with that emphasis are the preface and coda, comprising more than a third of the poem's 1,840 lines, praising Margaret Clifford, Countess of Cumberland, as a virtuous follower of the suffering Christ. ("Of God and Good Women" 203-4)

The Passion itself remains largely inaccessible for the first half of the volume. The 11 dedications form a preamble to the Passion poem, marshalling some of its themes and exhibiting the author's constant presence in the text. In these poems Lanyer gradually separates herself as an author from the Passion. Lanyer's first dedication invites Queen Anne to a Paschal feast, in which she has prepared the "figure of that living Sacrifice" for Anne's consumption (line 86). Lanyer excuses her "weake distempred braine and feeble spirits" (line 139) but refers frequently to her book and its subject, who in contrast is "Crowne and Crowner of all Kings" (line 49). Lanyer undertook, she explains,

> To write of Christ, and of his sacred merits,
> Desiring that this Book Her hands may kisse:
> And though I be unworthy of that grace,
> Yet let her blessed thoghts this book imbrace. (lines 141-44)

The sense of this dedication is that while Lanyer herself is "unworthy of that grace" of Anne's patronage, the content of Lanyer's work excuses her presumption in writing and any failings that she has as an author. The theme established in this first dedication sets the tone for the entire volume's presentation of authorship. Lanyer implies that her book, which she describes as containing (rather than representing) Christ, is as faultless as its subject. Lanyer elides responsibility for authorship of the book only to underscore her

own accomplishment. As Kari McBride shows, "the praise apparently directed to the noblewomen [of the dedications] repeatedly devolves to biblical heroines, to untitled virtuous women, and to Lanyer" ("Sacred Celebration" 64). Another key figure who must be added to McBride's list is Christ.

When Lanyer does describe her book in diminutive terms, she does so with irony to emphasize the greatness of her subject. She asks Arbella Stuart, for example, to

> cast your eyes upon this little Booke,
> Although you be so well accompan'ed
> With *Pallas*, and the Muses, spare one looke
> Upon this humbled King. (lines 9-12)

Lanyer's dedication to Mary Sidney similarly uses the modesty topos (applied both to her skills and to her book) to imply that no book could be more worthy. While Sidney's work is both "worthier" and "in a higher style," Lanyer's subject matter cannot be outdone (lines 215 and 202). She reminds Sidney that

> Though your faire mind on worthier workes is plac'd,
> On workes that are more deepe, and more profound;
>
> Yet is it no disparagement to you,
> To see your Saviour in a Shepheards weed,
> Unworthily presented in your viewe,
> Whose worthinesse will grace each line you reade.
>
> Receive him here by my unworthy hand,
> And reade his paths of faire humility. (lines 215-22)

Lanyer's treatment of her subject exemplifies the Christian theology that Christ appears in the most humble forms, and it follows that the topic of the *Salve Deus* is worthier than any other. Lanyer emphasizes in her dedications that her book is that humble form. This

enabling paradox operates vividly in line 214, in which Lanyer contrasts Christ with her "unworthy hand." The "roote of *Jessie*," says Lanyer, "giveth grace to the meanest & most unworthy hand that will undertake to write thereof; neither can it receive any blemish thereby" ("To the Ladie *Margaret* Countess Dowager of Cumberland" lines 16-18).

Lanyer's dedication to Lucie, Countess of Bedford offers an image of Christ as both reader and book:

> He that descended from celestiall glory,
> To taste of our infirmities and sorrowes,
> Whose heavenly wisdom read the earthlie storie
> Of fraile Humanity, which his godhead borrows;
> Loe here he coms all stucke with pale deaths arrows:
> In whose most pretious wounds your soule may reade
> Salvation, while he (dying Lord) doth bleed. (lines 8-14)

Lanyer's metaphor implies that her book is the medium of providing Christ's death to Lucie and its other readers, but the metaphor also elides the physical book. Lanyer has established that her subject necessitates a humble presentation, a gesture that authorizes her "writing of divinest things" ("To the Queenes most Excellent Majesty" line 4). In the dedication to Lucie, Christ emerges not just as the legitimizing subject of Lanyer's book, but as the author of the *Salve Deus*.

Lanyer portrays Christ as "Writing the Covenant with his pretious blood" in her dedication to Katherine, Countess of Suffolke (line 47). Lanyer claims that "his powre hath given me powre to write, / A subject fit for you to looke upon," and one of the ways he has done this, readers may imagine, is by modeling perfect writing in his Passion (lines 13-14). In presenting Christ as an author, Lanyer draws on a tradition of imagery in which he both destroys writing (figured either as the Mosaic law or as sin) and composes a new dispensation, literally making it with the materials of his body, the blood

and tears of the Passion becoming his ink. Lanyer invites Katherine and her "noble daughters likewise," as she has beckoned the other dedicatees and readers, to view Christ's Passion in her book (line 49). She promises that

> Here may they see him in a flood of teares,
> Crowned with thornes, and bathing in his blood;
> Here may they see his feares exceed all feares,
> When Heaven in Justice flat against him stood:
> And loathsome death with grim and ghastly look,
> Presented him that blacke infernall booke,
>
> Wherein the sinnes of all the world were writ,
> In deepe Characters of due punishment;
> And naught but dying breath could cancel it. (lines 61-69)

Lanyer skillfully overlaps the book that Christ writes to cancel the book of sin with her own volume, the crucial documentation of this scene of writing. These lines are a Passion in miniature, one of a number of instances in which the poems open onto a brief but complete image of the Crucifixion. Lanyer's careful control over the details of the scene, of which she is the gatekeeper and purveyor, reinforce her claim in the dedications to offer her Gospel to her dedicatees and readers. She need only present "the least part" of the Passion, as she explains in another dedication, because the work is

> Blest by our Saviours merits, not my skil,
> Which I acknowledge to be very small;
> Yet if the least part of his blessed Will
> I have perform'd, I count I have done all
> ("To the Ladie *Anne*, Countesse of Dorcet" lines 9-12).

The importance of reading and writing in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* becomes clear even in the dedications. As Jacqueline Pearson notes,

> Lanier's female patrons are, of course, encouraged to 'read' her work (e.g. pp. 41, 69, 87). But books and the acts of reading and writing are symbolically crucial throughout the poem. Virtue, 'this faire Queene' (p. 48) carries 'in hir hand the Booke where she inroules' the virtuous; the 'worth' of 'famous women' is written 'in lines of blood and fire' (p. 125); and the Queen of Sheba, Susannah and the Countess of Pembroke deserve to be 'Writ' and 'read' by 'after-coming ages' (pp. 61, 127, 133). The Countess of Pembroke is encouraged to read this poem, but her literary competence goes further than this since it also enables her to 'reade' the semiotics of salvation in Christ's wounds (p. 45). And if reading is assimilated to salvation, there can no longer be any argument about the propriety of reading and writing as activities for good women. (50)

Pearson also notes that in the dedications, "the central tenets of the Christian religion, incarnation, atonement, redemption and judgment, are persistently imaged as acts of reading and writing. Moreover, like a woman, Christ is not only a writer and a reader but also a text" (51). Pearson articulates the guiding principle of the *Salve Deus*, that Christ is both Lanyer's text and the author of that text.

Lanyer communicates this principle by carefully controlling the poems' presentation of the Passion. Once the "Salve Deus" poem begins, it is still difficult to locate a beginning for the section of the poem that will depict the Crucifixion. "To introduce her exalted theme," explains Beilin, Lanyer "spends eight stanzas consulting with her muse and gathering her forces" (194). While this extended beginning is in keeping with the early modern meditative tradition, Lanyer exploits this tradition as a tool for crafting her own authorship in the context of Christ's death. As soon as readers encounter the imagery of the Passion, however, they also find a metaphor of Christ as its author, not just in general terms but specifically in reference to the iteration of the Passion in Lanyer's book. She inventories the materials of the Crucifixion:

Christs bloody sweat, the Vineger, and Gall,
The spear, Sponge, Nailes, his buffeting with Fists,
His bitter Passion, Agony, and Death,
Did gaine us Heaven when He did loose his breath. (lines 261-64)

This brief overview of the Passion, accomplished by a survey of its instruments rather than a prolonged visual representation of Christ's death, is followed immediately by Lanyer's explanation of the composition of the "Salve Deus" poem. A marginal note labels this passage "A preamble of the Author before the Passion." Still addressing the Countess of Cumberland, Lanyer complicates the authorship of her poem; the "preamble" referred to may be *about* the author Christ, or it may be *of* the author Lanyer. She does not simply undertake to write about the Passion but rather

These high deserts invites my lowely Muse
To write of Him, and pardon crave of thee,
For Time so spent, I need make no excuse,
Knowing it doth with thy faire Minde agree
So well, as thou no Labour wilt refuse,
That to thy holy Love may pleasing be:
His Death and Passion I desire to write,
And thee to reade, the blessed Soules delight. (lines 265-72)

Where, and how, does Lanyer appear as an author in this passage? What other figures participate in the author function? The most this passage allows of a description of Lanyer as author is her statement that "His Death and Passion I *desire* to write," a phrase that suggests a wish for future authorship but slightly elides a depiction of Lanyer as the writer of the current work (line 271, my emphasis).[6] Meanwhile, other figures of authorship crowd the passage, beginning with Lanyer's muse but also including the

[6] It may be useful at this point to recall Julian of Norwich's repeated use of the term "desire" in her description of herself as a writer of the Passion.

Countess of Cumberland, whom Lanyer portrays as laboring in the construction of this work, and Christ, whose invitation sets the writing of the book in motion.

Christ can be assigned authorship because, in Lanyer's description, he literally establishes the parameters of the poem:

> Yea in these Lines I may no further stray,
> Than his most holy Spirit shall give me Light:
> That blindest Weaknesse be not over-bold,
> The manner of his Passion to unfold. (lines 301-304)

In addition to providing the content, commissioning the writing of the work, and determining its scope, Christ participates physically in the composition of the book. "That I may Write part of his glorious Merit," Lanyer insists, "he vouchsafe to guide my Hand and Quill" (lines 323-24). When the Passion narrative begins in earnest in the poem, it unfolds through a depiction of Christ's own narration of his story to the apostles in the garden of Gethsemane. Lanyer's role is to reproduce this narration, but also to intervene by apostrophizing Christ and providing a commentary. In this way it appears that Christ tells the story, but in fact the poem consists predominantly of Lanyer's own voice, always figured, however, as a response to the true author of the work. "Sweet Lord," Lanyer interjects, "how couldst thou thus to flesh and blood / Communicate thy griefe? tell of thy woes?" (lines 377-78). This passage may be seen as a kind of consultation between collaborating authors. Lanyer's voice almost immediately supersedes Christ's speaking, and the issue of Christ as the teller of the Passion story does not resurface for some three hundred lines, and then only at the moment for which his silence is more renowned than his speech. Christ, "charg'd by tongues impure," refuses to answer the charges laid against him by Herod and Pilate.

The Gospel of Procula

At this point in the "Salve Deus" poem Lanyer takes up the story of Pilate and his wife. These figures offer Lanyer two additional models for Gospel authorship. In

Matthew, as Pilate presents the people with the choice of releasing Christ or Barabbas, he receives a message from his wife instructing him: "Have nothing to do with that juste man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dreame by reason of him" (27:19). Matthew alone among the four canonical Gospels records this dream. This brief passage is the only appearance of Pilate's wife in the Bible, although Josephine Roberts notes that "the dream was described in more graphic detail in apocryphal writings" ("Diabolic Dreamscape" 299). The textual status of the dream itself, then—a non-canonical secondary text elaborating on hints given in the biblical account—made the dream of Pilate's wife ideal for further development throughout medieval and early modern Passion literature and by Lanyer in *Salve Deus Rex Judeaorum.*

Christian theology interpreted Pilate's wife, sometimes called Claudia Procula, in a range of ways, from viewing her as a minor figure of no real significance, to hailing her as a saint (in the Orthodox church), to denouncing her as the (perhaps unwitting) minion of Satan. This indecision characterizes many of the most compelling figures in Scripture, those characters of the background whose presence often points to fractures and convolutions in the main narrative. Procula, in such a role, was available to early modern writers as a device of plot, as a symbol, and as a minor model for authorship. Her dream and her message to Pilate were interpreted as more than instructions. It was possible to read these events as creative, inspired acts that in effect produced one of the first Gospels about Christ. Procula's value as a Gospel writer lent her brief appearance in Matthew an increased significance to Passion narratives concerned with the intricacies of producing language to describe the divinity and the death of Christ.

While Pilate's wife does not speak directly in Matthew, in some early modern Passion narratives she plays a substantial role and speaks at length. Having entered the English tradition through an Anglo-Saxon translation of the *Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus*, Procula "captivated the popular and religious imagination well into the beginnings of the early modern era" (Campbell "The Figure of Pilate's Wife," 6).

Josephine Roberts reports that the dream of Pilate's wife appears in three of the surviving medieval play cycles, which "uniformly agree in presenting the dream of Pilate's wife as demonic, inspired by Satan's desperation" (300). This tradition presents Procula's dream as an attempt by Satan to stop the Crucifixion and thereby forestall the resurrection. For instance, Procula's dream appears in the York cycle of mysteries, in the play in which Christ is brought before Pilate by Caiphas and Annas. The York play reproduces the belief that Procula's dream was inspired by Satan. Further, the play portrays Pilate's wife acting not out of innocence in this matter, but as ruled by vanity and the desire to protect her lofty status (much as Eve's actions could be construed not as the result of ignorance or manipulation, but as manifestations of the negative qualities associated in this period with women or with effeminate behavior). Procula first appears in the York play in a scene with Pilate, in which she drinks and laughingly assents to Pilate's claim that "In bed she is full buxon and bain [willing and eager]" (line 52). Satan's speech to the sleeping Procula suggests that she acts out of self-interest; he tells her that Christ shall "unjustly be judged" but also that her "richesse shall be reft you that is rude" (lines 168 and 174). In this tradition Pilate and Procula know that Christ is innocent but act only when their own positions are jeopardized. The play underscores this analogy between Pilate and his wife through its symmetries: just as Satan comes to Procula in her sleep, Annas and Caiphas deliver Christ to Pilate in the middle of the night. Further, just as Procula's betrayal is couched in sexualized terms (the messenger reports to Pilate that Procula's dream took place "all naked this night as she napped"), Caiphas calls Pilate's masculinity into evidence, claiming that "It is no mensk [honor] to your manhood, that mickle is of might, / To forbear such forfeits that falsely are feigned" (lines 325-26).

Lanyer's reading may have brought her into contact with other representations of Pilate's wife in the literature pre-dating and contemporary to her poem, but her

intervention in Matthew far surpasses most of these portrayals.[7] Most of these works follow the biblical text closely, referencing Procula only within a narrative focused on Pilate, and not developing her story. In George Sandys' translation of Hugo Grotius's *Christs Passion*, for instance, Pilate reviews the events that have taken place, including the release of Barabbas and then comments on Procula's dream:

> And now my wife's not idle dreams perplex
> My struggling thoughts, which all this night did vex
> Her troubled slumbers; who conjures me by
> All that is holy, all the Gods, that I
> Should not the laws of justice violate
> To gratify so undeserv'd a hate. (155-160)

Similarly, Robert Holland's *The Holie Historie of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christs nativitie, life, actes, miracles doctrine, death, Passion, resurrection and ascension* (1594) includes the dream of Pilate's wife, but assigns her only six words:

> Then he thus warned by his wife,
> Wrong not thou that just man, sayd she:
> He sought all meanes to save his life,
> But by those meanes it would not be. (277-78)

Holland reiterates this information when Pilate tries to free Christ by offering to liberate one prisoner (and the people choose Barabbas):

> For Pylate knew it verily,
> That envie caused them indeed
> To deale with Christ so cruelly,
> And therefore sought to have him freed.

[7] As Barbara Bowen demonstrates, Lanyer "had read widely and deeply in the Calvinist Passion narratives with which her poem is in dialogue" ("The Rape of Jesus" 108).

His wife also to that intent,

A message had to Pylate sent. (279)

While it is possible that Lanyer knew works on the Passion such as Holland's, it is equally likely that Lanyer's innovation in the portrayal of Pilate's wife influenced her contemporaries and later seventeenth-century writers. Although we lack a reception history for *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Lanyer's influence may be visible in the increased attention, both positive and negative, that later authors give to Pilate's wife. To be sure, some later works, such as Robert Rollocke's *Lectures upon the History of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1616) underplay the importance of Pilate's wife. According to Rollocke,

> whilst Pilate was sitting in judgment, there cometh a messenger from his wife, and says, 'Have nothing ado with this innocent man.' Why? 'for I have been troubled for him in my sleep.' This is an advertisement sharp enough unto him, and the Lord wanted not his own work therein; for the Lord brought this to pass. (94)

And in John Gaule's treatment of the women involved in Christ's final days, there is an indirect reference to Pilate's wife, whose message is mentioned in a list of evidence for Christ's innocence that is ignored: "The unwonted Warning of a Woman" (264). The dream of Pilate's wife is included as part of Charles Herle's condemnation of Pilate: "his *wifes dreame*, and our *Saviours confession* on the one side, on the other side the peoples wilfull violence, and *Cæsars* threatned *enmity*" (245). While they do not develop Procula to the extent that Lanyer suggests, these few examples show a continuation of the Reformation tradition of considering Procula as an early, unheeded witness to Christ's innocence.

In other works, this tradition allows for a greater depth of consideration of Pilate's wife. For instance, while Procula does not typically appear among the righteous women

enumerated in *querelle des femmes* texts, Rachel Speght's *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (1617) includes Procula in its praise of the truthful speech of biblical women:

> Fourthly and lastly, the finall cause, or end, for which woman was made, was to glorifie God, and to be a collaterall companion for man to glorifie God, in using her bodie, and all the parts, powers, and faculties thereof, as instruments for his honour: As with her voice to sound foorth his prayses, like *Miriam*, and the rest of her company; with her tongue not to utter words of strife, but to give good councell unto her husband, the which hee must not despise. For *Abraham* was bidden to give eare to *Sarah* his wife. *Pilate* was willed by his wife not to have anie hand in the condemning of Christ; and a sinne it was in him, that hee listned not to her: *Leah* and *Rachel* councelled *Jaacob* to do according to the word of the Lord: and the Shunamite put her husband in mind of harbouring the Prophet *Elisha*. (19)

While Speght does not pursue an extended treatment of the story, her interest in Procula is implied by the comparisons to the unimpeachable Miriam, Sarah, Leah, and Rachel, and by the fact that Procula alone represents the righteous women of the Christian Bible in Speght's passage. Writing in 1685, Abraham Woodhead takes up the positive tradition of Procula and elaborates the scene in Matthew. First, he uses it as an occasion to review the events leading up to Christ's trial by Pilate, a gesture that may suggest that Procula's dream was viewed as a significant event within the Passion sequence, one through which the entire story of Christ's death might be viewed. Further, Woodhead develops the scene of the dream in detail, following in the imaginative tradition to which Lanyer had made a major contribution. He portrays Pilate, having failed to secure Christ's release, receiving the message.

> This great Lady (whose name Nicephorus *Lib.* I. *cap.* 30 saith was *Procula*, and whom the Greek Church honour as a Convert of our Lord's) doubtless had heard the report of our Lord's Miracles; of his late solemn

> entrance into Jerusalem (at which all the city was generally moved, saith the Text); of his apprehension, condemnation by the Jews, and at last remission to Pilats Tribunal, and had her thoughts much troubled in his behalf; as that Sex useth to be more tender and comPassionate, and averse to such cruelties. Upon which, that morning, she had also a dream or vision that much affrighted her, perhaps of her Husbands being accessary to his death, and of the Tragical end he should incur after such an impious fact, ejectment out of his government, banishment, and at last making away himself, like to that of Judas, as Histories do relate the Event. (268-69)

The greater the detail with which Procula's dream is rendered, the more important it becomes as an early Gospel and possibly a model for the early modern writers who, like Lanyer and Woodhead, insist on a positive valuation of Procula and her "text."

Just as Christ is often described as a book and an author in the Passion tradition, the contents of Procula's dream could be imagined as a written document. In *The Lama-sabachthani, Or, Cry of the Son of God; Useful at all Times, especially For Passion Week* (1691), the words of Pilate's wife, in the form of a letter, are included as imagined by the author. When Pilate was

> ready to pass Sentence, and had enter'd the Judgment-Hall, and sate down in the Judgment-Seat, in order to do it; his Wife sends a Letter to him, with words to this effect, saying, I beseech you, Husband, if you have any Love for me, and any Bowels of Pity and comPassion for this poor innocent Man, *Jesus*, (that now is arraign'd and stands before you just ready to be Condemn'd, and Sentence to be pass'd upon him on purpose to gratifie the inordinate impetuous desires of a rash Multitude, and blood-thirsty Jews,) forbear, I say, I humbly beg of you, and do not Condemn him, and *have nothing to do with this just Man, for I have suffer'd many*

> *things for him this day in a Dream, which I shall communicate to you, as soon as I see you.* (72)

Here again the words of Pilate's wife reiterate the preceding events of the Passion and demonstrate her knowledge of these events as well as her early belief in Christ as a "poor innocent Man." These are the defining features of a Gospel. The Geneva Bible note to Matthew 27:19 also interprets Pilate's refusal to listen to his wife within the tradition that validates Pilate's wife: "This was to the greater cõdemnation of Pilate, whome neither his owne knowledge colde teache nor counsel of others, to defende Christs innocencie." It is this tradition that allows Lanyer to view the dream of Pilate's wife as an early Gospel; Procula, as the recipient, interpreter, and proclaimer of the dream message, becomes a model for Lanyer as she writes her own Gospel.

As Roberts notes, Lanyer dramatically revises the tradition of Pilate's wife that carried over from the medieval cycle plays. Her expansions show that Lanyer took Procula as a paradigm for her own project. In addition to her intervention in the story and re-assessment of Pilate's wife, Lanyer attaches Procula's dream to two central and authorizing dreams in *Salve Deus Rex Judeaorum.* Lanyer places Procula's dream between her own two dreams—the vision of Mary Sidney in the dedications and the address "To the Doubtfull Reader" at the end of the volume, in which Lanyer describes receiving the title of her volume in a dream. In organizing the volume in this way, Lanyer "denies an association between women and demonic dreams," which had often characterized Renaissance portrayals of Eve (Roberts "Diabolic Dreamscape," 300). In *Salve Deus*, at the place where (following the order of events in Matthew) the reader would expect Pilate's wife, Lanyer as narrator instead enters and instructs Pilate herself.

> O noble Governour, make thou yet a pause,
> Doe not in innocent blood imbrue thy hands;
> But heare the words of thy most worthy wife,
> Who sends to thee, to beg her Saviours life. (lines 749-52)

This speech leads Lanyer into one of the most daring sections of the "Salve Deus" poem, "Eve's Apologie." This 9-stanza portion of the poem marshalls some of the available materials for a defense of women circulating in the *querelle des femmes* tradition, but also makes a unique contribution to that discourse. As Woods, Lewalski, and others have shown, Lanyer asserts that women's culpability for the Fall is cancelled by the far greater male sin of the Crucifixion. The passage's momentum builds toward her shining demand to "let us have our Libertie againe" and continues into the next stanza, in which Lanyer again turns to Pilate's wife (line 825). "The confusion of voice" in the stanzas about Eve that interrupt the message from Pilate's wife, "is significant, for the poet's identification with Pilate's wife—a woman who also had a dream, whose knowledge came from divine illumination—allows her to speak with and for her" (Guibbory 199). Linking her proto-feminist flourish with the truthful speech of Pilate's wife—"Witnesse thy wife (O *Pilate*) speakes for all"—Lanyer creates an opportunity for her addition to scripture by shadowing the words and the speaking position of her biblical precedent (line 834).

The interpretive situation that Gardner Campbell describes, in which Procula had been represented both as a Satanic interloper in the redeeming work of the Passion *and* as a saintly figure defending Christ against his more powerful antagonists, necessitated a complexity in Lanyer's use of Procula. It was her very intricacy as a figure that recommended Procula, because, for Lanyer, only a woman as complex as Procula could adequately represent the situation of a seventeenth-century woman entering into print. Rather than merely continue the "female worthies" tradition that simplistically exalted figures such as Esther and Procula, both Sowernam and Lanyer take advantage of the complexities of these biblical women, many of which center on their gender identities. As Gardner Campbell aptly shows, Lanyer embraced the paradoxes of Procula's warning. In this way, like Sowernam, Lanyer makes the difficulties of Procula's public speaking the very grounds for a high valuation of that speech. Janel Mueller shows that "in her intervention, Pilate's wife provides Lanyer with an example for the role she herself

assumes in publishing her devotional poem" ("Feminist Poetics" 199). The digressive nature of this intervention yields an additional level of sophistication and intricacy, as Boyd Berry shows. "In form," Berry argues, "the 'Apologie' can be read as a digression or intrusion into the narrative, that is, as a rhetorical movement that is subversive of some set of expectations about how a narrative will or should proceed" (212). Berry's astute observation must be amended somewhat by recognizing that digression is an element of narrative ideally suited for the Gospels, a set of stories that is multiple, diverse, contradictory, and evasive by nature.

The Gospel of Pilate

As we have seen, Lanyer underscored the parallel between the dream of Pilate's wife, which reveals the nature of Christ's identity, a message that she then attempts to spread, and Lanyer's dream of the title. She describes her own dream in a separate section at the end of the volume, in which Lanyer addresses "the doubtfull Reader."

> Gentle Reader, if thou desire to be resolved, why I give this Title, *Salve Deus Rex Judæorum*, know for certaine; that it was delivered unto me in sleepe many yeares before I had any intent to write in this manner, and was quite out of my memory, untill I had written the Passion of Christ, when immediately it came into my remembrance, what I had dreamed long before; and thinking it a significant token, that I was appointed to performe this Worke, I gave the very same words I received in sleepe as the fittest Title I could devise for this Booke. (139)

Lanyer's apologia for her title beautifully expresses the tensions along which her authorship unfolded. Both agent and vehicle, receiver and transmitter, authority and subject, Lanyer understands her authorship to be both highly complex and effortlessly providential. She shows herself engaged in a long-term project of composition that goes far beyond the literal writing of the poem and in which she imagines herself as a co-participant with the force of divine appointment. Her compelling line, "I gave the very

same words I received," could stand as a motto not just for this volume, but for the broader scriptural culture which so magnificently produced the artistic and devotional materials of the early seventeenth century.

As the address to the "doubtfull Reader" makes clear, a good deal of the authorization for Lanyer's writing comes from an act of rewriting. The title—which, as we saw in *Ester hath hang'd Haman* was a relatively recent innovation in printed books that allowed for a great deal of meaning to be conveyed to the reader—reverses Pilate's inscription on the cross. A brief return to the dream of Pilate's wife will demonstrate again the importance of acts of inscription within the Passion story. Abraham Woodhead, having discussed in some detail Procula's dream and Pilate's failure to act upon the information it communicated, turns immediately to Pilate's "Gospel."

> This message also, perhaps delivered with many more Circumstances shewing some thing extraordinary in it, made it seems no small impression upon her husband, as appears by his so solemnly washing his hands presently after....Pilat in all probability being really persuaded, upon the several motives forementioned, that he was their Messias, and their King, in that sense our Lord confest it; and therefore he persisted afterwards in making his title on the Cross exactly such, notwithstanding their importuning him for the alteration of it. (268-69)

Woodhead's choice of the term "title" for Pilate's inscription, and Lanyer's reclamation and revision of that title, have profound implications for the way we read the early modern Passion narrative.

Lanyer's emphasis on Pilate's writing on the cross is another of her additions and expansions to scripture and may be a source for later commentary on this element of the Passion narrative. The Geneva Bible version says merely that "Thei se up also over his head his cause written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWES" (Matthew 27:37); the note at this passage claims that "The maner then was to set up a writing to signifie

wherefore a man was executed: but here God governed Pilates hand to write other wise then he thought." The Gospel of Mark relates how "the title of his cause was written above, THE KING OF THE JEWES" (15:26). In Luke the people mock Christ and say that if he truly is the Messiah he should ask God to save him. Then "a superscription was also written over him, in Greke lettres, and in Latin, & in Hebrewe, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWES" (23:38). A marginal note explains that Pilate used the three languages "That the thing might be knowen to all nacions, because these thre languages were moste commune." In John, "Pilate wrote also a title and put it on the crosse, and it was written, JESUS OF NAZARET THE KING OF THE JEWES" (19:19).

Robert Holland's *Holie Historie* cites each of these passages in the margin, and portrays the writing as Pilate's attempt to announce Christ as messiah.

> A title Pilate also wrote,
> And put it up the crosse upon,
> Whereby each man might plainly note,
> What was then his opinion;
> Jesus of Nazareth to be
> King of the Jewes, confessed he.
>
> And though the high Priests did repine,
> That Pilate then should write him so:
> This sentence, sayd he, it is mine,
> It shall remaine will ye or no.
> In Hebrue, Greeke, and Latin he,
> Did cause the same so writ to be. (283-84)

We should note the tension in Pilate's authorship between the Geneva version, in which God controls completely the words that Pilate writes, and Holland's imaginative re-creation of the scene, especially Pilate's moving claim that "it is mine." In Holland's

account Pilate's action is one of admiration and genuine belief in Christ as the messiah. He defends the writing, claims it as his own, and uses it as a gesture of belief. Holland's portrayal of Pilate's inscription allows it to be seen as an early Gospel.

Pilate, like his wife, occupied a place of interpretive uncertainty for seventeenth-century readers. His intervention in the unfolding of the Passion was read both as knowing participation in the persecution of Christ and as the action of a man who tries to save Christ but must ultimately yield to the force of events already in motion. Vincenzo Bruno's *Abridgment of Meditations of the Life, Passion, Death, & Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (English translation 1614) captures this ambivalence and suggests the extent to which reversal of meaning characterizes the incident of Pilate's writing on the cross. Bruno enumerates the lessons to be derived (in this case by his Jesuit audience) from the episode:

> 1. Consider how that which the Jewes and Pilate did for our Saviours confusion, and greatest ignominy, turned notwithstanding to his great honour & their shame. 2. How the high Priests and the rest perceaving this, desired Pilate to write only, that our Saviour called himselfe King of the Jewes, which he would not accord unto, no nor chaung what he had once written. 3. How we ought to waigh the words of this Title, Jesus being come to save us as his name importeth; being innocent as is signified by this word Nazareth; and briefly being King he should not have byn so traytourously put to death by his owne subjects. (185-86)

Bruno's meditations on the inscription underscore the importance of the phrase as a title to the "book" of Christ's Passion and suggest that inherent in the writing is a sense of misprision and radical rereading.

In Woodhead, Pilate's inscription on the crucifix is presented as writing which—unlike the laws written by Moses—cannot be revised or destroyed.

> Next, by Pilat's order, and according to the custome of the Romans, was

> fastned also to the Cross over our Lord's head a Title, in great and legible Letters, of the accusation or crime for which he suffered; which Title, that it might be understood, in that great confluence of strangers to this Feast, by all that looked on it, the Governour (which was very extraordinary) caused to be written in the three most universal languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin: and it was this; *Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.* Many came thither (saith St. John) it being so nigh the City (for now this Sacred Hill of Calvary is taken into it) and reading this Title thus exposed in so many tongues, the chief Priests much resented it; which in plain terms affirmed Jesus to be their King, and made them the Betrayers and Crucifiers of him....They therefore hast to Pilat to procure an alteration of the Title; not to run that he *was*, but that *he said he was*, their King. From whom they received only this sullen Answer, that *what he had written he had written*, that what he had written, should stand so. It being the Divine pleasure, that without any of their false glosses it should now be published to their shame who he was. (284)

Although Bruno shows the inscription to be unavoidably open to misreading, Woodhead implies that Pilate's words nevertheless receive divine protection from "false glosses." In this way, their textual status closely resembles that of the Bible itself. Because of his writing, according to Woodhead, and, presumably also because of the quasi-scriptural status of his text, "Pilat in some sense was thus the first Apostle declaring to the world his Sacred person" (28).

Sandys' translation of Hugo Grotius' *Christs passion* also shows some concern about how Pilate's Gospel will be read and interpreted. The fourth act begins with a report from First Nuncius to the chorus about the Crucifixion, in which he includes the major events and discusses them in graphic detail. He refers, for example, to Pilate's

inscription without attributing it specifically to Pilate, although he is the one who refuses to remove it, describing it as a scene of writing:

> But above His declining head they hung
> A table in three languages: the tongue
> The first of tongues, which taught our Abrahamites
> Those heav'nly precepts, and mysterious rites;
> Next, that which to th'informéd world imparts
> The Grecian industry, and learnéd arts;
> Then this, from whence the conquer'd earth now takes
> Her laws, and at the Roman virtue quakes;
> All of one sense: His place of birth, His name
> Declare; and for the Hebrew King proclaim. (94-104)

It is, however, a scene of reading.

> After the bloody priests so long had fed
> On this lov'd spectacle, at length they read
> The title: and in such a misery,
> So full of truth, found something to envy:
> The governor intreating to take down
> That glorious style, lest He the Hebrew crown
> Should vindicate in death. (105-111)

While "title" in this passage can refer to the honorific "Hebrew King" it might also indicate a book metaphor. The observers of the Crucifixion looked upon it but did not know how to interpret it until they read its "title."

The Passion in Cooke-ham

The final poem of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, "The Description of Cooke-ham," is a country house poem celebrating the estate of the Cumberland family. The inclusion

of the "Cooke-ham" poem in a volume that concentrates mainly on the Passion has raised questions for recent critics. It is possible, however, to read the Cooke-ham poem as a continuation of the Passion narrative that dominates the rest of *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, another attempt by Lanyer to access the imagery of the Crucifixion. Just as Christ urges her to write, Cooke-ham also "will'd me to indite, / The sacred Storie of the Soules delight" (lines 5-6). These lines can be read as a reference to the Cooke-ham poem itself, which Lanyer presents as the fruits of her time with the Cumberland women. But the reference in the lines to a "sacred Storie" implies that they may also refer to her Passion poem. At the end of the volume, in the place where a reader might expect to find a detailed portrayal of the Crucifixion, Lanyer presents an extended poetic investigation of its most important icon, "that faire tree....Where many a learned Booke was read" (lines 157 and 161). The placement of the Cooke-ham poem at the end of the volume may suggest that it represents in fuller terms than the main "Salve Deus" poem the final chapter of the Passion story, the role of the Crucifixion in the process of atonement. Lanyer draws on one of the four major theories of the Atonement current in the seventeenth century, which suggested that Christ's death answered Adam's sin—one man dying in order to cancel the death that another man's sin originated. This theory was often conceptualized using an analogy of trees, in which the cross stood as a revision of the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden.[8]

Lanyer describes Cooke-ham as a sacred location from the opening lines of the poem. It is the site of her own conversion, where she "first obtain'd / Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain'd" (lines 1-2). The land itself at Cooke-ham recognizes the exalted nature of the grace unfolding there. In response to the Countess of Cumberland's presence, the trees bend "themselves to beauteous Canopies," the birds sing, and the "very Hills right humbly did descend" (lines 25 and 35). While this

[8] On the atonement, see Patrides ("Milton and the Protestant Theory of the Atonement"). Lanyer offers another formulation of the atonement within the "Salve Deus" poem when she exalts that "by his merits we those joyes might winne" (line 1632).

imagery echoes Lanyer's written praise of the Countess in the preceding poems, it may also connect the events at Cooke-ham to the tradition which held that at the moment of the Crucifixion the natural world trembled in response.[9] Lanyer's survey of the response of the natural world to the Countess's arrival at Cooke-ham builds to its central image of

> ...that stately Tree,
> Wherein such goodly Prospects you did see;
> That Oake that did in height his fellowes passe
> .....
> How often did you visite this faire tree,
> Which seeming joyfull in receiving thee,
> Would like a Palme tree spread his armes abroad,
> Desirous that you there should make abode. (lines 53-63)

The tree not only welcomes the Countess of Cumberland in a manner that recalls the grace of atonement, it does so in terms that specifically invoke the Crucifixion. The tree rises above all others and, in subsequent lines, affords the Countess a "Prospect fit to please the eyes of Kings," a vantage analogous to Christ's temptation on the pinnacle and later to his elevation on the cross (line 72). Lanyer describes the tree in a posture of Crucifixion, its arms spread, and associates it with the palm, another central image from the Passion narrative.

Lanyer invites the Countess to this scene specifically to re-enact her habit of walking in the woods of Cooke-ham "With Christ and his Apostles there to talke" (line 82). Cumberland transacts this conversation, Lanyer shows, through a direct association between the tree and the Bible; she portrays the Countess "Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree, / To meditate what you therein did see" (lines 83-84). With this image Lanyer draws on another commonplace of Reformation theology that preferred the events

[9] Lanyer portrays this phenomenon in the "Salve Deus" poem at lines 1185-1200; a marginal note describes these lines as "The terror of all creatures at that instant when Christ died."

"written" on the cross to the Mosaic law written on the tablets of stone and the reverence for physical inscriptions in the Hebrew Bible. The poem lays out a typology—

> With *Moyses* you did mount his holy Hill,
> To know his pleasure, and performe his Will.
> With lovely *David* you did often sing,
> His holy Hymnes to Heavens Eternall King

—that allows the reader to intuit an ultimate pairing of Cumberland and Christ (lines 85-88).

"More than I can write": Christ's Authorship

When Lanyer reaches the actual moment of the Crucifixion in the "Salve Deus" poem, she again addresses the Countess of Cumberland. This image, Lanyer tells her, "with the eie of Faith thou maist behold, / Deere Spouse of Christ, and more than I can write" (lines 1169-70). The insufficiency topos has received a great deal of attention from critics of early modern women's literature. The degree to which claims of inability, and excuses for imperfections in one's work, were conventional among poets, even those who are now among the most canonical, has been established. This context, which demonstrates that female authors' use of the modesty topos actually makes them more like their male contemporaries than unlike, leaves scholars to determine how, when, and why such formulas were used by early modern women. The issue of authorial modesty matters for Lanyer because it bears so heavily on the question of her formulation of an authorial persona in the context of Protestant Passion writing. Characterizations of her writing, and of herself as an author, appear throughout the dedications and text of *Salve Deus*. As a conclusion to this chapter, and an introduction to the next chapter, it will be important to understand how Lanyer uses the trope of insufficiency.

Lanyer's process for describing her authorship depends on a tenet of Christian theology, the paradox that the lowliest are the most blessed, which Lanyer re-imagines.

She disperses responsibility for the authorship of her poem to some of her readers, to her muse, and ultimately to Christ. To consider first the position of her muse, it is necessary to return to what Lanyer calls "A preamble of the Author before the Passion," beginning at line 265. As Lanyer prepares to embark upon the representation of the Crucifixion, she begins to displace some of the conventional claims of humility and insufficiency associated with Passion writing onto her muse. Speaking directly to the muse, Lanyer demands, "now whither wouldst thou flie, / Above the pitch of thy appointed straine?" (lines 273-74). Lanyer is never far, in these discussions of her muse, from the connection between the muse and the ultimate author of the *Salve Deus*, Christ. The "Weaker thou doest seeme to be," Lanyer argues, "In Sexe, or Sence, the more his Glory shines," a claim that radicalizes the Christian belief in the strength of the most weak by using it to rehabilitate women and to fashion an unassailable authorial position (lines 289-90). Lanyer takes up the closing image of the final Gospel, from the postscript caution at the end of the Book of John, that if every one of the deeds of Christ were recorded, the world could not contain all of the books that would be written. For Lanyer, the Passion is

> A Matter farre beyond my barren skill,
> To shew with any Life this map of Death,
> This storie; that whole Worlds with Bookes would fill,
> In these few Lines, will put me out of breath
> .....
> But to present this pure unspotted Lambe,
> I must confesse, I farre unworthy am. (lines 313-20)

Wendy Wall argues that "in conflating Christ with the poorly dressed pastoral book," the metaphor of the "Saviour in a Shepheards weed" that appears in the dedication to Mary Sidney, "Lanyer indicates the divinity within her own work that immediately offsets her self-deprecation" (324). Her very facility with the original text of John in her own passage makes it clear that the unworthiness she describes attaches not to Lanyer's poetic

abilities but rather to any human attempt at representing the crucifxion. Lanyer benefits, at the same time, from the paradox of "the poorly dressed pastoral book."

One example will show how Lanyer collects the images and phrases of weakness in a bravura demonstration of this Christian way of reading the Passion. Lanyer uses the same word, "sieliy" to describe her writing—"these siely lines descrie"—and to characterize Christ—"one siely, weake, unarmed man" and "this siely Lamb" (lines 277, 551, and 572). In the choice of this term Lanyer underscores that what is most weak and most susceptible to scrutiny and critique is also most blessed. The OED reports several meanings for "seily" or "seely," the convergence of which suggests the importance that this term might have for Lanyer. In addition to a sense more familiar to modern readers of "insignificant, trifling; mean, poor," the term also signified an innocent person or one "deserving of pity or symphathy." An older meaning of the term may also be at play in Lanyer's application of it in the "Salve Deus" poem: one who is "seely" is "spiritually blessed" or "pious, holy, good."

While in the Gospel accounts Christ spoke little in answer to his accusers (Pilate, Herod, Caiphas, and Annas), in Lanyer's version he does respond to the solicitations of women. Like Lanyer in her role as author, the "daughters of Jerusalem" move Christ to speak.

> To speak one word, nor once to lift his eyes
> Unto proud *Pilate*, no nor *Herod*, king;
> By all the Questions that they could devise,
> Could make him answere no manner of thing;
> Yet these poore women, by their pitious cries
> Did moove their Lord, their Lover, and their King,
> To take comPassion, turne about, and speake
> To them whose hearts were ready now to breake. (lines 977-84)

The speech that follows this introduction, however, belongs not to Christ but to Lanyer. She steps into the authorial space that the preceding lines create to reassure the "daughters of Jerusalem" that they had "found such favour" in Christ's sight (lines 985-86).

To discuss Christ's authorship in the poem is to return to Lanyer's Gospel, having looked at the use that Pilate and his wife have as figures for authorship in the poem. As we saw in the dedications and the beginning of the "Salve Deus," however, it is Christ whose writing fuels both the Passion narrative and Lanyer's text. As Lanyer turns from "Eves Apologie" to "Christs going to death," she reminds readers that he undergoes Crucifixion

> By his deserts the fowlest sinnes to cleare;
> And in th'eternall booke of heaven to enroule
> A satisfaction till the generall doome,
> Of all sinnes past, and all that are to come. (lines 949-52)

As in Sowernam and the Sidney *Psalmes*, Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* turns ultimately to the biblical book of life; like Sowernam, Lanyer emphasizes Christ as its author rather than God.

Christ's death is a specific instance of writing, but is also associated in the poem with the larger concept of the book of life. He "Opened the Booke, and did undoe the Seales" according to Lanyer (line 1656). Having made the written word obsolete, Lanyer's Christ performs an inscription that for her is much more compelling:

> For by his glorious death he us inroules
> In deepe Characters, writ with blood and teares,
> Upon those blessed Everlasting scroules;
> His hands, his feete, his body, and his face,
> Whence freely flow'd the rivers of his grace. (lines 1724-28)

The tradition of representing Christ's body as a scroll and his blood as ink are taken up at greater length in the next chapter, but it is worthwhile to note here that, having established the affinity between Christ's writing and her own book, Lanyer is able to imply in these climactic lines that, at least to some extent, the qualities of the "Everlasting scroules" apply to the text that she has produced and which she here offers to the Countess of Cumberland and her other (mostly female) readers. Wendy Wall suggests that Lanyer "carries the text-as-body metaphor, a staple of Renaissance prefaces, to one logical extreme," in which "her published text *becomes* Christ" (324-25). Christ's writing provides a pattern for Lanyer (and her readers) as it did, she claims, for the apostles who "Their noble Actes they seal'd with deerest blood" (line 1814). As for Lanyer's writing, she concludes the poem by acknowledging, in a manner akin to Julian of Norwich's conclusion to the *Shewings*, that her muse and the excellence of Cumberland "hath rais'd my sprites to write, / Of what my thoughts could hardly apprehend" (1833-34). While these lines suit a poem that has concentrated such extended attention on the Countess and her virtue, they also recall the many instances throughout the volume in which Lanyer's muse is not Cumberland but Christ. At the final lines, Lanyer first downplays her authorship and then, remarkably, claims an understanding, even if only partial, of the central narrative of the Christian tradition.

Lanyer's imaginative conception of divine poetry and authorship may paradoxically contribute to a troubling tendency to undervalue Lanyer as an author in twentieth-century criticism. One of the questions that all of these authors raise—and which will be important for Milton as well—is the role of literary work modeled on biblical authors in constructing a literary career, and in the critical "reading" of such a career by modern scholars. Marshall Grossman feels that, regarding Lanyer, "it is doubtful that we now have enough of her poetry to sustain the kind of perpetual inquiry that creates and maintains canonicity" (8). In one sense this remark represents the continued triumph of the process of recovery, the phase of criticism on early modern

women writers that, as is clear from the case of Sowernam, continues to exert a dominant pull. Even a volume of critical essays, such as Grossman's, that claims to move beyond the merely biographical and to "read Lanyer as a poet whose work is capable of sustaining the sort of open-minded close attention to language, rhetoric, and thought with which we are accustomed to approach the works of, say, Donne or Jonson" eventually admits that there is not enough of a body of work to claim this poet as canonical (6). In Grossman's view, Lanyer's value lies instead in her ability to challenge readings of those acceptably canonical poets; she "enters the canon by disrupting it" and makes its claim to neutrality visibly false (8). The assumption at work in Grossman's placement of Lanyer as a peripheral figure reveals a larger problem in modern readings of seventeenth-century works. Grossman's reading exemplifies a modern approach to understanding authorship; Foucault claims that the author

> is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction. In fact, if we are accustomed to presenting the author as a genius, as a perpetual surging of invention, it is because, in reality, we make him function in exactly the opposite fashion. (118-19)

It is not only that Lanyer's contribution to the canon is limited to one volume, one could suggest, but also because that volume presents its authorship in an intricate and surprising manner, that Berry and Grossman take *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* as a digressive and disruptive text. It is clear, however, that Lanyer's mode of authorship was, for a contemporary reader, grounded in the most central and profound discourse of her culture. Her contributions must be measured within this context.

Chapter Four

The Poetics of Omission and Supplement: Milton, the Passion, and Print

> Whoever pursues his studies in this book, should be careful to handle the leaves gently and delicately, so as to avoid tearing them by reason of their thinness; and let him imitate the example of Jesus Christ, who, when he had quietly opened the book of Isaiah and read therein attentively, rolled it up with reverence, and gave it again to the Minister.
> (From a 14th century manuscript, quoted in Richard Garnett's introduction to Alfred Pollard's *An Essay on Colophons*).

Milton's poetic engagements with the Passion differ widely from those of Aemilia Lanyer. While for Lanyer (and for other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century women) the Passion solicits authorship, Milton borrowed more from the tradition in which the Passion *cannot* be represented. His avoidance of the Crucifixion derived not only from the iconoclastic tradition in Protestantism but also from Milton's interest in the difficulties of representing the divine, particularly the Word, through the printed word. Milton's withdrawal from the Passion, like Lanyer's embrace of it, propels his poetic career by constantly eliciting more writing. He says in the note at the end of his fragment "The Passion" that he could not write about the subject to his satisfaction, yet he included the poem and explanatory note in the 1645 and 1673 *Poems* because they seem to demand more attempts by the poet to address the Passion. Many of Milton's evasions of the Passion function through a dialectic of omission and supplement, taking advantage of,

and calling readers' attention to, the materiality of printed books. As Leah Marcus points out, irregularities in the printing of early modern books were sometimes seen as dismemberments of a poetic corpus, especially in cases, like Milton's, of close association between poetic corpus and authorial body. If an analogy may be drawn between the fragmentation of the authorial body through print and the physical destruction of the body of Christ in the Crucifixion, then his death and disfigurement may be repaired metaphorically by textual devices that aim to repair, amend, or supplement the wounded textual body.[1]

Iconoclasm and the Passion

The removal of icons in English Reformation art and literature, especially images of the Passion of Christ, resulted not in the total disappearance of such images but rather in a process of aesthetic dispersal, in which they fragmented, scattered, multiplied, and returned across Reformation culture. Elizabeth Mazzola documents this phenomenon in *The Pathology of the English Renaissance: Sacred Remains and Holy Ghosts*, explaining that "abandoned symbols or practices do not simply disappear from the mental landscape; and sometimes, this discarded material takes up far more space. No longer scrutinized so carefully or clung to as dearly as official public knowledge, outworn symbols can find their powers increased by occupying the margins of accepted ideas, shadowing the background of the imagination" (1). The materials of Catholic piety, especially the Crucifixion and the events surrounding the death of Christ, as well as the visual culture of

[1] Some forms of iconoclasm, including the blotting of names and figures in sixteenth-century devotional books, can be examined through the lens of omission and supplement. This form of iconoclasm allows the offending material to be both visible—marked by its erasure—and absent.

the traditional faith, no longer occupied the center of English belief and practice after the Reformation.

The new artistic operations of such symbols and practices have begun to receive some critical attention in revisionist histories of the Reformation. As Ernest Gilman remarks, iconoclasm poses "a crucial dilemma for the literary imagination of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (1). In addition to the "migration of the holy" from the rites of the church to those of the monarchy that John Bossy has identified, and the growing "iconophobia" of the later English Reformation as Patrick Collinson describes it, readings of early modern literature must also account for a new poetics of Christian imagery.

Literature absorbed and rearranged the iconography removed from the visual sphere. The place of images was quite literally "filled by scriptural verses painted on the walls and altar cloths, and by the literary monuments of the Reformation, the English Bible and Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs,' *The Acts and Monuments of the Church*" (Gilman 7-8). Within this shift from icon to text, the Passion of Christ in particular exemplifies Mazzola's reading of the "sacred remains" of early modern literature. The doctrinal and cultural centrality of the Crucifixion—experienced, for instance, in the festival of Corpus Christi—originated in the twelfth century as part of a monastic movement that sought a more accessible humanity in Christ. While the focus of traditional Christianity on the suffering of Christ in the Passion generally retreated in Protestant literature, the Passion as a subject did not. An older tradition of indirect representation, often through images of and references to other scriptural narratives (such as Daniel slaying the dragon or the sacrifice of Isaac) or to events of the Passion excluding the Crucifixion, resurfaced with

the Reformation.[2] As Debora Shuger explains, "central discourses, paradoxically, tend toward dispersal and fragmentation" (9). In later sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English literature such narrative fragmentation enables the Passion story to create occasions for meditating on the role of the literary witness in the Passion narrative. Poets who take up the story of the Passion, like those who produce psalm versions, often dramatize the acts of speaking and writing, using the Passion to explore problems of authorship.

The "sacred remains" of Catholic representations of the Passion become, for Milton, occasions for commentary on the role of the divine poet. Milton referred to the Passion in many of his works, but most of these allusions are oblique rather than direct. Attempts to locate the Passion in Milton's canon that rely only on overt images of the Crucifixion will frustrate because, while the Crucifixion occupies the center of the Passion narrative, it rarely appeared alone in seventeenth-century English devotional or literary works on the Passion. Rather, the cluster of events both preceeding and following the Crucifixion (such as the last supper, the temptations, Pilate's inscription on the cross, and the appearances of the resurrected Christ to his followers) often receive far more attention from Protestant writers than does the moment of Christ's death.

Milton's early short poem "The Passion" exemplifies his habit of approaching and then withdrawing from representations of the Passion. It ends with a note describing the inability of the poet to conclude the poem: "*This Subject the Author finding to be above the years he had, when he wrote it, and nothing satisfied with what was begun, left it unfinisht.*" While readers of "The Passion" have long been attentive to the absent

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[2] For a discussion of representations of the Passion in the early church, see Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art*, vol. 2 (Greenwich, CT, 1971).

depiction of its stated subject, critics consistently overlook the poem's potential as a guide for reading Milton's systematic thinking about the Passion, its theology, and its implications as a narrative for early modern poetics. In the place of a description of the Passion, Milton substitutes a narrative of poetic composition and an investigation of authorship. The simultaneous absence and presence of the Passion in this poem, and its disappearances and distortions in Milton's other works, invite further analysis of the balance between inspiration and limitation in the use of Christ and the Evangelists as scriptural models for authorship.

Just as these figures supply extremely complex paradigms of authorship, their texts, the four canonical Gospels, provide models that may explain the most interesting narrative features of early modern Passion literature. Renaissance readers and writers show some awareness of the textual history and controversies of the Bible, knowledge that influenced not only Protestant theology (especially among the radical sects, some of which completely abjured the printed Scriptures), but also biblically-based literature. Frank Kermode describes the experience of difference that arises from a reading of the Gospels, in which

> Everybody notices how different the Passion narratives are from what precedes them; they have a quality not to be found in their prologues. The opening chapters are seemingly incoherent, generically uncertain; clues as to their progression, climax, and closure must be sought with a charitable interpretive eye. Such orders as are found in them are hardly *narrative* orders. We do not remember them in order as they are written, or not without a special effort. They lack the great mnemonic, plot—the fulfillment of narrative promise, the insistence on cause and regulated

> sequence, and harmonious interrelation between what has gone before and what is now being said. (113)

Similarly, because the four books tell the same story using different words, characters, episodes and styles, the texts of Scripture themselves present a special problem. The editors of the Complutensian Bible (1514-1517) acknowledged "that scribes sometimes carelessly added to one passage a word, phrase, or even a whole sentence that properly belongs to a different, though similar passage. At Matt. 24:42 they found a whole sentence not witnessed in the Greek, but derived instead from Luke 17:34" (Bentley 101). The nature of the Gospels as a set of related narratives allows for the textual condition of assimilation that Bentley describes.

Many early modern writers were aware, as Milton certainly was, of the textual history of the Bible—its composition, redaction, translation, circulation and canonization. The Gospels alone provide a wealth of literary strategies that influenced sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature. The Gospels bear internal markers of their own composition history, in which multiple narratives arise out of fragments of another text (as when Christ quotes psalm 22 on the cross). Further, the Gospels remind readers of their origin in the radical destruction of earlier texts and, by drawing so extensively on the texts of the Hebrew Bible, in fact enable the Christian assertion that the New Testament abrogates the Hebrew Scriptures. This unusual situation, in which "the entire Jewish Bible was to be sacrificed to the validation of the historicity of the Gospels; yet its whole authority was needed to establish that historicity," must also be accounted for in any reading of early modern texts based on the Gospels (Kermode 107).

Outside of the Gospels themselves, Renaissance readers also had access to many of the controversies surrounding vernacular translations of the Bible. Some of the Bibles

published in England in the seventeenth century provided materials for a textual history of the New Testament, including the Polyglot version edited by Brian Walton (1655-1657), which included "variant readings from codex Alexandrinus, which had recently been presented (1627) by Cyril Lucar, the Patriarch of Constantinople, to Charles I" (Metzger 107). Similarly, Tyndale's prologue, "W. T. To the Reader," in his 1534 Pentateuch suggests that the reaction to his 1530 New Testament was provoked by its invitation to readers "to amend if ought were founde amysse" (2). While the emendations that Tyndale sought in the 1530 note (and in a renewed request in his 1534 prologue) related to his translation from the Hebrew, the possibility of outright error shadows the background of Tyndale's comments. The translators of the Geneva Bible claimed that they provided marginal notes in order to counter the suggestion that a text which can be variously translated cannot be true: "lest ether the simple shulde be discouraged, or the malicious have any occasion of just avillation, seing some translations read after one sort, and some after another, whereas all may serve to good purpose and edification, we have in the margent noted that diversitie of speache or reading which may also seme agreable to the mynde of the holy Gost" (*iiii). The King James version supplies an even more elaborate preface giving a history of the Bible. This chapter will explore the consequences of early textual scholarship on post-Reformation "divine poetry."

Omission and Supplement

Milton often struggles to sort out the complex and potentially perilous relations of the literary writer to Scripture. In both *Of True Religion* and *Tetrachordon* Milton quotes Deuteronomy 4:2, in which Moses teaches the Israelites, "*Ye shall not add to the word*

which I command you, neither shall you diminish ought from it" (VIII: 419 and *Tetrachordon* II: 653). In *Of True Religion* Milton follows this quotation with the stern warning of Revelation 22:18-19 against supplementing or removing words of Scripture:

> For I protest unto everie man that heareth the wordes of the prophecie of this boke, if any man shal adde unto these things, God shal adde unto him the plagues, that are writen in this boke. And if any man shal diminish of ye wordes of ye boke of this prophecie, God shal take away his parte out of the Boke of life, and out of the holie citie, and frō those things which are writen in this boke.

Twice in *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* Milton decries the practice of supplementing Scripture,

> that which Saint *Paul* foretold of succeeding times [II Timothy 4:3-4], when men began to have itching eares, then not contented with the plentifull and wholsom fountaines of the Gospell, they began after their owne lusts to heap to themselvs teachers, and as if the divine Scripture wanted a supplement, and were to be eek't out, they cannot think any doubt resolv'd, and any doctrine confirm'd, unlesse they run to that indigested heap, and frie of Authors, which they call Antiquity. (I: 626)[3]

Despite such grave injunctions, Milton recognizes that certain conditions within

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[3] *De Doctrina Christiana* also references Deuteronomy 4:2 (VI: 591).

Scripture necessitate supplement. For instance, the condition of scattered truth in the Gospels "gave reason to St. *Paul* of his own authority, as he professes, and without command from the Lord, to enlarge the seeming construction of those places in the Gospel, by adding a case wherin a person deserted which is somthing lesse then divorc't, may lawfully marry again" (*Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* II: 338). A textual condition thus begets a textual practice. But Paul is a biblical author; what may readers of the Bible do? One supplement to Scripture that Milton warrants readers to provide is grammar. In Paul's discussion of marriage to infidels, Milton notes, "if we shall supply the grammatical *Ellipsis* regularly, and as we must in the sam *tense*, all will be then cleer" (*Tetrachordon* II: 684). Readers may also provide one passage to expound another; "Thus while we reduce the brevity of St. *Paul* to a plainer sense, by the needfull supply of that which was granted between him and the Corinthians..." we may understand the passage (*Tetrachordon* II: 686). What the strict rules of supplementation portend for the composition of literary works that require addition to the events and words of the Bible will be addressed below.

Milton often calls upon a vocabulary of omission and supplement to describe his process of composition and to portray scenes of writing. This discourse, which appears in Milton's prose and issues from his poetic narrators, promises a poetics of absence and restoration. For instance, the invocation at the beginning of *Paradise Lost* characterizes the poem's content as "Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rime" (I.16) and *Paradise Regain'd* promises a song of "deeds / Above Heroic, though in secret done, / And *unrecorded* left through many an Age" (I.14-16, my emphasis). Instances of the words "omit" and "omission" in Milton's prose works often refer to his authorial decisions. These terms consistently indicate conscious choices rather than negligence. Frequently,

by pointing out an omission, Milton in fact supplies what he purports to have excluded, as when in *The Likeliest Means* he claims to "omitt also" the "violent and irreligious exactions" of the prelates: "thir seising of pots and pans from the poor, who have as good right to tithes as they; from som, the very beds; thir sueing and imprisoning" (VII: 296).[4] Similarly, in the *History of Britain* Milton clearly identifies omission as a deliberate element of composition when he pledges that "if ought by diligence may bee added, or omitted, or by other disposing may be more explain'd, or more express'd, I shall assay" (V: 41).

The technique of omission allows Milton to identify himself as an author with the rhetorical practices used by Christ in the Gospels. In *Tetrachordon*, for instance, Milton asserts that in his quotations from Scripture, Christ himself sometimes omits because "He himselfe having to deale with treacherous assailants, useth brevity, and lighting on the first place in *Genesis* that mentions any thing tending to Marriage in the first chapter, joynes it immediately to the 24. verse of the 2 chapter, omitting all the prime words between, which create the institution...." (II: 648). Christ's omissions place the burden of interpreting Scripture on his readers:

> If heere then being tempted, hee desire to bee the shorter, and the darker in his conference, and omitt to cite that from the second of *Genesis*, which all Divines confesse is a commentary to what he cites out of the first, the *making them Male and Female*; what are we to doe, but to search the institution our selves. (II: 649)

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[4] All references to Milton's prose works are to the Yale edition.

These passages suggest that omissions represent choices made by the author for the sake of brevity and clarity but also to signal negative sources of meaning and to shift some responsibility for that meaning to readers.

Areopagitica contains Milton's most famous discussion of supplement, a protest against pre-publication licensing based on the importance of revision to the process of composition. Milton asks

> And what if the author shall be one so copious of fancie, as to have many things well worth the adding, come into his mind after licencing, while the book is yet under the Presse, which not seldom happ'ns to the best and diligentest writers; and that perhaps a dozen times in one book. The Printer dares not go beyond his licenc't copy. (II: 532)

Milton's characterization of addition as a literary tool is revealing. Milton uses terms for supplement (usually forms of the word "add") in much the same way that he uses terms for omission, to direct the reader's attention to his exertion of control over a text, as in his claim in the conclusion of the second edition of *The Readie and Easie Way*, that "Many circumstances and particulars I could have added in those things wherof I have spoken; but a few main matters now put speedily in execution, will suffice to recover us, and set all right" (VII: 462). Here, and in many similar passages, the supplement remains a strictly writerly device.

In other places, however, the supplement unleashes its more dangerous aspects.[5] Two such instances merit brief discussion to illustrate the interpretive potential of

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[5] Though not immediately relevant to a discussion of Milton's poetics, Derrida's *Of Grammatology* provides a thorough consideration of the dangers of the supplement (trans. Gayatri Spivak, Baltimore, 1976).

Milton's language of omission and supplement. In *Samson Agonistes*, Dalila speaks to Samson of loss and restoration, offering to

> ...ever tend about thee to old age
>
> With all things grateful chear'd, and so suppli'd,
>
> That what by me thou hast lost thou least shalt miss. (lines 925-27).[6]

In this speech Milton marshals the language of omission and supplement to demonstrate Dalila's false perception of total control: she believes that she has been both the cause of Samson's fall and his restorer. Interestingly, Eve also uses this vocabulary as she determines, immediately after eating the fruit, how to proceed:

> ...But to *Adam* in what sort
>
> Shall I appeer? shall I to him make known
>
> As yet my change, and give him to partake
>
> Full happiness with me, or rather not,
>
> But keep the odds of knowledge in my power
>
> Without Copartner? *so to add what wants*
>
> In Femal Sex, the more to draw his Love,
>
> And render me more equal.... (IX.816-23, my emphasis)

Here Eve is herself supplied by forbidden knowledge, which changes her own status to that of a kind of secret text ("And I perhaps am secret" she says at line 811) which, having been revised ("my change"), has the power to change Adam as well.

In Book Five Adam treats Eve's dream as a text that mimics the reality of their

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[6] All references are to the Columbia edition.

experiences "But with addition strange" (116). He notes however that "Evil into the mind of God or Man / May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave / No spot or blame behind" (117-19). Eve has not yet been blotted or marred by the evil supplement of her dream, but her later revision will of course transfer that blot to Adam. While Milton allows some measure of flexibility in the text of Scripture in his prose, he shows in his long poems that the very practices that create a divine text may also be vulnerable to dangerous misapplication. The prose and the poetry, each in its own way, instruct readers to concentrate interpretive attention on instances of textual instability, both within Scripture and in the printed texts of divine poetry.

Milton's contemporaries also used the language of omission. Seventeenth-century readers encountered the word "omit" in dedicatory letters and other textual apparati designed to instruct or guide their reading.[7] Henry More, in his *Conjectura Cabbalistica* (1653), asks its dedicatee "to make up out of your rich Treasury of Learning, what our Penury could not reach to, or Inadvertency may have omitted" (sig. A5r-v). Edward Pond's almanack, *A President for Prognosticators* (1609), uses similar language to instruct "the friendly Reader" to

> Read where you please, & leave that you like not, my onely suite unto you is, that (in this Booke) if anything be amisse, you pardon it; if wel, you defend it, & howsoever it be, you accept it. Faults escaped in the Printing correct with your pens: omitted by negligence, overslip you with Patience: committed by ignorance, remit you with favour. And in so dooing I shall

[7] The practice of supplementing printed books has a pre-Reformation history as well. Eamon Duffy describes sixteenth-century readers copying devotional material into books of hours, a habit that led to a consumer demand that "resulted in the expansion of the *Horae* to include such material" (234).

> be the more incouraged to continue my Labour to the benefit of my Countrey in hasting to the Presse some other works of greater importance. (sig. A1v)

Pond's note provides evidence of early modern reading practices—such as the suggestion of selective, non-linear reading ("Read where you please, & leave that you like not") and the expectation that readers also became writers by inscribing on the printed page—and reveals the conflation of two types of omission, printing errors to be corrected and ideas to be supplemented. Many Renaissance readers did make all of the corrections that were indicated in errata lists as well as corrections that were not listed, or changes they desired to make in the absence of instructions from the printer. Harris Fletcher reports that several copies of Milton's 1671 volume "had all errata corrected by scraping off the erroneous printing with a penknife, and some of these were then corrected with a pen and some not" (37).[8]

Milton's uses of omission and supplement demonstrate his awareness and manipulation of such technical features of print culture. Stephen Dobranski shows that

> Milton understood the ideological weight that a book's design carried, for in *An Apology Against a Pamphlet* (1642) he had begun his attack on *A*

[8] On corrections see Percy Simpson, *Proof-Reading in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1970), pp. 5, 8-10, 28, 34-6.

> *Modest Confutation* with its title page (*CP* I: 875-7), in *Areopagitica* (1644) Milton had acknowledged that 'shrewd books' often bore 'dangerous Frontispieces' (*CP* II: 524), and to refute *Eikon Basilike*, Milton criticized the book's 'conceited portraiture...sett there to catch fools and silly gazers' (*CP* III: 342). (94)

In *Areopagitica*, when Milton "compares truth to a dismembered virgin and uses expressions such as 'cropping,' 'sharpest justice,' and 'ript up, and drawn,' he deftly alludes" to the martyrs of censorship, the printers and authors who were maimed and occasionally killed (Dobranski 119). Such an association between the destruction of books and that of bodies also offers compelling imagery for a poet writing on the death of Christ.

The Passion in Milton's works

To understand Milton's treatments of the Passion, it is important to consider the scope and contents of the Passion narrative as Milton conceived them. The Gospels do not set apart from the story of Christ's life the events leading up to his death or those which follow. There is no clearly defined series of actions that could definitively be called the Passion, and early modern Passion narratives and lives of Christ vary considerably in the events they include. Milton's representations of Christ throughout his prose and poetry follow the Gospels in this respect, with one episode or characterization of Christ often folding into itself many other moments in his life or corollary incidents and passages of Scripture. As Emory Elliott notes in his discussion of *Paradise Regain'd*, Milton "uses the very words and phrases of Scripture to draw into the poem essential details of the encircling framework of Christ's total career and teaching" (228).

This technique allows the Passion to be present not through direct representation but through allusion, citation, and the readers' recollection of the larger story of the Passion, of which the Crucifixion is but one part. The reader participates vitally in this technique; as Emory argues, the "dramatic power" of *Paradise Regain'd* "depends upon the reader's awareness of those aspects of Christ's life and character of which Satan is ignorant" (228). The Gospel of Mark, believed to be the earliest and the basis for the others, presents the Crucifixion in far less detail than do the other Gospels. By building on one another, the Gospels provide an instance of elaboration and expansion and invite later writers to extend or collapse their narratives of the Crucifixion as they choose. The events most frequently depicted in early modern Passion narratives include the agony in the garden, Judas' betrayal, Christ's arrest and interrogations, the many separate episodes upon the cross (such as the alliance formed by John and Mary and Christ's several utterances), the burial and the resurrection.

Fragments of the Passion appear throughout Milton's poetry. Among the 99 topics for potential dramas recorded in the Trinity College Manuscript appears one with the heading "Christus patiens" that reveals an early intention on Milton's part to compose a tragedy about the Passion of Christ. The note also indicates the importance that Milton attached to the events surrounding the Crucifixion. It reads: "Christus patiens / The Scene in ye garden beginning frō ye coming thither till Judas betraies & ye officers lead him away ye rest by message & chorus. his agony may receav noble expressions" (Fletcher 2:28). We may also note Milton's decision to portray the events that take place after the arrest "by message & chorus," a method he would later use in *Samson Agonistes*. Did Milton's thinking about how to represent the Passion migrate from a tragedy on the subject to *Samson Agonistes*?

Poems of Mr. John Milton, Both English and Latin

Critics wishing to consider Milton's presentation of himself and his poetry often turn to his 1645 volume, *Poems of Mr. John Milton, Both English and Latin, Compos'd at several times*. While Louis Martz's view of the volume as an announcement of Milton as a "rising poet" has become a critical orthodoxy, Randall Ingram offers the important counter-argument that the 1645 volume is a book that "questions books, distrusting the capacity of writing and print to capture what *At a Solemn Music* calls 'divine sounds'" (181). Ingram insists that the volume's frontispiece (with its contending image and quatrain), title page (which ascribes authority to both Milton and Henry Lawes), and poems themselves (by preferring the oral to the written) undermine or sabotage the medium of print. He notes that "The Passion," for instance,

> makes explicit what is implicit in the Nativity Ode: the struggle against the limits of writing. *The Passion* must end because it is smothered by the material difficulties of writing, imagined as writing on surfaces that resist inscription, black pages and rock, and because it refuses an iconic visual representation of the suffering Christ that the medium seems to encourage. Including *The Passion* discovers a fear that the Nativity Ode attempts to suppress, namely, that writing will rob the poet of his poem. (189)

This reading of "The Passion" raises an important objection to criticism that interprets the 1645 volume as an unqualified celebration of Milton's authorial control. The tension in the *Poems* between authorial mastery and the characteristic features of printed books, many of which operate against this authority, often asserts itself in the poems that address the death of Christ.

Three short poems near the beginning of the volume—"On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," "Upon the Circumcision," and "The Passion"—can be read as a group that narrates the life of Christ, concentrating on his birth, circumcision, and death. Reading these poems as a unit allows the presences and absences of the Passion to become more visible.[9] "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and "Upon the Circumcision" evoke the violence and redemption of the Passion through typological analogies to other events in Christ's life.

The collection opens with "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," a beginning that could set up an expectation that the collection of poems as a whole will narrate the story of Christ's life and death. The Passion is folded into the nativity throughout this opening poem. It is mentioned, for instance, three times in the first seven-line stanza:

> This is the month, and this the happy morn,
> Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,
> Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
> *Our great redemption from above did bring*;
> For so the holy Sages once did sing,
> That *he our deadly forfeit should release*,
> And with his Father *work us a perpetual peace*. (lines 1-7; my emphasis)

Milton's insertion of the Passion is atypical of contemporary nativity narratives.

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[9] Frederic Tromly argues that Milton's "careful dating and arrangement of the poems in the volume suggest that he intended them to be seen as movements of a single poem. By incorporating 'The Passion' into this design, Milton bestows upon his fragment a meaning which it does not possess intrinsically; he assimilates it into a larger context, the 'ideal figuration' of the poet which the volume represents" (282). Following the work of Neil Fraistat, John Hale also examines the ordering of the 1645 collection in "Milton's Self-Presentation in *Poems...1645*," *Milton Quarterly* 25:2 (May 1991): 37-48.

Herbert's "Christmas" and Crashaw's "A Hymne of the Nativity, sung by the Shepheards," for instance, do not include the Passion. While Vaughn's "The Incarnation, and Passion" speaks of Christ's birth as an act of death, it does not represent any events of the Passion.

That Milton should see the Passion forecasted in the nativity is appropriate from a Christian theological perspective. His handling of references to the Passion, however, demands closer attention. From the earliest reference in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," Milton characterizes writing on the life of Christ as lost, missing, or insufficient. "Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strein, / To welcome him," he asks the Muse (lines 17-18). Similarly, the song with which the heavenly choir accompanies the birth of the infant is, from Milton's perspective, one of "unexpressive notes" (line 116).

Near the middle of the poem, in the sixteenth stanza, Milton projects time forward to the Crucifixion, but immediately forestalls this forward trajectory:

> The Babe lies yet in smiling Infancy,
> That on the bitter cross
> Must redeem our loss. (lines 151-53)

Thus the Passion appears near the center the story of Christ's life, from the incarnation to the Last Judgment. Though present in the heart of the poem, Milton's representation of the Passion in "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" does not provide a complete image or discussion of the crucifixion. Distilled into four words—"bitter cross," "redeem" and "loss"—the Passion remains abstracted.

"Upon the Circumcision" similarly evokes and retreats from the violence of the Passion. It typifies a phenomenon of representation that will become increasingly

important to Milton's portrayals of the Passion. In concentrating on the circumcision, Milton finds an oblique approach to the Passion in a literary typology that inserts events of the Passion into other biblical stories, a process of composition that is in fact highly similar to that of the Gospels. The two lines in "Upon the Circumcision" that describe the Crucifixion become readable because they are removed from their Gospel context and more comfortably relocated to the scene of circumcision.[10] The reference in line 20 of the poem to Philippians 2:7-8 also offers a connection to the Passion, again dislocated into another biblical text. In this passage Paul explains that Christ "toke on him the forme of a servant, and was made like unto men, and was founde in shape as a man. He humbled him self, and became obedient unto the death, even the death of the crosse."

The formal elements of "Upon the Circumcision" also allow for insertions of fragments of the Passion. The narrator's exclamation,

> Alas, how soon our sin
>
> Sore doth begin
>
> His Infancy to sease!

alludes to both "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" and "The Passion" (lines 12-14); just as the Passion can be displaced into another biblical text, it can be relocated in another Miltonic text. The conclusion of "Upon the Circumcision," again like the nativity ode, looks forward to the Passion without explicitly engaging it. The poem reminds readers that

> ...O ere long

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[10] Similarly, Luke 2:21 reports only that "when the eight daies were accomplished, that they shulde circumcise the childe, his name was then called JESUS, which was named of the Angel, before he was conceived in the wombe." Paul's letter to the Ephesians, however, does provide a scriptural basis for an association between the circumcision and the Crucifixion, when he notes that the Ephesians who, because uncircumcised, "once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12).

Huge pangs and strong

Will pierce more near his heart,

yet Milton withholds a more detailed representation of the Passion (lines 26-28). Finally, in the center of the poem, the most abstracted reference to the Passion may be found. At lines 14-15 there is a chiasmus, a grammatical crossing that leaves an "x" (or, a cross) in the center of the poem: "O more exceeding love or law more just? / Just law indeed, but more exceeding love!"[11] Attention had also been concentrated on these lines through textual emendation. The *Variorum Commentary* notes that lines 12-14 were "first written in MS. in two lines: *alas how soone our sin / sore doth begin his infancie to sease*; replaced in margin by three, as in text."[12] This change, though perhaps not of great significance to the content of the poem, shows that revision may have been one of Milton's strategies for writing about the Passion.

Milton was not alone among his contemporaries in evoking a connection between the circumcision and the Crucifixion. Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple*, for instance, demonstrates the typological link between the two events by means of poetic ordering, placing the poem "Our Lord in his Circumcision to his Father" immediately prior to "On the wounds of our crucified Lord." The representation of the circumcision as a pre-figuration of the Crucifixion also appears in William Cartwright's "On the circumcision:

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[11] On these lines as a suggestion of the passion see also M. Thomas Hester, "Typology and Parody in 'Upon the Circumcision,'" in *Renaissance Papers* (1985): 61-71. Hester also shows that "Upon the Circumcision" may participate in the dialectic of damage and repair to holy texts. In the poem, Hester argues, "the disfigurements of Christ are transfigured as embodiments of the historical and transcendent text(s) of God's Word" (67).

[12] A. S. P. Woodhouse and Douglas Bush, eds., *A Variorum Commentary on the Poems of John Milton* (New York, 1972), 173.

for the king's music," which claims that the circumcision "Only preludes unto his riper cross" (line 12).[13]

In Milton's 1645 volume, the trio of poems about Christ's life is completed by "The Passion." "The Passion" is the first instance in Milton's poetry in which the subject matter of Christ's death exerts a defining influence over the poem's formal and textual properties. William Shullenberger identifies an association between Milton's theological and poetic conceptions of Christ that illuminates the function of the Passion in Milton's poetics. Milton, Shullenberger argues, in describing Christ as a "mutual hypostatic union of two natures" also describes "the structure of figurative language" (189). And in "The Passion," Milton "attempts a subject that must destroy the very possibility of poetry: the loss of the Word. The fragment provides evidence of what happens when a poem loses its formal cause, when the metaphoric structure which permits poetic creativity is itself broken" (190). Shullenberger calls the poem a "self-consuming artifact" (196) and "a poem whose subject entails its disfiguration" (197); the following discussion of "The Passion" will consider the degree to which the discourse of the Passion itself is self-consuming.[14] The "self-consuming" nature of Passion poetry reflects the *kenosis*, the voluntary self-emptying descent of Christ into man. Milton's views of the Atonement motivate the poetics with which he portrays Christ in the major poems as well as the early short poems on Christ's life.

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[13] Reprinted in J. B. Broadbent, *John Milton: Odes, Pastorals, Masques* (Cambridge, 1975), 55.

[14] For another view of the "self-consuming artifact" in seventeenth-century literature, see Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley, 1972).

Like the Nativity Ode, "The Passion" is extremely conscious of itself as a poem, a fact that has been seen by many critics as the reason for the poem's "failure." Modern critical responses elucidate the complex formal qualities of the poem without taking seriously Milton's strategies and choices. William Riley Parker, for example, suggests that Milton's "professed grief at thoughts of the Crucifixion turned out to be literary. *He was writing a poem about himself writing a poem*; in every stanza except the third he had described himself in the process of composition" (72). And Northrop Frye calls "The Passion" Milton's "one obvious failure" because it "is the only poem of Milton's in which he is preoccupied with himself in the process of writing it" (212).[15] Absent from these assessments is the possibility that the "failure" of "The Passion" operates as a literary device. The note, in short, is taken as pure autobiography and not as poetry. Were critics to read the note as part of the poem, or as a supplement to the poem, a greater range of interpretations might become available.

"The Passion" displays the ability of poetry to contract and to expand, to let meanings multiply and also to forestall them. The poem acknowledges how its shape and content are created by the events of the Passion—"these later scenes confine my roving verse / To this horizon is my Phoebus bound"—yet the poetics of fragmentation and limitation remain largely unexplored by Milton criticism (lines 22-23).[16] At the same time, Milton demonstrates the vast flexibility of the Passion narrative—its ability to take many shapes and encompass (or omit) many different events—by including a brief but

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[15] Similarly, Charles Huttar claims that Milton's subject "is no longer Christ's Passion but—in a far lesser sense—his own" (241).

[16] This line, describing a scene of writing, was changed in the 1673 edition of the *Poems*, with "latest" substituted for "latter." While not a major revision, this change again shows a certain concentration of attention on lines that describe writing.

complete Passion narrative in the third stanza of "The Passion." The first five lines of the stanza portray the incarnation:

> He sovereign Priest, stooping his regal head
> That dropt with odorous oil down his fair eyes,
> Poor fleshly Tabernacle entered,
> His starry front low-rooft beneath the skies;
> O what a Mask was there, what a disguise! [17]

The last two lines of the stanza provide a highly concentrated version of Christ's death: "Yet more; the stroke of death he must abide, / Then lies him meekly down fast by his Brethren's side" (lines 15-21). The first words of line 20, "Yet more," emphasize that the spectrum of episodes connecting the incarnation with the Passion can be contracted or expanded; portraying the events in Christ's life allows the poet to show the nature of poetry and how it works.[18]

Milton's investigation of the nature of poetry unfolds both outside the poem (in the revisions and the emphasis on technical features of print culture) and inside it. "The Passion" includes several scenes of writing, or rather, several images that promise writing to come. The fifth stanza presents the first conditional scene of writing: "The leaves should all be black whereon I write, / And letters where my tears have washt, a wannish

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[17] The anointing suggested by the first two lines of this stanza may also refer, as Bush suggests in the *Variorum Commentary*, to the episode in Matthew 26:7 in which Christ anoints himself before Passover.

[18] Trauma theory, as it is explained by Cathy Caruth in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore, 1996), provides another way to think about the inaccessibility of the Passion. Writing on Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, Caruth asserts that "a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (18). A traumatic event, in other words, contains an "indirect referentiality" that forces a delay of recognition of the event for the victim. Not only is the Crucifixion a suggestive example for trauma theory, but Caruth's theory could be used to argue that the *narrative* of the Passion also exemplifies the problems of writing about trauma that arise from the narrative absences inherent to traumatic events. Caruth contends that Freud's *book*, like its subject, "is the site of trauma" (20). I thank Nico Israel for this reference.

white" (lines 34-35). The image of writing in these lines is postponed ("The leaves *should*") and inverted, so that the black and white of a printed page are reversed.[19] The poem goes on to describe the speaker witnessing the scene of the Passion, but it is a scene emptied of the actual players and actions. His reaction initiates a second instance of postponed writing, when

> My eye hath found that sad and Sepulchral rock
> That was the Casket of Heav'n's richest store,
> And here though grief my feeble hands up-lock,
> Yet on the soft'ned Quarry would I score
> My plainting verse as lively as before;
> For sure so well instructed are my tears,
> That they would fitly fall in order'd Characters. (lines 43-49)

Several factors conspire to prevent writing in this passage. First, the technology of writing has regressed from paper and ink to rock and chisel (perhaps echoing the inscription on stone in Moses' writing of the law). The image of writing with tears reappears in these lines, creating a connection between the earlier instance of stalled writing and this one. The phrase "my plainting verse as lively as before" may also recall, as do the opening lines, the Nativity ode. If this intra-textual link is brought to mind in addition to the inter-textual association, then there is ambiguity about whether "as before" refers to an act of writing or to an act of *not* writing. It is also notable that nearly all of

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[19] Frederic Tromly has also noted the use of conditional verbs in these passages. Bush provides a brief discussion of the practice of white printing on black pages, especially in association with elegies, in the *Variorum Commentary* (159).

the verbs associated with writing in these two passages, especially *should* and *would*, indicate hesitation or delay.

Poems in the 1645 collection, especially the three that provide as a group a brief life of Christ, illustrate the difficulties of representing the death of Christ poetically. The presence in the early poems of fragmentation, delay, and revision as strategies for approaching the Passion suggests some of the techniques that appear in the longer poems as well. Critical responses to the 1645 poems also reveal what Dobranski calls "an 'Omissa' within Milton studies," a lack of attention to the textual properties of the poetry and the meanings that manipulations of poetics and medium might convey (44).

Paradise Lost

The Crucifixion also flickers in and out of focus in *Paradise Lost*. Two important representations of the Passion occur in Book Six—in Milton's substitution of Christ for Michael as the victor of the battle in heaven—and in Book Twelve, when Michael briefly narrates the life and death of Christ to Adam, saying only that "thy punishment / He shall endure by coming in the Flesh / To a reproachful life and cursed death" (403-405). The brevity of Michael's description, like Milton's choice of the temptations rather than the Crucifixion as the subject of *Paradise Regain'd*, has been read as evidence of Milton's distaste for the vulneral sacralism of Catholic traditions of the Passion, "the local wounds / Of head or heel" (PL 12.387-88). Critical accounts that value the theological significance of the Passion over issues of its representation, however, do not fully address the status of the Crucifixion within *Paradise Lost*.[20] C. A. Patrides allows some

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[20] John Conners makes this argument in his dissertation, "The Crucifixion in *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regain'd*, and *Samson Agonistes*." (University of Rochester 1983), 121.

discussion of the poetics of the Passion when he notes that "Michael's failure to be precise is calculated: being an excellent story-teller, he increases the suspense by withholding the information that Adam is seeking until the appropriate moment" (126). But more than this, the omissions in Michael's account may be intended to point to the inherent problems, both theological and textual, in his sources, the Gospel narratives of Christ's Passion. If Michael stands for the divine poet in Book Twelve, the strategies he uses to narrate biblical history matter as much as the contents of his story.

A third episode from *Paradise Lost* will aid in understanding Book Twelve because in it Milton creates an image from the Passion story through editorial addition. The second edition of *Paradise Lost* in 1674 reorganized the poem into twelve books and added several lines. Most important for this study are the lines added to Book Five in which Raphael describes the "communion sweet" of the angels. John King suggests that Milton added these lines to allude to the 1669 controversy over transubstantiation following "the conversion to Roman Catholicism of James, Duke of York" (42).[21] In addition to operating within this contemporary theological context, Milton's use of the word "communion" underscores the parallel between the events of Book Five—a meal to celebrate Christ just as Satan begins to unleash his "deep malice"—and the sequence of events from the Last Supper to the Crucifixion.

Textual instability moves from the outside of the poem (Milton's revisions to the printed text) to its interior in Book Twelve, which prepares readers for Michael's revelation of the Passion. First, in the transitional lines that Milton added to the beginning of the book in the 1674 edition, the narrator suggests that there might be a

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[21] King considers the lines within the broader context of Protestant theology on communion and commemoration.

place in the narration in which "*Adam* aught perhaps might interpose" (line 4). While Adam does not interpose anything in the initial lines of the Book, he does receive an instruction from Michael in methodology. Because "objects divine / Must needs impair and weary human sense," the story of mankind following the flood will be told rather than viewed ("Henceforth what is to come I will relate") (lines 9-11).[22] The suggestion that Adam might supply some of the narrative himself—or that he might, as he in fact does, interrupt the narrative with a question—and Michael's admission that the coming events, including and culminating in the Passion, cannot be witnessed but must be narrated, provide guidelines for readers of *Paradise Lost* in their interpretation of the contents of Michael's speech and their role, analogous to Adam's, as audience. The internal apparatus of qualifiers and instructions that surround the book's depiction of Christ's death show Milton relocating the technical features of printed books into the interior of his poem.

Book Twelve portrays the Passion in a series of brief, repeated phrases, progressively expressing the major theories of the Atonement. Michael corrects Adam's expectation of a battle between Christ and Satan by noting that the destruction of Satan cannot be

> But by *fulfilling that which thou didst want,*
> Obedience to the Law of God, impos'd
> On penalty of death, and suffering death,
> The penalty to thy transgression due. (396-99; my emphasis)

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[22] An echo of these lines can be found later in Book Twelve when Michael relates the pleading of the Israelites to hear the law from the voice of Moses rather than the voice of God: "But the voice of God / To mortal ear is dreadful; they beseech / That *Moses* might report to them his will" (lines 235-37).

The Passion, in other words, will supplement Adam's lack, an image of Atonement that follows Paul's assertion of Christ as the second Adam. Underscoring the difficulty of his project, Michael seems to begin again five lines later when he provides a slightly more elaborate version of the Passion, in which Adam's "punishment / He shall endure by coming in the Flesh / To a reproachful life and cursed death," a view of Christ as a substitute for sinful man (lines 404-405). The final narration of the Passion in this passage elaborates the narrative most fully. In Michael's final account, he tells Adam that Christ

> ...shall live hated, be blasphem'd,
> Seiz'd on by force, judg'd, and to death condemn'd
> A shameful and accurst, nail'd to the Cross
> By his own Nation, slain for bringing Life;
> But to the Cross he nails thy Enemies,
> The Law that is against thee, and the sins
> Of all mankind, with him there crucifi'd,
> Never to hurt them more who rightly trust
> In this his satisfaction; so he dies,
> But soon revives, Death over him no power
> Shall long usurp; ere the third dawning light
> Return, the Stars of Morn shall see him rise
> Out of his grave....
> ...Nor after resurrection shall he stay
> Longer on Earth than certain times to appear
> To his Disciples....(lines 411-23; 436-38)

Though the passage offers little in the way of direct representation of the Crucifixion, it does encompass several major episodes of the Passion, including the arrest, questioning, and judgment, the traditional accusation of betrayal by the Jews (Christ's "own Nation"), the instruments of the Crucifixion (nails and cross), the moment of death, the resurrection on the third day, and the appearance before the disciples.

William Shullenberger's argument about the "self-consuming" nature of "The Passion" might be said to hold for *Paradise Lost* as well, in that the poem originates in a fragmentation of language. According to Mary Nyquist,

> The Father's declaration [of Christ's sonship] therefore in both epics [*Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regain'd*] ends up, as if involuntarily, initiating not just a new order but also a plot: logos, under attack, gives rise to mythos. Divine self-presence, magisterially manifesting itself in language and the Word, brings forth the substitutive economy of narrative action. (187)

The fabric of the poem, its plot and language, therefore consists of and derives from the fallen state of separation from the Word. Here, as in representations of the Passion, poetry becomes both inevitable and insupportable. It may be helpful to remember, as Ernest Gilman points out, that in iconoclastic Reformation culture, "few people are likely to have envisioned an 'image'—certainly in its most narrowly proscribed form as a representation of the Trinity, of Christ or his cross, of the Virgin or the saints—without at the same time, perhaps for a fleeting instant charged with horror or glee, envisioning that image destroyed" (10-11). Gilman emphasizes also that iconoclasm "is something that can happen to texts and within texts written during this period" (11). Milton's poetics internalize the cultural effects of iconoclasm and the print revolution.

Paradise Regain'd

In Book One of *Paradise Regain'd* the Son describes his recognition of a divine mission:

> ...myself I thought
> Born to that end, born to promote all truth,
> All righteous things: therefore above my years,
> The Law of God I read....(lines 204-207)

The phrase "above my years" recalls the note Milton added to "The Passion" that describes the poet finding the subject of the Passion to be "above the years he had." There is a critical tradition that regards the Son's soliloquy as a quasi-autobiographical account of Milton's own childhood (see the *Variorum* commentary, 37-39). Perhaps more useful for the argument of this chapter is to note that the language used in *Paradise Regain'd* to introduce the Son as a reader of Scripture recalls Milton's description of himself as a writer of biblical poetry.

A second reference to the Son as a reader of the Bible follows his mother's narration of his nativity and the prophecies of Simeon and Anna. The Son discovers his identity as the messiah by "searching what was writ," although the information was only "to our Scribes / Known partly" (I.260-2). These passages reveal that, for the Son, Scripture lies at two removes because it is both above him and partial. The same partiality and inaccessibility also characterize the deeds of the Son (following his initiation into Scripture reading) and, in turn, the narrative of these events provided by *Paradise Regain'd*. The narrator, using language that recalls the initial justification of the poem as a song of "deeds / Above Heroic, though in secret done, / And unrecorded left

through many an Age" (I.14-16), emphasizes that the exact nature of the Son's days in the wilderness "is not reveal'd" (I.307). Finally, Christ replicates this characteristic secrecy in his scripturally-based answers to Satan. Book One ends, for instance, with the Son's brief response to Satan (echoing John 19:11; see below) and the narrator's comment that "He added not" (497).

Among the most important of the secrets omitted from *Paradise Regain'd* is the narrative of Christ's Passion. Absent through lack of direct representation, the Passion reasserts itself in *Paradise Regain'd* in references to Gospel passages that describe the Passion. In most of Milton's works, citations from and allusions to the four Gospels almost entirely avoid the chapters concerning the Passion. Such allusions appear somewhat more frequently in *Paradise Regain'd.* Notable instances include the Son's assertion in I.204-205 "myself I thought / Born to that end, born to promote all truth," which echoes Christ's response to Pilate, "For this cause am I borne, & for this cause came I into the worlde, that I shulde beare witnes unto the trueth" (John 18:37). The Son again paraphrases another of Christ's responses to Pilate as a way of answering Satan; the Son's instruction "do as thou find'st / Permission from above; thou canst not more" (I.495-96) points readers of *Paradise Regain'd* to the moment at which Pilate seeks to release Christ (who has told him, "Thou coldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above") (John 19:11). Satan's first temptation invites the Son to turn the stones to bread to "save thyself and us relieve" (I.344), a parallel to the request of one of the criminals crucified alongside Christ in Luke 23:39, who implores "If thou be the Christ, save thy self and us." During the second temptation the Son in effect contrasts his decision not to command "a Table in this Wilderness / And call swift flights of

Angels ministrant / Array'd in Glory on my cup to attend" (II.384-86) with Christ's request to the Father to "take away this cup" (Luke 22:42).

In addition to these examples, Emory Elliott identifies several passages into which the active reader of Milton's poetry will insert the Passion at moments in the text which seem to call for its presence.[23] He suggests an echo of Luke 9:22 and 17:25 ("The Sonne of man must suffre many things, and be reproved of the Elders, & of the hie Priests and Scribes, and be slaine, and the thirde day rise againe" and "he must suffer manie things, & be reproved of this generacion") in III.188-92. The first passage from Luke (9:22) contains Christ's own account of the events that would comprise his Passion.[24] The most explicit references to the Passion appear in the fourth book, when Satan challenges the Son,

> Cast thyself down; safely if Son of God:
> For it is written, He will give command
> Concerning thee to his Angels, in thir hands
> They shall up lift thee, lest at any time
> Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone. (lines 555-59)

After the Son has finally stood, and Satan fallen, the scene ends with the angelic invitation to the Son to "enter, and begin to save mankind," a request that conflates the ending of the poem with its beginning and prompts readers to imagine the events that follow the temptations (IV.635). The most explicit rendering of the Passion within *Paradise Regain'd* is the association of the pinnacle scene with the imagery of the

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[23] Additional passages may be found in Huttar 251-60.

[24] Elliott also suggestions the following connections: PR IV.128-29 and Hebrews 2:14-15; PR III.56-57 and Luke 6:22-6; PR III.440 and Romans 5:6-8 (240 n.9).

Crucifixion. Edward Cleveland and Barbara Lewalski also find in the pinnacle scene a suggestion of both the Crucifixion and the ascension (see *Milton's Brief Epic* 313-14).

The Crucifixion is only present through these somewhat oblique references. The reason for Milton's choice of the temptations, rather than the Crucifixion, in *Paradise Regain'd* remains an important critical question. The Passion had been identified with the martyrdom of Charles I, and critics often assume that Milton attempted to undermine this association by concentrating on the temptations instead. Theologically, as a Protestant writer, Milton may have sought to avoid the Catholic reification of Christ's body and wounds. In Huttar's words, *Paradise Regain'd* can be read as "a manifesto for a true Christianity purged of its fixation on the Cross" (237). Another line of interpretation on this question concentrates on the literary qualities of Milton's preference for the temptations. For dramatic purposes, the temptations are easier to depict and telescope into the complete narrative that Milton's readers would have known intimately, culminating in the Passion. Here again, although this is not noted in the critical tradition, the reader becomes an author by supplying the missing Passion.[25] It is with Huttar's assertion that although theologically central, the Passion for Milton "did not lend itself to narrative poetry" that we most nearly approach the more complex realities of Milton's representations of Christ's death (249). While Huttar elucidates certain of the obstacles to the narrativization of the Passion within Milton's poetic practices, he does not consider

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[25] It is worth noting briefly the tradition that has developed around Thomas Ellwood's narration of the composition of *Paradise Regain'd* in response to his remark to Milton, "Thou hast said much here of *Paradise lost*; but what hast thou to say of *Paradise found*?" (quoted in *Variorum* 1). The suggestion that Milton wrote *Paradise Regain'd* in answer to one of his readers—in some sense in collaboration with that reader—has caused, like other controversies about Milton's composition practices, some uneasiness among Milton scholars. In Walter MacKeller's words, Ellwood's claim that Milton attributed the idea for *Paradise Regain'd* to his question leaves "in uncertainty matters in which certainty is most desirable" (*Variorum* 2).

the categorical problems of narrative presented by the Passion story itself, problems which Milton may have been pointing to in his many indirect representations of the Passion.

Milton may have turned again, as he did in the 1645 volume, to the techniques of print culture as a method for highlighting narrative problems. Catherine Belsey argues that "the project of classic realist narrative is to repress its own textuality, constructing the illusion of a knowledge which is inter-subjectively shared by narrator and reader, and which transcends the text itself" (101). According to Belsey, textuality, which in the pinnacle scene takes the form of Scripture, ultimately reasserts itself in a return of the repressed. On the pinnacle Christ quotes Matthew 4:7, which itself is a quotation of Deuteronomy 6:16, and, to draw on Belsey's theory, "each reinscription produces a difference which, however marginally, problematizes its meaning" (102). The fragmentation and dispersal of text in *Paradise Regain'd* reveal textual trouble in Scripture.

Mary Nyquist's evaluation of the Son's use of citation to battle Satan also sheds light on the troubled status of the epic's central text, the Bible. The unsettled quality of written text touches even the Gospels themselves. "Far from being an accidental property of Milton's presentation of the Son's first temptation," argues Nyquist, "the textual status of this Word is insisted on by the temptation narratives in both Matthew and Luke, where the formula 'it is written' is used in all three temptations" (195). The Son's responses to Satan are "historically and textually displaced" because the Son quotes not the Word itself but its written representation, Scripture (189). This sense of displacement exists not just in the content of *Paradise Regain'd* but, necessarily, in its very structure: "Compared

with *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regain'd* seems to present itself not as 'advent'rous song' but as written text" (189).

Samson Agonistes

As in *Paradise Lost*, Milton supplemented *Samson Agonistes* with language that refocused the text around the events of Christ's death. The paratextual materials that surround the tragedy—a reference to *Christ Suffering* in the preface and an Omissa attached to the errata list—create, as we will see, the possibility of finding a Passion narrative within *Samson Agonistes*.[26] In the preface, Milton also provides an example of unfinished authorship, perhaps analogous to his own fragment "The Passion," with Augustus Cæsar's *Ajax*. The language that Milton uses to describe Cæsar's abortive composition is highly similar to his note at the end of "The Passion": "but unable to please his own judgment with what he had begun, left it unfinisht" (331-32). Robert Wickenheiser comments in his notes on the preface that the story of Caesar's *Ajax* "is told by Suetonius (*Lives of the Caesars*, II, lxxxv): 'Though he began a tragedy with much enthusiasm, he destroyed it because his style did not satsify him'" (VIII: 135, n. 7). Did Caesar provide, for Milton, an example of an author marring his own text?[27]

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[26] Randall Ingram addresses the status of the early modern preface as a dangerous supplement: "Printed on unnumbered or differently numbered pages, a preface can seem simply a supplement, perhaps dangerous and destabilizing, to the book: prefatory remarks, as classical rhetoricians warned, can compromise the discourse that succeeds them, because prefaces imply that the discourse itself needs a supporting apparatus" ("First Words and Second Thoughts" 104).

[27] Another way of reading *Samson Agonistes* might be suggested by Gilman's reading of Donne's poems on the Crucifixion (especially "The Crosse" and "Goodfriday, 1613") as structures both "made and marred" by the poet (147). By situating the lines most evocative of the Passion outside the text, does Milton perform a similar function to Donne, "both by shouldering the imaginative weight of the Crucifixion and by enduring the painful correction of his own poem" (147)?

A parallel textual problem occurs at the end of the 1671 volume. Ten lines in the first edition of *Samson Agonistes* are missing from the body of the poem. They appear at the end of the volume under the heading "Omissa," a category distinct from the errata. Stephen Dobranski suggests that the unusual placement of these lines allowed Milton to insert a vision of "the possible 'miracle' of a renewed revolt against monarchy" (58). While Dobranski does not identify any other instances of "Omissa" within seventeenth-century books, he notes that some works "do include omitted passages at the end of the text. On the final leaf (H1) of the first edition of Milton's *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643), for example, are printed two omitted passages with page and line numbers for their insertion" (196-97 n. 4). Although the *Samson Agonistes* passage is labeled "Omissa," it occupies the place in a printed volume usually held by a supplement.[28] Milton may use "Omissa" to connote an idea usually associated in the neo-classical sense of the term with a precious lost text.[29] "Omissa" in neo-Latin literature signals the inevitable absences in classical works as they were received and reconstituted by Renaissance scholars. In the note that prefaces "Ad Joannem Rousium" Milton uses "amisso" to describe the lost copy of the 1645 *Poems*, suggesting a possible relationship between this volume—*amisso*—and the ten lines of *Samson Agonistes*—*Omissa*. There are dozens of examples of seventeenth-century printed books that use the term "Omissa;" in some, such as John Ray's *Historia plantarum generalis* (1693), the word is used to describe the contents of the work ("obscura illustrantur, Omissa supplentur, superflue resecantur"), while in others "Omissa" function as a paratext as they do in *Sancti Dionysii*

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[28] As in, for example, the 1633 edition of Sidney's *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*, which contains a "Supplement of a defect in the third part of this history, by Sir W.A. knight."

[29] One may want to think, in this respect, of the lost books of the Bible.

Areopagitæ opera omnia quæ extant (1615), which contains on the final page "Comissa et Omissa."

The lines omitted from *Samson Agonistes* occur at a moment in the tragedy that may be read as its omitted Passion: the captive Samson has been led to the temple of Dagon to perform for the Philistines. Samson's father, Manoa, and the chorus hear cries from the temple and speculate about Samson's fate. The chorus asks,

> What if his eye-sight (for to *Israels* God
> Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,
> He now be dealing dole among his foes,
> And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way?

And Manoa replies,

> That were a joy preumptuous to be thought.
> *Chorus.* Yet God hath wrought things as incredible
> For his people of old; what hinders now?
> *Manoa.* He can I know, but doubt to think he will;
> Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts Belief.

After the comment, "A little stay will bring some notice hither," the reader should then add the final missing line, "Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner."

The lines of the Omissa raise the possibility that Samson has triumphed over his captors, an image that recalls Christ's triumph on the cross. Read without the Omissa, the passage expresses only the fear and confusion of Manoa and the Chorus. A reader of the 1671 volume who returned to this part of the poem and inserted the omitted lines would add an interpretation of Samson's destruction of the Philistines that suggests three aspects of the Passion. First, the language echoes the taunting of Christ to save himself if

he really were the messiah.[30] Additionally, the comment that "evil news rides post, while good news baits," recalls the order of events in the Passion, in which the resurrection is delayed (line 1583). And finally, the suggestion of Samson's role in a divine plan that is inaccessible to the human understanding of Manoa and the chorus has connotations as well of the nature of Christ's sacrifice.

The typological link between Christ's Passion and Samson's death appeared in several contemporary Passion narratives. Charles Herle's *Contemplations and Devotions On The severall passages of our blessed Saviours Death and Passion* (1631) provides a particularly detailed consideration of the typology. Herle refers to Samson in his description of Christ's arrest in the garden:

> *Israel* had long before beene too busie, in borrowing the Philistines religion, and now it seemes they will make bold with their pollicie too, their old pollicie, *of plowing against Sampson, with his owne Heifer*, his *owne familiar friend* (as our Saviour himselfe complaines) *like an untamed Heifer hath lifted up the heele against him; Sampson*, the true *Nazarite*, is here againe *taken, bound, abused, blind-folded:* innocent *Susanna* (in resemblance, if not tipe) is here once againe by the envious Elders, bathing in a bloody sweat, surprisd [sic] in the Garden, yet not with out some instance of that ever victorious selfe-armed majesty of innocence. (57-58)

Herle also asks "how much easier then *Sampson*, could this *Nazarite* have *broken your Philistine cords asunder*" (64). And again in his description of the mocking and scorning

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[30] "He saved others, but he can not save him self: if he be the King of Israel, let him now come downe from the crosse, and we wil beleve him" (Matthew 27:42).

of Christ, Herle demands "how easily could this *Sampson*, this *Nazarite*, how justly might hee have pluck'd downe the house about the eares of such *scoffing Philistines*, and have made (as there) their Theater, their Grave, and turn'd this their comike folly into as tragike a funerall?" (120-21). A third explicit reference to Samson in the section on the taunting of Christ is also framed as a question: "how very threds of sand, are mans strongest bonds, when in those *Sampsons hands* of thine, that *measure out the Heavens with a span, and weigh the mountaines in scales, and hold the waters in their hollowe*" (345-46).

In the Omissa, Manoa speculates that Samson may have risen above his enemies in a manner akin to that of Christ's triumph in the Passion. Conversely, in these passages, Herle reads Samson's physical triumph as the antithesis of Christ's moral victory. In both cases, one figure serves as a foil for the other and as a way of understanding the meaning of the Passion by looking for its absence in other, more familiar actions. Passion narratives displace the death and torment of Christ into other biblical stories; typological ways of reading are not only theologies but are also literary strategies for approaching an event that could hardly be depicted. For example, Psalm 137 is referenced to describe Herle's (speechless) reaction to the Passion: "while I live here then, what should I doe but *sit me downe by these waters* of sorrow? as for my *harpe* of mirth, what should I but *hang it up*, untill I come to *my Jerusalem*, what should I doe *a singing here in a strange land*, and that too *before the victory*, before I have either *fought my fight*, or *finish'd my course*" (298-99). *Samson Agonistes* has been said to have no "middle," which is also a characteristic feature of Passion narratives, which often in this period lack a direct representation of the Crucifixion.

Milton's language also overlaps with that of Gospel accounts and later Passion narratives in Manoa's comment that the noise from the temple of Dagon "tore the Skie" (1472). Matthew 27:51 reports that in the aftermath of Christ's death on the cross "the vaile of the Temple was rent in twaine, from the toppe to the bottome, and the earth did quake, and the stones were cloven."[31] The second noise that Manoa and the Chorus hear in *Samson Agonistes* is described in a similar way: "Noise call you it or universal groan / As if the whole inhabitation perish'd" (1511-12). Similarly, the messenger chooses language that is often used to describe the unspeakable nature of the Crucifixion:

> O whither shall I run, or which way flie
> The sight of this so horrid spectacle
> Which earst my eyes beheld and yet behold;
> For dire imagination still pursues me. (1541-44)

Watson Kirkconnell shows some precedent for such a comparison, although he dismisses the possibility of a direct parallel with Milton, in his discussion of Francis Quarles' *The Histoire of Sampson* (1642), in which he argues that "in describing the humiliations heaped upon Samson, Quarles is able to imply, by the mere overtones of language, a comparison with the mockeries heaped upon the blind-folded Christ by Pilate's soldiery" (173).

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[31] Geneva 1602.

The imagery of the Omissa relates to the tragedy as a whole through Milton's discourse of omission and supplement. Milton uses a form of "omit" three times in *Samson Agonistes*. First, in the preface, Milton notes that "Division into Act and Scene referring chiefly to the Stage (to which this work never was intended) is here omitted."

Next, Manoa responds to Samson's claim that he "shall shortly be with them that rest" by insisting that, for his part, he "Must not omit a Fathers timely care / To prosecute the means of thy deliverance" (602). Finally, the Chorus also responds to Samson's petition for "speedy death" by asking God why he degrades mankind, or remits them

> To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismission,
> But throw'st them lower then thou didst exalt them high,
> Unseemly falls in human eie,
> Too grievous for the trespass or omission,
> Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword
> Of Heathen and prophane, thir carkasses
> To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd. (687-94).[32]

The concept of omission, thus, appears most prominently in two critical moments: Milton's paratextual discussion of the generic nature of his poem and the erroneous interpretations of Samson's state offered by Manoa and the Chorus.

Thematic and typological errors work together in *Samson Agonistes*, most notably in the errata list printed at the end of the volume, below the Omissa.[33] The errata instruct readers to return to certain passages, in effect to a second reading: the Chorus' initial

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[32] Dobranski also notes this use of "omission" (59-60).

[33] In broader terms, error is a theme of print culture. The fear that mass circulation of printed books would result in erroneous, even heretical beliefs, exists alongside the conviction that print would allow more accurate texts, particularly of Scripture.

retelling of Samson's history, Samson's first explanation of his choice of the woman of Timna, Manoa's comments on the changes in his son, the Chorus' lament of God's treatment of the afflicted, Samson's estimation of Harapha, the officer's summons to Samson to appear at the festival and Samson's reply, and Manoa's questioning of the messenger after the great noise. Because they contain typographical mistakes and show characters in error, these moments are both thematically and textually erroneous. Christopher Grose shows that both figures in the 1671 volume, the Son in *Paradise Regain'd* and Samson, "engage in extensive review" in their roles as "the heirs of the ideal poet as Milton had once described him" (6). The errata and the Omissa also force the reader into a position of review, in that they imply a second reading of the tragedy, now supplemented with new information that will change the way it is read. The Passion narrative, evoked by the Omissa, is one of these supplements—both an addition and a completion, outside but also essential.

The apparatus of the volume instructs readers to take *Samson Agonistes* as an addition to *Paradise Regain'd*. The placement of the Omissa with an errata list for *both* epics suggests to the reader a return not just to *Samson Agonistes* at the end of the volume but to *Paradise Regain'd* as well. Further, the volume's title page imples a supplementary relationship between its two poems by the phrasing "*Paradise Regain'd* to which is added *Samson Agonistes*."[34] Grose notes that the end of *Samson Agonistes* is also the end of the volume and therefore, at least in part, a qualifying ending for *Paradise Regain'd* (5). Placing *Paradise Regain'd* first, rather than in the order in which the two

[34] Several of Milton's publications—including the 1645 volume, divided into its English and Latin halves—were double books or, in the language of "Ad Joannem Rousium," "twin books, rejoicing in a single robe" (line 1).

stories appear in scripture, gives Milton possibilities that surpass typology. Joseph Wittreich argues that the poems "together form a totality, with the individual poems themselves becoming like fragments" ("'Strange Text!'" 165). Part of the technique by which the volume becomes more than a joining of fragments is the elaborate system of echoes which "are the equivalent of scholia transferred from the margins into the text itself" (174). The textual metaphor needed here to describe the volume is apt; Milton does seem to call upon ways of reading, such as marginal notation, that transferred responsibility to his audience. In this configuration, *Paradise Regain'd* becomes the biblical text and Samson the human interpreter of scripture. Another way of accounting for the order is to view the plots of the two works continuously, so that *Paradise Regain'd* depicts the temptations and *Samson Agonistes* as a whole stands in for the Passion, a narration of which Milton's readers would have expected to follow the temptations.

In fact, the omission and supplement of the Passion in Milton's poetry exemplifies several key principles for reading early modern books. The complex relationship between text and paratext can offer instructions for interpretation or a rebuttal to what is found in the text; in Leah Marcus's words, "the operation of the book is made part of the process of poetic discovery" (187). Additionally, because the Omissa may well represent a late-stage change of intention by the author or even the printer, it attests to the influence of print house practices over the final appearance and content of early printed books. This example suggests that when problems in the text signal problems of interpretation, these difficulties are often associated with constructions and representations of authorship. For Milton, the Crucifixion proves both inevitable and indescribable and his books show this paradox in their complex physical features.

Milton, Christ, and Perfect Authorship

Milton followed a number of his contemporaries in recognizing that the Passion cannot be described except by negative comparisons and rhetorical questions because it is unprecedented, unparalleled, and to some extent unknowable in human terms. Two of the most important precedents for Milton's treatments of the Crucifixion and its resonances in Christian theology and poetry are the eleventh- or twelfth-century Greek tragedy *Christ Suffering* to which he refers in the preface to *Samson Agonistes* and George Sandys' 1640 translation of Hugo Grotius' *Christ's Passion* (1608), a poem that foregrounds through its apparatus problems of authorship in the Passion tradition, including those surrounding the attribution of *Christ Suffering*.[35] The existence of these two tragedies makes clear, first, that Milton avoids writing a Passion play in this tradition and, further, that what he takes from this tradition are its internal contradictions and moments of tension over how to represent the death of Christ. *Christ Suffering* contains, rather than a representation of the Crucifixion, a series of characters, including the chorus and the Mother of God, who struggle to articulate the events of the Passion. Their comments ("I am speechless and have lost my mouth" [631]; "how shall I speak, how shall I tell you?" [643]) provide a model not just for Milton's dramatic choices in *Samson Agonistes*, but also a deeper pattern of distancing that he uses whenever he comes near to the Passion.

Silence is in fact the response to the events of the Passion that the Gospels most highly value because it was Christ's own response. One of the features of the Passion narrative that many commentators struggle to understand is Christ's selective use of

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[35] Kranidas notes that it is "curious that Milton either did not know of the question [of attributing *Christus Patiens* to Gregory of Nazianzus] or chose to ignore it in the preface to *Samson Agonistes*" (99).

silence versus speech, especially during the episodes in which Herod and Pilate interrogate Christ. Christ's silence and speech, which are read by Passion authors as highly complex and meaningful, provide a model for early modern authors. Samuel Walsall takes Christ's silence as a cue that his material warrants special treatment: "I will not talke of that, at which himselfe was silent, his condemnation, whereby the Lord of life was delivered to the power of death" (sig. D1r). And John Gaule's *Practique Theories: or, Votive Speculations upon Christs Prediction, Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection* (1629) suggests that the structure of the Gospels is based on omission because

> many things did Christ, which are not written in his Booke: Yea, and many Things he did, which are written, but not their Manner of doing: Because (in many things) it sufficeth we know, and believe who did it, and why; no matter when, or how. In this, and other pointes and places of holy Scriptures, where the matter is uttered, and manner irrevealed; I cannot be certaine, I would not be curious, I dare not be peremptorie. (364-65)

In this passage Gaule portrays his authorship as an activity limited and shaped by his manner of reading the Bible. His attitude toward Scripture, which he emphasizes is *not* one of curiosity or innovation, allows him to legitimate his writing.

Other authors approach the unspeakable nature of the Passion through metaphors of writing.[36] In Herle, Christ's blood is figured as a substitute for his words, for his lack of complaint. "Sweat and blood are the two best emblemes of labour and Passion, of

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[36] Such imagery has a precedent in earlier writing as well. Bruce Metzger quotes Cassiodorus on the joys of copying the New Testament: "The fast-travelling pen writes down the holy words and thus avenges the malice of the Wicked One, who caused a reed to be used to smite the head of the Lord during his Passion" (quoted in *The Text of the New Testament* 18).

doing and suffering, and so, the best epitomes, or (if you will) journals of our Saviours life and death; for both made up *the travayles of his soule*; the first he wrote in sweat, the other in blood" (1-2). His sweat is compared to the law, and his blood, the Gospel. Herle's discussion of the mocking and scorning of Christ draws on the notion of the Passion as an inexpressible subject, observing that for Christ to be so treated is "so farre beyond that of tongue, as indeed tongue can no way reach it" (112-13). And again, in the chapter on the Crucifixion itself, Herle calls the torture "a subject fitter for meditation then speech: such as fully to expresse, would require both the eloquence and experience of him that felt it: how should I write on, but that my teares should blot out what I write, when 'tis no other then he that is thus us'd, who *hath blotted out that hand writing of ordinances against me*" (320). When he says that the subject is more suited to meditation than speech, he transfers responsibility for the content to the reader. When he notes that writing on the Passion would require experiencing it, he fashions Christ as the ultimate and only author of the Passion.

In Gaule the metaphor is specific to the printed book, again (as in Milton) underscoring the importance of contemporary textuality as a means of accessing the Passion. Christ is a

> *Booke*, and written both of his Name and Pedagree: It is enough; He need add no more, but amplifie: His verie Preface is the Summe of all he can say: The Booke concludes the whole Contents in the Title; and expresses that at first, which afterwards it doth but repeat. Oh that I were able, or worthy to open but his one-Sealed Booke of his Generation; but to looke thereon, and read God the Word in the Word of God! Lord, view me in thee; and let me know thee by thee: who (without thee) am not worthy to

unloose the Latchet of thy Shoo; lesse able to unfold one Leafe of thy Booke, wherein is clasped the Word shod in Flesh. (64)

The Bible itself could be a means for imagining Christ as text. As Bentley explains, the Complutensian Bible (1514-1517) published at Alacalá provided a preface to explain "why the Vulgate appears in the center of the three columns printed on each page: the Hebrew original and Greek Septuagint surround the Latin as the two thieves hung on either side of Jesus at the Crucifixion" (91).

Herle's *Contemplations and Devotions On The severall passages of our blessed Saviours Death and Passion* (1631) uses a book metaphor to compare himself in his sins to those who mocked and wounded Christ: "thus my life what is it but a larger, though lesse printed, lesse studied commentary on their broader text; and doth but descant their blunter, harsher plainesong into more variety of abuse?" (220). The Passion is often presented as an event that is beyond description and yet at the same time solicitous of writing. The indescribable nature of the Passion takes several forms. First, commentators often suggest that writing cannot contain the Passion. As we have seen in Milton, writing and books as objects are characterized by insufficiency. For Robert Holland,

...many other things there are,
That Jesus did also,
Which man with tong cannot declare,
Nor pen paint out: for lo
If written were his works and words,
The world could not containe
The bookes (so much the same affoords)
Unwritten that remaine. (334)

Again, Holland takes his cue from John 21:25, which expresses the vastness of Christ's acts by claiming the incapacity of the written word to contain them. And for Samuel Walsall as well, there is "no deeper booke than Christ's wounds" (*The Life and Death of Jesus Christ* [1607] F3v). John Andrewes prefaces his *Christ His Crosse or The Most Comfortable Doctrine of Christ Crucified* (1614) with an epistle "To the Christian Reader" in which Andrewes writes that although there are already so many books, nothing is more suitable to an author's first book than the Passion. According to Andrewes, "The tongues of all men living (saith *Marlorate*) cannot declare Gods mercies and love towardes us, nor the pennes of all the writers in the world, can never sufficiently expresse the same" (36).

Metaphors of printed books serve the Passion well because of another tradition, as we have seen in Chapter Three, in which Christ himself is portrayed as an author. In Vincenzo Bruno's *An Abridgment of Meditations of the Life, Passion, Death, & Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (English translation 1614) there is a passage in which Christ becomes the author and a reader of the Passion. After uttering his final words on the cross, "How he felt a vehement griefe setting before his eyes, as in a book, all that he had suffered from the houre of his birth untill then, to present them unto his Father, seeing the houre of his death to draw so neere" (198). John Hayward's *Christs Prayer Upon the Crosse, for his enemies* (1642), a work that expands the ten words that Christ spoke upon the cross into a book-length treatment of the Passion, presents Christ as a master of the prayer as a genre, which in some senses it was in the seventeenth century. There is also a connection between his speaking and his wounds, and, in the final line, the speech of others *about* this event: "to heare prayers for them flowing out of thy mouth, with teares and groanes, whilest thy blood was running out of

thy veines; to heare thee plead for them, who wouldest not open thy mouth to speake for they selfe. What shall we say?" (27). There is an important balance, in which Christ is praised both for his silence and his speaking; he has achieved the appropriate combination of the two, which is in effect the art of writing. But, in the final line, "What shall *we* say," Bruno reveals the problem of extrapolating one's own authorial role from the one performed by Christ, who cried not only "with his mouth; but his wounds cryed, his blood cryed, his defilements cryed, his torments cryed, al his members cryed: *Forgive*. So many wounds as he received, so many griefes as he endured; so many mouthes hee opened, with one voyce intreating" (55-56).

Presenting Christ as an author often prompts commentators to consider their own authorship. Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives* (1604) calls on Christ's wounds as the very instruments of her own composition. "Let the Mount Calvarie be our schoole," Grymeston instructs, "his wounds our letters, his lashes our commaes, his nailes our full-points, his open side our booke" (20). Gaule's "speculations" on the Passion begin with a statement of failure:

> We all fayle and erre in no Meditation sooner, then in this of the Passion of Christ. I cannot say whether it bee our Ignorance, or Custome (that we are either unacquainted, or over stalled with it) that makes us many so blind and dull in this Consideration. Either is the Mysterie of his Passion too deepe for our understanding; else is the Historie too common for our admiration. We would start and wonder, to behold the Sunne (at any time) stayed, repelled, darkened; that are not moved, not affected, though we heare (daily) the Sonne of God was mocked, scourged, pierced, dead. (153-54)

Gaule takes as a model for his silence Christ himself, noting that "*Adam* that did the Sinne, shifted it with a reply: Christ that tooke the Sinne, bare it in silence. Our Advocate spared his breath, to plead for us; that now held his peace, and sayd nothing for himselfe" (222). Christ is not entirely silent, however. Herle asks, "shall *Balthazar quake so* with enter-feering *knees & joynts at the hand writing upon the wall* and not I at thy hands here writing thy last will and testament in blood upon the Crosse?" (476).

Christ is also, at least in Grotius, the destroyer of writing. Caiphas describes him as rejecting the laws "writ in leaves of marble" (200) "which Moses' pen reveal'd" (193). Biblical precedents that seem to empower authorship also contain the possibility of the destruction of the written word. Grotius makes clear the association between the ark of the temple in Jerusalem, which contained the original stone tablets of the law, and the vail covering the ark. When Christ's death is consistently represented as tearing the vail, then, this moment can be read as an instance of iconoclasm associated particularly with the written word.

The readings advanced above might be extended to another bibliographic controversy concerning *Samson Agonistes*, the date of its composition. We have seen that revision was one of Milton's most important tools for a poetics of the Passion. The question of dating might similarly reveal traces of revision as a literary technique. Milton "rarely considered any of his works complete and instead continued revising many of them, sometimes substantially, even after they appeared in print" (Dobranski 7). One tradition, most famously expressed by Charles Lamb's repulsion upon seeing a

manuscript of *Lycidas*,[37] considers Milton's revisions more as obstacles to his desired end (a correct copy) than as elements of the process of composition.[38] Another critical thread, influenced by recent theoretical work on authorship and print history and represented primarily by Leah Marcus and Stephen Dobranski, views Milton's revisions instead as revelatory of the culture of seventeenth-century printed literature.

The question of revision dates to the earliest Milton criticism as well, when Edward Philips reports that *Samson Agonistes* was among the works that Milton began before, and completed after, the Restoration. While Dobranski notes that Milton may have had a "specific purpose in bringing out so many texts after 1660, for his final books aptly encapsulate his career as both a poet and prose-writer," the pre- and post-1660 classification of Milton's works has not exposed them to consideration from a bibliographical viewpoint (176). Is this pre- and post-Restoration process of composition indicated in any way within the texts, or within the textual features, of these last works, especially those revised after 1660, and particularly *Samson Agonistes*? The dating controversy—like the debate over the provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*—indicates the state of Milton criticism on the questions of authorship and the nature of early modern literary composition. If Milton composed both works over two decades or more, how do we as modern readers characterize the "author" behind the works? Much of the uneasiness driving the body of scholarship seeking to definitively answer such issues may

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[37] "I had thought of the 'Lycidas' as of a full-grown beauty—as springing up with all its parts absolute—till, in an evil hour, I was shown the original written copy of it, together with the other minor poems of its author, in the Library of Trinity, kept like some treasure to be proud of. I wish they had thrown them in the Cam...." (quoted in Marcus 177).

[38] This view also appears in William Riley Parker's narrative of Milton's relationship with his early printers. After *Animadversions* had been printed, "Milton, for some unknown reason, decided to delete about 1700 words. This meant tearing up four leaves, and printing the remaining matter again—and Milton could hardly complain when pages 45-48 were omitted in the pagination as a result" ("Above All Liberties: John Milton's Relations with His Earliest Publishers," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 2:2, 43).

derive from the continually frustrated desire for one authorial Milton behind a stable body of authorized works (*not* texts). It is worth remembering that this expectation would not have been satisfiable for Milton as a reader, even when it came to the Bible.

In other chapters we have been concerned with the move from reading the Bible to writing scriptural literature. While Milton himself commented extensively on his readings of the Bible, and modern scholars have pursued the thematic and generic elements of Milton's biblical reading, less is known about the materiality of his Bible reading. In other words, what impression, if any, was formed in Milton (in his roles as reader and author) by the textuality of the Bibles he saw, handled, and read? Several critics have raised the textuality of the early modern Bible as a potential area of exploration for literary critics. Dayton Haskin, for instance, claims that

> What has been little explored in recent revisionist criticism, from the point of view of its implications for the practice of poets, is the dismay that many readers felt once they opened their Bibles. A sense of intimidation was partly owing to the material features of the printed Bible, its size and complexity, its layout and display of learning. (x)

In his discussion of the interpretive stances available to seventeenth-century readers of the English Bible, Christopher Hill briefly raises a point which warrants much greater scrutiny, that "among many possible approaches to the Bible, two stand out among the radicals....[One] approach denied the infallibility of the Bible, or submitted it to close textual criticism" (*World Turned Upside Down* 209-10).[39]

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[39] Hill provides examples of such biblical criticism; see pages 213-5.

Milton admits that the text of the New Testament "has been liable to frequent corruption, and in some instances has been corrupted, through the number, and occasionally the bad faith of those by whom it has been handed down, the variety and discrepancy of the original manuscripts, and the additional diversity produced by subsequent transcripts and printed editions" (*De Doctrina Christiana* 275). In *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* Milton appeals to the authority of the Bible on the basis that it is "the onely Booke left us of *Divine* authority" (I: 625).[40] What does Milton's belief in lost biblical books mean for an evaluation of Milton's beliefs about textuality? Milton's engagement with the Passion contributes a significant dimension to our understanding of the poetry of the Reformed church, as he—and some of his contemporaries—labor to demonstrate that full representation of the "sacred remains" of the Crucifixion is untenable, and in doing so trace out the boundaries of the enterprise of divine poetry.

[40] Milton also says, "It is difficult to conjecture the purpose of Providence in committing the writings of the New Testament to such uncertain and variable guardianship, unless it were to teach us by this very circumstance that the Spirit which is given to us is a more certain guide than Scripture, whom therefore it is our duty to follow" (*DDC* 277-79).

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