

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: “IS THIS YOUR MANLY SERVICE?”: RELIGION,
GENDER, AND DRAMA IN EARLY MODERN
ENGLAND, 1558-1625

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This project argues that the interplay between religion and gender on the early modern English stage was a crucial means toward religious mediation and theatrical affect. Playwrights exploited the tensions between gender and reformed Christianity to expose the inconsistencies and contradictions within the period’s religious polemic, to combine various religious expressions and habits of thought, to deepen sensitivity toward England’s tenuous religious settlements, and to advance their art form. Furthermore, this project argues that the theater was better equipped than any other cultural and political institution to handle England’s complex religious situations. This study, then, engages a broader scholarly effort to understand the relationship between theater and religion during England’s ongoing reformations.

Chapter 1 discusses how reformed biblical exegesis underwrote the staging of female piety in Lewis Wager’s Calvinist *Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* (1566). Because this play surprises audiences with its endorsement of Mary’s devotion,

Wager qualifies our sense that the Reformation was relentlessly committed to repressing sensual worship and stamping out iconophilic fervor. To heighten theatrical affect, his play inverts associations between femininity and sin even as he defends the theater in Calvinist terms.

Chapter 2 assesses the interaction of religion, gender, and kingship in Shakespeare and company's three *Henry VI* plays (~1592-95). By heightening the tensions between militant Protestantism and Christian humanism, the playwrights ask searching questions about the compatibility of reformed Christianity and kingship and about the place of Christian piety on the popular stage. To test various dramatic paces, to tap the theatrical possibilities of a weak and peaceful Christian king, and to unsettle audiences, Shakespeare and his collaborators show what is lost and gained by a culture that cannot reconcile masculine rule to reformed Christian piety.

Chapter 3 argues that Thomas Dekker and Philip Massinger's *The Virgin Martir* (1622) takes advantage of Jacobean religious compromises and impasses. By staging a martyrdom that invokes sensual beauty and physical vulnerability, this play stresses reform, recalls John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, and endorses what Lancelot Andrewes called "the beauty of holiness": the iconic splendor that reformers stripped from the Mass. As it bears witness to Jacobean England's vexing religious settlement, the play exploits the recurring post-Reformation conflict between text, reform, and godly masculinity on the one hand, and spectacle, ceremonialism, and feminized piety on the other.

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by

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2011

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DEDICATION

To my family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the time, effort, and generosity of my committee members. Kent Cartwright, always courteous, knew how to balance praise with critical commentary. Kim Coles helped me to contextualize my arguments. She also introduced me to important scholarship at the Folger, even as she had her own work piled on a table in the reading room. Theresa Coletti helped me to broaden the scope and clarify the importance of my project. Her unwavering encouragement made it impossible for my confidence to waver. Phil Soergel was accommodating and reassuring. And Ted Leinwand always knew how to bring my attention back to the theater. His keen eyes, unwavering dedication, painstaking readings, and brilliant insights have led to what succeeds in this project.

I also wish to thank Jane Hwang Degenhardt for her feedback on a portion of Chapter 3; to Linda Shenk, Carole Levin, and other participants at the 2010 Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo for their reactions to a portion of Chapter 3; to Paul White, Jeffrey Knapp, Alexandra Johnston, and other attendants at the 2005 Elizabethan Theater Conference in Waterloo for providing key insights after I presented a very early portion of Chapter 1; and to Patricia Badir, who let me see sections of her book on Mary Magdalene before its release date. These people demonstrate how goodwill and scholarship go hand-in-hand.

I would also like to thank Keith Botelho, Kate Bossert, David Coley, Beth Colson, Lara and Tim Crowley, Betty Hageman, Donna Hamilton, Gillian Knoll, Jody Lawton, Doug Lanier, Linda Macri, Chris Maffucio, Meg Pearson, and Margaret Rice. Marc Lavallee has been a good friend throughout this process, as has Jim Poisson, whose

heart is always in the right place. Marc, Jim, Jack Berry, and Jack's summer reading group—Fr. Ryan Connors, Tom Keefe, Ben Thorpe, Steve Salomone, Mike St. Thomas, and Andy Tardiff—surprised me with new ideas and kept my intellect and imagination working during Rhode Island's humid July mornings (Jim's donuts from Allie's and Jack's limitless coffee helped, too).

I would like to thank my grandparents, Frank and the late Natalie Williams, whose heartening support made my career choice possible. My mother, Marilyn, my brothers, Vin and Andrew, and my father, Vinnie, also lent their support. I also thank my in-laws, Dennis and Marcia, for the help that I cannot even begin to list here. Lastly, I thank my wife, Candice, who has sacrificed more than I ever could.

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INTRODUCTION

All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players.
 They have their exits and their entrances,
 And one man in his time plays many parts,
 His acts being seven stages. At first the infant,
 Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
 Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school; and then the lover,
 Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
 Made to his mistress' eyebrow; then a soldier
 Full of stange oaths and bearded like the pard,
 Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
 Seeking the bubble reputation
 Even in the cannon's mouth; and then the justice,
 In fair round belly with good capon lined,
 With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
 Full of wise saws and modern instances;
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
 With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
 His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide
 For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
 That ends this strange eventful history,
 Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
 (As You Like It 2.7.140b-67)

The world according to Jaques is a stage without religion. He steadfastly avoids any religious overtones that might contextualize his otherwise discouraging rendition of the *theatrum mundi* trope.¹ There were other choices. The protheatricalist Thomas Heywood followed in the footsteps of the church fathers when he envisaged a stage

¹ For a survey of the religious, philosophical, and literary origins of *theatrum mundi*, see Christian's book. Also see Davis and Postlewait 8-11. For patristic applications of the topos, including Augustine's and Tertullian's, see Christian 34-41. Of course, there are classical and astrological appropriations in Jaques' speech, but even these he strips of any hint of religion. For instance, his seven ages parallel the seven spheres, but none of them is the Sun (Bradford 174-75).

“fill[ed]” with actors for God’s amusement and judgment: from the “starre-galleries of hye ascent,” God could “applaud the best” and “doom the rest” (*An Apology for Actors* sigs. A8r-A8v).² Pierre Boaistuau’s theatricalization of the divine comedy, though more frightening, is ultimately salvific: with death, the “end of this bloudie Tragedie,” and amid God’s “dreadful laughter,” comes knowledge of sin and the desire to enter heaven (sig. A4v). Even John Calvin was wont to praise the world that he feared as God’s majestic, dazzling theater.³

Jaques conjures a series of brief *manly* shows. Following the “mewling and puking” infant and the “whining schoolboy” but before an emaciated man’s “second childishness,” the lover sighs “like a furnace,” the soldier is “sudden and quick to quarrel,” and the fat justice sits “[w]ith eyes severe and beard of formal cut.” Although Jaques’s speech begins in the spirit of gender equality—“men *and* women are...players”—he is not interested in female performances, not even a “chaste lady” or a “wanton Curtezan” (Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, sig. A8v).⁴ In Jaques’s “strange eventful history,” and in spite of female empowerment in Arden, the significant correlation is between age and masculinity.

A subtle challenge to its literary and religious antecedents, Jaques’s *theatrum mundi* speech also interrupts a subplot that conflates Christianity, civility, fraternity, and femininity. After Orlando aggressively demands food from Duke Senior and his entourage, the duke sets out to soften the “emboldened” “cock” (2.7.91-92). Threatening

² Heywood’s version of *theatrum mundi*—“so compared by the Fathers”—appears in the prefatory poem, “The Author to his Book.”

³ For Calvin’s mention of *theatrum mundi*, see R. White.

⁴ Scolnicov also observes that Jaques is not interested in the parts that women play in the world (31).

speeches and raised swords have no place in a world “where bells have knolled to church,” where deprived men have “sat at any good man’s feast,” where tears are signs of sympathy and men “know what ‘tis to pity and be pitied” (107-18). In Arden, Orlando now intuitively, it is the strength of the Beatitudes that prevails: “Let gentleness my strong enforcement be” (119).⁵ Himself having heard the “holy bell” and wept with “sacred pity” (122-24), Duke Senior bids Orlando: “sit you down in *gentleness* / And take upon *command* what help we have / That to your wanting may be *ministered*” (125-27, my italics). From the Old Testament to the Gospels, from commandment to ministry, from “desert” to civilization, from postlapsarian survivalism to Christian paradox, their dialogue counters what prefigures it in Act 1—Orlando and Oliver’s Cain-and-Abel strife. Christian typology informs this brotherly exchange.⁶

Brotherly, but Orlando nevertheless feminizes his newfound civility—he “blush[es] and hide[s]” his sword (120) and imagines himself “a doe” who must “find [her] fawn, / And give it food” (129-30a). This maternal Orlando is not to be found in Greene, Ariosto, or Pulci. His antecedent is *intratextual*, looking back to Shakespeare’s own *Venus and Adonis*, when Venus “runs”

Like a milch doe whose swelling dugs do ache,
Hasting to feed her fawn hid in some brake. (*Venus and Adonis* 871-76)

When Orlando first lets it be known that he “know[s] some nurture” (*AYL* 2.7.98), he is asserting his status; but when he recalls this longing, lactating Venus, he reimagines

⁵ Chris Fitter discusses the religious tone of this scene in terms of the play’s rebuke of class stratification and official repression of the poor (“Reading” 132).

⁶ Dusiherber notices how “*anaphora*—words repeated at the beginning of a phrase or clause—creates the effect of liturgy” here (*AYL* 226, n. 122). Although Phebe Jensen links these references to “bells” and “holy bells” to a Catholic sentiment, church bells were tolerated in Elizabethan and Jacobean England (P. Jensen, *Religion and Revelry* 133-34, Cressy, *Bonfires* 69-70).

nurture. It is then unsurprising that Duke Senior responds to Orlando's reappearance (with Adam, on cue, just after Jaques speaks of a "second childishness ... *sans* everything") in the language of maternity and of nurture: "Welcome. Set down your venerable *burden* / And let him *feed*" (168-69, my emphasis).⁷ Orlando has become an amalgam of a new Adam and mother to an old Adam, not quite a "mewling and puking" "infant" (2.7.144-45). And this may explain why Orlando is in the best position to rid theatricality of Jaques' nihilism. He arrives in Arden playing the part of heroic masculinity, but in the blink of an eye, he begins to play the Christian woman.

This dissertation examines the unprecedented and profound intertwining of theater as mode, gender as ideology, and religion as practice in early modern England that we see condensed into a portion of a scene from *As You Like It*. What looks unforced and almost intuitive in the staged Arden turned out to be much more troubling when gender ideology and Christianity intersected in early modern England. Succeeding English reformations strained to masculinize true religion, but Orlando appears effortlessly to embrace its feminine configurations. And yet, even for Orlando, there are unforeseen consequences: after the Christian feast comes impotence. His love poetry is "lame"; his "feet" cannot "bear" his verse (3.2.161-67). He is dependent on Rosalind to envision him as a Herculean lionslayer, a vaguely Christian warrior whose mark of civility is blood on a cloth. In England's theaters, audiences contended not so much with theology catechized or doctrine expounded, but rather with the confounding relationship between acceptable religious deportment and traditional gender ideology.

⁷ In *King John*, Shakespeare uses "burden" to refer to a child in the womb ("burden" *OED*, 4a). Dusiñberre notes that Samuel Johnson cross-referenced Orlando's return with Aeneas's escape (*AYL* 230, n. 168).

I argue that gender norms and Christian reform not only bear upon early modern English drama but are themselves inflected by theatricality. Theaters were not just places where religion and gender intersected one another as ideologies and as practices; theaters productively influenced their interplay. Competing religionists' efforts to gender religion and to reform by way of gender ideology inspired innovative theatricalities. Whether theater extended, subverted, satirized, bolstered, hindered, or cultivated cultural associations between religion and gender, it advanced its own aesthetic. There was no better place in England to rehearse the formation and the reformation of (religious) identities, to heighten or allay attendant anxieties, and to stage the surprising compatibility of seemingly agonistic religious experiences.

To understand religion and gender as adjunct systems that were modulated and reconfigured on the stage, we must reconsider the commonly held assumption that reformers masculinized piety in early modern England.⁸ From the start, religious reforms were defined and promoted in gendered terms. Inveighing against papist machinations that they believed had weakened and effeminized England, reformers like William Tyndale sought to strengthen the church and the state from both the top down and the bottom up.⁹ A prince beholden to the Roman bishops would be "soft as silke and effeminate, that is to say turned unto the nature of a woman" who cannot "resist" her "lustes" when "with child" (Tyndale sigs. P1v and Q4v). Laymen who sought wisdom in

⁸ See Eire 315, Diehl, *Staging Reform* 172, and Dolan 7.

⁹ The degree to which reform was both a bottom-up and a top-down phenomenon has been a central question among historians. Collinson's *Birthpangs* emphasizes the former, Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altar*, the latter. The ongoing debate has been extensively and repeatedly covered. See, among others, Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*; Haigh, *English Reformations*; Lake and Questier, *The AntiChrist's Lewd Hat*; MacCulloch, *The Reformation*; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*; and Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*.

Roman superstitions would find themselves like Lucrece, who valued “her own glory in her chastity and not gods” and whose type of “pride God more abhorreth then the whoredome of any whore” (Tyndale sigs. R1r-R1v). Tyndale’s disturbing assessment—that self-pride, not rape did her in—participates in a trend that associates sin and religious infidelity with sexual penetration and female promiscuity. It is not enough for Tyndale to claim that idolators and papists “ascribe heaven unto their imaginations and mad inventions” (sig. R1v). Tyndale’s choice of analogies makes it clear that reform, when polemicized, is as much about reinforcing patriarchal norms and deepening gender anxieties as it is about reviling church abuses and clearing space for God’s kingdom. To call the unfaithful “whore[s]” is to build reform on the back of misogyny.

Tyndale set the tone for later polemical discourse. Whether pointing to the allegorical Whore of Babylon or David and Daniel, countless treatises and sermons both initiated and reinforced dominant associations between masculinity and reform, femininity and (Catholic) superstition.¹⁰ But religious polemic does not tell the whole story of culture and religion in early modern England, and gender anxiety was not systemic in England’s predominant religious culture.¹¹ Debora Shuger holds that scholars must attend to religious “continuities” as well as “transformations” in early modern England (“The Reformation of Penance” 571). That she has been making this point for over twenty years suggests that there is still work to do, and, quite possibly, that scholarship has sometimes tacked in the opposite direction.¹² To posit that gender

¹⁰ Marotti 36-37, Dolan 102-18 and *passim*.

¹¹ I follow the lead of such scholars as Debora Shuger and Jeffrey Knapp, who have analyzed the ways religion overlapped with all aspects of life in early modern England.

¹² See *Habits of Thought* (22 and *passim*).

anxiety is an early modern, post-Reformation condition, and to associate female piety with outmoded, reviled Catholic superstition, is to divorce medieval Christianity entirely and unhistorically from the new Christianities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹³

To pretend that reformed Christianity and the gender ideologies that it sponsored were as settled as the polemicists would have us believe is no less erroneous. By bringing the theater into this picture as a third term, beside religion and gender, we can better descry the heuristic limits of hard and fast categories. Like expansive Venn spheres, theater, religion, and gender worked into one another as playwrights tried to make sense of the period's religious tension and brooding political and social crises. The early modern stage evaluated ideologies of reform in terms of gender; it represented religious practice to trouble gender ideologies; and, in the process, it discovered viable theatricalities. Playwrights assayed early modern English religion in ways that were simply not available to the crown, the press, the preacher, or the pamphleteer.

The English Reformation was a series of transitional, incomplete, and interrupted reformations.¹⁴ Henry VIII resisted key reforms.¹⁵ His archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, slowly and methodically constructed a new religious program that, although never reformed enough for hardliners, was suddenly dismantled in 1553. Queen Elizabeth may have endorsed Cranmer's vision of the English Church, but she still disappointed leading

¹³ Scholarship that places reform on a linear track cannot help but make this mistake. For instance, see O'Connell. Of course, many literary critics have effectively blurred these boundaries. For example, see Beckwith, "Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet*" and Womack (esp. 180-184).

¹⁴ See Haigh and Duffy.

¹⁵ MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* 207-235.

reformers who hoped for further religious change and ecclesiastical improvements.¹⁶ The same applies to King James, who endorsed Protestant forms of worship even as he stymied a host of other efforts at reform.¹⁷ Reform at the universities, not to mention amid the populace, was even more painstakingly tumultuous.¹⁸ Early modern English culture remained a mosaic of incongruous, if not incompatible, habits of thought.¹⁹ In each major arena of culture—the court, the pulpit, the university, the theater, the streets, and even the home—ambiguity and nuance, not certainty and settled opinion, obtained.

We are also in a good position to assess the varied part played by gender ideology in society and in politics. In London proper and its liberties, gender roles were shifting in response to economic pressure and unprecedented social mobility.²⁰ At Court, Queen Elizabeth was busy exploiting prevailing gender stereotypes when she was not stretching them to the breaking point. She proclaimed and traded on her much publicized virginity even as she engaged in intense marriage negotiations. She insisted that she had a kingly heart and stomach, but official images of her often idealized and sensualized her virginity.²¹ From 1559 to 1603, religious and political notables seasoned their eulogies

¹⁶ MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation* 28-30.

¹⁷ See Chapter 3 below.

¹⁸ See Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, for diversity among university reformers. See Watt, Duffy, and Lake and Questier for religious heterogeneity in English culture.

¹⁹ Shuger tracks conflicting epistemologies in the works of Lancelot Andrewes and Richard Hooker (*Habits of Thought* 17-90). As I point out in Chapter 1, Calvin was anything but consistent. More recently, Lake and Questier have investigated English religious plurality in popular print and have found that what Shuger calls “complex and divergent assumptions” inhere in early modern religious culture (Shuger, *Habits of Thought* 9; Lake and Questier, 713 and *passim*).

²⁰ Howard, “Crossdressing.”

²¹ See Chapter 2 below.

and condemnations of her with incompatible gender stereotypes. From John Knox to the Earl of Essex, from John Foxe to Philip Sidney, influential men proved incapable of orchestrating a consistent response to their female sovereign. If reform masculinized England, if superstition was as tempting and seductive as a woman, and if women themselves were innately susceptible to Catholic machinations, then what was England to do with Elizabeth, the Supreme Governor of the church and avowed Protestant champion who also happened to pray before a silver cross?²² No matter that reformers and courtiers linked Elizabeth with Deborah and Judith, they could never eliminate the underlying, unstated assumption that a woman had no business lording over a realm, never mind a reformed church. Her gender did not fit easily within the Protestant, patriarchal narrative, even when her stature forced English reform to accommodate femininity.

Unlike England's Court and churches, England's theaters solicited audiences to look and think beyond Catholic/Protestant, Protestant/Puritan, masculine/feminine. Highly sophisticated negotiations about the meanings, extent, pace, and goals of reform were conducted on London's stages even as the "purposes of playing" themselves were debated.²³ Consider the struggle to define the religious aesthetic of Shakespearean theater. Huston Diehl sees in the last scene of *The Winter's Tale* a defense of the theater as a place for preaching—a defense in Protestant, even Puritan terms, against antitheatricalists who used idioms of reform to excoriate the theater ("Does not the stone

²² See Dolan for Protestant fears of the female Catholic (27-32, 48-94).

²³ Of course, I have in mind Louis Montrose's *Purpose of Playing*, which analyzes the theater's responses to the very "socioeconomic, political, and religious forces and institutions that shaped ... [the] conditions of [theatrical] production" (xi).

rebuke me”).²⁴ And yet, Diehl may be too quick to reduce Hermione’s transformation—from graven image to “warm” female body—to an “early Protestant” version of the Pauline rebuke (80). Phebe Jensen argues that the same play represents a Catholic aesthetic (*Religion and Revelry* 194-233). Its pastoral and reconciliatory scenes in Acts 4 and 5 are culminations of efforts elsewhere in Shakespeare’s comedies to tie festive performance and revelry to their Catholic traditions. But Jensen situates Leontes’ repentance within the Catholic tradition of penance as if there were no acceptable forms and theories of repentance in early Jacobean England. Although Diehl and Jensen acknowledge England’s religious diversity of thought, they too quickly ascribe hardened religious categories to acts and scenes that were imbricated in a heterogenous religious milieu.²⁵

Anthony Dawson dismisses *any* such imbrications. Instead, he defines the theater—particularly, Shakespeare’s theater—as a “secularizing” institution where performances might “have religious analogues, maybe even origins, and produce responses akin to religious feelings, but at the same time ... undergo a transfer when they shift into the theatrical sphere” (84). Like Jeffrey Knapp, Diehl, and Jensen, Dawson recognizes the religious heterogeneity in early modern England, but then he refuses to credit the theater with any overtly religious function: “Theatrical belief *replaces* religious faith” (97, my emphasis). But this is too readily to limit religion to indoctrination and to

²⁴ Diehl’s reading of *The Winter’s Tale* extends an argument that she has made about reform and comedies like Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*: “Rather than simply repudiating puritan culture, the comedies of early modern England ... imaginatively engage its assumptions, cleverly appropriate and transform its genres, and creatively respond to its challenges to the stage” (“Disciplining Puritans and Players” 88).

²⁵ Here is another example of this trend: while P. Jensen reads *As You Like It* as an endorsement of ritualistic, festive, Catholic theatricality (*Religion and Revelry* 117-48; “Mirth in Heaven”), Robert Watson describes the play’s early modern, post-Reformation skepticism and its postlapsarian futility (77-107).

official liturgical spaces. Faith and devotion were by no means localized; they might be found in (and be as profound in) Cheapside Cross or the Globe, where audiences could hear the bells ring at St. Mary Overies nearby.²⁶ Nor are we saying much if we argue that plays are secularizing because they do not subscribe to particular religious doctrines; plays entertain various religious strains because England's religious settlements enabled an assortment of pieties and beliefs that were only infrequently doctrinally compatible.

When we move from the stock caricatures and doctrinal distinctions of early modern England to its ambiguous religious expressions—kneeling at communion, or making the sign of the cross, or simply wearing a cross—we can better make out not the barriers but the overlaps between femininity and tradition on the one hand, and masculinity and reform on the other.²⁷ This applies with equal force to religion in the theaters. Not only is a Protestant in 1557 altogether different from a Protestant in 1607, but in any *one* year, Protestants were not alike. Nor were Catholics. We ought not to use convenient religious labels to cover over the religious patchwork that was the backdrop of early modern theater.²⁸

In the chapters that follow, I endeavor to interpret plays in light of their specific religious contexts and of the nuanced religious positions that they rework for the stage.

²⁶ For the bells of St. Mary Overies, see *AYL*, 225, n. 115.

²⁷ Kneeling at communion was a recurring issue in early modern England (see Chapter 3, below). For making the sign of the cross, especially as pedestrians passed the Cheapside Cross, see Cressy, *Travesties* 234-50. For the fashion of cross necklaces, see Dolan 27-28.

²⁸ Frances Dolan is careful to point out that, "[l]ike everyone else in the period, Catholics existed in the midst of a sloppy transition from image to word, a transition that, of course, can never be complete" (29), and she understands that "each side could employ the language of gender inversion to different ends" (53). However, she seems to assume that fears of feminization were rooted in English Protestant culture. She does not consider the acceptable, female forms of worship in post-Reformation England. Marotti also recognizes the fantasies of polemic, but he implies that polemic had a major stake in the development of England's religious culture, which, according to Lake and Questier, was much more pluralistic.

Moreover, I dwell on the interplay of religion and gender in order to reveal how theater, at least, resisted the temptation to oversimplify England's rich if unsettling religious milieu.²⁹ Close attention to representative dramas set beside seminal religious texts—Calvin's *Institutes* and commentaries, Erasmus's Christian humanist writings, Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, and sermons by Lancelot Andrewes and his contemporaries—indicates that affective pieties and “feminine” markers of Christian faith were accommodated in post-Reformation England. I also discuss the many ways that religious discourse and dramaturgy countervail what scholars have deemed essential to post-Reformation, masculinized religious culture. My focus, then, draws on criticism of iconoclasm, religious militancy, and disembodied pieties both on and off the stage. There were reasons within the reformed tradition *not* to fear the senses, there was thoughtful concern among reformers over the paradox of Christian militancy, and there was a mixture of moderating forces that gave rise to England's nominally reformed, ever-reforming religion. Each of these affected the pace and direction of English reform over a span of decades. And each of these surfaces on the early modern English stage.

In Chapter 1, I discuss how reformed biblical hermeneutics underwrote the staging of feminine spirituality in Lewis Wager's *Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* (1566). Unlike John Bale's *The Temptation of Our Lord* (~1538), which ignores Jesus' body to foreground His Word, and Thomas Garter's Elizabethan play, *The Vertuous and Godlye Susanna* (1569), which curtails its central female character's agency, Lewis Wager's “Calvinist” *Life and Repentance* evinces an interest in the power

²⁹ I am aware of polemical dramas like Thomas Dekker's *Whore of Babylon*, but even here, the demarcations of religion and gender are not clear cut. The evil church is feminized, but so is the true church (Dolan 55).

of feminine devotion even as it deploys Calvinist exegesis.³⁰ Rather than simply put theater to work for reform, Wager has reform work for the theater. He qualifies our sense that the Reformation and the theater of reform were relentlessly committed to repressing sensual worship and stamping out iconophilic fervor. His theatricality is answerable to the often contradictory hermeneutics of a Reformation that was anything but settled in his day. Affective piety and the power of the female religious figure persist in spite of efforts to reform modes of worship. Wager's surprising treatment of Mary Magdalene encourages us to reconsider the scope and purpose of sixteenth-century biblical glosses, particular reformers' sermons, and Calvin's exegetical writings.

Wager seems intuitively to have recognized the provocative, theatrical potential of staging aspects of contemporary polemical commentary on the relations between religion and gender. If Mary Magdalene's femininity is to blame for her sexual promiscuity, it is her gender that makes her receptive to grace. And if Mary's sexual dalliances, her trendy fashions, and her idolized beauty signal her sinfulness, her spectacular, patently sensual, maybe even iconic devotion at Christ's feet verifies her faith. Whereas Bale was content to enervate theater for the purpose of indoctrination, Wager electrifies Mary's ablutions. Her version of reformed Christianity outflanks iconoclastic obsessions over her, even as *Life and Repentaunce* demonstrates how to breathe theatrical life into a seemingly outdated religious icon.

In Chapter 2, I assess the relationship between religion, gender, and kingship in Shakespeare's three *Henry VI* plays (~1592-95). These plays ask searching questions about the compatibility of Christianity and kingship, about the place of Christian piety on

³⁰ O'Connell has made the argument that Bale's drama "textualizes" the stage; its stress on the Word eliminates the image and the body as ways toward understanding and practicing the faith.

the popular stage, and about the gendering of Christian monarchy. What options were available to sovereigns when *imitatio Christi* clashed with political necessity? Could a peacemaking Christian appeal to audiences who paid to watch an English history play? The focus of this chapter—Henry VI—implements Christian humanist policy to the ire of his court's factions and his wife. With this character, Shakespeare and his collaborators probed religious conceptions of monarchy—the Christian ideal, God's intercessor, warrior for Christ—by calling attention to the gendered aspect of royal performance. When Christianity weakens a king, does it effeminize him? If so, what happens to his masculinity? Is masculinity at odds with the laws of Christianity? Is masculine rule vitiated by chastity, humility, and patience? Shakespeare and his collaborators show what is lost and gained by a culture that cannot reconcile masculine rule to reformed Christian piety.

The *Henry VI* plays were not unique in intimating that Christianity, even when reformed, is feminizing to rulers. Such is the case with Thomas Heywood's Elizabeth who, in *If You Know Not Me, You Know No Body, Or the Troubles of Queen Elizabeth* (1605), radiates femininity and piety until she receives the crown. Whenever monarchs were represented on stage, each performed a distinctly gendered regality. On stage, and in early modern culture at large, virility was often at odds with religion. Piety, humility, and clemency impaired masculine rule; war, vengeance, and capital executions sustained it. Of course, playwrights were not alone in trying to resolve the tensions between realpolitik and Christian charity. I read their efforts alongside Christian humanist efforts to reconcile Christianity to rule: namely, Antonio de Guevara's *The Dial of Princes*

(1558, rpt. 1582), Erasmus's political theology, Elizabeth I's official imagery, and Thomas Roger's translation *Of the Imitation of Christ* (1580).

In Chapter 3, I discuss Thomas Dekker and Phillip Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr* (1622) in terms of its Jacobean religious contexts. A staged conflation of the St. Dorothy and St. Agnes legends, the play fantasizes that the godly never truly feel torture but that God's elect may experience a kind of sensuality otherwise deemed sinful in post-Reformation England. It stresses reform even as it endorses what Lancelot Andrewes called "the beauty of holiness": the iconic splendor that reformers stripped from the Mass and that Andrewes sought to restore. This balance speaks unmistakably to Jacobean disputes over religious practice. By staging a spectacular martyrdom that invokes both Dorothea's sensualized beauty of holiness and her physical invulnerability, the play aims to resolve the conflict between text, reform, and godly masculinity on the one hand, and spectacle, ceremonialism, and feminized piety on the other.

In its commitment to a *via media* theatricality, *The Virgin Martyr* calls attention to the various early modern genderings of martyrdom and conversion, hence to crucial religious rites which were often the subject of polemical vitriol, but which here are given almost ecumenical power. *The Virgin Martyr* is one among a number of plays—*Malcontent* (1604), *Measure for Measure* (1604), *The Martyr'd Soldier* (1619), *Two Noble Ladies* and *The Converted Conjuror* (1622), and *Maid of Honour* (1628)—in which dramatists envision radically different, highly gendered conversions and/or martyrdoms. Their dramas answer to an ecclesiologically and theologically "Anglican," hence confusingly neither Protestant nor Catholic, English religious settlement.

In each chapter, Elizabeth, either as present or past queen, enters my discussion just as she infiltrated contemporary analyses of religious reform and its gendered entailments. It was one of the surprises of my research to discover the extent to which the negotiations and quandaries that preoccupy these plays pertain to the Tudor queen. Each major strain of reform which I survey—English Calvinism, Protestant militancy, and *via media* aspirations—struggles to mediate religious tensions and resolve religious incongruities that were linked to Elizabeth and her self-fashionings. When we look closely enough at Wager’s “reformed” Magdalene, Shakespeare’s baffling Henry VI, or Dekker and Massinger’s pure and impervious Dorothea, we discover hints of the Queen, her detractors, and her elegists. It would be hard to overstate the extent to which Elizabeth factored into the period’s gender and religious instabilities.

Beyond their direct and indirect affiliations with Queen Elizabeth, the plays that I discuss bear constant witness to the complex interplay of theater, religion, and gender at three significant historical moments: the tumultuous beginnings of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, the brooding religious and political conflicts of Elizabeth’s later years, and the tenuous religious compromises at home and abroad toward the end of King James’s reign. Contemporary canonical drama is similarly preoccupied: in Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, the path to hell begins with a vow to play the man; in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, violent masculinity cannot fully acquiesce to the directives of Christian faith; and in John Webster’s *The White Devil*, nothing religious is reliable, because nothing religious is masculine. Time and time again in early modern English dramas, gendered religious performances challenged audience members who found themselves in the crossfire of

ongoing religious crises. And yet, these same performances signaled a poignant desire to allay the cultural anxieties which produced them.

CHAPTER 1

“A WOMAN TERRESTRIAL?”: RETHINKING THEATER AND REFORM IN
LEWIS WAGER’S *LIFE AND REPENTAUNCE OF MARIE MAGDALENE*

Lewis Wager’s *Life and Repentaunce of Mary Magdalene* (1566), a recognizable product of the Elizabethan settlement, strikes a balance between theater and reform that favors theatricality over indoctrination. Edwardians and Elizabethans were as apt to soften their religious stances as they were to harden them, and Wager was no exception.¹ His play endorses John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and it mocks papists; but because it retains key, unreformed elements of the Magdalene legend, it subtly explores the possibilities and the limits of English reform.² Indeed, the former Franciscan turned playwright exploits the affect-laden bodies of Magdalene and Christ in ways that were uncongenial to reformation drama. Wager not only recapitulates what some reformers considered careless, even unscrupulous exegesis; he indulges in sensual expressions of faith, and he blends variously contentious Christian belief-systems. At a time when theologians, church leaders, and preachers were formulating their reformed versions of Christianity, Wager the dramatist made the stage a pulpit where bodies mattered.

¹ The play’s date of composition is uncertain. According to Paul White, *Life and Repentaunce* is a late-Edwardian play because: (1) it resembles John Bale’s morality plays; (2) it paraphrases Calvin’s *Institutes*, first available in Latin in 1539; (3) Wager’s death in 1562 makes an Elizabethan composition unlikely; and (4) the play’s Prologue, which claims that the play had been “exercised” “a long season,” advises “true obedience to the kynge,” not the queen (*Life and Repentaunce* 10-11 and 34; White, *Theatre and Reformation* 80-81 and O’Connell 99). But Jeffrey Knapp leaves open the possibility of an early Elizabethan composition, and Kent Cartwright argues for *circa* 1558 (Knapp 40; Cartwright 147). On the title page, Charlewood markets the 1566 publication as a “new Enterlude,” “very delectable for those which shall heare or reade the same” (emphasis mine). At least in the printer’s mind, this play was meant for Elizabethan audiences and readers. I have approached it as an Elizabethan script that wrestles with the ongoing English Reformation.

² For more on Wager’s use of Calvin’s *Institutes*, see White’s appendix to the play (142-44) and his *Theatre and Reformation* (181-85).

Life and Repentaunce could hardly be more different from its late-fifteenth century precursor, the Digby Magdalene. The older script theatricalizes the legend of Mary Magdalene to appeal to the “material and spiritual interests” of its East Anglian audience (Coletti, “Paupertas” 350), whereas Wager’s play, printed after decades of religious upheaval, cuts major sections of the Magdalene *vita*, excludes the circumstances of her wealth, and has Mary undergo Calvinist absolution: first grace, then faith, repentance, and love. There is nothing of her post-biblical ministry. She does not travel to Marseilles, and her piety does not turn eremitic.³ But neither does Wager make a clean break with Magdalene tradition. His Mary comes from “worshipful stock” (177), seeks a life of leisure, and unabashedly wraps her hair around Jesus’s feet. These features dangerously align his play with the very Magdalene narrative that moderate and radical reformers were eager to rescind.⁴

Despite the various Edwardian reforms revamped at the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, there was concern among reformers that parishioners still cherished outmoded devotional practices to which Mary Magdalene bears witness.⁵ For a play to celebrate Maudlin expressions of piety in 1566 was to challenge a reformation which paradoxically set the conditions for Wager’s composition. Certainly a reformed drama, *Life and*

³ Cf. White, *Theater and Reformation* 82, Badir, *The Maudlin Impression* 31-32, Cartwright 147, and Happé 227-31.

⁴In the *Book of Common Prayer*, there seems to have been an official attempt to marginalize Magdalene. Its account of John 20 on Easter Day leaves out her weeping at the tomb (153-54). She is the only female saint in the 1549 edition (Shuger, *Renaissance* 169), but she is left out of the 1552 and 1559 official calendars. In the 1561 calendar, she is once again mentioned among the other saints, but without any devotional status (Blunt 24, 127-28; cf. Cressy, *Bonfires* 5-7).

⁵For the validity of these concerns, see Duffy, *Stripping* 565-93.

Repentance nonetheless plots its own course-correction for the reformed stage and for the English Reformation.

Quite simply, Wager's play bears witness to the confusing religious situation in England during the 1560s. It popularizes academic efforts to discover, test, and respond to nascent Calvinist beliefs and epistemologies. The play's evocation of Calvin's own writings is not so much a sign of complete affirmation as an effort to dovetail Calvinist thought with an assortment of traditional and reformed early Elizabethan pieties. While the play often paraphrases Calvin's writings, the physical expressions cued for its actors, and the text's vivid reflections on those expressions, offer a brand of Calvinism that is protheatrical and that gingerly accommodates traditional, affective piety. It is, then, fair to say that Wager's play was daring, at least at this moment when "the opinions of every English divine of significance could be accommodated, without undue strain, within a framework of thought that was recognisably Calvinist" (Lake, *Moderate Puritans* 226), and when religious heavyweights like John Foxe were reconstructing the bodies of martyrs to serve proselytizing efforts. Wager is ever avid to remind theatergoers that Magdalene, and the sensuous, female piety that she represents, could still signal Calvinist faith and salvation within the reformed church.

If, following Michael O'Connell, reformation drama was reformed, hence not medieval, doctrinaire and so not affective, instructive but not theatrical, and textual not sensational, then Wager's play is manifestly idiosyncratic.⁶ It passes nonchalantly from crude humor to Messianic miracles as if oblivious to those who subscribe to a disenchanting world. Unsympathetic to straightforward iconoclasm and hardline

⁶ See O'Connell 89-115.

logocentric worship, it fuses new, continental theology with customary English predilections and pastimes. The Reformation may have borne down on the early modern English stage, but with *Life and Repentaunce*, the stage offers its own form of resistance. Unlike other Reformation dramatists, Wager can conceive of something we might call sensuous female piety. Treated with care, such religious affect could serve the interests of both the Reformation and the Edwardian/Elizabethan theater.

***Life and Repentaunce* and Calvinism(s)**

Life and Repentaunce is a reformed version of the morality play. It depends on doubling. The professional troupe that would have performed this play on tour had to employ at least five actors; while a boy actor could play Mary, four men would have doubled the remaining thirteen parts (White, *Theater* 81). With its reliance on allegorical figures, *Life and Repentaunce*'s staging of Mary's fall and conversion also "follows the morality play structure" (Cartwright 147). And like most morality plays, the Vice figure enlivens the stage. Infidelitie competes with Christ for the central role, sparks the play's main conflicts, and quite simply has the most to say. From the onset, he and his cohort have two schemes: to corrupt Mary and to frustrate Christ's ministry. Their methods are theatrical, scholastic, and vulgar. To lure Mary, Infidelitie calls himself Prudence, a smooth-talking humanist who couples classical saws with sexual jests. The other vices follow Infidelitie's lead: Pride of Life becomes Nobilitie and Honor, Carnall Concupiscence turns into Pleasure, Cupiditie acts as Utilitie, and Malicious Judgement plays True Intellection of the Law (Wager 480, 454, 465, 460, and 1038). With the help of these co-conspirators, Infidelitie "dresse[s]" Mary in the latest fashions (324). Now a deified whore, she will be a bawd, a swindling merchant, and an oppressing landlord

when her beauty fades (604, and 803-822). To combat Christ at Simon the Pharisee's house, Infidelitie joins Malicious Judgement and plays Legal Justification, a servant who arranges the dining room before he turns Simon against Christ.

Whereas the vices improvise their "tragedie" as they go along (451), the virtues—Lawe, Knowledge of Sinne, Fayth, Repentaunce, Justification, and Love—have an even greater impact on Mary, even if they risk tiring the audience with their pedantic urgency. They admonish Mary and manage to guide her through repentance after her fall. Meanwhile, Christ orchestrates the play's central spectacles: before he forgives Mary's misdeeds and saves her from damnation, he exorcises her demons. All this inspires Mary to wash Christ's feet in spite of Simon, who scorns her depravity and Christ's disregard for Judaic law. In the end, Mary shows herself a proper Calvinist: she acknowledges that absolution is responsible for her newfound affective piety (not the other way around) and that faith is a divine gift, not a reward.

Because the second half of the play is stockpiled with a congeries of Calvin's writings, it has been argued that its iconoclasm and its anti-papist allegories impoverish its theatricality. Michael O'Connell insists that so to "engage in theological discourse" is to enervate all theatrical affect (101-02 and 107).⁷ Patricia Badir finds the play at odds with itself: because it cannot do away with Mary's iconic allure, the play cannot "sustain" its "explicitly Calvinist" "theological principles" (*The Maudlin Impression* 37, 29, and 27). Badir reasons that, no matter how hard Wager tries to exchange the "three-dimensional" idol for the "two-dimensional" word—the salacious whore for the repentant

⁷ O'Connell extends White's suggestion that "for Reformation dramatists" like Wager, "the thesis or argument conveyed to the audience takes precedence over 'story' and 'character'" (*Theater and Reformation* 75).

Calvinist—theatrical pressures do not allow him to complete the transaction (“To allure” 17).⁸ In the end, Wager’s “encounter with the material pressures of the theatrical experience” leads to an “inadvertent” realization that “the iconoclastic staging of reform could by no means fully reform the fundamentally iconic stage” (*The Maudlin Impression* 46-47). Both O’Connell and Badir assume that Wager sought to replace splendor with exegesis. Either the play’s racy and affective moments are unfortunate irregularities or they contribute to the “oxymoronic condition” of “Wager’s iconoclasm,” a condition “that sets his play on the path to failure” (37). Simply put, “Wager’s problem ... is his choice of the theatre as medium for his Calvinist message” (Badir, “To allure” 19).

Kent Cartwright’s assessment of the play’s religious affect does not square with this account. His Mary has “iconic [...], even kinesthetic appeal” precisely because of her sensual devotion at the feet of Christ (*Theater and Humanism* 147). “[H]er moral force,” Cartwright contends, “express[es] itself visually and sensually, even in her silence.” Hence Wager’s play does not so much nervously exploit as it forthrightly endorses dramatic spectacle and female agency. Whereas O’Connell and Badir focus on the play’s Calvinism, and so its didacticism, Cartwright—who conceives of reform more broadly—is in a better position to call attention to Mary’s theatrical power.

For critics to posit an opposition between the play’s affect and its Calvinism is for them to assume that they must choose a side. For O’Connell, Badir, and others, since early modern English theater could not be reconciled with Calvinism, or with the reformed tradition more generally, Wager had no choice but to try to control theatrical

⁸ For the sinful Mary as an allegory for idolatry and the corrupt Roman church, see Badir, *Maudlin* 34-38.

forces and promote doctrinal unity.⁹ Such an argument implies that Calvinism admitted no other solution. Like White, critics know that some Calvinists defended the theater even as other Calvinists opposed it (White, *Theater* 61), but their first allegiance is to scholarship that dwells on Calvinism's anxiety over humanity and its sinfulness.¹⁰

We can, however, investigate the striking ways that Wager ties affective theater to Calvinism, the ways that he conjoins putatively opposed forms of religious expression. Calvin manifestly struggles to come to grips with humanity as a creation both splendid and depraved; his work-ethic is at odds with his distrust of human effort; he strains to impose order on a postlapsarian humanity always on the verge of utter damnation; he depends ferociously on faith, exegesis, and doctrine. Surely, his pessimism underlies many early modern suspicions about the body and how it experiences the world—itsself a “dazzling,” misleading “theater” (1.5.8).¹¹ But we shortchange Calvin if in him and his work we see only anxiety about the “flesh” and doubt over human ingenuity.¹² He is not

⁹ First, see Diehl, *Staging Reform* 45, 66, and *passim*. Although O'Connell mostly focuses on biblical dramas, and Diehl, on early modern tragedies, both argue that the period's dramas bear witness to an increasingly iconophobic culture. O'Connell qualifies his argument when he sees in *The Winter's Tale* evidence of a dramatist who insists on “visual as well as verbal” representation, but this seems to be a typically Shakespearean exception (13, 139-42). Also see Happé's article and White, *Theater and Reformation* 164-74. White recognizes the various attitudes toward the theater among reformers, but he does not have the space to distinguish one set of “Protestant values and models of piety” from another (174). In a later essay on the continued reception and gradual “demise of civic religious drama,” White emphasizes how scholars must “recognize that the Reformation produced a range of religious subjectivities which varied with local circumstances and the passage of time” (“Reforming Mysteries’ End” 140).

¹⁰ See Bouwsma (*passim*) and Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible* (104-07, 185, and *passim*).

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, I cite Calvin from his *Institutes*.

¹² Recent scholarship on Calvin is extensive, contentious, and revealing. Richard Muller places Calvin's biblical commentaries, sermons, and *Institutes* in their historical contexts to counter scholarship that “accommodates” Calvin for modernity. Analyzing variances among sixteenth-century editions of Calvin's work, Muller gives us a Calvin “who does not fit neatly into the dogmatic, existential, or psychological paradigms of much twentieth-century scholarship” (*The Unaccommodated Calvin* 3-14). Instead, he meticulously analyzes “a theology at once intriguing and intractable to twentieth-century concerns,” a theology that is part of an intricate conversation among Calvin's predecessors and contemporaries (14-15). Although not as challenging as Muller's work, Randall Zachman's *Image and Word in the Theology of*

always bleak, and his disgust over human depravity is often expressed to accentuate his gratitude for the love and mercy God bestows upon his creation—his “most glorious theater” (1.6.2).¹³ Because there is more to Calvin than panic, Wager the reformed dramatist can stage a Mary Magdalene who embodies a more nuanced, less desperate, Calvinism.

As William Bouwsma would have it, anxiety over human inadequacies in the face of God sparks Calvin’s trademark fury against all that is ungodly: medieval legends and man-made rituals, papist theatrics and religious iconography, Epicurean hedonism and gender play. These abuses tamper with the order of God’s universe, sow ignorance and pride, and discount faith and scripture for the sake of worldly gratification. It is the body that Calvin often blames for these abuses, as he blames women, who “always seemed to [Calvin] potentially wanton” and responsible for “many of the sins of men” (Bouwsma 80 and 53). When not obsessing over fashion, they are drowning out warnings from the pulpit with their unending gossip. Eager to dominate men, they instead debase themselves (52-53).

This “Calvin” is the marker for standard-issue antitheatricalist fear and loathing of sensations and femininity. At first, reformed dramatists like John Bale sought to contain

John Calvin is a balanced, accessible interpretation of Calvin’s biblical commentaries, sermons, and *Institutes*. For the latest biography of Calvin, see Bruce Gordon’s *Calvin*. William Bouwsma’s 1989 biography has been the most influential, but Muller convincingly challenges its assumptions (*The Unaccommodated Calvin* 79-98). For Calvin’s influence on English antitheatricalism, see White, *Theater and Reformation* 3-4 and 170-71.

¹³ Consider how Calvin explicates Psalm 8: “[I]nfants, while they nurse at their mothers’ breasts, have tongues so eloquent to preach [God’s] glory that there is no need at all of other orators” (1.5.3). Out of the mouths of suckling babes comes a defense of God against “those who might desire to extinguish God’s name in favor of their own devilish pride” (1.5.3). The creative energies of maternity signal a world ready to praise God for providing it with spiritual nourishment. They also counteract Calvin’s disgust with those who fail to notice God’s “glory” in the most natural of scenes.

this alarm; their plays distinguished sly papists from plain-speaking evangelicals. From *God's Promises* to *The Temptation of Our Lord*, “Bale’s interest . . . is in discourse; he steers wide of the narrative elements that draw the audience toward emotional engagement and instead dramatizes purely verbal arguments” (O’Connell 95). But after Bale, theater gradually came under attack (it is effeminizing, it is demonic) from reformed pulpits and printing houses. John Northbrooke sounds the vulgar Calvinist note when in 1578 he argues that “[a]ll such spectacles and shewes . . . [are] to be avoyded; not onelye bicause vices shall not enter our heartes and breastes, but also least [sic] the custome of pleasure shoulde touche us, and converte us thereby both from God and good workes” (Northbrooke 88).¹⁴ Whatever touches theatergoers—physically, emotionally, linguistically, morally, rhetorically—exploits their vulnerabilities.¹⁵ The evil that Calvin sees in the world, antitheatricalists locate in the theater, with its “straunge consortes of melodie to tickle the eare, costly apparrell to flatter the sight, effeminate gesture to ravish the sence, and wanton speache to whette desire to inordinate lust” (Gosson, *Schoole of Abuse* 22).¹⁶

Not surprisingly, Stephen Gosson, Phillip Stubbes, and the “moderate Puritan” John Rainolds appropriate Calvin for their antitheatrical polemic.¹⁷ Calvin, after all,

¹⁴ Cited in Mazzio 180-81.

¹⁵ Cf. Mazzio 181-82 and *passim*.

¹⁶ Gosson’s *Schoole of Abuse* is cited in Mazzio 178.

¹⁷ That “a good deal of the criticism and action taken against the stage had little to do with religion per se,” helps to explain how someone like Philip Stubbes “was a loyal and conforming member” of the official Elizabethan church, how someone like Gosson rejected Thomas Cartwright’s radical presbyterianism, and how someone as instrumental as Rainolds could influence both Gosson and the much more moderate Richard Hooker (White, *Theater and Reformation* 166; Coles, *Religion* 88; Lake, *Moderate Puritans* 76). Antitheatricalism and puritanism did not always go hand in hand (Knapp 14). At the same time,

lambasts theatrical cross-dressing in a sermon on Deuteronomy 22:5: “[t]he woman shall not weare that which pertaineth unto the man, nether shall a man put on womans raiment: for all that do so, are abominacion[s] unto the Lord thy God.”¹⁸ Like later antitheatricalists, Calvin wants this rule applied to “maskings and mumblings,” where crossdressing is a matter of course. “Although no evil ensued thereof,” it both “displeaseth God” and opens “a gap to all whoredome” (*The Sermons* 773-74).¹⁹

Calvin may have laid the groundwork for antitheatricalists who insisted that theater effeminized players and playgoers, but his attack against crossdressing occurs in only one sermon.²⁰ Although Calvin was the antitheatricalists’ friend, he really does not have much more to say directly against the theatrical arts.²¹ Taken as a whole, Calvin’s *oeuvre* is more concerned with painting and sculpture, art forms that aspire to give permanence to an ephemeral universe. “Man . . . is a transient being, and yet he will want to be counted as God a piece of metal” (1.11.4). Perhaps because Deuteronomic code was too dry for polemic, antitheatricalists found it more efficacious to vilify the

antitheatricalists rejected the theater on religious grounds when they compared theatergoing to idolatry (O’Connell 14-17).

¹⁸ The 1590s debate between antitheatricalist John Rainolds and apologist William Gager centered on the Deuteronomic injunction (Barish 90-91).

¹⁹ Cited in White, *Theater and Reformation* 233-34, n. 28. Calvin’s successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza, had no problem with boys playing women, and defenders of the stage were keen to cite him (White, *Theater and Reformation* 171 and 234, n. 29).

²⁰ For antitheatricalism in early modern England, see Barish 80-126, 159-167, *passim*, and Howard, *The Stage* 22-46. For its religious premises, see O’Connell 14-35. For the cultural implications of its sexual and gender obsessions, see Orgel, especially 26-30 and 35, Levine, and Breitenberg.

²¹ Beza’s approval of theater and unconcern with crossdressing had no documented effect on his relationship with and admiration for Calvin.

theater by linking it to idolatry and papist ceremony.²² They conveniently if sometimes disingenuously used Calvin's mockery of the theater of the Roman church to warrant their misgivings about all theater.²³ They also followed Calvin when they denigrated the human imagination, a repudiation that was a mainstay of reform. And yet, among "magisterial" English reformers, there was a godly purpose even for "works of the imagination," theatrical productions included (Coles, *Religion* 118-19).²⁴ What antitheatricalists rejected—the theater, the imagination—others, including Calvin, treated with more ambivalence.

At a time when antitheatricalists found it so easy to appropriate Calvin for their polemic, it is remarkable that a play like Wager's could somehow balance Calvinist inhibitions with a theatrical energy that Mary emanates not only when she flaunts her body, but also when she lies at the feet of Christ. Why else would Wager's Calvinist Christ use the two-debtor parable, if not to praise the loving "gestures" that Mary "sheweth" (1898-99)? When Wager heightens theatrical affect amid outpourings of spirited exegesis, he too befriends Calvin, even as he lays into antitheatricalists who "reprehend" and "dispraise" the "labour" of Wager and the playing troupe (18-27).

²² See O'Connell 14-35 and Barish 89. There were also local contexts: "The abuses these writers castigated were not merely 'the muck of their melancholicke imaginations' —they were responding on a public platform to unsettling realities which had already provoked uneasiness at the local level." (Walsham, "Godly Recreation" 24).

²³ According to Calvin, papists "display ceremonies not understood, like a scene on the stage, or a magical incantation" (4.10.15).

²⁴ Some antitheatricalists acknowledged that theater could work for the good, as Stubbes did in the first edition of his *Anatomy of Abuses*. He thought better of this in subsequent editions, where there is not even a backhanded endorsement of the stage (Walsham, "Godly Recreation" 20 and 41, n. 76). Even though Wager's play precedes the first printed Elizabethan antitheatrical treatise by more than a decade, his Prologue rebuts antitheatrical claims that the theater was an ungodly, slanderous scam (Wager 31-44).

Because Wager retrofits Calvinism for the theater, as opposed to the other way around, we should take our cue from historians and theologians who have reconsidered the direction and scope of Calvin's epistemology. Calvin did not always fear the eyes and what they saw. Nor is it entirely accurate to ascribe to Calvin a deep-seated anxiety over the human body, women, and the transient world.²⁵ Indeed, revisionist scholarship itself corresponds with various early modern impressions of Calvin's work. One version of Calvinism (think Bouwsma) can stimulate antitheatricalist anxiety; another can account for Wager's refusal to set morality and inhibition against theater and appetite.²⁶

In his thirty-ninth sermon on Job, Calvin certainly does call the "flesh and skin" "nothyng but . . . filthiness," which "infects the mind" with "vile lust" and "impurity" (*Sermons upon the Book of Job*, Sig. N3v; 3.10.3). But in the same sermon, in almost the same breath, he marvels at the body's beauty and function: "behold how skin, behold how flesh, behold how sinewes . . . are things whereat all the world may be amazed" (Sig. N3v). God has "polished" each person "through out from top to toe, so as ther is one orderly workmanship in him throughout . . . and ther is no exception to be taken in him even to the tippes of his nayles" (Sig. N3r). Although sensory organs are vulnerable to sin, they are also parts of "a composition so ingenious that its Artificer is rightly judged a wonder-worker" (1.1.2). They are the lowest of human faculties, but they are no more tainted by sin, and no less susceptible to grace, than are the heart and the mind, the faculties of the soul (Muller 169, 1.15.3, and Calvin, *Romans* 261).

²⁵ Zachman provides a revisionist reading of Calvin's epistemology (5-7 and *passim*). Muller warns against subjecting Calvin and his theology to psychoanalysis (79-98).

²⁶ English Calvinists differed, often quite sharply, from Calvin himself. They also appropriated Calvin for widely disparate purposes. For instance, Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift evoked Calvin to refute English Calvinists (Lake, *Moderate Puritans* 218-226).

Responsive to both sides of Calvin's analysis, Wager begins by debasing the senses. Mary's sexualized body leads her astray from the moment she first enters the stage: "there is not a gentlewoman in this land, / More propre than I in the waste I dare be bolde" (156-57). Fretting over "mans sight" (158), she boasts that she could prove her proportional figure if it were not for "garmentes that so bungarly do stand" (158). Her obsessions are in line with Calvin's ire against those who so "enslave all their senses" to "the splendor of . . . apparel" that their minds are too "overwhelmed" to give God thanks (3.10.3). To "be pleasant to every mans eye," Mary agrees to prepare her body for pleasure, to "norish" herself with "fine meats and pure wines," to paint her face, to perfume her body, and to don lavish clothing and shimmering jewelry (774, 665-704 and 768-73). She wants to "lay out [her] faire teates," to "allure" men so strongly that their noses bleed (308, 679-83).

Wager reinforces the sinfulness of the senses when Infidelitie has at Mary with sexual jests: "In the myddes they set the piece that is worst" (169). "Meddle with it, and you spyll it utterly" (174). Infidelitie misogynistically, if wittily, genitalizes the fall, and Mary responds on behalf of her "carnal desyre" by joking about it (368). When Infidelitie puns on the "myddes" of her garments, Mary responds in kind: "My maydens on the other side are suche sluts, / That if I should not for myne owne clothe[s] devise, / Within a while they would not be worth a couple of nuts" (188-90). Later, when the vices start in again with the bawdy wordplay, Mary joins them. She brags that she can "play on the virginals," Infidelitie offers her a "recorder" to "play upon"—"so bigge that your hand can it not gripe"—and Pride of Life asks her "to play us a daunce" (837-46). Mary mocks them: "Alas we have no suche instrument here" (847). They have no sexual

organ worth her time, until Infidelitie, ready to hop “[u]p into [her] saddle,” leads her off-stage (926).

In the first half of the play, theatergoers’ sights are trained squarely on Mary’s objectified, provocative body. And yet, her sensuous body is also the host of her grace-inspired conversion. When she first encounters The Lawe with his stone “tables,” the play may turn sermonic, but its corporeal imaginings persist. Lawe gives Mary a mirror to “pricketh” her “conscience” and to captivate her eye (1139 and 1159). Living up to his namesake, Infidelitie cannot believe that this “prick of conscience” could “pricketh” her as “sore / as the yong man with the flaxen beard” (1153-55). After she hears, sees, and feels the Lawe, apparently more powerfully than anything that she sensed during her sexual escapades, she smells Knowledge of Sin, “a pocky knave . . . Corrupt, rotten, stynkyng . . . iniquitie” (1198-1200, 1204). Although Mary hears the usual tenets of reform, *sola scriptura et gratia* among them (1295-96), Wager is manifestly fascinated by the sensual pangs of her conversion. The virtues penetrate the same senses that the vices stimulated to corrupt her. Although Knowledge of Sinne claims not to “appere” to “her carnall sight” once he departs the stage, he will continue to “gnawe” “upon hir conscience” (1305 and 1307-08). The language of her psychomachic struggle is no less somatic than are the vices’ allusions to her prurient lifestyle.

Mary’s body matters to Wager’s allegorical virtues and to his Calvinist Christ. Knowledge of Sin declares that Christ makes God’s “mercy” “comprehensible” “to all the senses” of the faithful (1251-52), and Repentaunce orders Mary to repent as is “described in Scripture”—“with the senses in every part” (1437-40). Before Mary’s repentance, Cupiditie objectified Mary Magdalene as might a Petrarchan lover: her hair is

gold, her eyes “as gray as glass,” her “smyling countenance” “lovely,” her lips as “ruddy” as a rose, her teeth “as white as...the whales bone” (877-85). After her conversion, Mary puts her body in service to Christ: “The same iniquitie away for ever I do cast, / And will make my body servant to the veritie” (1791-92).²⁷

Following a longstanding tradition, Wager celebrates a religious transformation that empowers the sensual, female body. Reaching as far back as Gregory the Great, and recalling his near contemporary Erasmus, Wager has Mary Magdalene “itemiz[e] her features (particularly eyes, ears, and hair) as penitential attributes” (Badir, *The Maudlin Impression* 49-53). Although she ought to give her eyes to “godly contemplations,” not “worldly and carnall delectations,” she must “be bent” to “wepyng and tears” (1443). Her “fleshy eyes” were “divels volumes and books” that lured men to “synne and vice”; now they are imprinted with nothing but “teares and water” (1798-1801). Her ears, of late eager to hear “the blasphemying of Gods holy name,” must be “glad to heare the Gospell of salvation” (1446-49). Blessed with grace, she will share with Christ her “penitent fruictes”—her touch and her scent, her hair, tears, and ointment (1815):

All my worldly substance abused before,
And through unbelief of synne made instruments,
Now will I bestow them onely to his honor,
In helpyng hym, and for his sake other innocents. (1817-20)

The “virginals” and “recorders” that she offered to play for the vices made of her body an instrument of hedonism and carnality. Now reformed, her body is still sensual and expressive, but it is an instrument for religious devotion. Her plan to anoint Christ’s feet with the ointment that made her “carkas pleasant and swete” confirms that her body expresses the faith, repentance, and love that signal God’s mercy (1810). The same

²⁷ Cf. Badir, *The Maudlin Impression* 47-49 for an analysis of this juxtaposition.

“civet, pommander, [and] musk” that perfumed her sexual revelry now make for the olfactory pleasures of grace and forgiveness; they are no less stimulating at Simon the Pharisee’s house than they were in her chambers.

Wager, then, celebrates the conversion experience as a theatrical, sensuous expression of faith. He endorses Mary’s pious sensuality to emphasize a staple Calvinist assumption that salvation, like sin, is all-encompassing. The mind and the heart are as permeable as the body; both are susceptible to wickedness and both depend on grace. This is why, from the beginning, Infidelitie schemes to “occupie” “all mens heartes” and to “occupy the rulers myndes,” why the vices plan to “move” Mary’s “mynde” and “be ... rooted within [her] heart,” and why Mary does not simply work up “an appetite” for honor, but plans to meditate on her ambitions with “hearts courage and myndes elevation” (124, 136, 140, 369, and 567). The vices appeal to her rationality and her affections as often as they stoke her erotic desires and adorn her body. Christ and the virtues nurse both body and soul because her blasphemous “tong” “hurt” both, because both would “be spilled” if not for God’s grace, and because both must repent in unison (1454, 1356, and 1473-40).

Like Calvin, Wager employs the term “flesh” for various purposes. His “flesh” sometimes refers to the same skin and sinews with which Calvin struggles in his thirty-ninth sermon on Job. This is the “flesh” that Carnall Concupiscence wants Mary “to nourishe with drinke and meate / Without abstinence like a beast” (385-86). But when the vices encourage Mary to live “for the flesh and the world,” “flesh” appears to be the Pauline metonym that for Calvin signifies “[w]hatever we have from nature”: the body and “the sensual” and “the higher part[s]” of the soul, the heart and the mind (482;

2.3.1).²⁸ In the postlapsarian world, neither the soul nor the body can achieve salvation. Only the Holy Spirit, or just “Spirit,” can “regenerate” sinners (2.2.27). Otherwise, they are “[in]capable of conceiving anything” because “every imagination of man’s heart is only evil” (2.2.27).

Simply to blame Mary’s “flesh” for her debauchery would be to argue that every facet of Mary’s being is adulterated. As Infidelitie and his cohort dress her for scandal and stimulate her sexual appetite, they corrupt her mind with humanist scholarship. Ciceronian maxims validate prurience: “Pleasure sayth one man, of his owne nature, /Allecteth [allures] to hym every humayn creature: / Now what person soever doth pleasure hate, / As a beast is to be abjected both early and late” (730-33). Like Marlowe’s Faustus, the vices make quick work of Mary by decontextualizing passages from standard Latin writings to serve their own agenda. “Your wordes do not onely provoke my desire,” Mary tells Infidelitie, “But in pleasure they set my heart on fire” (686-87). Later, “I have printed all their wordes in my mynde,” Mary says of the vices’ lessons. “I have determined by them to direct my life” (910-11). Playful banter and sensuality excite Mary, but so do humanist teachings—or whatever counts for them.

So even when these adages allure Mary, they also point to the vices’ hypocrisy. “Homo homini deus,” Pride of Life proclaims to Mary, as if he were reading from Erasmus’ collection of proverbs (591). Because “man is the begynnyng of his own operation,” and because “Man is his owne God therefore with utility,” Mary “must beleve” that she is a goddess who despises other gods and their “Scripture” (594-96, 604-06). But the vices actually live by another Erasmian maxim: *homo hominem lupo*—man

²⁸ Cf. Calvin, *Romans* 249 and 259-60; Bouwsma 132-33.

is wolf to man. At Simon's house, Infidelitie calls Christ a "dogge" for "taunt[ing] a man at his table" (2005-06), and Simon commands Infidelitie "to dog" Christ "from place to place" until the Pharisees can silence him (2034-36). Curs, if not wolves, the vices have bared their teeth to Mary all along. They dress her as "a morsell for princes and noble kynges" (872). To become as appetizing as Lais, Thais, and Helen (871-74), Mary must prepare her body for pleasure; she should fatten herself with "fine meats and pure wines" (871-74 and 774). *Homo homini Deus, homo homini lupus*. Wager invokes a paradox that Erasmus offers to expose the futility of human effort and the "unreliability" of language (Barker 93-94). Here, in Wager's hands, it serves a dual purpose: it puts humanist education into the service of hedonism, and it demonstrates that the height of human wisdom is as flawed as the lowest parts of the body.

At their first meeting, Infidelitie insults Mary, then plays the flatterer ("In Jerusalem there is not I dare say, / A sweter countenance, nor a more louying face" [195-96]). When Mary does an about-face ("I thank you for your good worde, gentle friend" [203]), Infidelitie blames womankind in the words of Ovid: "Verba puellarum foliis leviora caducis / The promise of maidens . . . / Be as stable as a weake leafe in the wynde" (207-09).²⁹ Later, Infidelitie teaches that "[f]ew womens words, be honest, constant, and stable," because Mary cannot decide which vice she "should love best" (719-25). Mary is like all "yll disposed women"—"always mercylesse . . . alwais scraping, clawing, and gathering, / To maintaine their lives in wickednesse and synne" (462-64).

²⁹ For the Ovid references, see White's notes to the play.

On the one hand, as Badir recognizes, “the play’s antifeminism is always at the surface level” (“To allure” 7); on the other hand, the play’s misogynistic stereotypes are ironic. Wager caricatures female vices, then, only to suggest that women are better equipped to receive grace.³⁰ After all, it is Mary’s “female” vacillations that facilitate her conversions.³¹ Her initial mood swings and naïveté lead quickly to her debauchery. Her pride flips to shame when the vices notice pock scars on her face (652-56). She remembers a school lesson about the transience of beauty—“the tyme of youth hath no long permanence”—but only after she is reassured that a “Painter” can make her “like one whose beautie doth never dispaire” (790-802 and 650-51). And although Mary’s early education could have led her to oppose Epicurean dictates, she decides that the vices’ “counsell and device” “profit” her, “by the faith of [her] body” (823-24). By the end of the temptation scenes, “none of us from other shall depart,” for “I have printed all their wordes in my mynde,” and “I have determined by them to direct my life” (828 and 910-11). This commitment is brief: when shaken with guilt, Mary chooses the Lawe’s authority over Infidelitie’s and overwrites their evil lessons with the Word: “The spirite of God speaketh by Kyng Salomon, / That no man on earth lyveth without synne” (1165-66).

Mary’s conversion bears ironic witness to the religious potential of inconstancy.

Infidelitie, who was wont to exploit Mary’s inconstancy, falls victim to it during her

³⁰It is not novel for Wager to employ gender stereotypes for reformist purposes. John Bale did the same in his edited version of Anne Askew’s *Examinations* and in his *Image of Two Churches*, an exegetical effort to simplify the opaque *Book of Revelations* (Coles, *Religion* 27-32; McEachern, “A Whore at First Blush”). John Foxe also presses female characterizations into the service of reform in his *Actes and Monuments*, first printed in 1563 (Coles, *Religion* 32-38 and Chapter 3 below). Cf. Coles, *Religion* 3-9.

³¹ Her conversion recalls Anima in the late-medieval play, *Wisdom*. Coletti observes that Anima is a version of Mary Magdalene who experiences redemption precisely because of her feminine vulnerabilities and permeability (*Mary Magdalene* 85-89).

conversion—even before her exorcism, that is. As Mary marvels at the Lawe, Infidelitie insists that his “wordes print well in [her] remembrance” (1319). But she “regard[s]” the vice’s words “no more” because he cannot steady her “wavering witte” (1335-36). Neither can the virtues. Mary’s belief in the “wordes” of “the lawe” and her despair over “hell fire” last until Christ purges her demons and offers his “Gospel of Salvation” (153-54, 1281, and 1449). Mary’s inconstancy is the very characteristic that Christ exploits and remediates. Because her “faith” is “waveryng and insufficient,” Mary asks Christ to “strength me now that hence forth I do not fall” (1411 and 1468).

In Wager’s world, men of resolve have a harder time yielding to such a transformative experience. If it is Mary’s wavering that enables her conversion, the steady, self-governing Simon cannot follow her example. The vices admit as much when they regroup in the aftermath of Mary’s exorcism:

Infidelitie

A vengeance take [Christ] thefe, is he gone?
 From Mary Magdalene he did me chace:
 From Simon the Pharisie he will drive me anon,
 So that no where I shal be able to shew my face.

Malicious Judgement

Nay, we are so surely fixed in the Pharisies mynde,
 That [Christ’s] blasphemous words can not drive us thence
 Women heartes turne oft as doth the wynde,
 And agayne of the law they know not the sence. (1609-16)

The implication is that men, especially those of status and education, are so self-assuredly committed to their “sence” of the law that they will stonewall any prophetic call to change. Malicious Judgement’s way of reassuring Infidelitie is to retrieve the same type of gender stereotypes that underwrote Mary’s sinful regression: men can commit themselves to their education, but women are too ignorant and too capricious to do the same. It is a hard realization for the vices: they easily subverted Mary’s childhood

education “in vertuous qualities, and godly literature”; now just as easily, they lose their pedagogical grip over her (249).

The salvific potential of Mary’s femininity is also evident when Simon, committed to his legal expertise, resists Christ’s message. Mary’s “gestures . . . [p]rocede from a true meanyng heart verily, / As by her humilitie plainly you may see” (1899-1900); but Simon’s “intent,” Christ realizes, was not to “humble” himself “with penitence,” but “to shew [his] riches and treasure, / And that [his] holynesse might to me appeare” (1895-96, 1928). Every bit as inflexible as the next law-abiding man, he will not bend to Christ’s “new fangled” Gospel (1954). Simon’s resolve is his weakness. When Christ asks Simon to rid himself of vice, the Pharisee cannot admit that the vices have already penetrated him (1981-84).

Wavering Mary is more prepared for the sudden throes of conversion than Simon, the obstinate “man of science” (1868), because her gesture acknowledges her shortcomings. Comparing Mary with Simon, Wager acknowledges the role assigned to custom and grace in *Luke*, and emphasized by Calvin:

She moistened his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head; while he did not even order water to be given, according to custom. She did not cease to kiss his feet, while he did not deign to receive Christ with the kiss of hospitality. She poured precious ointment on his feet, while he did not even anoint his head with oil. (*Harmony of the Evangelists* 2.138).

Following Calvin’s lead, Wager has Christ cherish Mary’s penitential acts because they exhibit her love without entirely breaking away from custom. Simon did not “kisse” Christ, “as the maner of the countrey is,” but Mary, who “[w]ould not presume my head or mouth to kisse,” embraces his feet while “lamenting in hir heart for hir syn” (1909-12). Simon did not “anoynt” Christ’s head “with oyle,” whereas Mary “anointed” his “fete”

“with most precious balme” (1913-16). As if to reinforce Calvin’s point, Wager has Christ insist that Mary’s penitential acts are products of hospitality customs in first-century Judea. And yet, at the very same time, they are as Calvin suggests: penitent acts of “extraordinary zeal” and “humilite” that exceed customary practice (Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists* 2.138; Wager 1900).

Still for Wager, gender, too, is profoundly effectual. Mary is a fitting candidate for election because she is receptive to change. What stands in Simon’s way has as much to do with his masculine tenacity as with his legalism. When Simon lambasts Christ for “[g]oyng about the law and our rulers to subdue,” Simon calls attention to a false faith premised on the merit and scholarship on display among male religious and political leaders (1955). To play the humble sinner is to stoop to the level of a woman and a harlot, so Simon demurs. He would rather “prepare” “the sacrifice” for “evenyng service” than follow Mary’s lead when she “bestowe[s]” her luxurious “oyntment” “[a]bout the innocent feet” of Christ (2045-46 and 1813-14).

Mary’s silence signals a return to conventionally gendered behavior: while the men debate the purpose and function of her body, her silence signals the “modesty” and “humility” that Calvin took from Luke 7 narrative (*Harmony of the Evangelists* 2.139). And yet, Wager troubles distinctions between speech and masculinity on the one hand and silence and femininity on the other. Mary “boldly” “procedes” “after” Christ, according to Infidelitie (1835). Although Christ counters that her “gestures” signal “a little obsequie” and “humility” (1897-1900), her silence is short-lived—she promises to “declare his mercy in towne and citie” (1951). Both Mary and Christ claim that there is “strength” in humility and repentance (1468, 1931).

Whether women like Mary exhibit the very traits which men like John Knox excoriate—weakness, unpredictability, passion—or instead display humility and obedience, they are predisposed to conversion because they are receptive. Wager is savvy, perhaps even shrewd enough to feminize conversion and to assign religious efficacy to the female body. And yet he is no radical—he stops well short of overturning the traditional gender hierarchy or of banishing female stereotypes from the stage: women waver, and men stand firm.

Wager's play thus upholds early modern assumptions about gender when it stages an unreliable, malleable Mary, only to satirize misogynists who reinforce those same categories. When Infidelitie loses his hold over Mary, typical gender binaries give way to absurdity: "Women have no soules, this saying is not newe, / Men shall be damned, and not women which do fall" (1181-84). To limit women to their bodies, and to grant souls only to men, is to misread key scriptural terms. As "flesh" can refer to a person's body and soul, the term "man" in Scripture, the Lawe tells Infidelitie, refers to "both man, woman, and child in dede, / Yea as many of both kyndes as be of mans nature, / Whiche procede of Adam the first parents sede" (1185-88). By defending women even while giving priority to Adam, the Lawe blurs the very gender distinctions according to which the vices deride Mary's femininity.

Bouwsma's observation about Calvin makes a similar point:

In spite of [Calvin's] insistence on the authority of men over women, husband over wife, in spite of the anti-feminine railing that crept into his sermons, he was well aware that the sexes are equal before God. He warned the men of his congregation against taking pride in their preeminence, which, in this context, he treated not as a law of nature but as an arbitrary disposition by God for the maintenance of practical order. Indeed, as far as 'nature' is concerned, neither sex can claim superiority;

husband and wife are ‘equal in bed,’ and no one can say ‘my father’ without implying ‘my mother.’ (Bouwsma 138)

The theologian is troubled by gender hierarchy in part because he insists that God demands humility from all sinners. He recognizes that there are limitations to the patriarchal worldview that he nonetheless upholds. He “reject[s] the common association of ‘flesh’ with women, which implie[s] that only men possess spiritual capacities” (Bouwsma 138; Cf. *Commentary on John* 1:13). “Both sexes . . . are created in the image of God,” and both are riddled with sin (138). In fact, Calvin “treated” female sexuality with “unusual sympathy” and “respect” as often as he reviled women’s propensity for sin (53 and 137).

During the foot-washing scene, Wager’s Mary is similarly admired and vilified, but Wager sorts through the complication by giving the anti-female rants to the vices and scripting Christ as Mary’s admirer. The scene approximates Calvin’s celebratory exegesis of Luke 7, without the misogyny that creeps into some of Calvin’s other writings:

For what mean those profuse tears, those frequent kisses of the feet, that precious ointment? What mean they but to acknowledge, that she had been weighted down by an enormous burden of condemnation? And now she regards the mercy of God with a fervour of love proportioned to her conviction that her necessity had been great[.] (*Harmony of the Evangelists* 2.137-38)

This love-to-need ratio validates the play’s foot-washing. Unfazed by its spectacular narrative, Calvin reads Luke 7 as if it were a vignette in what he elsewhere calls God’s “most beautiful theater”; hence we should “not be ashamed to take pious delight in the works of God open and manifest” (1.14.20). “Every one of these things it is our duty to imitate,” he concludes about the foot-washing. Although “the pouring of the *ointment*

was an extraordinary act, which it would be improper to consider as a rule,” it is praiseworthy enough (*Harmony of the Evangelists* 2.139).

Evidently, sensual, female conversion accords with Calvinist soteriology so long as the sensuality is not an agent, but an inspired expression of the faith and absolution that affect each part of the “flesh.” Wager nearly undercuts the play’s Calvinism when his Mary seems ready to convert because of her gender, but the problem for Calvin would not have been the feminine sensuality in Wager’s Luke 7 scene. Nor would it have been Christ’s preference for the woman over the man. Mary’s remorse and Christ’s forgiveness apparently compensate for Wager’s earlier, racier temptation scenes. It is the exegetical bearings of the play’s foot-washing scene that signal Wager’s departure from Calvinism, and the very name of his protagonist (more so than her performance) that marks the end of his Calvinism.

Wager, the Geneva Bible, and the Conflated Mary

As Wager well knew, Mary Magdalene’s identity had come under scrutiny during the Reformation. In 1518, Jacques Lefèvre d’Étaples found no scriptural proof for Gregory the Great’s conflated Mary Magdalene.³² Despite centuries of exegetical tradition, Lefèvre concluded that Mary Magdalene, whom Jesus exorcises and who visits the sepulcher (Matthew 27, Mark 15-16, Luke 23-24, and John 19-20), Mary of Bethany, who pours water over Jesus’s head and is sister to Martha and Lazarus (Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 10, and John 11-12), and the female sinner who anoints her savior’s feet

³² See Hufstader. For the humanist debate that followed, see Badir, *The Maudlin Impression* 7-11 and Porrer. For its cultural implications, see Coletti, *Mary Magdalene* 218-231.

(Luke 7:37-38) were three distinct women.³³ Whereas Calvin, a disciple of Lefèvre, wrote off Gregory's exegesis, Wager reasserts the conflation.³⁴ The playwright also inverts two major elements of the traditional, conflated Magdalene narrative. In Luke, the woman washes her Savior's feet (Luke 7) before Christ purges Magdalene's seven demons (Luke 8); in *Life and Repentaunce*, Jesus plays the exorcist to inspire the love that Mary later expresses at his feet.

The name that Wager employs—"Mary Magdalene"—would have resonated strongly with theatergoers who struggled against the direction and pace of the Reformation. To stage a harlot's conversion is to rehearse one of the staple, noncontroversial messages from the Gospel. To stage Mary Magdalene's conversion is to revive a tradition that outraged both Lefèvre and Calvin. So it is not the female touch in Wager's play that clashes with Calvin; it is *Mary's* touch that would have exercised him. Calvin's conflicting thoughts on women help to explain how, on the one hand, he cherishes the foot-washing at Simon the Pharisee's house and, on the other hand, he reviles Mary Magdalene-as-icon. His approach is polemical no less than exegetical. He loathes the cultural obsession with Mary Magdalene, best on display at a shrine in Marseilles, where "[m]en do make a treasure of her, as it were a god descended from

³³ Cf. Porrer 34-35. Lefèvre assumes that Mary of Bethany is the unnamed woman who pours water over Jesus's head at Simon the leper's house (Lefèvre 201; cf. Matthew 26: 6-7 and Mark 14: 3). In his *De Maria Magdalena*, Lefèvre complicates things when he argues that Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, is one Mary Magdalene, while the exorcised Mary Magdalene is another (Porrer 50). He "abandon[s] this line of argument in his *Disceptatio Secunda*."

³⁴ It may have been a meeting with Lefèvre that led Calvin to reject the unreformed church and push for reform (Battles xxx). Bruce Gordon (38) refers to the meeting in his recent biography, but only to note Lefèvre's impression of his mentee and to emphasize the study that Calvin was able to pursue in the south of France (which, as Theresa Coletti has reminded me, was the center of the Magdalene cult). Gordon does not entertain the possibility that the meeting inspired Calvin's final conversion, but he makes clear that Calvin held Lefévrian sympathies (40).

heaven” (*A very profitable Treatise* sig. B1r).³⁵ He hates all idols, but he singles out this one because it speaks to widespread fascination with a saint whom Christ rebukes:

“Touche me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17).

Not the biblical Mary Magdalene *per se*, but *noli me tangere* retellings that joined “corporeal and spiritual longing” (Shuger 175)—as well as mourning rituals based on those retellings—disgusted Calvin.³⁶ In his *Commentary on John*, he instituted “the familiar dualist oppositions of earthliness and elevation, carnality and spirituality” as a corrective (Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible* 175).³⁷ He “brushes away [her] weeping as ‘idle and useless’” because she “‘leaves out the most important matter, the elevation of her mind to the divine power of his resurrection’” (Shuger 175).³⁸ Mary wrongly emphasizes Christ’s body over the “abundantly clear testimonies” of Christ’s Word

³⁵ Cited in Diehl, *Staging Reform* 16.

³⁶ Katharine Goodland argues that female mourning evoked competing reactions from early modern English audiences because of the Reformation: “On the one hand sorrow was considered natural: an expected, even obligatory response to the loss of a loved one. On the other hand, sorrow could be excessive, self-indulgent, and construed as contrary to faith because it was believed to stem from doubt about the Resurrection” (205).

³⁷ According to Shuger, two *suasoria*, or complaint letter narratives, were the only pre-Reformation Magdalene narratives available to early modern English readers, but they were provocative and widespread. See *The Renaissance Bible* 170-175. The first is the “pseudo-Chaucer” narrative, a “verse prosopopoeia” that was first published in 1520, but that found its way into each edition of Chaucer’s works until 1775. The pseudo-Origen “homily,” the second and originally in Latin, appeared in at least twelve editions from 1504-1604, was translated into English for a 1565 printing, and influenced Robert Southwell’s popular *Marie Magdalens Funeral Tears* (1591), Lancelot Andrewes’s fourteenth Easter sermon, and Gervase Markham’s *Marie Magdalens Lamentations* (1601). Shuger reveals the extent to which these narratives “fuse [the] highly eroticized Ovidian representation of abandoned females with the Song of Songs and the hagiographic tradition, producing a self-conscious amalgam of the ancient rhetoric of female desire and the biblical language of erotic spirituality” (170). In both accounts, Mary’s agony at Christ’s tomb is the central moment: she longs for Christ’s body, but without the comfort of any imminent sign of resurrection or fulfillment. Despite the exegetes’ condemnations, the angels’ reassurances and warnings, and the readers’ foreknowledge, Mary insists upon a sacred eroticism that conflates romantic passion and religious dedication. It is no surprise that Calvin bristled at her devotional status. For more on the pseudo-Origen and pseudo-Chaucer narratives, see Coletti, *Mary Magdalene* 209-13 and 217.

³⁸ Cf. *Commentary on John* 2.252-60.

(Shuger 175).³⁹ What does “touch me not” command, if not that “all who endeavour to go to [Christ] must rid themselves of the earthly affections of the flesh” (*Commentary on John 2.259*)?⁴⁰

But in this same biblical commentary, Calvin moderates his approach. In a passage worth quoting in its entirety, he compares Mary to the devoted women of Matthew 27:9:

Since [Christ] allowed himself to be touched by his disciples, what reason was there for forbidding Mary to touch him? The answer is easy, provided that we remember that the women were not repelled from touching Christ, till their eagerness to touch him had been carried to excess; for, so far as it was necessary for removing doubt, he unquestionably did not forbid them to touch him, but, perceiving that their attention was too much occupied with embracing his feet, he restrained and corrected that immoderate zeal. They fixed their attention on his bodily presence, and did not understand any other way of enjoying his society than by conversing with him on the earth. We ought, therefore, to conclude, that they were not forbidden to touch him, until Christ saw that, by their foolish and unreasonable desire, they wished to keep him in the world (2.258-59).

Here, Calvin offers two reasons that Christ rebuked Mary: the resurrected Christ was no longer chained to the world, and Christ wished to rebuke Mary for her overzealous yearning.⁴¹ Calvin chastises Mary’s “foolishness and unreasonable desire,” not the touching itself.⁴² His tolerance for *proper* female contact with Christ not only bears

³⁹ Cf. *Commentary on John 2.252*.

⁴⁰ Cited in Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible* 175.

⁴¹ In the *Institutes*, Calvin offers only one explanation for the rebuke: “When he sees Mary hastening with devoted and zealous reverence to kiss his feet, why should he disapprove of and forbid this touching until he be received into heaven? There is no other reason but that he wishes to be sought there alone” (4.17.29).

⁴² Calvin’s tempered criticism of Magdalene in John 20 is unsurprising; he was wrestling with a Johannine passage that had challenged exegetes since Augustine. See Dinshaw 162-64. Cf. Coletti, *Mary Magdalene* 83.

witness to his capacity for nuance; it also reveals that, to differing degrees, reformers could accommodate physical, female expressions of devotion.

We can see Wager exploiting one of the openings that Calvin provides. In the play, Christ celebrates Mary's touch, albeit at Simon's house, not at the sepulcher:

See you this woman? I know that in your hertes
You condemne her as a synner very unmete
To enter among you, and to touche any partes,
Of my body, yea either head or feet
Saying among your selves, if this were a Prophet,
He would know what maner a woman this is
Which thus commeth in while we be at meate,
A sinner she is, and hath done greatly amisse. (1869-76)

Wager gambles that to look upon Mary Magdalene and to cherish her touch *before the Resurrection* is not to ignore Calvin's reading of John 20. But when Wager insists upon the religious function of the performative body, he returns to a key devotional model of the pre-Reformation English church. Wager's Christ sits, watches, and consents to the most sensual of early Elizabethan performances. He balances scripture with spectacle and theatricality; with his tacit blessing, theatergoers may continue to enjoy Mary's sensational, moving repentance. If they do not, then they might even be thought to side with Simon and the vices, who cry out against her expressive devotion.

How could Wager stage the conflated Mary? How could her touch, so repulsive to exegetes like Calvin, receive Christ's praise on a reformed stage? Although Wager's play is idiosyncratic among other reformation dramas, it bears witness to the continuing cultural impact of the Magdalene in Reformation England. The Magdalene tradition is a force even in the "Calvinist" Geneva Bible (1560), a massive exercise in philology and etymology drafted by prolific English exiles during Queen Mary's reign and a central Reformation text that official Elizabethan churchmen found too radically Calvinist to

endorse.⁴³ Its disorienting cross-references endorse the conflated Magdalene. Next to the Luke 7 narrative of Christ's anointing, the Geneva editors invite readers to gloss the following passages (sig. HH3r):

There were also women, which behelde a farreof, among whome was Marie Magdalene, and Marie (mother of James the lesse, and of Joses) and Salome. (Mark 15: 40)

But Marie [Magdalene] stode without at the sepulchre weping: & as she wept, she bowed her self into the sepulchre. (John 20: 11)

If the Geneva Bible otherwise reflects Calvinist hermeneutics, then why does it endorse the Gregorian conflation?⁴⁴ Its other glosses to Luke 7 subscribe to Calvin's exegesis: the introduction to Luke 7 does not name "the woman," and where Jesus tells the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace" (Luke 7: 50), the gloss reads, "The peace of conscience cometh onely of faith" (sig. HH3v).⁴⁵ The woman's love for Christ is the result of his forgiveness, not the cause of it.

And yet, despite this Calvinist theology, the Magdalene tradition persists elsewhere in the Geneva Bible. In the margins, the editors link Luke 7 to John 20, where

⁴³ Unless otherwise noted, I cite from the 1560 edition of the Geneva Bible. For a brief overview of the Geneva Bible, see Shaheen 26-29. For in-depth scholarship on the three major versions of the Geneva Bible (1560, 1592, and 1602), see Betteridge. All three versions had the same translation and notes for the Old Testament. The 1592 edition contained Lawrence Tomson's New Testament, which is a translation of Theodore Beza's 1574 Latin text and notes, first printed in 1576; the 1602 edition replaces Tomson's notes on Revelation with "a massive and violently antipapal diatribe by Franciscus Junius," a survivor of the French religious wars (Betteridge 44-45). The 1602 edition often appeared in pirated editions with the incorrect date 1599 (Shaheen 50; Betteridge 45). For a review of the Geneva Bible in the context of English biblical translations in the 16th and 17th-centuries, see Lawton 52-86. Also see Danner's work, which provides insights into the contributions made by particular English exiles in Geneva (*Pilgrimage*) and documents some of the major doctrinal and political tenets expressed in the marginalia ("The Contribution").

⁴⁴ Danner notes that the English exiles did not fully rehearse Calvinist theology in their annotations ("The Contribution," 16-18 and *passim*), but he does not comment on Calvin's exegesis. Rather, he suggests that they could have developed much of their "Calvinist" theology before corresponding with Calvin.

⁴⁵ Cf. Calvin 3.4.37: "By what means she obtained forgiveness of sinnes, the Lord openly testifieth: Thy faith, saith he, hath saved thee." Cited in the appendix to White's edition of the play (144).

Mary Magdalene's mourning is intolerable to Calvin (Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible* 173-75). The same editors are just as Gregorian with Mark 14 and Matthew 26, which describe a woman at Simon the leper's house in Bethania: the introduction to Mark 14 names the anointing woman, "Marie Magdalene" (sig. FF4v); in Matthew 26, Christ "excuseth Magdalene" (sig. DD3r). In sum, English Calvinists were reluctant to distinguish Magdalene from the woman in Luke 7. In subsequent editions of the Geneva Bible, until at least 1602, a discreet battle, waged in the margins, revealed how hard it was for English reformers entirely to accept Calvin's reformed exegesis.⁴⁶

For Wager and theatergoers, as well as for the Geneva Bible editors and their readers, a penitent prostitute is most appealing when called "Mary Magdalene," and vice versa. Previously a friar, Wager might have had a special affinity for the saint. Because of their focus on affective experiences of Christ, Franciscans identified themselves with Mary Magdalene at the tomb (K. Jansen 84-85). They imagined themselves at Christ's feet, mourning below his wounded body at the cross. In medieval paintings on the Continent, St. Francis sometimes kneels beside or simply replaces Magdalene, with his haloed head down and hands clasped (93, 95, and 97). Given the dearth of medieval religious artifacts and architecture, we cannot know whether Mary Magdalene held a vital

⁴⁶ In the Tomson NT, introductions to Matthew 26 and Mark 14 no longer refer to Magdalene (sigs. F4r and K4v). But Tomson links Luke's repentant woman to John 20, even though its Luke 7 commentary refers to "this woman" and its synopsis is Calvinist: "the charitie that is here spoken of, is not to be taken for the cause, but as a signe." In the 1602 Geneva Bible, the annotations of Luke 7: 37-38 are finally, but not fully, reformed. Mark 15:40 is still referenced, but because the passage mentions many women, the Magdalene connection is at best spurious. More importantly, John 11 replaces John 20: "After a certaine man was sicke, named Lazarus of Bethania, the towne of Mary, and her sister Martha. (And it was that Marie which anoynted the Lord with oyntment, and wiped his feet with her haire, whose brother Lazarus was sicke)." The 1602 editors link this passage to the "woman" in Matthew 26:7 and to Mary of Bethany in John 12:3. As in earlier editions, the sinner's devotion in Luke 7 is not to be ritualized. The 1602 cross-references are less ambiguous than their forebears: the woman in Luke 7 may be Mary of Bethany, but Mary Magdalene is virtually discarded.

place in the friary that Wager left in the 1530s.⁴⁷ It is similarly difficult to gauge the influence that Wager's former vocation had over him, his work, and his brief literary career.

Franciscan piety obviously does not explain the reluctance of other English reformers to accept Calvin's approach to Luke 7. In the end, Lefèvre and Calvin were simply unpersuasive to later generations of clerics. In the 1590s, Lancelot Andrewes preached about Mary Magdalene, the celebrated foot-washer. More pertinently, later "English Calvinists" John Dove and George Meriton followed suit a decade or so later.⁴⁸ Perhaps the conflation was not as problematic for late-Elizabethan and Jacobean English clerics as it was for Lefèvre and Calvin. If the purpose of reformed hermeneutics as a whole was to recover Christian truths from Scripture, and if Wager and the Geneva Bible editors pursued this aim, then why did they weave the Magdalene tradition into the fabric of the Reformation? Either Scripture was inconsistent, even contradictory, or the godly could not fully agree on even the simplest of historical references, or the language on which exegetes worked was just too intricate to simplify. In any case, Wager and the editors risked shortchanging reformed hermeneutics and unintentionally collaborating with papist heretics, who, according to John Jewel, schemed to "'bid away with the [...] Scriptures" by allowing "not only divers, but also contrary, interpretations" (78).

⁴⁷ Wager's Franciscan origins, then, are far different from Bale's Cistercian roots. Any comparison between the two needs qualification. For such comparisons, see Badir, "To allure" 7 and White, *Theatre and Reformation* 83. For the various paths that ex-friars took after the Henrician dissolution, see Rex 58: "That many friars remained entirely traditional in their religious sympathies is hardly surprising."

⁴⁸ Andrewes, *The Works* 2.37; Dove sig. B4r; Meriton, *A Sermon of Repentance* sig. C1r; and Meriton, *A Sinners Conversion*, in *A Christians Assuring House*, sigs. E2v-F1r.

Despite English reformers' demands for accurate exegesis, the woman in Luke 7 remained Mary Magdalene because early modern England was deeply, if not completely, connected to its religious heritage. As Shuger insists, we need to pay attention to continuities in, as well as transformations of, English Christianity ("The Reformation of Penance" 571). Reformers often grafted their theologies and biblical interpretations onto established religious traditions and their pieties onto medieval exegesis, and onto early Church writings, too. Just as England could not dismiss its religious past in a matter of decades, men like Wager apparently could not dismiss theirs, either.⁴⁹ They adopted Calvinist tenets selectively. Fusing traditional exegesis to doctrinal reforms allowed exegetes, playwrights, and audiences alike to see how their religious experiences fit into new reformed Christianities.

Wager's approach to Magdalene is shrewd. Because he depicts Mary Magdalene, rather than an unnamed harlot, he can tap cultural desires for the sensual piety which she emblemizes. Because he omits the gospel scene at Jesus's empty tomb (John 20), he does not have to take extra pains to empty a woman's touch of pious import. At the same time, he appropriates Calvin's analysis of Luke 7, which finds loving, feminine expressions of faith inoffensive.⁵⁰ What matters to Calvin is that the female sinner's love is the acceptable result of faith and forgiveness, but that Mary's passion at the tomb is excessive (3.4.37). Wager elides the difference: the Luke narrative celebrates Mary's touch, and Christ's forgiveness inspires feminine worship. In an exegetical compromise that follows, or anticipates, the English editors' glosses of their Geneva Bible, Wager

⁴⁹ As Watt puts it, "belief-formation" is "a process: not a simple replacement of Catholic with Protestant doctrine, but a gradual modification of traditional piety" (327).

⁵⁰ See *Harmony* 2.135-141 and *Institutes* 3.4.37.

tempers rather than evacuates Mary's sacred erotics. With Wager's Mary, theater and tradition trump Calvin's exegesis.

Christ, Mary Magdalene, and her (Anti)Theatrical Demons

Wager's Calvinism and his theater are otherwise more neighborly than adversarial. If the Prologue to his play is any indication, Wager tries to refute hardliners who claim that reform and theater are mutually exclusive, that playmaking is nothing more than a profit-making scheme (42). But he does not make this project easy for himself. Wager vigorously devotes the first half of his play to the sort of drama that critics of the stage most feared, a drama scripted and directed by the vices. "For every day" Infidelitie has "a garment to weare, / Accordyng to [his] worke and operation" (1023-24). Infidelitie also has costumes and cosmetics to ready his cast members for their assigned roles (123-34). The vices are given to duplicity, and their "tragedie" catalyzes Mary's fall (451). Their playacting stimulates Mary's senses, stokes her lust, and inhibits her conscience. She is a target because she conveniently frets over just the sort of problems that Infidelitie's theatrical work can resolve—her garments, her pox scars, and her "worshipful state and dignitie" (225). If Infidelitie the impresario can "so dresse" Mary "that neither law nor prophets she shall regard / No though the sonne of God to her them expresse" (318-320), what will be the effect of his theatrical labors on the audience?

Mary's corruption entails exactly the profitable theatrical work that antitheatricalists reviled. "I would thou dydst see hir disposition," Infidelitie tells an eager Malicious Judgement, who "would bestowe [his] forty pence" "[t]o see her fashion" because he "doubt[s] not but she knoweth all wicked ways" after she "tasted of"

Infidelitie's "erudition" (1063-65). Because the first half of Wager's play verges on just this sort of voyeuristic enterprise, it threatens theatergoers every bit as much as it threatens Mary. The Prologue claims that the audience has paid to see virtue and to hear the gospel, but it is Infidelitie's "craft and art" that entertains them, filling both them and Mary "with wickednesse beyond all measure" (44-46, 457, 318, 329, 365, 373-76). She will learn to play her "part" "right well" on a stage that theatricalizes sexuality and sexualizes theatricality (620). For the vices, as for antitheatricalists, there is hardly any distinction. To exploit her, the vices "make" Mary into "a Goddess" and a whore who must "roll" her "eyes," dye and style her hair, paint over her pox scars, wear velvet, expose her "white pappes," "gird" her waist, perfume her clothing, smile, cast "a wanton eye," and "flatter" and "boast" with a "fyled" "tongue."⁵¹ When a boy actor is coached to look and sound like such a lustful woman, the potential for audience arousal must be great.⁵²

If *Life and Repentaunce* aims to counter antitheatricalists who "say" that "worse tungs were never heard before this day" (22-23)—indeed, if Wager defends his play on Calvinist grounds—what are we to make of the play's lewdness? The Prologue ascribes the vices to dramatic convention and timelessness—"[f]or in men and women they have depended / And therefore, figuratively to speak, it is the use" (82-83)—but this explanation hardly justifies Wager's vices, who would have been too suggestive and titillating for reformed playwrights like John Bale. In Bale's *Three Laws*, the Infidelity who mocks the virtues and satirizes papist attire is raciest when he rhymes "smart" with

⁵¹ See 451, 616, 624-45, 649-61, 673, 675, 689, 769-73, 776, 768 and 710-15.

⁵² See Orgel 29 and Levine 10-11 on the titillation and the fear of effeminization aroused by such performers. Also see Howard and Rackin for cross-dressing in early modern English theater.

“fart” (D4r-v and A6v). Wager’s *Infidelitie* dwells emphatically on Mary’s sexuality. He begins the play pointing to “the midst” of Mary’s “garments” (171). Later, when he boasts that he has brought Mary “into suche a case / That she is past the feare of God and shame of man” (1057-58), the “case” is no less sinful than sexual. Perhaps a pun for a brothel, it is where iniquity takes root, and it explains why “she worketh privily in every place” (1059-60), the theater among them.⁵³ How can a putatively godly play begin with coital overtures, and then expect to deflect charges that the theater whets base appetites?

Given the tonal differences between the temptation scenes and the conversion scenes, scholars have presumed that the only way for Wager to stage reform is to do away with anything that either appeals to the senses or heightens sexual desire. The play’s sensuousness is but a pretext for its own disavowal. As I noted earlier, Badir suggests that, during Mary’s conversion, Mary’s provocative, gendered body is “replaced by the flattened, two-dimensional surfaces of the Word” (*The Maudlin Impression* 40). Sermons and scripture come to dominate, while Mary’s penitential performance “is managed and contained” by Christ, the virtues, even one of Wager’s stage directions: “creepe under the table, abyding there a certayne space behynd ... as it is specified in the Gospell” (*Maudlin Impressions* 43; 1828SD). The marginalization of Mary’s reformed body corresponds with the predominance of evangelical discourse over affective piety. As Badir would have it, Wager’s spectator sees “a picture of words, and behind these words, that which the words, when read, would picture” (*Maudlin Impressions* 43).

Badir claims that words win out in the end, but not before “[t]ext and body compete for supremacy in a moment of riveting theatricality” during the foot-washing

⁵³ Cf. *OED* “Case” n.² 7c.

scene (44). This line of thinking suggests that “text and body” are irrevocably at odds. But just as Wager’s Calvinism is nuanced, so is his reformed dramaturgy (which declines to turn the stage into an iconoclast’s lectern). Infidelitie may eroticize Mary’s fall, but Christ himself encourages and relishes her spectacular conversion and sensuous repentance. The struggle over Mary is consistently theatrical: her conversion reforms the purpose of her body and of its staging, but Wager refuses to enervate theater in the process. To set scripture against images or bodies would have been to move in lockstep with antitheatricalists who claimed that the theater was sacrilegious. Wager instead makes a place for God in the theater, and uses Mary’s body to stress a larger point about the dramatic ethos of the Gospels, a series of narratives centered on manifestation and incarnation. Whereas words in scripture depict Christ’s ministry, theater, when it stages that picture, does what words cannot do: it fleshes out the Word.

Wager’s support for a reformed theater counterintuitively aligns the vices with sixteenth-century antitheatricalists.⁵⁴ He does not so much scoff at antitheatrical anxieties—Infidelitie’s dramaturgy contributes to Mary’s fall, after all—as he allows the vices eventually to deride the art that they espouse. Their shift could be said to anticipate the souring that playwrights like Gosson and Munday experienced toward the theater. Wager’s vices enact a progression—from player-playwrights to antitheatrical converts—that he himself declines in favor of a dramaturgy that serves Christ and in which Christ can participate. While Wager never equates religion with theater, by patently ascribing theatrical talent to Christ and to Mary, he brings reform in line with an aesthetic otherwise controlled by vices and vilified by antitheatricalists.

⁵⁴ Knapp briefly mentions the link between the vices and antitheatricalists (41-42).

Infidelitie reveals himself as an antitheatricalist reformer when he first encounters the virtues. Mary should not fixate on the Law, Infidelitie warns, because “gasyng” is an unfaithful act (1159-60). Perhaps her gaze leads her astray during the temptation scenes, but during her conversion, Mary locks her eyes on a “glasse” that reflects a decree: “[a]ll men for synne by Gods sentence damned be” (1161 and 1164). Infidelitie confuses her gazing with adoration; he fails to recognize how Mary can see God’s word reflected in the Law, an actor who holds tablets “in his hand” (1110). When Christ enters the stage, Infidelitie takes the antitheatrical platform to an extreme. As the head vice scrambles to remind Mary to “print” the vice’s “wordes” “well in your remembrance” and “never” to “regard” Christ’s “words,” he calls Christ a “false harlot,” a tag for the old Mary no less than for idols and cross-dressed actors (1319, 1348-49). Whether Infidelitie exploits the stage or castigates it, his definition of theater is consistent: it spawns evil.

During Mary’s conversion and repentance, it is not Christ, but the “righteous”—Simon and Infidelitie and Malicious Judgement—who disregard the religious potential of theater: they reject theater because, in the Prologue’s words, they “wold not have ther fautes reveled” and “wold ... have ther wickednes still concealed” (38 and 40). Unabashed hypocrites, the vices whose theatrical success hinged on Mary’s sexual dalliances now condemn Christ for exploiting her body for theatrical effect. Her sensual longing for Christ reignites antitheatrical sentiments that Infidelitie first voiced during her conversion. Once Mary “creepe[s] under the table,” vices Malicious Judgement and Infidelitie vilify her: she is a “wicked sinner,” “a harlot” who “boldly after hym ... doth procede,” a “person defiled” whom Christ brazenly “permits” to “touche hym” (1833,

1835-36, 1837-38). Ever the opportunist, Infidelitie calls attention to the very scene he supposedly reviles:

I pray you see, how busy about hym she is,
She washeth his feet with teares of hir eyes,
Heigh, mary younder is like to be nothing amisse.
Behold, she anoynteth him to drive away flies. (1841-44)

Just in case it is hard for us to “see” and “behold” Mary under the table, Infidelitie clarifies how theatrical her “busy” actions under the table are.⁵⁵ As the vices lose grip of their own art form—Mary’s conversion and repentance is entirely theatrical—they repudiate the stage for the same reasons that they cherished it.

Simon is similarly hypocritical when, disgusted by the anointing but “lookyng” anyway, he opens himself up to Christ’s criticism of “hypocrites full of dissemblyng scorne” who arrogantly display “richesse,” “treasure,” and “holynesse” (1848, 1891, and 1895-96). Like Infidelitie, Simon looks at the woman whom he condemns for showing herself, while also condemning Christ for looking at and accepting Mary’s penitential acts. Simon rejects the feminine expressions of piety that apparently excite, or at least mesmerize, him. In self-righteous fashion, Simon chastises Christ with loaded questions:

... Are you in such things to be tought?
What meane you, wherabout do you looke,
I marvell wherabout you do occupy your thought. (1850-52)

Earlier, Simon “marvelled” at Christ’s miracles; here he “marvells” at what he takes to be Christ’s sexual fantasies.⁵⁶ Watching and feeling parts of Mary’s body—her hands, her

⁵⁵ Infidelitie recalls Laura Levine’s take on Shakespeare’s Ulysses, whose “rhetoric is the rhetoric of an anti-theatricalist,” but whose “actions are the actions of the player or playwright *as an anti-theatricalist would see the player or playwright*, the person who produces in the spectator uncontainable affect, whets desires to inordinate lust” (31).

⁵⁶ “Occupy” had bawdy connotations. See *OED* 8a.

hair, her face—is tantamount to sexual depravity and effeminization. Simon’s anxiety about where Jesus “looks” and about what he thinks has all of the hallmarks of the antitheatricalists’ attacks. But Wager’s Christ insists that Simon’s anxieties are without merit. When Simon worries about what “occupies” Christ’s mind, Christ responds that “the truth is so,” that he does in fact have a “thing in my mynd” (1853). Despite its bawdy overtones, “thing” in this case is a parable about two debtors, not a voyeuristic fantasy. For Christ, Mary’s foot-washing is both a theatrical expression of her remorse and a scriptural aide-mémoire.

Simon, the anti-Semitic stereotype for whom religion is predicated on cerebral faith, “precepts,” and doctrine, is a parody of radical reformers and antitheatricalists whose concern for God’s law trumps sensual devotion, repentant gestures, and salvific expression. He is Reformation’s extreme moralist at the same time that he is a papist who “prepare[s]” the “sacrifice” for “evenyng service” (2045-46). To entrap Christ at dinner, Simon looks for more than a declaration of divinity, for something more politically subversive and culturally transgressive; even after Christ calls himself “the sonne of the livyng God immortal,” Simon ignores the vices’ complaints and feigns tolerance (973-980, 1740-44). It is not until Mary’s expression of piety, and Christ’s acceptance of it, that Simon condemns his guest: “you are newfangled and frivolous,” he tells Christ, “Going about the law and our rulers to subdue, / Introducyng sectes perillous and sedicious” (1954-56). What is “frivolous,” “perillous and sedicious” to Simon is Mary’s erotic devotion and theatrical displays. What is “newfangled” in 1566 is reform that is hospitable to theatricality, that makes religious experience tangible even as it defuses anxiety over affective piety. “All the inward thoughts of the hart / And all the

imaginations of the mynde / Which were occupied evill by Sathans arte,” Repentance tells Mary, “Must hence forth be turned after an other kynd” (1429-32)—turned, that is, into a still theatrical, yet holy art.

Christ himself reassures theatergoers who “are oppressed” “with labor,” who “are heavy laden” and who “have transgressed” (1549-51): “I came not into the world, the righteous to call, / But the synfull persons unto repentance” (1557-58). Drawing on the *theatrum mundi* trope, Wager’s Christ (here, as elsewhere in the play) correlates the world with the theater, a theater that calls “great detters unto repentance” (1877-78).⁵⁷ Christ’s world is the theater which houses this very performance. It is where Christ can go about his work, “comfort[ing]” “the sick” (1550 and 1560) as both an accomplished director and an actor.⁵⁸

Mary’s exorcism is a case-in-point. It fulfills expectations first established when, well before Christ appears, Simon acknowledges that his “doctrine is marvellous.” The “wonders” he has “wrought” bespeak a mysterious “power” the provenance of which is expressly theatrical: “At Naim a dead chylde he did rayse,” “a marvellous act” (933-36, 961-62, 976). Whereas Infidelitie has a “tragedie” in mind, Christ arrives to declare that Mary is “dressed” for “salvation,” not whoredom (451 and 1388). Even Infidelitie finally is forced to acknowledge Christ’s superior theatricality after the exorcism: “His wordes be of suche strength and great power, / That the divell hym self and all his rablement, /

⁵⁷ Like Christ, the vices view the world as a theater. Malicious Judgement has the theater in mind when he asks, “What thyng in this world excelleth libertie?” (750); Infidelitie plans to “remayne” “above true Faith” until “the worldes ende” (137-38); Pride calls Mary “as proude a litle gyrl truly I thinke, / As ever men sawe in this world eate or drinke” (361-62); and wherever Pride and his “ofspryng” “dwell,” “[t]here is a place for all the divels in hell,” a place that “doth begynne” “in this world” (445-48).

⁵⁸ In 1566, Pierre Boaistuau’s *Theatrum Mundi* appeared in English; of course, comparing the theater to the world, and the world to the theater, was an accepted commonplace for Calvin no less than for early modern English playwrights. For Calvin’s use of the metaphor, see Robert White’s article.

He is able to expell, and utterly devoure” (1622-24). Playing Tamburlaine to Infidelitie’s Faustus, Christ breathtakingly clears the stage of—even consumes—those who contest his “wordes.”

Once Christ declares Mary’s theatrical destiny (“dressed” for “salvation”), “Infidelitie runneth away,” “Mary falleth flat downe,” demons backstage “[c]ry” and “roare terribly,” and Christ commands Mary to “[a]rise . . . and thanke the father of heaven” (1388 SD and 1393). Christ directs Mary in her new role as a faithful penitent. He conceives of her conversion and her repentance as theatrical signs of revelation: “I thank thee O father, O lord of heven, earth and of al / That thou hast hidden these things from the sapient, / And hast revealed them to the litle ones and small” (1541-43). The “sapient” are the learned, hypocritically antitheatrical Pharisees in all their guises; the “litle ones and small” are Mary and the theatergoers who watch her salvation unfold.

Not only Christ’s “scriptures” but also his “workes” “[b]eare witnesse” to his theatrical divinity (1726-30). His gospel requires costumes, countenances, speech, music, scents, adages, embraces, laws, and kisses. Consequently, Mary does more than “heare the Gospell of health” and “beare” “the wordes thereof . . . in [her] remembrance” (1531-32). Her body, which had expressed sinfulness, now performs her grace-inspired faith—“with her senses in every part”—precisely because Christ works in and with the theater (1440). Yes, there is salvific power in his “voyce” (1361), which “speake[s] . . . wordes” and calls all to “serch the scriptures that saved you myght be” (1722). But Wager also puts in a plug for Christ’s stagecraft: he exorcise Mary’s demons, has her “dressed,” and welcomes her perfumed touch.

Because theater is measured in terms of bodily affect, and because Mary is the character by which we measure bodily affect in this play, it should be no surprise that Wager's theatrical Christ expects more from Mary than declarations of faith. Before the foot-washing scene, Mary had already received Christ's grace. The appropriation of Luke 7 is redundant if its primary function is to forgive Mary; during the exorcism scene, Jesus had vouched that his "grace shall be ... sufficient" for her (1530), that faith and repentance will help her "heare the Gospell of health," that Repentance will "detaine" her "from all wickednesse" (1531-35). Mary is already "saved" (1540). Mary's footwashing, then, follows from Wager's conviction that repentance, "joynd continually" with her faith, be given theatrical expression (1474). One among Christ's "greter works" (1580), it confirms Christ's endorsement of theatricality: his grace inspires Mary to "make" her "body servant to the veritie" and "to shew ... obsequie" at his feet (1803).

If Mary's conversion does not involve a switch from images to words, from icons to scripture, or from sexual innuendo to sobering jeremiads, it is because Wager cannot envision a theater that could survive such an exchange. Christ saves Mary by means of the same physiological and spiritual vulnerabilities that the vices exploited. In Wager's *Life and Repentaunce*, Christ's works are thoroughly theatrical. Speaking, gesturing, affected and affecting bodies are what prevail. Indeed, theater becomes an agent of revelation. Histrionically purged, Mary suddenly emotes graceful quatrains in admiration of her Savior:

Honor, praise, and glory to the father eternall,
 Thanks to the sonne, very god and very man
 Blessed by the holy gost, with them both coequall,
 One god, which hath saved me this day from Sathan. (1537-40)

Nothing in the dialogue has taught Mary this theology. Only her spectacular awakening can have led to this awareness of the Incarnation and Trinity. Theater can awaken the converted to the truth, Wager suggests, because the truth is somehow imparted through performance. Consider Christ's mystifying relationship with the father:

All things of my father are committed unto me,
And who the sonne is, none but the father doth know
No man but the sonne knoweth who the father shold be,
And he to whom the sonne wil reveale and showe. (1545-1548)

To "reveale and showe" is to understand the Father and the Son in theatrical terms, and "he to whom" suggests theatergoers eager to decipher divine inscrutability. Later, Christ attributes his spectacular "work" to the "Father":

For the father doth the sonne entirely love,
And sheweth him al things to the praise of his name,
And shal shew him greter works than these as you shal prove. (1578-80)

Christ's miracles imitate the Father's, which are just as performative—"The sonne can do nothyng of hym selfe duely, / But that he *seeth* the father doying always still" (1575-76, my italics). Christ has taken his cue from his Father. That they both "sheweth," "revealeth," and "seeth" confirms for Wager and for us that reformed drama may draw on visual, sensual, and affective (not merely aural, oral, and didactic) resources.

O'Connell finds it "tempting to speculate that the antitheatricalism hinted at in Wager's prologue may have been provoked by his presuming to put Christ on stage—and that the failure of the portrayal, its being hedged about with theological abstraction, derives from anxiety over the attempt" (O'Connell 101). But Wager's play suggests that O'Connell's "theological abstractions" actually have theatrical underpinnings. Something akin to Christ's relationship to the Father is what Wager hopes to foster

between theatergoers and actors. The Father “sheweth” the son so that the son can “shew” to the elect, who, like Mary (and Wager), will do the same: “we will shewe that great was hir repentance,” the Prologue claims, “And that hir love towards Christ was also as great” (75-76).

To Wager, then, theater is a proper vehicle for spreading the gospel because it is the likely medium for Christian revelation. Theater can serve religion because the complex interactions that occur within it represent incarnational relationalities that exceed solely scriptural reform.⁵⁹ When Mary washes Christ’s feet—when she yearns for, receives, and exhibits the sensations of grace—and when Christ praises her touch, Wager imagines a Christianity that lives up to its promise to bridge creator and creature. And when Justification calls theatergoers “to go forward” and “no more to looke back” (2115), he alludes to an experience of salvation that is not limited to exegesis and sermon only. Rather than condemn the play’s earlier theatrical displays, Justification recalls Mary’s own theatrical account of her progress: “Graunt me Lord suche a perfect repentance ... that I looke no more back, but go forward still” (1470). In the face of reformist pressure, Mary commits herself to theologically-backward footwashing and, with Christ’s help, makes of it a move “forward.” Had Wager gone “forward” with the typical, iconoclastic fashion, he would have been complicitous in the erasure of her name from the Luke 7 narrative (an erasure that not even the editors of the 1560 Geneva Bible

⁵⁹ Wager’s endorsement of corporeal piety reminds us of late-medieval biblical theater, which positions “the body as the bearer of social and cultural meaning ... not just ... [out of a] concern [for] a theology of incarnation and embodiment, but also because in theater it is the very body of the actor that becomes the chief vehicle of semiosis” (Beckwith, *Signifying God* 31). Like the medieval cycles that reformers were slowly dismantling in the 1560s and 1570s, *Life and Repentaunce* “explores theology through the very logic of performance” (Beckwith, “Drama” 85). And despite all its differences from the Digby script, Wager’s play returns to significant questions about “the boundaries of sacred and profane” that the conflated Magdalene “repeatedly bridge[d] ... and transgress[ed]” in her legends and on the stage (Coletti, *Mary Magdalene* 204).

had endorsed). According to Calvin, she is not the woman at Simon's house (*Harmony of the Evangelists* 2.137-38). Mary is but the woman whose brother was raised from the dead, and whose touch, no matter how genuine, is too much to tolerate.

It is to Wager's credit that he refuses to think of reform in terms that disavow his model of female piety. Religious progress, as with so many other ideals in this play, is easily misconstrued. From the start, Infidelitie himself plans to help "set" Mary "forward" (317). And many decades after 1566, ceremonialists like Lancelot Andrewes promoted sensory worship and affective piety as if they were the way "to go forward" with reform. Does, as Happé surmises, "[t]he Protestant [have] to reject the erotic image" to counter "idoltrous emotionalism" (Happé 226-27)? Or, as Cartwright suggests, can the Protestant stage describe a Mary with "iconic ... kinesthetic appeal," an appeal heightened by her erotic spirituality and affective devotion (*Theater and Humanism* 147)? While Wager probably does not expect his Magdalene to be as central as she was before the 1530s, he manifestly rejects the "perception" of reformers like Lefèvre "that the attachment of female sexuality and eros to holiness can only be unsuitable" (Coletti, *Mary Magdalene* 227). Wager's Mary is the product of a cultural effort to balance the aims of reform with the desire for divine contact and religious affect, and she is the product of a dramaturgic effort to pair theater with Calvinism, one of the most complex and influential developments of the Reformation.

With the converted, repentant Mary, Wager grants physical receptivity religious value, reclaims the body—always unstable, always effeminized in antitheatrical tracts—for God's work, and reconceives the Gospel into a form of theater that celebrates the performative body as a vehicle for grace, mercy, and love. Mary, after all, is a cross-

dressed boy who shows audience members how to play the woman during the conversion and repentance process. In antitheatrical treatises, and within early modern English culture more generally, women are “inherently theatrical and duplicitous ... with temperaments prone to change and inconstancy” (Howard, *The Stage* 36). Players encountered the same criticism. But according to Wager, the vacillation and inconstancy associated with femininity and playacting are also the basis for Mary’s spectacular conversion. Such attributes enable God’s chosen to be confronted, seized, penetrated, humbled, silenced, and transformed. If cross-dressing on the stage was to antitheatricalists a vile and effeminizing abuse, here it becomes a fitting representation of salvific experience.

That Wager could have masculinized Mary’s devotion and her election is confirmed for us by the later “Calvinist,” George Meriton. Conversion, Meriton remarks, necessitates “[t]he strength of Gods arme in our works and actions” (*The Christian* sig. E2r)—hence, Mary displayed “strength in action” when “she wept, she watered, she wiped, she kissed, she anoynted Christs feet” (sig. E2v). Women ought “to keepe at home” and practice modesty and humility, but Mary “leaveth her owne house” and “thrust herselfe amongst a company that sat at meat” (sig. E3r-v). The spiritual “fire in her bowels” makes a man out of her, and the best way to express this godly masculinity is, curiously, to kneel in remorse (sig. E3r). Meriton’s Mary follows a long line of “deep sighers” and “great weepers,” saints whose lachrymonious devotion, fueled by the “Spirit of God,” is the rightful “badge” of a manly “Church” (sig. G3r). As with David, whose “tears” were his “meat day and night,” the faithful should “embrace” Mary’s “example” to “strangle our sinnes with the streames of our teares” (sig. G5r). Meriton interjects

physical aggression into the Luke 7 narrative; Mary's sorrow and grief are symptomatic of the spiritual warfare in which all the elect are conscripted to fight.

Although Wager's Christ commands Mary to "call" on God "[f]or strength to continue" (1931), Wager does not masculinize piety when he gives free rein to its submissive, somatic expression. To him, David's (feminine) "tears were his sustenance" (1435); they are signs of humility, repentance, and faith for David no less than for Wager's Mary. David's "synnes" (1433), hers, and ours are all of a sort. Still, when Justification prays "that all we example may take / Of Mary, our synfull lyves to forsake," he is mum as to the manner in which we are to "forsake" "our synfull lyves" (2114-14). This alone is clear: Wager's Mary is our "example" because she "never spared" "to *shew* hir self a sinner," because her "*gestures*" "[p]rocede from a true meaning heart," and because she "shewed that obsequie" with "love grounded in Faith" (65 and 2103-04, my italics). She stands for a Calvinist theology that does more than clarify the source of salvation and love. It grants sensual, theatrical expression to both. Wager takes on the forces of reform that would ultimately close the theaters, and he relies on reformed exegesis to do so.

Mary, Elizabeth, and Theatrical Affects of Faith

With Mary's devotion in Wager's play comes what Love calls "the end of the law" (2097), an especially poignant statement at a time when some reformers sought to outlaw ceremonial acts like foot-washing. To endorse Mary's theatrical devotion, beneath the lawful Simon's disapproving glare, is to veer from the Reformation's iconoclastic path. In this, Wager anticipates England's Queen, who when she chose to give vivid, sensual, ritualistic expression to her faith, intimated that women like

Magdalene could be the model of female piety in the reformed church. Interestingly enough, the earliest evidence for this connection comes from John Bale, who cast then-Princess Elizabeth as England's Magdalene when in 1548 he circulated *A Godly Medytacyon of the Christen Soule*, Elizabeth's translation of Marguerite de Navarre's 1544 *Le Miroir De L'ame Pecheresse*. It is an intensely personal reflection on the spiritual trials of a woman. In a text that blends reform and tradition, its passionate queries and biblical citations mix with pleas to God and to the Virgin Mary.⁶⁰ Bale's frontispiece has the diminutive princess stand like Mary Magdalene, with an ointment box in hand before Christus Resurrectus, but dressed for the throne, not in mourning garb (Figure 1). Bale seems to suggest that such an image lends support to a reformed text. It is as if Elizabeth's translation proves her faith as powerfully and as affectively as Mary's foot-washing had proved hers—her text effectively fulfills the devotion pictured in the woodcut. But Bale also tempers the potential sensuousness of the scene by conflating Luke 7 and John 20: Elizabeth holds, but does not apply the ointment, while Christ points to heaven and readies himself to administer his famous *noli me tangere* rebuke. What Magdalene emblemized, and what Bale curiously and cautiously links to Elizabeth, was not for the Queen to represent. Bale imports his dramaturgical approach to Elizabeth's translation; always suspicious of affect, he suggests that text ought to supercede all religious expression.

⁶⁰ "Now my lorde if thou be my father, maye I thynke that I can be thy mother ... Therfor without anye feare, wyll I take upon me the name of a mother. What mother of God? O swete vyrgyne Marye, I besyche the, be not angry that I take up suche a tytle" (sigs. B7v-B8r).



Figure 1: Princess Elizabeth before Christ

Throwing Bale's caution to the wind, Elizabeth washed feet each year during the highly theatrical Maundy Thursday ceremony. Also favored by Queen Mary and commemorated in Levina Teerlinc's miniature painting (c. 1565), this politically charged ritual legitimized the affective, iconic brand of devotion that strict reformers worked to ban.⁶¹ Absent a censorious Simon, Elizabeth's finely dressed courtiers looked on as the Queen washed and blessed the feet of poor women. Imitating Christ, but exquisitely dressed in the blue of the Virgin Mary, she would trace the sign of the cross onto each foot when finished. As if feminine piety could bolster her regality, Elizabeth laid claim to the Virgin's grace, Christ's humility, and Mary Magdalene's piety, all the while maintaining the appearance of a "worshipful" queen (Wager 177).

Although Maundy Thursday commemorates Jesus's washing of the disciples' feet (John 13: 5-12), scriptural accuracy mattered little to participants. And yet, it was not

⁶¹ Levin notes that Elizabeth was continuing Queen Mary's practice (23). For the miniature, see Aston, *The King's Bedpost* 104.

completely sidelined, either. When Elizabeth reenacts Mary Magdalene's humble gesture, her typological performance intersects with key Christian narratives. Elizabeth is a female Christ, the poor women are her apostles; she is the supplicating woman who anoints female *imitatorices Christi*; and she is the Virgin who administers to fellow women. To kneel and to anoint feet would have been to summon up Mary Magdalene. Short of using her own hair, anointing, rubbing, and cleansing women's feet was as affective and as sensuous a ritual as the Queen could conduct. It was also a dramatized beatitude, a daring moment of hierarchal reinforcement and social inversion. A stand-in for Christ, Elizabeth calls the female participants to repentance; a royal Mary Magdalene, she expresses her own repentance by humbling herself before meek and socially disenfranchised women—by touching stand-ins for Christ.

When Henry Denham reprinted Elizabeth's translation of *The Mirror* in 1568, he excised the Elizabeth-as-Magdalene woodcut. It is tempting to think that Royal Maundy-induced anxieties led to this excision. Ceremonial foot-washing could not help but infuriate reformists who sought to anathemize affective piety.⁶² Although Calvin seethed over what he called papist "theatrical feet-washing" performed by hypocrites who "are then free to despise their brethren" afterwards, what Calvin would have said about foot-washing performed by the faithful is open to question (Zachman 384).⁶³ It goes without

⁶² For Elizabeth's moderate religious faith, and the various reactions to that faith, see Aston, *The King's Bedpost* 97-107, Collinson, "Windows," Doran, "Elizabeth I's Religion," and MacCulloch (*The Later Reformation* 25-26).

⁶³ Quoted from Calvin, Commentary on John 13:14, *Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia, Series II, Opera Exegetica Veteris et Novi Testamenti*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1992, 2.120-21. Also see *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, eds. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. Vol. 4: 60.

saying that when Elizabeth celebrated Maundy Thursday, she mightily tasked hardline reformers.

They turned acrimonious on a number of occasions, most shockingly in 1570, not long after Wager's play, when Edmund Dering gave his infamous sermon before the Queen, decrying England's religious "abominations."⁶⁴ "[C]ontemptuously disparaging her gender," "he warned her that her disobedience to God's will was inviting divine punishment" (Freeman, "*Imitatio Christi*" 45). Gesturing to St. Paul's Chapel, where he "need not seeke farre for offences, wherat Gods people are greved" (sig. B3r), he turns her proclaimed faith against her: "If you have said sometime of yourself: Tanquam ovis, 'as a sheep appointed to be slain', take heed you hear not now of the prophet, tanquam indomita Iuvenca, 'as an untamed and unruly heifer'" (sig. B3r).⁶⁵ From her royal closet, Elizabeth heard her linked in the same breath to the "purple whore" of Babylon and a barren cow (sig. D1v). Dering worries that peace and prosperity lure England to "say as proud Babylon: I sit like a Queene, and shall see no evil, I shal be a Lady for ever" (sig. B4v). As goes the queen, so goes the realm. More than a decade after her ascension, Elizabeth has become a dangerously infertile, impious, superstitious woman who mocks God with airs of power and glory. Although a female ruler, she fails to nourish the spirit of her realm. Dering admonishes her to be a nurse "unto the Church of God" (sig. C2v) and "[l]ooke unto [the people's ignorance] better, if you wyl looke well unto your selfe" (sig. C4r). God will "come to aske accompt of her stewardship"; if she does not reform

⁶⁴ Cited in McCullough, *Sermons at Court* 36-37. Cf. Freeman, "Providence" 44-45. Dering's sermon follows earlier admonishments of the queen, most notably Thomas Cole's (1564). See McCullough, *Sermons at Court*, Appendix V, 11.

⁶⁵ The first is a citation from Isaiah 53:7 that Elizabeth often recited, according to Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (1563.1712v). The second is from Jeremiah 50:11. Cf. Freeman, "Providence" 54, n. 111.

herself, “she will be found eating and drinking with sinners” (C3r). Lost upon Dering, but not upon Wager and Elizabeth, is that joining sinners at the table—or, for that matter, the court or the theater—could be a measure of faith.

John Charlewood, Wager’s printer, placed himself in the midst of this conflict when he published an edition of Dering’s sermon in 1578, a decade or so after the publication of *Life and Repentaunce*. Charlewood markets Wager’s play as “not only godlie, learned and fruitefull, but also well furnished with pleasaunt myrth and pastime, very delectable for those which shall heare or reade the same.” This advertisement emphasizes what typically counts for reformed epistemology: “hear or read” this “enterlude” to appreciate its pleasures and its lessons. What Charlewood fails to mention is the play’s emphasis upon theatrical displays that “sheweth” the Gospel passages that the script “recite[s]” (72). How did Charlewood adjudge the reformist texts that he disseminated twelve years apart from each other, texts that represented an ongoing struggle to define religious progress and proper piety in early modern England? Did he look forward to the eradication of sensuous modes of devotion? Or was he tolerant of a faith at once unabashedly theatrical and sensuous?

Elizabeth decisively chose the latter, but she had to make do without the theological warrants that Wager could draw on. According to one witness’s account, Elizabeth’s Maundy Thursday demonstrated how close England’s faith was to Catholicism.⁶⁶ Wager’s *Magdalene*, however, represents a Calvinism that endorses affective piety as an expression of love, which itself is “a speciall fruite of Faith”

⁶⁶ Spanish ambassador, Canon Guzman de Silva, wrote an account of this ceremony for Philip of Spain in 1565 (Aston, *The King’s Bedpost* 104). Of course, the ambassador could have embellished his account for any number of political reasons.

(2087)—the blessed end, but not the necessary means, of salvation. And his is a script that, when it conjoins Elizabeth's piety and Calvinist reform, makes room for female sensuality in the reformed faith. If men like Dering, and Knox before him, granted no virtue to the female body as they vilified Elizabeth, then men like Wager saw to it that women, and the devotional acts typically ascribed to them, found a central place in England's reformed Christianity. That theater was Wager's venue bears witness to its religious possibilities at a time when the fault-lines between theater and religion, and reform and femininity, had begun to surface.

CHAPTER 2

THEATER AND CHRISTIAN RULE IN THE *HENRY VI* PLAYS

The under-remarked *Henry VI* plays dwell upon an early modern monarch's religious duty to protect his or her link with the divine.¹ They rehearse the early modern attempt to triangulate Christianity, sovereignty, and manhood. By engaging with Christian-humanist discourse, they ponder the Christian virtues demanded of royalty, the sort of royalty entailed by such virtues, and, noticeably, the gendering, not just of piety, but of sovereignty. The very proving grounds of manliness in early modern England—the battlefield and the court—were potential sites of evil. Combat (or militant Protestantism) no less than policy (or Machiavellianism) might undermine a monarch's Christian identity. However, Christian peacemaking might diminish sway. By reconstructing the reign of an effeminate Christian king, these plays trouble the conjunction of kingship and Christianity.²

¹ Phyllis Rackin and Jean Howard have noted the sparse *Henry VI* criticism from 1975 to 1988 (21-22). The trend has certainly continued into the 21st century, perhaps because these plays are “notable for their diffusion of royal and patriarchal authority, and often criticized for their lack of dramatic focus” (25). Rackin and Howard suggest that the prominent women in these plays contribute to their noncanonical status (23-26). The authorship question is another factor.

² Mindful of likely collaboration in the *Henry VI* plays, I refer to each text or to the playwrights, not to “Shakespeare.” See John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen's Introduction to *Henry VI, Part 3* for a brief history of the *Henry VI* authorship controversy (45-49). While Michael Hattaway still writes of “Shakespeare's” *Henry VI* plays (see his introduction to *The Second Part of King Henry VI*), Brian Vickers deduces co-authorship in *Part One* from prosodic irregularities. Vickers also takes issue with Edward Burns's editorial practices (and implicitly, Burns' resistance to “computing” authorship [Burns 82]); he writes that Burns, like Norman Sanders (Sanders 240-41), refuses “to accept any theory of its ‘being a product of multiple authorship’” (Vickers 349-50). Yet, Burns calls this play “a commissioned piece, based largely on [Edward] Hall's history, written by a group of writers, among whom Shakespeare took a major part” (Burns 83). Moreover, regarding ascription in general, Burns writes that “commercial considerations tend to be conservative in reinforcing the familiar; so, however much an edition may present arguments as to authorship and provenance, the familiar title and author-ascription will still be on the cover – otherwise this volume will not sell and so not be profitable to the publisher” (84). Still, Vickers ascribes *Part 1*, Act 1 to Thomas Nashe and 4.2-4.5 to Shakespeare. Like Burns (73-83), Cox and Rasmussen (49), Ronald Knowles (Introduction, *Part 2*, 115-21), Gary Taylor (“Shakespeare and Others”, 147-48), and Lukas Erne (92-94) attribute the *Henry VI* plays to Shakespeare and others, but they do not employ Vickers' methodology. I use the Arden 3 editions because each editor discusses the authorship controversy,

The *Henry VI* plays assess the potential for success of a religious monarch in both England and its theaters. They thus stretch the limits of war drama. At once fascinating and horrifying, Henry V and Macbeth are sure-fire crowd pleasers, but what does theater become in Henry VI's hands? Does Henry VI's debilitating, effeminate, even effeminizing piety guarantee tepid drama and inept policy? Thomas Nashe called history plays "a rare exercise of vertue," a display of "our forefathers valiant acts" meant as a "reproofe to these degenerate effeminate dayes of ours" (Nashe 1.212).³ "[F]resh bleeding" Talbot was up to the task, but where does a Christian king like Henry VI fit into this picture? Even as they contend with the shortfalls of Christian kingship, the *Henry VI* plays set out to discover its theatrical, religious, and political possibilities. Henry VI's strict piety bears witness to tensions built into Christian rule. To follow his progress through the plays is to determine whether Christianity can govern policy, where the law stands in relation to the Gospels, and whether the art of lamentation has a place in a royal repertoire that typically is founded on rhetorical and martial arts.

Of course, the religio-political underpinnings of Protestant English monarchy were problematic both on and off the stage. That kings had two bodies empowered Tudor and Stuart kings (i.e., Henry VIII's supremacy over the church and James I's absolutism); but this may also have sponsored the conflicting, perhaps subversive, representations of kingship in Shakespeare's history plays.⁴ Further to analogize the

acknowledges collaboration, and cross-references the plays with their sources. Ronald Knowles' *Part 2* and Cox and Rasmussen's *Part 3* also consult the Folio versions alongside earlier octavos and quartos. All other Shakespeare plays are quoted from *The Norton Shakespeare*.

³Cited by Burns, "Introduction," *Henry VI Part I*, 1.

⁴ For the ways that theater, and history plays in particular, represented and subverted the king, see Kastan.

king's two bodies with the body of Christ might run the risk of restricting some forms of sovereignty.⁵ Certainly it mattered precisely with which person of the Trinity a king was compared. Lancelot Andrewes insisted that the king was "mystically connected to Christ" (Shuger, *Habits* 144), but James I stressed the Father.⁶ The king may have had good reason to avoid an association with the Son (even in the context of what Patrick Collinson has called the "heightened Christocentrism of sixteenth-century Protestantism" [*Birthpangs* 147]). The Gospels' message of charity, peace, and humility, with its radical eschatology in tow, could easily enervate a sovereign. "Give therefore to Caesar, the things which are Caesar's" (Matthew 22:21a) hardly empowers rulers whose status hinges upon their affiliation with Christ.⁷

The monarch's religious function was a recurrent concern under both Elizabeth I and James I. Gender certainly had comparable force, but to my mind it becomes especially salient when it is understood in relationship to Christianity. Yet, scholars have not examined the connections between masculinity, rule, and religion in early modern England. Bruce Smith lists a variety of masculine ideals in *Shakespeare and Masculinity*, but none is religious.⁸ Mark Breitenberg argues that Protestantism actually

⁵ For the analogy between the king's body and Christ's, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz's seminal study, *The King's Two Bodies*, 16-20 and 42-49. In Elizabethan law, for instance, "Royalty [...] was actually expounded in terms of christological definitions" (16).

⁶ James may have fashioned himself as "a prince of peace" (Wells 127), but Jonathan Goldberg and Debora Shuger note James's propensity to compare kings to the Father, not the Son (Goldberg 3-5 and Shuger, *Habits of Thought* 156 and *passim*).

⁷ All biblical citations are from the Geneva Bible.

⁸ Smith's list includes the chivalrous knight, the Herculean hero, the humanist man of moderation, the merchant prince, and the saucy jack (44). He admits that "it might be possible to isolate other ideal types in Shakespeare's plays" (57), but the absence of religion from Smith's study insinuates either religion's irrelevance or a polarization between piety and masculinity.

fueled male anxiety, and so disturbed patriarchal pretensions.⁹ According to Elizabeth Foyster, men were encouraged to “demonstrate [in their households] the Christian virtues they had learnt” in grammar school, but she does not link Christian humanist education to male rule.¹⁰ Alexandra Shepard suggests that piety renders only wise, old men masculine.¹¹ Otherwise, religion is a tool of realpolitik, and manliness depends upon (unChristian) hostility: “violence was one of the main props of patriarchy in early modern England, and as such was central to the regulation of social relations between men as well as between men and women” (128).¹² Piety apparently had no such efficacy, and Christianity—not its institutions, but its contemplative exercises—underwrote neither patriarchal rule nor masculinity.¹³ And yet, Christian monarchy was not supposed to be entirely absent piety, certainly not during Elizabeth’s reign. Her rhetoric and

⁹ Breitenburg agrees with Susan Dwyer Amussen that English Protestantism sent men a “double message”: “on the one hand, a husband still (in theory) maintained absolute authority within the family, a position legitimated by his analogous relationship to God and to the king; but on the other hand, the idea of marriage as a companionate partnership characterized by mutual respect appeared to elevate the wife’s position from a merely subordinate role” (Breitenburg 25). Cf. Amussen, *An Ordered Society* 102.

¹⁰ Foyster cites Erasmus on male piety: “Erasmus’s teachings on the virtues of Christian belief became a grammar school commonplace: ‘let it not move thee one whit when thou hearest the wise men of this world...so earnestly disputing of the degrees of their genealogy or lineage...though, laughing at the error of these men...shall count...that the only most perfect nobleness is to be regenerate in Christ’” (36). As this chapter confirms, Erasmus typically asked boys and men to model their lives after Christ.

¹¹ “As young men’s access to patriarchal manhood was contingent on their adherence to its tenets, so old men’s continued claims to it in terms of wisdom and authority, temperance and piety, were dependent upon their appropriate behavior” (42).

¹² For masculinity and the practical uses of devotion, see Shepard’s consideration of William Cecil’s advice to his son in *The Counsell of a Father to his Sonne, in Ten Severall Precepts* (London, 1611): “Humility was here associated with gain: on the one hand it oiled the wheels of preferment when expressed towards superiors, and on the other hand it secured loyalty when directed towards inferiors” (35). It is *seeming* piety that secures masculine authority. For manliness and violence, see 127-51. Connecting the two, Shepard follows Eugene Waith’s *The Herculean Hero* as well as Susan Amussen’s “The part of a Christian Man” (217-22) and Wells’ *Shakespeare on Masculinity* (7-23 and *passim*).

¹³ For the distinction here between male-dominated hierarchy (patriarchy) and traditionally male actions and behaviors (masculinity), which might contravene patriarchal dicta, see Shepard 6-7, 10-12.

iconography linked her rule to feminine piety and emphasized her ties to Christ. Her counselors, like the early modern intelligentsia before them, worked hard to dado and rabbet Christianity with sovereignty. In response, playwrights like Shakespeare inspected, dismantled, and sometimes refurbished their handiwork. In the pages that follow, I examine the *Henry VI* plays within the context of Elizabeth's self-representations as a pious woman and Christian humanist, figurations which helped her to defend her cautious foreign policies and which must have outraged militant Christians for whom combat was an expression of faith.

Contextualizing Henry VI: Elizabeth I, Christian Humanism, and Militant Christianity

What Elizabeth's iconography promoted, it also effeminized: Christian piety, peace, and prosperity. Hence her cultists worked hard to invest her gender and Christianity with regality. As John King observes, woodcuts of Elizabeth tend to connect her with Christian peace. The frontispiece to Richard Day's *A Booke of Christian Prayers* (1578) has Elizabeth gazing upward, hands in prayer.¹⁴ Because a book lies on her prie-dieu and a sword below her, piety takes precedence over militarism: "[this] accords with the image of a cautious queen who in her own life adopted the pose of a ruler who prefers reading the book symbolic of divine wisdom and mercy to wielding the sword of military and judicial power" (King 115).¹⁵ In a 1546-47 painting of Princess Elizabeth, the "central gesture"—"that of the book held against the lower torso, with a

¹⁴ See King for the following illustrations: *Elizabeth Regina* from Richard Day's *Booke of Christian Prayers* (1578) (111), *The Allegory of the Tudor Protestant Succession* (c. 1570) (222, 226), *Elizabeth as Constantine* in *Actes and Monuments* (1563) (155), and Hans Holbein the Younger's *Henry VIII with the Sword and the Book* in the Coverdale Bible (1535) (58).

¹⁵ *Elizabeth I and the Four Virtues* in *The Bishops' Bible* (1569) is another example (King 234).

finger inserted between the leaves”—may be an “apt biblio-genital visual metaphor for...chaste intellectual power”, but even the Queen’s masculine penetration of the book is in the service of her feminine piety (Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth* 33). She remains in (and is restrained by) an enclosed space. Montrose pairs this portrait with a 1546-1547 portrait of Prince Edward, whose left hand rests alongside his codpiece, and whose right clasps a sheathed sword.¹⁶ While the painter adorned Elizabeth with a bejeweled brooch of the cross, his Edward is unencumbered by Christian imagery. The prince stands beside an equestrian soldier carved in a roundel on a column’s base; the open window on his right signals a future in the field, not in his chamber.

Whatever Elizabeth based her actual policies on, these contrasting portraits confirm which tropes contributed to Elizabeth’s official iconography, and which did not. Scholarship and piety featured more prominently than royal command.¹⁷ Christian humanist portrayals could hardly masculinize her as would more militant portrayals; indeed, humanism ultimately was not a prerequisite for masculine rule. Elizabethan iconography feminized what for Christian humanists was thought to masculinize the mind: pious learning.¹⁸ Even in Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* (1563), Elizabeth gazes toward the vial in her left hand and delicately holds the sword like a pen in her right.

¹⁶ Montrose attributes both paintings to William Scrots (*The Subject of Elizabeth*, 29-30).

¹⁷ According to Montrose, Elizabeth’s “postures of militancy” were “infrequent” (*The Subject of Elizabeth* 159).

¹⁸ In a letter to John Sturm in 1550, Roger Ascham writes that Elizabeth’s “study of true religion and learning is most energetic” and her “mind has no womanly weakness, her perseverance is equal to that of a man” (cited in Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth* 31).

This is to recast her father's demeanor on the *Coverdale Bible* title-page border, where he gazes at the sword, not the book he receives.¹⁹

Attempts to “fashion [Elizabeth's] own image as a peaceful Protestant ruler” (King 223) and as a Christian humanist queen extended beyond canvas and paper.²⁰ From the beginning of her reign, Elizabeth, dressed in blue, would wash and bless the feet of poor women on Maundy Thursday (Levin 27-34).²¹ This was to reaffirm Elizabeth's piety, to align gender with proper, pious rule, and conveniently to link regal femininity with both the Virgin Mary's receptivity and Christ's humility. It also was a subtle defense of her peacemaking policies. Each Maundy Thursday, while Elizabeth kneeled on cushions to perform the sacramental rite, the Pope supposedly “pronounced a solemn anathema against all heretics and enemies of the Roman Catholic Church” (Levin 33). Rather than publicly retort the Bishop of Rome on the Thursday before Easter, the Queen supplicated to the poor.

But she was not inclined to overplay either her feminine or Christian roles. When tensions with Spain mounted in the 1580s, Elizabeth changed her tone. Witness her oft-cited Tilbury Speech:

I am come among you at this time but for my recreation and pleasure, being resolved in the midst and heat of the battle to live and die amongst you all, to lay down for my God and for my kingdom and for my people my honor and my blood even in the dust. I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king and of

¹⁹ For a similar depiction of Henry VIII, see *Allegory of the Reformation* in Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, 2nd ed. (1570) (King 159).

²⁰ Cf. Montrose: “I construe ‘the cult of Elizabeth’ neither as a quasi-mystical object of belief nor as a mere ‘courtly game’ but rather as a core component of Elizabethan statecraft, one within which elements of devotion and diversion were inextricably mixed” (“Idols” 133).

²¹ See Chapter 1, above.

a king of England too—and take foul scorn that Parma or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm. To the which rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will venter my royal blood; I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of your virtue in the field. (*Elizabeth I* 326)

This call to arms is decidedly masculine. Despite her defensive position (“invade the borders of my realm”), she is nothing like the iconic Elizabeth of Day’s frontispiece. It invariably proved easier “strategic[ally to] meld . . . maternal care with princely power” (Montrose, “Idols of the Queen” 146), even to wed femininity to militarism, than to link contemplative prayer with martial power. But even after 1588, Elizabeth never completely dropped her pious Christian persona. Consider this speech before Parliament in 1593:

It may be thought simplicity in me that all this time of my reign I have not sought to advance my territories and enlarge my dominions, for opportunity hath served me to do it. I acknowledge *my womanhood and weakness* in that respect. But it hath not been the hardness to obtain, or doubt how to keep the things so obtained, that only hath withheld me from these attempts. My mind was never to invade my neighbors, or to usurp over any. I am contented to reign over mine own and to rule as *a just prince*. (Levin 145, my emphasis)

In her Tilbury speech, Elizabeth dissociates her sex from her crown; here, she blames her sex for missed opportunities in places like the Low Countries, only to vindicate her inaction in Christian humanist terms. The duties of a “just prince,” more than “the hardness to obtain” territories, forbade ambitious conquests of neighboring lands. Her piety is hardly noticeable, but still she contains her sovereignty within the bounds of both gender and Christian humanism. She may have frequently linked her rule to her femininity, but she also countered militants frustrated with her diplomacy by refusing to concede that her “womanhood and weakness” alone dictated her policies. Instead, in

response to encouragement that she attack Catholic tyranny, she invoked the Christian humanist model of the “just prince.”

Of course, Christian humanist monarchical theory was rooted in the very weakness typically attributed to her sex. By 1559, Erasmus’s adage “Dulce Bellum Inexpertis” (1515) had already reshaped *imitatio Christi* into an early modern political science.²² Like his *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516) and his *Complaint of Peace* (1517), “Dulce” rehearses arguments against war, dismisses *divino jure* explanations for a king’s authority, and even recommends abdication when peace is at stake.²³ Although publications of his writings dwindled after John Cawood’s 1559 printing of *The Complaint of Peace*, Erasmus’s Christian humanism never vanished. Richard Taverner recommends “Dulce” in his *Proverbs or Adages*, an abridged collection of Erasmus’s adages printed five times between 1539 and 1569.²⁴ In the *The Book Called the Governor*, printed eight times between 1534 and 1580, Elyot extols the only contemporary writing that he mentions, Erasmus’s *The Education of A Christian*

²² For a complete list of known English translations of Erasmus, see E. J. Devereux’s catalogue. According to Devereux, there was no printed translation of *Education* (130). For the *Adagia* specifically, see Erika Rummel’s article, “The Reception of Erasmus’ *Adages* in Sixteenth-Century England,” which tracks printings of Erasmus. The only 16th-century English translation of “Dulce” is the anonymous *Bellum Erasmi*, printed in 1534 by Thomas Berthelet. Timothy Kendall’s 1577 translations are similarly limited, presenting only two adages in *Flowers of Epigrammes* (Devereux 31). John Paynell’s translation of *The Complaint of Peace* (1559), the only known 16th-century edition, was printed by John Cawood, one of the Queen’s printers. Wells hears echoes of Erasmus in the 1590s and notes J.H. Walter’s conviction that Shakespeare knew the *Education* (42-43), although he does not address the print history of Erasmus’s texts (15). Steven Marx and R.V. Young also take Erasmus’ presence in the 1590s as a given.

²³ Ronald G. Musto lists Erasmus’ other antiwar writings (200-01). Erasmus recommends abdication: “if you cannot defend your kingdom without violating justice, without much human bloodshed, or without great damage to the cause of religion, then abdicate rather than that, and yield to the realities of the situation” (*Education* 19).

²⁴ “He that listeth to know more of this Prouerbe, let him go to Erasmus, which handleth in his Chiliades, this Prouerbe both right copiously, and also eloquent” (Taverner 63). Taverner’s selective compendium appeared in 1539, 1545, 1550, 1552, and 1569. The last known English translation of “Dulce” was in 1534, but Taverner’s commendation suggests its continued availability.

Prince.²⁵ An English translation of Erasmus' *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (1501) was reprinted in 1576, reintroducing Erasmus' guidebook on the art of spiritual warfare, in which prayer and knowledge are the weapons of choice, faith is armor, and Christ is captain (*Enchiridion* 42).²⁶ And English translations of Erasmus's *Paraphrases of the Gospels and Acts* were also available, even during the heyday of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. Royal injunctions under Edward VI and Elizabeth I ordered each church to set up a copy.²⁷ In the *Paraphrases*, too, Erasmus condemns militancy.²⁸

²⁵ Writing for future rulers and magistrates, Elyot groups Erasmus with Aristotle, Cicero, Plato, and Solomon, all of whom counsel that "courage be bridled with reason" (39). Readers should "be as familiar always with gentlemen at all times and in every age as was Homer with the great King Alexander, or Xenophon with Scipio; for as all men may judge that have read that work of Erasmus, that there was never book written in Latin that in so little a portion contained of sentence, eloquence, and virtuous exhortation, a more compendious abundance" (40). "[Princes and governors ought to be] wary and circumspect [...] [w]hereof they be sufficiently admonished by the most excellent divine Erasmus Roterodamus, in his book of the *Institution of a Christian Prince*, which in mine opinion cannot be so much praised as it is worthy" (191).

²⁶ This is the only known Elizabethan printing. For a complete list of sixteenth-century English translations, see Anne M. O'Donnell's introduction to the *Enchiridion* (xxvi-xlix).

²⁷ While Devereux has noted that English translations of *Paraphrases* were not printed after 1552, John Craig's study of parochial evidence suggests that the *Paraphrases* were still widely available through Elizabeth's reign. Worth noting is Archbishop Richard Bancroft's own memory (in 1610) of the Elizabethan Church: "In the late queenes tyme of worthy memory, every parrish was driven to buy Erasmus Paraphrase uppon the New Testament and the said bishops [John Jewel's] Replye against Hardinge, one of the said books delivering plainly to every man's understanding the true sense and meaning of the whole New Testament and the other conteyninge a very notable and learned confutation of all the principall points almost of popery" (Craig 335).

²⁸ See Jane E. Phillips's recent translation of the *Paraphrase on Luke 11-24*: "But now, let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a bag. And let him who has no sword sell his mantle to buy one" (195-96). Rejecting literal interpretations of Luke 22.36 which justify violence, Erasmus dwells on a metaphorical, if not anagogical, meaning—the sword is of the Spirit. Among the many other antiwar passages, consider Erasmus's readings of Zechariah and Isaiah in his Luke 24:27 paraphrase:

When you hear [from Zechariah] of a kingdom and a government placed upon [the Messiah's] shoulder, are you not plainly hearing of the kingdom of the cross Christ carried as he was about to conquer the powers of the air? When you hear of the Prince of Peace, surely you understand the king enticing by good deeds, not compelling by force and fear. When you hear of the Father of the age to come, you perceive that he is unlike the princes of this age. The prophet describes him just the same way in another place: "And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. And the righteousness shall be the girdle of his hips, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" [Isaiah 11:4-6]. (249)

Most apparent in his antiwar writings, Erasmus's position on Christian rule—radical, cohesive, and unwavering—takes a peculiar definition of man as its premise.²⁹ By nature, man is “naked, weak, delicate, unarmed, with very soft flesh and a smooth skin” (“Dulce” 320). He has “friendly eyes,” embracing arms, laughter, tears, and a voice “not threatening and fierce as with beasts, but friendly and caressing” (320).³⁰ In *The Praise of Folly*, Erasmus relies on typical gender constructs to contrast old men (“rough features, coarse skin, bushy beards”) with “foolish” women (“soft cheeks, a high voice, a delicate and smooth complexion”) (29). Treble aside, Folly's feminine traits become manly in Erasmus's rhetoric of peace. Inverting a crucial component of the ideal masculine body, Erasmus weaves soft, vulnerable flesh into the very texture of manhood.³¹ True virtue for Erasmus takes the form of bodily effeminacy.

In contrast, tough, hard bodies are beastly and tyrannical. If elsewhere swords and armor were manly accoutrements—if, according to Phillip Stubbes, hemp shirts usefully hardened men's skin—for Erasmus, they would have been perversions.³² In

²⁹ I find this doggedness particularly intriguing, given the skepticism and equivocations found throughout many of his other works. See Rummel, *Erasmus on Women* 3-5. Musto provides a detailed review of both Erasmus's antiwar arguments and 20th-century criticism of them. I have used William Barker's translation of “Dulce.”

³⁰ Erasmus bases his definition of a good ruler on both *natura rerum* and Jesus's commandments. Scholars have not fully considered Erasmus's description of the human body. Robert P. Adams (95-96), James T. Johnson (47), and José A. Fernandez (210) refer to Erasmus's description of man as weaponless and unprotected, but move on quickly to Erasmus's understanding of human sociability.

³¹ Robert Burton uses Erasmus's description of man's body to condemn war. “Who made so soft and peaceable a creature, born to love, mercy, meekness, so to rave, rage like beasts, and run on to their own destruction? How may Nature expostulate, and all good men! Yet, *Ego te divinum animal finxi*, etc., I made thee an harmless, quiet, divine creature! how may God expostulate, and all good men! (57).

³² Phillip Stubbes, *Anatomy of Abuses*: “their [the English's] curiositie, and nicenesse in apparell (as it were) **transnatureth** them, and maketh them weak, tender and infirme [...] when [men] ware shirtes of hempe or flaxe (but now these are too grosse, our tender stomackes cannot easily disgest such rough and hard meates) men were stronger, healthfuller, faire complectioned, longer liued, and finally, ten times harder then we be now, and abler to endure any sorrow, or paines whatsoever. For be sure, this pampering

directions to a prince's tutor, Erasmus commands, "let him thrust before his pupil's eyes a terrible, loathsome beast: formed of a dragon, wolf, lion, bear, and similar monsters; having hundreds of eyes all over it, teeth everywhere, fearsome from all angles, and with hooked claws . . . This is the picture of a tyrant" (*Education* 27). The bizarre, excessive elements of this monstrous body constitute weapons unbefitting a proper prince, whose "constant principle" should be "to harm nobody" (52). "It is the mark of a tyrant, and indeed of a woman, to follow an emotional impulse" (*Education* 52). His diatribe against the conventions of regal masculinity—powerful bodies, pomp, and military might—reveals his central premise.³³ Man's body is akin to woman's; its innate physiology confirms that stiff sinews and chafed skin are unmanly.

This gendering foregrounds Erasmus's uncompromisingly Christian monarchical theory: "Let him become convinced of this, that what Christ teaches applies to no one more than to the prince" (*Education* 13).³⁴ Erasmus adjures Christian princes to "bear the image of Christ" (*Complaint* 56), "to hear and read that you are the likeness of God *and his vicar*, [and] not [to] swell with pride on this account, but rather let the fact make you all the more concerned to live up to that wonderful archetype of yours" (*Education* 22, my emphasis).³⁵ Christ commends meekness of mind, brotherliness, and peace-seeking

of their bodies makes them weaker, tenderer, and neshier [softer], then otherwise they would be if they were vsed to hardnesse, and more subiect to receiue any kind of infection or malady, & doth rather shorten our dayes by many years, then extenuate our liues one minut of an hower" (95-96).

³³ For pomp, see *Education* 14: "Teach the young prince that nobility, statues, wax masks, family trees, and all the heraldic pomp which makes the common people swell with girlish pride, are only empty gestures, except in so far as they have been the consequence of honourable acts."

³⁴ Cf. *Complaint* 56: princes "bear the image of Christ."

³⁵ For king as benevolent father, see *Education*: "what is a king but the father of very many people" (34). For James' use of Erasmus, see Marx 70.

(*Education* 24, *Complaint* 38).³⁶ By fighting, princes diminish their own manliness: “if [war] be a thing so far from holiness that it be a most pestilence of all godliness and religion . . . I pray thee, by the immortal gods, who shall believe these *to be men*” (*Complaint* 7, my emphasis). War is no longer the font of masculine virtue; forgiveness makes a man and revenge enfeebles him.³⁷ Erasmus condemns and effeminizes the conventions of regal masculinity. If it is on the battlefield that male identity is constructed, then Erasmus inverts convention when he insists that militarism and belligerence undermine honor. Princes are subject to both natural and Christian law; their military victories corroborate charges of fratricide and diminish their manhood.³⁸

Except for Elizabeth, sixteenth-century Christian monarchs generally rejected or ignored Erasmus’s political theory.³⁹ Thomas Elyot and Antonio de Guevara’s ambivalence would have been more palatable. Despite its reliance upon Erasmus’s opus, Elyot’s *The Governor* has a hard time reconciling militant might with Christian

³⁶ I am reluctant to use “pacifist,” which Ronald Musto deems anachronistic (198-200).

³⁷ Cf. *Education* 88: “Vengeance is the mark of a weak and mean spirit.”

³⁸ Although Erasmus never enumerates the circumstances of a just war, he does admit its possibility: “The good prince will never start a war at all unless, after everything else has been tried, it cannot by any means be avoided” (*Education* 103). In such a war, the prince should ensure the safety of his subjects, “at the lowest cost in Christian blood,” and expedite the war’s end. Erasmus certainly does not open the floodgates here. Instead, he consistently admonishes good princes to seek all possible alternatives. Erasmus strategically acknowledges just war theory in order to strengthen his irenic platform. Peace is always desirable and honorable, war always calamitous and wicked: God cannot be “where peace is not present” (*Complaint* 19, *Education* 108).

³⁹ Cf. Bok 61: “Though frequently reprinted, Erasmus’s writings on war and peace fell out of favor in many quarters. To militants of every persuasion, his insistence on arbitration and other peaceful means of resolving conflicts seemed an endorsement of cowardice and vacillation” (61). Some modern scholars also balk at Erasmus’s ideals. For the foreign policies Erasmus tried to influence, see James Tracy’s *The Politics of Erasmus*, which considers Erasmus’s “pacifism” in its historical context. José Fernandez calls Erasmus’ politics “flimsy” (211)—criticism in line with the Dutch Protestant Hugo Grotius’s (Nelson 41)—and R.V. Young considers Erasmian princehood ineffective when he sees it operating in Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* plays (94-95). Musto also cites John Mulryan’s “Erasmus and War,” which along with Fernandez’s article, argues that Erasmus hedges (211-12, n.79).

humanism. At times, Elyot devalues war, but with nothing like Erasmus' furor. Consider Elyot's contrast between King David and Solomon. The former "was a man of rare and marvellous strength" (219). As a child he slew a bear and a lion, and he later proved his prowess as a "captain in battle." Such strength, though, "was not of such effect that in the long time of his reign, which was by the space of forty years, he could have any time vacant from wars." David's puissance incited the threats against him and Israel. He failed to prevent war.

Contrariwise, his son Solomon, of whom there is no notable mention made that he showed any commendable feat concerning martial prowess, saving the furniture of his garrisons with innumerable men of war, horses and chariots; which proveth not him to be valiant and strong, but also prudent; he after a little bickering with the Philistines in the beginning of his reign, afterward during the time that he reigned, continued in peace without any notable battle or molestation of any person. (219)

Elyot takes a page out of Erasmus here.⁴⁰ Solomon is *rex pacificus* because "only by sapience [he] so governed his realm, that though it were a little realm in quantity, it excelled incomparably all other in honour and riches; insomuch as silver was at that time in the city of Jerusalem as stones in the street" (219). Elyot concludes "that sapience in governance of a public weal is of more efficacy than strength and puissance" (219). At this moment in *The Governor*, martial prowess, and the manliness it is meant to effect,

⁴⁰ Erasmus, *Education* 108: "David was beloved of God for his other virtues, and yet he was forbidden to build his temple for the simple reason that he was a man of blood, that is, a warrior—God chose the peaceful Solomon for this task." *The Complaint of Peace* takes this a step further: "How great soever David was, yet because he was a warrior, because he was defiled with blood, he is not suffered to build the house of God, nor he deserved not in this part to bear the type and figure of peaceable Christ" (20). Cf. "Dulce," where Erasmus praises Solomon's wisdom (357) and where Erasmus links Christ with Solomon, not David, in praise of Pope Leo X (353).

does not preserve the commonwealth. Here, as in Erasmus, peace increases wealth and enhances culture.⁴¹

But Elyot finds it difficult to detach masculinity from combat and link it to peace and wisdom. Citing Alexander's "noble courage" as an example of magnanimity (125), Elyot pays no heed to Erasmus' disgust with such classical allusions.⁴² Elyot neither bestializes violence nor redefines manliness. Like his models of heroism, his version of male physiology is conventional: "the body of man is of all other mortal creatures in proportion and figure most perfect and elegant" (162). He advises men to augment their "strength and hardness of body" (59). No Erasmian soft flesh and smooth skin here. Rather, Elyot's Christian prince must prepare his body for combat, even if war proves futile.

Likewise, in the popular *Dial of Princes*, Antonio de Guevara says nothing about Erasmian masculinity and has trouble reconciling Christianity with virtù.⁴³ On the one hand, he condemns war:

⁴¹ "In times of peace it is just as if a fresh spring sun begins to shine on human affairs; farms are established and towns rise, fallen buildings are restored, others ornamented and enlarged, wealth increases, pleasures are nurtured, law is enforced, statecraft flourishes, religion is fervent, justice reigns, goodwill prevails, artisans practise their crafts with skill, the earnings of the poor are greater and the opulence of the rich more splendid" ("Dulce" 330).

⁴² Elyot comments "that in his [Alexander's] wars against Darius he was seen of all his people fighting in the press of his enemies bare-headed." Cf. Erasmus, *Enchiridion* 162: "for what is more unreasonable, than that a chrysten prynce sholde set before hym for an ensample, Han[ni]bal, great Alexander, Cesar, or Pompey."

⁴³ Thomas North's 1558 translation was reprinted in 1568 and 1582. I have used the 1582 edition. The *Dial of Princes* proved popular in and outside of Spain. According to Kathleen Bollard de Broce and Simon Vosters, "by 1593 there had been at least 130 editions and translations of the unauthorized edition, and 102 of the revised work, making Guevara one of the most successful Spanish authors of the sixteenth century" (171). De Broce cites Vosters's "La fortuna europea del libro Aureo de Antonio de Guevara," *Deutsch-Spanische Literatur-und Kulturbeziehungen: Historia de la recepción*. Madrid: Departamento de Filología Alemana, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1995, 37-50. For information on Antonio de Guevara, his connection to humanism, and the context for his *Dial of Princes*, see de Broce's article. She explains humanist disgust over Guevara's *Dial of Princes* due to its fictional citations and historicizations. See Joseph R. Jones's *Antonio de Guevara* for summaries of the bishop's major works.

Let us know what thing warre is, and then we shall see, whether it be good or euil to followe it. In warres they doe nought els but kill men, robbe the temples, spoyle the people, destroy the innocents, geue libertie to theeues, separte friendes, and raise strife: al the which thinges cannot be done without great hurt of iustice, and scrupulositie of co[n]science. (fol. 249r-v)

On the other hand, Guevara incongruously expands on the possible need for war even as he admits no Christian defense for it:

It is not meete we should bee too extreame in com[m]ending those which haue peace: nor let us be too vehement in reproving those which haue warre. For it may be now, that if one haue warre, it is to the end to attaine peace. And for the co[n]trary, if one haue peace, it shalbe to the e[n]d to make warre. (fol. 251r)

According to this disclaimer, even unrestrained conquest could be a just means to peace.

And yet, Guevara decides that war is “superfluous” if not for defense (fol. 247v). On the one hand, he suggests that Christianity is not always applicable; on the other, he

“desire[s], exhort[s,] and further admonish[es] all princes, and great Lordes, that for his sake that is prince of peace, they loue peace, procure peace, keepe peace, and liue in peace” (fol. 251v). Neither Elyot nor Guevara, then, offers precise guidelines for choosing war over peace. They cannot accept Erasmus’s strict and unrelenting diatribe against so-called Christian princes. Although they subscribe in principle to Erasmian peacemaking, they do not explain precisely how a prince could war “in good conscience” if peace is Christian and war evil (fol. 17r). Nor can they imagine how manliness can spring from peacemaking.

These limitations never fazed militant Protestants. Because peace was a sign of God’s displeasure and a source of temptation (Jorgensen 170-97), their Christianity

demanded bold, swift, military aggression.⁴⁴ They vowed both to besiege the satanic strongholds of papism and to save those duped by papist conspiracy and superstition. Of course, Elizabeth demurred. Because peace was her “top priority” (MacCaffrey 561), she disappointed militants eager to attack Catholic Spain.⁴⁵ Francis Walsingham, like his fellow Protestants, worried openly about his queen’s religion not because of her ceremonial religious practices, but because of its bearing on her foreign policy.⁴⁶ Walsingham, Philip Sidney, and the Earl of Leicester fumed because Elizabeth hesitated to back military expeditions against Spain in the Low Countries. In letters from the 1570s, Sidney broods over the Queen’s refusal to grant him a command (Worden 82). Like other forward Protestants, he saw the Netherlands as the apocalyptic battleground for the Protestant cause against corrupt Catholic Spain (Duncan-Jones 287-88).⁴⁷ While Spain meddled in the Low Countries, Elizabeth consistently rescinded earlier promises to grant Leicester a military post until William of Orange’s assassination forced her hand in 1585/6. Even then, interventionists like Walsingham and Leicester fretted that she would renege (as indeed she had, most infamously in 1578).⁴⁸

⁴⁴ While Steven Marx disagrees with Jorgensen on the subject of Shakespeare’s investment in Jacobean peace, both come to the same conclusions about the prevalence of militancy in late Elizabethan England. See Marx 60 and 63-64.

⁴⁵ Stephen Alford has documented how Elizabeth resisted calls to arms as early as the 1560s. For instance, Cecil understood that one reason not to enforce a treaty with Scotland in 1565 was “the Lack of disposition of the Quenes Majesty to allow of warr, or of the charges therof” (Alford 137). Cited from British Library, London, Cotton MSS, Caligula B. 10, Cecil’s Anglo-Scottish papers, fo. 352r-v.

⁴⁶ On Walsingham, see Worden 48-57.

⁴⁷ For “forward Protestants,” rather than “militant Protestants,” see Worden, *passim*.

⁴⁸ For more on Elizabeth’s cautious, vacillating foreign policy and the Netherlands conflict, see Worden 41-88, esp. 77-79, Hammer 43-46, McCoy, *Knighthood* 49-57, and MacCaffrey 553-66.

The queen was “immune to [the] conviction” that all Protestants must unite against Catholic tyranny (Worden 57). When she refused to acquiesce, the Earl of Essex, Fulke Greville, Barnaby Rich, and Dudley Digges bemoaned her foreign policy in gendered terms.⁴⁹ What Sidney calls an “[o]verfaint quietness” strips “idle England’s” virtue and honor (Worden 61).⁵⁰ “Greville says, ‘hearts effeminatish’ are ‘adverse to war’—as Elizabeth is and as her nation, in the eyes of Sidney and his party, has become” (Worden 155). As if England’s “idleness” sprung from a female monarch without true religious conviction, Essex lamented that England had become “bewitched with the delight of peace” and complained that the queen’s “delay and inconstancy proceeded chiefly from [her] sex” (Essex Sig. E^v and de Maisse 3 and 115).⁵¹ Elizabeth’s critics used the links between her Christian humanist foreign policy and her gender to condemn her cautious diplomacy. They intimate that Elizabeth’s policies at once effeminize England and subvert the Protestant cause.

Elizabeth’s rhetoric of piety and her iconography complemented her various personae—the peacefaring virgin, maternal *imitator Christi*, and Christian humanist prince—but militant Protestants manipulated her rhetoric and her iconography to

⁴⁹ For Essex, Rich, Greville and Digges, see Jorgensen 171-73, 185-86, and 181-83. Nick de Somogyi also comments on Rich’s works, which include *Allarme to England, foreshewing what perilles are procured, where the people live without regard of Martiall Lawe* (1578), *His Farewell to Militarie Profession* (1581), *A Path-Way to Military Practice* (1587), and *A Martiall Conference* (1598) (44, 263).

⁵⁰ Worden gives a concise synopsis of Sidney’s rejection of passivity (23-37). He also distinguishes Sidney’s definition of virtue from Machiavelli’s: “With Niccolò Machiavelli . . . Sidney sees that the political battlefield has its own laws which apply to the virtuous and vicious alike. If the virtuous are to prevail they must be wise as serpents. Otherwise, he and his allies understood, they will play into their enemies’ hands. The case for evil means, or at least for means at odds with Sidney’s conception of virtue, can be pressing . . . Where Sidney departs from Machiavelli is in holding the goodness of virtue to be a significant determinant of those facts [of power]. In Sidney’s fiction the virtuous have an inner and thus an outer strength denied to the wicked” (30). “Good ends cannot justify bad means” (27).

⁵¹ Cited in Wells 11 and Levin 152.

condemn her handling of the Netherlands. In a 1598 Dutch engraving, Elizabeth is a Protestant Europa, and her head is Spain.⁵² On her left, she bears a sword like a one-breasted Amazon, with England and Scotland as a sort of a rerebrace. On her right, her breast is exposed, her sinewy arm overwhelms the Italian peninsula, and her hand cradles an orb. According to Montrose, this topography “projects the prudent English queen as a virago who champions the international Protestant cause and sweeps away the Spanish tyrant and popish Antichrist” (*The Subject of Elizabeth* 155). Surely the Queen would not have welcomed this militant representation. She was more likely to display her military strength “in terms of her providential status as a virginal instrument of the divine will” (159).

But even as forward Protestants were denouncing her policies or retouching the Queen’s body for their cause, she was rebuffing them with her own iconography. In the *Allegory of the Tudor Protestant Succession* (c.1570), a painting that Elizabeth apparently commissioned for Walsingham, Elizabeth escorts Peace, who stands on a sword, and Plenty, who cradles a cornucopia and bares her right breast (Montrose, *Subject of Elizabeth* 58). They enter from the east as Mars follows Mary Tudor and Philip II from the west. If Walsingham were the recipient, the painting would have repudiated his commitment to military intervention and associated classical virtù and militancy with Philip and Mary’s Catholic tyranny. It would have anticipated Elizabeth’s consistent reluctance to succor the Netherlands throughout the 1570s and 1580s. And it would have maddened Walsingham, who despaired that his rivals at court and Catholic conspirators were to blame for her passivity (Worden 147). Elizabeth reminds

⁵² See Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, 154-59 for a thorough examination of this engraving.

Walsingham of England's earlier religious strife and of the peace and prosperity that *she* has returned to the realm. In the 1590s, this painting resurfaced as an engraving dedicated to John Whitgift, the archbishop of Canterbury. Its reappearance reinforced Elizabeth's ties to a feminine peace and prosperity that outraged Essex and all but quashed his hopes of military glory; it also linked her Christian humanist foreign policy to the English Church.⁵³ But the image's irony is unmistakable; she insisted upon her legacy of peace by means of the very iconographic devices that the militants had frequently directed against her.

Only a year after Elizabeth's death, Thomas Heywood distinguished Elizabeth's piety and peacemaking from her sovereignty in *If you know not me, you know no body* (1604-05). Under Mary's subjection, *Part 1*'s Princess Elizabeth tends to pray:

Thou Power Eternal, Innocents just guide,
That sway'st the scepter of all monarchies,
Protect the guiltlesse from these rauening jawes,
That hydeous death present by tyrants laws:
And as my heart is knowne to thee most pure,
Grant me release, or patience to endure. (208)⁵⁴

When anointed queen, she kisses the English Bible to usher in a new, Protestant era. In *Part 2*, she is mostly and notably absent. Her evangelism and devotion do not appear until she thanks God for the mercy she grants a would-be assassin (327); but when the Armada threatens English shores, she assumes "a masculine spirit, / To tell the bold and daring what they are" (337). She praises God and heaven after the victory, but during the

⁵³ William Rogers printed the later engraving, entitled "Allegory of the Tudor Dynasty," ca. 1590-95 (Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, 61-62 and 268, n. 9). Susan Doran gives the year 1597 ("Virginity" 186). See Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth* 59 for an image which accompanies verses that Montrose believes make the print even more anti-Marian and anti-war than the original painting. Aston references the dedication (*The King's Bedpost* 130). For Essex's military ambitions, see Hammer *passim*, McCoy 100, and Levin 150-56.

⁵⁴ Page numbers are cited from *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood*.

battle she complains that God did not make her body “man-like like our mind” (338).

That she never prays to God during the battle—when she has the heart and stomach of a *king*—underscores the preference for masculine rule over Christian piety in the theater.⁵⁵

So it is with the monarchs of early modern English drama; excepting Henry VI, Christian passivity gives way when manly games of war are afoot.

If Paul Jorgensen and Steven Marx are correct, then the Henrician exception is of no consequence in plays like *Henry VI, Part 1* because they speak on behalf of Sidney and Essex (Jorgensen 191, Marx 64).⁵⁶ Accordingly, these plays reprove what Thomas Nashe considered England’s “effeminate days”; just as war could revive idle England, history plays could inspire active virtue among London audiences.⁵⁷ But in the *Henry VI* plays, militancy patently collides with Elizabeth’s Christian humanism and the *imitatio Christi* tradition. Shakespeare, at least, refuses to walk in lockstep with the militants. His Henry V is a war hero patently at odds with his own status as “the mirror of all Christian Kings” (*Henry V* 2.Chorus.6).⁵⁸ Shakespeare and company’s Henry VI is even more alienating: he forces audiences to acknowledge worldly passivity, spiritual agency, and peace as alternatives to late sixteenth-century militancy. When Henry VI

⁵⁵ Jean Howard argues that through “hypercitationality” Heywood “materializes” Elizabeth’s femininity with the trimmings of a Foxean martyr: “In depicting the young Elizabeth, Foxe thus gives Heywood a template by which to materialize her as a gendered being distinct from other women and exemplary both in her virtue and her virginity. Hers is not a sexualized femininity, and no romance codes govern her depiction. Instead, she is rendered powerful in her steadfast adherence to the Protestant faith in the face of persecution, and this in turn enables her resistance to her half-sister’s demand that she confess to crimes against Mary as reigning monarch” (“Staging the Absent Woman” 273). Howard sees Protestantism working in tandem with Elizabeth’s gender *and* power. That Elizabeth has little of this earlier piety when war is imminent complicates Howard’s reading.

⁵⁶ Leah Marcus (xiii) makes a similar claim, as does Nick de Somogyi (2).

⁵⁷ Cf. Jorgensen 170-207.

⁵⁸ Henry V’s soliloquy on the burden of kingship—“We must bear all” (*Henry V* 4.1.213-66)—is less a sign of vulnerability than an ethos-building performance.

enunciates Elizabeth's Christian humanist rhetoric, he challenges the viability and the theatricality of war.

Sidnean militancy bears upon the *Henry VI* plays, but Sidnean faith does not. Although Protestantism often went hand-in-hand with militancy, belligerent characters in the *Henry VI* plays profess their Christianity unconvincingly. The playwrights insist on only Henry VI's Christian piety, a piety which recalls Thomas Rogers's often-reprinted version of Thomas a Kempis' *Of the Imitation of Christ*. Here, only self-inflicted violence is acceptable: "Except thou offer violence vnto thy selfe, thou shall . . . neuer triumph ouer sinne" (sig. e3r).⁵⁹ The time to "fight like a man" (sig. d10r) is when one is engaging in psychomachia. Otherwise, humility, meekness, and charity are the defining qualities of Christian men.⁶⁰ In short, Henry's Christianity is more in line with Elizabeth's Christian humanism than with Sidney and Essex's forward Protestantism or the Pope's treasonous Catholicism.

The *Henry VI* plays present a stark choice between Henry's Christianity and almost everyone else's impiety. To dismiss the king's faith, especially given the significant residues of Erasmian humanism in Elizabethan England, is to mistake a multifaceted religious culture for a straightforwardly militant one. To marginalize the staged Henry VI and his piety is to make a comparable mistake. It may be true, as Jean Howard writes, that Henry "often seems peripheral to much of the action: absent, passive,

⁵⁹ Replacing the popular 1560s Edward Hake edition, Rogers' version of *Imitatio Christi* was reprinted at least ten times between 1580 and 1605. I have used the 1587 edition.

⁶⁰ "It cannot be but that [Christ] must needs bring forth his fru[i]ts, which are lovingness, gladness, quietness, mercifulness, meekness, faithfulness, mildness, and staiedness [to all Christians]" (Sig. b4r), and so we should try "to resemble him in al our whole life . . . in folowing his virtues, as his faith, his obedience, his patience, his constancie, his temperance, his loweliness, meekenes, mildnes, gentlenes, perseverance, diligence, earnestnes in praieng and thanksgiving, and many other things" (sigs. b5v-b6r).

increasingly isolated” (“Stage Masculinities” 199). A king “who fails to rule, to be the head, either in the family or the state,” Henry may even be a “study in feckless masculinity” (202).⁶¹ But this is only to confirm that he is a study in the connections that bind passivity, piety, and rule in late Elizabethan England, connections that Christian humanism helped to tighten, connections that tested audiences’ political and religious convictions.

Chronicling Henry VI’s Christian Rule

In John Stow’s *Chronicles* (1580), Henry VI

was of witte and nature simple, gentle, and méeke: he loued better peace than warre, quietnesse of mind than businesse of the world: honestie than profite: rest and ease than trouble and care: all iniuries that euer happened to him, which were many, he suffered patiently, and reputed them to be worthely sent of God for his offences. (sig. Qq5r)

Is Henry’s simplicity infantile, his suffering unbecoming? Does his pacific nature immobilize him or sanctify him? Henry VI’s Christianity made it difficult for Stow and others in sixteenth-century England to pigeonhole him. *A Mirror for Magistrates* is more overtly ambiguous.⁶² Each edition from 1559 to 1587 at once faults and exonerates Henry, whose lamentation is rife with switchbacks. On the one hand, Henry VI presents himself like *imitator Christi*: “The solace of the soule my chieftest pleasure was, / Of worldly pompe, of fame, or game, I did not pas” (65-66). On the other hand, we find him admitting to “sundry sinnes” (61), breaking an oath to marry Margaret being the most egregious. He is at once “vertuous” and responsible for a marriage that led to “many a slaughter” (96)—here, faith and virtue, there, sins of omission and political ineptitude.

⁶¹ Cf. Howard and Rackin 67 and 71, where they label Henry as an effeminized, passionate monarch.

⁶² Lily B. Campbell’s 1938 edition of *Mirror* (and then her book) confirmed its relevance to Shakespeare studies (Cox and Rasmussen, *Part 3* Introduction, 112).

Edward Hall picks up the same thread in *The union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre & Yorke*. As Phyllis Rackin has noted, Hall “attributes the charge of cowardice to Henry’s enemies and associates the charge of foolishness with the ‘vulgar opinion’ and ‘wisdom of this world’ that is ‘folishenes before God’” (8). For Hall, not even Henry’s marriage is unreasonable: “[Suffolk] declared how he had taken an honorable truce, for the safegard of Normandy, & the wealth of the realme, out of which truce, he thought, yea, and doubted not, but a perpetuall peace, and a finall concorde, should shortly proceade and growe out” (Hall 65v). Yet, Hall also speaks on behalf of those, like Richard of York, who thought that the civil war was God’s doing: “wyth this matrimony [He] was not content” (Hall 66v). How could Henry’s lack of wit and “coward stommack” cause England’s misfortune if Hall “clearly seems to favor the providential view that ‘God . . . punished the offence of the grandfather in the sonnes sonne’” (Rackin 7-8)? Is Henry VI to blame, or is his grandfather?

Adding to this uncertainty, Holinshed compares Henry to Caesar. When Henry granted himself the power to pardon traitors, he “gave evident testimonie that he was indued with those qualities of mind which the poet ascribed unto Cesare [sic], namely slow to punish, and sad when he was constrained to be severe: sith the one commended his lenitie, the other savoured of tyrannie” (652). This Henry is hardly feeble. Margaret may aid her husband because “the king studied of nothing but of peace, quietnesse, and solitarie life” (654), but Holinshed never tells us that Henry’s studies were inappropriate.

Evidently, Shakespeare’s (and Peele’s, and Nashe’s) sources handed down no clear verdict on Henry. Granted, the chroniclers were not in the business of lambasting

England's past kings; however, their accounts have gaping holes.⁶³ If as Rackin claims, "a major impetus for the Elizabethan interest in history was the often-reiterated faith of the humanists that the past could provide lessons for the present and models for the future" (11), then these accounts of Henry VI were a poor guide to the proper place of Christianity in English politics. Perhaps this failure presented Shakespeare and company with an opportunity: an unduly Christian king might well have appealed to Elizabethan playwrights and playgoers, if not to chroniclers, whose own queen's reign was imbued with theatrical, rhetorical, and iconic displays of Christian piety.

The jury is still out on the historical Henry's piety. Before 1970, the consensus was that Henry was a saint victimized by those around him.⁶⁴ Then, John McKenna argued that Henry's piety contributed mightily to his downfall: "The terrible truth is that Henry was that rare phenomenon a True Christian, which is to say that he was meek, charitable, gentle, otherworldly, temperate, and extremely prudish. Like all living saints he was impossible to live with, and as a royal saint he was the greatest single disaster since the previous English royal saint Edward the Confessor" (79). McKenna goes on to say that these traits helped to create a cult that benefited early Tudor royal iconography. Bertram Wolffe takes this a step further, calling Henry's saintliness a propagandistic construct designed to stabilize Henry VII's reign (3-21). Not all historians have accepted this skeptical account. John Watts, for one, sees a man "of little will and little judgment"

⁶³ The chroniclers' heavy borrowing from their predecessors' contrary accounts may explain their incongruities. For this practice in Holinshed, Hall, and other chroniclers, see Patterson 3-70 and Rackin 23-24.

⁶⁴ See a brief summary of these histories in Wolffe 13.

(111), and Roger Lovatt reconfirms Henry's piety and victimization.⁶⁵ Ralph A.

Griffiths's exhaustive study on Henry VI's reign gives us a complex picture of a man "well-intentioned" but "extravagant," "credulous" but "fearfully suspicious" (253). But even Griffiths fails to dislodge the conviction that Henry was an ineffective monarch whose piety was mostly irrelevant.⁶⁶

To people in early modern England, piety was Henry's *raison d'être*. His legend, along with remnants of his cult, persisted into the 1570s. Roger Ascham's *Scholemaster* taught students the following English-to-Latin translation: "King Henry doth many divers miracles. *Divus Henricus non una miraculorum specie inclarescit*" (Ascham 28).⁶⁷ In 1577, Henry's relics—the late king's spurs and a chip from his bedstead, along with a stained glass likeness—still attracted worshippers to Windsor, no matter how jurist William Lambarde fumed (McKenna 76, 86). Was it strategic on James I's part to call Henry VI a "sillie weake King" (Wolffe 351)?⁶⁸ Perhaps he was eager to distinguish his own commitments to peace from those of Henry, a king who on the Rose stage in the early 1590s was a "timorous wretch" "famed for mildness, peace, and prayer" (*Henry VI, Part 3* 1.1.231, 2.1.155).

Literary critics have not examined these contradictions. I have already noted that Jean Howard does not dwell on Henry's Christian rule. Taking Margaret's word for it

⁶⁵ Lovatt's argument is cited in Watts's foreword to Wolffe's *Henry VI* (xviii).

⁶⁶ See Watts on the disconnect between Henry's public role and his private life: "The institutional and conceptual conditions of kingship conspired to make Henry VI formally responsible for everything done in his name, and it is often the case that all we may legitimately deduce from the evidence of his public initiatives is the existence of these conditions: we cannot know whether the stuff of policy comes from without or within" (106). For Watts, public deeds do not say much about private intentions (107).

⁶⁷ Cited in Wolffe 354.

⁶⁸ James' description of Henry VI is cited in Zaller 69.

that Henry's loves are "brazen images of canonized saints," Howard thinks that his "iconically rendered" piety "fails to coexist with courage or skill in leading men," as it "so clearly substitute[s] for the tasks of rule to which his position as king has destined him" ("Stage Masculinities" 203). Howard glosses over the ties between Henry's "devotional inclinations" and his "tasks of rule." She intimates that piety could coexist with sovereignty, but not how or in what form. Nor does she recognize that a feminized king like Henry VI, in three successful and virtually concurrent plays, could dramatize a host of religious and political attitudes about Elizabeth.

Howard is hardly unique.⁶⁹ Others have been quick to dismiss Henry VI as naïve and woeful, or too dismayed by him to wonder *why* he refuses to fight like a man. We would be hard pressed to find a major Shakespearean character who is categorized as confidently and as effortlessly as Henry VI. For R.V. Young, Henry VI is an "extreme embodiment of ineffectual piousness" and "a caricature" of Erasmian rule (94), as if there were a more nuanced, balanced Erasmus. Having dwelt on Henry's ineptitude, scholars either give short shrift to his Christianity and to his relevance for the Elizabethans, or they suggest that his feeble politics undercut his sacred passion and simplicity (at least until he loses his crown). And when he is not blamed, he is ignored. Joan of Arc, Jack Cade, York, and Margaret regularly overshadow Henry VI in recent scholarship.⁷⁰ Even

⁶⁹ Donald Watson deprecates the *Henry VI* plays' disjunction between Christian piety and political reality: "The inappropriateness of the Christian king seems decidedly comic, even if his pacific sentiments are in another sense worthy of praise" (48). He scants "the inefficacy of humanist politics . . . and the historical fabrication of the Christianized ideologue of monarchical governance" that Henry forces upon us (99), perhaps because Henry's "naïve faith" (65) is too obvious to analyze or to appreciate. If, as Watson claims, Henry is a marginal character by "weakness" and by "choice" (61)—indeed, if Henry is a "Good King" stuck in the wrong genre (52)—we ought to ask why.

⁷⁰ See, among others, Nancy A. Gutierrez, "Gender and Value in '*I Henry VI*': The Role of Joan de Pucelle," Brian Walsh, "Unkind Division": The Double Absence of Performing History in *I Henry VI*," Paul Dean, "Shakespeare's *Henry VI* Trilogy and Elizabethan "Romance" Histories: The Origins of a

his name is effaced when editors reinstate the quarto titles. In *The Norton Shakespeare*, *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and the Good King Henry the Sixth* appears above the character list, but *Richard Duke of York* appears in the running heads throughout the play and above Jean Howard's introduction as well.⁷¹ Clearly, it has proved easier for critics than it was for Shakespeare and his coauthor(s) to ignore two crucial early modern questions that arise when Henry VI walks on stage: can Christian rule really be Christian, and can Christian rule "coexist with courage" (Howard, "Stage Masculinities" 203)?

Of course, to be fair, pious Henry can easily come off as a king *manqué*, if not *fainéant*: he debates with his lords as if they were colleagues; he fails to demand the wealthiest French princess as wife; he refuses to "spend his youth / His valour, coin, and people in the wars" (*Part 2* 1.1.75-76); he will not shed blood or execute the seditious; he does not exude "courage, courtship, and proportion" (*Part 2* 1.3.55); and he lacks teeth "to bite the world" (*Part 3* 5.6.54). His wife makes decisions while he indulges in beatitudes: "I prithee peace, good queen, / And whet not on these furious peers; / For blessed are the peacemakers on earth" (*Part 2* 2.1.32-34). Henry's most strenuous effort is extra-diegetic: he has to wrest the stage from the likes of Tamburlaine. Otherwise, he comes off as static, unspectacular, and ineffectual. His performance consists of maxims,

Genre," Thomas Cartelli, "Jack Cade in the Garden," Chris Fitter, "Emergent Shakespeare and the Politics of Protest: *2 Henry VI* in Historical Contexts" and "'Your Captain is Brave and Vows Reformation': Jack Cade, the Hacket Rising, and Shakespeare's Vision of Popular Rebellion in *2 Henry VI*," Paola Pugliatti, "'More than history can pattern': The Jack Cade Rebellion in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, 2," Marilyn Williamson, "'When Men Are Rul'd by Women': Shakespeare's First Tetralogy," and Gabriele Jackson, "Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons, and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc."

⁷¹ *The Norton Shakespeare* uses the quarto title for *Part 2* as well: *The First Part of the Contention of the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*. There is no alternative title for *Part 1*.

deliberations, and dicta; for better or for worse, he cannot supplant uprisings, maimings, and executions—the very staples of Elizabethan theatricality.

The *Henry VI* plays unsentimentally and steadfastly deny Henry both onstage miracles and the fruits of his piety, and yet they grant him a prominent place in politics and in the theater. Simply to describe Henry's rule as "weak" and "ineffectual" (or saintly and guiltless, for that matter) is, then, to sidestep difficult questions about Elizabethan theatricality, and it is to mistake the horizon of London audiences' expectations no less than the issues with which theatergoers had to contend when they considered the stability and salvific function of their own government. What transpired, for audiences and citizens alike, if and when they found Henry's devotional inclinations unappealing, or, as Alexander Leggatt puts it, "irritating" (15)? What would such reactions have said about the Christianity of Elizabethan audiences, about Christian sovereignty, and about Christianity itself? Conversely, to the extent that Henry did become appealing, did he insinuate (if not quite model) a sort of Christian kingship potentially efficacious both in the theater and at court?

Written by professional playwrights for paying audiences, the *Henry VI* plays must have assumed that Henry himself had theatrical potential. They must, then, be raising questions about the very dramas of warfare to which Henry gives his name, and still more importantly, they must be essaying a different kind of theatricality, one that decelerates dramatic momentum (thereby taxing audiences' patience) and delays audience response (thereby imposing patience). Shakespeare appears to be testing the proposition that theater can succeed even if it does not arouse, quicken, or fascinate. Evidently, this is an unorthodox, even counterintuitive stratagem. Witness the defense of

humanist dramaturgy mounted by one of our best recent commentators on sixteenth century drama. Kent Cartwright writes that, neither “enervated” nor “deficient” (3, 7), humanist drama “embroils feelings and emotions” (1), and makes “meaning complex, even dynamic—thereby stimulating and moving” (20). It is implied that, circa 1590, just about any other mode of operation would derail a performance. What with the profitability of London theaters at stake, drama had “to provide immediate stimulation and variety” so that it could compete “with other entertainments” and “attract repeat customers” (222). Perhaps. But do not the *Henry VI* plays suggest that to slow the pulse, to staunch adrenal flow, to work toward stasis, even to prolong inactivity, could serve theater and captivate audiences?

Tested in *Part 1* and *Part 2*, deceleration is central to *Part 3*. There, Henry frustrates, exhausts, even embarrasses playgoers with soliloquies and proclamations that are unrhythmic, inappropriate, and tedious. He changes the tempo of declamation on stage and with it, the tempo of drama itself. Henry eschews the visceral sensations and frenetic pace of combat; characters and theatergoers alike have no choice but to take the time to contend with him. He seemingly ceaselessly enunciates the same dry talking points, displays the same flaccid emotions, at all points shunning action, in order to inculcate his Christian humanism into his subjects and audience members alike. The on-stage warriors and conspirators revile him, reaffirm their missions, and do their best to boost the dramatic momentum. But theatergoers may respond differently. At first Henry’s passivity may be frustrating or befuddling, but in time, after a sufficient number of scenes of horrific brutality, vengeful maledictions, and masculine grandiosity, Henry’s thoughtful, even beatific peacemaking may win over audiences on account of its

theatrical no less than its ideological rewards. The hurly burly through which villains and heroes alike incriminate themselves disenchant playgoers, who may in turn feel unfulfilled, complicit, or rueful. What, the plays ask, would it have meant to be embarrassed by the “irritating” king but not by his bloodthirsty subjects? In lieu of violence and acrimony, might playgoers have been solaced by this politically untenable, Christian humanist king?

Overlapping, theatrically induced affects manipulate audience sensitivity and awareness. At the end of *Part 1*, Henry “feel[s] / Such fierce alarums both of hope and fear / As I am sick with workings of my thoughts” (5.4.85-86). Off-stage, and in his next two plays, he will discover new ways to “revolve and ruminate [his] grief,” to chew over his woe, to take in its many contours, textures, and tastes (101). Just as the “dissension” “in [his] breast” unnerves the realm (84), his “thousand cares” confuse playgoers (95) when they find themselves every bit as passive, bemused, and conflicted as Henry. In an environment given over to spontaneity, recreation, and gratification, Henry solicits mindful sympathy. Sure, there are Talbot, Joan, Margaret, York, and Richard to arouse and to overawe spectators. But Henry may deepen their sympathies, as well as redirect and refocus their attention.

Even though the *Henry VI* plays propose alternatives to Henry’s rule, they return time and again to his effeminizing piety. This is to say that while these are three distinct plays written in an order about which (and by playwrights about whom) we are still uncertain, and while *Part 3* best evokes what is at stake in the theater when Henry confronts political exigencies, all three plays depend on a royal character named Henry

VI.⁷² He is a young Christian in *Part 1*, a despairing providentialist in *Part 2*, and an elusively pious rhetorician in *Part 3*. Again and again, Erasmian overtones may be heard in Henry's language *in each of these three plays*. The reader who aims to triangulate faith, gender, and rule in them, and to appreciate their contemporary import, is better served by attending to the ways that these plays trouble audiences' familiar assumptions about masculine and Christian rule than by worrying about whether Henry is pious in this scene but not in that. In the sections of this chapter that follow, I argue that each of these plays speaks directly to a culture that found it difficult to balance Christianity and realpolitik. Although they are responsive to Christian humanist and *imitatio Christi* traditions, none of them offers up either model as a solution. Instead, they ask that we take Henry seriously even as they themselves seem to wonder whether a king (or a queen) can be theatrical, virtuous, and politic when religion prescribes contemplation, disengagement, and passivity. As a result, they tap Henry's theatrical potential to counteract the very war dramas that he headlines.

⁷² The Oxford editors' dates are as follows: *Part 2* (1591), *Part 3* (1591), *Part 1* (1592) (Norton 3377). Using E.K. Chambers' *The Elizabethan Stage*, G.E. Bentley's *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, and the 3rd edition of Alfred Harbage's *Annals of English Drama 975-1700*, Andrew Gurr dates *Part 1* (1590?), *Part 2* (1592-3?), and *Part 3* (1592-3?) (Gurr 237), implicitly refuting Chambers, who seems to have influenced the Oxford editors, and Sidney Thomas, who reasserts Chambers's dating and rebuts the "early start" theories of E.A.J. Honigmann. See Sidney Thomas' "On the Dating of Shakespeare's Early Plays." Hanspeter Born has given a concise explanation for this disagreement over dating: "Critics who see the *Henry VI* trilogy as an organic whole either reject the identification of Henslowe's play with I *Henry VI* or they claim that Henslowe's entry records the revival of a play at least two years old and taken over from another company. Those who remain convinced that Henslowe's play can have been none other than I *Henry VI* and that it was new in March 1592 see themselves obliged to assume that the first part was written after Parts 2 and 3" (324). Born concludes that *Part One* was first staged on March 3, 1592, and *Part Two* and *Part Three* were written between March and August of that year, because it was possible for "Shakespeare" to complete *Part Two* and *Part Three* by August. Robert Greene could very well have seen *Part Three* at a reading or a rehearsal before the play was staged at the Rose theater: "The general acceptance of the 1590/1 date [for *Part Two* and *Part Three*] can be traced to a red herring—the seeming incompatibility of Greene's allusion to 3 *Henry VI* in August 1592 and Henslowe's testimony that I *Henry VI* was new in March of the same year" (334).

Henry VI, Part 1

Bellicose Henry V provides both a context that explains the pugnacity of the nobles at the start of *Part 1* and an implicit contrast with Henry VI throughout the play. Gloucester, the Lord Protector, eulogizes Henry V for his masculine, almost monstrous deeds, but in this scene and throughout Acts 1 and 2, Christian rule has little to do with the Christian humanism that is yet to come:

England ne'er had a king until his time.
 Virtue he had, deserving of command,
 His brandished sword did blind men with his beams;
 His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings:
 His sparkling eyes, replete with wrathful fire,
 More dazzled and drove back his enemies
 Than midday sun fierce bent against their faces.
 What should I say? His deeds exceed all speech;
 He ne'er lift up his hand but conquered. (1.1.8-14)

Whatever “virtue” this terrible, demonic beast-king has, it lies outside of any Christian framework. Even Tamburlaine pales beside this sort of composite, mythological fury, at once blinding, fire-breathing, always conquering. No wonder Exeter responds by asking, “why mourn we not in blood?” (1.1.17). Before we even see Henry VI, his counselors endorse nightmarish warmongering, nicely pandering to the theater audience in the play’s opening lines by testifying to the theatrical power of warfare.

Even when the Bishop of Winchester introduces patently Christian language, the tone stays the same:

He was a king, blest of the King of kings.
 Unto the French the dreadful Judgement Day
 So dreadful will not be as was his sight.
 The battles of the Lord of Hosts he fought;
 The Church's prayers made him so prosperous. (1.1.28-32)

Winchester translates Gloucester's pagan imagery into a confident eschatological register alien to the passive and humbling faith of Christian humanism. Christianity is perverted in precisely the way that disgusted Erasmus.⁷³ And nothing in this scene counters this bellicosity. Winchester advocates Christian warfare but he can only assert that Henry V was an exemplar of Christian rule. Precisely what such sovereignty might look like must await the appearance of Henry VI.

Bedford "invoke[s]" the "ghost" (52) of Henry V to "prosper this realm, keep it from civil broils, / Combat with adverse planets in the heavens" (53-54), making Henry V a god or an idol of sorts, comparable to that "holy maid" (1.2.51), Joan of Arc, or "England's honour," Lord Talbot. Doubles as much as they are opposites, both Talbot and Joan similarly carry on Henry V's legacy.⁷⁴ Because Joan is a French woman, the play would have us think that her militancy and reputation are not like Talbot's or Henry's. Alençon will set Joan's "statue in some holy place / And have thee revered like a blessed saint" (3.3.14-15), while Burgundy "enshrines" Talbot "in his heart, and there erects / Thy noble deeds as valour's monuments" (3.2.116-18). Joan is either a "holy maid" or a "[f]ell banning hag" (5.2.63), a Catholic idol; a Protestant icon, Talbot is "the scourge of France" (2.3.14). It is obvious that Joan is the witch on an English stage, and Talbot the hero, but none of this obscures what Joan and Talbot share.

She can wield a sword, bewilder Talbot with "wondrous feats" (1.2.64), and convert Burgundy from English to French. Talbot can seem to the French like "the devil

⁷³ Cf. *The Complaint of Peace* 35-37.

⁷⁴ Rackin and Howard have discussed how "the gendered opposition between Joan and Talbot defines the meaning of the conflict between France and England" (54). Talbot cherishes his familial ties, Joan rejects hers. He displays heroic masculinity; she traverses gender boundaries. He is English, she is French.

was in arms” (1.1.125), “enact[ing] wonders” (1.1.122) for his country. Joan is “an Amazon” (1.2.104), but “like Hannibal” (1.5.21), with a magically conquering air about her. Talbot can defeat the French simply with his name, as if it were God’s: “The cry of ‘Talbot’ serves me for a sword” one soldier remarks (2.1.79). Joan’s piety—at least, what the French think is her piety—empowers her. She is an Amazonian Deborah, devotee of the virgin Mary, and the “Divinest creature, Astraea’s daughter” (3.3.15, 1.5.43, 1.2.104-06). Her religion helps her to thwart Talbot, or at least make his thoughts whirl “like a potter’s wheel” (1.5.19). Analogously, Talbot is Christlike to his soldiers:

TALBOT	Well, let them practise and converse with spirits. God is our fortress, in whose conquering name Let us resolve to scale their flinty bulwarks.
BEDFORD	Ascend, brave Talbot. We will follow thee. (2.1.25-28)

This sounds salvific, even pentacostal. Talbot has already “enacted wonders with his sword and lance,” and he can send “hundreds” “to hell” (1.1.122-23), but he also can lead his followers to heaven. Talbot and Joan extend the heroic masculinity that Winchester, Gloucester, and Bedford invoke at the play’s opening. Neither passive nor contemplative, theirs is an aggressive religion that apparently legitimizes their military exploits.

Summoning devils to the stage to strengthen her military prowess, Joan may be the play’s most spectacular perversion of Christianity, but she also amplifies Talbot and Henry V’s sometimes heroic, sometimes horrific masculinities. In one way, Talbot appears to be something of a Christian warrior, ascending where Henry merely was leading his men “unto the breach” (*Henry V* 3.1.1). In another, with the “grisly countenance [that] made others fly” (1.4.46), he is the same creature as Monmouth, whose “sparkling eyes” drove “back his enemies” (*Henry VI, Part I* 1.1.13). The former

king was dragon-like, his arms “spread wide.” Talbot may first appear like a “silly dwarf” to the Countess of Auvergne (2.3.21), but his name terrifies the French: “So great fear of my name ’mongst them were spread / That they supposed I could rend bars of steel / And spurn in pieces posts of adamant” (1.4.49-51).⁷⁵ And while Henry threatens the town of Harfleur with rape and infanticide (*Henry V* 3.3.110-18), “warlike and martial Talbot” (3.2.116) promises to “play on the lute” like Nero, “beholding the towns burn” (94-95). Although Talbot later compassionately mourns his son’s death, here he momentarily turns vile and tyrannical. Like Joan, if to a lesser extent, these English heroes defile their own Christian reputations.

By degrading the very conduct of war that they promote, Henry V, Talbot, and Joan set the stage for Henry VI’s pious rule and theatricality. The play introduces peacemaking, piety, and Christian humanism in 1.4, just after Gloucester and Winchester pledge to beard each other. Their retainers skirmish until the Mayor of London intervenes with homiletic force: “Fie lords, that you, being supreme magistrates, / Thus contumeliously should break the peace” (57-58). Gloucester, unfazed, demands “peace” from the mayor (“thou knowst little of my wrongs”) and calls Winchester unfaithful to God and King (59-61). Winchester returns the favor: “Here’s Gloucester, a foe to citizens, / One that still motions war and never peace” (62-63). Perhaps the Bishop is correct, for Gloucester will “not answer” “with words, but blows,” and according to the stage direction “they skirmish again” (69-70). When the mayor intervenes (“I myself fight not once in forty year” [89]), he defies their ethics as Bedford had (“Cease these jars and rest your minds in peace” [1.1.44]). So by the time Henry VI enters in Act 3, the

⁷⁵ According to Howard and Rackin, Talbot’s meeting with the Countess represents the central conflict of the history play genre: theatrical representation versus historical documentation (59-61).

play has already firmly established two distinct moral frameworks: violent retribution and peaceful reconciliation.

The new king reaffirms the latter. Henry VI eschews the classical virtù praised in 1.1. and presents a more Erasmian royal profile:

Uncles of Gloucester and of Winchester,
The special watchmen of our English weal,
I would prevail – if prayers might prevail –
To join your hearts in love and amity. (3.1.65-68)

This is suddenly to make prayer an instrument of policy. Henry VI substitutes Christian humanism for Monmouth's blinding fury. His thoroughly Erasmian idiom ("What other thinge is [Christ's life], than the doctrine of concord, & mutual loue? What other thyng do his commaundements inculcate and repeate, what his parables but Peace, but mutuall charitie?" [*Complaint* 18]) registers with Gloucester, who remarks that "[t]he presence of a king engenders love / Amongst his subjects and his loyal friends, / As it disanimates his enemies" (3.1.183-85). Gloucester even makes the Erasmian connection between rule and Christian love. For a moment in 3.1., then, Erasmian beneficence displaces the brutality and fear eulogized in 1.1. It also halts Gloucester and Winchester's quarrel. "O how this discord doth afflict my soul," Henry exclaims. "Who should be pitiful, if you not be," he asks the bishop. "Or who should study to prefer peace / If holy churchmen take delight in broils" (3.1.110-12).⁷⁶ When Henry continues ("will not you maintain the thing you teach, / But prove a chief offender in the same?" [130-31]), Warwick marvels at Henry's precocity: "Sweet King! The Bishop hath a kindly gird. / For shame, my lord

⁷⁶ Erasmus made similar charges against regulars in his antiwar tracts. See for instance *The Complaint of Peace*: "[Priests and monks] make of the trumpet of the Gospel Mars's trumpet, and forgetting their dignity they course and run up and down and suffer all things so they may stir up war. And through these men, princes the which peradventure would be quiet are inflamed to war, by whose authority it was meet and convenient that they, being in tumults and strife, should have been quiet" (34).

of Winchester, relent; / What, shall a child instruct you what to do?" (132-34).

Reminding Winchester that the adult ought to instruct the child, Warwick evokes an underlying anxiety about the weak and impressionable child-king. Earlier, Gloucester castigated Winchester for trying to "overawe" "an effeminate prince," "a schoolboy" (1.1.35-36). Henry VI's Christianity always runs the risk of effeminizing the realm and sapping the play's momentum.

This is to say that the playwrights have their work cut out for them if, after we have heard about or witnessed Henry V, Joan, and Talbot's prowess, they are going to conjure for us a theatrically and politically effective alternative in the person of Henry VI. In 3.4., when the King meets Talbot for the first time, we get a simplified version of Talbot the English hero. He greets Henry in the language of a dutiful if hardly bashful knight. At once chivalrous and courteous, he is nonetheless quick to advertise the fortresses, cities, and towns he has "reclaimed" (3.4.6) on Henry's behalf. Perhaps suppressing his peacefulness, the King responds in kind to the "brave captain and victorious lord" (3.4.16). "[R]emember[ing] how my father said / A stouter champion never handled a sword" (18-19), he apparently tries to impersonate his father: he dubs Talbot Earl of Shrewsbury and invites him to the coronation, at all points showing respect for a militancy that he later deems "impious and unnatural" (5.1.27). His Erasmian convictions are put on hold when Talbot, who in many ways is a stand-in for Henry V, kneels in fealty.

The conflict between concord and war—between the ways of the son and of the father—that 3.4 finesses becomes more acute in 4.1. Henry banishes Fastolfe for fleeing battle and seems to push for war when he hears of Burgundy's betrayal:

KING Why then, Lord Talbot there shall talk with him
 And give him chastisement for this abuse.
 How say you, my lord, are you not content?
 TALBOT Content, my liege? Yes: but that I am prevented,
 I should have begged I might have been employed.
 KING Then gather strength and march unto him straight.
 Let him perceive how ill we brook his treason
 And what offence it is to flout his friends.
 TALBOT I go, my lord, in heart desiring still
 You may behold confusion in your foes. (4.1.68-77)

This exchange seems ordinary enough: the king notices treason, sends his knight to remedy the situation, and Talbot wholeheartedly accepts. Missing, though, is any talk of execution, of blood, of death, of battles. It certainly sounds like an order to engage Burgundy, but that the King never explicitly commands Talbot to battle bears witness to a rhetorical mediation between peace and warfare. If Talbot is “to gather strength and march unto him” and to make “him perceive how ill we brook treason,” what in fact will Burgundy “perceive”? This king is more comfortable with “behold[ing] confusion” than with what Nashe calls “fresh bleeding.” Indeed, Henry’s response to treason here has neither his father’s guile nor his decisiveness. If anything, he leans in the direction of Erasmus: “Let the cry of treson agaynst thyn owne person (whiche other with great wordes make an haynous offence) be counted of the[e] a very trifle” (*Enchiridion* 162). Henry feels the “haynous offence,” to be sure, but he confronts it with nothing more specific than “chastisement.”

Torn between Erasmian morality and his father’s politics, Henry has a higher tolerance for foreign conflict than for domestic enmity. Talbot is given permission to respond to “abuse”; but when Vernon and Bassett seek Henry’s permission to duel (4.1.78-79), the King demurs. He insists that any “ill” (4.1.112) among compatriots is “slight and frivolous” (112), and he urges the peace: “as we hither came in peace, / So let

us still continue peace and love” (4.1.159-61). Then he admonishes them to “go cheerfully together and digest / Your angry choler on your enemies” (4.1.167-68). A domestic Erasmus, he encourages his barons to release their anger in France.

Henry VI is prone to muddle the types of vengeance that Harry Keyishian distinguishes.⁷⁷ In the first four acts of *Part I*, Henry implicitly answers now to his father’s ethos, now to Erasmus’s. In Act 5, the irenic King undermines English conquest, the very source of Talbot’s, and Henry V’s, heroic masculinity. Once Joan falls and the French lose, Gloucester informs the King that the Pope, the Emperor, and Earl of Armagnac all “sue . . . / To have a godly peace concluded of” (5.1.4-5). Gloucester then remarks that it is a good suit, “as the only means / To stop effusion of our Christian blood / And ’stablish quietness on every side” (8-10). Henry VI agrees, “for I always thought / It was both impious and unnatural / That such immanity and bloody strife / Should reign among professors of one faith” (11-14). Henry reorients audiences who were led to believe that Christianity could be put to use on the battlefield: “Ten thousand French have ta’en the sacrament / To rive their dangerous artillery / Upon no Christian soul but English Talbot” (4.2.28-30). But just as Henry’s Erasmian cadences condemn this French ritualization of military preparation, he retrospectively incriminates England’s Talbot, turning his masculinity into “immanity,” or monstrosity. When it asks us to reconcile the Henry VI who praises Talbot with the Henry VI who associates Talbot with unmanliness, the play asks us to distill an unattainable concentrate, equal parts masculine virtù and Christian morality.

⁷⁷ “Revenge against foreign foes are glorious; revenges against domestic enemies are odious; vindictive revenges, exercised for no valid reason, are most abhorrent of all” (68).

Confronted with Henry's and Gloucester's calls for peace, Richard of York quickly reveals on which side of the "quietness"/"immanity" divide he stands:

Is all our travail turn'd to this effect?
After the slaughter of so many peers,
So many captains, gentlemen and soldiers,
That in this quarrel have been overthrown
And sold their bodies for their country's benefit,
Shall we at last conclude *effeminate peace*? (5.3.102-07, my emphasis)

York takes for granted the common gender distinction that females are weak, leaky, and delicate, that true men are brawny and bloody. Believing that "fighting [is] a man's business" (Shepard 127), that only through war can men honor the casualties of war, York is impatient not just with effeminizing peace, but with the emasculating consequences of Henry's Christianity. Like militant English Protestants, this eventual villain and harbinger of rebellion genders Christian humanist policy in order to repudiate it, for it disrupts the cycle of violent masculinization and diminishes the theatricality of war.⁷⁸ Only moments earlier, York commanded Joan's execution: "Break thou in pieces, and consume to ashes, / Thou foul accursed minister of hell" (5.3.54 and 92-93). Another inheritor of Talbot and Henry V's legacies, York reasserts both militant virtue and early modern gender conventions. He faults Christian policy for England's losses and, by implication, the play's paucity of quarrels, duels, sieges, melees, pillages, and executions.

York lays claim to Henry V's violent and spectacular dramatic inheritance, but it is Henry VI's subtle response to that legacy that ends the play. Of course, the king's eager acceptance of a peace treaty vexes those in the audience who, like York, want more slaughter. Yet, truce with France and his betrothal to Margaret enables Henry to shift the

⁷⁸According to Shuger, traits like gentleness are emasculated *after* the early modern period "for reasons that are not directly related to gender roles but rather to the subsequent attempt to throw off the burden of inherited Christian values" (*Habits* 223). York's diatribe against peace suggests otherwise.

dramatic center to his inner turmoil. So far, audiences have seen Henry try to bridge the widening gap between war and peace, manliness and “immanity,” realpolitik and piety. Now, Henry confronts them with his Christian humanist anguish (“I rest perplexed with a thousand cares” [5.4.95]). He is confused over the morality of his marriage, the intentions of Suffolk, and his own desires. We, too, are perplexed, and this is so, I am arguing, because we, no more than Henry, can see our way to a desired reconciliation of militancy to peace, not to mention a politically viable *imitator Christi regius*. While spectacles of violence have lost their luster, Henry’s agony and anxiety make for uneasy theater. And in this regard, *Part 2* does not flinch.

Henry VI, Part 2

If anything, *Part 2* more acutely troubles audiences with Henry’s piety. For the most part, Henry is still championing Christian peace. When he realizes that the rebel Jack Cade’s “supplication” is a rebellious call-to-arms, he commands “some holy bishop to entreat” (4.4.8): “God forbid so many simple souls / Should perish by the sword” (9-10). A good Erasmian, Henry wants to stop the violence through peaceful deliberations: “I myself, / Rather than bloody war shall cut them short, / Will parley with Jack Cade their general” (4.4.10-12). When he hears Cade’s army plans to slaughter all “scholars, lawyers, courtiers, [and] gentlemen,” Henry’s first reaction is to imitate Christ, not to muster troops: “Oh graceless men! They know not what they do” (4.4.35, 37). He refuses to participate in the combats, rebellions, and political schemes of war drama. Instead, he will learn to “govern better” by retiring off-stage (4.9.48).

Never the less, some of Henry’s ambivalence toward physical conflict persists in *Part 2*. When Peter accuses his master Horner of treason, Henry follows Gloucester’s

directives: combat “is the law, and this is Duke Humphrey’s doom” (1.3.211). The king finds this “doom” palatable because he imagines it less mortal or political than divine. After Horner confesses and dies by Peter’s hand, Henry finds solace in divine justice: “by his death we do perceive his guilt” (2.3.102). Henry has no blood on his hands; Horner’s death, like Peter’s life, follows from God’s decree. But then why does this calculus not apply to war against the rebellious? Whenever Henry takes the stage, the tension between combat and Christian passivity supercedes each and every one of the play’s other ambivalences, whether class hierarchy, rebellion, or the carnivalesque.⁷⁹

Margaret exposes this tension in gendered terms when she contrasts Henry to Suffolk and compares her husband’s religious predilections to the pope’s:

I thought King Henry had resembled thee
In courage, courtship, and proportion.
But all his mind is bent to holiness,
To number Ave-Maries on his beads;
His champions are the prophets and apostles,
His weapons holy saws of sacred writ,
His study is his tilt-yard, and his loves
Are brazen images of canonised saints.
I would the College of Cardinals
Would choose him Pope and carry him to Rome
And set the triple crown upon his head:
That were a state fit for his holiness. (1.3.54-65)

The condemnation of the corrupt Roman church is obvious. Margaret associates Henry’s weakness with perverse idolatry, not proper piety. But even if Margaret’s description of Henry’s devotion were accurate, in pre-Reformation England there was almost no alternative to Catholicism. To question Henry’s Catholicism is ineluctably to interrogate any sovereign’s *Christian* responsibilities. Moreover, Margaret does not

⁷⁹ For the various contexts and implications of class rebellion in *Part 2*, see Cartelli, Caldwell, and Fitter (“Emergent” and “Your Captain”). For Cade’s rebellion as carnival, see Bernthal and Longstaffe.

anachronistically condemn Henry for papism; gendering his devotion to his disadvantage, she nominates him for an unmasculine Holy See oddly devoid of political reach. If, according to Margaret, religion is not for men, let alone kings, the play itself is less certain.

Needless to say, Margaret is anything but reliable.⁸⁰ Henry never prays to images on stage and he is never at rosary (it is Richmond who claims saintly protection in *Richard III*).⁸¹ She talks about “courage, courtship, and proportion,” but she acts discourteously, ridiculing the English in general (“base cullions” [1.3.41]) and Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester in particular (her “minion” [1.3.139]). Her response to Henry’s Christian idealism is corrupt policy and tyranny. In fact, Gloucester’s “virtuous Henry” (1.2.20) is not as naïve as Margaret would have us believe. The king initially accepts Simpcox’s “miraculous,” fraudulent cure from blindness (2.1.65-66, 81-83) because he would rather envision a providential, thaumaturgic, and harmonious universe than listen to “strings jar what hope of harmony” (57). Yet, he also contributes to Gloucester’s investigation: “Why then, thou know’st what colour jet is of?” (109). Since Henry acknowledges the evidence that comes to light, his naivete is by no means irremediable. It is not so much that Henry is more gullible than his train; rather, he is more deeply in touch with the gravity of what is at stake vis-à-vis Simpcox. He alone feelingly asks, “O God, seest thou this, and bearest so long?” (146). What he mourns is merely comic to Gloucester, Margaret, Winchester, and Suffolk. “It made me laugh to see the villain run,” Margaret says (147). Where, the play asks, do we stand? In Margaret’s camp,

⁸⁰ See Howard and Rackin 73. Margaret poses a danger “to men and to the good order of the kingdom.”

⁸¹ “God and our good cause fight upon our side. / The prayers of holy saints and wrongéd souls, / Like high-reared bulwarks, stand before our forces” (5.6.194-96).

laughing at the signs of a fraudulent, grim world in which “miracles are ceased” (*Henry V* 1.1.68)?

The play returns to this predicament in 3.2, when Gloucester’s sudden death horrifies the king. As with Simpcox, God is nowhere present at Gloucester’s bedside, where Suffolk strangled or suffocated the Lord Protector. Instead, an unholy apocalypticism (“Upon thy eye-balls murderous tyranny / Sits in grim majesty, to fright the world” [3.2.49-50]) gives way to despair (“Come, basilisk, / And kill the innocent gazer with thy sight: / For in the shade of death I shall find joy; / In life, but double death, now Gloucester’s dead” [3.2.52-55]). The political ambitions that have led to this murder prove less disconcerting than Henry’s indignation. Not Suffolk’s violence, but Henry’s Christian humanist response to that violence takes center stage. Margaret will take hold of Suffolk’s severed head and admonish herself for her grief: “grief softens the mind / And makes it fearful and degenerate; / Think therefore on revenge and cease to weep” (4.4.1-3). For his part, Henry insists upon Christian humanist rule at the very moment he faces social upheaval and political treachery. His unspectacular “holiness” clearly signals his resistance to the militant grandiosity and bloodlust that audiences expect.

The king prepares the theater for prayer and introspection. In 3.3, bed curtains are drawn to reveal the Cardinal of Winchester “raving and staring” (3.3.0 SD). Desperate and willing to exchange his ill-gotten gains (“England’s treasure” [2]) for life and relief from pain, he mistakes Henry for Death and then dies unwilling or unable to “make signal of [his] hope” (30). It appears that God will not “beat away the busy meddling fiend / That lays strong siege unto this wretch’s soul” (21-22). Like Warwick, the king sees in Winchester’s madness “a sign . . . of evil life” (5); but unlike Warwick,

and perhaps the audience, the king is compassionate: “[f]orbear to judge, for we are sinners all” (31). Despite Winchester’s “bad . . . death” and his “monstrous life” (30), Henry prays for mercy (19-23 and 26).

“Close up his eyes, and draw the curtain close,” the King orders. “[L]et us all to meditation” (32-33). But not for long. Even as the audience turns inward, discord overwhelms the stage. “Alarum. Fight at sea. Ordnance goes off” (4.1.0 SD). If, like Henry and Winchester, we seek inner peace, we are nonetheless met with unrest, with the “gaudy, blabbing and remorseful day” that the Lieutenant tells us “[i]s crept into the bosom of the sea” (4.1.1-2). “[N]ow howling wolves . . . arouse the jades / That drag the tragic melancholy night.” These—Hecate’s dragons—“[c]lip dead men’s graves” with their wings and “[b]reathe foul contagious darkness in the air” (3-7). The thrashing sounds of naval battle are transformed into the noises of nightmares, despair, and plague. For just this moment, Henry’s intuition of a disquiet that is deeper than political instability rises to the surface. But then straightaway, with “therefore” (“Therefore bring forth the soldiers of our prize” [4.1.8]), the Lieutenant returns us to the world of political intrigue and spectacular crimes. Blaming Suffolk for England’s plight and ordering his beheading, the Lieutenant manfully forgoes the despondent poetry with which he launches 4.1, poetry that was suggestively in tune with Henry’s anguish.

Part 2 frequently anchors itself to Henry’s Christianity to linger with this anguish. Consider Henry’s wish to be a subject: “Was never subject longed to be a king / As I do long and wish to be a subject?” (4.9.5-6). According to Elyot and Erasmus, a king should suffer anxiety and doubt precisely because so much hinges on his rule: like Christ, “[princes] shall not think how much honour they receive, but how much care and burden”

(Elyot 97).⁸² So it is with Henry, who nonetheless has no plans to abdicate. Nor does he seek the vengeance that for Margaret makes the man. When Cade flees and the captured rebels await Henry's "doom of life or death," Henry frees them: "And Henry, though he be unfortunate, / Assume yourselves will never be unkind" (4.9.18-19). Before, during, and after war, Henry calls for introspection, diplomacy, and clemency despite opportunities to combat the rebels and avenge Lancastrian losses.

The play's deployment of Erasmian ethics scrupulously poses Christian humility, meditation, and forgiveness against sovereign self-confidence, militancy, and reprisal.⁸³ After Alexander Iden kills Cade and while the nobles continue their infighting, York proclaims, "I am far better born than is the king, / More like a king, more kingly in my thoughts. / But I must make fair weather yet awhile / Till Henry be more weak, and I more strong" (5.1.28-31). For York, kingly strength resides in military prowess and murderous rage. He unsurprisingly begins his campaign by killing Old Clifford.

CLIFFORD *La fin couronne les oeuvres.*

YORK Thus war has given thee peace, for thou art still;
Peace with his soul, heaven, if it be thy will! (5.2.28-30)

This is to mock Erasmian (and Elizabethan) peace. That war works spiritual fulfillment is a sardonic distortion on behalf of macho-sovereignty and an equally mordant allusion to militant Protestantism.

Not even God's supposed agent, Iden, joins war with piety: "Sword, I will hallow thee for this thy deed / And hang thee o'er my tomb when I am dead" (4.10.66-67).

⁸² Cf. Erasmus, *Education* 27: "[The prince] torments himself with constant anxieties so that his subjects may enjoy peace of mind."

⁸³ Maurice Hunt believes Henry's "pining to be a commoner, eventually a shepherd, remains [...] pernicious, for it [...] would disrupt an established order crucial for relative peace" ("Climbing for Place" 172).

Iden's idolatrous language sets his heroism against true devotion. Since Iden is honor's, not God's, soldier, he predictably misses the point when Cade faults famine, not valour, for defeat:

... as I thrust thy body in with my sword,
 So wish I I might thrust thy soul to hell.
 Hence will I drag thee headlong by the heels
 Unto a dunghill, which shall be thy grave (4.10.77-80)

The Neronian Talbot resurfaces as the vengeful Iden, hardly an ideal candidate for God's plan. But Iden goes further than Talbot to claim soteriological power. He wishes his sword could be thrust into body and soul, and he vows to drag Cade to a dunghill—an apt end for the sinful reprobate.

The play weighs Henry's and the militants' theatrical force in the figure of Iden, who acts like a vengeful God on earth. With Iden, *Part 2* adds a new strain of religious militancy to the search for an alternative to (effeminized/effeminizing) Christian humanism and (manly) ruthlessness. Yet it is hard to find either a solution or relief in Iden, who idolizes his sword and marginalizes divine providence to make room for his own. Young Clifford presents us with still another alternative. For him, virtù is at once manly, vile, and sacred, and, far from displaced, God is omnipresent to men whose religion is militancy:

... O war, thou son of hell,
 Whom angry heavens do make their minister,
 Throw in the frozen bosoms of our part
 Hot coals of vengeance! Let no soldier fly.
 He that is truly dedicate to war
 Hath no self-love: nor he that loves himself
 Hath not essentially but by circumstance
 The name of valour. (5.2.33-39)

Young Clifford reenvisages sacrifice; for him, soldierly altruism supplants its Christian counterpart. His saber-rattling might have been self-condemning for Erasmus, but in *Part 2*, it represents a blend of Henry's piety and York's virtù.⁸⁴ A "minister" of the "angry heavens," hellish war nobly demands sacrifice. Manliness risks self-obliteration and eschews ego-stroking bravado. When York kills Somerset and opines, "Sword, hold thy temper; heart, be wrathful still: / Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill" (5.2.70-71), there is no sign of selflessness. But Clifford's alternative to Henry's peacemaking policies and York's ruthless masculinity does its best to incorporate quasi-Christian ethics into the male enterprise of war. *Part 2* never endorses this ethos (or, for that matter, Henry's humanism or York's militancy), but its availability speaks to the play's, and to the audience's, desire for a more sinewy kingship, for an alchemy of ethical codes that preserves the essence of Christianity and (masculine) rule. In this astringent play, nothing completely satisfies our desire because the play invariably returns to Henry.

If he is to bind Christian humanism to sovereignty, Henry must coax others to join him in reevaluating masculinity. As the play comes to a close, Margaret urges Henry to flee: "Now is it manhood, wisdom, and defence / To give the enemy way, and to secure us / By what we can, which can no more but fly" (5.2.75-77). But Henry still sees God's work in the civil broils and asks "Can we outrun the heavens?" (73). For Margaret, even fleeing is empowering, because it gives Henry a chance to retaliate. Devout and humble, Henry refuses; belief in providential design leads to his Ecclesiastes-like defeatism. No wonder Margaret asks, "What are you made of?" (74). This must also be the play's question, and ours. At each turn Henry defies our expectations. Henry is clement when

⁸⁴ *Complaint of Peace* 55: "We have hitherto have done sacrifice enough to the furies and to hell."

we expect a king to be forceful. But then he approves a duel and banishes Suffolk. In *Part 3*, he will disinherit his son and curse Richard of Gloucester. If there is anything predictable about Henry, it is that he will choose what others deem ineffectual, even damaging and effeminizing. But who is really more virtuous, more Christian, even more manly than Henry VI? While Clifford is trying to enlist Christian ethics in support of his hawkish sentiments, Henry is trying to garner support for Erasmian masculinity. York is politically dominant, but Henry requires audience members to confront the “dissension” in their “breast[s].” He understands that to subscribe to Margaret’s (and in this play, to anyone else’s) version of manliness is to reject Christianity. In short, he is the touchstone of the play’s aesthetic precisely because he piously and poetically refuses to partake in the glories of war theater.

Henry VI, Part 3

In *Part 3*, Henry wants his piety to matter to his subjects:

. . . My meed hath got me fame.
 I have not stopped mine ears to their demands,
 Nor posted off their suits with slow delays.
 My pity hath been balm to heal their wounds.
 My mildness hath allayed their swelling griefs.
 My mercy dried their water-flowing tears.
 I have not been desirous of their wealth
 Nor much oppressed them with great subsidies,
 Nor forward of revenge, though they much erred.
 Then why should they love Edward more than me?
 No, Exeter, these graces challenge grace,
 And when the lion fawns upon the lamb,
 The lamb will never cease to follow him. (4.8.38-50)

Tickling off items in his Christian humanist handbook, Henry declares that the will to “pi[e]ty” is the only political ethos suitable for a Christian monarch. On his own behalf, he summons the *Gospel of John* and *Isaiah* in lines 48 and 49, but his clemency has

somehow propelled his adversary, Edward, to the fore.⁸⁵ “Seize on the shamefaced Henry” (52), Edward commands, reinforcing Westmoreland’s earlier characterization: “[b]ase, fearful and despairing Henry,” that “faint-hearted and degenerate King, / In whose cold blood no spark of honour bides” (1.1.180, 183-84). Henry’s “cold blood”—his womanly humor—both generates and contaminates the palliatives that he has administered to his realm. Edward and Westmoreland respond to Henry’s rule not with mere ingratitude, but with disgust and embarrassment because what they consider Henry’s effeminized and effeminizing regality—his almost maternal approach to sovereignty and his aversion to revenge—comport with a bedside or prie-dieu. But then how could Henry’s “coldness” have “robbed” Warwick’s Yorkist “soldiers of their heated spleen” (2.1.121-23)? And how could his gentleness have the force of Clifford’s rage?⁸⁶

Part 3 asks not just whether drama can succeed despite its king’s piety, but whether it can succeed because of his piety and because of his articulation of it. Henry the Christian humanist believes in the efficacy of words and countenance, and *Part 3*, in particular, depends on their theatricality: “frowns, words and threats / Shall be the war that Henry means to use” (1.1.72-73). For better and for worse, theatrically speaking, others refuse to accept this Christian stance. When Henry calls for patience, Clifford declares, “Patience is for poltroons” (1.1.62). Before Henry disinherits his son in order to stop the civil war and to retain the crown (1.1.197-200), he predicts that “first shall war

⁸⁵ John 1.16 and Isaiah 11.6, respectively (Shaheen 70).

⁸⁶ “But whether ‘twas the coldness of the King . . . Or more than common fear of Clifford’s rigour . . . I cannot judge” (121-27). Since Henry discouraged his own side in Hall and Holinshed, Cox and Rasmussen call Warwick’s inference “odd” (228).

unpeople this my realm” if he were to leave his “kingly throne” (1.1.123-26).⁸⁷ He naively supposes that his empty threats will force others to accept his claim to the throne: war’s “colours . . . / Shall be my winding-sheet. Why faint you, lords? / My title’s good, and better far than his” (1.1.126-29). Not even Clifford believes him (“King Henry, be thy title right or wrong” [159]). After Henry disinherits Prince Edward (an “unmanly deed” [1.1.186]), Margaret lambasts her husband: “Had I been there, which am a silly woman, / The soldiers should have tossed me on their pikes / Before I would have granted to that act. / But thou preferr’st thy life before thine honor” (1.1.243-46). Speaking at length about Henry’s “foul disgrace” (253), she “shame[s] to hear [him] speak.” Her dismissive “Thou has spoke too much already” (258) is chilling.

The rest of the play sets Henry’s theatricality against Margaret’s. While his words are failing politically, the play is experimenting with their theatrical capacities, soliciting the audience to sympathize with Henry even though it has shared everyone else’s exasperation with him. It appears that playwrights in the early 1590s were still testing dramatic ratios between speech and spectacle, tranquility and combat, prayer and sin, quietism and heroism. When, 37 lines into the play, York declares, “By words or blows here let us win our right” (1.1.37), we do not yet know for sure which of the two will fill up the succeeding two hours of stage traffic. Indeed, the start of the play establishes a tense interdependence between display and speech. Warwick begins the play bewildered—“I wonder how the King escaped our hands” (1.1.1), and York easily

⁸⁷ Raymond Utterback sees a further logic in Henry’s action: “He proposes to entail the crown to York on the conditions of remaining King for life and receiving York’s loyalty. York accepts the arrangement with alacrity, but obviously he does not reflect on the positions implicitly admitted. If York can become Henry VI’s heir by “adoptive” process (and with Henry under military duress), then Henry IV was Richard II’s legal heir, and his descendant Henry VI has the superior right. Further, the mere acceptance of the position of heir presupposes the validity of Henry’s title, since no man can bequeath to an heir what he does not possess” (51).

explains that Henry abandoned his men. But Warwick's surprise that this king, who is hardly ever on the move, got away reminds us just how much, for Henry, stasis and disputation serve an o/aural kingdom, an o/aural theater. In *Part 3*, his Christian peacemaking textualizes, and in so doing it decelerates (rather than sensationalizes), the events of history. Replete with decapitated heads and pierced necks on the one hand, with Henry's Erasmian homilies on the other, the play shuttles back and forth between spectacle and words.

Were there a way to expel Henry from his own play, it would move along easily from battle to gory battle, execution to harrowing execution. In fact, Prince Edward gives "fearful" men like his father "leave to go away," as if it were St. Crispian's Day:

For did I but suspect a fearful man,
He should have leave to go away betimes,
Lest in our need he might infect another
And make him of like spirit to himself.
If any such be here, as God forbid,
Let him depart before we need his help. (5.4.44-49)

Of course, Oxford approves ("O brave young Prince, thy famous grandfather / Doth live again in thee" [52-53]). And for his part, Somerset hopes that the "fearful man" will "[g]o home to bed, and like the owl by day, / If he arise, be mocked and wondered at" (56-57). They echo Warwick's earlier fear that Henry has somehow slowed the push for war:

Why stand we like soft-hearted women here,
Wailing our losses whiles the foe doth rage,
And look upon, as if the tragedy
Were played in jest by counterfeiting actors?
Here on my knee I vow to God above:
I'll never pause again, never stand still. (2.3.25-30)

Metatheatrical concerns punctuate Warwick's frustration here. But Shakespeare and company reject the premise that only constant motion makes for potent drama. Allowing (Henry's) language to slow *Part 3* nearly to a standstill, they test what happens to England, to a history play, and to an audience, when the king rejects violence in favor of the stage laments of "soft-hearted women" and the ethics of a genuine Christian sovereign.

Like Oxford and Somerset, Margaret wants a king who "defies" his enemies (2.2.118). Consider how she directs the action during the scourging of York. When vengeful Clifford resolves not to "bandy" York "word for word / But buckler with thee blows twice two for one" (1.4.49-50), Margaret commands, "Hold, valiant Clifford, for a thousand causes / I would prolong the traitor's life" (1.4.51-52). She pays York a "crown" both to see him "stamp, rave, and fret, that I may sing and dance" (1.4.91) and to "hear the orisons he makes" (110). He does not disappoint her: "She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France, / Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth!" (111-12). For both York and Margaret, stageworthy "orisons" are profanations. Of lamentations, they make masculine expressions: "These tears are my sweet Rutland's obsequies, / And every drop cries vengeance for his death / 'Gainst thee, fell Clifford, and thee, false Frenchwoman!" (1.4.147-49). These are the sorts of invective, prayer, and tears that Margaret demands from Henry and that he uniformly refuses. Hence audiences find themselves caught between her hypertheatrical sadism and his hypotheatrical piety. To endorse her theatricality is to risk feeling shameful; to endorse his is, also, differently, to risk feeling shameful. Surely at least some playgoers identified with the Henry who, fretting over York's dead body, admits that, "To see this sight it irks my very soul."

(2.2.6). And surely, by the end of 2.2, some were eager enough for honorable slaughter: “Let our bloody colours wave,” Edward commands, “And either victory or else a grave!” (173-74).

The play asks playgoers to evaluate Henry’s “cold” theatrics—his pious detachment, bookish inclinations, and elegiac commentaries. Unspectacular, unheroic, and static, they are nonetheless affecting. There is something deftly Shakespearean about the way epic simile contends with enervation in Henry’s molehill soliloquy in 2.5:

This battle fares like to the morning’s war,
When dying clouds contend with growing light,
What time the shepherd, blowing of his nails,
Can neither call it perfect day nor night.
Now sways it this way, like a mighty sea
Forced by the tide to combat with the wind.
Now sways it that way, like the selfsame sea
Forced to retire by fury of the wind.
Sometime the flood prevails, and then the wind;
Now one the better, then another best,
Both tugging to be victors, breast to breast,
Yet neither conqueror nor conquered:
So is the equal poise of this fell war.
Here on this molehill will I sit me down.
To whom God will, there be the victory.
For Margaret, my Queen, and Clifford too,
Have chid me from the battle, swearing both
They prosper best of all when I am thence.
Would I were dead, if God’s good will were so.
For what is in this world but grief and woe? (2.5.1-20)

The dynamism of virtù and realpolitik have been leeched right out the play at this point.

Indeed, it is surprising to find that the tempo can slacken still further:

O God! Methinks it were a happy life
To be no better than a homely swain
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run:
How many makes the hour full complete,
How many hours brings about the day,

How many days will finish up the year,
How many years a mortal man may live. (2.5.21-29)

Composed of georgic fantasies and Christian musings, Henry's deadening repetitions anesthetize a familiar early modern trope: that kings are shepherds who herd their subjects toward salvation.⁸⁸ What are we to make of this king who taxes playgoers who only scenes earlier found themselves on his side? In 1.4, they had good reason to blush at Margaret's theater; in 2.5, it is Henry's woolgathering that makes them queasy.

Shakespeare and company seem to throw up their hands, too. Prince Edward orders his father to fly. Exeter warns, "stay not to expostulate, make speed" (2.5.135).

Heretofore, Henry stayed, refusing to act; but now, there is a noticeable shift:

Nay, take me with thee, good sweet Exeter:
Not that I fear to stay, but love to go
Whither the Queen intends. Forward, away! (137-39)

"Not that I fear to stay"—who fears to stay? The other characters, the playwright(s)? To linger would be to dwell on the incompatibility between Christianity and rule. But can Henry suddenly or simply jettison the angst engendered by his Christian ethics? Having decelerated the play, accustomed audiences to his unhurried pace, and subjected them to

⁸⁸ In conformist tracts from 1572 on, "writers like John Bridges and Thomas Bilson (against the papists) and John Whitgift (against the presbyterians) could cite Deuteronomy and indeed the whole history of the kingdom of Israel, where all could see 'princes to have been ordained immediately of God as Moses, Joshua, all the judges, Saul, David and Solomon . . . Each of these men was a 'prince of God's people' appointed 'to be a pastor or shepherd unto them . . . not only by the law of nations and civil, a politic pastorship is committed to the prince but also a Christian pastorship to the Christian prince in the New Testament also'" (Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans* 97). Also see the following Italian and Latin prayers in John Day's 1569 *Christian Prayers and Meditations in English, French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Latin*: "[M]ay the people be faithful and governable, so that I and all my flock, living in quietness and peace, may have the occasion and time to serve Thy majesty, praying and supplicating Thee for all this through Jesus Christ my Lord and Thy only forgotten Son" (*Elizabeth I* 154); "[K]eep hirelings and every kind of wolves away from this flock of ours, however little it be, promised to Thee and Christ. Wherefore furnish Thou the same flock with Thy new favors, that to Thee and Thy supreme honor, doing obeisance to us standing in Thy place, they one to another may deny themselves mutual charity in nothing" (160).

his droning soliloquy, he has given the audience every reason to welcome his departure and to demand quicker, fiercer dramatic action.

Regret and appreciation set in only two scenes later, when Henry returns, disguised, to expostulate with “prayer book” in hand (3.1). Two keepers recognize “the quondam king” (23), but rather than “seize upon him,” they “[f]orbear awhile” to “hear a little more” (27). Henry admits that his royal “balm” can evanesce—a shocking revelation that calls to mind *Richard II*—but he no longer exposes the faultline between Christianity and kingship (16-17). The keepers then debate with him over the natures of oaths and kingship. He calls himself a king “in mind” with “content” as his crown (66-68); they plan to take him prisoner, anyway. No less than Edward’s power-grabbing, Henry’s loss troubles audience members who have good reason to wonder what is sacred about a crown and a scepter so easily seized. And yet, even as Henry faces capture, he calmly asserts his authority. The keepers “charge” the “contented” Henry “in God’s name and the King’s / To go with us unto the officers” (3.1.67 and 96-97). He responds with a command: “In God’s name lead; your King’s name be obeyed, / And what God will, that let your King perform; / And what he will, I humbly yield unto” (98-100). That the keepers call themselves “true subjects to the King, King Edward” no longer matters (93). After all, the final word that they obey is Henry’s: they “lead” him off-stage to end the scene. With subtle, instructive irony, the keepers end up serving Henry, not Edward. No longer the “quondam king,” he “performs” what God wills, as if he has ordered his own arrest, as if he can play God’s king when Edward is off-stage, and as if he can save the appearances of Christian monarchy. The keepers lead him away, but they follow his lead as well. According to Henry, they are like all other “common men”—like a feather,

“[c]ommanded always by the greater gust” (88-89). This once and future king recognizes how political power operates; perhaps here, he acts like the dramatists, who can reallocate theatrical power from one scene to the next. If in 2.5 theatergoers are ready to wash their hands of a winded Henry, in 3.1, they might once again discover the appeal of his crafty speech, his resolute faith, and his measured pace.

Our uncertainty carries over to 4.6, when Henry once again tantalizes audiences with a viable accommodation of Christianity to sovereignty. Having regained the crown, Henry reinstates Christian humanism as a radical alternative to absolutism. But like King Lear, he himself wants to go forward unburdened. So, he “resigns” his “government” to Warwick and Clarence, even though his “head still wear[s] the crown” (4.6.24-25). Now, it is ceremonial office, not rhetoric, that will cheat Fortune (“That I may conquer Fortune’s spite” [20]) and stabilize Christian monarchy. And for the moment, Warwick and Clarence are willing to meet him halfway (26-32).⁸⁹ They tacitly decide that Henry’s piety can contribute to effective governance. Henry joins their hands and dubs them co-Protectors, “[t]hat no dissension hinder government” (40). But they are disoriented. Ersatz sovereignty explains Warwick’s awkward search for precise terminology: “We’ll yoke together, like a double shadow / To Henry’s body, and supply his place, / I mean, in bearing weight of his government” (49-51). Of course, in short order, Edward usurps the throne and Henry is relegated to the Tower. Once again, for a moment and only for a moment in *Part 3*, Christian humanist monarchy has flickered and then faded.

Henry is still in the Tower when Richard of Gloucester enters in 5.6. All of the play’s contrasts between between Christian humanism and masculine rule culminate in

⁸⁹ Later, Clarence reneges so that he may fight for his family (5.1.81-102).

their confrontation. “Good day, my lord,” Gloucester begins. “What, at your book so hard?” (5.6.1). Until now, nothing has been “hard” about Henry’s study, but this scene pins its theatrical success in part on Henry’s intricate language. Bandyng terms like “bush” and “bird,” Henry and Richard retaliate against one another with proverbs (5.6.7-17). Henry asks Richard, “What scene of death hath Roscius now to act?” (5.6.10). It turns out to be a scene not spectacular, but poetic and semantic, and Henry takes the lead:

And thus I prophesy – that many a thousand
Which now mistrust no parcel of my fear,
And many an old man’s sigh, and many a widow’s,
And many an orphan’s water-standing eye,
Men for their sons, wives for their husbands,
Orphans for their parents’ timeless death,
Shall rue the hour that ever thou wast born.
The owl shrieked at thy birth, an evil sign;
The night-crow cried, aboding luckless time;
Dogs howled; and hideous tempests shook down trees;
The raven rook’d her on the chimney’s top;
And chatt’ring pies in dismal discords sung.
Thy mother felt more than a mother’s pain,
And yet brought forth less than a mother’s hope:
To wit, an undigested and deformed lump,
Not like the fruit of such a goodly tree.
Teeth hadst thou in thy head when thou was born
To signify thou cam’st to bite the world. (5.6.37-54)

The speech is fraught with Christian humanist imagery. It evokes both Thomas More’s biased biography of the Yorkist king and Erasmus’s portrayal of tyrants. The widows, orphans, elderly, wives, fathers and sons already tormented by civil war will fear and hate Richard of Gloucester because his rule will be as unnatural as his body. Intentionally provocative (“I’ll hear no more! Die prophet, in thy speech” [5.6.57]), Henry’s prophecy crucially reminds us of the potency of Christian humanist rhetoric.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Maurice Hunt argues that Henry’s final words simply reveal an unnatural king: “Henry pays the ultimate price for mirroring the unnaturalness of his slayer, the unnaturalness that in a fainter image has been his all along” (“Unnaturalness” 164).

When Richard continues the speech that he abruptly interrupts, he effectively downplays the recent regicide. In fact—and once again, one suspects a deft Shakespeare at work here—Richard goes out of his way to exploit Henry’s humanism:

I that have neither pity, love nor fear.
 Indeed, ‘tis true that Henry told me of,
 For I have often heard my mother say
 I came into the world with my legs forward.
 Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste,
 And seek their ruin that usurped our right?
 The midwife wondered and the women cried,
 “O, Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!”
 And so I was, which plainly signified
 That I should snarl, and bite and play the dog.
 Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
 Let hell make crook’d my mind to answer it.
 I have no brother; I am like no brother.
 And this word ‘love’, which greybeards call divine,
 Be resident in men like one another
 And not in me: I am myself alone. (68-83)

By conceding his socially alienating bestiality, Richard subsumes himself within Henry’s Erasmian typology. He will “play the dog” because he is not among “men like one another.” Although he refers to his deformed body, it is his language that dehumanizes him. “I have no brother; I am like no brother” utterly dissociates Richard from Christian humanist strictures even as it bears witness to both Henry’s Christian humanism and Henry’s dismay over the fratricidal War of the Roses. “O, Jesus bless us” is as much a plea against bestialization as it is a quick, *female* prayer for grace. But neither prayer nor gender matter to Richard. Although divine love resides in all “*men* like one another,” the beastly Richard does not need to challenge Erasmian gendering to discount Erasmian ethics. Unlike Henry, he will not try to reconcile Christianity with masculinity, and vice versa. Richard lets his playwrights off the hook by effectively disengaging Christianity

from rule. The former has become irrelevant, and we slip back into the world of Herod and conventional tyranny.

And yet, something of Henry's does carry over to Richard: he accepts Henry's lesson that words have a profound theatrical efficacy of their own. There will be no more decapitations or dismemberment in *Part 3*. Language will supplant spectacle. When, in a moment of domesticity, Richard kisses Edward's newborn, his words—"To say the truth, so Judas kissed his master / And cried, 'All hail!', when as he meant all harm" (5.7.33-34)—have the precise potency that Henry saw in language ("kill me . . . not with words" [5.6.26]).

Editors and critics often take Henry's impotence for granted, and with it, the occasional imprecision of Henry's language. In 4.8, Warwick wants to strategize an effective retaliation against Edward, who marches toward London with "many giddy people flock[ing] to him" (1-5). Henry the meek shepherd offers the first option: "Let's levy men and beat him back again" (6). Warwick resolves to muster "true-hearted friends" in Warwickshire (9) and has his king's blessing: "Farewell, my Hector, and my Troy's true hope" (25). Why is Henry suddenly playing Priam? Henry the Christian humanist, most recognizable when he laments, here sponsors a military course of action. Perhaps this is merely one of the many textual inconsistencies that troubled and annoyed Tillyard.⁹¹ Cox and Rasmusen have added to Samuel Johnson's conclusion that "line [6] expresses a spirit of war so unsuitable to the character of Henry, that I would give the first *cold* speech to the King, and the brisk answer to Warwick": line 6 "could as easily be understood (and performed) as an instance of Henry's ineptitude when he attempts to

⁹¹ "Shakespeare had a great mass of chronicle matter to deal with [in *Part 3*] and he failed to control it; or rather in paring it to manageable length he fails to make it significant" (Tillyard 90).

lead” (Cox and Rasmussen 65 and 74, my emphasis).⁹² Certainly, the language itself does not reflect Henry’s Christian humanist idiom. Maybe the attribution of line 6 is a printing house error; as Johnson asserted, it makes more sense to give the line to Warwick. If so, then what of the Hector reference? That line 6 does not exist in the 1595 octavo tells us nothing, since Henry’s mole-hill speech is truncated there as well. So how do we reconcile Henry’s macho command here with his passivity everywhere else? My sense is that we cannot. We can no more suture piety to rule than the *Henry VI* playwrights could. We can only evaluate, as best we can, the dramaturgical no less than the ethical alternatives with which Christian sovereignty confronts us.

And we can attend to the ways that Shakespeare continued to probe Christian policy—its theatrical force and its gender assignments—on the London stage. At the end of *Richard III*, he has the newly crowned Henry VII begin the Tudor legacy with a familiar vocabulary:

O now let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeeders of each royal house,
By God’s fair ordinance conjoin together,
And let their heirs—God, if his will be so—
Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
With smiling plenty, and fair prosperous days. (5.8.29-34)

The first Tudor invokes Queen Elizabeth’s Christian humanist rhetoric. But “the time to come” is more troubling than Richmond can know. Is England’s “smooth-faced peace” cause for celebration or concern? Would England suffer because of its Queen’s dedication to that peace? Insofar as we are still listening to Shakespeare’s words, Richmond’s sentiments must hark back to the previous Henry, the “Shakespearean” king whose Christian humanist policies failed to “conjoin” warring factions.

⁹² Cf. Johnson 8.608.

Henry VII's retrieval of Christian humanism gives thematic coherence to the first Henriad, a series of plays that upends the cultural values, gendered attributes, and theatrical conventions of peace and war, rule and piety, aggression and passivity. The *Henry VI* plays, like Richmond's epilogue, position audiences squarely on the collision course where Christian humanism and manly rule meet, a route charted nowhere else in Shakespeare's canon, even in *Henry V*. They appraise the masculinity and theatricality of Christian kingship at a time when Elizabeth's gender and religion shaped her rule. And they represent religious strife not in polemical terms that reaffirm propagandistic notions of true religion, but through an innovative theatricality that exploits the incongruity of rule and Christianity and vexes audiences to this day.

CHAPTER 3

“CAN THIS DOO’T?”: THE JACOBEOAN FANTASY OF A *VIA MEDIA* RELIGION
AND THE THEATRICALITY OF HOLINESS IN *THE VIRGIN MARTIR*

The Virgin Martir (1620), which weds iconoclastic reform to ceremonial ecclesiology, bears witness to a multifaceted Jacobean church and fantasizes a conciliatory *via media* religious settlement.¹ Dramatists Thomas Dekker and Philip Massinger took their cue from a pre-Laudian movement within the church that counteracted reform by emphasizing the “beauty of holiness”—iconic rituals and liturgical splendor, in particular.² Either unsuspecting of, or untroubled by, the gathering storm that would loom over England in the 1630s and 1640s, Dekker and Massinger’s *via media* dramaturgy sought to attract and reassure the hybrid London audience.³ Dekker and Massinger reworked virgin martyr *passio* narratives into a *via media* script for an audience plagued by denominational strife and desperate for a unified English church.⁴ Theatergoers could marvel at the play’s godly reforms, as well as its religious spectacles and mystical ecstasies. While some must have applauded the virgin Dorothea’s iconoclastic rhetoric, others no doubt cherished her moments of sensational piety. A seventeenth-century saint play, *The Virgin Martir* is curiously both iconic and iconoclastic, a document of its place and moment in history.

¹ Lori Ferrell defines “ecclesiology” as “the perceptible and apparent practices of the Church as opposed to its theology” (“Kneeling” 89). Also, see Ferrell, *Government* 140-66. Unless otherwise noted, I quote Ferrell from her book.

² For the “beauty of holiness,” including its “architectonic” attributes, see Ferrell “Kneeling” 79 and *Government* 153. MacCulloch calls the pre-Laudian shift the “Westminster Movement,” not Arminianism, which he argues is both inaccurate and anachronistic (*The Later Reformation* 89-91).

³ Butler discusses the theater in troubled Caroline England.

⁴ See Gasper, “The Sources,” for the play’s alterations of its sources, which include de Voragine’s *The Golden Legend* and Villegas’s counter-Reformation martyrology, *Flos Sanctorum*.

On the one hand, the *Virgin Martir* follows a Jacobean turn to sacramental religious practice; it suggests that by 1622, a play could present the sacred—indeed, it could do so quite openly—and audiences could tolerate, enjoy, even participate in that sacred performance. On the other hand, Dekker and Massinger tap the rhetorical and theatrical conventions of martyrologies like Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* to manage their staging of godly sensuality and affective spirituality.⁵ As in most of Foxe's accounts, the play's men and women display masculine perseverance and physical invulnerability under duress; neither sensual nor affective religiosity has a central place at the torture table or the scaffold. And yet, ceremonialism accompanies reform without undercutting Foxe's project of godly masculinization. By adapting Foxe's martyrological conventions, *The Virgin Martir* moderates the very physiological responses to martyrdom and conversion upon which it relies. Affective spirituality enriches the play's theatricality of holiness just enough to establish a *via media* dramaturgy.

Hence, the play reshapes the modalities that give it shape. Even as it rejects the scope of radical iconoclasm and Calvinist polemic, it espouses Foxe's rhetoric of reform and gives voice to Calvinist iconoclasm and gynephobia. Huston Diehl has noted the extent to which reformers "systematically assign all sacred images—including images of Christ's body and the cross—a female gender. Invoking a symbolic order that aligns the masculine with the spirit, the feminine with the body, they identify all images with women and therefore denounce them because they are of the flesh and not the spirit" (160). This conclusion oversimplifies what was a multifaceted, switchback English reform: reformers like John Foxe lambasted medieval iconography even as they replaced

⁵ For Foxe's theatrics in *Actes and Monuments*, see Knott, *Discourses* 11-83, especially 69-78, and Diehl, *Staging Reform* 24-25.

it with their own religious imagery; the official *Book of Common Prayer* could not be counted on to implement Calvinist dogma; remnants of traditional iconography somehow survived decades of persistent iconoclasm; and that iconography was tactfully reproduced into the 1620s (Watt 137).⁶

Diehl is right to recognize that images in *Actes and Monuments* are reformed: rather than grant religious figures any salvific agency or spiritual power, Foxe simply memorializes them in his woodcuts. He follows a trend according to which reformed images replaced “corrupt” icons (the crucifix, beads, chalices, monstrances, and shrines) in such key books as Richard Day’s 1578 reformed Book of Hours, the *Book of Christian Prayers*.⁷ And yet, such texts also muddle reformed imagery and traditional iconography. The poses of Foxean martyrs, like Margery Polley’s (Foxe 2.1860) and William Gardiner’s (Foxe 2.1544), resemble hagiographic icons.⁸ In Day’s frontispiece, Queen Elizabeth appears no less devotional than devoted.

Jacobean dramas like *The Virgin Martir* magnify the discrepancies between (and within) the reformed church that Foxe lauds in his martyrology and the ceremonial liturgy that gained traction at the Jacobean court pulpit. They also benefit from the rich

⁶ Tessa Watt insists that reform did not totally do away with visual representation in popular culture (Patrick Collinson argues that this began after 1580): the “inward-looking” iconoclasm of “hardline Protestants” should not lead to “wider claims for the notion of ‘iconophobia’” across “the nation as a whole.” Rather, Watt contends, there were “some ways in which visual communication continued to play a role in mainstream Protestant culture; and, conversely . . . post-Reformation religion continued to have a place in the mainstream visual culture” (136). Cf. Collinson, *Birthpangs* 23-24. Eamon Duffy adds that traditional iconography and ritual remained durable at least midway through Elizabeth’s reign, in spite of reform (xvi, 5, and passim). Watt points to *A schole-house for the needle* (1624) as an example of continued iconography in Jacobean England. Ladies who used the guidebook “embroidered not only unicorns, peacocks, flowers and abstract designs, but scenes of Adam and Eve, the pelican in her piety, and even the crucifixion” (137). Cf. *A schole-house* A2-A4.

⁷ Duffy connects the 1578 prayerbook to the Hours tradition (*Marking* 171).

⁸ Unless otherwise specified, I quote from the two-volume 1570 edition of *Actes and Monuments*.

ambiguities and vexing mediations of the English reformations.⁹ When Dorothea plays the pious Christian, she at once endorses iconoclasm and practices affective piety. Repulsed by pagan idolatry, she nonetheless plays the iconic Christian. By means of her mystical sensuality, saintly intercessions, spectacular torture, and empowering martyrdom, Dekker and Massinger diffuse iconoclastic rage even as they dramatize the misogyny and anxious masculinity that accompany it.

“Reformed” and licensed for the Red Bull on October 6, 1620 and entered into the Stationers’ Register on December 7, 1621, *The Virgin Martir* adapts and combines the stories of St. Agnes and St. Dorothy, early Christian virgin-martyrs who endured the tenth and last Roman persecution (Dekker, *The Virgin Martir*, Introduction, 365).¹⁰ The play begins just as Dorothea is thrust into the public sphere, when the famed soldier Antoninus admits his love for her and refuses to marry Artemia, Emperor Diocletian’s daughter. Believing that Dorothea’s Christianity has bewitched Antoninus, the Roman minister Theophilus sends his two daughters, Caliste and Christeta, to convert Dorothea to the Roman faith. When they take to desecrating pagan idols, he slaughters them and oversees Dorothea’s torture. But she is protected by her aptly named servant Angelo; despite help from the devil Harpax, Theophilus cannot break her. Antoninus’ father Sapritius is just as powerless: he can neither cure his son’s love-melancholy nor overpower Dorothea. He orders his son to rape the virgin, but Antoninus ultimately

⁹ Cf. Haigh, *Reformations*. Collinson cautions against taking such revisionist history to an extreme: “The English Reformation, in the traditional sense, did happen. One of the most Catholic countries in western Europe did become, within a hundred years, if not one of the most Protestant nations, culturally and politically profoundly Anti-Catholic, an alteration of global significance” (“English Reformations” 27).

¹⁰ Monta notes that there are “indications of rewriting; it is the ‘reformed’ play that was entered in the Stationers’ Register” (199). A censor received 40s to “reform” the play. Also see Gasper, *The Dragon* 143. Cf. Bentley, Vol. 3, 263-66 for a useful discussion of the 1620 licensing. St. Agnes was “one of the earliest virgins to be recognized by the [Catholic] church” (Wogan-Browne 4).

refuses. Seething, Sapritius commands one slave, then ten, to violate her. At the height of his sadistic fury he collapses, only to revive through Dorothea's prayers. Dorothea is then led to the scaffold where, feeling no pain, she glories in her execution. This spectacle converts Antoninus. Later, when she sends miraculous fruits from heaven, she has the same effect on Theophilus. He in turn banishes Harpax, frees Christian prisoners, defies emperors, dies a martyr, and follows Dorothea and her other converts into heaven.

The play's central ambition—to rehearse Jacobean conformist ecclesiology, to advocate religious tolerance to a heterogenous London population, and to enchant audiences with an iconic, yet reformed theater—would not have been easy to fulfill in 1622. With Jacobean conformity gradually alienating more and more reformers, any attempt to appease a hybrid London audience was bound to be challenging. Dorothea represents the playwrights' best chance. She is a reformer, a ceremonialist, a martyr, and a mystic. The faith that she practices appeals, at different times and to different effects, to audience members across a broad religious spectrum. Her final acts—as sacrifice, as intercessor, and as beatific vision—celebrate iconic beauty and sanctify her theatricality. One might think that spectacular performances would undermine religion in the play, but in fact, Dorothea's religion enhances theatrical affect.¹¹ Theophilus sponsors her theatricality first by his pagan resistance to it, then by his Christian participation in it.

¹¹ For Pickett, the most important conversions in the play—Antoninus's and Theophilus's—confirm “the transformative power of theater itself” (454). When Angelo, Antoninus and Theophilus say they will “perform” or “act” a “scene,” their religious performances become “self-consciously theatrical” (454). But this “theatricality of conversion” is not “immediately reduc[ed] to insincerity” (455). Rather, “[c]onversion in the play is finally and importantly inseparable from its theatrical representation” (455). Myhill disagrees. Paying particular attention to the play's martyrdoms, Myhill insists that the play cannot “compel a universal [religious] response” because the playwrights expose their own art (9, 27). Audience members “recognize” the truth to both the pagan claim that the miracles are “counterfeit” and the Christian claim that they are authentic (9, 14). But it is hard to imagine a theater that succeeds when its paying customers go to the theater only to expose its artifice, not to suspend disbelief.

Because of his villainy, audience members reject his iconoclastic stagecraft in favor of Dorothea's pious performances. Because of his conversion, Dorothea's miraculous spectacles take on added religious and theatrical value. At the same time, because Dekker and Massinger are appealing to a reform-minded audience, Dorothea lambasts pagan idolatry, and Theophilus plays the Foxean soldier of faith.

Like the Jacobean Church itself, then, the play contends with the entire spectrum of reform and tradition.¹² It asked audiences to evaluate images based on general religious affiliation (Christian or pagan), to be tolerant of mounting ceremonialist sentiments, and to enjoy vestiges of traditional religion that made for terrific theater. Only by situating the play within the context of uneven Jacobean reform can we understand the nuances of its dramaturgy, its rejection of religious sectarianism, and its tolerance of divergent Christian practices and expressions.

Of course, any religious imagery or sacraments on the Jacobean stage necessarily called to mind religious conflicts that preceded the Reformation. Staging a female virgin's martyrdom could not help but evoke the virgin martyr *vita* and *passio* traditions.¹³ But Dekker and Massinger's play is best understood chiefly in terms of its own historical, political, and religious moment.¹⁴ Because recent studies focus on the

¹² Gasper, *The Dragon*, 162-64, discusses the play's success from 1620 to 1715. The religious "spectrum" of Jacobean England is Peter White's coinage (211-12)

¹³ For the prevalence of the *vita* and *passio* genres in medieval England, see Wogan-Browne and Delany.

¹⁴ For instance, the virgin martyr *passio* in Jacobean England obviously could not engage anchorites and nuns as it had in medieval England, nor could it exploit virginity in the same way after the Reformation and after the reign of Queen Elizabeth: "different virginities exist for different genres, times, and audiences" (Wogan-Browne 21). For debates over the various medieval representations of religious and secular virginity, various virginities in medieval texts, and the definitions of virginity itself, see Salih, Bernau, and Evans, "Introduction." For the issues surrounding the language of erotics, mysticism, and virginity in religious writings, see Salih, "When is a Bosom not a Bosom?". See Salih, *Versions of Virginity* for both a

propagandistic elements of the play, they tend to overlook the *The Virgin Martir*'s very Jacobean staging of uniformity, ceremony, and sacramental participation on the one hand and reform, Word-centered service, and iconoclasm on the other.¹⁵ Noting the play's resemblance to the morality tradition, Susannah Monta emphasizes its fanciful longing for ancient Christianity's "stark confrontations between right religion and idolatry or heresy" (194-95 and 200).¹⁶ Perhaps; but the play also responds to Jacobean "right religion" brimming with complexities, if not outright inconsistencies. "Religion" and "superstition" were both in flux. If there was conflict between them, it was anything but "searingly clear" (Monta 195).

Indeed, neither the Bohemian crisis nor the Turkish threat diminished Jacobean efforts to achieve consensus among disparate religious dispositions—efforts with which this play engages.¹⁷ Debora Shuger provides some guidance in this regard: "Literary

succinct contrast between medieval and modern virginites and the cultural importance of medieval virgin martyr legends (16-106 and 44).

¹⁵ See Gasper, *The Dragon*, 137-165 and Monta 194-216. Gasper reads *The Virgin Martir* as allegorical propaganda that "galvanized the audience into active support for the Protestant cause" in Bohemia at the onset of the Thirty Years' War (158). While Monta looks to Protestant and Catholic martyrologies to contextualize the play, she also contends that the play "articulates a Protestant call-to-arms" (202 and 194-96). Unless otherwise noted, I quote Monta from her book, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England*. Pickett argues that the "older" aspects of these conversions "highlights" and "heightens" theatrical effect because those aspects are "unfamiliar," "nostalgic," and "estranging[ly] medieval" to a Jacobean audience (451-52 and 455).

¹⁶ "The playwrights added Spuncius, Hircius, and Harpax, and expanded the Catholic sources' anonymous angel into the character Angelo. Drawn from morality plays' stock figures, these four characters function to distinguish firmly between true and false religion" (Monta 200). Monta does not mention which morality play figures inform these characters.

¹⁷ Jane Hwang Degenhart argues that "[w]hile *The Virgin Martir* does not overtly feature Turks or Islamic conversion, its particular representation of Christian resistance in the form of bodily inviolability . . . can best be understood by taking account of the sexual, bodily, and racial valences associated with the Ottoman threat, and reflects an emerging model of Christian faith that is defined not solely by inner (Protestant) spirituality but also by outward physical and sexual resilience" (85). Perhaps this model was reemerging, but it was not new to England. Debates over proper piety—debates spun from the flesh/Spirit binary in Paul's *Romans* and from changes and renewed emphases on religious practice—across medieval England were prevalent.

scholars, by training, seek what is not obvious . . . [but] texts do not usually omit, conceal, or make ambiguous the important stuff” (*Political Theologies* 5). Paramount in this play is mediation between religious poles—between affective spirituality and iconoclastic reform, between ceremony and sermon, between image and text, between the flesh and the Spirit. If I am correct, then *The Virgin Martir* is an exception to one of Diehl’s major conclusions about early modern dramaturgy:

dramatists seek to reform the stage, developing rhetorical strategies that disrupt older modes of sight and producing plays that conform to Protestant theories of art and representation. Even as they display discredited forms of theatricality and spectacle, exposing them as fraudulent and illusory, they also use the stage to advance new—reformed—modes of seeing and interpreting. (*Staging Reform* 66)

Calvinist epistemology may underwrite plays like *Doctor Faustus* and *Hamlet*, but the theater of the English Renaissance was not the theater of English Calvinism.¹⁸

Iconoclasm, gynephobia, and antitheatricity are present in *The Virgin Martir*, but not endorsed by it. Dekker and Massinger absorb and resist this or that Reformation tenet. Their play reminds us that in early modern England, there was much more to religious debate than theological doctrine and Calvinist epistemology.¹⁹ If Lancelot Andrewes’s

¹⁸ Calvin wonders at God’s creation as a “theater,” but warns that it can dazzle humans into folly (see Chapter 1, above). Thus, he deems art “proper” when it represents things that people can see without superstition—events and histories (Diehl, *Staging Reform* 84). When Diehl parallels Calvin’s *theatrum mundi* trope to the Renaissance theater, she recognizes the resilience of visual representation on and off the stage, but implies that Calvinism dictated cultural responses to, and dramatic representations on, the stage: “However disruptive and destabilizing, [early Protestant culture’s growing] distrust [of the imaginary] proves to be a stimulus rather than an obstacle to dramatic production, so much so that the drama of the English Renaissance can also be understood as the drama of the English Reformation” (93). See Robert White, “Theatrum Mundi” for Calvin’s use of the theater trope.

¹⁹ According to Ferrell, Jacobean ecclesiology was a “larger and more contentious” concern than “theology” (*Government* 13).

sermons tell us anything, it is that Calvinist preachers were not the spokesmen for England's religious establishment.²⁰

In other words, *The Virgin Martir* is not straightforward religious propaganda because English Protestantism was not straightforward. Indicative of a complex, vacillating Jacobean ecclesiology, the play thwarts efforts to pigeonhole it within one or another epistemology or theology. Historical scholarship sensitive to the many nuances of Jacobean religion ought to inform our literary analysis of plays like this one.²¹ Hence, by briefly reviewing the play's Jacobean religious contexts, I can best demonstrate how its pieties, its martyrdoms, and its conversions both answer to the *via medias* of Jacobean ecclesiology and reimagine the martyrological conventions of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*.

***Via Media* Rhetoric and the Hybrid Audiences in Jacobean Theaters**

James I strove for religious inclusivity in an effort to offset religious sectarianism, to reaffirm monarchical supremacy, and to protect England's religious settlement. He most certainly did not advocate religious pluralism. Rather, he suggested that between Puritan separatists and Catholic recusants stood the true English faithful, those who accepted official religious doctrine and practice and who acquiesced to the religious authority of the king and his bishops—in other words, those who accepted the status quo. James's goal was to maintain an accord among these faithful English subjects and to

²⁰ For the development of Andrewes's anti-Calvinism, see Tyacke, "Lancelot Andrewes," 12-18.

²¹ Henry Shirley's *A Martyr'd Souldier* (ca. 1619) and the anonymous *Two Noble Ladies and the Converted Conjurer* (ca. 1622) come to mind. I thank Jane Degenhardt for introducing me to the latter.

compel others to join them—to unify England within a moderately Protestant, *via media* church, led by the king.²²

Something like a “middle way” had premised religious policies during Elizabeth’s reign, but the “middle way” was not explicitly formulated until a few years before James’s accession, in Richard Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Piety*.²³ For Hooker, as for James, the extremes were the Roman and the Genevan church. The former, of course, located authority within the Vatican; the latter’s presbyterian church structure placed congregations outside of any monarch’s or any bishop’s authority. Hooker argues that the king and his bishops can best lead the church because, in Diarmaid MacCulloch’s words, “history . . . may change the form of the Church and make another form more appropriate for a new age” (84). As with church hierarchy, *via media* church practice was situated between Genevan and papist extremes, between *sola scriptura* services and superstitious rituals.

Of course, the “middle way” did not just split differences (Ferrell 2).²⁴ Religious conformity was not religious uniformity.²⁵ Take restricted conformists, or moderate

²² For the oaths of allegiance that James required of his subjects, see Questier, *Conversion* 148-49. Questier insists that these oaths effectively corralled people into the English church, but he acknowledges that some historians are reluctant to attribute religious conversions to these oaths.

²³ See MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation*, 83-85. Lake agrees with MacCulloch that Hooker’s represented a new development (“Lancelot Andrewes” 114 and *Anglicans and Puritans?* 145-252, esp. 159-60). Peter White argues otherwise: the “contrast between the Church of England and the continental reformed Churches, above all with Geneva, was far from being, as has recently been claimed, the invention of Richard Hooker” (213).

²⁴ The state of English Catholicism and its relation to official Protestantism lies outside the scope of my project. Although the monasteries and priories (alongside papal supremacy) were long gone, choirs still sang at Westminster Abbey and the official liturgy at the cathedrals retained high ceremonies. MacCulloch notes that a “cathedral tradition” (“most spectacular and well-funded in Westminster Abbey”) developed from “the potential for liturgical splendour in Cranmer’s Book of Common Prayer (a development which, almost certainly, he would not have welcomed)” (*The Later Reformation* 79-81). Royal chapels also retained elements of Catholic ceremony; the crucifix was removed after Elizabeth’s death, but candles and tapers remained (Tyacke, “Lancelot Andrewes” 29).

Puritans. They professed loyalty to the crown and the Church, subscribed to official canons, and participated in a limited capacity, but they were troubled by church ceremonies, ritualistic gestures, and superstitious language (Ferrell 14).²⁶ They strove to reform church practice (and perhaps hoped to reform church hierarchy) from within. Although they were just as dismayed by the underreformed church as sectarians, they tolerated it for a number of reasons: the visible church was an inherently flawed imitation of the invisible church of the elect; election had nothing to do with the *adiaphora*—“things indifferent”—of the visible church; and they joined other conformists in a commitment to Calvinism, a love of sermons, and hatred of popery.²⁷ Indeed, despite disagreements over religious practice, there was, theologically speaking, a Calvinist consensus among most conformists.²⁸

²⁵ Many historians have warned against strict religious categorization in the early modern period: “the perception of an absolute, virtually insitutionalized division between Protestant and Catholic concerns is [as] misleading [as] the stark binary divisions between Calvinism and Arminianism, or Anglicanism and Puritanism” (Questier, *Conversion* 204). Cf. Shuger, *Habits* 6-8.

²⁶ Lake roots what he calls “a limited or restricted conformity” in a “strategy to accommodate the dictates of the puritan conscience to the realities of an unreformed Church and liturgy” (“Moving the Goal Posts?” 180).

²⁷ Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?*, discusses the 1570s debates between Bishop John Whitgift and presbyterian Thomas Cartwright over the state and condition of the visible church, the relationship between the visible and invisible church, the monarch’s ecclesiastical function, and the *jure divino* status of bishops and monarchs. For more on the visible/invisible church and its apparent role in the split between Laudians and Calvinists, see Milton, “The Church,” esp. 188-205. For the sentiments shared by Puritans and Calvinist conformists, Ferrell cites Collinson, *Religion of Protestants* and “Protestant Culture and the Cultural Revolution” in *Birthpangs of Protestant England (Government by Polemic* 4 and 180, n. 10). Also see Fincham 12-13.

²⁸ For the Calvinist consensus, see Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (79-91), Ferrell 3 and passim, and Milton, “The Church.” Once again, Peter White disagrees: “many clerics early in the reign of James I . . . are most appropriately described as ‘Anglicans.’ Although they were quite ready to accept an underlying unity of doctrine among the protestant churches, it did not tie them to a particular doctrine of predestination, and they cannot adequately be categorised as either ‘Calvinist’ or ‘Arminian’” (214). In response, Fincham calls the “Anglican” label “an anachronistic tag” when it includes all English protestants except “a few separatists” before 1642 (3-4).

Inclined toward Calvinist doctrine himself, James was eager to emphasize this consensus, and restricted conformists hoped further to influence James almost immediately after his coronation. Their first opportunity was the Hampton Court Conference of 1604. James called this conference to address supposed abuses in the English church, not to implement added reforms.²⁹ But to restricted conformists like John Reynolds, the Book of Common Prayer was an abuse; its ritualism and superstitious language could lead the flock astray. Others were better able to persuade James. On the second day of the conference, Bishop Richard Bancroft fell to his knees to entreat James to have prayer supercede preaching (Ferrell, “Kneeling” 70-71). Although a Calvinist, he linked prayer to conformity and preaching to “puritanism” (Ferrell 142-146 and 207). In the end, the conference reaffirmed church orthodoxy: the Book of Common Prayer, with its liturgical services, was retained, and subscription to the English Church continued to be mandatory.³⁰ It also endorsed James’s denunciation of English puritans as he understood them—“those who defied royal authority” (Fincham and Lake 27).³¹ Perhaps men like Reynolds expected more from a king whose love of sermons hinted at reformist sensibilities. And perhaps these same men still hoped that James would eventually mandate further reform.

²⁹ For a summary of the conference, which marked James’ public denunciation of English puritanism, see Fincham and Lake 25-27.

³⁰ The conference also laid the groundwork for the 1611 Authorized Bible (McCulloch, *Reformation* 497).

³¹ Cf. James 6-7.

Lancelot Andrewes and John Buckeridge, ceremonialists who held premier positions at court, stood in their way.³² Both bishops were savvy enough to conceal their anti-Calvinism. They understood that doctrinal consensus was for the most part a distraction (Ferrell 13-14).³³ Because Jacobean orthodoxy was “equal parts reformed doctrine and unreformed ecclesiology” (Ferrell 9), they could shrewdly sidestep hot button topics like double predestination, divine will, and the origins of the true church. Instead, they dwelt on ecclesiology, or religious practice.

Taking their cue from Hooker, Andrewes and Buckeridge stressed the “beauty of holiness” in the liturgy (what Ferrell calls “devotion to the scenic apparatus of religion” [23]).³⁴ In part because James himself preferred sermons to ritual, Andrewes and Buckeridge slowly, tactfully, and deliberately worked to replace sermon-centered services with iconic, sensory, and sacramental liturgies.³⁵ As these court clerics saw it, the English church suffered from spiritual deprivation; the laity were malnourished due to the preaching that had replaced Christocentric worship and its “outward bodily reverence” toward the sacrament, which “both expressed and helped to form or create internal spiritual reverence” (Lake, “Lancelot Andrewes” 128). Preaching had its place in the church, but not above prayer and the sacrament (125-26). Andrewes and

³² According to Ferrell, Andrewes was the source of Jacobean ceremonialist rhetoric, but Bancroft used similar rhetoric at the 1604 conference. During James’s reign, Andrewes moved from one bishopric to another: Chichester, Ely, and Winchester (Stevenson 138).

³³ Cf. Tyacke, “Lancelot Andrewes” 29.

³⁴ Andrewes uses the phrase in the November 5, 1617 Gunpowder Plot sermon at Whitehall: “God should be worshipped ‘in the beauty of holiness’. But ‘we stumble at the very threshold’, failing to make ‘adoration’ on entering church” (Tyacke, “Lancelot Andrewes” 30).

³⁵ Tyacke also points to this gradual pace; although Andrewes had strong opinions about communion tables at the start of his career, he did not preach about their “irreverent treatment” until 1617 (“Lancelot Andrewes” 28). For James’ affinity for sermons, see McCullough, *Sermons at Court* 121-141.

Buckeridge used the pulpit “to denigrate pulpit-based Protestantism,” to advocate a ceremonial ecclesiology, and to equate restricted conformists with loathed “Puritans” (Ferrell 15).

Andrewes and Buckeridge politicized their campaign by linking their ecclesiology to what James believed was an essential religious truth: the prince’s “divine authority to govern the church” (Fincham and Lake 31). When they declared that “outward ceremony” was “outward demonstration of the church’s unity” (Lake, “Lancelot Andrewes” 129), they insinuated that to be against outward ceremony was to be against the monarch no less than the church. During the Hampton Court Conference, restricted conformists were still, at each day’s end, conformists. By the 1620s, reformers who subscribed to but did not conform to the king’s ecclesiological canons—indeed, reformers with the same concerns as John Reynolds— were deemed misguided Puritans (Ferrell 5-7). While recusant papists and puritan separatists had always been on the fringes of James’s *via media*, now “puritan” could mean much more than blatant nonconformity and sectarianism.³⁶ Diverse calls for ecclesiological reform could now be construed as defiance of James and his church.

By linking their ecclesiology to James’s authority, Andrewes and Buckeridge contradicted the *adiaphora* tradition that underpinned Jacobean religious inclusivity.³⁷ This was the tradition that had enabled the clergy to retain elements of the Mass that scripture did not outlaw—ceremonial gestures and other “matters indifferent” left to the

³⁶ The term “Puritan” always insinuated disobedience to the monarch, but “when wielded by the king or his court preachers, the epithet had the power to indict even conformable, moderate Puritans in the Church of England as potential or actual sectaries” (Ferrell 16).

³⁷ Moderation and *adiaphora* “were the basic controversial elements of court sermon rhetoric” (Ferrell 17).

“worshipper’s discretion” (Ferrell, “Kneeling” 75-76).³⁸ It was as central to the Jacobean religious settlement as any Calvinist consensus was. It helped to mitigate opposition to the Book of Common Prayer and to church ceremony. Kneeling at communion had the most potential for controversy; by calling supplication adiaphoric, the faithful could kneel without spiritual repercussions. According to Calvinists, no human deed could effect salvation, and no gesture could empower the sacrament; any suggestion otherwise would be tantamount to Roman heresy. Even restricted conformists aiming for complete reform could tolerate “unreformed ceremonies” because they were not essential to salvation (Ferrell 13-14). In fact, because kneeling did not matter religiously, they could also stand or sit during communion.

But simply for the sake of political uniformity, churchgoers were expected to kneel at the Sacrament, even though the *adiaphora* tradition ought to have allowed them to abstain (and some certainly did).³⁹ James’s rationale for this call to uniformity initially had nothing to do with the state of the Eucharist or with salvation. In his 1599 *Basilikon Doron*, James advises his son, Prince Henry (and, as the “father” of England, all his subjects) “to discern betwixt points of salvation and indifferent things, betwixt substance and ceremonies; and betwixt the expresse commandement and will of God in his word, and the invention or ordinance of man . . . [A]ll that is necessarie for salvation is contained in the Scripture . . . [A]s for all other things not contained in the scripture, spare not to use or alter them, as the necessitie of the time shall require” (17). For an

³⁸ Cf. Lake, “Lancelot Andrewes” 113.

³⁹ An anecdote about puritan John Burgess, rector of Waddesdon, is a case in point. When pressed in 1604 not merely to subscribe to the official canon, but to implement the ceremonies it endorsed, Burgess said, “[it] seemeth a charge of more weight than an indifferent ceremony should bear” (Lake, “Moving the Goal Posts” 186).

absolutist monarch with divine authority, then, supplication during communion reaffirmed allegiance to the Crown.⁴⁰ And radical Protestants understood this well. John Robinson spoke for all separatists when he scoffed at *adiaphora*. For him, “there are no *adiaphora*, no things indifferent; either rite and ceremony conform to God’s will or they do not” (Shuger, *Habits* 124). So much for James’s religious authority; if Scripture holds that the official communion service is superstitious (which, for Robinson, it did), then the king and his subjects must alter it.

In part because of Andrewes and Buckeridge and in part because of his commitment to absolutism, James grew more impatient with this line of thinking, eventually ignored the *adiaphora* tradition, and lent his voice to ceremonialist rhetoric: the rites and ceremonies of the Jacobean church are willed by God. Prior to 1619, James was concerned with religious uniformity and political order, but from that year on, kneeling really mattered to him. It began to serve both a political and a spiritual function.⁴¹ He may not have professed a belief in transubstantiation or a particular real presence, but by siding with known ceremonialists, he “resacralized” a central church ceremony (Ferrell 160). For better and for worse, communion regained some of the iconic significance that it may have lost during the 16th century. Perhaps that was Andrewes and Buckeridge’s intention all along. Persuaded by the political implications

⁴⁰ For James’s absolutism, see Shuger, *Habits* 153-57. Cf. James’s 1598 *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (*Political Works* 53-69).

⁴¹ See Ferrell 163-65 and “Kneeling” 86-88. James’s most vehement defense of kneeling occurs in his 1619 treatise, *A Meditation upon the 27th, 28th, and 29th Verses of the 27th Chapter of Saint Matthew, or, A Pattern for a King’s Inauguration* (Ferrell 163). Shuger also notes that James, like Andrewes, “wanted . . . to ground society in the divine, to reconnect visible institutions with sacred order, and to transform political relations—understood as relations based on coercion and rights, force and law—into quasi-religious ones, where power would be both utterly absolute and wholly benevolent” (*Habits* 157). Perhaps James desired to sacralize visible institutions from 1603 on; but according to Ferrell, it was Andrewes and Buckeridge who persuaded James to politicize and to resacralize kneeling at communion.

of their ceremonial ecclesiology, James was ready to contribute rhetoric that would later undergird Laudian policy and alienate moderate reformers in Caroline England.⁴²

In short, the ceremonialists exploited James's *via media* policy. Their own *via media* was in actuality "a splendid rhetorical caricature," a "propagandistic strategy," and a tendentious call for moderation that meant to silence and ostracize the moderate Puritans who sought to reform Jacobean ecclesiology (Ferrell 7 and 9). More sacramental than reformist, their *via media* represented a concerted shift to the right. Andrewes and Buckeridge castigated reform by "puritanizing" reformers who resisted liturgical splendor and ceremonial gesture. They recognized that "moderation" itself was up for grabs. Moderate Puritans construed it as "royal and episcopal toleration of some kinds of conscientious nonconformity" (Ferrell 5). Ceremonialists wanted it to mean "sacramental conformity as an act of loyalty to the royal supremacy" (Ferrell 5). While initially, at least, James appears to have been reluctant to damage what may have been only the semblance of religious uniformity (Fincham and Lake 25-36), by 1619, he committed himself to ceremonialist "moderation."⁴³ Those conformists who strove for further church reformation found themselves on the outside looking in.

The divisive and rightward tendencies of this *via media* were uncongenial to London's playwrights. Peter Lake and Michael Questier have examined "cheap print and cheap thrills," popular narratives and performances pitched to a surprisingly hybrid as

⁴² Rhetoric, Ferrell contends, "constructed the stereotype of 'Puritanism' that destroyed the political cohesion of the early Stuart Church" (5).

⁴³ "James had available to him two coherent alternatives to his policy of conciliating moderate puritans and papists, but throughout his reign chose not to adopt either and thereby forfeit the unity he had so laboriously constructed" (Fincham and Lake 32). Moderate papists seem to include anti-Calvinists and ceremonialists here.

opposed to polarized audience. “[T]he denizens of the popular stage and of Grub street were engaged in a struggle with the godly clergy both for the same audience or at least for massively overlapping audiences and for great swathes of the same cultural, moral and intellectual terrain” (xxxix). These “denizens” of the marketplace had agendas markedly different from James’s sacramentalist clerics; attention to a heterogeneous consumer-base demanded a considerably more tolerant approach. So, vendors spun “a complex, interconnected and gendered web of narrative conventions, images and tropes that allowed them [consumers] to confront and control, to scare themselves with and reassure themselves about, some of the most threatening aspects of their social, religious and political worlds” (xxv). Popular murder and plague pamphlets, sermons, satirical plays, tragedies, and comedies give

the impression of a certain cultural and religious indeterminacy and instability; a situation in which the multifarious Christian and sub-Christian stuff left strewn across the English cultural landscape by what Christopher Haigh quite rightly insists on calling the English reformation enabled a number of different groups, of ideological factions and fractions (catholic as well as protestant), as well as an almost entirely commercially motivated pamphlet press and popular drama, to make pitches for the attention, allegiance and money of a number of overlapping, socially and culturally heterogeneous (i.e. ‘popular’) audiences. It was a situation in which at different times, on different issues, in different political and polemical circumstances, the same people might react positively to what were, in formal terms, radically different, indeed, on occasion, mutually incompatible messages. (713)

This picture of Jacobean religious culture—more diffuse than oppositional—distinguishes the *via* of the marketplace (and of the theater) from those at Court. Andrewes orchestrated a decisive move toward ceremonialism and political conformity. But commercial writers and printers did their best to accommodate mutually exclusive

theological *and* ecclesiological sentiments. Rather than shift the center to the right, they set out to broaden the center.

The Virgin Martir bears witness to this distinction between the tendentious *viae mediae* of the court and the fantasized *via media* of the marketplace. Like some of the clerics at Paul's Cross and Whitehall, Dekker and Massinger generalized Christian doctrine and sidestepped theological disputes. But because their dramaturgy entailed religious spectacle (and ceremonialism to boot), they had to find ways to stage ecclesiological controversy without alienating their patrons. Unsurprisingly, they traded on the *adiaphora* tradition to the extent that it could lessen differences over devotion, ritual, and ceremony. Luckily for them, kneeling was not required of theatergoers. And yet, Dekker and Massinger well knew that ceremonial gestures in playhouses like the Red Bull could provoke hostile responses.⁴⁴ This in itself (beyond the Master of the Revels' censoring pen) may explain the paucity of Jacobean religious plays like *The Virgin Martir*. It also may explain why Dekker and Massinger rely so obviously on the *adiaphora* tradition.

When the soldier Antoninus meets his beloved Dorothea for the first time, we get to see how *adiaphora* enables the theater's *via media* fantasy. First, the devil Harpax stokes fear about her Christianity:

The bloudlesse Dorothea...in prayer
And meditation (mocking all your gods)
Drinkes up her ruby colour, yet Antoninus
Playes the Endymion to this pale fac'd Moone,
Courts her, seekes to catch her eyes. (2.2.43-47)

⁴⁴ Gasper claims that the Red Bull "had for years specialized in putting on militant Protestant plays" (*The Dragon* 140); ceremonial stagecraft certainly would have served other purposes.

She only has to “[f]all on his bosome, and be fir’d with love” to “blast” his soul, “[m]aking it foule like hers” (2.2.50 and 63-64). But when they meet, she prays for his salvation: “Can I, with wearing out my knees before him [God] / Get you but be his servant, you shall boast / Y’are equall to a King” (2.3.88-90). Dorothea, always the perfect Christian, kneels to God in prayer (earlier, her guardian Angelo fondly recounts her devotion before an altar [2.1.185-87]). But when Antoninus falls before her (“on my knees I beg it, / Pitty me wondrous maid” [2.3.93-94]), Dorothea cautions, “kneel not Sir *to me*” (2.3.95, my emphasis). Even Calvinist theatergoers nonplussed by her kneeling and her attempts to influence divine will (she will “get” Antoninus to obey God) would choose Dorothea over Antoninus. What matters is her resilient Christian faith, not her supplication. Whatever religious gesture she performs, she performs it as a Christian and thereby signals piety and godliness. The same gesture, when performed by a pagan, is heretical because pagans are pagan. This circular logic frequently recurs; when Antoninus converts to Christianity, he kneels to Dorothea and kisses her hand (4.3.163-65). Antoninus’s devotional acts prove irrelevant; he is either Christian or pagan. Just this tautology lies at the heart of the play’s *via media*, which joins all Christians together, no matter their differences over things indifferent.

For a religious play like *The Virgin Martir* to affect an audience, its theatricality of holiness must include the splendors of ceremony. Yet, even as a thing indifferent, such displays could alienate Calvinist audience members. *Adiaphora* “begged the question of where the line between essential and inessential was to be drawn” (Gregory 344). No dramatists could predict or control how audience members would react to evocative religious performances. Perhaps this uncertainty explains why Angelo only

refers to Dorothea's eucharistic devotion, while her actual, private supplication before an altar occurs off-stage. Walking a tightrope, Dekker and Massinger use *adiaphora* to establish an unobjectionable Christian/pagan binary, only to disrupt that binary when they parallel pagan and Christian ecclesiology. This would not have sat well with some theatergoers. Nonetheless, while the playwrights sometimes expose simplistic religious mediations as improbable, the play's *via media* is capacious enough for Dorothea—indeed all the play's Christians—to practice their faith in various, almost conflicting ways. The play's varieties of Christian devotion are coextensive but not entirely reconcilable; only by the most generous standards are they equally Christian. It is as if Dekker and Massinger expect their *via media* to succeed in spite of itself.

This paradoxicality may help to explain the divergent interpretations of the play's religion and politics over the past few decades. Julia Gasper rejects any association between the play and the Catholic, *tragedia sacra* tradition of early modern Spain; Monta and Karen Bamford follow suit.⁴⁵ Yet, Jane Degenhardt off-handedly tags the martyrdoms “Catholic” before she explores the anxieties surrounding “turning Turk” in early modern Europe (83). And Erin Kelly argues that the play is ecumenical, that like the Jacobean church, it attempts to unite Protestants and Catholics (181, 200). But rather than join all subjects under the banner of tolerance and pluralism, every putative *via media* aimed to conform some and ostracize others. The play's ecumenism is an invention that the playwrights often espouse, but sometimes expose: audiences were

⁴⁵ For *tragedia sacra* drama, see Clubb. Bamford contends that “there is nothing in [the play] to suggest Catholicism” (46).

invited to participate in and to question, to imagine and to discount, a Christianity at once reformed and ceremonial.⁴⁶

One way to get beyond disagreement over the play's religious affiliation is to break down the Protestant/godly—Catholic/papist binary. Protestantism itself denotes more than the single sect we see in Foxe (Gregory 184-85), and it answered to a wide variety of doctrines.⁴⁷ Papism is just as various. James held that his church agreed with the Roman church on essential articles of faith, and he distinguished between radical and moderate papists—those who insisted upon papal supremacy and those who did not (Fincham and Lake 28-29). If *The Virgin Martir* is hard to pin down, it is because its vague doctrines, inconsistent reforms, and hybrid ecclesiology cherry-pick elements of official Jacobean Christianity, itself an amalgam of tradition and reform.

Iconoclasm, Ceremonies, and the Reform of Paganism in *The Virgin Martir*

The play's on-again, off-again iconoclastic tendencies border on the preposterous. When Theophilus's daughters try to convert Dorothea, she mocks their warning "not [to] tempt / Our powerful gods" (3.1.115): "Which of your powerfull gods, / Your gold, your silver, brasse, or woodden ones? (116-17). Like Robert Burton, she renounces Venus the whore, Jupiter the adulterer, not to mention Apollo, Saturn, and thousands more (138-

⁴⁶ According to Jeffrey Knapp, early modern English playwrights endorsed an inclusive theater tradition to counter antitheatricalists' diatribes against "theater people" as ungodly: "protheatricalists were virtually compelled to emphasize just how open Christ intended his church to be" (14). Cf. 15, 27-38. If *The Virgin Martir* appears an example of such theater, then it does so because of its ties to the Jacobean religious settlement.

⁴⁷ Martyrologists did not "label their martyrs in denominational terms. Rather, they used generic phrases such as 'martyr of God,' 'devout martyr and witness of Christ,' 'dear man and confessor of evangelical truth,' and 'true martyrs of the Lord' (Gregory 184). "Even in the face of significant intra-Protestant or intra-Catholic fissures, most Protestant and Catholic martyrologists are reluctant to admit intra-faith divisions and instead labor to rally their co-religionists into an integrated opposition to a clearly demarcated religious Other" (Monta 2). Cf. Knott, *Discourses* 115.

61).⁴⁸ That Caliste and Christeta “worship / Their good deeds in their Images” is just as idolatrous (161-62). To warn them further against putting “trust in drosse” (186), Dorothea recounts an Egyptian king’s conflicting responses to his golden Osiris (163-86). When the king defeated his enemies, he adored the idol; when thwarted, he forged the gold into a foot basin for his concubines. The sisters do not convert Dorothea; of course, she converts the sisters. But notice that she becomes an iconoclastic preacher when pagans force her hand.

This is not to say that *The Virgin Martir* unabashedly endorses iconoclastic reform. By specifying the idols that she renounces, Dorothea roots the scene in its ancient Roman context; unlike Burton, she does not explicitly associate pagans with “pseudo-Christians.”⁴⁹ When Caliste and Christeta return with Dorothea, Theophilus has incense prepared and bids Dorothea to “kneele down / And pay your vowes to Jupiter” (3.2.46-49). Naming Jupiter further problematizes the play’s critique of iconic, ceremonial religion; when the daughters defy their father, they “spet at,” “throw” and “spurn” pagan gods, not Christian icons (53). The play, then, has it both ways, giving us an iconoclast whom Calvin would commend and a Roman polytheism dissociated from Jacobean ceremonialism. To fantasize its middle way, the play pits Christian reform against pagan ceremony and Christian ceremony against pagan reform.

In curious moments, however, the play sets Christian reform against Christian ceremonialism as well. Consider Dorothea’s private worship in Act 2. Alone on stage

⁴⁸ Burton 3.326-327

⁴⁹ “Mars, Jupiter, Apollo, and Aesculapius have resigned their interest, names, and offices to St. George, St. Christopher, and a company of fictitious saints, Venus to the Lady of Loretto” (Burton 3.326-327). Monta parallels ancient to papal Rome, but the play does not allegorize as overtly as Dekker’s *The Whore of Babylon*, an obvious example of anti-Catholic drama.

for the first time, Dorothea and her guardian Angelo prefer bodily ecstasy to psychological reform. She asks her servant Angelo for “my booke and Taper” but revels in his theatrics:

Thy voice sends forth such musicke, that I never
Was ravisht with a more celestial sound[.]
Were every servant in the world like thee,
So full of goodness, Angels would come downe
To dwell with us. (2.1.175-79)

Angelo returns the favor:

When at your prayers you kneel before the Altar,
Me thinkes I'm singing with some Quire in Heaven (185-87)

Dorothea and Angelo's experiences of grace—theatrical and sensuous—momentarily supplant the “booke and Taper,” representations of the *sola scriptura* and *sola spiritus* mantras of reform that undergird her iconoclasm in Act 3. As this scene unfolds, theatergoers are left asking how this Christian saint can represent inclusive Christianity when her ecclesiological preferences are so aligned with Jacobean ceremonialism, which vexed conformist and non-conformist reformers alike. It is not until her execution that the play fully accommodates Christian reform and Christian ceremonialism. But before I turn to her martyrdom, as well as to its ties to Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, I will examine further the *via media* fantasy evident in Dorothea's private ceremonialism, in her public reforms, and in the pagan responses to her Christianity.

Dorothea's altar, an emphatic extension of Jacobean ceremonialism, is a far cry from Calvinist reform. During the Edwardian reformation, the altar was the centerpiece of the corrupt Roman church, whereas the table, in its simplicity and functionality, guided

the godly away from superstition.⁵⁰ It may be that the ever-intensifying anti-Puritan rhetoric of Jacobean England and the growing influence of ceremonialists like Andrewes, Buckeridge, and Laud help to explain Dorothea's supplication at an *altar* and her predilection for sensory devotion in Act 2. Indeed, her ceremonial piety recalls Andrewes's ideal chapel, wherein a complete liturgy appealed "to the sense as well as to the soul" (Phillips 154). "[A] holy table covered with an embroidered carpet, candlesticks, sacred vessels, incense, copes and in time, images" would stir the external worship "necessary and fitting for the dignity of God and the needs of man" (154, 148). It would "beautify the house of the Lord" (Ezra 7:27).⁵¹

Did Dorothea's unseen altar conjure in the minds of playgoers anything like this? Perhaps. Her sacramental devotion certainly wins Angelo's admiration. But then what did Red Bull playgoers make of the pagan ritual shown in Act 3? Here, in a cloud of incense, the reformist Dorothea encourages Caliste and Christeta to profane the idol of Jupiter, but the smell must have triggered what Jonathan Gil Harris calls "untimely" or "polychronic" memories—memories that blend together palimpsestically, where "past and present coincide with each other" (467). As in other plays, incense here signals paganism; a priest of Jupiter brings in the censer.⁵² But the scent may also evoke memories of papist ceremonies, or of Jacobean services and festivals in which

⁵⁰ See Foxe's description of Bishop Nicholas Ridley's replacement of altars with tables during the Edwardian reformation (2.1519-20). Cf. Diehl, *Staging Reform* 107 and Davies 204 and 355-65.

⁵¹ Cited in Ferrell 44. Cf. Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Piety* and Lake, *Anglicans* 167-173. "Hooker was able to . . . attribute to ceremony and ritual a symbolic charge, religious significance and practical efficacy which most of his contemporaries (conformists as well as puritans) could and would not concede. This was a new way to bring value to the ceremonies of the English church (feasts and holy days), as they strengthened 'the *celestial impressions* in the minds of men' (167, my emphasis).

⁵² Harris lists Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall*, Shakespeare and Fletcher's *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (483-84).

frankincense continued to burn. Despite a Calvinist animus against incense, it was never formally banned even in the heyday of the English Reformation (Harris 482 and Atchley 330). By 1622, incense had begun to return to the minds, if not the prayer services, of early modern Londoners; Lancelot Andrewes preached about its function in the early church and used it in his private chapel.⁵³ So when the scent fills the air in Act 3, it neither simply reinforces collective disapproval of superstitious ritual nor suggests the “confusion and loss” that Harris believes was “generated” by the Reformation (483). Harris notices a “departure of God’s sweet-scented presence from the sphere of dramatic representation” (483-84); perhaps Dorothea’s piety in 2.1 and her reform in 3.2 signal its return.

If this smell lingered in later scenes, its “polychronic ambivalence” (485) would have applied to the drama’s chronology as well as to the culture’s. The incense that burns in Act 3 could remain in Acts 4 and 5, so that by the time Theophilus converts to Christianity, the smell of incense would coincide with widely disparate moments in the play, both pagan and Christian. But even in Act 3 alone, incense would have triggered incompatible memories. That which fogged the stage with the lure of the devil also rose to the rafters as prayers to God. That which purged the theater of noxious fumes also might have reminded audiences of plague, festivals, official ceremonies, and furtive papistry. Incense’s overdetermination undermines any easy pagan/Christian binary. It

⁵³ Tyacke, “Lancelot Andrewes” 25-27. Cf. Andrewes, *The Works* 5.324:

In the time of the Law, a special part of the service which the people performed to God was the offering up of incense, and therefore the Prophet compared the prayer to incense [Ps. 141.2]. And it is most fitly resembled to incense, for the use of incense was to sweeten those places which are unsavoury; even so the wicked imaginations and unchaste thoughts of our hearts, which yield a stinking smell in the nostrils of God, are sweetened by no other means than by prayer; and therefore to shew how the one is resembles by the other, it is said that while the incense was burning, the people were without upon their knees in prayer.

recalls reform *and* ceremony; true Christians reject visual and olfactory superstitions, but the true church might yet smell and appear divine.

The play traffics in the same untenable distinction between superstition and true religion that concerned Robert Burton. When he parallels pagan superstition with “pseudo”-Christianity in his list of causes for religious melancholy (3.321-68), he includes both sectarianism *and* Jacobean ceremonialism in his definition of false Christianity: “There is superstition in our prayers, often in our hearing of sermons, bitter contentions, invectives, persecutions, strange conceits, besides diversity of opinions, schisms, factions, etc.” (3.324).⁵⁴ It becomes nearly impossible to tell what religious practices are not superstitious: “For where God hath a temple, the devil will have a chapel: where God hath sacrifices, the devil will have his oblations: where God hath ceremonies, the devil will have his traditions: where there is any religion, the devil will plant superstition” (3.321). Burton makes little distinction here; temples and chapels are almost interchangeable, as are ceremonies and traditions. Later he remarks, “What strange sacraments, like ours of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, what goodly temples, priests, sacrifices they had in America, when the Spaniards first landed there . . . and how the devil imitated the Ark and the children of Israel’s coming out of Egypt” (3.326). For Burton, superstition lurks even in official sacraments. For Dekker and Massinger,

⁵⁴ For Burton’s concern over ceremonies, rituals, and imagery, see his poetic description of *The Anatomy* frontispiece, which pictures a superstitious man among six other melancholics:

Beneath them kneeling on his knee,
A Superstitious man you see:
He fasts, prays, on his idol fixt,
Tormented hope and fear betwixt:
For hell perhaps he takes more pain,
Than thou doest heaven itself to gain.
Alas poor soul, I pity thee,
What stars incline thee so to be? (8)

At beads, the supplicating man imagines a crucifix along with three other quasi-religious symbols.

superstition overlaps with true religion, but is nonetheless distinguishable from it. Both iconic and iconoclastic, the play nods in the direction of Jacobean conformity in 3.2 as it does in 2.1, when it has Dorothea intending to set down “in Golden letters . . . that day / Which gave thee [Angelo] to me” (2.1.191-93). A blend of word and image, script and icon, her mystical testimony will, in Hooker’s terms, make a “celestial impression,” a gilded inscription that will memorialize her conversion. She inscribes herself and her angel into the saint-day calendar, if not the litany book. Because she is an advocate of reform and of ceremonialism, Dorothea would have it that a Christian could both reform one iconic liturgy (Jupiter’s temple) and participate in another.

Even as *The Virgin Martir* draws analogies between Christian and pagan practices, it would have us believe that we can differentiate between ignorant, pagan delusion and Dorothea’s holy theatricality. Because Christian faith is set in opposition to pagan hedonism, Christian ceremonialism, iconography, and reform can remain pure.⁵⁵ When the fools Hircius and Spungius resolve to be “halfe Pagans and halfe Christians,” “to have an Infidels heart, / Though in shew I carry a Christians face” (2.1.41, 47-48), to be pagan from “cod-piece downward” (74), their *pagan* hedonism and hypocrisy are at fault. By setting Christianity against paganism, Dekker and Massinger can minimize the tensions between Christian reform and Christian ceremony.

But is this pagan/Christian binary clear enough to legitimize Dorothea’s affective and ceremonial spirituality? If not, then blame the pagan Antoninus. When saintly beauty enraptures this soldier, sensuous, lyrical, Christian piety becomes as suspect as

⁵⁵ Bamford examines the relationship between the sexual and spiritual compromises of Theophilus’ pagan daughters, Caliste and Christeta: “Dorothea castigates the sisters in terms that explicitly link pagan worship with sexual license” (47).

superstition. I have already noted how Dorothea chastises Antoninus for his idolatry—“kneel not Sir to me” (2.3.95). She tries, in Diehl’s terms, “to disrupt the devotional gaze.”⁵⁶ But to the play’s pagans, she remains Antoninus’s “Idoll” (2.3.11). Sapphirus is concerned that “a Midwife must deliver” his son Antoninus from a “deepe melancholy” inflicted by Dorothea and her religion (4.1.20, 14). He is plagued by idolatry even when she is not present: dreaming of Dorothea, he embraces her “airy form” in his slumber (4.1.28).⁵⁷ If Antoninus’ idolatry in 2.3 recalls Dorothea’s ecclesiology in 2.1, then the play gives voice to those reformers who believed that rituals and ceremonies, like idolatry, effeminized because they sensualized religious experience. According to the reformed body/spirit binary that Diehl highlights, any version of sensual worship can easily revert to idolatry and superstition. Among antitheatricalists and reformers alike, false religious practices were just as suspect as improper dress and behavior because religious practices were, as a matter of fact, gendered.⁵⁸ Robert Burton had a hard time pinning down true religion, but he had no trouble remarking that it “adds courage, boldness, and begets generous spirits” (3.320). Likewise, he contends that superstition increases melancholic humors.⁵⁹ He masculinizes true religion and effeminizes false worship. For Burton, not much else tells them apart. Burton never explicitly links

⁵⁶ Cf. Diehl, *Staging Reform* 26 and passim.

⁵⁷ For inner idolatry, see Perkins, *A Warning*, cited in Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts* 460. For religious melancholy, see Burton 3.325-26: working “by mediation of humors,” the devil conjures “a thousand several shapes, after divers fashions, with several engines” to afflict his victims with religious melancholy.

⁵⁸ For Stephen Gosson, theater “effeminized the mind” in part because of gender play (Levine 10). William Prynne warned that “the adoption of behaviors appropriate to the opposite sex will transform one into that sex . . . that action itself is constitutive, so much so that *even* that ‘valiant man of courage,’ the most masculine person in the culture, can be transformed” (Levine 44).

⁵⁹ For early modern humoral physiology and humoral differences between men and women, see Smith (16) and Paster (6-11, esp. 8).

ceremonialism to superstition or effeminization, but his tome bears witness to a strain of the English Reformation that masculinized piety and that correlated religious superstition with femininity, sensuous piety with debilitation.⁶⁰

But in the play, paganism, iconophobia, and gynephobia all derive from superstition. Consider Sapritius:

She's a Witch,
A sorceresse, Theophilus, my sonne
Is charm'd by her enticing eyes, and like
An image made of waxe, her beames of beauty
Melt him to nothing; all my hopes in him,
And all his gotten honours finde their grave
In his strange dotage on her. (3.1.2-8)

Oddly enough, it is the idolatrous villain who sounds like an iconoclastic reformist. One would expect his paganism to go hand in hand with iconophilia, not iconophobia.

Hypocrisy aside, Sapritius sounds nothing like a generic Catholic tyrant. Earlier, audiences saw Dorothea at prayer, a dramatic icon of sainthood; now, according to Sapritius, her religious beauty imperils both Antoninus and all others in attendance. She may not be threatened by pagan idols, but he fears her precisely because he believes in the power of idols. His iconoclastic drive belies his own idolatry. Unlike Dorothea, Sapritius belongs with those “iconoclasts [who] fear what they love, destroy what they desire” (Diehl, *Staging Reform* 163).⁶¹

To discredit Sapritius' iconophobia, the play proposes an alternative cause of religious effeminization: it is self-generated. Antoninus proclaims to Artemia, “nor do I

⁶⁰ For the masculinization of piety, see Diehl, *Staging Reform* 172 and Eire 315.

⁶¹ Sapritius also recalls antitheatricalists: “Perhaps we may most plausibly reckon ...[that] a number of antitheatrical writers ... betray in their very rhetoric the fact that the theater exerts a primitive and powerful pull on them, which they must make it part of their program as pamphleteers to deny and to exorcise, being unable to acknowledge it openly” (Barish 227).

kneel / To keep a wretched life of mine from ruine” but to “preserve this temple [Dorothea] (builded faire as yours is) / And Caesar never went in greater triumph / Then I shall to the scaffold” (2.3.157-59). By this point in the play, Antoninus’s infatuation has diminished his manhood. In an attempt to remasculinize himself, he predicates his heroism upon the purity and preservation of his idol, Dorothea’s body. Earlier, Dorothea insisted that Antoninus “kneel not” to her; now, he kneels as if he can protect her with a religious gesture.

When Artemia scoffs at Antoninus’s defiance and orders Dorothea to “go cursing” with him to their deaths (2.3.158-60), Dorothea insists on playing the martyr her way. She will not be a voiceless pawn in Artemia’s game of jealous spite, nor will she be Antoninus’s temple:

No, but pittying
 (For my part, I) that you loose ten times more
 By torturing me, than I that dare your tortures,
 Through all the army of my sinnes, I have even
 Labord to breake, and cope with death to the face,
 The visage of the hangman frights not me;
 The sight of whips, rockes, gibbets, axes, fires
 Are scaffoldings, by which my soule climbs up
 To our eternal habitation. (2.3.161-69)

She seeks heaven’s “scaffoldings,” torture instruments that figure into her theatrical self (“For my part, I”). Because her dismemberment will leave her godliness whole, she can grant herself a perseverance and courage never afforded to actual idols. And because tools that can disfigure an idol build her a way to God, she cannot be an idol. She is not “drosse,” but an icon whom audiences should behold without fear. When she calls for her own death, she signals that it will be iconic, not iconoclastic, that it will theatricalize and sensualize her religious experience.

Sapritius has other plans. In Act 4, he drags Dorothea on stage by the hair and commands Antoninus to

make her thy Whore,
Thy health lies heere, if she deny to give it,
Force it, imagine thou assaultst a towne,
Weake wall, to't, tis thine own, beat but this downe. (4.1.75-78)

With this sadistic battlecry for rape, Sapritius debases the iconoclasm that Diehl argues influenced early modern drama. He would transform “one of the most powerful and beloved images of the Middle Ages—the idealized, holy woman—into a whore” (Diehl, *Staging Reform* 170).⁶² Perhaps Sapritius “wants to rape her by proxy” (Bamford 50), but his iconophobia also leads to his bizarre resolution: Antoninus the “midwife” must rape Dorothea to remasculinize himself and to desecrate his idol.

Everyone but Sapritius realizes that such iconoclasm is damning and enfeebling, not salvific and restorative. When a British slave is the last to resist, the play pits one form of masculinity against another in order to reject Sapritius’s iconophobia:

SAPRITIUS Thou shalt then be no slave, for I will set thee
Upon a peece of worke is fit for man,
Brave for a Brittain, drag that Thing aside
And ravish her.
SLAVE And ravish her! Is this your manly service,
A Divell scornes to doo't, tis for a beast,
A villaine, not a man. (4.1.147-53)

Here, rape is an iconoclastic act, a purging ritual that will dispel Antoninus’ infatuation, a “peece of work” “fit for man.”⁶³ But the slave, a clear stand-in for English theatergoers

⁶² Cf. Diehl, *Staging Reform* 164: “women are identified as potential idols because the reformers teach that whatever entices the eyes, beguiles or enchants the mind, fires the imagination, or captivates the heart is idolatrous, and according to Renaissance theories of eros, women do all these things.”

⁶³ Cf. Diehl, *Staging Reform* 162: “Because they [iconoclasts] have constructed those images as seductive women, they symbolically kill women they believe are polluted in ritual acts of purification.”

(if for no other reason because he is a “Brittaine”), challenges the value of such a “service”; to him, iconoclastic rape is neither masculinizing nor religious. The slave intimates that Dorothea, a living icon of true religion, deserves admiration, not defilement. Instead, Sapritius objectifies and idolizes the woman whom he would brutalize. The play, then, vilifies, rather than validates, the assault on her holy theatricality. True Christian reformers, the play suggests, would not threaten Dorothea, just as they would not fear her affective piety or religious aesthetics. Rather, they would reform Sapritius’ obsessive iconophobia and gynephobia.

Unlike the Stuart dramas that “displayed, demystified, and destroyed” eroticized women (Diehl, *Staging Reform* 172-73), *The Virgin Martir* insists on Dorothea’s sensational holiness despite calls for iconoclastic reform. It endorses Dorothea’s ceremonialist theatrics even at moments of imminent iconoclasm and heightened eroticism. When Dorothea repels Antoninus’ predatory advances, she kneels:

O Kill me, [kneels]
And heaven will take it as a sacrifice,
But if you play the Ravisher, there is
A Hell to swallow you. (4.1.98-101)

Dorothea averts rape by kneeling. Like her devotion off-stage, her prophecy is demonstrably and effectively ceremonial; kneeling in prayer will open a trap door to hell and a gateway to heaven. Her ceremonial piety convinces Antoninus to spurn Sapritius’ suggestive provocations (“Let her swallow thee” [4.1.101]). Suddenly the chivalrous soldier “would not wound [her] honour,” for “pleasure[s] forc’d / Are unripe Apples, sowre, not worth the plucking” (101-06). He “abhorre[s]” Sapritius’ plot “as much as the blackest sinne / The villany of man did ever act” (107-08).

When Dorothea defuses the threat of rape, she sets one type of theater against another. Sapritius's theater, like Theophilus's, relies on a sadistic irradiation of Christian icons from the stage in favor of pagan idols. Inversely, Dorothea's theater is centered on the resilience of a pious, virgin, female icon, despite her reformist sensibilities. Not only does she set the stage for the more explicit and expressive iconography yet to come in Acts 4 and 5, but she also distinguishes idolatry from stageworthy iconography—a female saint kneeling in prayer.

As this unmistakable icon derails pagan iconoclasm, Antoninus's quandry (and the audience's) becomes as much about theater as it is about religion and desire. To choose his father's way would be to give final, violent expression to idolatry. To choose his own way is, simply and uninhibitedly, to idolize the appearance of holiness. To choose Dorothea's way is to be neither destructive nor infatuated. Rather, it is to be fascinated and uplifted by religious theater. When the play supplants the idol—"that Thing" that Sapritius wants to rape by proxy, that woman who Antoninus adores—for the icon—the suppliant female virgin—it makes its choice, and it encourages theatergoers to follow suit.

As if to dare those who follow, Dorothea nearly grants herself a salvific function. After Sapritius collapses in an apparent sign of divine retribution, she resuscitates him:

Heaven pardon you,
And if my wrongs from thence pull vengeance downe
(I can no myracles worke) yet from my soule
Pray to those powers I serve, he may recover. (4.1.176-79)

Dorothea's parenthetical disclaimer, "I can no myracles work," literalizes the play's approach to reform.⁶⁴ Not despite of, but alongside its most reformed moments—a call for the book and taper, the destruction of a pagan idol, and an assault against an idolized woman—the play endorses Jacobean ceremonialism. The play directs iconoclastic reform toward pagan rites and theatricalizes a sensuous devotion that antitheatricalists and radical reformers deemed effeminizing and idolatrous. By 4.3, Dorothea is no longer a prayerful, humble reformer; she has become a miracle worker after all. When Theophilus asks for signs of heaven, she responds:

Know thou tyrant
Thou agent for the divell thy great master
Though thou art most unworthy to taste of it,
I can and will. (110-13)

If this tyrant is the devil's agent, then she is God's intermediary. A saint in word and deed, Dorothea protests her limitations and asserts her power. Such ambivalence is at the heart of the play's appeal.

Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and the Miracle of Masculinization

If the religious female hero who kneels like a ceremonialist and intervenes like a saint exceeds the parameters of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, then Dekker and Massinger are not merely reenacting John Foxe's martyrology.⁶⁵ Foxe's alignment of

⁶⁴ Forty lines earlier, Dekker and Massinger parenthesize reformed theology just when they have Angelo recall a litany of saints: "Your zealous prayers and pious deeds first wonne me," Angelo professes to Dorothea, "(But 'twas by his command to whom you sent 'em) / To guide your steps." (135-37).

⁶⁵ For Gasper ("The Sources" 17-18), Monta (3, 197 and passim), and Myhill (14-17), Foxe's influence is a given. Leslie Oliver has noted the book's limited availability, but consider Collinson's qualification: "On the one hand, it can be demonstrated that such a large and expensive book, with restricted print runs in all its editions, cannot have been as widely promulgated as it has been conventional to suggest. But on the other the 'Book of Martyrs' generated many 'little foxes', slim, ephemeral, debased but culturally significant bastard sons of the majestic original" ("English Reformations" 34). Cf. Oliver 247-48. For the cultural importance of one of these abridged editions, Thomas Bright's *The Abridgement* (1589), see

“spiritual” religion and the plain speech of Protestants against the “corporal” religion and outlandish ceremonies of Roman Catholics (Knott, *Discourses*, 13 and 73)—problematic and unsettled though that alignment may have been—sorted poorly with Jacobean ecclesiology. Moreover, it does not appear to have been lost on Dekker and Massinger that Foxe’s approach to the miraculous was altogether qualified, ambiguous, even inconsistent. In the 1563 edition of *Actes and Monuments*, faithful supporters rummaged through martyrs’ ashes for skeletal relics (Gregory 175). “[A] marvellous white cross” appeared on the chest of one martyr from Brentford, Essex, who “desired of God some token to be given whereby the people might know that they died in the right” ([1563] 1670).⁶⁶ Such anecdotes recall the abusive practices of indulgences, intercessions, and litanies.

It is no surprise that Foxe suppressed such accounts in later editions.⁶⁷ Still, the miracles that he retained must have alarmed reformers. Thomas Cranmer’s heart lay intact after execution, like Zwingli’s had a few years earlier (Foxe 1.1003). Foxe lambasts Henry III’s wife, Elinor, for believing that a miracle cured a dissembling man of blindness, only to document “an other maner of myracle sounding more nere the truth, and so much the more likely, for that it served to the conversion unto Christian faith: to which use properly, all true miracles do appertayne”: namely, a saracen’s conversion, inspired by a baptism that transforms an infant “overgrown and all rough with hair, lyke

Lander 81-89. In part because of the edition’s accessibility, in part because of Bright’s patron, Sir Francis Walsingham, *The Abridgement* fostered a “protestant, English triumphalism” (83).

⁶⁶ Cited in Freeman, “*Imitatio Christi*” 41.

⁶⁷ Gregory 175: “Foxe toned down [such passages] in 1570, perhaps prompted by others’ objections. The original formulation, it would seem, had conceded too much to Catholic claims about the ancient origins of such practices.” Cf. Freeman “*Imitatio Christi*” 41.

to the skin or a Bear” into one “as fayre and smooth skynned, as any other” (1.440). Foxe may have “downplay[ed] visible intrusions of the supernatural” (Knott, “Foxe” 726), but he did not avoid miracles.⁶⁸ And they were not limited to what Knott calls “God’s supportive and comforting presence in the face of death” (724).⁶⁹ Foxe would have adamantly opposed anything akin to Andrewes’ ideal chapel, and he went to great lengths to discredit the marvels of medieval hagiographies. But he did not entirely forgo the miraculous, especially when it reinforced the heroism of Protestant martyrs.⁷⁰ If Dorothea “can and will” manifest the splendors of heaven, she could also include herself among the early Christian martyrs in Foxe’s catalog.

Still more to the point of *The Virgin Martir*, Foxe used gendered terms to describe and evaluate the miraculous in his martyrology. In his 1583 edition, Foxe patently reforms superstitious legends.⁷¹ Disturbed by “gross fables” of a corrupt church, he truncates the saint tales “without the admixture of all these Abbeylike additions of Monkish miracles, wherwith they were wont to paint out the glory of such saintes to the moste, by whose offerings they were accustomed to receave most advantage” ([1583]

⁶⁸ “Foxe’s injunctions suggest a wary acceptance of miracles rather than an automatic rejection of them” (Freeman, “Texts,” 37).

⁶⁹ Cf. Knott, “Foxe” 723: “Foxe could accept the seemingly miraculous tolerance of pain where he could not the appearance of angels and other manifestations of the supernatural or the creation of a shrine for the veneration of [a martyr’s] bones, because he could understand it as evidence of a fortitude made possible by the sustaining power of God.” Nonetheless, Knott notices “[t]he mixture of skepticism and attraction with which Foxe responded to accounts of miracles associated with martyrs,” claiming that it “reflects unresolved tensions between his own sense of martyrdom and that found in Eusebius and other early sources” (*Discourses* 42).

⁷⁰ Diehl assumes the opposite: “Foxe omits from his narratives of martyrdom any references to wondrous miracles or efficacious relics” (*Staging Reform* 44). See Freeman, “*Imitatio Christi*” 36: although there was “an increasing sensitivity to the possibility of fraudulent miracles,” “it is important to note that miracles still continued to be a feature of both Protestant and Catholic hagiographies and martyrologies.” Cf. Monta 54-65 and Collinson, “English Reformations” 35.

⁷¹ Cf. Knott, “Foxe” 725 and Gasper “Sources” 18.

89). Although Foxe sets out to purge medieval hagiographies, he retains just enough to legitimize and masculinize virgin martyrs like St. Agnes. He claims to prefer Prudentius's *Liber Peristephanon* to Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* ([1583] 94), but Prudentius's Agnes compares execution to penetration:

This lover, this one at last, I confess it, pleases me.
I shall meet his eager steps half-way
And not put off his hot desires.
I shall welcome the whole length of his blade into my bosom,
Drawing the sword-blow to the depths of my breast.
(*Peristephanon* 14.74-78)⁷²

That Foxe refuses to “eroticiz[e] the executioner’s sword” is to be expected (Delany 110). His Agnes commends the executioner for his soldierly strength, rather than one “more feable, weake, and faynt . . . or els any other yong man sweetly enbalmed, and wearing gaye apparell that might destroy me with funerall shame” ([1583] 95). Foxe excises blatantly superstitious, feminizing material: he ignores the legend of Agnes’s hair, growing to hide her naked body from view at a brothel (*Golden Legend* sig. Gii^v).⁷³ He would rather document a miracle that demonstrates God’s wrath and Agnes’s godliness. When a man with “uncircumcised eyes” gazes at her naked body, a “flame of fire” engulfs him, as if punishing him for eroticizing and idolizing her with his gaze. “By the prayer of Agnes,” he is restored ([1583] 94-95). Foxe does not even mind her remedial intercession, which Dorothea echoes in *The Virgin Martir* when she prays for Sapritius (4.1.176-79). Such miracles do not square with reform, but they square with masculine

⁷² Sheila Delany calls attention to the erotic conceit here (110). For a brief discussion of Foxe and *Liber Peristephanon*, see Knott, *Discourses* 42-44. Foxe does not narrate S. Dorothy’s legend.

⁷³ “Some writers make of her a long discourse,” Foxe writes of Agnes, “more in my judgement then necessary, reciting diverse and sundry straunge miracles by her done in the process of her history, which partly for tediousness, partly for the doubtfulness of the author . . . and partly for the straungeness and incredibilitie therof I omit, being satisfied with that which Prudentius, briefly writeth of her” (Foxe [1583] 94).

deportment. Miracles have not ceased for Foxe, they have been masculinized. As for martyrdom, it and masculinity prove mutually reinforcing.

Generally speaking, miracles gained Foxe's endorsement if they (1) in some way differed from corrupt, medieval legends (2) led to conversion and (3) emphasized the manliness of the godly. If a true miracle in *Actes and Monuments* "deriv[es] from the flesh's subjugation to religious imperatives" (Monta 55), and if English reformers correlated the flesh, idolatry, and femininity (Diehl, *Staging Reform* 160), it follows that miracles—and by extention, any sign of holiness—would be expressed in masculine terms. It is not simply that martyrs "play the man" at the stake.⁷⁴ Masculinity, in all its performative, theatrical, and embodied aspects, is Foxe's touchstone for sanctity. The shape of Protestant heroism is among the basic elements of the Reformation that fascinate Foxe (Knott, *Discourses* 7), and this heroism is explored, extolled, and repeatedly reinforced in terms of masculinity.

Given Dorothea's apparent power over her persecutors, Dekker and Massinger's tolerance was greater than Foxe's. What these playwrights did seize on was Foxe's conviction that the sign of true religion among the martyred faithful was godly masculinization. This miracle enabled the martyr heroically to bear the cross, and it was at the heart of Foxe's martyrological project.⁷⁵ Theologically speaking, St. Augustine's

⁷⁴ "[T]he gendering of martyrdom as a form of masculinized heroism has a long history" succinctly expressed during the martyrdom of the early Christian, Polycarp—"Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man" (Monta 211). Hugh Latimer recites the line to guide Nicholas Ridley before they are set aflame (Foxe 2.1937). Cf. Knott, *Discourses* 78. Delany notices that "hagiography often negates traditional gender roles," that "[t]he female martyr often assumes a number of conventionally masculine prerogatives" (189).

⁷⁵ In his "To the true Christian reader, what utilitie is to be taken by readyng of these Historyes," Foxe proclaims that martyrs "are in deede the true Conquerers of the world, by whom we learne true manhoode, so many as fight under Christ, and not under the world" (*iii^v). For Foxe's masculinization of martyrs, see Monta 211 and *passim*, Fisher 93-101, and Knott, "Foxe and the Joy of Suffering" 729. Knott tries to make a distinction between the "ability to display boldness and courage in the face of death" and "the kind

formidable distinction, “non facit martyrem poena, sed causa” (“not the punishment, but the cause makes the martyr”), invalidated comportment in early modern England (Gregory 329, 338); but in practice, bystanders needed “some external verification of martyrdom” (Freeman “*Imitatio Christi*” 36), and masculinity was the criterion of choice.⁷⁶ A martyr neither relents nor laments. Although the “passive resistance” of Christian martyrs is often distinct from “masculinized heroism” (Monta 210), a canvas of Foxe’s martyrological accounts reveals that what is “mylde” about the godly is their sacrifice to God, nothing more. “True manhoode” is divinely inspired, a “supernaturally conferred constancy” that is both “fortified by the Holy Spirit” (Freeman, “*Imitatio Christi*” 37) and a sign of the martyr’s persistent efforts against heterodoxy, tyranny, and the flesh. Whenever possible, Foxe underscores the miracle of godly masculinization. He appreciates the Christian “strength through weakness” paradox, but he is disinclined to emphasize the vulnerabilities of Protestant martyrs.⁷⁷ When *The Virgin Martir* stages masculinization as a miracle, it nods toward Foxe.

The Pauline trope, “Soldier of Christ,” ties Foxe’s accounts together; he tests his revisions, commentaries, appropriations, and excisions against this *sine qua non*.⁷⁸ Thus, martyr Thomas Tomkins is godly because he plays *and* looks the part of a Christian

of divine intervention that miracles exemplify” (724). But a martyr’s painless sacrifice results from that very kind of intervention.

⁷⁶ Cf. Monta 6, 9-12 and Myhill 10-11, 17-18. Freeman exposes the limitations of various “external” criteria, such as comportment. Miracles and courage could signal Satanic influence (“*Imitatio Christi*” 35-39).

⁷⁷ For this paradox, see Knott, *Discourses* 28-29.

⁷⁸ See Knott, *Discourses* 11-83 and *passim*. Heroic suffering and militant faith were essential in the ancient works of Eusebius and Prudentius and in the early modern tomes of Foxe and Cresspin. Knott claims that the Christian soldier was the “most common metaphor for the ideal posture of the Christian” (99).

soldier. With a “spirit so rapt up, that he felt no pain,” he withstands Bishop Edmund Bonner’s torture devices during trial (2.1711). Hand to the flame, Tomkin “so vailantly did despise, abide, and endure that burning, that we have lesse cause hereafter to marvaile at the manifulnes [sic]” of him (2.1711). Later, Bonner has Tomkins shaved “so he would looke like a catholicke.” Tomkins retorts that he was a good Christian before his beard grew, and is the same “my beard being on.” But what Tomkins considers ancillary, the woodcut suggests is essential, for it juxtaposes Bonner’s smooth face and obesity with Tompkin’s mature beard and physique (Figure 2). True religion takes the form of masculine exterior and behavior.

The burning of Tho. Tomkins hand, by B. Boner, who not long after burnt also his body.



Figure 2. Foxe, *A & M* [1570], 2.1710



Figure 3. Foxe, *A & M* [1570], 2.1684

Even when torture mutilates their bodies, Foxe's martyrs still exhibit godly masculinity. Consider the woodcut of John Hooper's martyrdom, which centers on a flesh-stripped man, upright and composed despite adipose and dermal ooze (Figure 2). The text, while less certain about his iron-clad countenance than the woodcut, conveys his masculine composure amidst the horror:

He did wye both his eyes with hys hands, and beholding the people, he sayd with an indifferent loud voice: For Gods love (good people) let me have more fire. And all this while his neither partes did burne: for the Fagottes were so few, that the flame did not burne strongly at his upper partes.

The third fire was kindled within a while after, which was more extreme then the other two: and then the bledders of gunnepowder brake, which did him small good, they were so placed, and the wynd had such power. In the which fire he prayed with somewhat a loud voyce: Lord Jesu have mercy upon me: Lord Jesu have mercy upon me: Lord Jesus receave my spirit. And these were the last wordes he was heard to utter. But when he was blacke in the mouth and his tounge swollen that he could not speake: yet his lypes went till they were shronke to the gummies: and he knocked hys brest with hy handes untill one of his armes fell of, and then knocked still with the other, what tyme the fat, water, and bloud dropped

out at his fingers endes, untill by renewyng of the fire, his strength was gone, and his hand did cleave fast in knocking, to the iron upon his brest. So immediately bowyng forwardes he yelded up his spirite. (2.1684).

In the woodcut, Hooper has already lost his limb and grasped his chains, but his face is unyielding. The entire image projects calm in the face of horrific mutilation. Chest-knocking and eye-wiping have their place in the text but are absent from the woodcut. Despite this discrepancy, in both the verbal and visual representations, Hooper, like his fellow martyrs, imitates Christ “with a vengeance” (Kelley 1328). “The greater the torment and the greater the rituals of degradation which the condemned was forced to undergo, the greater was the potential for perceived resemblance to the sufferings of Christ” (Freeman, “*Imitatio Christi*” 56). Not coincidentally, the executioners set Hooper ablaze three times, as if numerology could further link his heroics to Christ’s.

Of course, female martyrs troubled Foxe’s project. Women could accept martyrdom “with no lesse boldnes of spirite, then did the men themselves above specified, to whome howe much more inferiour they were in bodely strength, so much more worthy of prayse they be, for their constant standing” ([1583] 93). And when Agnes Potten and Joane Trunchfield died, “their constancy worthely was to be wondered at, who beyng so simple women, so *manfully* stode to the confession and testimony of Gods word and verity” (2.2072, my emphasis). Yet, as Monta notes, female martyrs complicated the masculinization process to the extent that readers pitied their humble suffering even as they commended their godly resilience (211-12). By most accounts, Anne Askew epitomizes how a woman’s “‘playing the man’ becomes especially vexed” in Foxe (Monta 211). Because Askew “needs to be a weak, physically broken woman in order to serve as an example for readers” (Monta 212), Foxe takes pains to bring Askew’s

suffering body into focus. A gap opens between Askew's version of events, which "admits bodily awareness but not bodily experience," and Foxe's, which "emphasize[s] the suffering that she won't concede" (Coles, "The Death of the Author" 536 and 538). Summoning Askew's shattered bones and torn ligaments, Foxe overwrites her account, highlighting her femininity even at the risk of subverting his own martyrological project.⁷⁹ He does this despite the fact that in *The Examinations* and elsewhere, in her pen and in others, she is understood as a masculine type:

Like as the armed knight
Appointed to the field
With this world will I fight
And faith shall be my shield.⁸⁰

At the same time that Askew's victimized female body exposes Catholic tyranny, her godly constancy overrides her vulnerability. Foxe seems to want to give both the masculine and the feminine their due.⁸¹ Like John Bale before him, he "deals with Askew's gender by persistently emphasizing the paradigm of the 'weak' woman made stronger than men through the power of the Holy Spirit . . . [he] used this model because it explained the constancy of female martyrs in a way that did not discredit them, and yet,

⁷⁹ "Foxe feminizes her at [the] moment of racking . . . [A]ccording to [Foxe's] scenario, the lieutenant in charge, Anthony Knyvett, 'tendering the weakenes of the woman,' refuses to torture her further" (Coles, "The Death of the Author" 538, Foxe 2.1419). Contrast this passage with Askew's own account of that very moment: "Then they did put me on the racke, because I confessed no Ladyes or Gentlewomen to be of my opinion, and theron they kept me a long tyme. And because I lay stil and did not cry, my L. Chauncellour and [master Rich], tooke paines to racke me with their owne handes, till I was nigh dead" (Coles, "The Death of the Author" 536, Foxe 2.1418). Coles aptly notes the latter passage's "disembodied quality": "We understand Askew's bodily experience obliquely: she doesn't observe her pain, only her response to it" (536).

⁸⁰ For the entire ballad, see Beilin 149. Although Susan Brigden assumes the ballad is Askew's own (524-25), Coles is less certain ("The Death of the Author" 516), and Monta thinks it unlikely ("The Inheritance" 154-155). Nonetheless, its cultural currency is undisputed; what became "The Ballad of Anne Askew" circulated as late as the 1620s (Monta, "The Inheritance" 155).

⁸¹ Cf. Monta, "Foxe's Female Martyrs."

at the same time, did not subvert conventional ideas” of masculinity (Freeman and Wall 1191).⁸² Despite her frailty, Askew defies her persecutors. Even when brought to the stake, she keeps the faith. Predictably, Foxe praises her constancy more than he pities her debilitation. She is “a singular example of Christian constancie for all *men* to follow” (Foxe 2.1420, my emphasis). If Askew can withstand physical agony and deprivation, then men can as well. Foxe reminds his readership that God masculinizes his elect, despite even the “weakness of a woman” (2.1419).⁸³

Section 3: Godly Masculinization in *The Virgin Martir*

When Dekker and Massinger dramatize a female martyrdom for Jacobean audiences, they adapt Foxe’s masculinization project for the stage. *The Virgin Martir* employs Foxe’s martyrological conventions when it stages Dorothea’s torture and death: it hypermasculinizes Dorothea, vilifies her persecutors, feminizes superstition, and avoids any “monkish” miracles from medieval legends that call attention to her female body. But Dekker and Massinger also draw attention to the religious potential of her virginity and sexuality. While Dorothea’s virgin body becomes a locus of mystical and ceremonial experiences, she theatricalizes her godly masculinity. Staging a spectacular martyrdom

⁸² Cf. Knott, *Discourses* 57.

⁸³ Coles has demonstrated how what she calls Askew and Foxe’s competing rhetorics conspire to marginalize Askew’s corporeality. Askew’s rhetoric “does not assume the embodied terms visible in the writings of dissident scholars,” whereas Foxe’s works to show her body, because “the subjects of his stories must be visible bodies” (“The Death of the Author” 539). The result is best expressed in the woodcut of her martyrdom (Foxe 2.1420). There, Askew is an outline amid outlines. Unlike Hooper’s, her tortured, mangled body is hardly visible—“she both appears, and crucially does not appear” (Coles, “The Death of the Author” 539). Foxe’s masculinization project helps to explain the distanced portrayal. Because he leaves much of Askew’s own account intact, and because Askew refuses to “bring her corporeality to the center” (538), Foxe can draw attention to her physical frailty in his text even as he summons her masculine constancy, best expressed in her own voice. Coles rightly emphasizes that competing rhetorics effect incongruities in the text; Foxe’s counterintuitive strategy to reaffirm masculine godliness in this account is one such incongruity.

that invokes both Dorothea's sensualized beauty of holiness and her invulnerability, the play depolarizes what is otherwise in conflict: text, reform, and godly masculinity on the one hand, and spectacle, ceremonialism, and feminized piety on the other.

Tied to a pillar, Dorothea appears to be at the mercy of Hircius and Spungius when her punishment begins. But as the two fools swing their cudgels with reckless abandon, "Angelo kneeling holds her fast" (4.2.85, stage direction) and Dorothea mocks "tormentors wearie of torturing" ("tyrants strike home / And feast your fury full") (90-93). Hircius marvels that the bridge of her nose is "full of Iron worke" (98). Theophilus is just as bewildered: these "bats have power . . . to fell gyants," but she is neither bruised nor fractured (108-09). "Shrink not deare mistress" and "There fix thine eye still" on eternal salvation, Angelo tells her. "Ever, ever, ever," she promises. Angelic intervention and steadfast faith masculinize her, even as her gaze toward God imitates the postures of Foxe's Protestant martyrs. But unlike Foxe's Askew or Agnes, Dorothea also recalls the feminine beauty emphasized in works like *The Golden Legend*. While Sapritius wonders if the cudgels are counterfeit, Theophilus notices that "her face / Has more bewitching beauty then before" (4.2.94-95). The gruesome disfigurements in Foxe do not appear on the Red Bull stage. Instead, while Dorothea's resilient "iron-worke" signifies her godly masculinity, her increasingly "bewitching beauty" underscores her femininity.

Not just what we see but what we hear from Dorothea improbably resolves the tension between heroic masculinity and sensual femininity, textualized reform and affective piety:

Theo. Hast thou ought else to say?
 Doro. Nothing but blame
 Thy tardinesse in sending me to rest,
 My peace is made with heaven, to which my soule
 Begins to take her flight, strike, O strike quickly,
 And though you are unmov'd to see my death,
 Hereafter when my story shall be read,
 As they were present now, the hearers shall
 Say this of Dorothea with wet eyes,
 She liv'd a virgin, and a virgin dies.
Her head stricke off. (4.2.171-79)

Like a soldier of faith, Dorothea objects to the delays and hastens her execution; like a true Reformation martyr, she prefers the textual account to the actual event. Readers will grasp the significance of her death more than “unmoved” viewers do now.⁸⁴ In a curious development, Dorothea deprecates the theatricality of her own death. Martyrologies will comprehend her “story” better than her audience can. She also believes that readers will be able to envision her death “as [if] they were present now.” Like Foxe’s, her book will permanently enable readers to relive her sacrifice outside its temporal-spatial bounds—“She lived a virgin, and a virgin dies.” Thus, the play momentarily subjects its own theatricality to a kind of textuality that it cannot achieve on stage. In Act 2, Dorothea supplemented scripture with sensory devotion; now, she advocates private reading instead of participatory spectatorship. Like Foxe’s accounts of female martyrdoms, this death scene overwrites Dorothea’s femaleness. An imagined text redirects the gaze from her body to a book very much like Foxe’s, where her name will emerge among others who “manfully endured” torture (Foxe [1583] 83).

⁸⁴ In “Paraclesis” (1516), Erasmus gave voice to what became a fundamental tenet of reform when he claimed that the New Testament could be more inspiring than the historical Jesus: “And because he promised to be with us even to the end of time, he is present most especially in these writings in which even now he lives, breathes, and speaks to us, more forcefully (I might almost say) than when he lived among men” (125). Cf. O’Connell 36.

And yet, at the very same time, her last line—“She lived a virgin, and a virgin *dies*”—abruptly reemphasizes her sexualized body. The double-entendre suggests a sensual, even orgasmic union with God. It enables her sexualized body to channel religious ecstasy. While a spectacular performance of her mysticism would provoke the iconophobic anxieties of her persecutors (and of theater audiences), her memorializing text will subtly and poetically express her physical release to God. Dorothea’s last act before death is a sudden leap from martyrological commonplaces to a Petrarchan pun. She reformulates the “rather clichéd conception of love” in Antoninus—“a hyperbolic Petrarchan suitor” (Monta 208)—into a conceit of mystical affect. She reminds us of how she withstood ravishment and sanctified her female sexuality in the process: men could not ravish her, but God can. During the averted rape scene, the play “literalizes and sensationalizes a threat not against her body only but her ‘holy integrity’ read more broadly” (Monta 209); inversely, her trope at the site of execution eroticizes her divine rapture. If God masculinized Dorothea’s body to protect her, her own last words recall her earlier religious and feminine euphoria, when, alone with Angelo, she was “ravisht with . . . celestial sound” and her “most chaste bosome . . . was fil’d with no hot wanton fire, / But with a holy flame, mounting since higher” (2.1.176, 198-200). As in her private chamber, on the public scaffold she yields her body to divine ravishment.

Antoninus’s conversion anticipates Dorothea’s “death.” From the scaffold, Dorothea asks Angelo to transform Antoninus’ love for her to love for heaven. The angel agrees to “perform it,” and Antoninus’s lust becomes devotion in the flesh:

I feele a holy fire
That yeelds a comfortable heate within me.
I am quite alterd from the thing I was.
See I can stand, and goe alone, thus kneele

To heavenly Dorothea, touch her hand
 With a religious kisse. (4.3.160-65)

Like Dorothea's spiritual experience in 2.1, Antoninus's conversion ignites "a holy fire" within. He kneels to "heavenly Dorothea" to "touch her hand / With a religious kiss," as if to recall the *Song of Solomon*. The play repugns Antoninus' earlier idolatry, but it allows sensual devotional practices that would have offended hardline reformers. Because Antoninus supplicates to and kisses his beloved with religious fervor, he differentiates carnal impulses from religious erotics. Dekker and Massinger are comfortable with their devout soldier Antoninus; they free him from the strict masculine paradigm voiced most vehemently by his iconophobic father, they grant him a sensual religious experience, and they associate recoiling audience members with his pagan persecutors on stage ("But see your sonne," Theophilus tells Sapritius, to which he replies "Villaine" [4.3.70]).

Antoninus' devotion and Dorothea's pun on "dies" in 4.2 recall how important her virgin body is to the play's ecclesiology.⁸⁵ Her words and his piety not only contribute to a martyrdom that is both reformed and affective, visually masculinized and textually feminizing; they also reinvest her eroticized body with immense religious value and call attention to a martyrdom informed by, but not confined to, Foxean conventions. If "Dorothea locates the significance [of her martyrdom] not in the immediate visual experience of her spectators but rather in the textual and oral transmission of the narrative of her death" (Myhill 11), this transmission nonetheless calls upon audiences to envision

⁸⁵ The ties between her virginity and her ecstatic union with God follow a long-standing medieval tradition. She recalls the play's hagiographical sources: in *The Golden Legend*, when Agnes repels her suitor's advancements, she states that she is already bequeathed to a man whose "love is chastity itself, his touch holiness, union with him, virginity" (cited in Mills 189). Dorothea's mystical union, too, is made possible in part because of her virginity. For the dissemination of St. Agnes in medieval England, see Mills 190.

the sensual, iconic ecstasies of mystical union. And if the play cannot dramatize those ecstasies, it can at least connote a Christian woman's religious fulfillment expressed in terms of divine ravishment.

Moreover, if martyrs are Eucharistic no less in medieval hagiographies than in early modern martyrologies, then Dorothea's last words flesh out what this means: a visual, sensual, gendered, and personal embodiment of divine union.⁸⁶ Sacrifices when martyred, transmuted bodies in *Actes and Monuments* are sensational responses to and efficacious replacements of the transubstantiated host. Like Foxe's narratives, Dorothea's text will affect readers as if they were Eucharistic participants, "[a]s [if] they were present now" (4.2.77). It just so happens that they are present with Dorothea's perpetual, erotic mysticism.

Her last line also resonates with the myth of England's virgin queen. John Stow's Queen Elizabeth had this to say before her first Parliament: "a marble stone shall declare that a Queene having raigned such a tyme, lived and dyed a virgin."⁸⁷ In the 1615 edition of Stow's *Annales*, this famous prediction had become a memorial at a time of intense nostalgia for the queen. Many Jacobean apparently forgot about earlier anxieties over Elizabeth's reign and religion. What mattered now was that she was better than James. Because of his conciliatory policies toward Catholic Spain—the marriage negotiations between Charles and the Spanish Infanta and the refusal to enter the Thirty Years' War—

⁸⁶ For Foxean martyrs as Eucharistic, see Mueller 168-73 and Coles, "The Death of the Author" 517, 533-34, and 538. The connections between the Eucharist and virgin martyrs in particular is not new in Foxe. In medieval and early modern narratives of S. Margaret, for instance, "the virgin's body is metonymically both Church and eucharist": "pure, white and round" (Evans, "The Jew" 175; cf. 168-69 and 174-76).

⁸⁷ Elizabeth's first parliament was held in Westminster on January 25, 1558/9. This account first appears in the 1592 edition of Stow's *Annales* (1080), but I have used the 1615 edition (636). Cf. Levin 39.

many Jacobean longed for their late queen as if she were a Protestant militant par excellence.⁸⁸ To recall Elizabeth during Dorothea's martyrdom is to nod toward current political debates no less than to pressure Dorothea toward one side of that debate. As a tribute to the virgin queen, the virgin martyr's mystical verse is put into the service of the Protestant cause. In short, Dorothea's martyrdom is the site of fantastic alignments among gender and religious practices. A brilliant tour-de-force that aims to unify audiences otherwise disparate and plural, her death scene encapsulates the play's *via media* theatricality.

And Theophilus is there at the end to deny this fantasy its validity. He dismisses the "celestial" stagecraft when music sounds from above after Dorothea's death:

Illusions of the Divell
Wrought by some one of her Religion,
That faine would make her death a miracle,
It frights not me. (4.2.188-91)

Dekker and Massinger deploy Theophilus' antitheatrical reaction to regulate the power of their play's religious spectacles, not to mention its miracles. Yet, Theophilus's villainy paradoxically validates those very spectacles: unbeknownst to him, her death *is* a miracle, and audiences *do* witness the divinity evident in the sounds and sights that amaze Theophilus's companions. The play may represent Dorothea's torment and death "as simultaneously spiritually authentic and theatrically constructed" (Myhill 9), but the play

⁸⁸ For the myth of Elizabeth in Jacobean England, see Collinson, "William Camden" 84-85 and Walsham, "A Very Deborah?" 157-161. Although some seventeenth-century Puritans were quick to malign the last Tudor (Walsham 161), many Jacobean exalted Elizabeth, and some went so far as to use her as a "critical yardstick" against James and his court (Collinson, "William Camden" 85). "In the 1620s Elizabeth became a symbol of the belligerent Protestant interventionism advocated by the godly, an emblem of contemporary discontent about the supine neutrality of England's stance in the Thirty Years War" (Walsham, "A Very Deborah?" 160). Cf. Cressy, *Bonfires* 130-38. The ties between Elizabeth and Dorothea become more in focus in Sir Edward Coke's 1621 eulogy of the late queen. He calls her "'the flower of queens' as the rose is the queen of flowers" (Cressy, *Bonfires* 134, cf. Neale, *Essays in Elizabethan History* 14). Dorothy's emblem, the crown or basket of flowers or roses, strengthens the link.

favors authenticity. Spectators who do not suspend their disbelief, whose impulse is to disenchant the stage, are like Theophilus. To fail to acknowledge the theatricality of holiness is to be blind to representations of the divine and to miss the joys of theater. To accept them is to stand in the *via media*, alongside Dorothea, taken in as she is by theatrical power, ecclesiological displays, reformed idioms, and poetic expressions of faith.

After Theophilus condemns Dorothea's theatricality of holiness in Act 4, we join him in his private chamber in Act 5 to listen to his tales of persecution:

As a curious Painter	<i>Rises.</i>
When he has made some admirable peece,	
Stands off, and with a searching eye examines	
Each colour, how tis sweetned, and then hugs	
Himselfe for his rare workemanship – So heere	<i>Sits.</i>
Will I my Drolleries and bloudy Lantskips	
Long past wrap'd up unfold to make me merry	
With shadowes, now I want the substances. (5.1.5-12)	<i>Booke</i>

Like a self-aggrandizing painter or a lesser Faustus, Theophilus idolizes his text and his talents. And like Sapritius, he depolarizes image and text, superstition and reform.

Theophilus's text is an idolatrous version of the Eucharist, which in Reformation England "want[ed] the *substance*," because it never underwent transubstantiation. Laughing at the agony of his English victims, he resolves to "flesh" himself "[o]nce more, upon some one remarkeable / Above all these, this Christian Slut" Dorothea (38-40), as if his catalog serves a perverted Eucharistic function. He records "drolleries and bloudy Lantskips" for an anti-martyrology that displaces the reformist preference for text: "A thousand wives with brats sucking their brests, / Had hot Irons pinch 'em off, and thrown to swine; / And then their fleshy back-parts hewed with hatchets, / Were minc'd and bak'd in pies to feed starv'd Christians" (20-23). His "fleshy" interpretation challenges Dorothea's prophecy

that readers will witness the truth of her martyrdom. Himself a martyrologist, Theophilus records the agony of persecuted Christians; like a sadistic persecutor, he takes pleasure from his index of maimings, forced cannibalism, and infanticide. Text can be as enticing to the superstitious as a graven image.

The play's ambivalence toward text comports with its premise that iconography, ceremony, and reform can all work in tandem. By endorsing Dorothea's iconic texts and eroticized death, by giving expression to an iconoclastic theatricality, and by rejecting Theophilus's "rare workmanship," *The Virgin Martir* sponsors even as it tempers both reform and ceremony. Writing, textual analysis, and theater can demonstrate piety, and they can do the devil's work. Likewise, masculinity and femininity may and they may not serve godliness. Dorothea does not "flesh" herself when she is "ravished" before the altar and "dies" at the scaffold. Theophilus does "flesh" himself with text. His villainy supplements the *via media* fantasy that she rehearses. By condemning Dorothea's holy theatricality only to feed on the bloody tales of his antimartyrology, Theophilus reveals the limitations of preferring icon and ceremony to text or text to icon and ceremony. It is fitting, then, that Dekker and Massinger altered their sources to make Theophilus both persecutor and Christian convert. Because he opposes the theatricality that the play endorses, his conversion becomes the focus of Act 5.

Theophilus's Conversion and Its Contexts

Theophilus's conversion is a curious celebration of Jacobean ceremonialism. While the villain reads his anti-martyrology, music sounds, and Angelo enters with a basket of fruit and flowers. The arrangement entices the Roman; the "tempting fruit" puts even the "Dioclesians Gardens" to shame (5.1.56-60). He asks whether he may visit

the “Garden” itself. Answering “Yes, if the Master / Will give you entrance” (55-56), Angelo both tempts the flesh and voices the reformed belief in *sola gratia* (only God can “give” Theophilus “entrance”). Theophilus suspects a miracle is at hand when he asks, “is it not February? / The second day she dyed: Frost, Ice, and snowe / Hang on the beard of Winter” (62-64).

Because Lent typically begins in February, this scene seems at odds with the liturgical season of repentance, fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. In his 1619 Ash Wednesday sermon to King James at Whitehall, Andrewes forcefully proscribes fasting as a “chastisement for sin,” a Lenten custom of early Church origins, a prerequisite for conversion, and a convincing sign of repentance: “tell God and Christ they are not well advised [who say that] we have found out a way . . . to turn unto God without any fasting at all” (*The Works* 1.388, 392, 368). To be saved, converts must humbly beseech God through self-abhorrence and an “abstinence” that will “crop . . . the buds of sensuality” before they “ripen and seed to the ruin of our souls” (1.372 and 389). In a 1623 Ash Wednesday sermon, fasting is the “fruit” of repentance, the “fruit bidden” that counteracts the “fruit of the forbidden tree [which] had envenomed our nature” (1.422). To wean the body from food is to open the soul to God. If a repentant must eat, s/he should follow the example of Daniel, who ate to sustain nature, “not [to] purvey for the flesh to satisfy the lusts thereof” (1.368).

Fasting is not fruit for Theophilus, nor is his feasting of the sort that Andrewes seeks to restrain. The angelic fruit, albeit sumptuous and luring, serves a eucharistic, nourishing function. Although he suspects bewitching games are afoot when the “bright cheek’d child” vanishes—the boy was “a spirit / Sent from that Witch to mock me”

(5.1.77-78)—his olfactory and palatal sensations overwhelm him. He is “sure / This is essentiall, and how ere it growes, / Will taste it” (78-80). His way to God is through the flesh.

Theophilus does not eat from the fruit in the sources.⁸⁹ Dekker and Massinger, however, capitalize on this dramatic, lapsarian moment. As Theophilus takes his fill, Harpax the devil laughs from backstage and calls Theophilus a “lickorish foole” (83). Perhaps audiences would agree that his “fleshy” predispositions all but guarantee his damnation. But Harpax, the self-proclaimed fisherman of souls (85-87), confronts a penitent man who directs his mind’s eye to the ground, “bloudy, / And pav’d with thousands of those Christians eyes / Whome I have tortur’d, and they stare upon me” (102-4). Because of the fruit, Theophilus is no longer blind to his past cruelty and superstitions. He ridicules his former idols, and as heavenly music plays, he credits “a power divine” for shining through his “darke ignorance” and for exposing “a conscience all stai’nd ore, / Nay drown’d and damn’d for ever in Christian gore” (106-18). As Theophilus “is banqueted again” (122), the conversion process continues to enhance his senses: he recognizes the devil in Harpax —“Thou art no Twin to him that last was heere (124)—and refuses the drink that Harpax offers (129-34). Earlier, Theophilus was ravished by his daughters’ “eloquent ability to reconvert Christians to paganism [3.3.203, 3.2.36]” (Monta 209). Now, the same “ravishing sounds” that mesmerized Dorothea in Act 2 arouse him (5.2.138-39). Eyes and ears are once again receptacles of divine experiences. Christian Theophilus revels in the sensuous, affective pieties of Jacobean

⁸⁹ de Voragine, Fol. Ccxxxr-v and Villegas, sigs. Q3v-Q4r. “Theophilus receaved the present and the child vanished awaie, shewing cleerlie that it was an Angell of God. Theophilus being amazed and astonished, said: trewlie Jesus Christ is God, & there is no other God but he” (Villegas, sig. Q3v).

ceremonialism, and the adiaphora tradition licenses him to distinguish between pagan and Christian sustenance.

When Harpax is forced to gaze first on the fruit, and then the flowers, he grows anxious; but it is the “crosse of Flowers” seized from “the botome, / One thing I found not yet” that exorcizes Harpax from the stage (138-39). The devil recoils in terror, and the former persecutor asks “Can this doo’t?”, a question that anticipates the audience’s own reaction to such traditional iconography (140). The cross was ever susceptible to reformers’ attacks. According to Keith Thomas, “Protestantism . . . presented itself as a deliberate attempt to take the magical elements out of religion, to eliminate the idea that the rituals of the Church had about them a mechanical efficacy, and to abandon the effort to endow physical objects with supernatural qualities by special formulae of consecration and exorcism” (Thomas 75). This includes crosses, of course, which from Henry VIII to Elizabeth were destroyed along with other “idols.”⁹⁰ But English reform was often partial. Traditional religion still held sway; some crosses and stained glass survived until 1641.⁹¹ Through Elizabeth and James’ rules, the icon-laden Cross at Cheapside invited surreptitious genuflections despite reformer opposition and attempted vandalism.⁹² There were “those like John Donne, who believed, as Queen Elizabeth had believed, that there was no cause for Christians to deny the image of the cross, to take offence at the ancient

⁹⁰ See Aston, “Cross” for the fitful eradication of crosses from parishes, waysides, cemeteries, windows, and monuments that culminated in the 1640s.

⁹¹ Aston, “Cross” 268-272. Cf. Aston, *England’s Iconoclasts* 92. Watt also contends that “[f]or every iconoclast there were many parishioners with a deep, even ‘proprietary’ attachment to the images in their church” (177).

⁹² See Cressy, *Travesties* 234-50 for the curious history of the Cheapside Cross in Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

emblem of Christianity” (Aston, “Cross” 270).⁹³ Elizabeth herself refused to strip a silver crucifix from her chapel altar (Levin 17; Walsham, “A Very Deborah?” 147). Later, Andrewes and Buckeridge pushed to revive iconic ceremony, and this included renewed emphasis of the cross.⁹⁴ There was just too much ambivalence toward icons—especially the cross—to diffuse them completely of their spiritual potency. And their afterlives enabled Dekker and Massinger’s iconic dramaturgy in Act 5.

When Harpax tells Theophilus to “Claspe Jupiters Image, and away with that” (5.1.141), the cross matters religiously. A token of spiritual agency, it supplants the idoloc centerpiece of pagan superstition. It also matters theatrically. Rather than diminish Theophilus’ power, it strengthens his resolve: “I serve a strength above thine,” he tells Harpax, “this small weapon / Me thinkes is Armour hard enough” (151-52). It masculinizes Theophilus against the forces of idolatry and satanic influence. By the time Harpax “sinkes alittle” under the weight of traditional, Christian iconography, the beauty of holiness—not doctrine, not scripture, not martyrology—has converted the pagan sinner and has banished the devil to the stage’s hell. To sensationalize holiness was to create religious theater. So much for Calvinist drama.⁹⁵

In an inversion of sacramental order, the Eucharistic fruit precedes baptismal purification in 5.1; after Theophilus relishes the fruit and banishes the devil with the cross, his body becomes the locus of religious transformation. Angelo tells Theophilus

⁹³ Cf. Freeman, “*Imitatio Christi*” 40-43.

⁹⁴ According to McCullough, Andrewes defends the cross as early as his 1590s Good Friday sermons (“Lancelot Andrewes’s Transforming Passions”).

⁹⁵ Although Calvin sees utter iconophobia a superstition—“I am not gripped by the superstition of thinking absolutely no images permissible” (*Institutes* 1.11.12), he certainly “condemns images that purport to have magical power” (Diehl, *Staging Reform* 84).

that he will baptize the repentant in “a River that shall wash / Thy bloody hands cleane, and more white then Snow” (5.1.156-57). This Psalm 51 commonplace finds important emphasis in moderate John Dove’s *Conversion of Salomon* (1613).⁹⁶ There, God sanctifies Solomon’s sexual desire: “Behold farther the wisdom of God, which by such things as were answerable to [Solomon’s] owne delights, worketh in him repentance” (A1v). Like the Magi whose love of astrology led them to infant Jesus, and like the Jews whose “delight” with “often washings” led them first to John the Baptist, then to Christ (“by whose only blood their scarlet sinnes were washed and made whiter than Snow”), Solomon’s “delights in the sensualitie of the flesh” inspired his “sweet allegories and mysticall speeches of kissing and imbracing between the Spouse and her Lover.” (This recalls Antoninus). Through the grace of God, erotics can embolden Solomon, “being before effeminate,” “to become a chast[e] member of Jesus Christ” (and a godly poet, to boot). With Dekker and Massinger, similar temptations can convert Theophilus to the true faith. Prone to “flesh” himself on vicious, damning atrocities, Theophilus yields once again to temptation and is subsequently, shockingly redeemed. His participation in an iconic, Christian theater readies him for baptism, martyrdom, and salvation.

Theophilus must have his body cleansed of depravity to enter “that Garden where these blest things grow” and to admire “that martyr’d Virgin” (158-63a). But this can only come to pass if he is not “shaken with a Cesars voyce, / Though [a] thousand deaths were in it” (154-55). Political defiance readies him for cleansing; markers of masculine perseverance and militancy offset suggestions of feminine purity and mysticism. So too, his desire for the “ravishing Boy,” who “hast (by these mine eyes fixt on thy beauty) /

⁹⁶ For Dove’s moderate Calvinism, see Milton, *Catholic and Reformed* 425-26.

Illumined all my soule,” and who has revealed his “blacke Tyranies,” somehow empowers him “to doe well, / That my last act, the best may Parallel” (167-73). Rather than debilitate Theophilus, the enchanting, holy beauty of theater—“ravishing” boy actor and all—prepares him for heroic martyrdom. When the angel vanishes, Theophilus further tethers the body to the spirit, but this cleansed body is miraculously invigorated and empowered to withstand the torments unleashed in the next scene. Like Andrewes and his moderate colleagues, the play dismantles the Pauline flesh/spirit dualism that underwrote much of the English Reformation and that Diehl argues influenced early modern English drama. But the playwrights go further to link Theophilus’s masculinity to the sensuous, theatrical nature of his conversion.

Even as Dekker and Massinger emphasize Dorothea’s religion in Theophilus’ *study*, and even as they propose that an early modern *performance* can sate religious appetites, they downplay a key method of conversion in Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments*—specifically, hermeneutical and theological study. Of course, *Actes and Monuments* is an embodied text. When mutilated bodies of martyrs are on display there, they act as eucharistic surrogates. After all, people converted at the sight of charred bodies. The scaffold, ill-suited to conversions made through a “cold, intellectual modification of ideas,” was the stage for “an explosive evangelical sensation” for martyr and audience alike (Questier 58). Despite all the transcribed letters, debates, doctrines, and disputations, visualized martyrdoms are what initiate Foxe’s readers unto the true faith.⁹⁷ To root true religion in the body and proselytize religion through the body are two major

⁹⁷ “[T]he spectacle of the martyrs’ deaths could frame a final act of evangelization more powerful than a thousand sermons” (Gregory 135).

aspirations of Foxe's martyrology, but they often compete with its two chief directives—that the faithful must reject the flesh and immerse themselves in scripture.

Foxe is quick to emphasize spirit and Word over flesh and image whenever reformers first convert. When Foxe accounts for Martin Luther's awakening, he denies the reformed Augustinian the "agonized turmoil and release" that contributed to the "picturesque tale of a 'tower experience'" (MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, 115): "I extolled my sweetest word with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word 'righteousness of God' . . . At this I felt myself straightway born afresh and to have entered through the open gates into paradise itself" (Luther). Instead, Foxe stresses Luther's studies:

[Luther] was not only strengthened, but was also instructed of the full meaning of S. Paul, who repeateth so many times this sentence: *We are justified by faith*. And having read the expositions of many upon this place, he then perceived as well by the purpose of the old man, as by the comforte he received in his spirite, the vanitie of those interpretations, which he had read before, of the schole men: And so reading by little and little, with conferryng the sayinges and examples of the Prophets and Apostles, and continuall invocation of God, and excitation of faith by force of prayer, he perceived that doctrine more evidently. Then he began to read S. Augustines bookes, where he found many comfortable sentences among other, in the exposition of the Psalmes and especially in the booke of the Spirite and Letter, which confirmed this doctrine of faith and consolation in his hart, not a little. And yet he layd not a side the Sentenciaries, as Gabriell and Camera-censis. Also he read the bookes of Occam, whose subiltie he preferred above Thomas Aquine, and Scotus. He read also and revolved Gerson: but above all the rest, he perused all over S. Augustines workes with attentive cogitation. And thus continued he his studie at Erford, the space of iiii. Yeares in the convent of the Augustines. (Foxe 1.970)

Over the course of Luther's gradual conversion, research and scholarship excite faith; scripture comforts his spirit and confirms true doctrine "in his hart, not a little." Just as Foxe caps Luther's passion with this aptly placed litotes, he supplants emotive,

physiological expressions of faith with Luther's reading list. Luther's conversion lacks turmoil and fervor because Foxe seeks to strengthen, not complicate, the reputations of his heroes. In a text that relies upon displays of embodied masculinity to convert the reader, the man who standardized *sola scriptura* looks to "cogitation" and scholarship.

In other words, Foxe often locates conversion at the site of transmuted flesh, but he paradoxically insists that conversion is a choice of reading. From a young age, Thomas Bilney profitted "in all kinde of liberall science, even unto the profession of both lawes," but with the help of a new schoolmaster, "he came at last unto this point, that forsaking the knowledge of mans lawes, he converted his study to those things, which tended more unto godlyness then gainfulness" (1134). Although Bilney grows "enflamed with the love of true religion and godliness" and receives in "his hart an incredible desire to allure many unto the same" after his conversion, Foxe does not describe Bilney's physical or emotive reactions during his conversion. Instead, Bilney is like the Henrician martyrs Richard Bayfield and John Tewkesbery, who converted after reading William Tyndale's *New Testament*, *The Wicked Mammon*, and *Obedience of the Christian Man* (1.1161 and 1165). Nor do we hear much about Bilney's evangelical method, except that he converted "many of his fellowes unto the knowledge of the Gospel," among them Hugh Latimer (1.1134-35). As for Thomas Cromwell, he awakened his faith by memorizing Erasmus' New Testament on his voyages to and from Rome (1.1347). *Actes and Monuments* drew early modern readers to the body even as it consistently emphasized the Word as the way, the truth, and the life. As potent tools of conversion, embodied godliness and heroic sacrifice could have easily and effectively superceded scripture and reformed hermeneutics. Indeed, depicted martyrdoms more likely

convinced contemporaries than did Foxe's rhetorical mediations. Perhaps Foxe recognized this, and was satisfied to inspire readers with tales of flesh made pure by fire, as long as readers would then follow in the footsteps of the fallen—not to the scaffold, but to the bookshelves and to the pulpit, where, of course, his book belonged.

Neither Dorothea's sacrifice nor a textual account of that sacrifice inspires Theophilus to convert. And yet, there is something of *Actes and Monuments* in Theophilus's conversion: the suppression of tears. The play cherished lamentations when Caliste and Christeta turned to God in "true repentance" with tears likened to "a heavenly showre, celestial balm / To cure" their "wounded conscience" (3.1.196 and 192-93); in 5.1, Theophilus "see[s] a conscience all stai'nd ore . . . for ever in Christian gore" (5.1.117-18), so he focuses on the "dainty relish on my tongue / [that] [t]his fruit hath left" (120-21). Tears had readied his daughters for martyrdom (3.1.203-213), whereas eucharistic fruit empowers him against Harpax and imperial Rome. Although Dekker and Massinger endow icons with theatrical and religious potency during Theophilus' conversion, they downplay his repentance in order to leave his masculinity intact. Once the convert tastes the fruit for a second time, Harpax enters "in a fearefull shape, fire flashing out of the study" (5.1.123 SD). As their psychomachic struggle ensues, the hellish fire conjures the stakes at Smithfield, and Theophilus prepares himself by "playing the man." Oddly enough, at a moment of heightened sensationalism and Christian iconophilia, Dekker and Massinger take their cue from Foxe, who strains to minimize accounts of remorse once they begin to encroach upon the spectacles of martyrdom.

In *Actes and Monuments* no less than in *The Virgin Martir*, conversion is a site of competing religious drives: to strip godliness from the vulnerabilities of the flesh; to root true religion in the physical no less than the psychological and spiritual strengths of the faithful; to verify the true religion; to proclaim the Word; and to supplicate to God. Consider Foxe's account of Thomas Cranmer. This key cultural artifact evinces what is at stake when a man must play the convert. Because it prominently displays godliness alongside lachrymosity, it embodies a crucial struggle within the English Reformation to mediate a manly faith with certain, perhaps unavoidable, pious affects.

What Michael Questier calls "the agonies and ecstasies of repentance" overtake the former archbishop during his final conversion (Questier 40). After Edward VI's death and Queen Mary's ascension, Cranmer recanted his reformed faith and subscribed to Marian Catholicism on several occasions. But facing his last trial at the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford, Cranmer made the most of his place on a "stage" to redress his apostasy (Foxe 2.2064).⁹⁸ While Henry Cole sermonized about Cranmer's past indiscretions, welcomed recantations, and desire for "diriges," Cranmer

in all this meane tyme with what great grief of minde he stood hearing this sermon, the outward shewes of his body and countenance did better expresse, then any man can declare: one while lifting up his hands and eyes unto heaven, and then agayne for shame letting them down to the earth. A man might have seene the very image and shape of perfite sorrowe lyvely in hym expressed. More then twenty severall tymes the teares gushed out abundantly, dropped downe marveilously from hys fatherly face. They which were present doe testify, that they never saw in any childe more teares, then brast out from hym at that tyme, al the sermon whyle: but specially when he recited hys prayer before the people. It is marveilous what commiseration and pity moved all mens harts, that beheld so heavy a countenance and such abundance of teares in an old man of so reverend dignity. (Foxe 2.2064)

⁹⁸ Cf. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer* 599-607.

With tears no less paternal than juvenile, Cranmer's lachrymose performance both counteracts and upholds Foxe's martyrological conventions. Foxe overwrites lamentations and childish tears with Cranmer's "fatherly face" and "reverend dignity." But even after Cranmer defies Cole and proclaims his reformed theology, his belief in monarchical supremacy, and his hatred for the pope—a sign of "true faith . . . without colour or dissembling"—"all the teares that remained in his body, appeared in his eyes" (2.2066). Vacillating curiously between humility and heroism, mourning and glory, weeping Cranmer contravenes a central rhetorical template of Foxe's martyrology. Perhaps Foxe's failure to reform tearful conversion here explains why he does not attempt to fit it into his masculinization project elsewhere in *Actes and Monuments*. It is not until Cranmer thrusts his unflinching right hand (the culprit that signed the recantations) into the flames that Foxe can fully emplot Cranmer's narrative for the Protestant cause (Figure 4).

As a self-proclaimed historiographer, Foxe could not excise major details from the former archbishop's apostacies and final, glorious conversion; what witnesses saw, he must document.⁹⁹ And yet, because Cranmer converts so expressively, Foxe must have been particularly concerned with the archbishop's conversion scene. Seven years after the first edition of *Actes and Monuments*, John Day put Stephen Bateman's *A Christall Glass of Christian Reformation* to press. In it, we find a woodcut that Diarmiad MacCulloch deems "clearly ill-fitted to the use to which it is put in that setting, and it may have been a rejected version of the [trial] scene from the 1563 volume [of *Actes and Monuments*]" (*Thomas Cranmer* 602). If true, then Foxe had good reason to omit the

⁹⁹ Martyrologists had to base their accounts on facts so as not to delegitimize their martyrologies (Gregory 18).

woodcut (Figure 5). In it, a dejected preacher (Cranmer) stands at a lectern to the left, and a stake blazes outside the doorway to the right. A tonsured man (Cole) seizes the preacher by the beard in front of seated bystanders. The image does pertain to Foxe's textual description, but it is nothing like the official *Actes and Monuments* illustration (Figure 6).¹⁰⁰ There, Cranmer's beard is untouched. His robe raises up his persecutors even as they try to pull him down. Levitating above his platform, he emblemizes "*imitatio Christi* with a vengeance." But this image is not of the textual Cranmer, a torn and remorseful man who emulates the Jesus in Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Although Foxe has Cranmer imitate different Christs, the answering model to the official woodcut is the imperturbable Christ of John's Gospel. It is as if Foxe wanted his readers to visualize not a lamentable but a strong-willed convert.

This preference recurs in Dekker and Massinger's play; for Jacobean audiences no less than for Foxe's readers, the converted man has little time to grieve. Because of Theophilus's dry eyes, audiences and playwrights alike skirt the sort of gender inflections that problematize the Cranmer narrative. Despite (or perhaps enabled by) a Eucharistic conversion and poetic baptism, Dekker and Massinger shift to a generic, martyrological narrative that interweaves godliness and manliness, Christianity and reformed embodiment. Ironically, while endorsing Andrewesian ecclesiology—the sensations that "ravish" Theophilus—Dekker and Massinger avoid Andrewesian penitence, premised as it is on the tears which are essential to "turning to God" when the heart is "ground to powder" (*The Works* 1.371, 446). Theophilus is a Roman man, after all, and any tearful

¹⁰⁰ "[W]hen he began to speake more of the Sacrament and of the Papacy, some of them began to cry out, yalpe, and baule, and specially Cole cried out upon him: stoppe the heretickes mouth, and take him away. And then Cranmer being bulled downe from the stage, was led to the fire, accompanied with those Friers, vexing, troubling, and threatning him most cruelly" (2066).

conversion of a Roman man, no matter how warranted, might have been too disruptive and counterproductive, even for a late-Jacobean audience.



Figure 4: Foxe, *A & M* [1570], 2.2067

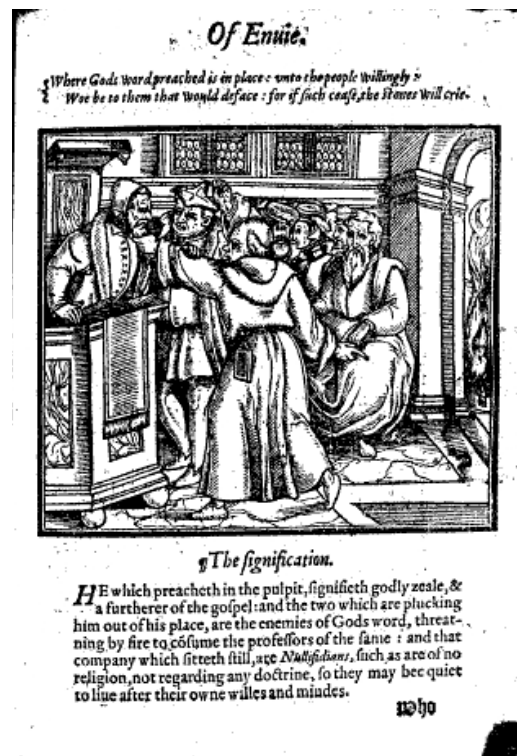


Figure 5: Bateman, *A Christall Glass of Christian Reformation*, Giv^r



Figure 6: Foxe, *A & M* [1570], 2.2065

Before his capture, Theophilus has Antoninus's friend Macrinus free captive Christians from the emperors' snares. Like a true Foxean martyr, Theophilus sacrifices himself out of political and religious defiance. When put on trial, the Christian convert refuses to recant but "begs" for "cruelty" (5.2.172-73) as "an easie pennance" for his past atrocities (172-77)—"easie" for audiences as well, because it both recycles the generic conventions of martyrology and supplants other, more teary-eyed signs of penance. He would have his persecutors administer the "thousand engines" that he "did prepare / For miserable Christians" (5.2.181-84). Although it seems that he "rewrites militarism as conquest-through-suffering" (Monta 214), Theophilus does not suffer:

More tortures, more: alas you are unskilfull,
 For Heavens sake more; my brest is yet untorn:
 Heere purchase the reward that was propounded,
 The Irons coole, heere are armes yet and thighes
 Spare no part of me. (209-13)

He "[o]utdare[s] the bloudest" (5.1.171), but now, like Foxe's steely soldiers of God: he "endures beyond / The suffrance of a man" and neither sighs nor grones (5.2.213-14).

Like Dorothea's martyrdom, Theophilus's is painless, a sign of an impregnable, reformed body.

But like her experiences of the divine, his too are sensual and affective. As Foxe did so often, Dekker and Massinger transport masculinity from the battlefield to the stake; unlike Foxe, they use sensory devotion to accomplish that transference. When Theophilus approaches death, crowned Dorothea enters robed in white, with Angelo, Antoninus, Caliste and Christeta, "in white, but less glorious" (5.2.219-20 SD). Monta compares this scene to "the iconography Foxe's title page tried to claim for English Protestantism" (215). But when presented with his crown, Theophilus absorbs all the sensational delights of true religion:

Most glorious vision,
 Did ere so hard a bed yeeld man a dreame
 So heavenly as this? I am confirm'd,
 Confirm'd you blessed spirits, and make hast
 To take that crowne of immortality
 You offer to me; death till this blest minute
 I never thought thee slow pac'd, nor could I
 Hasten thee now for any paine I suffer,
 But that thou keepst me from a glorious wreath
 Which through this stormy way I would creepe to,
 And humbly kneeling with humility weare it.
 Oh now I feele thee, blessed spirits I come,
 And witnesse for me, all these wounds and scarres,
 I die a souldier in the Christian warres. *Dies.* (220-33)

Like Dorothea, Theophilus "feels" his salvation and cherishes his "vision"; like Antoninus, he kneels before Dorothea. He yields to the dreamy temptations of holy aesthetics. But whereas Dorothea's last line locates religious experience within her body, Theophilus's last line militarizes his body. "[A] souldier in the Christian warres," Theophilus emulates the virgin martyr's invulnerability and sensory ecstasies, all the while retaining the manliness so essential to Foxe's rhetoric of reform. When Angelo

commands the “twice-damned” Harpax to “[h]aste to thy place appointed cursed fiend, / In spite of hell this souldier’s not thy prey, / Tis I have wonne, thou that hast lost the day” (235-38), the good angel borrows Theophilus’s militant language to legitimize the religious spectacle that celebrates Theophilus’s victory. In the torture room, as in Theophilus’s study, the play is comfortable with iconographic traditions, sensory practices, and ecstatic, mystical experiences. It binds affective spirituality to reform. But it stops short of reconsidering, let alone counterbalancing, the masculinity of English reform. As an apparent opposition to Dorothea’s sexualizing death, Theophilus “die[s] a souldier.” Dekker and Massinger retain Foxean godliness despite Jacobean ceremonialism, which locates piety and faith neither in the scars of religious combat, nor in the sacrifices of transmuted martyrs, but in the splendor of mystical union and in the savor of sacramentality.

By means of its martyrdoms and conversions, the play constructs a dramaturgy both reformed and traditional, textual and visual. Traditional iconography here recalibrates the function of religious theater and martyrology in a Jacobean context; rather than represent the iconoclastic fervor of a Protestant culture, the play reclaims the sacramental potency of Christian icons to dispel pagan idolatry and spellbind audience members who may have been eager for the sorts of ceremonialism that had begun to reemerge in some English churches during the 1620s. When George Buc “reformed” the play before it hit the press, even before it appeared on the Red Bull stage, he did not excise its traditional religious elements, nor did he pay attention to the problematic theatricality of a female virgin martyr. What he left intact—the play’s recuperation of affective female mysticism and saintly intervention, its endorsement of Protestant

martyrology and textual dissemination--points to a theater that could broaden the center in a way that the pulpit, the press, the church, and the state could not.

Why theater in particular should have had this capacity is difficult to say. It may be that religious inclusivity was more marketable, certainly more palatable, than intrafaith division. Or it may be that the theatrical rhythm of sudden spectacle followed by nuanced declamation worked to defuse religious tensions. Perhaps theater could employ signs of religion and gender—whether visual or verbal—without backing itself into a particular political or polemical corner but still taking advantage of a license unavailable to a preacher, even a monarch. Otherwise, Dekker and Massinger's play would almost certainly have exacerbated the conflict between reform and traditional iconography with its staging of Dorothea's altar and Theophilus's floral crucifix. That *The Virgin Martir* was reformed and approved bears witness, first, to a theatrical culture that could mediate religious and gender differences with considerable sophistication, and second, to a *via media* that may have been tenable at the Red Bull (the Blackfriars, and the Globe), but that proved catastrophic elsewhere.

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