

REFORMING THE READING WOMAN:
TRADITION AND TRANSITION IN TUDOR DEVOTIONAL LITERATURE

by

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Abstract

This thesis outlines two distinct modes of early sixteenth-century devotional practice (image-based and text-oriented), which in the context of the English reformation are increasingly represented as antithetical to one another, as Protestants champion the vernacular Bible and creed-based Christianity, while suppressing “idolatrous” images and traditional practices. Women readers, who tend to be vernacular readers, figure prominently in the religious controversy, and come to represent both the distinctives of Protestantism and anxieties around vernacular readership and hermeneutic agency. The vernacular woman reader stands in direct opposition to the priestly authority of masculine, Latin clerical culture; accordingly she is both rhetorically useful to the Protestant cause and a locus of cultural instability. I then turn to consider female Tudor translators as *reading* women, and translation itself (rather than a type of “feminine” writing) as a form of meditative or proclamatory reading. While translation has a traditional association with the meditative devotional reader, the religious controversy makes possible a more public and polemically-motivated sort of translation by women, which, however, remains framed largely in terms of personal devotional activity. As the number of literate women grows throughout the century, translation (with reading) is also increasingly represented as a means of keeping women out of trouble, a development which reflects the growing acceptance of the Protestant contention that a good woman is a reading woman. The epistolary culture of the persecuted Marian Protestant community illustrates the construction of a community of readers in the Protestant language of spiritual family, and the role of the reading woman in sustaining that community. My concluding chapter outlines the continuing construction of a textual community of exemplary foremothers, a tradition of “godly, learned women,” in which the virtuous woman reader is expected to participate. This distinctly Protestant pattern of literate female piety, alongside a growing number of women readers in Elizabethan England, increasingly shapes cultural ideals of female virtue.

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*In memory of my mother,
who read to me.*

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Introduction

Late-medieval women—as readers—have received more attention than their early modern descendants. Middle English devotional literature, while usually written or translated by men, frequently was produced for a female audience— anchoresses, religious communities, devout laywomen. The position of these women readers, as consumers, shapers and sharers of a “feminine” vernacular piety increasingly has attracted scholarly attention.¹ Furthermore, studies of the Lollard controversies of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have foregrounded the figure of the heretical woman reader, and her relation to the vernacular Bible, hermeneutic agency, and marginal religious communities.² These issues become even more pressing in the Reformation period, a time of tumultuous cultural transition during which the lines of spiritual authority are redrawn, the English Bible

¹ See Marjorie Curry Woods, “Shared Books: Primers, Psalters, and the Adult Acquisition of Literacy among Devout Laywomen and Women in Orders in Late Medieval England,” in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liège and Their Impact*, ed. Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts* (Brepols, 1999); Felicity Riddy, “‘Women Talking About the Things of God’: A Late Medieval Sub-Culture,” in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Anne Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and Subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); and Elizabeth Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

² Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984); Rita Copeland, “Why Women Can’t Read: Medieval Hermeneutics, Statutory Law, and the Lollard Heresy Trials,” in *Representing Women: Law, Literature, and Feminism*, ed. Susan Sage Heinzelman and Zipporah Batshaw Wiseman, *Post-Contemporary Interventions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Claire Cross, “‘Great Reasoners in Scripture’: The Activities of Women Lollards 1380-1530,” in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978); Shannon McSheffrey, “Literacy and the Gender Gap in the Late Middle Ages: Women and Reading in Lollard Communities,” in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995), and *Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities 1420-1530* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

is widely circulated in print, and the marginalized “heretical” reader becomes emblematic of the new Protestant “orthodoxy.” Near the beginning of the sixteenth century, the printing press is relatively new; toward the end of the century, reading women are numerous enough to constitute a profitable market for a thriving printing industry. In between, the terms of authorized religious practice in relation to language and text dramatically change.

While the actual number of reading women in Tudor England is necessarily speculative, this number increased significantly over the course of the sixteenth century. In her study of English books for women, Suzanne Hull points to an expansion (both in number and variety), from the 1570s onward, of publications specifically directed toward women—an indication that by this time a substantial female reading audience had developed and was attracting attention.³ This rising literacy rate is due, in part, to print technology—greater access to cheaper books provided more opportunities and incentives for the “uneducated classes” to learn to read. However, literacy rates had also risen during the previous century, and the printing press, when it arrived in England, capitalized on as well as accelerated an already-growing demand for affordable English books.⁴ The distinctive

³ Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982; reprint, 1988). See also Colin Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, “Four Prayer Books Addressed to Women During the Reign of Elizabeth I,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1997). What, exactly, female readers were actually reading is more difficult to determine. One helpful study is Mary Ellen Lamb, “Margaret Hoby’s Diary: Women’s Reading Practices and the Gendering of the Reformation Subject,” in *Pilgrimage for Love: Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of Josephine A. Roberts*, ed. Sigrid King (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999).

⁴ H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers: 1475 to 1557*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). For a lower estimate of literacy rates in general, see David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); for a higher one see Keith Thomas, “The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England,” in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. Gerd Baumann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986). See also Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate*

development of the female reading audience in the sixteenth century, then, is not only a matter of numerical increase (although that is part of it); it also represents a shift in the terms and contexts of women's reading. If there is a "typical" reading woman at the beginning of the century, she is likely to be either a cloistered nun or an aristocratic laywoman; by the end of the century, she is more likely to be a member of a reasonably prosperous middle-class household. And while the demographics and material circumstances of the "average" reading woman changed, so did the conceptual frameworks in which she read.

Alongside the development of print culture, the Protestant Reformation is central to the formation and development of the sixteenth-century female reading audience. The dissolution of the monastic houses in the 1530s eliminated one important medieval context for women's literate activities, while the controversial vernacular Bible became a focal point for disputes about gender, literacy and authority.⁵ For Bible readers such as the Henrician martyr Anne Askew, whose bookish pursuits led them into conflict with the establishment, literacy and access to English texts were serious matters. Reading could be costly. In the context of Reformation controversies and greater access to authoritative texts, popular religious reading took on a greater interpretive dimension—it was not simply a devotional practice, but easily could become a hermeneutic activity. Religious reading, then, might be an act of resistance, but it also remained an act of piety. As a result of the centrality of the Word to Protestant polemic and practice, Biblical literacy, with religious reading more generally, are increasingly associated with Christian virtue. This is particularly the case for

Culture in England, 1500-1700 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) and Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁵ See Susan Wabuda, "The woman with the rock: the controversy on women and Bible reading," in *Belief and Practice in Reformation England*, eds. Wabuda and Caroline Litzenberger (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998) 40-59.

women, who routinely were encouraged to restrict their reading to that which was “morally edifying”—a standard which fluctuated significantly.⁶ While religion was considered a particularly appropriate *domain* for women’s reading, in the midst of the Reformation religious books were hardly neutral ground. Thus the Protestant promotion of vernacular religious reading—and with it, the image of the godly woman reader—was instrumental in solidifying a cultural perception of religious reading as an indicator of female virtue.

Most literate activities of Tudor women (reading, writing, translation, patronage) were connected to religious texts—partly because these were readily available and related to the pressing questions of the day, and partly because these genres were deemed most acceptable for women to be involved with. Religious discourse, then, represented the primary source of opportunity for women’s literary activities, and for this very reason it also represented the limitations imposed on the female reader and writer.⁷ Much attention has

⁶ For a broad overview of two centuries of controversy over women’s literacy, of policing and resistance, see Jacqueline Pearson, “Women Reading, Reading Women,” in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Concerning the relationship between representations of women readers and their access to particular genres, see Mary Ellen Lamb, “Constructions of Women Readers,” in *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers*, ed. Susanne Woods and Margaret P. Hannay, *Options for Teaching* (New York: The Modern Language Association, 2000). See also Margaret W. Ferguson, “A Room Not Their Own: Renaissance Women as Readers and Writers,” in *The Comparative Perspective on Literature: Approaches to Theory and Practice*, ed. Clayton Koelb and Susan Noakes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), and Eve Rachele Sanders, *Gender and Literacy on Stage in Early Modern England*, ed. Stephen Orgel, vol. 28, *Cambridge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). As I illustrate in Chapter 5, the language of “moral improvement” is conventionally associated with the woman reader, sometimes in connection with decidedly un-edifying works.

⁷ The foundational study of this double-edged relationship of literary women with religious discourse is Margaret Patterson Hannay, ed., *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985). For a discussion of the Reformation as motivating and enabling women writers, see Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) 48-86. On devotional writing as self-

been given to the ways in which literate women maneuvered in and around such limitations. However, to cast sixteenth-century religion solely as *instrumental* either to the personal expression or patriarchal suppression of the female subject risks distortion and anachronism. For the Tudor woman who bothered seriously to read religious material—and this is the sort with which I am chiefly concerned—religious allegiance was not primarily either a shackle or a mask, but an integral part of her identity. Particularly since my study focuses on the religious reader in the Reformation period—a setting in which religious difference was at least as formative as gender difference—I have endeavoured to give religious identity and the gendered self equal weight as I explore the connections and tensions between them.⁸

Furthermore, in the sixteenth-century context of expanding (but sometimes controversial) literacy, in which for many people reading was a novel and distinctive skill, rather than an automatic, reflexive activity, one's position as a reading subject might be as formative as the subject of one's reading. In other words, I suggest, religious reading was not merely a means of absorbing prescriptive behavioural codes (or of transgressing them), but an identity in

representation see Helen Wilcox, "My Soule in Silence?": Devotional Representations of Renaissance Englishwomen," in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997). On writing Psalms as "both a mode of thought and a discursive strategy" (126), see Hannay, "So May I With the *Psalmist* Truly Say": Early Modern Englishwomen's Psalm Discourse," in *Write or Be Written: Early modern women poets and cultural constraints*, ed. Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) 105-34.

⁸ On the "necessity of theoretically constituting religion on a par with the triad of race, class, and gender as a material determinant of human experience and expression" (41) see Janel Mueller, "Complications of Intertextuality: John Fisher, Katherine Parr, and 'the Book of the Crucifix'," in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997). See also Debora K. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

itself—a means of identifying with a community of readers.⁹ One aim of this study is to trace the Protestant construction of a conceptual community of godly woman readers.

The last two decades have seen an enormous growth in scholarship concerning both late-medieval and early modern women's literate practices. However, the amorphous transition point between "late-medieval" and "early modern" (often coinciding with a discipline boundary) marks a change in the critical landscape; scholars of the early modern period—which (eventually) encompasses a substantial cluster of female literary figures and a thriving print culture—have understandably focused most of their attention on women writers and the female authorial voice.¹⁰ Thus the seventeenth-century woman writer and the terms of her literary production have frequently taken centre stage; Tudor women writers have only very recently come into focus.¹¹ Consequently, scholars tend to read "backward,"

⁹ For a discussion of late-medieval women's interactions with texts in the context of communities see Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

¹⁰ For instance, Tina Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 1992) and Kate Chedgzoy, Melanie Hansen, and Suzanne Trill, eds., *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996). While the arbitrary dividing line between medieval and modern tends to be set at 1500, studies or anthologies of early modern women writers often start in the post-Reformation period.

¹¹ Compare Micheline White, "Recent Studies in Women Writers of Tudor England, 1485-1603 (Mid-1993-Mid-1999)," *English Literary Renaissance* 30, no. 3 (2000) with Elizabeth H. Hageman, "Recent Studies in Women Writers of Tudor England (1984-April 1990): Part I: Women Writers, 1485-1603, Excluding Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke," in *Women in the Renaissance: Selections from English Literary Renaissance*, ed. Kirby Farrell, Elizabeth H. Hageman, and Arthur F. Kinney (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990) for a sense of both the significant increase in critical attention and the expansion of the field. Particularly significant to the development of the field are several recent scholarly editions, including Elaine V. Beilin, ed., *The Examinations of Anne Askew, Women Writers in English 1350-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Susan M. Felch, ed., *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughn Lock*, vol. 185, *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999); Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, eds., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); and Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G.

to consider Reformation-era women as part of an early modern group that primarily is defined by the concerns and contexts of later generations. By considering the Tudor woman *reader*, and by beginning with the late-medieval context and reading “forward,” I aim to map out some landmarks along the faint trail that connects the late-medieval reader to the early modern writer. Across the Reformation period we see increasing numbers of literate women (especially vernacular readers), a controversial context that prompts (and authorizes) polemical or evangelical, externally-directed responses to religious reading, and an emerging Protestant model of the godly, learned woman—all developments which contribute to the formation of the woman writer of the next century. But the sixteenth-century woman reader demands attention not just in her relationship to writing (a skill which many readers did not possess), but as a religious practitioner in a radically changing devotional climate. By examining a period during which literate practices and patterns of thought become much more central to authorized religious experience, I intend to shed some light on the changes, challenges and opportunities that women of varying degrees of literacy encountered in the midst of textual, religious and cultural reformation.

The first two chapters of this project discuss the implications for (potentially) literate women of radical shifts in religious culture and practice. Chapter 1 outlines two modes of early sixteenth-century devotional practice (image-based and text-oriented), which in the context of the English Reformation are increasingly represented as antithetical to one

Brennan, eds., *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); as well as the series of facsimiles published by the *Early Modern Englishwoman* project (Ashgate; General editors, Betty S. Travitsky and Patrick Cullen). For a current overview of the field, see also the extremely helpful collection Susanne Woods and Margaret P. Hannay, eds., *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers, Options for Teaching* (New York: The Modern Language Association, 2000).

another, as Protestants champion the vernacular Bible and creed-based Christianity, while suppressing “idolatrous” images and traditional practices. I discuss *The Ymage of Loue* (1525) as a “transitional” text, a devotional work addressed to Syon nuns that falls within the bounds of Catholic orthodoxy while promoting a form of text-oriented piety congenial to the Protestant project. This text, by associating traditional image-based devotional practices with (vain, deceptive) external ornamentation, draws on a gendered discourse of virtue and vanity to redirect feminine piety toward a more abstract, Word-oriented spirituality consistent with (modest, true) inward adornment. Texts such as these, by juxtaposing Word and image, abstract and tangible, help to set up the conceptual conditions which force a choice between two increasingly distinct religious paradigms.

In Chapter 2 I argue that the institution of vernacular liturgy and the promotion and wide circulation of the English Bible had especially profound consequences for the woman reader, particularly concerning her access to authoritative text and her proximity to the sacred. Further, partly because of the gendered Latin-vernacular language divide, this shift to the “mother tongue” was central to the Protestant reconfiguration of spiritual authority. Women readers, who tend to be vernacular readers, figure prominently in the religious controversy, and come to represent both the distinctives of Protestantism and anxieties around vernacular readership and hermeneutic agency. The vernacular woman reader stands in direct opposition to the priestly authority of masculine, Latin clerical culture; accordingly she is both rhetorically useful to the Protestant cause and a locus of cultural instability.

While women were frequently the audience for translated religious texts, some women also produced them. Tudor women translators habitually are discussed in the context of women’s *writing*; in Chapter 3 I argue that we must also consider Tudor translators as

reading women, and translation itself (rather than a type of “feminine” writing) as a form of meditative or proclamatory reading. While translation has a traditional association with the meditative devotional reader, the religious controversy makes possible a more public and polemically-motivated sort of translation by women. The type of reading encouraged by religious controversy and access to contested texts invites, not just the inward personal response associated with meditative reading, but an outward, externally-directed expression of thought—of assent, dissent, persuasion, interpretation, proclamation. Such reading practices, I suggest, contribute to the impulse to write for an audience. (Conventional prefaces to women’s printed translations, however, continue to frame the works largely in terms of personal devotional activity, a means of importing the moral capital of the meditative reader into the public arena of print.) As the number of literate women grows throughout the century, translation (with reading) is also increasingly represented as a means of keeping women out of trouble, a development which reflects the growing acceptance of the Protestant contention that a good woman is a reading woman.

In Chapter 4 I examine a religious community in print—an Elizabethan collection of the letters of the Protestant martyrs during Mary’s reign—and the place of the woman reader both in the original minority community and as a reader of the printed collection. The construction of a paradigmatic Protestant community in the language of the elect family of God represents a shift away from Catholic familial language of the cloister and priesthood and, concurrently, an increasing conflation of women’s religious and domestic roles. Reading is a primary means of identifying with the historic community of the faithful; it is also part of the communal role and responsibility of the godly woman.

Moving beyond the microcosm of idealized Marian Protestantism, Chapter 5 addresses similar themes of community and exemplarity in the broader development of the godly woman reader. Reformers reconfigure standard catalogues of female virtue and vice to shape a distinctly Protestant model of virtuous womanhood, and to situate her in an authorizing tradition of exemplary learned women. This chapter discusses the incorporation of notable Reformation-era women and their works (Anne Askew, Princess Elizabeth, Katherine Parr) into a tradition of literate Protestant female piety, a community of exemplary foremothers. This community of godly reading and writing women takes shape in print in the devotional collection *The Monument of Matrones* (1582)—a “domestical librarie” for the godly woman reader that provides her with models of virtuous learning and godly living for her instruction and imitation. The best-selling account of the life of Katherine Stubbes, who near the end of the century is presented as a pattern of godly womanhood, and whose virtuous life is characterized by a zealous attachment to books, illustrates and perpetuates this tradition of the godly woman reader.

Two related themes that recur throughout this period of reformation, and particularly in texts concerned with women, are exceptionality and exemplarity. The language of exceptionality is characteristic of Protestant apocalyptic rhetoric and the related argument that the Reformation is an exceptional moment in salvation history, in which unlikely people are called on to do special things, in which God uses the weak to shame the strong; in which all hands are needed in the field in order to accomplish the “innyng of the Lordes corne.”¹²

¹² Nicholas Udall, in *The First Tome or Volume of the Paraphrases of Erasmus Upon the Newe Testament. . . Thoroughly Corrected as It Is by the Kinges Highnes Iniunccons Commaunded to Bee Had in Euerie Churche of This Royallme* (London: Edward Whitchurch,

Such rhetoric opens up unusual roles and opportunities for women, while simultaneously reinscribing them as non-normative. Most of the Protestant material that I discuss has, to some degree, this sense of exceptional circumstance; if women's roles in mainstream English Protestantism become more restrictive toward the end of the century, it is perhaps because the sense of evangelical urgency capable of overwriting conventional gender roles faded in an increasingly established church. The language of exemplarity is ubiquitous where women are addressed or discussed, and reflects a persistent cultural understanding of women in narrowly moral terms.¹³ But it is also a language in which "exceptional" behaviour can be repackaged for imitation. The moral exemplar, then, particularly in times of transition, is key to the cultural (re)formation of ideal womanhood. Notions of both exemplarity and exceptionality shift during the Reformation period; new models of the virtuous woman are put forward for imitation, and the "exceptional" learned woman is represented both as an idealized figure and, to some degree, a normative one, in the emerging figure of the godly woman reader. This distinctly Protestant pattern of literate female piety, alongside a growing number of women readers in Elizabethan England, increasingly shapes cultural ideals of female virtue.

1551) Fol. 399. A common Biblical text on the weak shaming the strong is 1 Cor. 1:26-31. Such language of divine strength operating through human weakness is not inherently gendered, and often is applied to men as well as women; however, it readily takes on gendered meaning when applied to the "weaker vessel."

¹³ As the humanist educator Juan Luis Vives articulated, a woman needs "goodnes and wysedome" rather than eloquence, and while "it is mete that the man have knowledge of many and dyverse thynges, that may both profet hym selfe and the common welthe," women ought primarily to be occupied with that which is morally improving. *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002) 23. The prescriptive triad for women of chastity, silence, and obedience has been widely discussed.

1

Ymage and Text

The turbulent transition from traditional Catholicism to institutionalized Protestantism in sixteenth-century England unquestionably involved a reorientation of devotional thought and practice. Protestantism exchanged familiar images, rituals, and symbolic structures of late-medieval Christianity for a creed-conscious vernacular liturgy and a return to the unembellished Biblical text; it rejected “unwritten verities” and “idolatrous” images for the written Word. The re-definition of orthodoxy and the re-writing of liturgy were accompanied by a subtler, but no less significant, re-formation of devotional consciousness, one which took place alongside an expanding print culture and rising literacy rates. For those worshippers whose religious observance was focused around affective response to devotional objects and images—and this was particularly expected of women—a mental transition from traditional Catholic to Protestant forms of devotional practice required, among other things, a changing relationship to words and to images, a conceptual re-orientation or accommodation of the devotional mind to the intangible abstracts of textual culture. To a greater or lesser degree, most devotional texts of the period participate in the debate about words, images, and acceptable religious practices—a conversation with a lively history going at least as far back as the Lollard challenge to orthodoxy in the late fourteenth century. While the more polemically-focused of these works generally position themselves clearly at either end of the theological spectrum, many devotional texts, concerned more with piety than with controversy, occupy a spongier middle ground. They influence the devotional climate less

through direct argument than by shaping the mind of the reader, by naturalizing a certain approach to the pious life.

The printed devotional text, *The Ymage of Loue* (1525), most often attributed to the Observant friar John Ryckes,¹ is an example that works on both these levels at once. Although the work contains polemical sections which echo familiar Wycliffite arguments (against material images and the misuse of church wealth), it nevertheless operates, precariously, within the bounds of Catholic orthodoxy. It presents familiar, traditional teachings, but with a twist in emphasis that promotes a mode of devotion, and an understanding of “spirituality,” congenial to the Protestant mindset. In this sense, then, the *Ymage* can be considered a “transitional” text, neither fully “traditional” nor solidly reformist, but rather reflecting—and effecting—subtle changes in the devotional ethos which make Protestant teachings more readily imaginable.

To call the *Ymage* a “transitional” text is not *necessarily* to call it a proto-Protestant one. Revisionist historians of the Reformation, led by Christopher Haigh, have cautioned against a “whiggish,” teleological version of history which “finds the origins of a known result,” an approach to the past which “exaggerates conflict, accelerates change, and gives a one-sided story of protest and victory.”² Haigh emphasizes the “fluidity and contingency” (21) of the events that eventually turned England into a Protestant nation, and reminds us that those who lived and worshiped and made decisions in the midst of this series of changes did not know the final outcome. Particularly as an early text, prior to any inklings of a political break from Rome, the *Ymage* is not committed to a definitively Protestant way of thought,

¹ John Ryckes, *The Ymage of Loue* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1525). STC 21471.5. See below for a more detailed discussion of authorship.

² Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 15.

nor is it *inevitably* heading that way.³ Rather it picks up certain strands of Christian teaching which stress the “un-imaginability” of the divine, the inward state of the soul, and the role of scriptural and traditional teaching.

The late-medieval devotional climate has been characterized as ritualistic, affective, and image-centered, whereas Protestant models of devotion are generally described as creed-based, intellectual, and text-centered.⁴ Within this framework, the *Ymage* can be considered “transitional” partly because, operating within a Catholic context, it privileges “Protestant” modes of devotional thinking. Yet it is also transitional in another way, in that it creates tension between these two models in the first place: it helps to set up the conceptual conditions which force a choice between the two. The *Ymage* sets up an opposition between concrete and abstract, material and spiritual, affective and intellectual, in effect driving a conceptual wedge between these two modes of piety.⁵

³ Eamon Duffy argues in a similar vein: “That there was much in late medieval religion which was later developed within a reformed setting is obvious, but there was virtually nothing in the character of religion in late medieval England which could *only* or even *best* have been developed within Protestantism.” Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 4.

⁴ See Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, for a detailed discussion of “traditional” religion. On its central symbols, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), and Sarah Beckwith, *Christ’s Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London: Routledge, 1993). Haigh characterizes serious Protestantism as a religion of “thinkers,” requiring “informed belief”—a “Word religion: the Word preached, the Word read, the Word sung to the Lord, the Word applied to life.” *English Reformations* 286-7. In this, if little else, he is in agreement with A. G. Dickens, who also emphasizes the biblicentrism of the Reformation. *The English Reformation*. 2nd ed. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989).

⁵ Such a simplistic opposition of “traditional Catholic” and “Protestant” forms of devotion is unsatisfying in part because one can find all these characteristics, in some form, in both traditions. Most late-medieval Christians would not naturally see these terms as opposites. For example, the fourteenth-century devotional classic *The Cloud of Unknowing* is a complex blend of abstraction and affect, emphasizing the human inability to imagine God (a recurring theme in the *Ymage*), while describing a devotional life driven by desire: God “may well be

Ryckes' fluid use of the word "image" in his *Ymage of Loue* reflects and capitalizes on the diversity of use in the religious and literary discourse of the day. Images can be solid, tangible, "dead" things—crafted, painted objects and ornaments (idols, in Lollard vocabulary)—or "living" reflections of the incomprehensible divine "image"—in Christ's humanity, more dimly in self and neighbour (the *imago dei*), but most of all in scripture. Somewhere in between these extremes, "image" also can mean a mental picture or an abstract mental concept, and the words that explain them. Both Ryckes' argument and his language favour "reflection" over (more direct and concrete) "representation," locating the "true image" in the realm of the "living" and abstract. The virtue of love, for example, is a truer image of Christ than a "dead" wooden crucifix. Operating primarily within an image-centered devotional milieu, the *Ymage* redefines "image" in a way that challenges the common devotional paradigm.

The *Ymage* is significant, not only as an illustration of shifting devotional paradigms in the early sixteenth century, but also as a gendered version of such a shift. Most likely written for the Bridgettine nuns at Syon Abbey, it is certainly directed primarily to a group of religious women readers. Since a female readership is more likely to be identified strongly with the traditional affective, image-centered devotional model, it is particularly significant that Ryckes' devotional ideals push in the opposite direction. As the *Ymage* redirects "image" away from associations with the material, so it also, more subtly, redirects familiar notions of female piety.

loved, but not thought." *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, trans. Clifton Wolters (London: Penguin Books, 1978) 68. For the *Cloud*-author, popular models of late-medieval devotion (as well as a solid theological understanding) would represent an important, but beginning stage in the serious devotional life.

The female community at Syon was a unique one, not only as the sole Bridgettine house in England, but also in its wealth, prestige, and ties to the aristocracy. A strong voice of conservatism in the matter of the king's divorce, and a tenacious community-in-exile after the dissolution, Syon Abbey was not likely to be receptive to works of dubious orthodoxy. Yet as an unusually literate female community—reading was a primary activity for the nuns⁶—it may have been more receptive than most to the sort of text-oriented devotional practice that the *Ymage* favors. Such speculation may be moot, however; since the first edition of the *Ymage* was recalled on suspicion of heresy, it is not certain that any of the nuns actually had a chance to read it. While addressed to these female readers, the *Ymage* was published with a broader audience in mind; moreover, the controversy that it (probably unintentionally) generated overshadowed its devotional message and re-situated it as polemic. Thus the “transitional” *Ymage of Loue* is of interest, not primarily for its actual (perhaps negligible) impact on the women readers it addresses, but rather because it is uniquely suited to illustrate the sort of issues at stake in the re-formation of the female devotional mind.

The Ymage of Loue appeared for the first time on 7 October 1525, printed by Wynkyn de Worde; a second edition, newly typeset, was printed in 1532, again by de Worde, “for

⁶ A translation of the Latin Bridgettine Offices for the use of the nuns with an accompanying devotional treatise on divine service, includes a substantial section on reading. See *The Myroure of Oure Ladye (1530)*, ed. John Henry Blunt, vol. 19, *Early English Text Society: Extra Series* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1873; reprint, 1898) 65-71. It indicates both that contemplative reading played a significant role in the Bridgettine spiritual life, and that many nuns were unable to follow the Latin services without the aid of a vernacular translation. The *Ymage*, also, is translated to serve the needs of a vernacular audience. For an extensive discussion of Syon as a textual community, see C. Annette Grisé, “Syon Abbey in Late-Medieval England: Gender and Reading, Bodies and Communities, Piety and Politics” (PhD, University of Western Ontario, 1998). See also Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) 153-206.

John Gough, dwellynge at Poules gate.”⁷ The 1525 edition lists no author, although it is certain that Gough was translator; the 1532 title page states that the work was “compyled by John Ryckes, bacheler in diuinitie, an obseruant fryre.” The work was reprinted, with substantial changes, in 1587, as “*The True Image of Christian Love*. . . Written in Latin by Adrian Saurine a Dominican Frier, and translated 50. yeres ago by an English Obseruant Frier named Richard Rikes, & now truly conferred with the auncient copies, and published by A[nthony] M[unday].” There is nothing to support Savorine’s authorship (the name is unknown), and in the most plausible (though still uncertain) scenario the Latin original remains attributed to the shadowy figure of John Ryckes.⁸

What we do know about the 1525 edition and its readership is due to the controversial nature of the text. In December of 1525 Wynkyn de Worde and John Gough appeared before the Vicar-General to answer charges of printing heresy. Records of this case tell us that, after

⁷ While the date is not printed in the book, 1532 is the date usually assigned to it. Gough did not take up residence at Paul’s Gate until 1532. See Arthur W. Reed, “The Regulation of the Book Trade before the Proclamation of 1538,” *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 15 (1918): 165. De Worde was dead by the beginning of 1535 (*D.N.B.*, s.v. “Wynkyn de Worde”).

⁸ For a full discussion of all three editions of the work, as well as the case for Ryckes’ authorship, see E. Ruth Harvey, “*The Image of Love*,” in *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, ed. Thomas M. C. Lawler, Germain Marc’hadour, and Richard C. Marius, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981). According to Harvey, John Ryckes can be traced at Cambridge from 1501 to 1517, and presumably joined the Observants sometime after that period. Harvey speculates that Ryckes may have become interested in Syon through Cambridge associates who were benefactors of the abbey. In 1532 a “Father Rykys” is listed as the guardian of the convent at Newark. Ryckes is thought to have died in 1536; that same year a translation of Otto of Brunfels’ *Prognostication*—“an attack on astrological predictions and a revision of the church calendar that substituted Bible stories for all the feasts of the saints except the major festivals of the Virgin Mary” (Harvey 735-6)—was published and attributed to him. An attractive hypothesis (although not a provable one) is that Ryckes wrote (or “compyled”) the *Ymage* specifically for the nuns at Syon, and that Gough and de Worde were commissioned to provide each of the nuns with a printed copy of the work in translation.

admitting he had been present the previous year when Bishop Tunstall had warned London booksellers against the importation of Lutheran material, de Worde also

confessed that since the aforesaid monition he had printed a certain work in the vulgar tongue called *The Image of Love*, alleged to contain heresy, of which he said he sent sixty to the Nuns of Syon, and as many more he sold. John Gough, Printer, likewise of the said City also appeared and confessed that he had translated the said book or work for the said Winandus to print, which he received, so he said, from a certain Edward Lockwood of the Parish of St. Brides; and then the Vicar-General warned them that if they had any of these books to sell not to sell or part with them, and that they should get back those already sold and have them brought in before Christmas; and that they should also have copies of this work that has been sold or sent to the Universities of Cambridge or Oxford, brought in before the Feast of Epiphany; further he warned them to appear before him in Consistory on the third day after St. Hilary to reply to articles concerning suspicion of heresy.⁹

It is not known what took place when they returned to answer the heresy allegations, but perhaps it was not that serious, since the two ventured to print the work again in 1532. This time, however, John Gough was fortunate enough to enjoy royal privilege, and this fact is prominently displayed on the title page.¹⁰

⁹ Reed, "The Regulation of the Book Trade before the Proclamation of 1538," 163-4.

¹⁰ Even without royal privilege, there was less risk involved in printing questionable material of this sort in the 1530s under Cromwell than there had been in the previous years. Reed suggests that the reprint might have been motivated by the demand generated by Thomas More's *Dialogue concerning Heresies* (2nd ed., 1531), in which More mentions the *Ymage* by name, and answers some of its arguments against religious images (Reed 165). More is primarily concerned with one relatively small section (chapter four) of the *Ymage*, which he answers in the second chapter of the first book of the *Dialogue*. If the *Ymage* started out as a

De Worde's testimony that a copy of the book was delivered to each of the sixty Syon nuns, coupled with the internal evidence of the text, makes it quite clear that the *Ymage* was directed primarily (though not exclusively) to the female readers of Syon Abbey.¹¹ The proemium is tailored to a female audience: the writer compares his feeble literary offering to the poor woman's mite and to the "lytyll lofe," made from a handful of meal and a few drops of oil, that the widow of Zerephath gave to the prophet Elijah (A2r). The work concludes with a prayer for the writer to receive "charyte in to my reason wyll and memory, for a contynuall dweller in me. And lykewyse in you good ladyes perpetually" (F4r). At various points within the body of the text, the writer consciously directs his arguments toward Christ's "specyall spouses" (C2r). Thus the primary audience of the text is a female monastic one.¹²

technically orthodox work with a subtle reformist flavour, after the publicity in the *Dialogues* it was more likely to be read as straight polemic.

¹¹ Krug notes that "de Worde had by this time taken over the market in devotional printing, and Syon was on of his best customers." *Reading Families* 202-3.

¹² However, if de Worde had sold at least as many copies outside Syon as he had delivered to the nuns, clearly the book was published in anticipation of a broader audience than female religious. It was not unusual for religious texts initially directed toward an individual or a single community to enjoy a much broader circulation, particularly after printing technologies made them easily reproducible. There was considerable overlap of religious and lay readership surrounding Syon and its associated publications. The publisher's testimony before the Vicar-General indicates that one text might be marketed to several different levels of readers (convents and universities, for example) with different associations in each context. The fact that the books were recalled is a further reminder that intended audience is not always a reliable indicator of actual audience: it is impossible to say how many Syon nuns read the book in the short time before it was recalled, whether any of the banned copies remained at Syon, and whether the nuns had access to the unchallenged 1532 edition. Indeed, since the 1525 edition received unexpected notoriety as a heretical work, it is quite probable that the second edition was printed with a very different audience in mind.

It is unlikely that the *Ymage*, primarily a devotional work, was designed to be controversial.¹³ Yet it clearly participates in the contemporary debate regarding devotional practices. The nature of the objections to the work helps to isolate its distinctive and disruptive elements. While the work is not primarily concerned with criticizing the material paraphernalia of the Church, it contained enough Lollard-associated material to be considered dangerous in the paranoid climate of the mid 1520s, and to draw the indignant fire of Thomas More. In the second edition (1531) of his *Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, More inserts a substantial new passage directly dealing with the *Ymage of Loue*.¹⁴ The *Ymage* fairly mildly presents familiar reformist arguments: that money ought rather to be spent for the benefit of the poor, the living images of God, than on vain, corruptible material images; that priests and monastic houses have strayed from their vocation and become worldly and corrupt; that “charyte myght lacke, for all this gay outwarde thynges & obseruaunces” (C3r). While More carefully challenges the specifics of Ryckes’ arguments (concerning the Hebrew tabernacle, the ornamentation of the early church, and the like), his most interesting response is to the broader suggestion that effective devotion (or even thought itself) can take place without images:

¹³ One wonders whether Bishop Tunstall would have bothered to bring heresy charges against the *Ymage* (see below) if the work had not been directed to a high-profile, highly-respectable (but perhaps, as women, perceived as more suggestible) group of religious women. Given this respectable conservatism of Syon, associating a particular piece of writing with the abbey might lend credibility to an otherwise dubious work. Krug suggests that “the bishop ultimately was worried not about what the sisters at Syon would have thought about the *Ymage* but rather about what influential lay believers might conclude” from the fact that the nuns were reading it. *Reading Families* 205.

¹⁴ Since the first edition of the *Dialogue* came out in 1529, four years after the publication of the *Ymage*, it is curious that More did not respond to it initially. The fact that he included it in his second edition suggests that the book’s controversial arguments continued to circulate well after its suppression.

. . . all the wordes that be eyther wrytten or spoken / be but ymages representyng the thynges that ye wryter or speker conceyueth in his mynde: lykewyse as the fygure of the thyng framed with ymagynacyon and so conceyued in the mynde / is but an ymage representyng the very thyng it selfe that a man thynketh on.¹⁵

More does not distinguish between images formed in the mind, written on a page, or carved in stone:

fayne wolde I wytte of these heretyques / yf they gyue honour to ye name of our lorde / whiche name is but an ymage representynge his person to mannes mynde and ymagynacyon / why and with what reason can they dyspyse a fygure of hym carued or paynted / whiche representeth hym and his actes / farre more playne and more expressely. (39-40)

More begins and ends his discussion of the *Ymage* with this sort of argument, and his focus on this issue is telling. More seems to sense that the real iconoclastic current in this work is much more subtle than its rehearsal of reformist arguments. As Harvey observes, the *Ymage* “is controversial only in emphasis: Ryckes stresses a spiritual turning to God by the devout soul at the expense of the devotional apparatus of the church” (741). This distinctive emphasis of the *Ymage* makes it effective as a “transitional” text, capable of easing its readers into a new mode of devotional thinking. Ryckes manipulates the protean concept of “image” in such a way that he both affirms a distinction between types of images (material vs. non-material, dead vs. living, etc.), and privileges those “images” which are most abstract. The reader is gently teased away from a reliance on (predominantly affective)

¹⁵ Thomas More, *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, ed. Thomas M. C. Lawler, Germain Marc’hadour, and Richard C. Marius, vol. 6: 1-2, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 46.

material images (as well as vivid mental pictures) and lifted into a world of words and abstractions, the realm of the “true image.”

Such a maneuver is of special interest when addressed to a female audience, for feminine piety was commonly associated with the physical, material and emotional. In the prologue to his best-selling *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, Nicholas Love contrasts that which is written “to clerkes in latyne” with that written “in Englyshe to lewde men & women & hem that bene of symple vndirstondyng.”¹⁶ His translation and adaptation of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*—originally written by Bonaventure, the prologue claims, for the edification of “a religiouse woman”¹⁷—is tailored to these non-clerical readers:

To the which symple soules as seynt Bernerde seye contemplation of the monhede of cryste is more likyng more spedefull & more sykere than is hyghe contemplacion of the godhed ande therfore to hem is pryncypally to be sette in mynde the ymage of crystes Incarnacion passion & Resurrection so that a symple soule that kan not thenke bot bodyes or bodily thinges mowe haue somewhat accordyng vnto is affecion where with he maye fede & stire his deuocion . . .¹⁸

Women and other simple souls are to be directed toward the concrete, embodied, affective forms of devotion; higher matters of doctrine and divinity are out of their reach. Love’s *Mirror*, which Love claims is “more pleyne in certeyne partyes than is expressed in the gospell of the foure euangelistes” (10), is designed in part as an “orthodox substitute for the

¹⁶ Michael G. Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love’s Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Critical Edition*, *Garland Medieval Texts* (New York: Garland, 1992) 10. This early-fifteenth-century work first appeared in print in 1484, and was printed regularly up to 1530.

¹⁷ Commonly attributed to Bonaventure, this work is now assumed to be composed by a lesser-known Franciscan, Johannes de Caulibus, in the early fourteenth century.

¹⁸ Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love’s Mirror* 10.

Wycliffite Bible.”¹⁹ In this sense, the work draws its “symple” audience away from “dangerous” direct contact with the vernacular Bible toward more suitably mediated, simple narrative and affective content. While this popular text replaces Scripture as such with an affective account of Christ’s life and passion that freely adds imaginative extra-Biblical material for maximum emotional impact, Ryckes’ *Ymage*—“compendiously extract of holy scripture” (A1r)—moves in the opposite direction, away from affect and towards scripture.²⁰ Given the popularity and availability of the *Mirror*—not to mention the fact that a print run of each text came off de Worde’s press in 1525—the *Ymage* was likely read in the context of (and as a challenge to) the familiar piety of the *Mirror*.²¹

Also in the conversation (and in the library at Syon)²² is the *Tretyse of Loue*, a translation from the French which borrows heavily on the *Ancrene Riwe*, and was printed by de Worde around 1493. While the *Tretyse* purports to treat the same devotional

¹⁹ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*. (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999) 252. Archbishop Arundel, shortly after the anti-Wycliffite Constitutions of 1409 (which, among other things, outlawed the Wycliffite English Bible and made all English translations of religious material subject to church approval), enthusiastically welcomed Love’s *Mirror*—which contains a substantial amount of explicitly anti-Lollard material—as useful “for the edification of the faithful and the confutation of heretics or lollards.” Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love’s Mirror* xlv. The work, then, is at the other end of the theological spectrum from the quasi-heretical *Ymage*. See Sargent xlv-lvii for a discussion of the *Mirror* as an anti-Wycliffite text.

²⁰ Ryckes repeatedly seeks his true image of love in scripture, and urges his reader to do the same. Of course Ryckes’ text, like Love’s, “mediates” Scripture to some degree, but more directly, through substantial quotation. Bible references are faithfully documented in the margin of the text. Ryckes is not interested in (potentially affective) narrative/biographical passages, but rather in propositional/imperative ones. While there is no *necessary* polarity between scripture and affective devotion, both of these works tend to reinforce a division between the two.

²¹ The *Mirror* was printed nine times between 1484 and 1530, and was widely circulated in manuscript prior to that time. Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love’s Mirror* lxxxv.

²² See David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, vol. 158, *Cistercian Studies Series* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1995) 171-210.

topic—love—as the *Ymage*, and is also compiled for a female audience (apparently for a wealthy laywoman), unlike the *Ymage* it is a highly affective text.²³ Operating on the principle that the greater Christ's suffering, the greater his love for us and the greater our imperative to love him, the text focuses on the painful details of Christ's nativity and passion, on the anguishes of Jesus and the laments of his mother. While it is loosely structured around a discussion of various types of love, and reasons for loving God, it is primarily an emotional appeal to the reader, returning again and again to scenes of the passion:

seyth saynte Bernarde . . . 'O ye blessed and happy spowse of jhesu cryste, beholde on the crucifyx the shyld of jhesu cryste your spowse, And se the inclinacyon of hys hed to kysse yow; se the spredyng of hys armys to clyppe yow; beholde the openyng of hys syde and the crucifyenge of hys fayr body; and wyth greet affeccoun of your holy loue turne it and returne it from syde to syde, fro the hede to the fete, and ye shall fynde that ther was neuer sorou nor peyne lyke to that payne our lorde Ihesu cryste endured for your loue'²⁴

Focused on the second person of the Trinity and the vivid details of his life and death on earth, the affective devotion represented by the *Tretyse* revolves around a graphic, highly-elaborated "image" of love—the crucifix.

Against this devotional background, Ryckes' *Ymage of Loue* stands out more distinctly. In the proemium the writer states that, given his religious audience, he "thought it best to gyve some goodly pyctures and ymages of our sauour Jesu of our blyssed lady or of

²³ While the *Tretyse* is dependent for much of its structure and content on the *Ancrene Riwe*, much of the additional material is Passion-related. For a discussion of the relationship between the two works, see John H Fisher, ed., *The Tretyse of Loue, Early English Text Society: Original Series No. 223* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951).

²⁴ Fisher, ed., *The Tretyse of Loue* 15-16.

some other holy sayntes.” As he is searching for an appropriate picture, it occurs to him to present them with an image of love. In the approximately fifty pages which follow, the writer considers “images” of natural, worldly, and carnal love, as well as “artificial,” material images. All these he rejects in favour of the true image of love, as defined in scripture and reflected in Christ. The rest of the text develops this largely intangible image of love, exhorting readers to love God, neighbour and enemy, to attend to their inward spiritual state, and to mirror the divine image in the glass of their hearts. Although the *Ymage* is conventional in many ways, it is not what one would normally expect from a late-medieval devotional work which purports to present a devotional *picture*.

The proemium’s initial mention of images of Jesus, Mary and the saints suggests all the trappings of affective piety: crucifixes and pietàs, graphic meditations on the wounds of Christ and the tears of Mary, and the popular cult of the saints. One might expect, when Ryckes equates Christ with the image of love, that this would be accompanied by a vivid and moving account of Christ’s passion similar to those in the *Tretyse*, a tableau at the foot of the cross in which the pious reader could immerse herself. Indeed, vivid images (both externally apprehended and internally generated) were integral to the practice of meditative spirituality. This tradition of meditation, which Eamon Duffy tells us permeated both private and public worship,

stressed the spiritual value of vivid mental imagining of the events of the life of Christ, especially his Passion, to “make hym-selfe present in his thoghte as if he sawe fully with his bodyly eghe all the thyngys that be-fell abowte the crosse and the glorious passionne of our Lorde Ihesu”. This search for spiritual communion with God through vivid picturing of the events of Christ’s life and death was, of course, evolved

as part of an individual and intensely inner spirituality. But it came to be applied to the liturgy itself, and to be seen as the ideal way of participating in the Church's worship.²⁵

In other words, such affective "visualization" was not merely an isolated devotional technique, but a dominant mode of religious thought and experience. Connected to the observances and material images of the church (from rosary beads to side altars to the crucifix which dominated late-medieval rood screens), this affective mode of devotion was to a significant degree dependent upon them. Images of all kinds might serve as cues, focal points around which to imaginatively construct a devotional world and immerse oneself in it. And the senses, the body and the "bodyly eghe," were fundamental to this process of entering a closer communion with God.

Given the role of both the external senses and the inward eye in affective devotion, Ryckes' discussion of the five senses is of particular interest. While he privileges the sense of sight, he does so in a way which runs counter to the assumptions of affective piety. In pairing five manners of love with the five senses, the *Ymage* author matches sight with the highest love, love toward God. The lowest and most basic of the senses, that of touch, the author equates with love of kindred, "for thys sens perteyneth moost and onely unto the flesshe and so that loue is shewed to none but that be nere togyther . . . And as the sens of touchinge is in the flesshe and in euery parte of the body, so this loue is in euery thyng that hath lyfe. . ." (D3r). Touch is that sense which is "closest" to the body, both in the physical proximity of the object which we apprehend through direct connection with our flesh, and

²⁵ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* 19.

also because we share it with the beasts—it does not require higher, specifically human functions. In contrast,

the syght aboue all other chalenge to it selfe the symylytude of the deuyne and holy loue of god in that, that is moost excellent of a synguler nature more clere & spyrytual than all other senses, & discerneth thynges moost farre of, and knowe the dyfferences of many thynges, for though ye smellynge & heerynge do perceyue thynges somewhat farre of, yet it is more by drawynge to of ye ayer that cometh from ye object . . . But the syght do not so but rather it semeth to go forth & procede to thynges very farre of, so it is in these maner of louinge . . . yf we loue god . . . we go from ourselfe unto hym, we hye us fast and moost swiftly (as the eye to the moost delectable objecte) we caste all our loue unto hym that is onspekably moost hie goodnes aboue us and all creatures, hauynge no respecte unto our owne profyte of pleasure no more than the eye can reflecte the syght to se itselfe: . . (D4r)

Sight is the highest sense, according to Ryckes, because of the eye's ability to perceive things at a distance, and because it "goes forth" from the body—it is the least "fleshbound" sense.²⁶

Ryckes seems to be emphasizing distance here, a sort of objective clarity in contrast to the lower, instinctual perception of touch. The sight may go forth to fix on its object of desire (to use more affective terms), but it is also moving away from the body, increasingly

²⁶ Such enumeration of the senses (and in this case their companion "loves") is a familiar device in medieval texts, and the equation of sight with a more spiritual realm of experience is nothing new. Bonaventure, several centuries earlier, articulated a similar distinction between sight and touch: "through vision there enters bodies sublime and luminous and the other colored things, but through touch bodies solid and terrestrial" (*Itinerarium mentis in deum* 2.3, trans. from Quarrachi ed., for *The Franciscan Archive*). Ryckes seems particularly concerned with the *tension* between the terrestrial and the luminous, the solid and the sublime. While affective modes of piety would tend to blur the distinction between the tactile, material world and the luminous realm of the spiritual, this writer is persistently trying to leave the "solid" world behind.

“abstracted.” While affective visualization imaginatively brings the body to the cross, stresses physical and emotional identification with Christ and his mother, and thus associates a sense of physical closeness with spiritual closeness to God (in the person of Christ), the *Ymage* seems rather anxious to leave the body behind. Closeness to “hym that is onspekably moost hye goodnes aboue us” is less a matter of focusing in on affective detail than a matter of expanding heart and mind to bridge a great distance.

Given this shift away from the sensory and affective, it is fitting that in describing his “image” of love the author does not mention the Passion, or provide any “illustrations” of Christ’s specific, embodied acts of love on earth. Instead, he offers a very different sort of “image”:

An ymage of god Inuisible incomprehensible the sone of god by whome he hath made all creatures and man moost syngularly unto his ymage and symylytude, & because he was inuisyble and incomprehensyble, he toke a glasse that is our nature, whiche well may be compared to a brytyl glasse wherin he shewed us this ymage of loue that is hymselfe, in whome though there appered infynyte power and wysdome, yet charyte passed all as unto our behofe, for that put awaye the olde ymage of deth in our soule, and reneweth his ymage agayn in us & made it quycke thugh his ymage of loue. (D1v-D2r)

The stress is as much on the invisible as the visible. The word “image” is frequently repeated, but the author is occupied with equations more than with pictures. The “image” of which he speaks—of God in Christ, of Christ in the soul, of death, of love—is a reflection, moving between multiple “glasses.” This motion outlines a network of relationships and

transformations; it does not provide a fixed point on which the meditative mind's eye can focus.

The *true* image, Ryckes emphasizes, is a *living* thing. It is not a dead, material image nor is it something easily "fixed." Drawing primarily on 1 John, he uses language of light and reflection to describe the way in which the believer experiences the image:

A glasse shewe not the ymage so moche as it is, no more we can consyder his loue so moche as it is, a glasse can represent nothyng: but yf somewhat be present unto it. So in man can be no charyte but yf god be present unto his soule. . . .yf god be gone this ymage is loste & gone frome hym, as in the materiall glasse ye persone that was present to it goynge awaye, ye ymage in the glasse seaseth and hath no beyng

The grace of cryste & his doctryne is the lyght, kepe the glasse towards the lyght, torne it not a waye towards darkenes, and this ymage shall euer contynewe in the glasse. (D2r-v)

The true image is something which can not be grasped, but only imperfectly reflected. It cannot be fully located or contained, but remains itself in the realm of the "un-imaginable." The picture the writer offers us, of a mirror turned towards the light, directs the reader toward the external, intangible, and invisible.

There is a tension in the *Ymage* between traditional "imagistic" writing and the writer's desire to move the reader into a more abstract, less picture-dependent mode of thinking. While Ryckes occasionally resorts to some vivid descriptive imagery, in effect drawing a picture in the mind of the reader, he rejects these mental pictures for much less "imaginable" abstractions. He describes and rejects a Roman picture of friendship, an

illuminated picture of worldly love, and a seductress representing carnal love;²⁷ that which is most memorably described is that which the reader is encouraged to forget. The concluding chapters of the book illustrate this tension. After defining the “true image” of love—an ethereal gold-clad woman, a compilation of virtues—the writer describes its antithesis, the picture of envy and malice. By far the most memorable image in the book, envy resembles the traditional vice figure. Citing Ovid, the author describes envy as

an olde trotte with a lene face pale & wan, the teth blacke, a fyry tonge, the mouth full of venyme, the eyes holowe neuer lokynge ryght forth, grymme & cruell of countenance, the brest swollen full of poyson, cruell nayles with bloody handes & many other yll features. . . (F1r)

“But yet,” he cautions, “he [Ovid] cowde not dyscryue it so yll as it is in dede.” The writer emphasizes that the essence of the vice defies description: “If I shoulde portraie it lyke the deuyll, it is worse than he If I shoulde make it lyke Nero, yet is enuy moche worse Compare it unto deth, and it is moche worse . . .” (F1r). His lengthy and distasteful

²⁷ Friendship is “portrayed lyke a yonge man standyng bareheed & in his foreheed was wryten. Estas et Hyems. That is wynter & somer, he had on a shorte thynne cote, in whose hemme they wrote. Mors et Vita. Deth & lyfe, his syde was open that his herte myght be seen . . .” (A3r). The worldly image “frome farre appered very goodly, all burned wt gold & syluer with many other ryche thynges set out wt fresshe & oryent colours . . . And in ye border therof were portrayd, foules beestes, flyes, serpentes, wormes, & floures of dyuers kyndes. . . The foules appered so rauysshyng, ye beestes so cruelly deuourynge, ye flyes so defylyng erbes & floures & takynge awaye theyr sauoure, the serpentes so styngynge the wormes so gnawynge & freatyng that I am sure ye should a fered to put therto you hande” (A4r). Carnal love is a “pycture me thought passynge nature, whose foreheed hyghe sette up glystered as glasse, ye yelow here trussed in sylke with a fyne bonet a perle fylette & a frontlet brawdred with sylke & golde set with stones and a goodly broche of golde, the eyes rollynge in the heed, ye countenance solen & chaungeable, the skyn whyte as lyly, with some lyuely rodenes, the necke and brestes bare the apparell all dysguysed of the new facyon with a longe trayne, where appered out ye tayle of a styngynge serpente” (B1v). The image of friendship (which has an abstract, textual dimension) is dismissed as well-meaning but inadequate; worldly and carnal love, however, are identified with dangerously seductive sensuous imagery.

description of envy is necessary to make his point, but it is not sufficient. He has “drawn” a vivid picture of this “false monster” so that “euery man sholde be ware of hym & utterly dyspyse hym.” Yet even this image remains unstable, for the monster will frequently “traunsforme hymselfe in to an aungel of lyght by flaterynge & dissymulacyon” (F1v, F2r).

It is fitting that the picture which is most thoroughly and vividly described in the book is the one which is most completely opposite to the “image of love.” In Ryckes’ scheme of things, that which is most concretely described is the least trustworthy. He has “paynted this uggely pycture, for to set out myne ymage ye more goodly” (F2r). Since his image of “love” is more often abstractly defined than pictorially described, it is a more vague and—from a literary perspective—a less effective image. Thus the most memorable pictures which the text creates in the mind of the reader are those which represent the vice she is to avoid; the abstract “image” of love is constructed through contrast with concretely (if inadequately) described vice. To the extent that these vivid “pictures” are needed to emphasize his point, to give more shape to his abstractions, the author ironically remains dependent on a pictorial habit of thinking which much of his book challenges.²⁸ The “ugly picture” gives a sharper definition to the more ethereal one. Yet despite these inconsistencies there is a sense in which the oppositely described images *reinforce* the distinction or transition that the writer is trying to make throughout the work. If the reader is to turn from the image of envy to the image of love, this entails both a moral and a conceptual redirection. The move from vice to virtue is accompanied, as the language of the book suggests, by a

²⁸ As More polemically points out, “there were not in this worlde so effectuall wryting as were to expresse all thyng in ymagery,” *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* 46-7.

move beyond external, tangible, concrete images into a world of virtues that are more accurately defined than illustrated.²⁹ The true image is not an “image” at all.

To the extent that “image”-centered devotional practices were considered particularly appropriate to women, it is especially significant that the *Ymage* deviates from this sort of “image” altogether. Indeed, drawing on familiar discourses of female virtue, Ryckes seems to suggest that the sort of conceptual redirection that he encourages, away from the material/external toward the abstract/internal, is *especially* appropriate for women. As the writer is wondering whether, in spite of his unworthiness, he ought to continue to seek the true image in scripture, he is interrupted by the psalmist, who assures him that he must, for lesser images are not acceptable for his (female religious) audience:

Than met with me the prophete and shewed that it was vayne for me to gyue
corruptyble ymages to such persones. Quia omnis gloria eius filie reges abintus. For
all the glory & pleasure of a kynges doughter, is inwarde ghostly in ye soule, ye be
doughters of the heauenly kynge espoused to his sone Jesu, your father I suppose
dyde gyue you this liuely ymage whan he spake to you by grace & sayd. Audi filia et
vide.&c. Heere my doughter & se Inclyne thyn eere and be obedyente, forgete thy
contrary[sic] men, forgete thy fathers howsholde, that is forsake thy naturall loue, thy
worldely loue, thy fleshely loue, forsake all vanytees and make the naked of all
erthly thynges, by pouerte and chastyte, and than the kynge my sone shall couete the
beaute and apparell the with clothes of verteu. (C1v-C2r)

²⁹ That it is easier to illustrate vice than virtue is a familiar dilemma for religious writers. What is striking in this case is not simply that the image of virtue is less colourful or compelling than the competing picture of vice, but the implication that virtue is all the more virtuous for losing the competition.

The writer suggests that only that image which “can not be seen of ye bodely eyes” (C1v), which is as a shadow in a glass, is suitable for the “specyall spouses” (C2r) of Christ. As “kynges doughters” the nuns should divest themselves of all attachment to earthy things in favor of the more abstract clothing of virtue.³⁰ Their monastic vocation to turn away from the things of the world includes turning away from “worldly” religious ornamentation. Their devotion should be a matter of internal, rather than external observance. Ryckes is drawing on Psalm 44(45) here, and the passage is integral to the argument which he elaborates later in the text.³¹ The psalm, a wedding song, begins with praises of the king, and then turns to consider his bride:

... Thou [king] hast loued rightuousnesse, & hated iniquite: wherfore God (which is thy God) hath anoynted the with the oyle of gladnes aboute thy felowes. All thy garmentes are like myrrre, Aloes & Cassia, when thou comest out of thine yuerie palaces in thy beutifull glory. Kynges doughters go in thy goodly araye, & vpon thy right honde stondeth the quene in a vesture of the most fyne golde. Herken (o doughter) considre, & enclyne thine eare: forget thine owne people, & thy fathers house. So shal the kynge haue pleasure in thy beutie, for he is thy LORDE, & thou shalt worshipe him. The doughters of Tyre shal be there with giftes, the riche amonge the people shal make their supplicacion before the. *The kynges doughter is all glorious within, hir clothinge is of wrought golde.* She shalbe brought vnto the kynge

³⁰ For a discussion of the use of clothing and nakedness metaphors in Reformation controversy, see Judy Kronenfeld, *King Lear and the Naked Truth: Rethinking the Language of Religion and Resistance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

³¹ Here in chapter five, the Psalm allows him to recap the previous four chapters (natural, worldly, carnal, and artificial images of love), and set up the controlling image of chapters nine and ten. That this Biblical passage is woven into the structure of the work is one good indication that it was initially written with the nuns in mind.

in rayment of nedle worke, and maydens after her: soch as be next her shalbe brought
vnto the. With ioye and gladnesse shal they be brought, and go in to the kynges
palace.³² (*italics mine*)

A generalized allegorical interpretation would identify the king and his bride with Christ and the Church, but the passage also has special significance for those nuns who are “brides of Christ” more directly, as well as daughters of the King of Heaven.³³ The italicized verse (v. 13) is key to Ryckes’ conceit, which relies on a perceived contradiction between internal and external beauty, a tension between “glory within” and gold without. This tension facilitates his transferral of earthly ornamentation to the spiritual realm—if “gold” translates to (internal) virtue, then it is in harmony with the (non-material) glory within.

In chapter nine, Ryckes elaborates on this passage at length, offering—rather incongruently—a “visualizable” illustration of the living image of love which he has thus far been defining in abstract terms. The image is compared to this queen of the psalm, standing at the king/God’s right hand:

In apparell goodly gylte set aboute with dyuersyte of oryent colours & precious
stones of vertues and gyftes of grace with borders & heemes of golde. In this ymage
shoulde all swete soules yt be the spouses of cryste haue theyr glory & delyte, not in

³² This English quotation (verses 7-15 in modern translations) is taken from the roughly contemporary (1535) Coverdale Bible. While Ryckes and his contemporaries clearly understand “within” in v.13 (*italics*) to refer to internal virtue, modern translations have tended to interpret it spatially, adding “within *her chamber*”(see NRSV, NIV), thus removing any direct reference in the passage to internal beauty.

³³ *The Myroure of Our Ladye*, in its brief discussion of this psalm, applies it more directly to “oure Lady [who] ys chyefe persone of holy chyrche vnder criste. and that persone in whome abode onely the faythe of the holy chyrche in tyme of her sonnes passyon. therfore moche of the scripture that is expounde by doctours of holy chyrche is redde of oure lady” (138-9). Ryckes, who primarily uses Father-daughter language, ignores Our Lady throughout his work.

paynted clothes and karued ymages set aboute with dyuersete of byrdes beestes and foules which is but a grosse or a colored deuocyon. (E1v)³⁴

Ryckes initially appears to “paint” virtue in the same colourful terms as vice, implying that devotion is really a matter of preferring gold images to wooden ones; at this point in his argument he is in danger of undermining the distinctions he has been trying to emphasize. Yet each element of the queen’s finery is displaced into the heavenly realm and firmly attached to a virtue, for “kynges doughters shold haue pryncypally all your glory from withinforth” (E1v). Hems and borders of gold translate to patience and perseverance in love; colours and gems are assorted virtues which, when well ordered, accentuate each other’s beauty. This image of love dissolves into a catalogue of familiar (and arguably “feminine”) virtues:

Put dyligence to obedyence & nothyng can be more pleasaunt, let mekenes be Joyned to chastyte and nothyng is more splendent, Joyne pacyence with pouerte and nothyng can be more delectable. Connyng coupled with lowlynes what is more shynynge, set mercy and Justice togyther and nothyng can do better, benygnyte set with magnyfycence sadnes or grauyte doeth merueylously wel, & discrecyon myxed amonge all these maketh all the apparell goodly sure and profytable. And aboue all this is ye gylte vesture that I spake of goodly wysdome, whiche is not in getynge riches pleasures and honoures, but in dispysyng them & all other erthly thynges. (E2r)

The decorative apparel of this image includes a disdain for decorative apparel, a total displacement of earthly ornamentation to the gilt realm of heavenly virtue. And—in keeping with Ryckes’ emphasis that the glory of the king’s daughters is within—this translation of

³⁴ The “byrdes beestes and foules” in this passage recall the previous description of the image of worldly love (see note 27).

“gold” to “virtue” is accompanied by the movement of external religious observances to the interior, “spiritual” realm:

Lo here is the apparell of this ymage of loue. Occupy the eyes of your mynde in these varyetes, ye be ye very temples of god, set up therin the aulter of your herte and there make your sacryfyce and your prayers for now is the tyme yt cryst spake of to the woman of Samary, sayenge. The houre is come whan yt very treu worshyp of god shall worshyp hym inwardely for spyrytuall thynges in treuth unfaynyngely and not in Jerusalem, that is not onely after the outwarde obseruauntes. . . (E2v)

The “eye of the mind” supersedes the eye of the body. Material altars and sacrifices are relocated in the abstract interior world. Virtue is within.

That “our lorde consyder ye inwarde thynges of man . . . And he shall judge, not after the outwarde seyng of mans eyes nor after ye heerynge of the eeres, but after the very ryght and after ye thought and the entent of man” (E2v) is a standard Christian teaching; authentic devotion is not measured by potentially deceptive appearance, but by the state of the heart. What is notable in the *Ymage* is the juxtaposition of this principle of authentic virtue with the entire (external) apparatus of late-medieval devotion. While Ryckes does not seem interested in actually dismantling this apparatus, his rhetoric implies that, if virtue is defined by one’s internal state, external devotional aids and observances are not only unnecessary, but potentially antithetical to the development of authentic interior virtue.³⁵ This suggestion, that one must forsake (or at least conceptually dissociate from) the external for the good of the

³⁵ Ryckes himself comes to a tentative, and ultimately orthodox, conclusion: “we sholde not leene ne trust to moche unto outwarde obseruaunces & cerymonyes more otherwyse than ye treuth doeth assygne sayenge that also they be lytyl acceptable but yf ghostly and inwarde workyng goeth withall we maye not leue of the honourable and deuoute customes and holy ordynaunces of the chyrche” (E3v).

internal, makes the work subversive. Moreover, this imperative to dissociate from externals, linked as it is to notions of internal virtue, takes a distinctly gendered form.

While both sexes are routinely cautioned to guard against a hypocritical dissonance between thought and action, inward piety and external performance, it is traditionally women who have been warned against external ornamentation. It is an ancient and familiar misogynist commonplace that female beauty is suspect and outward adornment a snare; the good woman (if such a creature exists) eschews external display and favors a compliant and productive invisibility. Ryckes borrows from this strain of thought early in the work, in his conventional representation of carnal love in the form of a woman “whose foreheed hyghe sette up glystered as glasse, ye yelowē here trussed in sylke with a fyne bonet a perle fylette & a frontlet brawdred with sylke & golde set with stones . . . the apparell all dysguysed of the new facyon with a longe trayne, where appered out ye tayle of a styngynge serpente” (B1v).³⁶ This characterization of the venomous but well-dressed carnal love serves to illustrate Ryckes’ point that “outwarde beaute was a vayne and a dysceyuable grace” (B2r), and also alludes to a constellation of cultural assumptions about ornamented women which are part of the context in which the work was received.

Yet while this commonplace of deceptive female beauty remains in the background, Ryckes primarily operates in the related, but distinct, vocabulary of piety, modesty and

³⁶Presumably because of this section, Francis Utley concludes that the *Ymage* contains “attacks on women sufficient to allow inclusion” in his list of books participating in the ongoing controversy about the nature of woman. See Francis Lee Utley, *The Crooked Rib: An Analytical Index to the Argument About Women in English and Scots Literature to the End of the Year 1568*. (Columbus: Ohio St. U, 1944) 161-2. Given the conventionality of this image, it seems a stretch to suggest that Ryckes was consciously participating in this debate, particularly if he was writing to women. Indeed, the argument of the *Ymage* works against the common misogynist notion that women are incapable of “higher,” less body-centered forms of devotion.

renunciation of worldly vanity. Outward shows of piety are vain and deceptive unless they correspond to inner reality:

The body is cladde in a relygeous vesture it is well, but what auayleth that yf the mynde bere a seculer habyte after ye worlde. They kepe scylence withoutforth moche more take hede yt ye mynde inwarde be at rest from vayne thoughtes not clateringe with worldely ymagynacions. . . many do adourne and make gaye the materyall chyrche and hath grete reuerence to it, but what is yt where the temple of there soule . . . is ful of serpentes, Idolles & abomynacyons of egepte that is yll & unclene thoughtes . . . The body is kepte in within a lytyll cell, let not than the mynde be wanderynge all aboute the worlde. (E3r)

Combining the familiar gendered imperatives to silence and enclosure—particularly relevant to the situation of the nuns, but frequently applied to women outside the cloister as well—with criticism of the empty adornments of the “materyall church,” Ryckes associates modesty and piety with inwardness. Moreover, he implicitly links immodesty and impiety with (deceptive, “ornamental”) external religious observance.³⁷ His point, he claims, is not that the “honourable and deuoute customes and holy ordynaunces of the chyrche” should be outright rejected, but rather that they are useless without “ghostly and inwarde obseruaunce” (E3v). Nevertheless, by emphasizing this inward observance, and contrasting it with outward show, Ryckes draws on other (gendered) discourses of inwardness—modesty, silence, enclosure—to encourage his readers in a mode of devotion that is abstract, non-material, internally located, and tending away from the affective toward the intellectual. “God is a spyrytuall thyng,” he reminds his readers:

³⁷ This connection will be made vivid and explicit in the reformist characterization of the Roman Catholic Church as the Whore of Babylon.

remembre he knewe not the folysshe vyrgyns that had lampes of goodly workes
 outwarde, but they lacked that they sholde haue had withforth ye oyle of grace . . .
 Therefore rere up an aulter in your temples that is your selfe that be the lyuyng
 temples of god. There set up lyghtes gete you lernynge bothe by doctryne and grace
 whereby ye maye worke teche & shewe examples of lihtg[sic] . . . there fyxe up your
 ymages of loue. . . (E3v-E4r)

The “temple” and the altar are spiritualized and internalized; the wise virgin is to get
 “lernynge” and to set up “images” of love that, in the context of this work, are predominantly
 textual and propositional, oriented toward scripture and the “increate & incomprensyble”
 (E4r) God.³⁸

Redefining the spiritual life in the vocabulary of the “true image” for a female
 audience, the *Ymage of Loue* also reshapes the female devotional ideal. This is a transition
 away from dependence on material and visual image, but also a transition toward text. The
 “true image”—that incomprehensible thing which is apprehended only as a dim
 reflection—is most clearly “seen” in the mirror of scripture. The printed page displaces (and
 somewhat paradoxically replaces) devotional “images”—and reading moves nearer the
 centre of religious practice. For the nuns of Syon Abbey, already “reading women,” this
 might be fairly unremarkable. But for the majority of sixteenth-century women, who had
 ready access to the material images in the church but little or no access to text, the quiet
 suggestion that good women find the “true image” in text had potentially profound
 implications.

³⁸ Chapter 6, for example, is largely a compilation of various biblical passages describing love. It is not an (affective) emotional appeal to love, but rather an (intellective) discussion of the properties of charity.

From Separate Libraries to Common Prayer:

The Vernacular Woman Reader and the Dislocation of Priestly Authority

Religious Reading: His and Hers

The Bridgettine house at Syon had two libraries, one for the women and one for the men.¹ While this reflects the strict structural segregation of the house—in which each group existed in its own separate space and the chapel was partitioned such that men and women could not see each other—it also is emblematic of a less tangible partition between the sexes, that of language. Both libraries are known to have contained books in English (and a few in French) as well as in Latin; however, vernacular works make up a much larger percentage of the nuns' reading material. David Bell, in his study of convent libraries, notes that "the high proportion of vernacular books owned by the sisters of Syon stands in marked contrast to the number owned by the brothers. Of the 1421 titles listed in the catalogue of the brothers' library, all but thirty are in Latin."²

¹ The catalogue of the brothers' library survives, while the inventory of the sisters' library is lost, and must be reconstructed from other sources. See Ann M. Hutchison, "What the Nuns Read: Literary Evidence from the English Bridgettine House, Syon Abbey," *Medieval Studies* 57 (1995), David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Nunneries*, vol. 158, *Cistercian Studies Series* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1995), Christopher de Hamel, "The Library: The Medieval Manuscripts of Syon Abbey, and Their Dispersal," in *Syon Abbey: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and Their Peregrinations after the Reformation* (Otley: The Roxburghe Club, 1991). On individual book ownership at Syon, see Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) 153-206.

² Bell, *What Nuns Read* 75. For an anecdote concerning a similar division of libraries and languages in the Bridgettine double monastery at Vadstena, Sweden, which "serves as a reminder that nothing even remotely resembling parity of access to the written word in Latin

Perhaps the most obvious conclusion that can be drawn from this distinction between libraries is that the nuns were not proficient in Latin, and thus required vernacular reading material. Indeed, several English translations of devotional works were made specifically with the nuns of Syon in mind (not the least of these *The Ymage of Loue* discussed in chapter one).³ Yet while certainly many (and perhaps most) sixteenth-century women religious lacked any competence in Latin, at Syon in particular there was a significant number of nuns who appear to have been proficient in it.⁴ Many women did rely on vernacular texts and translations; others would have been at home with the Latin theology of the men's library. Thus, the segregation of reading material both reflects the reality of unequal language abilities among the sexes in the double monastery, and oversimplifies it; the division is partly practical, but partly artificial.

What is perhaps more significant than the fact that the nuns frequently read in English is the apparent fact that the brothers chose not to. Religious reading in the vernacular, it would appear, was considered primarily women's work. The division of libraries at Syon,

for women and men in orders existed anywhere in the Middle Ages" see Marjorie Curry Woods, "Shared Books: Primers, Psalters, and the Adult Acquisition of Literacy among Devout Laywomen and Women in Orders in Late Medieval England," in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liège and Their Impact*, ed. Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts* (Brepols, 1999), 178.

³ Other particularly significant vernacular works include *The Myrroure of oure Ladye* (commentary on and translation of the Bridgettine office) and *The Orcharde of Syon* (a translation of the *Dialogues* of Catherine of Siena). For a discussion of English texts connected to Syon, many of which appeared in print, see J. T. Rhodes, "Syon Abbey and Its Religious Publications in the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44, no. 1 (1993). Rhodes suggests that, given the importance of reading in the nuns' daily activity, "the priest-brothers had a particular obligation to provide the sisters—who were expected to be literate—with a suitable range of reading matter in English" (15).

⁴ For a partial list, see Bell, *What Nuns Read* 62. While it is generally accepted that Latin literacy, especially in the convents, declined after the twelfth century, Bell suggests that the minority of nuns in later centuries who were able to read non-liturgical Latin texts might be greater than once estimated (77).

then, invites comparison between the sort of religious literature written in Latin, and that which was available in English. Echoing the assumptions of the period, J. T. Rhodes writes that “the comparative lack of vernacular literature or devotional material reinforces the academic, intellectual character of the brothers’ library.”⁵ Vernacular (and devotional) literature is positioned as non-academic and non-intellectual—outside the realms of “higher learning” and scholastic disputation. Bell makes a related point, observing that “to a very large extent, English spirituality was transmitted in the English language. [And] since it was the nuns, not just at Syon but elsewhere, who, by choice or necessity, seem to have evinced the greatest interest in this vernacular literature, it was the nuns, not the monks, who stood at the fore-front of English spirituality” (75-6). While “English spirituality,” however defined, was certainly not the exclusive province of women (in orders or otherwise), the point remains that the spiritual landscape as mapped by English religious works was distinct from that of the clerical Latin tradition, and distinct in part because of its association with women readers.⁶ The literary division embodied in the segregated libraries was to some extent a division of content (and devotional method) as well as of language—a classification (and separation) of material that was deemed particularly necessary and suitable to women and other non-clerical vernacular readers.

⁵ Rhodes, “Syon Abbey and Its Religious Publications in the Sixteenth Century,” 15. Bell points out that the brothers at Syon, particularly in the sixteenth century, were an especially learned group (75); the centres of theological study generally had shifted to the universities, which were themselves bastions of masculine Latinity.

⁶ If the brothers at Syon had little interest in reading vernacular works, some at least were apparently quite enthusiastic about producing them. Rhodes draws attention to the large number—and wide variety—of printed vernacular works that came out of Syon in the early sixteenth century. So while it would be misleading to suggest that the male community at Syon (or elsewhere) was not engaged with “English spirituality” (and equally misleading to suggest that the increasing number and variety of texts produced in English spoke in a unified spiritual voice), the point is that women figure prominently both as consumers and imagined consumers of these texts.

It is common in male-authored vernacular religious works (many of which are addressed, in the immediate context, to women), to cite women's ignorance of Latin as a primary justification for the production of the text.⁷ Richard Fox, bishop of Exeter, in the prefatory letter to his 1517 translation of *The Rule of Seynt Benet* (at the request of several abbesses in his diocese), explains that, while the sisters "daily rede and cause to be red somme part of the sayd Rule," all the reading is done "in the Latin tonge, wherof they have no knowlege nor understandinge, but be utterly ignorant of the same; whereby they do nat only lese their tyme but also renne into the evident daunger and perill of the perdicion of their soules." As these women are "under our pastorall charge," he concludes, he cannot "suffer the sayd religious wemen, of whose sowles we have the cure, to continue in their sayde blindenesse and ignorance of the sayd Rule, to the knowlege and observance wherof they be professed."⁸ Fox frames his translation in terms of pastoral duty and authoritative guidance. Certainly Fox's translation met a real need in the convents, making a central monastic text accessible to vernacular readers. But while, on one hand, this translation represents an attempt to bridge the gap between non-Latin-speaking women and a classic text of orthodox Latin tradition, on the other hand, the language of the preface reinscribes the division between "ignorant" religious women and the authoritative Latin rule to which they are subject.

⁷ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*. (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1999) suggest that "this rhetorical commonplace is not necessarily to be taken at face value as a sign of male concern to alleviate female ignorance" (120), since there were often many other interests or audiences served by the production of English texts. Furthermore, they argue, the project of alleviating ignorance has obvious limitations in the context of "a structural misogyny in which female illiteracy was represented not as a cultural but as a biological fact" (121).

⁸ Wogan-Browne et al., eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular* 163-4.

The project of translation for a female audience is often accompanied by the language of accommodation or simplification. In the prologue to *The Myroure of oure Ladye*—which includes a translation of the Bridgettine office for the use of the Syon nuns—the writer explains:

... to the gostly comforte and profyte of youre soules I haue drawn youre legende and all youre seruyce in to Englyshe, that ye shulde se by the vnderstondyng therof, how worthy and holy praysynge of oure glorious Lady is contente therin, & the more deuoutelly and knowyngly synge yt & rede yt and say yt to her worshyp. And in many places where the nakyd letter is thoughe yt be set in englyshe, ys not easy for some symple soules to vnderstonde; I expounde yt and declare yt more openly . . .⁹

The writer makes the text understandable to the woman reader through both translation *and* additional explanation. This familiar construction of the female (or lay) reader as in particular need of plain and simple teaching is especially pronounced in Nicholas Love's prologue to *The Mirrour of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*.¹⁰ Love suggests that the meditations on Christ's life—which he both translates and embellishes—are particularly suited both to the affective "contemplacion of the monhede of cryste" (see chapter one) and to "symple creatures the whiche as childryn hauen nede to be fedde with mylke of lyghte

⁹ *The Myroure of Oure Ladye (1530)*, ed. John Henry Blunt, vol. 19, *Early English Text Society: Extra Series* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1873; reprint, 1898) 3.

¹⁰ There is, of course, a competing stream of thought which argues that devout laypeople are perfectly capable of understanding difficult texts, and thus should have access to English Bibles rather than be forced to depend on clerics to (mis)interpret the Latin text to them. Love's text, designed in part as an orthodox substitute to the Wycliffite Bible in the wake of its prohibition in 1408 (see below), is responding to this sort of Lollard argument. For a discussion of the controversy around the vernacular Bible prior to 1408, see Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, ed. G. G. Coulton, *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920; reprint, 1966).

doctryne & not with sadde mete of grete clargye & of hye contemplacion.”¹¹ Love imagines the “symple” and “lewed” vernacular audience in direct contrast to the literate clergy, and neatly conflates the vernacular with affective devotional practices. At least in Love’s view, then, Latin and vernacular literatures denote not only different linguistic populations and social roles, but more importantly, different modes of religious thought and practice. “Vernacularization” of a text (or of an authoritative teaching or practice) is conceptualized as much more than pure translation—it involves accommodation to the supposed needs and limitations of a subordinate class of non-clerical readers.

Elizabeth Robertson, in a study of thirteenth-century anchoritic literature (the *Ancrene Wisse* and the related Katherine group), points to the role of the female, non-Latin-reading audience in the development of vernacular style. The decline of Latin literacy among nuns following the Norman conquest increased the demand for religious reading material in English. Because of their solitary and contemplative lifestyle, anchoresses, in particular, spent much time reading and were in need of vernacular texts. The *Ancrene Wisse* and related works were written by men with this particular female audience in mind. Robertson argues that the style of these texts, which she characterizes as “pragmatic, nonteleological, and emotional,” a style which “stresses the concrete and personal over the abstract and universal,” is not only a response to the particular circumstances of the anchoritic life, but also a reflection of “a masculine vision of a particularly feminine spirituality.”¹² The common perception of woman as more grounded in her body, more associated with blood and tears (and thus more inclined to empathy), and less capable of

¹¹ Michael G. Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love’s Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Critical Edition*, *Garland Medieval Texts* (New York: Garland, 1992) 10.

¹² Elizabeth Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990) 10-11.

abstract reason contributes to a style which attempts to lead women toward “an emotional and physical realization of religious truths” (43). The production of these texts in English, then, was accompanied by certain patronizing perceptions about the nature and capabilities of the (female) vernacular audience, assumptions which were extended (as Love’s text makes clear) to lay and lower-class readers. Women readers were linked with vernacular religious texts both as a condition of their production, and as an audience to which their content and style was particularly suited.

While all vernacular readers, male and female, are often conceptually grouped together in contrast to the male clerical class, there also appears to be a growing sense of a distinctly “feminine” literary culture (at least among the upper classes) held in common by women on both sides of convent walls. Felicity Riddy argues that, whereas the reading habits of aristocratic laymen and their clerical counterparts were more divergent given the specialized Latin education the latter were more likely to receive, “the literary culture of nuns in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and that of devout gentlewomen not only overlapped but were more or less indistinguishable.”¹³ She describes a female textual community which has echoes of oral tradition, values simplicity, and draws on “a vernacular discourse of religious sensibility . . . whose great models of grief and compassion in the crucifixion drama are female” (112). It is this female literary sub-culture, she argues, from which (and into which) Julian of Norwich competently speaks; it is also this sub-culture, she suggests, which is metonymized and satirized in the hyper-feminine character of Chaucer’s Prioress. Riddy’s model reminds us that the “feminine reader” is not simply a disparaging

¹³ Felicity Riddy, ““Women Talking About the Things of God”: A Late Medieval Sub-Culture,” in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 110.

category created by male writers, but is also generated within the female literary community, perhaps in intentional contrast to clerical modes of writing.¹⁴ Yet it also illustrates the way in which such a sub-culture is shaped, defined and subordinated by its marginal relationship to Latin clerical culture.

The segregated libraries of the double monastery, then, are emblematic of a conceptual division of the sexes along the Latin-vernacular divide with its associated spheres of activity and modes of thought. While linguistic boundaries in practice remained quite porous (in that women could and did read non-liturgical Latin and men wrote and used English devotional texts), there is nevertheless a persistent cultural stream of thought which conflates masculinity and Latinity, while associating the vernacular with the affective sphere of women and the laity. The sphere of the female vernacular reader was defined by real, material conditions which limited women's access to Latin, and was influenced by the real devotional needs and expectations of female readers, both lay and religious. However, the "female vernacular reader" is also an imagined audience addressed by male authors, a cultural construct in which "femininity" and "vernacularity" are conflated and contrasted with masculine Latinity.¹⁵ Thus far we have seen that the figure of the female, vernacular reader is located outside of Latin clerical culture; she is given her own library, as it were. But she is not only outside of (or subordinate to) Latin clerical culture—she is fundamentally

¹⁴ Riddy argues: "The reader of Julian's text, female or male, is invited to share the feminised space, to become 'simple' like her, putting learning aside; there is no citation of authorities, or Latin quotation from the Bible. Her visions may be profoundly intellectual, but they are not presented as such" (112).

¹⁵ On the ideological work of constructions of readers, and their divergence from individual realities, see Mary Ellen Lamb, "Constructions of Women Readers," in *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers*, ed. Susanne Woods and Margaret P. Hannay, *Options for Teaching* (New York: The Modern Language Association, 2000).

at odds with it. Masculine clerical (and academic) culture—of which Latinity is an integral part—defines itself to a significant degree in opposition to the female body and mind.

Masculine Latinity: Linguistic Boundaries and Spiritual Authority

Monastic culture, of course, emphasized celibacy; the absence of marital and family commitments, it was assumed, allowed the male—or female—ascetic to focus more fully on the things of God. If late-antique and medieval male enthusiasm for the celibate life produced a well-known collection of misogynistic reasons to avoid the company of women, women were also given reason to believe that they would be much better off with a heavenly Bridegroom. It was in its increasing connection to the clergy, and later to the university, that celibacy became integral to distinctly male positions of authority and modes of intellectual inquiry.¹⁶ By 1139 celibacy was officially required of all ordained clergy, making it a distinctive marker of the (exclusively male) priesthood.¹⁷ Furthermore, while women could (to some degree) receive an education in their own monastic communities, the development

¹⁶ To the extent that women were particularly associated with the body (over against a more masculine or asexual mind/soul), the representation of celibacy as disciplining or suppressing the desires of the body, or even transcending its sex distinctions, had always tended toward a denigration or erasure of the feminine. However, this conflation of the feminine with physical embodiment also shaped the culture of affective piety—in which the body is a crucial site of identification with the humanity of Christ—which Love identifies and locates *outside* of Latin clerical culture. While the spiritual goal of ascetic life—union with God—can be said to be the same for both men and women, the language of celibacy, discipline and renunciation has often carried different meanings for each sex. The development of the celibate priesthood and particularly the university can perhaps be seen as an institutionalization of a distinctively masculine strain of “mind over matter” asceticism.

¹⁷ While clerical celibacy had been strongly (but not all that successfully) encouraged by the church for a long time, the Second Lateran Council “not only forbade the ordination of married men but decreed that ordination automatically invalidates the marriage bond.” David F. Noble, *A World without Women: The Christian Clerical Culture of Western Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 130.

of the universities, with their central role in shaping clerical culture and consciousness, represented the creation of a new, all-male physical and intellectual space which defined itself in opposition to the physical (and intellectual) world of women.¹⁸

That the life of the mind could flourish only in the absence of women was a common argument, and all the more poignant when made by a woman herself. Peter Abelard, the twelfth-century intellectual instrumental in the development of the University of Paris and often considered the founder of medieval scholasticism, is perhaps better remembered for his unfortunate affair with his talented pupil Heloise. Hoping to rectify the scandalous situation created by the discovery of their relationship and the birth of their child, Abelard resolved to marry Heloise; she, however, drawing on familiar anti-matrimonial arguments, tried to persuade him against it. In his later autobiographical *Historia Calamitatum*, Abelard recalls:

Heloise bade me observe what were the conditions of honourable wedlock. What possible concord could there be between scholars and domestics, between authors and cradles, between books or tablets and distaffs, between the stylus or the pen and the spindle? What man, intent on his religious or philosophical meditations, can possibly endure the whining of children, the lullabies of the nurse seeking to quiet them, or the noisy confusion of family life? . . . For this reason the renowned philosophers of old utterly despised the world, fleeing from its perils rather than reluctantly giving them

¹⁸ See Noble, *A World without Women* for an ambitious discussion of the development and spread of celibate clerical culture and its influence on scientific thought and practice. Noble argues that, "rooted in the male monasticism of the fourth century and distinguished above all by its emphasis on total clerical celibacy, the clerical ascetic culture of the Latin Church hierarchy had become by the High Middle Ages the culture of the entire priesthood, as well as of the culture of learning" (xvi).

up, and denied themselves all its delights in order that they might repose in the embraces of philosophy alone.¹⁹

Heloise describes a radical disjunction between the feminine/domestic world and that of Latin scholarship, in which any (regularized) presence of women undermines the pursuit of philosophy. Heloise herself was highly learned, but her range of intellectual activity was ultimately limited to the convent, that feminine celibate space which resisted the label of “domestic.” The continuing impulse of the clerical world to flee from the perilous world of women is documented in the anti-matrimonial contents of Jankyn’s book, which Chaucer’s Wife of Bath so despises, and resonates in her assertion that “it is an impossible / That any clerk wol speke good of wyves.” Clerical identity, spiritual authority, and intellectual pursuit are shaped by a discourse of flight from the feminine.²⁰

Latin—as both an ecclesiastical and an intellectual language—was a distinguishing feature of this exclusively male celibate clerical culture. As the English vernacular came into

¹⁹ Peter Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum*, ed. Paul Halsall, trans. Henry Adams Bellows (Internet Medieval Source Book, 1996; reprint, 1999) book 7.

²⁰ Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) 114, ll.688-89. This is not to say that men did not participate in “feminine” forms of piety. Certainly male religious writers made abundant use of female imagery during this period. As Caroline Bynum has pointed out, “the dominant religious image of the self in the late Middle Ages was female; the soul was woman or bride (or sometimes child).” “. . . And Woman His Humanity”: Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages,” in *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, ed. Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 268. Yet for men to imagine themselves as female was an exercise in abstraction, while for women feminine imagery was in some sense grounded in their own physicality. Bynum suggests that “the male writer who saw his soul as a bride of God or his religious role as womanly submission and humility was conscious of using an image of reversal,” but “because women were women, they could not embrace the female as a symbol of renunciation” (273). It is instructive to note that Bernard of Clairvaux, one of Abelard’s persistent critics (who objected to, among other things, his consorting with women [Noble 144]), himself made frequent use of feminine and bridal imagery. Apparently these male writers saw no contradiction between identifying with women on an imaginative level, and eschewing their physical presence.

its own, Latin was increasingly the mark of a group set apart. Walter Ong, in a fascinating consideration of Latin language study as a Renaissance puberty rite, suggests that “when Latin passed out of vernacular usage, a sharp distinction was set up in society between those who knew it and those who did not. The conditions for a ‘marginal environment’ were present. Moreover, the marginal environment was one between the family (which as such used a language other than Latin) and an extra-familial world of learning (which used Latin).”²¹ He suggests that the study of Latin, which separated young boys from the private, vernacular world of childhood and women (the world of the mother-tongue), marked their initiation into the exclusive world of men.²² Latin literacy separated the men from the boys—and from the women.

In the system which Ong describes, there is a marked distinction between (primarily vernacular) literacy, which was frequently acquired at home, often from the women of the family, and (Latin-based) “learning”: “This situation meant that, in general, girls, who were educated at home and not in schools, could be quite literate without having any effective direct access at all to the learned world, which was a Latin-writing, Latin-speaking, and even

²¹ Walter J. Ong, “Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite,” *Studies in Philology* 56, no. 2 (1959): 107.

²² Ong notes that the study of Latin frequently involved separating the boy from his mother (and thus from temptations to revert to his mother-tongue), and subjecting him to routine beatings and other ritualized hardships. He observes that Renaissance discussion of language study often wanders “from the consideration of poetry or language to the consideration of courage, or of its opposite, softness or effeminacy” (114); the study of Latin literature (in practice, if not in the ideal Erasmian scheme of education) was primarily an adolescent activity, designed to strengthen and prepare the boy for the challenges of the adult masculine world. Given the humanist reverence for the classics, it represented “not only something difficult but precisely a transit from ignorance to tribal wisdom, that is, to the accumulated wisdom of mankind” (119).

Latin-thinking world.”²³ Even if women did manage to learn Latin, they would do so outside the system: they might be fully educated, yet remain “uninitiated.” The same would hold true for women religious; they might have comparable Latin learning, but they remained in the cloister, barred from the universities and from the exercise of clerical authority.

While Latin clerical culture constructed itself in isolation from the physical presence of women, Ong suggests that the Latin language itself was also conducive to patterns of thought that marginalized traits associated with the “feminine mind.” As a primarily *written* language, Latin (in contrast to the vernacular, which was spoken from infancy) had the effect of isolating discourse and distancing the knower from the known. Ong further argues that *Learned* Latin “effects even greater objectivity by establishing knowledge in a medium insulated from the emotion-charged depths of one’s mother tongue, thus reducing interference from the human lifeworld and making possible the exquisitely abstract world of medieval scholasticism.”²⁴ In this sense, the mother tongue may indeed be more congenial to the expression of affective piety and concrete devotional images—and Latin becomes a means of “abstracting” oneself from this vernacular world. The posture taken by authors and translators of vernacular works for women (discussed above) reinforces this idea of separate mental worlds by assuming that the vernacular audience has little interest in, or capacity for, abstract thought. This distinction between Latin/masculine and vernacular/feminine modes

²³ 108. Those humanists who advocated Latin learning for women emphasized its value in promoting the feminine virtues of obedience and chastity. As Erasmus comments in praise of Thomas More’s daughters, “a woman must have intelligence [education] if she is to keep her household up to its duties, to form and mould her childrens’ characters, and meet her husband’s needs in every way.” *The Correspondence of Erasmus*, trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson, *Collected Works of Erasmus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974-) 8.298. Classical learning for women enhanced the private life of the family; it did not create a place for women in the public sphere.

²⁴ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982) 114.

of thought creates a climate in which the masculine mind mediates the Latin text for the feminine mind. It also has the potential to produce a corollary anxiety—that without proper masculine mediation, the “feminine” reader is in danger of misreading the text.²⁵ The inaccessibility of the Latin text to the vernacular reader, then, secures the position of the authoritative masculine reader/mediator of the text.

The gendered Latin/vernacular language barrier is tightly bound up in the complex of boundaries that defined and maintained the authority of the late-medieval priesthood. This language distinction worked to establish members of the male clerical hierarchy as the interpreters and dispensers of sacred text, and of authoritative religion more generally.²⁶ Further, *any* boundary which *sets apart* priest from parishioner serves to reinforce the “sacred” nature of the priesthood; holiness or sanctity, particularly as a ritual condition, is in part defined by separation. In a context in which priestly authority was most clearly demonstrated, not in relation to text, but in the ritual of the mass, in the consecration of the eucharist and the mediation of Christ’s sacred body to the congregation,²⁷ the (gendered)

²⁵ See Rita Copeland, “Why Women Can’t Read: Medieval Hermeneutics, Statutory Law, and the Lollard Heresy Trials,” in *Representing Women: Law, Literature, and Feminism*, ed. Susan Sage Heinzelman and Zipporah Batshaw Wiseman, *Post-Contemporary Interventions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) for a discussion of women as “bad readers.” She argues: “the formal, scientific foundation of this logic of exclusion [of women from intellectual privilege] is the identification of woman with the body and of man with the spirit or intellect. The hermeneutic correlative of this metaphysic of gender also provides a powerful justification for male intellectual privilege. Women are not simply boisterous and demanding intruders on the scholar’s spiritual retreat: by their very nature, their willful carnality, women are bad readers. Good reading is reading like a man, reading always according to the spiritual sense” (256).

²⁶ While in reality not all parish priests *were* literate, they were nevertheless the custodians of the Latin liturgy, and it was their “hoc est corpus meum,” in whatever garbled form, which accompanied the miracle of the mass.

²⁷ For a detailed discussion of the development of eucharistic ritual and its centrality in the late-medieval church, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Rubin writes: “Priests were seen

language boundary between (male) cleric and (feminine) laity has a ritual or symbolic function, as well as a “practical” one. The priest (and only the priest) performs these sacred functions—and he is set apart as holy and authoritative by gendered boundaries of language, ritual celibacy, and all the distinctive trappings of clerical Latinity.

Thus late-medieval Latinity—as a marker of ecclesiastical position, intellectual distinction, and membership in an exclusively male world—is constructed in opposition to the feminine body and mind, and is a crucial dimension of masculine hermeneutic and priestly authority. It is the male reader and speaker of Latin who is the guardian and mediator of authoritative religious meaning. And it is the (female) vernacular reader, culturally positioned in opposition to authoritative masculine Latinity, to whom the authoritative text is mediated and adapted, and whose marginality has the potential to make her a dangerous reader. The late-medieval enmeshment of Latinity and masculine priestly/interpretive authority—as well as the destabilizing potential of the vernacular reader—is perhaps best illustrated by the place of the woman reader in the struggle over the vernacular Bible.

Crossing the Line: The Woman Reader and the Vernacular Bible

Two distinguishing features of the late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Lollard heresy are its “virulent anticlericalism”²⁸ and its emphasis on the Bible and vernacular

as teachers but above all as ritual performers of sacramental acts, those acts which tie the Christian world to God through repeated, and reiterated procedures that only the priests could perform” (50).

²⁸ Shannon McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities 1420-1530* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995) 8.

reading. It should be no surprise that these two go hand in hand, for the exclusivity of the Latin Bible was, in Lollard eyes, an opportunity for the clergy to retain and abuse their (unjustified) priestly power.²⁹ The fourteenth-century chronicler Henry Knighton had a rather different view of Wycliffite Bible translation, yet his account also emphasizes a divide between clergy and laity:

The Gospel, which Christ gave to the clergy and the doctors of the church, that they might administer it to the laity and to weaker brethren, according to the demands of the time and the needs of the individual, that Master John Wyclif translated from Latin into the language not of angels but of Englishmen, so that he made that common and open to the laity, and to women who were able to read, which used to be for literate and perceptive clerks, and spread the Evangelists' pearls to be trampled by swine.³⁰

For Knighton, English translation puts the gospel in the dangerous hands of readers who are ill-equipped to handle it—those who are “weak,” illiterate,³¹ and imperceptive—and female readers merit special mention in that category.

²⁹ Wycliffite thought questioned the sacramental role of the priest in the eucharist (and thereby priestly authority more generally) and invested primary authority in Scripture. It was, then, doubly important for the people to have access to the Bible in a form untainted by priestly mediation. By 1400 there were two Wycliffite translations in circulation (although there is no evidence that Wyclif himself was directly involved in the production of either of them).

³⁰ G. H. Martin, ed., *Knighton's Chronicle: 1337-1396*, *Oxford Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 243-45.

³¹ Knighton, of course, is speaking of Latin literacy. However, it is useful to remember that the frequently communal, “outloud” nature of reading in this period meant that a significant group of people could have access to vernacular texts which were read to them (or memorized and recited) without being at all literate themselves. On lollardy and literacy, see Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1984) 193-217. See also Claire Cross, “‘Great Reasoners in Scripture’: The Activities of Women Lollards 1380-1530,” in *Medieval Women*, ed. Derek

In 1408, in response to the Lollard heresy, Archbishop Arundel's Constitutions outlawed the reading of unauthorized Wycliffite texts and forbade the translation of any scripture text into English, or the use of such a translation, without diocesan inspection and approval. While this was not strictly speaking a complete ban on the vernacular Bible, it seems to have been perceived that way; it certainly served the purpose of associating vernacular scripture with heresy. Lollard heresy trials routinely inquired into the suspect's use or ownership of English books; Margaret Aston argues that "it was as a vernacular literate movement that Lollardy had gathered momentum and it was as a vernacular literate movement that it was suspected and persecuted."³² Reading vernacular books—especially the Bible—was a suspicious and potentially seditious activity, a challenge to (male, Latin) ecclesiastical, legal—and hermeneutic—authority.

While their numbers and level of involvement remain uncertain, it is clear that women were visible participants in the Lollard movement. In addition to outlining recorded instances of female readers, Claire Cross discusses the participation of women in book distribution, and suggests that (literate or not) they were particularly involved in the memorization (and recitation) of large portions of scripture. Margaret Aston finds enough evidence of heretical claims about women to speculate on the possibility of Lollard women

Baker (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978) for a discussion of the book-related activities of Lollard women.

³² 207. See also Anne Hudson's discussion of lollardy as a "heresy of the vernacular" in Anne Hudson, *Lollards and Their Books* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1985) 141-63. For a thorough foundational study of the vernacular Bible in this period see Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*. Recently Shannon McSheffrey has pointed out that the majority of Lollards (and especially the women) most likely remained illiterate; see Shannon McSheffrey, "Literacy and the Gender Gap in the Late Middle Ages: Women and Reading in Lollard Communities," in *Women, the Book and the Godly*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995). However, the point here is that, regardless of the statistical number of Lollard readers, the *perceived threat* of the movement was strongly connected to its vernacularity.

priests.³³ Shannon McSheffrey has recently challenged the widely-held critical assumption that Lollardy (and other heresies) offered women more actual opportunities than were available to them within orthodoxy; nevertheless, regardless of the degree of actual female attraction to and participation in the movement, anti-Lollard rhetoric itself tends to make similar sorts of assumptions, connecting women's participation with the heretical nature of the movement.³⁴

The late-medieval assumption that the daughters of Eve tend to be easily deceived likely contributes to the tacit belief that women are easy prey for heretical groups. Knighton (the chronicler) laments that Lollard preaching "subverted many simple minds, and compelled them to join their sect, lest they should be thought strangers to the law of God and divine precepts, and many weaker brethren were thus seduced, some by shame, and some by fear" But more troublesome to him is that these simple, suggestible people are suddenly given (unwarranted) hermeneutic authority: "both men and women [converts] instantly became learned exponents of evangelical teaching in their mother tongue, as though they had been trained and taught in one school" (303). Knighton's concerns echo other anti-Lollard

³³ Cross, "Great Reasoners in Scripture." Aston, *Lollards and Reformers* 49-70. Of course the Lollard notion of the priesthood itself was quite different, tending toward a concept of the priesthood of all believers, diminishing the sacramental role of the priest, and emphasizing the ministry of the word. Aston find no conclusive evidence of female priests in action, but demonstrates that some very unorthodox opinions on the subject were in circulation in the 1390's.

³⁴ See McSheffrey, "Literacy and the Gender Gap in the Late Middle Ages," which suggests that a substantial gendered literacy gap remained within the Lollard community, and McSheffrey, *Gender and Heresy*, in which the author suggests that women were not particularly attracted to Lollardy. In line with recent revisionist histories of the period, McSheffrey argues that popular Catholic practices, especially the cult of the saints, offered women more avenues for religious participation than did the Wycliffite community. Furthermore, she questions the "textbook orthodoxy" that women were particularly attracted to religious deviance. The contemporary critical argument that women are attracted to heresy is based on women's marginality in orthodox religion, whereas the late-medieval argument would assume women are more vulnerable to manipulation or more susceptible to corruption.

anxieties about “women’s improper and arrogant bookishness.”³⁵ The dangerous figure of the gullible, feeble-minded vernacular reader-turned-expositor haunts anti-Lollard rhetoric, and while this “bad reader” could be any minimally-educated layman, there is a sense that the woman reader represents all that is worst about this scenario. Any representation of heresy as particularly “feminine,” then, can also function to emphasize heretical excess and uncontrol. Rita Copeland concludes that “in anti-Lollard literature women’s reading becomes a sign of the transgressive violence that heresy has wrought against political and hermeneutical order. Women’s reading is a consummate symbol of the threat of the vernacular, lay reading of the Bible.”³⁶ The reading woman becomes emblematic of the more generalized threat of the heretical lay reader.

Particularly after the advent of printing in the late fifteenth century, and as lay literacy grew, an increasing amount of vernacular devotional literature was available, some of which was designed as a more suitable substitute for the English Bible. Eamon Duffy argues that, while “the fear of Bible translations was a major weakness in the educational and devotional programme of late medieval English Catholicism, and a principal reason why serious interest in religious education in the vernacular could tip over into, or be confused with, Lollardy,” the devotional climate was moving towards greater acceptance of and demand for vernacular material: “the pressure for the extension of the vernacular to all religious fundamentals, including the use of English versions of the Our Father, Hail Mary, and the Creed, had been

³⁵ Copeland, “Why Women Can’t Read,” 270.

³⁶ 271. It is important to remember that beyond this context of anti-Lollard polemic, women’s reading carried many other meanings, and was often used to connote meditative piety, as I discuss in the following chapter. Consider also the orthodox iconography of the annunciation, in which the Virgin is often depicted with an open book.

achieved long before the Reformation reached England.”³⁷ When William Tyndale’s reformist translation of the New Testament was published (in Worms) in 1526, it was immediately smuggled into England, and the authorities had little success in suppressing it.³⁸ By 1534 Convocation was seeking royal approval for an official English translation, and the Great Bible—which was to be placed in every church—appeared in 1539.³⁹ However, the vernacular Bible remained a contentious issue, and by 1543 the government was again seeking to control readership of the English scriptures.⁴⁰

³⁷ *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 80. Duffy speculates that, given the late-medieval devotional mood and the emphasis placed on scripture by figures such as Erasmus, More and Fisher, the English Bible, without the prompting of the Reformation, might well have found a place in traditional Catholicism. However, it is important to remember that vernacular prayers and creeds are not open to the same degree of interpretation as a vernacular New Testament would be; it seems likely that making the Biblical text available to a large new demographic of readers—whether in a traditional or a reformed context—would inevitably raise substantial anxieties over hermeneutic authority.

³⁸ The vernacular Bible was now connected with the threat of Lutheranism; Pope Leo X had called for the destruction of Lutheran books in 1520, and during this decade Bishop Tunstall of London was especially concerned with regulating the growing distribution of foreign books in the city. See Arthur W. Reed, “The Regulation of the Book Trade before the Proclamation of 1538,” *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 15 (1918). See also W. R. Cooper, ed., *The New Testament (1526), Translated by William Tyndale* (London: The British Library, 2000).

³⁹ The first Coverdale version appeared in 1535, and the Matthew Bible in 1537. The Second Injunctions (1538) required that a Bible be placed in each church by the following year, and that parishoners be encouraged to read it. Both Cranmer and Cromwell were certainly instrumental in these developments, which followed close on Henry VIII’s break with Rome and the 1534 Act of Supremacy. Gillian Brennan, “Patriotism, Language and Power: English Translations of the Bible, 1520-1580,” *History Workshop* 27 (1989) suggests that this rapid change in policy “does not represent a volte-face in government thinking, as the English Bible was still perceived within the context of the maintenance of order” (28). See also A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*, 2nd ed. (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989; reprint, 1992) 151-60. Given the vicissitudes of Henrician politics and the rollercoaster of reform and reaction during this period, the extent to which various official instructions were actually carried out at the parish level remains uncertain and uneven.

⁴⁰ Brennan, “Patriotism, Language and Power,” argues that this particular act was not, as is often supposed, primarily a product of the doctrinally conservative shift in official policy, but

The *Act for the Advancement of true Religion* was an official attempt to combat the “ignoraunce fonde opynions errours and blindenes of divers and soondrye [of the king’s] Subjects.” Not only does the act prohibit reformist translations of the Bible (such as Tyndale’s), but it also seeks to regulate reading of permitted versions:

no woomen nor artificers prentices journeymen serving men of the degrees of yeomen or undre, husbandemen nor laborers shall reade . . . the Byble or New Testament in Englishe, to himselfe or any other pryvatelie or openlie. . .⁴¹

It includes the exception that “everye noble wooman and gentlewooman maie reade to themselves alone and not to others” (3.896). Voicing—and encoding—familiar anxieties, the act regulates Bible reading on the basis of class and gender. And while the upper-class woman reader is granted access to the Word, she is prohibited from speaking it, from verbally distributing it to those who are not entitled to it. Those who were in the authorized categories were certainly not beyond suspicion; the young gentlewoman Anne Askew, burned as a heretic in 1546, was condemned for her denial of transubstantiation—a Protestant doctrinal position which she and her persecutors closely associated with her activity as a vernacular Bible reader.⁴²

rather that it was motivated “out of a fear that the English Bible was leading to disorder among the uneducated” (29). If this is the case, the existence of this act would seem to suggest that a substantial number of “uneducated” people were taking advantage of the new availability of the English Bible.

⁴¹ Alexander Luders et al., eds., *The Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols. (London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1810-28; reprint, 1963) 3.896.

⁴² Askew makes it quite clear that she is being executed for holding specifically Protestant beliefs: “thys is the heresy which they report me to holde, that after the prest hath spoken the wordes of consecracyon, there remayneth breade styll.” Elaine V. Beilin, ed., *The Examinations of Anne Askew, Women Writers in English 1350-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 139, and additionally, that the “scriptures are suffycient for our lernynge and salvacyon. . . we nede no unwritten verytees to rule [Christ’s] church with” (142-3). Askew appears to have been a target for heresy charges in part because of her

The heresy trials of Anne Askew, both as recounted by Askew herself, and as retold by both Protestant and Catholic polemicists in the following years, foreground the Reformation-era struggle over issues of authority, interpretation, text, gender and language. Askew's reformist views, and probably her association with some of the ladies at court, seem to have attracted attention, and around 1545 she was examined for heresy; her friends managed to negotiate her release, but in 1546 she was put on trial a second time, imprisoned, interrogated, and finally executed. She wrote her own account of both heresy examinations, which was promptly published, with commentary, by Protestant polemicist John Bale. The story of her martyrdom was further popularized in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, and accordingly, she was vilified by the Jesuit Robert Parsons in his 1604 attack on Foxe's work.

Askew portrays herself as, above all, a great Bible reader, better versed in the Scriptures than her opponents. She consistently quotes the Bible to her questioners, and appeals to it as the highest doctrinal authority. Her account of her trial focuses on doctrinal disputation, but it is clear that her gender is a point of contention as well. She writes:

Then the Byshoppes chaunceller rebuked me, and sayd, that I was moche to blame for utterynge the scriptures. For S. Paule (he sayd) forbode women to speake or to talke of the worde of God. I answered hym, that I knewe Paules meanyng so well as he, whych is, i. Corinthiorum xiiii. that a woman ought not to speake in the congregacyon by the waye of teachynge. And then I asked hym, how manye women he had seane,

connection with Katherine Parr's Protestant faction at court. As Henry VIII grew increasingly ill, reformist and traditionalist factions competed for control over church and realm; shortly after Askew's execution the king died, and Edward VI (with the Protestant Somerset as Protector) instituted sweeping reforms.

go into the pulpett and preache. He sayde, he never sawe non. Then I sayd, he ought to fynde no faute in poore women, except they had offended the lawe.⁴³

Askew's account of the exchange suggests that she not only knows the words of St. Paul, but she knows their meaning as well as her examiner; she is cleverer—and a better interpreter of scripture—than her questioners. Furthermore, based on her Biblical reading, she justifies her own hermeneutic activities as entirely appropriate for a woman.⁴⁴

Askew's account suggests that her opponents see her bookishness as a significant part of her—and their—problem. Askew recounts an exchange with the archdeacon, who “toke . . . my boke out of my hande, and sayd. Soche bokes as thys is, hath brought yow to the trouble ye are in. Be ware (sayth he) be ware, for he that made it, was brent in Smythfelde.”⁴⁵ Foxe, the martyrologist, also connects Askew to books and Protestant learning. When she, in her turn, is burnt at Smithfield, he praises her for correcting the preacher at her execution: “where hee sayd amisse, there sayd she he misseth, and speaketh without the booke.”⁴⁶ More significantly, Foxe links Askew's execution to a broadened attempt to eradicate Protestant literature: “Then the catholick fathers when they had brought this christian woman. . . unto [her] rest. . . made out a straight and hard proclamation, authorised by the

⁴³ Beilin, ed., *The Examinations of Anne Askew* 29-30.

⁴⁴ She also, when it suits her, capitalizes on conventional expectations of women. She recounts a conversation with an examiner: “he asked me, if the host shuld fall, and a beast ded eate it, whether the beast ded receyve God or no? I answered, Seynge ye have taken the paynes to aske thys questyon, I desyre yow also to take so moche payne more, as to assoyle it your selfe. For I wyll not do it, bycause I perceyve ye come to tempte me. And he sayd, it was agaynst the ordre of scoles, that he whych asked the questyon, shuld answere it. I tolde hym, I was but a woman, and knew not the course of scoles” (Beilin 34). Askew uses the traditional division between women and scholastics to her own advantage.

⁴⁵ 42. The author of the book is John Frith, executed in 1533, who wrote on the subjects of the sacrament and purgatory, among other things. Askew goes on to rebuke her questioner for judging a book without knowing its contents, and claims that after she “opened the boke and shewed it hym . . . he coulde fynde no faulte therin” (43).

⁴⁶ *Actes and Monuments* (1576), p. 1211.

kinges name, for the abolishing of the Scripture, and all such Englishe bookes, which might geue any lighte to the setting forth of Gods true worde and grace of the Gospel.”⁴⁷ As Foxe, Bale, and others popularize Askew as a model of Protestant conviction and godly womanhood (a process I describe in chapter five), they do so primarily in terms of her literary and hermeneutic activities. Askew—the woman reader, biblical expositor and martyr—thus becomes a memorable representative of Protestant textual culture.

In retrospect, and from the other side of the religious debate, Askew’s Jesuit critic Robert Parsons draws on the familiar language of the ignorant and unruly woman reader to discredit her (and by extention, the Protestant project with which she is associated). Writing after Askew has become a popular Protestant example of the godly, learned woman, Parsons takes the Reformers to task for promoting Askew as an author, complaining that John Bale “placeth her among the famous wryters of her age for that perhapps she wrote some 4 or 5 sheets of paper in priuate letters.”⁴⁸ He also, echoing common objections about Lollard women, repeatedly condemns her for “sending hereticall books hither and thither, but especially into the court” (2.496). Parsons particularly objects to “the proud and presumptuous answers, quips, and nips, which she gaue both in matter of Religion, & otherwise to the Kings Councell . . . [which] do well shew her intollerable arrogancy” (2.496). Parsons’ caricature of Askew as a “ghospelling & ghossipinge” (2.495) woman, presumptuous and arrogant, distributing dangerous books and pretending to great learning, suggests the familiar anxiety about female encroachment on a male textual domain. And

⁴⁷ *Actes and Monument* (1576), p.1216. (Foxe makes this connection in the 1563 edition as well, but expands on it here.) Given Henry VIII’s death in early 1547 and the ascendance of the Protestant faction, nothing came of this proclamation.

⁴⁸ Robert Parsons, *The Third Part of a Treatise, Intituled: Of Three Conversions of England* (London: N. D., 1604) 2.494.

while, from Parsons' position in the early seventeenth century, the vernacular reader of scripture has become a common fact of life, for Parsons the image of the ignorant, arrogant woman reader-expositor remains a prime example of the dangers, excesses and distortions of Protestantism.

Bishop Gardiner, who was largely responsible for Askew's execution, gives voice to similar anxieties, in a letter in which he also bemoans the popularity of Bale's edition of Askew's *Examinations*. He is clear about what is at stake in the contemporary struggle over the accessibility of the scriptures and the interpretive authority of the non-clerical reader:

For if it be perswaded the understanding of Gods law to be at larg in women and children, wherby they may have the rule of that, and then Gods law must be the rule of all, is not hereby the rule of al brought into there hands?⁴⁹

Woman as Bible reader inevitably leads to the question of woman as interpreter, a scenario which Gardiner fears would result in doctrinal and social anarchy. Askew, whose authority derives from her Biblical reading—both in providing her with scriptural justification for her actions and also through her invocation and recitation of God's authoritative Word, something which requires prolonged interaction with the Biblical text—represents the challenge to traditional Biblical interpretation (and clerical authority) that is made possible by the vernacularization and distribution of sacred texts. The fact that there was an audience eager to read Askew's *Examinations* is, in Gardiner's eyes, an expansion of that threat which Askew herself embodied.

Bale and Foxe, as apologists for the Reformation, are enthusiastic supporters of Askew, her Bible reading, and her reformist theology. Yet while in many ways Askew is an

⁴⁹ J. Muller, ed., *The Letters of Stephen Gardiner* (Cambridge, 1933) 280.

ideal exemplar of Protestant piety in action, as a subversive reader she is both an asset to and a potentially destabilizing force in the establishment of a new (Protestant) orthodoxy. Following Gardiner's reasoning, the glorification of Askew could be just as threatening to the male leaders of the Protestant church as it is to the Catholic hierarchy, if it appears to license women's ungoverned interpretation of scripture. The question of women's hermeneutic authority, then, was no doubt a thorny one for those reformers who praised "godly and learned" women. One way Bale's edition of Askew's *Examinations* exercises some control over her text is by enveloping Askew's words in Bale's extensive "elucydacyon." He frequently states his own agreement with her doctrine, with lengthy elaboration; in some sense his commentary offers a play-by-play "stamp of approval" to Askew's own narration. Bale praises Askew for being "lerned in the scriptures," but also for being "verye lowlye to true teachers, but scornefull and hygh stomaked to the enemyes of truthe."⁵⁰ Askew is praiseworthy, he implies, because she is humble enough to be taught (by the right teachers, of course); her "scornefullness" is an asset because she knows where to direct it and when to quit. Bale has the dual challenge of representing the outspoken Askew as an upright, exemplary member of her sex (thus validating her life, beliefs and martyrdom), and representing the "heretical," Bible-reading Askew as a fully "orthodox," doctrinally governable and teachable woman (thus confining her subversive reading practices within the bounds of "legitimate" resistance to Catholicism).⁵¹ Put another way, Bale and other

⁵⁰ Beilin, ed., *The Examinations of Anne Askew* 30, 12.

⁵¹ Bale assures his readers that Askew conformed to the standards of acceptable womanhood. He introduces her as "a gentylwoman verye yonge, dayntyte, and tender" (7); in discussing her ill-fated marriage he emphasizes that she "demeaned her selfe lyke a Christen wyfe, and had by [her husband] (as I am infourmed) ii. chyl dren," and that she did not leave him until he "vyolentlye drove her oute of hys howse" (92-93). Bale also compares Askew to "many godlye women both in the olde lawe and the newe [who] were lerned in the scriptures, and

reformers must find a way to merge the desirable attributes of the conventionally unruly “lollard” woman reader with the moral authority and stability of the traditional meditative reader (a figure I describe in the following chapter). The endorsement of the reading woman is in some sense a trademark of the reformist project, but it also opens the door to new and complicated negotiations of gender and religious authority within the Reformation church.

While the figure of the vernacular woman reader was bound to provoke some anxiety among any male authorities, one reason Askew was so successful as a Protestant heroine was precisely because she represented all that was antithetical to the Latin, clerical establishment. Askew requires no priest, either for confession or for instruction in the scriptures.⁵² She denies transubstantiation (and thus the central sacerdotal role of the Catholic priest); she reads and interprets sacred text for herself (rendering the mediating Latin establishment superfluous); she directly and visibly contradicts the ecclesiastical authorities, setting her scriptural knowledge and spiritual authority against theirs; and she does all this as a woman, deriving her authority from her reading of a vernacularized text which had formerly been the near-exclusive property of the Latin clerical establishment. Askew’s case is a vivid example of the way in which the vernacular Bible *engenders* a struggle for spiritual authority around

made utteraunce of them to the glorye of God” (30), establishing a precedent for her actions in Scripture and late antiquity.

⁵² Askew writes: “After that [her outright denial of transubstantiation] they wylled me to have a prest. And than I smyled. Then they asked me, if it were not good? I sayd, I wolde confesse my fawtes to God. For I was sure that he wolde heare me with faver. And so we were condempned without a quest” (112). At this point in the narrative Bale breaks in to assure the reader that “prestes of godlye knowlege she ded not refuse. For she knewe that they are the massangers of the lorde As for the other sort of prestes, she ded not amys to laugh both them and their maynteners to scorne . . .” (112). Here again we see Bale walking a fine line, endorsing resistance to authority at the same time as he tries to contain such resistance within certain boundaries.

the sacred text. A blow to the clerical Catholic establishment, in the context of this struggle, can be considered a victory for the vernacular woman reader.

Dissolving the Line: Translating the Sacred

The Edwardian reforms brought sweeping changes to Church theology and practice within a very short time.⁵³ Most relevant to this discussion is the 1549 Act of Uniformity which introduced the Book of Common Prayer as the only authorized form of worship in the realm. In his preface to this new English prayer book, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer stresses order and clarity, and argues that a primary purpose of the divine service (neglected in the Catholic liturgy) is the reading of Scripture for the edification of the people. Whereas the old service "hath been read in Latin to the people, which they understand not, so that they have heard with their ears only and their heart, spirit and mind have not been edified thereby," the new Book of Common Prayer is preferable because in it "nothing is ordained to be read but the very pure Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, or that which is agreeable to the same, and

⁵³ "In 1547 there were new reformist Injunctions and new evangelical *Homilies*; endowed prayers were suppressed, and the laity allowed communion in both bread and wine. In 1548 church images were pulled down, and an Order of Communion introduced English prayers to the Latin mass. In 1549 the Latin rites were replaced by a half-Protestant Book of Common Prayer, and the clergy were permitted to marry. In 1550 altars were exchanged for communion tables, and a new Ordinal provided Protestant pastors rather than Catholic priests. In 1551 the episcopate was remodelled and a corps of missionary preachers created. In 1552 there was a decisively Protestant second Prayer Book. In 1553 redundant mass equipment was confiscated, the Protestant theology of the Church defined in Forty-Two Articles, and a Catechism published to teach the new religion." Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 168. Haigh argues that the "clockwork" appearance of these reforms from the perspective of hindsight masks the fact that "religious change again proceeded by spasmodic fits, uncertain starts, and threats of reversal" (169). Certainly this whole reformist enterprise was dismantled (for a time) upon Mary's accession in 1553.

that in such a language and order as is most easy and plain for the understanding both of the readers and hearers.”⁵⁴ This careful emphasis on order and edification echoes Cranmer’s 1540 preface to the Great Bible, in which he makes the case (largely on patristic authority) that “it is convenient and good the Scripture to be read of all sorts and kinds of people,” advocating a sober middle path between the excesses of those who balk at the very idea of vernacular Scripture and those who read and dispute it irresponsibly. “All manner of persons,” he writes, “of what estate or condition soever they may be, may in this book learn all things what they ought to believe, what they ought to do, and what they should not do, as well concerning Almighty God, as also concerning themselves and all other.”⁵⁵ Cranmer (optimistically, or perhaps pragmatically) suggests that the translation of the Bible into English results in (or ought to result in) clarity, understanding, virtuous living, and an ordered society.

The official rhetoric surrounding vernacular scripture and liturgy, then, stresses order, uniformity, edification and obedience. Gillian Brennan argues that throughout the mid sixteenth century the government remained ambivalent about the English language, continuing to perceive it as the language of the lower classes—a threat to stability, but yet also (and increasingly) a means of enforcing order.⁵⁶ This discourse of public order takes

⁵⁴ Gerald Bray, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994) 273.

⁵⁵ Bray, 239.

⁵⁶ “Patriotism, Language and Power.” Brennan sees a change of emphasis (from obedience to comprehension) between Henrician and Edwardian rhetoric (30); to the extent that this is true, it probably reflects the more directly Protestant nature of Edwardian reform, in which correct doctrine becomes more clearly defined and a higher priority, though still firmly linked to the maintenance of order. Brennan is challenging the notion that English at this time was widely perceived or appreciated as a national language. On the continuing use of the Latin Bible by educated Protestants, see Susan M. Felch, “The Vulgate as Reformation Bible: The Sonnet Sequence of Anne Lock,” in *The Bible as Book: The Reformation*, ed.

shape in response to the disruptive potential of the vernacular; the language of ordered and obedient reading is meant to overwrite (or at least to contain) the destabilizing discourse of individual interpretation. Both currents of language (that of obedient/submissive readership and that of subversive readership) are often in tension in apologies for vernacular translation and especially (as the Askew material illustrates) in Protestant polemic. Thus while, officially, the Englishing of public worship promotes and consolidates civic and ecclesiastical order, there remains a subtext of subversive readership associated with the vernacular and the non-clerical reader. And, despite establishment attempts to contain her, this subversive reader is enabled (and in a backwards way even endorsed) by the official movement toward vernacularization.

Given the conflation of Latinity with traditional clerical authority, the Englishing of Scripture and liturgy represents a crippling blow to the exclusively masculine priestly-interpretive power complex. Clerics are no longer set apart (to the same degree) by a distinctive language, and no longer serve the same priestly function of mediating the Latin text. It is no surprise that vernacularization of public worship is part of the same complex of reforms that also strips priests of their traditional sacerdotal role in the consecration of the eucharist, the efficacy of the confessional, and many of the ritual trappings of priestly power. The Protestant reworking of the mass—replacing the altar with the communion table, requiring the priest to face the people, forbidding the elevation of the host, encouraging communion in both kinds, and of course explaining it all thoroughly in English—was in some ways a deliberate de-mystification of the Eucharist, and by extension a de-mystification of traditional priestly power. It was, in some sense, a de-sacralization of the priestly role, for

Orlaith O'Sullivan (London: British Library, 2000) 65-88. Felch points out that for the reformers the primary advantage of the vernacular Bible was its broad accessibility.

it located the sacred preeminently in the Word of God (rather than the Body of God), and a Word which, in the vernacular, was directly accessible (if not in text, then in the liturgy of common prayer) to all. This is doubly destabilizing, for at the same time that the Word is appealed to as the primary site of religious authority, it ceases to be the sole property of the (clerical) Latin reader. In principle, at least, the vernacularizing of Scripture dissolves the linguistic boundary that separates—and “protects”—the sacred text from the average lay person, and with it the priestly function of mediating the sacred across that boundary. The sacred text was no longer *set apart* from the “feminine” vernacular. Or, put another way, distance from the “feminine” was no longer a defining dimension of the “holiness” of the text.

If Latin was one marker of traditional masculine priestly authority, celibacy was another, closely related one.⁵⁷ Clerical culture was defined both by its rejection of the mother tongue and by the absence of women. With this in mind, it is illuminating to examine another dimension of reform which ran parallel to vernacularization: that of clerical marriage. Officially outlawed in 1139, clerical marriage unofficially crept into England after

⁵⁷ Virginity more generally, of course, has a longstanding association with spiritual authority for women as well as for men, from the powerful virgin martyrs of late antiquity to the superior spiritual status of the monastic life. Yet the language of the powerful female virginal life is often that of progression towards “masculine” ideals, and away from the encumbrances of the “feminine.” Alternately, or additionally, the authority attributed to the virgin (particularly as mystic or visionary) may derive from a sense of quasi-magical power similar to that associated with the celibate priest, but again, with gender distinctions. The power (and paradox) of female virginity is embodied in the Virgin Mary, while the focal point of priestly power is the miracle of the mass. (Reformers, particularly with their objections to late-medieval monastic life, tend to shift the language of virginity to that of chastity, which accommodates the married life and emphasizes the non-physical components of the virtue—purity of heart and mind.)

the break with Rome,⁵⁸ only to be officially outlawed again in Henry VIII's Six Articles of 1539. The same year that the Book of Common Prayer was introduced, this legislation was reversed in the 1549 "Act to Take Away All Positive Laws Against the Marriage of Priests." Five years later the Marian Injunctions radically turned the tables again, authorizing bishops to deprive of their benefices all clergy who "contrary to the state of their order and the laudable custom of the Church, have married and used women as their wives, or otherwise notably and slanderously disordered or abused themselves; sequestering also . . . the fruits and profits of the said benefices."⁵⁹ The harshness of the Marian legislation (which required both deprivation and divorce for married clergy), and its prominence in the "counter-reformation" injunctions, suggest that clerical celibacy was a significant point of controversy, and an important aspect of the Marian reform project. Clerical celibacy also had the advantage of widespread popular support, according to Christopher Haigh, who argues that "marriage was a difficult step for many clergy, because of lay hostility" (227). Celibacy was a well-recognized marker of traditional Catholic priestly authority.

In his 1549 *A Defence for Mariage of Priestes*, John Ponet argues that lay objections to clerical marriage are tied to misguided notions of holiness:

The cloud which hath so long blinded the eyes of the lay sorte in thys poynt, was the opinion of hollines that they conceaued in preestes, for that they maryed not as other men dyd: and the cloud that blinded the eyes of the priestes, was the gaine that they

⁵⁸ Anne Llewellyn Barstow, "The First Generations of Anglican Clergy Wives: Heroines or Whores?," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 52, no. 1 (1983): 3.

⁵⁹ Bray, ed., *Documents of the English Reformation* 316. By this period, Haigh records, about a third of priests in London had married, a quarter in Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk, and considerably less elsewhere. *English Reformations* 226. See also Helen L. Parish, *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation: Precedent Policy and Practice*, *St Andrews Studies in Reformation History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

gotte by their unworthye estimacion. So the one beyng deceued by simplenes and ignorance, and the other by couetousnesse and vayne glory, haue by a mutuall consent continued this deuelyshe state of unchaste sole life, to the greate hinderance of vertue, and auauncement of vice, and so to the subuersion of the kyngdome of Christ and setting up of the kingdome of antichriste.⁶⁰

The distinctive celibacy of priests, he argues, gave them unwarranted esteem—a false holiness—in the eyes of the people. While Ponet’s disparagement of the “unchaste sole life” reflects the common anti-clerical assertion that celibacy was simply a pretence to cover over a variety of unauthorized sexual activities, he goes on to suggest that the common assumption that sexual relations are inherently polluting is unfounded:

Al the world must graunt, ye matrimony is not denied to prestes for ye own sake, bicause of it selfe it is an holy thyng ordeined of God: but bicause as the pretend of the mutual company betwen ye man & the woman, which followeth matrimony, & is iudged of the unlearned, an ungodly thyng. (D2r-v)

Ponet’s arguments address the connection in the “ignorant” popular mind between celibacy, holiness and priestly authority, and attempt to dismantle this association.⁶¹ Clerical marriage

⁶⁰ John Ponet, *A Defence for Mariage of Priestes, by Scripture and Aunciente Wryters* (London: R. Wolff, 1549) A2v-A3r.

⁶¹ Ponet’s volume is part of an ongoing debate during this period: his arguments are answered in length by Stephen Gardiner (under the name of Thomas Martin) in 1554, which Ponet in turn refutes in a publication of the next year. In the substantial body of argumentation on priestly marriage circulating in the mid sixteenth century, women themselves are nearly invisible. The discussion is more concerned with patristic authority and Biblical exegesis—whether marriage is “lawful”—than with any sort of advantages or disadvantages of married life (beyond procreation and the maintenance of chastity). Ponet’s volume (unlike Gardiner’s) is designed to be accessible to a lay, vernacular reader, and thus to bring the debate to the popular level. The same year Thomas Hoby translated a work by the continental Reformer Martin Bucer on the same theme, “for the profit and instruction of the ignorant, whiche haue not receaued the knowledge of the Latin tonge, because it is

removed one of the most obvious distinctions between priest and parishioner, once again undermining clerical claims to special status. Furthermore, it challenged notions of “ritual purity” associated with the priesthood, the idea that the holiness of the priest himself (and the authority associated with that holiness) was defined by his distance from polluting sexual contact with women.⁶² Like clerical Latinity (with which it was intimately bound up), priestly celibacy demarcated a certain type of spiritual authority deriving from the exclusion of the feminine—in this case, in ritualistic, quasi-magical terms that were at odds both with the Protestant notion of priesthood and with the reformist aversion to the extra-Biblical and the superstitious.

The reformist critique of “superstitious” notions of purity is also visible in the reworking of the “Churching” liturgy, the ceremony in which women were re-instated into

written to them, as wel as to the other.” Martin Bucer, *The Gratulation of the Mooste Famous Clerke M. Martin Bucer . . . Vnto the Church of Englande for the Restitucion of Christes Religion. . . . Concerninge the Vnmarried State of Preestes and Cloysterars . . .*, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby (London: Richard Iugge, 1549) A3r. In form, as well as in argument, such promatrimonial texts seek to undermine popular support for clerical celibacy and the priestly authority associated with it.

⁶² For the classic discussion on concepts of pollution and their function in establishing boundaries and maintaining cultural order see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966). The traditional arrangement of sacred space within the church building also suggests a sensitivity to both the social order and the presence of women. Longstanding tradition generally separated male and female worshippers on opposite sides of the church, arranged in descending social rank from east (near the altar) to west. Men of high rank (only occasionally accompanied by their wives) might sit in the chancel. Margaret Aston connects these ancient customs to concern for purity—the need to keep men away from women, and women away from the altar. Aston, “Segregation in Church,” in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Shiels and D. Wood, *Studies in Church History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 242-5. She observes that “when the reformers took down altars, roods and rood-lofts and, with the rejection of the Mass, rejected the sanctity of chancels, more women took their places up in the east end” (246).

the church community after giving birth to a child.⁶³ Although the 1549 Prayer Book included the service under the traditional heading “The Order of the Purification of Women,” all subsequent editions changed this to “The Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth.” Some Puritans, however, wished to dispense with the ceremony altogether, insisting that it was a “Jewish or popish purifying” which was deceptively “varnished over with a colour or shewe of thanksgiving.”⁶⁴ Their objections suggest that indeed, in spite of the alterations, some people continued to view the ceremony in terms of pollution and purification. The reformist rejection of any need for “purification” after childbirth, like the dismissal of

⁶³ Traditionally, approximately a month after delivery, the woman would process to church with her midwives or other female friends, often wearing a white veil and carrying a lighted candle to be offered before an image of the Virgin. The customary offering included the chrisom cloth which had been wrapped around the child at baptism. The purification ceremony was usually followed by feasting and celebration. See David Cressy, “Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England,” *Past and Present* 141 (1993): 117-20, and Eamon Duffy, “Holy Maydens, Holy Wyfes: The Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England,” in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Shiels and D. Wood, *Studies in Church History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 196. While the ceremony derived from Levitical purification customs, it took on many other social meanings as well, and was a rare occasion when a woman took centre stage in the church community. Churching practices, particularly the wearing of the veil, continued to be a matter of controversy well into the seventeenth century. Like their Reformation counterparts, contemporary scholars disagree about the desirability of churching: while William Coster, “Purity, Profanity, and Puritanism: The Churching of Women, 1500-1700,” in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Shiels and D. Wood, *Studies in Church History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) characterizes it as an overwhelmingly negative ceremony of purification (which implies a very low view of women and childbirth), Cressy emphasizes the social and celebratory aspect of the ritual, and its evident popularity. In all likelihood, the churching service meant many different things (both positive and negative) to many different women and men. For discussion of various superstitions connected with churching, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1971) 38-9, 59-61.

⁶⁴ *Certaine Questions by Way of Conference Betwixt a Chauncelor and a Kinswoman of His Concerning Churching of Women* (Middelburg: R. Schilders, 1601) 18.

celibacy requirements for priests, worked to break down social and religious boundaries held in place by gendered notions of pollution and purity.⁶⁵

Part of the Protestant project was to steer the cultural understanding of the sacred away from traditional Catholic ritual (described in the language of idolatry, error, ignorance and superstition), away from spaces (shrines, the altar and chancel), objects (relics, images, and other material repositories of the holy) and ritual formulae—in short, away from externally performed faith observances toward a culture of more abstract internalized belief.⁶⁶ The official Anglican homily on Scripture reading (1547) advises its audience not to “runne to the stinking puddles of mens traditions (deuised by mens imagination) for our iustification and saluation,” but rather to seek that which is holy and sanctifying in and through the Bible:

These Bookes therefore ought to bee much in our hands, in our eyes, in our eares, in our mouthes, but most of all in our hearts. For the Scripture of GOD is the heauenly meat of our soules, the hearing and keeping of it maketh vs blessed, sanctifieth vs, and maketh vs holy, it turneth our soules, it is a light lanterne to our feet, it is a sure, stedfast, and euerlasting instrument of saluation.⁶⁷

With a characteristic emphasis on the internal—the heart, and the turning of the soul—this homily seeks to replace traditional ritual with the reading of Scripture.

⁶⁵ There is perhaps a sense in which Protestant reform, while seeking to dismiss the notion that the presence of women compromised priestly purity or sacred space, profited from this same notion—what better way to undermine the (to the Protestant mind false or superstitious) “sanctity” of the priesthood than to “defile” it through marriage?

⁶⁶ It is this mental shift that I have described in chapter one.

⁶⁷ Ian Lancashire, ed., *Certaine Sermons or Homilies Appointed to Be Read in Churches, in the Time of the Late Queene Elizabeth of Famous Memory* (London, 1623), vol. 1.2, *Renaissance Electronic Texts* (Toronto: Web Development Group, University of Toronto Library, 1997) I.1.1.33-35, 61-67.

The displacement of the system of sacred ritual and object by the sacred text is particularly apparent in another official homily (1563) on a similar topic:

If any could let vs see Christs coate, a sort of vs would make hard shift except we might come nigh to gaze vpon it, yea and kisse it too. And yet all the clothes that euer hee did weare, can nothing so truely nor so liuely expresse him vnto vs, as doe the Scriptures. Christes images made in wood, stone, or metall, some men for the loue they beare to Christ, doe garnish and beautifie the same with pearle, golde, and precious stone: And should wee not (good brethren) much rather embrace and reuerence GODS holy bookes, the sacred Bible, which doe represent Christ vnto vs, more truely then can any image. The image can but expresse the forme or shape of his body, if it can doe so much: But the Scriptures doeth in such sort set foorth Christ, that wee may see both GOD and man, we may see him (I say) speaking vnto vs, healing our infirmities, dying for our sinnes, rising from death for our iustification. And to be short, wee may in the Scriptures so perfectly see whole Christ with the eye of faith, as wee, lacking faith, could not with these bodily eyes see him, though hee stood now present here before vs. (II.10.1.78-93)

The sacred is that which represents Christ to the inward eye of faith (rather than to the bodily eye); the holy is mediated "internally" through text, rather than "tangibly" through objects or ritual.⁶⁸ The language of inward faith moves away from an understanding of the sacred which is based on tangible boundaries, and toward a system in which the divine is encountered in an abstract space which is less easily partitioned. This reconfiguration of the

⁶⁸ It is possible, of course, for the Biblical text to be venerated as a sacred *object*, or for the English liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer to be granted the same sort of ritual efficacy as the old Latin formulae; to varying degrees, traditional understandings of the sacred did persist.

sacred—and of its mediation—neutralizes the traditional role of the priest by dismissing boundaries across which mediation was necessary, and by which priestly authority and distinction were maintained.⁶⁹ The spiritual authority which was located in—or accessed through—the holy cleric is now located in—or accessed through—the sacred Scripture. And within this reformed paradigm of the sacred there is less room for that sort of clerical spiritual authority that derives from the exclusion (and particularly the ritual/symbolic exclusion) of the feminine.

Thus the Reformation translation and promotion of the English Bible (and accompanying liturgical texts) advances the cause of the vernacular woman reader in a variety of interconnected ways. On a basic material level, it makes the Scriptures available and accessible to all those who can read English (or who can benefit from the literacy of another). Furthermore, as the accessibility of the Bible is increased, the holy book is also invested with a greater concentration of spiritual authority; it is no longer simply one of several sources of sacred truth, but the measure for all. The increasingly accessible text becomes the arena for contests of spiritual meaning and authority. And, as Bishop Gardiner ruefully points out, anyone who can read might claim a share in that authority. Beyond this, the translation of the sacred text and the institution of English liturgy challenges the gendered Latin-vernacular language boundary, and with it the entire associated edifice of clerical hermeneutic exclusivity. The gendered binaries that sustained this edifice—clergy/laity,

⁶⁹ The preaching/teaching role of the priest, which was emphasized by the Protestants, is also a form of mediation of the sacred text, but one which is not shaped by the same system of boundaries. The Protestant notion of the “priesthood of all believers” clearly called for a new understanding of the role of the clergy. There is, perhaps, a sense in which holiness was again characterized in terms of inclusion and exclusion in the increasingly popular Calvinist notion of divine election; here, however, sanctity is not mediated (and emphatically not earned), but rather directly conferred by God.

Latin/vernacular, celibacy/impurity, learned/ignorant, scholastic/affective—along with the sort of spiritual authority that they symbolically (and often materially) demarcated, are significantly weakened. The line that contained the female vernacular religious reader “in her own library” or marked her—especially as a Bible reader—as suspiciously “out of bounds,” as trespassing in masculine territory is, in the Protestant scheme of things, no longer in the same place.⁷⁰ The figure of the masculine mediator of the Latin text is diminished, and there emerges a new incarnation of the “woman reader,” one in which the act of reading is invested with a new hermeneutical authority, in which reading is at once a personal act of piety, a means of sanctification, a potential site of resistance, and a source (as well as a sign) of spiritual authority.⁷¹

Dis-affection, Comprehension and Religious Experience

The Englishing of public worship almost certainly had a jarring effect on the average parishioner. The Book of Common Prayer was welcomed by some and despised by others⁷²—for everyone it presented a different way of relating to words in worship and

⁷⁰ There was, of course, still a line—Askew’s defense of her own activities of Scripture reading and teaching as distinct from preaching in the pulpit acknowledges this.

⁷¹ In chapter three I suggest that the act of devotional reading and translation can function as a *sign* of a godly inner life and exemplary piety, and that as such, it communicates a certain sort of spiritual authority deriving from the moral character of the person. When I speak here of reading as a *source* of spiritual authority, I am concerned with reading as an appropriation of the authority ascribed to the text itself, authority derived from familiarity with, citation of, or imitation of an authoritative text. Askew demonstrates all of these, showing detailed knowledge of the Bible, citing it in support of her arguments, and echoing Biblical language and rhetoric in her exhortations.

⁷² The introduction of the Prayer Book provoked significant resistance, including riots in several areas and the “Prayer Book Rebellion” in the West Country. The extent to which the western rebellion was motivated by unrelated economic and political factors is a matter of

prayer. A twentieth-century Canadian Catholic laywoman, reflecting on her own experience of the sweeping changes in Roman Catholic worship that resulted from the Second Vatican Council (1962-5),⁷³ describes the impact of vernacularization in this way:

The switch from Latin to English in the liturgy changed the experience of Catholicism completely. I understand why some people say it had the effect of shrinking the mystery and the beauty, because it located the acceptance of faith at a whole different point in the brain. When you worship in a language you don't understand, something quite moving and powerful can happen, but it isn't comprehension. You can't take it into your power and say, "I agree with this part," and "I don't agree with that part." By locating the experience of religion at a different point in the human spectrum of response, the switch into the vernacular represented a huge psychological change.⁷⁴

What might be a "huge psychological change" for literate North Americans who remained within the Catholic system had the potential to be much more disjunctive for non-literate sixteenth-century parishioners for whom linguistic change was also accompanied by the discarding of many elements of traditional theology and practice that had accompanied Latin

debate; certainly religious concerns were an important part of the mix. The opposition was not simply to the language change, but to the accompanying alterations made to (or prohibitions of) traditional religious practices. For an emphasis on resistance, see Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* 464-8; for an emphasis on variety of response, both positive and negative, see Dickens, *The English Reformation* 242-7; see also Haigh, *English Reformations* 173-6.

⁷³ The liturgical reforms of Vatican II—which permitted vernacularization and stressed lay participation—are an instructive, if limited, analogue to sixteenth century Protestant reforms. Vatican II also resulted in a renewed emphasis on the Bible and lay education. Significantly, the (few) contemporary Catholic critics of the vernacular mass who advocate a return to the Latin rite have complained that the reforms amount to a kind of "Protestantisation" of Catholic worship.

⁷⁴ Janet Somerville, "Outpouring of the Spirit and Human Shift," *Compass, a Jesuit Journal* 14, no. 1 (1996).

worship. In the new system, text was comprehensible, and text was central. For the reading woman this might be a welcome and easy adjustment; for the non-reading majority, this was likely to require a challenging conceptual reorientation and accommodation to textual culture.

Latin and vernacular liturgies represent two different modes of religious thought and practice, two different mental orientations. While I have argued that the vernacular language is frequently gendered “feminine,” paradoxically the mode of devotional practice closely associated with this “vernacular simplicity” is part of traditional—and consequently Latin-based—lay piety. The Protestant replacement of the Latin rite was part of a larger attempt to erase many forms of lay devotion, several of which were closely associated with female piety.⁷⁵ Those sensory, material devotional practices that the reformers considered most “idolatrous” or “ignorant” are precisely the sort of affective, tangible things that men like Nicholas Love believed were most suitable to the “symple soules” of the woman and layperson. Thus while the mother tongue frequently was associated with the world of the simple layperson, traditional late-medieval parish piety nevertheless (and consequently)

⁷⁵ Claire Schen asserts that “the Edwardian Reformation, through the abolition of the cult of saints and the dissolution of fraternities, deprived [women]—at a stroke—of potential patrons, role models, intercessors, and opportunities for membership of sometimes very important voluntary associations.” “Women and the London Parishes 1500-1620,” in *The Parish in English Life 1400-1600*, ed. Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs, and Beat A. Kümin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 254. While this broad statement does give some indication of what was at stake, it requires some nuancing. (For instance, women were also provided with new role models, which arguably were less problematic than virgin martyrs and virgin mothers; they also became, in a sense, their own intercessors.)

The extent to which it is accurate to characterize late-medieval lay piety in its entirety as “feminine” is questionable. Certainly it routinely has been perceived that way, particularly because of the prominence of the cult of the Virgin, strong affective elements, and also the female audience of many Middle English devotional works. Yet this may or may not reflect on the actual participation of the sexes in parish life. To suggest (as I do) that lay piety was “feminized” in relation to masculine clerical Latinity is not to say that “lay piety” and “female piety” are necessarily the same thing.

operated with Latin as its primary—and sacred—language. Indeed, the same understanding of the sacred that separated religious language from the language of the common people also infused this sacred language, regardless of the speaker's or hearer's comprehension, with a particular power:

the available models of prayer—supremely in the day-to-day liturgy of the parish churches, but also in monastic piety and the great literary models of devotion—were all in Latin. The highest form of prayer was uttered by the priest at the sacring, the moment of consecration at the Mass. It was a part of the power of the words of consecration that they were hidden, too sacred to be communicated to the “lewed”, and this very element of mystery gave legitimacy to the sacred character of Latin itself, as higher and holier than the vernacular. Moreover, since the words of scripture and the liturgy came from God, they were held to convey power even to those who did not fully comprehend them.⁷⁶

Accordingly, many of the prayers that appear in the primers were “often recited for the virtue of the words in themselves, and not for their power to move or persuade to intenser devotion.”⁷⁷ Thus the exclusivity of “sacred” Latin paradoxically made it possible for those “excluded” from comprehension to access its power in certain other ways—not only “incantational” but invocational and meditative as well.⁷⁸ Religious language was not

⁷⁶ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* 217-18.

⁷⁷ Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* 219. Duffy points out, however, that among those who had little knowledge of Latin there were varying degrees of comprehension, and it was possible to understand the general meaning and function of a Latin prayer without understanding the specific words. Likely the laity would have had a good understanding of the foundational *Pater noster* and *Ave*, which were sometimes substituted for less accessible prayers.

⁷⁸ Certainly Latin religious formulae were often put to all sorts of extra-orthodox “magical” uses in which the words were viewed simply as repositories of power. However, non-

necessarily something to be comprehended, but a way of connecting with the divine on levels other than cognitive—at a “different point in the brain.” To use incomprehensible Latin as a religious language, rather than comprehensible English, involved a different relationship to language and a different mode of thinking—a mode of thinking associated with the affective, non-literate “vernacular” mind.⁷⁹

While the rhetoric of clerical Latinity naturalizes, ritualizes and codifies the distinction between the authoritative masculine mind and the vernacular “feminine” mind, it also reflects (and perpetuates) a real division of conceptual worlds.⁸⁰ Those who had no means of acquiring literacy (or no incentive to do so) might find little to relate to in the Protestant system. “Since a bibliocentric religion was much more accessible to the literate,” writes Christopher Haigh, “it would be surprising if Protestantism’s social distribution did not reflect reading.”⁸¹ For those who could not read at all, who functioned largely “outside of” text, and for whom religious language was not something to be “read” but an aid to affective devotion or a source of supernatural power, the displacement of the familiar system

comprehensible Latin also enabled “legitimate” devotion, particularly of a mystical or meditative sort, in which connection with the divine takes place “outside of” language. This sort of devotion would harmonize well with late-medieval affective practices, which emphasized sensory and emotional connection with the divine.

⁷⁹ In the previous sections I have been referring primarily to the vernacular *reader*; here I am considering the (non-reading) vernacular *hearer/speaker*. Both categories are on the opposite side of the divide from Latin literacy. However, within the broader “vernacular” category are those who can read and those who can’t, and who can thus be expected to respond quite differently to the displacement of Latin authority by vernacular *text*.

⁸⁰ It is one thing to say that the feminine devotional mind doesn’t usually function on the level of text-oriented abstract thought; it is another thing to say that it is incapable of doing so. However, insistent repetition of the latter will certainly affect the practical reality of the former, which will then be invoked to illustrate the latter.

⁸¹ Haigh, *English Reformations* 195. Haigh here is discussing “convinced Protestants,” and not the many “parish Anglicans” who accommodated themselves to whatever official policy was in force at the time. He speculates that, at least during the time of the Marian persecution, women were less likely than men to be convinced Protestants: “Perhaps, like the illiterate poor, women had found less to attract them in a Bible-based religion” (196-7).

of image and ritual by an alien system focused on the propositions and abstractions of text (which for them remained only marginally accessible) would hardly have seemed empowering.⁸²

Vernacular liturgy, as the modern Catholic laywoman cited above points out, involves a different sort of power—the power of intellectual assent (or dissent), the potential of critical engagement through language. It demands a cognitively-processed response, an interpretive act—hermeneutic agency. Spiritual authority is primarily associated with *reading* the text, rather than speaking the words, with the inward response to the text, rather than tangible material practices. Thus for those who read only English, vernacularization and the increasing centrality of the written Word presented new opportunities—for textual interpretation (and the authority that accompanied it), and for new dimensions of religious response. For those who did not read English, but who now heard and understood it in the liturgy, these opportunities were also available, but to a lesser degree. In the sense that the Reformation encouraged a new type of credal, propositional thinking, and created a context of religious controversy in which people were asked to evaluate competing truth claims, one could perhaps expand the definition of the “religious reader” to all for whom the intelligibility of the liturgy and the heard Scriptures prompted a new sort of critical reflection on religious faith and practice, all who were prompted to “read” their faith anew. But certainly not all of these “readers” came to the same conclusions.

The Englishing of the Bible and the liturgy had a profound and varied effect on religious experience and devotional practice for many of the worshippers who were obliged

⁸² However, literacy was not essential to an appreciation for text-based piety (as Lollard Scripture memorization illustrates). Those who *were* motivated to read/hear the Bible for themselves might acquire literacy, profit from the literacy of a neighbour or family member, and/or memorize significant portions of it.

to make the shift from the old system to the new. Especially for women these changes seem to have represented extremes of loss or possibility, and perhaps a mixture of both. To the extent that late-medieval traditional religion can be considered “feminine,” the official suppression of the devotional practices associated with the Latin rite is also a suppression of the practices most identified with women; that mode of religious experience is lost or diminished, and those who primarily operate in that arena, whether by preference or due to limitations such as illiteracy, are pushed further to the margins of public devotional life. However, the shift of spiritual authority from Latin priest to English text brings *some* women closer to the centre of both common prayer and authoritative religious discourse. What is potentially gained, for women and men who can accommodate themselves to (or thrive in) text-centred thought patterns, is a new sense of hermeneutic agency. And because the familiar gendered construct of the ignorant, unruly, simple, concrete, emotional, physical, heretical, vernacular *woman* reader has commonly functioned as the antithesis to the power complex of clerical Latinity, the official vernacularization of “sacred” text—both materially and symbolically—is a particularly welcome development for the reading woman. While the Englishing of Scripture and liturgy accompanied, and sometimes enabled, the suppression of many elements of traditional “feminine” devotion (as practiced by or expected of women), this dislocation opened space in which new definitions of female piety began to take shape, in which reading—particularly of Scripture—is both endorsed and encouraged. The process of vernacularization in the Reformation context, then, facilitates both new opportunities to read and new ways of reading. These developments are reflected, as I discuss in the following chapter, in the discourses of women’s reading that accompany the work of women translators into print.

Reading, Devotion, and "Feminine" Translation

In surveying the range of Tudor women's writing, critics have long noted that "translation became a popular form of literary expression among women of the period, especially in the acceptable subject of religion."¹ Translation is often assumed to be both the predominant form of Renaissance "women's writing,"² and a compromised one—a less desirable (but potentially subversive) alternative to (more transgressive) "original" writing.³ Religious translation—involving, as it did, prolonged engagement with wholesome, edifying and pre-authorized subject matter—was the sort of writing most compatible with contemporary expectations of female virtue and women's sphere of activity. It was, in some sense, a "feminine" occupation. It is frequently suggested that by restricting women to (religious) translation, the male establishment attempted to channel women's writing energies away from original works and any overt form of self expression, and toward "pre-

¹ Tina Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 20.

² For the latest update on this rapidly expanding field, see Micheline White, "Recent Studies in Women Writers of Tudor England, 1485-1603 (Mid-1993-Mid-1999)," *English Literary Renaissance* 30, no. 3 (2000). While the available sample of women's writing has seemed more weighted towards translations in the past, recent scholarship has uncovered a variety of new texts (some unpublished, some hidden in other collections, many "original") which complicate the picture. Of the *published* works mentioned by White, roughly three-fifths are translations.

³ Margaret W. Ferguson, "Renaissance Concepts of the 'Woman Writer'," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), suggests that translation was a method of "disguising or softening claims to authorial power" (159), as does Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices* 20-21. Elaine V. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), terms it "an act of ventriloquism" (59).

censored,” often politically useful, subject matter.⁴ It is further assumed (with less supporting evidence) that translation itself was perceived as an inferior, and thus a “feminine” activity; and that the translated work itself was perceived as a (defective) “female” in relation to the “male” original. “Feminine” translation, then, routinely has been conceptualized in terms of its relationship to original writing and the authorial voice. These critical commonplaces—which privilege “original” texts and assume a correlation between (inferior, passive) “femininity” and the activity of translation—have recently been problematized.⁵ While it is certain that sixteenth-century ideas and practices of translation (in their many diverse forms) are “gendered” in significant ways, it is increasingly clear that the “femininity” of translation cannot be adequately or accurately described solely in terms of its supposed secondary, reproductive status. It is necessary both to re-examine the notion of translation as a “feminine” form of writing, and also to investigate the cultural meaning of women’s translation as it is constructed in vocabularies other than those of writing and authorship. In this chapter I consider points of intersection between women’s translation activities and the changing figure of the woman reader.

⁴ The now-classic study of sixteenth-century literary women and their relationship to specifically religious writing is Margaret Patterson Hannay, ed., *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985). This collection of essays argues “that the policy of permitting English women only religious discourse had two primary results. The first, as those in authority no doubt intended, was that the wealth, energy, and learning of a substantial number of noblewomen made possible the rapid production of religious works, which were predominantly Protestant. The second result, which they did not foresee, was that women occasionally subverted the text, even in translation, in order to insert personal and political statements” (4).

⁵ Two notable examples are Suzanne Trill, “Sixteenth-Century Women’s Writing: Mary Sidney’s *Psalmes* and the ‘Femininity’ of Translation,” in *Writing and the English Renaissance*, ed. William Zunder and Suzanne Trill, *Crosscurrents* (London: Longman, 1996), and Micheline White, “Renaissance Englishwomen and Religious Translations: The Case of Anne Lock’s ‘of the Markes of the Children of God’ (1590),” *English Literary Renaissance* 29 (1999).

John Florio, in an oft-cited dedication (to the Countess of Bedford and her mother) of his Englishing of Montaigne's *Essayes* (1603), connects "masculine" writing with "all mens conceipts that are their owne" and comments that his translation is of necessity defective "since all translations are reputed femalls." This passage suggests, writes Mary Ellen Lamb, that

translations were "defective" and therefore appropriate to women: this low opinion of translating perhaps accounts for why women were allowed to translate at all. A man who labors in this degraded activity must justify himself, "since all translations are reputed femalls." Writing original ideas, or even collecting the original ideas of others, is "masculine". . . . by engaging in this supposedly defective form of literary activity, women did not threaten perceptions of male superiority; any competence they displayed could be dismissed by denigrating the task of translation itself.⁶

While Florio's words may indeed reflect "the depth of the male anxieties at least partially responsible for preventing many women from writing original work" (115), his comments appear to be idiosyncratic rather than conventional and, given his own favourable view of translation in general, are not likely to amount to a denigration of translation as such.⁷ His

⁶ Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Cooke Sisters: Attitudes toward Learned Women in the Renaissance," in *Silent but for the Word*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985), 116. The full passage in question, as quoted in Lamb's article, is as follows: "To my last Birth, which I held masculine (as are all mens conceipts that are their owne though but by their collecting; and this was to *Montaigne* like *Baechus*, closed in, or loosed from his great Jupiters thigh) I the indulgent father invited two right Honorable Godfathers, with the One of your Noble Ladyshipes to witnesse. So to this defective edition (since all translations are reputed femalls), delivered at second hand; and I in this to serve but as *Vulcan*, to hatchet this *Minerva* from that *Jupiters* bigge braine" (115-6).

⁷ Trill argues that the "object of Florio's satire is not the 'femininity' of translation, but the elitism of those who denigrate it" (147). In this same preface Florio puts himself in the

words do, however, reflect the unstable status of translation, and the constant negotiation surrounding it.

In a survey of Renaissance attitudes toward translation, Yehudi Lindeman describes two common points of view on the subject. From the first perspective, translation is little more than a "crutch" which highlights the "loss" between the original and the translated text; the second position characterizes the translator as a "successful conqueror, the daredevil who, in spite of the odds against him, manages to safeguard much—not all—of the spoils and bring them home." While these two positions initially may seem to be opposite approaches, Lindeman points out that they often appear "in the same treatise, even on the same page: [translation is] that which cannot be done yet can be done, through some kind of *tour de force*."⁸ Good translation, he argues, is often defined in terms of fidelity—as opposed to servility—to the original text. He writes:

various authors use almost identical language that reflects a shared vocabulary to express commonly held notions. The result of servility is a cold, dull or dead idiom; fidelity, on the other hand, results in a work whose language is "hot," "polished" (shiny) or "quick" (alive), respectively. Du Bellay, for instance, speaks of the loss of "heat" of the original text which—in servile translation—results in a poem that appears "strained" or "cold" . . .⁹

position of apologist for translation, answering common objections against it, suggesting that his remarks reference a familiar translation debate, rather than encapsulating his own position.

⁸ Yehudi Lindeman, "Translation in the Renaissance: A Context and a Map," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 8, no. 2 (1981): 205.

⁹ 206. Lindeman's sources are primarily concerned with translation from the classics, and with "poetic" rather than "religious" material. His conclusions, therefore, are useful in contextualizing Florio's remarks, but not *directly* applicable to religious/polemical

Such language of “hot” and “cold,” which echoes the popularized Aristotelian notions of sex differentiation, suggests that there is indeed a broader context to Florio’s gendered language. A cold, “feminine” translation lacks the masculine “heat” of the original; any loss of heat results in imperfection and deformity, female by definition.¹⁰ Yet while an inept attempt at translation can result in a cold, dull, “effeminate” text, a skillfully-executed translation can capture the heat of the original and breathe its life into a new language. Not all translations are “female”—just the bad ones.

Renaissance discussions of translation, as Lindeman has shown, suggest a deep ambivalence—an appreciation of the need for translated works, an admiration for the skill required to produce a good translation, and an anxiety over what is inevitably lost in the process. This anxiety—and perhaps particularly the male translator’s fear of being “feminized” in relation to the text that he is attempting to conquer or in relation to the “original” work of his peers—does indeed find expression in gendered terms, but not generally in a wholesale denigration of translation. Rather, the gender differentiation is made *within* the category of translation, preserving a discourse of the heroic “masculine” translator. Rather than prompting men to leave “demeaning” translation to women, anxiety over the potentially “feminine” associations of translation may also result in the masculinization of translation discourse, an attempt to reassert control over a precariously male domain.¹¹

translation, in which “literal” (servile) translation is often valued as an indicator of doctrinal accuracy, and translation itself is valued as a political and theological tool.

¹⁰ See Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution 750 BC-AD 1250* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), especially pages 95-7.

¹¹ For a discussion of the way in which some male writers used gendered and sexualized language to establish authority and to legitimate publication, see Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

Although translation *was* the most likely occupation of the (published) woman writer, like all other forms of public writing it too was primarily the province of men. Prefaces to works translated by women suggest that this sort of female writing activity required an explanation. Richard Hyrde prefaces Margaret More Roper's translation of Erasmus' *A Devout Treatise upon the Pater Noster* (c.1526) with an elaborate defense of female learning:

whoso lyst and well can conferre and examine the translation with the originall / he shall nat fayle to fynde that she hath shewed herselfe / nat onely erudite and elegant in either tonge / but hath also used / suche wysdome / suche discrete and substancyall iudgement in expressynge lyuely the laten as a man may parauenture mysse in many thinges / translated and turned by them that beare the name of ryghte wyse and very well lerned men.¹²

The implication here is that artful translation is the province of "ryghte wyse and very well lerned men," and the (exceptional) female translator has surpassed them; she is excelling at a male activity. For Nicholas Udall, the industrious example of Princess Mary in translating Erasmus' paraphrase on John serves as a reproach to learned men to "shake of all sluggishenes" and produce something useful for England, as they ought;¹³ for women such activity is exceptional, but for learned men it is expected. The preface to Anne Cooke's translation of Ochino's sermons makes a similar point in less complimentary terms: "If

¹² *A deuoute treatise upon the Pater Noster, made fyrst in latyn by the moost famous doctour mayster Erasmus Roterodamus, and turned into englishe by a yonge vertuous and well lerned gentylwoman of xix. yere of age* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1531?) B2v. The STC gives a tentative first publication date of "1526?" (STC 10477) with a reprint in "1531?" (STC 10477.5); however, Hyrde's preface is dated 1 Oct 1524. My quotations are from the 1531? edition.

¹³ *The first tome or volume of the Paraphrases of Erasmus upon the newe testament. . . thoroughly corrected as it is by the kinges highnes iniunccions commaunded to bee had in Euerie Church of This Royallme* (London: Edward Whitchurch, 1551) 400r.

oughte be erred in the translacion, remember it is a womans. . . .”¹⁴ These female translators are being evaluated against a “masculine” standard of translation; the question is whether or not they, as women, are able (or entitled) to participate in a male, public activity.

The connection between translation and the “feminine,” then, is a complex and protean one, only partially explained in terms of literary “inferiority.” The assumption that translation was uniformly perceived (or represented) as an inferior, feminine form of writing fails to account for the fact that (published) translation remained a popular and male-dominated occupation. Such an assumption also tends to overlook the religio-political functions of translation: in contexts where translation is represented as a religious duty and a contribution to the Protestant cause, the quality of the work is not likely to be assessed against the standard of literary originality. Indeed, it is primarily when translation is placed in competition with “original” literary production that its “femininity” is expressed in terms of inferiority and defect.¹⁵

Much scholarship on Renaissance women’s writing, seeking to recover and amplify long-silenced female voices, has privileged “original” writing; translations have been examined for evidence of a subversive female voice articulating itself in and around the translated text.¹⁶ This line of inquiry has foregrounded the numerous obstacles—social,

¹⁴ *Fouretene Sermons of Barnardine Ochyne, concernyng the predestinacion and eleccion of God . . . Translated out of Italian in to oure natyue tounge by. A[nne]. C[ooke].* (1551?) A2v.

¹⁵ This is true, not just about Renaissance representations of translation, but for contemporary critical assumptions about the status of translation as well.

¹⁶ Ferguson, “Renaissance concepts of the ‘woman writer,’” writes that “women could use the cover of the translator’s humble (handmaiden) role to make significant ideological interventions and even to express apparently original ideas through interpolations or loose translations” (149); Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices* suggests that translation was a convenient way for a subversive female writer to “protect herself against accusations pertaining to ideas and content” (21). Studies which read women’s translations for evidence of personal expression include Diane Bornstein, “The Style of the Countess of Pembroke’s Translation

religious, political, material—which hindered women’s written self-expression and has highlighted various writers’ ingenuity in navigating that obstacle course. It has demonstrated ways in which religious and social pressure could “force [women] out of original discourse and into translation.”¹⁷ These foundational insights now require nuancing, for while the strictures of translation can indeed inhibit personal expression, translation and “originality” are by no means mutually exclusive. Suzanne Trill cautions against the implied opposition between “translation” and “writing,” a view “founded upon postromantic conceptions of an originary authorial genius.” Given the poststructuralist critique, she argues, “it can be suggested that *all* writing is a form of translation as no piece of writing is purely the property of a single, originary author. . . . the apparent opposition between ‘translation’ and ‘writing’ is brought into question: both are in some sense involved in the rewriting of previous texts, codes and discourses, and in neither case is the writer fully able to control the meaning(s) that the text produces.”¹⁸ Translation is never passive transcription or simple reproduction. It is misleading, then, to assume that for female writers translation was *necessarily* a barrier to personal expression or a less desirable alternative to “real” writing. “Writing” and “translating” are overlapping, not opposing, categories, and there is not always a clearly-

of Philippe de Mornay’s *Discours de la vie et la mort*” and Rita Verbrugge, “Margaret More Roper’s Personal Expression in the *Devout Treatise Upon the Pater Noster*,” both in *Silent but for the Word*, ed. Margaret Patterson Hannay (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985), and Marc Shell, *Elizabeth’s Glass: With “The Glass of the Sinful Soul” (1544) by Elizabeth I and “Epistle Dedicatory” & “Conclusion” (1548) by John Bale* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

¹⁷ Hannay, *Silent* 9.

¹⁸ Trill, “Sixteenth-Century Women’s Writing: Mary Sidney’s Psalmes and the ‘Femininity’ of Translation,” 141, 42-3. John Florio himself expresses a similar idea in his notorious preface: “What do the best, then, but glean after others’ harvest, borrow their colors, inherit their possessions? What do they but translate, perhaps usurp, at least collect?” *The Renaissance in England: Non-dramatic Prose and Verse of the Sixteenth century*, eds. Hyder Rollins and Herschel Baker (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1954) 569.

defined (or clearly gendered) hierarchy between them.¹⁹ Furthermore, just as translation cannot always be defined by an oppositional, inferior, feminine relationship to writing, so it does not *need* to be defined in terms of writing at all; the interrogation of traditional interpretive categories invites a consideration of translation outside its relationship to writing and the authorial voice. If translation is sometimes a “low” form of writing, it can also be considered an “elevated” form of reading. When women’s translation activity is examined in relation to the practice and discourse of reading, the notion of “feminine translation” takes on a different shape.

Translation as reading

The overwhelming critical emphasis on the female authorial self, on the woman *writer*, has obscured the connection between translation and the woman *reader*. A substantial part of translation, after all, is reading, understanding, and interpreting the text. Translation is a matter not only of output, but input as well. As such, it is caught up in the sixteenth-century discussion of acceptable reading materials for a woman, the question of how she should use her time and what she should think about. Translation, especially for women, was not primarily a public activity, but a “private” one.²⁰ When translations by

¹⁹ For instance, as Margaret Hannay has recently demonstrated, Psalm discourse offered women avenues into a variety of literary genres; in this context translation and devotional writing, meditation and paraphrase are all interrelated. See “‘So May I With the *Psalmist* Truly Say’: Early Modern Englishwomen’s Psalm Discourse,” in *Write or Be Written: Early modern women poets and cultural constraints*, eds. Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001) 105-34.

²⁰ The sixteenth-century notion of privacy is a slippery one; I am using the term “private,” not to define a specific set of material conditions, but rather to indicate a conceptual sphere

women were published, convention (and “modesty”) dictated that they be represented as a private enterprise reluctantly made public.²¹ Translation was an educational exercise, and a devotional one; for women especially, these twin purposes were virtually inseparable.

“Feminine” translation, then, is related to notions of acceptably “feminine” intellectual and spiritual activity.

The issue of the female translator is closely connected to discussion concerning the education of women. Translation was a means of acquiring education, as well as a means of exhibiting it. Classical and foreign languages were learned in part through translation; prominent educators such as Roger Ascham, author of *The Scholmaster* (1570) and a tutor of Princess Elizabeth, advocated the method of “double translation” as part of a sound education. Translation, then, was often a “private” scholarly exercise, a sign, perhaps, of one’s commitment to mastering a particular language. Princess Elizabeth’s trilingual (Latin, French, Italian) translation of her stepmother Katherine Parr’s English *Prayers or Meditations*, which she presented to her father as a New Year’s gift in December 1545, at age

of activity constructed in opposition to the “public” arena, particularly that of print publication.

²¹ While in this study I confine my discussion to the conversation around *print* publication, it must be acknowledged that print was not the only means by which to circulate one’s work, nor was it always deemed the most desirable. The most notable religious “translations” by a woman of this period, the Psalms of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, never appeared in print. Margaret Hannay argues that this was a deliberate literary decision: “Pembroke’s agency in print and scribal publication . . . suggests neither feminine modesty, nor fear at being thought unchaste, but rather a determined effort to present the works of her brother Philip and herself in the most elegant form possible to informed and sympathetic readers” (40). “The Countess of Pembroke’s agency in print and scribal culture.” In *Women’s Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550-1800*, edited by George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker, 17-49. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. In contrast, the language accompanying the print publication of most religious translations is that of broad distribution, edification and instruction. On the relationship between print and manuscript media, see for example Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol, eds. *Print, Manuscript & Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000).

twelve, is in this sense an exhibit of the progress of her education. "May I, by this means," writes Henry's daughter, "be indebted to you not as an imitator of your virtues, but indeed as an inheritor of them";²² the young Elizabeth's facility with languages is meant to demonstrate that she is a daughter worthy of her well-learned father. Prefacing a translation of the previous year, an Englishing of Marguerite de Navarre's *Miroir de L'Âme Pêcheuse* which Elizabeth presented to Katherine Parr,²³ the young princess more directly presents herself as a dedicated student:

knowing also that pusillanimity and idleness are most repugnant unto a reasonable creature and that (as the philosopher sayeth) even as an instrument of iron or of other metal waxeth soon rusty unless it be continually occupied, even so shall the wit of a man or a woman wax dull and unapt to do or understand anything perfectly unless it be always occupied upon some manner of study. Which things considered hath moved so small a portion as God hath lent me to prove what I could do. And therefore have I (as for assay or beginning, following the right notable saying of the proverb aforesaid) translated this little book out of French rhyme into English prose, joining the sentences together as well as the capacity of my simple wit and small learning could extend themselves.²⁴

²² Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, eds., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 10. Elizabeth penned this prefatory letter in Latin; it is included in this volume in translated form.

²³ Elizabeth's *Glass of the Sinful Soul* was published by John Bale, in slightly edited form and with a lengthy "Epistle Dedicatory" and "Conclusion," as *A Godly Medytacyon of the Christen Sowle* (1548). For the text of Bale's additions and a facsimile of Elizabeth's original 1544 manuscript, see Shell, *Elizabeth's Glass*.

²⁴ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, eds., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* 6-7.

Translation, then, was evidence of time well spent,²⁵ earnest scholarly endeavour, and the ongoing exercise of those scholarly skills. It was an important dimension of obtaining and maintaining an education.

For the royal Elizabeth, unlike many Renaissance gentlewomen, the utility of her extensive learning was not likely to be questioned.²⁶ The princess need not justify her time spent in study, but rather exhibit its fruit, as evidence that she has not been idle. For those women whose scholarly pursuits (or the scope thereof) were more likely to be questioned, the issue of utility becomes more urgent. "Idleness" may be defined by neglect of study; it may also be indicated by the wrong sort of study. Anne Cooke, well known for her learning,²⁷ dedicates her English translation of a collection of sermons by Bernardino Ochino²⁸ to her mother as justification for her particular study of Italian:

²⁵ I will return to this topic of time use and idleness in the section on "occupational" translation, below.

²⁶ For a comparison of Elizabeth's education with Mary's see Kathi Vosevich, "The Education of a Prince(ss): Tutoring the Tudors," in *Women, Writing, and the Reproduction of Culture in Tudor and Stuart Britain*, eds. Mary E. Burke, Jane Donawerth, Linda L. Dove and Karen Nelson (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000) 61-76.

²⁷ Anne (later Lady Bacon) and her sisters Mildred (Cecil), Elizabeth (Hoby Russell), and Katherine (Killigrew) were the well-educated daughters of Anthony Cooke, tutor to Edward VI. Each of these women produced some written work. See Lamb, "The Cooke Sisters," and Beilin, *Redeeming Eve* 55-64.

²⁸ A translation (by Cooke) of five sermons was printed anonymously as *Sermons of Bernardine Ochino* (1548) [STC 18764]. That same year Richard Argentine published translations of six other sermons under the title *Sermons of the ryght famous and excellent clerke Master Bernardine Ochine* [STC 18765]. The collection of translations which is published as Cooke's work—and which includes a gender-conscious preface by "B.B." as well as Cooke's epistle to her mother—is *Fourtene Sermons of Bernardine Ochyne* (c.1551) [STC 18767]—all my quotations are taken from this work. Also printed around this time was a collection of all twenty-five sermons (beginning with Argentine's preface and six sermons, and followed by Cooke's five and fourteen), *Certayne Sermons of the ryghte famous and excellent Clerk Master Barnardine Ochine*. . . (c.1551) [STC 18766]. This collection was reprinted c.1570, this time beginning with Cooke's group of fourteen, including its prefatory material, and attributing the entire collection to Cooke: *Sermons of Barnardine Ochyne, (to the number of. 25.) concerning the predestination and election of*

... it hath pleased you, ofte, to reprove my vaine studye in the Italyan tonge, accompting the sede thereof, to haue bene sowed in barayne, unfruitful grounde (syns God thereby is no whytte magnified) I haue at the last, perceiued it my duty to proue howe muche the understandyng of youre wyll, could worcke in me towards the accomplyshyng of the same.²⁹

What makes Cooke's fluency in Italian fruitful rather than vain? In part, the fact that she is making edifying reading material accessible to her mother and, since this work was eventually published ("halfe agaynst hyr wyll" the editor conventionally declares [A2r]), to a much larger audience. Yet in addition to the *product* of translation, the *process* itself is fruitful—not simply as an academic exercise (which apparently does not sufficiently impress Anne's mother), but as a spiritual one. Because Cooke is translating material with high-quality devotional content—"for the excelent fruit sake in them conteined, proceeding from the happy spirit of the sanctified Barnardyne" (A4r)—her occupation becomes *spiritually* fruitful, God *is* magnified, and her fluency in Italian justified.

Princess Elizabeth, too, speaks of her translations as spiritual as well as academic exercises. Prefacing her translation(s) of Queen Katherine's *Meditations*, Elizabeth emphasizes the piety of the original work, and commends "this inward labor of my soul" to her father, promising that "if it is well received, it will incite me earnestly so that, however much I grow in years, so much will I grow in knowledge and the fear of God and thus devote

god. . . [STC 18768]. Ochino, an Italian Protestant exile, arrived in England in 1547 at Cranmer's invitation and was welcomed by the reformist community (DNB). Princess Elizabeth dedicated a Latin manuscript translation of Ochino's *De Christo sermo* to her brother Edward VI in 1547 (Shell, *Elizabeth's Glass* 291-2, n. 6).

²⁹ *Fouretene Sermons of Barnardine Ochyne, concernyng the predestinacion and eleccion of God . . . Translated out of Italian in to oure natyue tounge by. A[nne]. C[ooke].* (1551?) A3r-v.

myself to Him more religiously and respect your majesty more dutifully.”³⁰ This work is an exercise in filial duty, but it is also an exercise in religious devotion. If positive feedback encourages her in similar pursuits, she suggests, she will “grow in knowledge and the fear of God” as a result. Translation of devotional works is spiritually nourishing for the translator. Prefacing her translation of Marguerite’s *Miroir*, Elizabeth acknowledges that her part in it is “as well spiritual as manual;” when John Bale publishes her work several years later he more directly makes the point:

... chiefly hath she done it for her own exercise in the French tongue, besides the spiritual exercise of her inner soul with God. As a diligent and profitable bee hath she gathered of this flower sweetness both ways and of this book consolation in spirit. And thinking that others might do the same, of a most free Christian heart she maketh it here common unto them. . . .³¹

Bale praises Elizabeth’s translation as both a scholarly and a spiritual endeavour, nourishing to the mind and soul of the translator as well as profitable for the readers to whom she makes Marguerite’s text accessible. For even the most “exceptional” of female writers, the rhetoric of education and devotion are tightly intertwined. And for those women whose translation activity—and the level of education associated with it—was *primarily* justified by its devotional fruit, scholarly pursuits could not respectably be separated from the rhetoric of spiritual endeavour.

While translation was also an educational and devotional practice for men, both learning and piety are constructed very differently for the two sexes. The humanist educator

³⁰ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, eds., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* 10.

³¹ Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, eds., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* 7; Shell, *Elizabeth's Glass* 94.

Juan Luis Vives, in his *Instruction of a Christian Woman*,³² is a strong advocate of female education, primarily for the purpose of moral and spiritual formation. A woman's reading material, he advises, should cultivate wisdom and holiness, rather than eloquence. Given the separate spheres of men and women, he argues,

it is mete that ye man haue knowlege of many & dyuerse thynges / that may both
profit hym selfe and the common welthe / bothe with the vse and increasyng of
lernynges. But I wolde the woman shulde be all together in that parte of philosophie /
that taketh upon hit to enfourme / and to teache and amende the conditions [i.e.
manners, moral character].³³

While many virtues are expected of a man (and thus deficiencies can be somewhat compensated for by excellence in other areas), Vives explains, "in a woman the honestie is in stede of all" (G4r). For Vives, virginity encompasses "purenes bothe of body and mynde" (F2v); thus the exercise of the mind, and particularly reading, is subsumed into the discourse

³² Vives dedicated *De Institutione Feminae Christianae* to Queen Catherine of Aragon. This initial Latin version was published in 1524. The English version, translated by Richard Hyrde, was published in 1529. It was a popular and influential text, and was published regularly (seven more times) throughout the century. Vives revised his initial Latin text for publication in 1537 and 1538; these revisions were not registered in an English translation, for the Hyrde version remained standard. For a brief discussion of Vives's alterations, see Elizabeth Patton, "Second Thoughts of a Renaissance Humanist on the Education of Women: Juan Luis Vives Revisits His *De Institutione Feminae Christianae*," *ANQ* 5, no. 2/3 (1992). For a contemporary English translation of the 1538 Latin edition, see Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual*, trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

³³ Juan Luis Vives, *A very frutefull and pleasant boke called the Instruction of a Christen Woman, made fyrst in Laten, and dedicated unto the quenes good grace, by the right famous clerke mayster Lewes Uiues, and turned out of Laten into Englysshe by Rycharde Hyrd*. (London: Thomas Berthelet, c.1529) E2r-v. A much-anticipated scholarly edition of this text, including extremely useful material on Vives, his work, and the history of the Tudor text has very recently been published: Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, eds. Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman and Margaret Mikesell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002). As it was not yet available to me as I wrote this chapter, all page references are sig. numbers (which are also included in the edition).

of specifically female virtue. While the cultivation of personal virtue is one dimension of education for men, for women it becomes the controlling focus of—and often the only accepted justification for—literate activity.

The restriction of women's education to that which is explicitly morally and spiritually improving contributes to—and is informed by—the commonly-held notion that “woman kynde pretendeth more vertue and deuotion naturally than the mankynde dothe” (av). Vives asserts: “The deuotion of holy thynges moste agreeth for women. Therefore hit is a farre worse syght of a woman / that abhoreth deuotion.”³⁴ The assumption here—for it is assumed rather than explained—is that women have a special affinity for the religious dimension of life; that piety is in some sense more female than male.³⁵ It is not only socially prescribed, but also *natural* for a woman's intellectual energies to be channeled into religious activity.

Thus, for women, education and devotion are particularly intertwined, and primarily located in the private sphere. Translation as a “feminine” occupation, then, is characterized as a predominantly religious (and generally private) activity, one of spiritual self-improvement first (which might occasionally be shared publicly once the feminine modesty of the translator had been suitably established). Devotional translation—of the psalms, for

³⁴ M1v. “Pretendeth,” here, does not connote deceit, but rather references a standard claim about “female” virtue. The gist of both these passages is that, because women are (or should be) naturally more inclined to virtue and devotion, vice in them is all the more objectionable. This common circular argument suggests that women especially should be given to devotional practice because they are *naturally* so inclined, and also because it keeps them from vice (to which they are highly susceptible, although apparently “unnaturally” so). Conveniently, women are both particularly attracted to religion, and particularly in need of it.

³⁵ For a rather essentialist account of the medieval “feminization” of Christianity, see Leon J. Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spence Publishing Co., 1999). Podles attributes the feminizing trend to Bernard of Clairvaux's bridal mysticism, the “women's movement” of the thirteenth century, and the scholastic tendency to separate spirituality from academic theology.

instance—which was a personal spiritual discipline for devout individuals of both sexes and generally done without any intent of publication,³⁶ is especially suitable to this feminine ideal.³⁷ Such translation was essentially a type of close reading, a meditation on a religious text. As such, it bears some resemblance to traditional monastic contemplative practice, and can be thought of as a form of holy reading.³⁸

Meditative/devotional translation: holy reading

Images of saintly women holding books are common in the middle ages; the caricature of the unruly, heretical “lollard” reader that I outline in the previous chapter is “balanced” by the pious, frequently cloistered meditative reader. *The Myroure of oure Ladye*, a devotional treatise on the divine service with a translation of the Bridgettine offices prepared for the nuns of Syon abbey, assumes that reading will be a substantive part of the nuns’ activity, and provides instructions for reading rightly. “Deuoute redyng of holy Bokes” the author advises, “ys called one of the parts of contemplacyon. for yt causyth

³⁶ Mary Ellen Lamb writes: “the translation of scriptural passages, especially the Psalms, was a religious discipline among many English people, men as well as women. As an expression of private religious sentiment, most of these translations remained unpublished and have long since disappeared” (“The Cooke Sisters” [109]).

³⁷ Paradoxically, this “suitability” also provided substantial literary opportunity. See Hannay, “Psalm Discourse.”

³⁸ The longstanding contemplative practice of *lectio divina* (“holy reading”) is divided into four parts: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio*, *oratio* (prayer), and *contemplatio*. It is a dynamic, multi-dimensional practice of reading scripture (or other religious texts) which cultivates prayer and communion with God. As such, it provides a model of spiritually-motivated *reading* which extends beyond mere absorption (input) of content to include intellectual and spiritual encounter with the text, as well as spiritual expression (output) and contemplative experience of the divine presence. Religious translation, as multi-dimensional devotional reading, can function in a similar way.

moche grace and comforte to the soulle yf yt be well and dyscretely vsed.”³⁹ He lists five aspects of spiritually profitable reading. The first is attention to the content of reading material: “ye ought to rede no worldely matters. ne worldely bokes. namely suche as ar wythout reason of gostly edyfycacyon. and longe not to the nede of the howse” (66). The second is an attitude of “meke reuerence and deuocyon” (66), a willingness to hear the voice of God in the text. Thirdly, the reader ought to “laboure to vnderstande” what she reads; she should not read too much at once, but rather “abyde thervpon. & som tyme rede a thyng ageyne twyes. or thryes. or oftener tyl ye vnderstonde yt clerely” (67), and she should be willing to teach others to understand it as well. Fourthly, the purpose of study is virtue: “dresse so your entente. that your redyng & study. be not only for to be connyng. or for to can speke yt fourthe to other; but pryncypally to enforme your selfe. & to set yt a warke in youre owne lyuyng” (67). Finally, a reader requires “dyscressyon,” the ability to adjust her way of reading to the goals of different types (instructional, affective) of religious writing. All of these points characterize reading primarily as a form of religious contemplation.

This late-medieval monastic paradigm for reading, in which reading and study are entirely directed toward the spiritual life and devotion is an end in itself, may be addressed initially to nuns, but it is substantially echoed in sixteenth-century discussion of reading and study for women in general. Moreover, it provides a conceptual model of contemplative reading which can encompass much of women’s translation activity. The painstaking and repetitive reading which the *Myroure* recommends for full understanding of the text is the sort of practice which translation both aids and requires. “Dyscressyon,” as a form of literary

³⁹ *The Myroure of Oure Ladye (1530)*, ed. John Henry Blunt, vol. 19, *Early English Text Society: Extra Series* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1873; reprint, 1898) 65-6. This work was probably originally composed sometime between the foundation of the abbey in 1415 and the mid fifteenth century; a print version was published in 1530 (vii-xi).

judgment, is also an essential ingredient of effective translation. The sort of devout reading which the *Myroure* advocates, then, is precisely the sort which can be practised and cultivated through translation. Significantly, as a translation and explanation of the Latin service, the *Myroure* itself is designed for use in a bilingual setting: the Latin liturgy is arranged in the text in such a way that the vernacular reader can follow the Latin clause by clause along with the English. The reader oscillates between languages as a means of more fully participating in the religious service.

There is a communal aspect to this model of “private” contemplative reading; the *Myroure* is conscious that the female readers whom it instructs do not always read in isolation. Not only does the work aim to facilitate their full participation in communal worship, but it also encourages the more literate nuns to share their knowledge with their less-educated sisters. Furthermore, it provides instructions for those reading aloud:

they also that rede in the Conuente. ought so bysely to ouerse theyr lesson before. & to vnderstonde yt; that they may poynte yt as it oughte to be poynted. & rede. yt sauourly & openly to the vnderstandinge of the heres. And that may they not do; but yf they vnderstonde yt. & sauoure yt fyrste themselfe. (67)

Here the reader, through her own private reading and meditation on the text, mediates and interprets it for the community. This act of “translation” is both private (individual) and shared for the benefit of the community; yet it remains “private” (enclosed) within the convent walls.

There is a strong conceptual link—and a considerable blurring of definitional boundaries—between the (private, devotional) practice of contemplative reading and the translation of religious texts. The prefatory conventions accompanying the publication of

translations by women reflect this connection. Introductory matter frequently emphasizes the moral quality of the original work, establishing it as the sort of edifying text on which it is appropriate and fruitful for a woman to meditate. Related to this is the assurance that the female translator is virtuous; she reads the right material, and she reads it with the right (usually devotional) intentions. She is an example of godliness and fruitful learning, an ideal picture of the familiar saintly woman with a book. This language of exemplarity—standard in male-authored prefaces to women's translations—works to characterize translation primarily in terms of devotional meditation, presenting the text as an artifact of a laudable personal life, a window into the contemplative devotional life of a pious and virtuous woman. Framed in this way as an almost voyeuristic glimpse of a virtuous private life, the translation can remain a “private” activity even when presented to the public.⁴⁰

Accordingly, women's published translations are often represented as the (incidental) public extension of private reading activity; the woman translator is routinely represented as reluctant to publish. Mary (Roper Clarke) Bassett's *An Exposicion of a Parte of the Passion of our Saviour Jesus Christe*, a translation of her grandfather Thomas More's *De Tristitia*, is included in the 1557 collection of More's works with this explanation by the printer:

Somewhat I had to doo ere that I could come by thys boke. For ye gentlewoman

which translated it, semed nothing willing to haue it goe abrode, for that (she sayth,)

⁴⁰ For a discussion of prefaces and their construction of “private” space, see Wall, *The Imprint of Gender* 169-226. Wall is primarily concerned with prefaces that sexualize the (original, poetic) text, code it as private, and thus construct the reader as a voyeur partaking in forbidden discourse. Prefaces to religious translations do not eroticize the private in this way; rather they construct the private in a way which maintains the illusion of enclosure, which outlines an authorized “private” space within the public view. As Wall emphasizes, “privacy” was a “term under interrogation” in the sixteenth century (176); concerning the translations under discussion, the language of the private functions at least as much as a mark of moral authorization as an indication of spatial confinement, isolation, or limitations on readership.

it was firste turned into englishe, but for her owne pastyme and exercyse, and so reputeth it farre to symple to come in many handes.⁴¹

Bassett's work is characterized as a personal exercise, within a close-knit family context. Bassett is not only a "nere kinswoman" of More, but "is no nerer to hym in kynred, vertue and litterature, than in hys englishe tongue: so that it myghte seme to haue been by hys own pen indyted fyrst, and not at all translated" (1350). This representation of her work as fundamentally private, within the small community of the More family circle (and only made public to serve the goals of that community),⁴² is reminiscent of the spiritual and intellectual activity and exchange of the (ideal, literate) convent.

Bassett's translation activity, then, is twice distanced from the publication of her work; first by her professed wish to keep it private, and second by the insulating discourse of community, which mediates her text to the outside world, redefining her individual project in terms of communal goals. In part this ubiquitous modesty topos can be (and usually has been) understood simply as one more element in a list of feminine virtues—a "good" woman is a modest woman. However, because (devotional) translation is conceptually linked to private spirituality, to represent translated work as a fundamentally private exercise associates the activity and product of translation with spiritual discipline and personal piety. In this case it is not that a female translator can get away with the questionable activity of translation (and publication) because she is otherwise a good (modest) woman; rather the

⁴¹ *The Workes of Sir Thomas More 1557*, 2 vols. (London: Scolar Press, 1978) 1350. An edited version is available in the companion series, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*. Ed. Clarence H. Miller. London: Yale UP, 1976. vol.14, pt. 2, Appendix C (p.1077-1165).

⁴² The printer goes on to explain that some of Bassett's circle wished her translation to be "set furth in prynte alone, because the matter is so good and eke so well handled, that it were to be wished it mought be readde of all folkes: which mo would bye, set out alone, than with so many other of hys [More's] woorkes" (1350).

activity of translation itself, when it is associated with private spiritual endeavour, is indicative of a pious lifestyle and enhances her moral reputation.

This definition of virtuous translation as a form of contemplative reading is rooted in the monastic ideal, and reflects the medieval elevation of the contemplative, cloistered life over the “active” one.⁴³ Vives, although discussing the education and conduct of laywomen, draws on the same language, explaining that the solitary (virgin or widow) woman is able to devote herself more completely to study and devotion. Her thoughts are as different from the married woman’s “as the activities of Mary and Martha were different, not through opposition but in degree, as the thoughts of an unmarried woman are more elevated than those of a married woman.”⁴⁴ For Vives, any woman not currently married is *de facto* a spouse of Christ; thus the widow

myghte be at more libertie with the immortal / and more by leasure / and ofter talke
with hym/ and more pleasantly / yea and to saye more playnly / a wydowe ought to
pray more intentysely and ofter / and fast longer / and be moche at masse and
preachyng / and rede more effectually / & occupie her selfe in ye contemplation of
those thynges / that may mende her lyvyng and maners. . . .ye widowe hath taken
Christe to her husbände immortall. Wherefore it is reason / that all thyng be more
excellent and accordyng for suche a spouse / and wordes more sadde and sober. (r3r)

⁴³ The active/contemplative dichotomy often is used to describe the two dimensions of the religious life, but the contrast can also be extended to divide religious from laity. Related to this hierarchy is the ranking of women’s states: first virginity, then widowhood, then marriage.

⁴⁴ Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual* 207. Vives apparently added this passage for the second edition; it does not appear in Hyrde’s translation, but reflects the general tenor of the argument in book 2, part 3. Here I quote Fantazzi’s contemporary translation of the revised Latin edition. See Luke 10:42. Martha and Mary were familiar examples of the “active” and the superior “contemplative” life respectively.

It is not that a married woman cannot be devout and learned (indeed, proponents of the educated woman often emphasize her desirability as a marriage companion and her competency to teach her children);⁴⁵ but rather, that the life of a laywoman tends to be considered more pious the more it resembles that of a nun. The standard language of (educated) female devotion (and female education more generally) is essentially that of the cloister.

Just as the *Myroure* encourages literate women freely to teach others to understand the religious text, while simultaneously admonishing them to read primarily for their own improvement (rather than to seem clever or to “speke yt fourthe to other” [67]), so according to this paradigm publication of translations by women is sometimes acceptable, but only as a secondary activity. When publication is acceptable, it is often contextualized in communal terms—a response to the “nede of the howse.” Alternatively (or additionally) it is framed in the language of exemplarity, a public glimpse of a pious private devotional life, locating the act of reading/meditation/translation in “private” space. Private meditation may indirectly enrich the public, but that is not its primary purpose. This notion that devout learning for women is an end in itself has both restrictive and dignifying aspects. It is restrictive and controlling in that it prevents women from exercising their intellectual gifts more publicly and defines the practice of female piety quite narrowly. Yet it also implies that a woman’s

⁴⁵ The Christian humanists tended to be critical of (corruptions in) the monastic life, and correspondingly to have a relatively high opinion of marriage. The high value they put on the “active,” lay, political life challenged the professed superiority of the insitutionalized monastic/contemplative life. This “laicizing” influence, blurring the boundaries between the vocational religious and the lay devout, may have encouraged the application of “convent” language to the spiritual life of the laywoman. The public/civic *telos* of much of humanist learning, of course, left classically-educated women in a sort of intellectual limbo—qualified for public activities they were not permitted to engage in. Marriage and motherhood—still essentially private activites—were the female version of the “active” life.

spiritual development is important for the sake of the woman herself, for the female community, and for God, and not simply for the effect it has on men. It values the private and contemplative for its own sake, and downplays (although it does not dismiss) the language of public utility.

While elements of this “contemplative reading” model of translation remain standard far beyond the dissolution of the religious houses in the 1530s, for the Reformers translation often *was* an intentionally public, polemic practice. Translation by women that was *designed* for public consumption, in which personal spiritual nourishment was byproduct rather than goal, invited an altered paradigm. Princess Elizabeth’s translation of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Miroir*, initially a personal educational and devotional exercise, was published in 1548 as *A Godly Medytacyon of the Christen Sowle* by Protestant reformer John Bale for polemical reasons. Although he describes Elizabeth’s translation work as initially a private contemplative exercise, he resists the monastic overtones of the meditative paradigm, emphasizing Elizabeth’s generosity in making her work public, rather than being “a niggard over the treasure of God.” He continues:

She hath not done herein as did the religious and anointed hypocrites in monasteries, convents, and colleges, in sparing their libraries from men studious and in reserving the treasure contained in their books to most vile dust and worms. But like as God hath graciously given it, so doth she again most freely distribute it.⁴⁶

For Bale, there is a moral imperative to make such work public, an imperative which he constructs in opposition to a secretive, niggardly, self-absorbed Roman Catholic elite. The Reformist characterization of the Catholic hierarchy and the monasteries as hoarders of the

⁴⁶ Shell, *Elizabeth’s Glass* 94.

gospel, resisting its translation and distribution to the people, hiding the truth behind closed doors while proclaiming self-serving lies, and out of touch with the practical needs of laypeople and the poor, complicates the picture of the good woman translator as private (cloistered) devotional reader. The “cause” of the Reformation provided a potentially acceptable motivation for translation beyond the personal contemplative sphere. Moreover, the hermeneutic posture of reading associated with the Biblical text and the context of religious controversy was more likely to elicit from readers an outward, polemical response. The contemplative model remained a conventional way of establishing the virtue of the female translator, a language familiar to a devotional culture still accustomed to the monastic ideal. In many of the intentionally Protestant publications, however, the emphasis shifts away from a woman’s “contemplative” credentials, and toward the language of duty, authority, and zeal.

Polemical/instructional translation: right reading

For those immersed in the religious debate of the times, doctrinal accuracy and sectarian affiliation were of paramount importance. Whereas the preface to Margaret More Roper’s *Devout treatise upon the Pater Noster* (1523) is occupied in defending her Latin learning, establishing that such scholarship is an appropriate and profitable private pastime for women, works that are published with polemical intentions are more concerned with establishing that the translator was reading the text “correctly,” or that she holds the religious convictions which enable her to read rightly. Translation *for* publication is much more closely identified with “writing” and a public voice than is the private meditative model, and

thus is more closely connected to issues of authority and anxieties over women's participation in the public sphere.⁴⁷

Partially counterbalancing these anxieties is the conviction among many Reformers that they stand at an exceptional point in time, a new and pivotal place in the history of salvation (and the nation), which calls for special action. "Nowe in this gracious and blissefull tyme of knowledge," writes Nicholas Udall,

in whiche it hath pleased almighty God to reuele and shewe abroad the lyght of his moste holye ghospell: what a noumbre is there of noble weomen (especially here in this realme of Englande) . . . able aptely, cunnyngly, and with mucche grace eyther to endicte or translate into the vulgare tounge, for the publique instruccion and edifying of the unlearned multitude.⁴⁸

At this exceptional period in history, all the faithful are required to do what they can, and social boundaries are relaxed (but not erased) for the sake of the cause. Prefacing the Princess Mary's contribution (most of the gospel of John) to the landmark translation of Erasmus' New Testament paraphrases, Udall continues:

in this time of Christes harueste, euerye good bodye moste buisily applying the woorke of his vocacion towards the innynge of the Lordes come, some by instructyng the youthe, some by teachyng scholes, some by preachyng to theyr symple flockes,

⁴⁷ At this point in my argument, I come closer to the territory of women's writing as it has most frequently been understood (within the rubrics of expression and agency). My purpose is not to substitute "reading" for "writing" as a category in which to consider polemically-oriented translation, but rather to examine the ways in which the traditional paradigm of devotional reading informs and interacts with the representation of texts which are more directly engaged with public religio-political issues.

⁴⁸ *The first tome or volume of the Paraphrases of Erasmus upon the newe testament. . . thoroughly corrected as it is by the kinges highnes iniunccions commaunded to bee had in euerie churche of this royalme* (London: Edward Whitchurch, 1551) 399r.

some by godlye inducing of their families, some by writing good and godly treatises for the edifying of suche as are willing to reade, and some by translating good bokes out of straunge tongues into our vulgare language, for the helpe of the unlearned: the most noble weomen of bloude and estate royall, are no lesse diligent trauaillours then the best, (in any of the aboue named offices mete for their sexe,) ne take any manier skorne or disdeigne in the labour of drawing this haruest home, to bee ioyned as yoke felowes with inferiour persons of moste lowe degre and condicion. (399r-v)

While Udall assumes that some vocations ("teachyng scholes" and preaching, for example) remain inappropriate for women, he praises Princess Mary—and Katherine Parr, to whom this preface is addressed—for their sense of duty which urges them beyond the privileges of their social position. Unlike most translations by women, Mary's is unapologetically represented as a public endeavour. While Udall clearly is gender-conscious, he deflects attention away from gender boundaries by choosing to emphasize the class divide, framing Princess Mary's literary contribution as the effort of a noble woman sacrificing her time (and health) for the sake of the "unlearned multitude." Her appearance in print is explained in terms of religious duty and royal generosity. The "innyng of the Lordes corne" is an urgent task which requires exceptional things from exceptional women.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The English translation of Erasmus' New Testament *Paraphrases* (1548), to be placed in every church in the realm, was a project in which Katherine Parr was heavily involved. The collection of translations, edited by Nicholas Udall, was dedicated to her, with a flowery tribute preceding each section. Given Parr's very recent publication of *Prayers or Medytacions* (1547) and *The Lamentacion of a Synner* (1548), it is not surprising that Udall enthusiastically endorses not only Mary's translation, but women's godly writing more generally. The prominence of class language in this dedication has the effect of marking out an acceptable area of influence in which these royal women writer/translators have authority (over the unlearned masses) by virtue of their nobility, deflecting attention from more contentious issues of authority and gender. The unique social station of these women also allows an additional *noblesse oblige* dimension to the language of Christian duty.

The reliability of Mary's translation requires no special comment, since—due to ill health and the time constraints of the project—she did not finish it herself, but entrusted its completion to “Maister Frauncisce Malet doctour in the facultee of diuinitee” (399v).

However, Udall does optimistically locate Mary rather nearer to the Reformist project than is plausible, suggesting that her persistence with the project amounts to a “plain declaracion of her most constaunt purpose to promote Gods woorde, and the free grace of his ghospell” (399v).⁵⁰ Mary's text is fit into the larger (reform-minded) project on the editor's terms.

Similar textual framing takes place on a grander scale with John Bale's publication, the same year (1548), of Princess Elizabeth's work. Bale, in appropriating Elizabeth's *Glass of the Sinful Soul* to serve his project of reform,⁵¹ establishes her Protestant credentials in his dedicatory epistle and conclusion by elaborating on, or “explaining,” her text.⁵² Referring to Elizabeth's “golden sentences out of the sacred scriptures” which he received along with her book, Bale proceeds to explain to Elizabeth what she means by her trilingual rendering of Psalm 13(14).1:⁵³

By this does Your Grace unto us signify that the barren doctrine and good works without faith of the hypocrites, which in their uncommanded Latin ceremonies serve their bellies and not Christ in greedily devouring the patrimony of poor widows and orphans, are both execrable in themselves and abominable before God. . . . Blessed be

⁵⁰ It has been suggested that Katherine Parr encouraged Mary's translation of this work in the (vain) hope of drawing her away from her Catholic religious convictions.

⁵¹ Bale most likely received Elizabeth's text from his friend Katherine Parr, to whom the princess originally presented it, and presumably published it with their approval (Shell 3).

⁵² Bale does a similar thing in his publication of Anne Askew's *Examinations*, nearly suffocating Askew's own text with his interspersed “elucidacyons” affirming her theological position.

⁵³ Bale translates the passage as “The fool saith in his heart, there is no God. Corrupt they are, and abominable in their wickedness (or blasphemies against God); not one of them doeth good” Shell, *Elizabeth's Glass* 96.

those faithful tutors and teachers which by their most godly instruction have thus fashioned your tender youth into the right image of Christ and not Antichrist. (89-90)

Elizabeth has been rightly educated, Bale emphasizes, and her theology approved; she is an ally on the side of Christ. Bale's substantial dedication and conclusion bracket the translated text, authorize it, and steer it along his polemical trajectory.⁵⁴ He characterizes Elizabeth's work as reformist material, and her "generous" publication of it (see above) as a reformist act. As such, he suggests, its public distribution is both authorized and justified.

Focused on their projects of public instruction, neither Bale nor Udall have much use for the language of (private) meditative translation; however, both editors do echo—in somewhat altered form—the familiar languages of community and example. Both construct a needy community—the nation, the unlearned masses of England—which the (royal) female translator has a Christian (and royal) duty to serve; by translating inaccessible texts she is, in some sense, "reading aloud" to the ignorant. Udall suggests that, whereas the knowledge of exemplary women of the past "extended no farther then to the priuate edifying of their own selues with a veraie fewe others" (399r), in this new age learned women are able to

⁵⁴ As part of Bale's vision of a Protestant English nation—in which the royal Elizabeth figures prominently—Bale uses his dedication and conclusion to position Elizabeth in a long line of noble English women "which in this land of Britain or realm of England have excelled in beauty, wit, wisdom, science, languages, liberality, policies, heroical force, and such other notable virtues" (Shell 100). These virtues are compounded in the godly women of the current age: "now since Christ's gospel hath risen, we have beheld [these virtues] and yet see them still to this day in many noble women, not rising of flesh and blood as in the other, but of that mighty living spirit of His which vanquished death, hell, and the devil" (101). Elizabeth is a prime political example of the noble and godly Englishwoman, and it is likely that Bale is publishing her translation less for the sake of the translated text than because it is *her* translation. He finds it necessary to authorize her words, but he is also constructing a Protestant nationalist mythology.

extend the benefits of their learning to a much larger community.⁵⁵ This expansion of the communal sphere of authorized female literary activity, with its attendant emphasis on public duty, reconfigures the exemplary status of the woman translator; rather than simply exemplifying private virtue, Mary is an example of service to the common weale, and Elizabeth of a royal English woman who lends the weight of her well-tutored nobility to Bale's Reformist cause.⁵⁶ In this case, the language of moral exemplarity does not frame a "private" (feminine) space for their translation activity, but rather authorizes their public activity in terms of the public duty accompanying their exceptional rank and their exceptional place in history.

While for royal women the invocation of rank may displace concerns about transgressing the boundaries of the private sphere—and diplomatically diminish the language of judgment, evaluation or endorsement on the part of (lower-ranking) male editors—in most cases the polemical imperative does not erase anxieties about women's foray into public literary space. Indeed, the same polemical priorities that authorize "exceptional" activities and valourize hermeneutic reading practices are accompanied by a heavy investment in a "correct" reading of the text. The motivation of the female translator may be explained in terms of duty, but she must also be established as a trustworthy reader. Anne Cooke Bacon's *An Apologie or answere in defence of the Churche of Englande* (1564), an Englishing of John Jewel's foundational Anglican document, is accompanied by an anxiously thorough endorsement of her reading of the text. For this text, as Matthew Parker makes clear in the

⁵⁵ On the duty of the Protestant woman to provide spiritual instruction to those who were younger, lower-ranking or less-educated, see Hannay, "Psalm Discourse," 119-23.

⁵⁶ Furthermore these editors, particularly Bale, by positioning the translators' work within their own instructional projects, by claiming the women as allies, authorize the content of the women's work in an indirect and politically astute way, even as their projects benefit from royal association.

epistle, accuracy and clarity of translation were a primary concern. Not only did Lady Bacon's work please him personally, he writes, "but far above these priuate respectes, I am by greater causes enforced, not onely to shewe my reioyse of this your doinge, but also to testify the same by this my writing prefixed before the work."⁵⁷ He continues:

You have vsed your accustomed modestie in submittinge it to iudgement, but therin is your prayse doubled, sith it hath passed iudgement without reproche. And whereas bothe the chiefe author of the Latine worke and I, seuerallye perusinge and conferringe youre whole translation, haue without alteration allowed of it, I must bothe desire youre Ladiship, and aduertise the readers, to thinke that wee haue not therein giuen any thinge to any dissemblinge affection towards you . . . (pi.2.r-v)

Parker takes great pains to assure readers that Lady Bacon's translation has been submitted to (male) judgment and found true to its source, and has been approved and endorsed from all angles. He and Jewel have not "softened" their standard of judgment to please or flatter her, but rather have been thorough and exacting in their evaluation. The content of the translation, then, has been fully authorized, and is advertised as such.

As for Anne Cooke Bacon's activity in translating for publication, it is both denied and justified. Parker gives many reasons why her (published) translation is laudable:

you haue expressed an acceptable dutye to the glorie of GOD, deserued well of this Church of Christe, honourable defended the good fame and estimation of your owne native tongue, shewing it so able to contend with a worke originally written in the most praised speache: and besides the honour ye haue done to the kinde of women

⁵⁷ *An Apologie or answere in defence of the Church of Englande, with a briefe and plaine declaration of the true Religion professed and used in the same*, trans. Lady Anne Bacon (London: Reginald Wolfe, 1564) pi1r.

and to the degree of Ladies, ye haue done pleasure to the Author of the Latine boke,
 in deliueringe him by your cleare translation from the perrils of ambiguous and
 doubtful constructions: and in makinge his good woorke more publikey beneficial
 (pi.3r)

Bacon is praised for her literary achievement (another nod toward the reliability of her text), and for her dutiful contribution to the Church. Yet she is also praised in the familiar terms of exemplary private devotion, for having “furnished your owne conscience ioyfully with the fruit of your labour, in so occupieng your time: whiche must needes redounde to the encoragemente of noble youth in their good education, and to spend their time and knowledge in godly exercise, hauing deliuered them by you so singular a president” (pi.3r). Bacon is held up as an example of personal piety, a woman occupied with godly exercises beneficial to her own conscience. Here, once again, the rhetoric of exemplarity *does* frame a “private” space of meditative reading. This posture of private translation is reinforced by Parker’s explanation that he has returned her manuscript in printed form, “to preuent suche excuses as your modestie woulde haue made in staye of publishinge it” (pi.3v). Given that a capable translation of the text was urgently needed and Lady Bacon was well-connected to the upper circles of both Church and court, it is highly unlikely that she undertook the project simply for her personal spiritual health. The doublespeak in Parker’s epistle, then, illustrates the tension between the private-contemplative model of translation and the polemical-instructional imperative. These models can coexist, but uneasily, for to *intentionally direct* translated work to a public audience suggests a compromise of the private (female) devotional ideal. For a “good” woman to venture beyond the cloistered space of holy reading

requires a holy reason; where religious texts by women are concerned, the appeal to Christian duty competes with traditional expectations of feminine piety.

The Puritan Anne Vaughan Lock, who wrote the prefatory material to her two published translations herself, and dedicated both of them to women, does not provide her readers with any evidence of male endorsement of her projects.⁵⁸ Rather, she establishes her authority—her ability to read rightly and to pass on her knowledge to others—in terms of her theology and her place in the community of the elect. Introducing her Englishing of *Sermons of John Calvin* with what amounts to her own sermon, Lock explains:

Suche remedye as here is conteined can no Philosopher, no Infidele, no Papist minister. For what perfite helpe can they geve to a dyseased mynde, that understande not, or beleve not the onely thyng that muste of nedefull necessitie be put into all medicines that maye serve for a tourmented soule, that is to say, the determined providence of almightie God. . .⁵⁹

As a “trewe belevyng Christian” (5), Lock has the spiritual understanding required to read the text (both Calvin’s commentary and the accompanying biblical passages) correctly—a message which is only fully accessible to believers. Her own spiritual authority is constructed in opposition to counterfeit spiritual remedies resulting from wrong belief.⁶⁰ She

⁵⁸ Anne Vaughan was married to Henry Lock (c.1551-71), then to the Puritan preacher Edward Dering (1572-6), and finally to Richard Prowse of Exeter (sometime before 1583); see Susan M. Felch, ed., *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughn Lock*, vol. 185, *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999) for a thorough biography. In 1560 she published *Sermons of John Calvin, upon the song that Ezechias made*, which was dedicated to Lady Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk. Her translation of Jean Taffin’s *Of the Markes of the Children of God, and of their comfort in afflictions* (1590) is dedicated to Anne Russell Dudley, the Countess of Warwick.

⁵⁹ Felch, ed., *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughn Lock* 5.

⁶⁰ Like Udall’s emphasis on class divisions, Lock’s self-positioning in terms of theological categories has the effect of demoting gender distinctions and roles to secondary status.

translates as a right-reading member of the community of faith, for the edification of that community.

Lock's translation of Jean Taffin's French text, *Of the Markes of the Children of God, and of their afflictions* (1590), is particularly designed to encourage and exhort the true Church. In her dedication, addressed to the Countess of Warwick, Lock explicitly explains her very public goals in disseminating the work in English:

I have translated this little booke, first to admonish some . . . to applie unto themselves whatsoever they heare or reade of the triall of GOD his children. . . Secondlie, to awake others . . . that are diseased with Lethargie. . . Last of all, to comfort an other sort, whome it hathe pleased GOD . . . to exercise with continuall afflictions. . .⁶¹

Responding to the current political and religious climate, the translator takes on a prophetic and exhortatory role in addressing the needs of the increasingly besieged Puritan community.⁶² While Lock is motivated by her message and appears minimally concerned with feminine decorum, she nevertheless is aware of the limitations placed on her sex; she explains her translation as an acceptable way in which to fulfill her Christian duty:

Everie one in his calling is bound to doo somewhat to the furtherance of the holie building; but because great things by reason of my sex, I may not doo, and that which I may, I ought to doo, I have according to my duetie, brought my poore basket of

⁶¹ Felch, ed., *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughn Lock* 76.

⁶² For a discussion of this translation as "a response to the government's efforts to suppress radical Puritanism" (392), see White, "Renaissance Englishwomen and Religious Translations." Among other things, White argues that Lock's politically engaged translation debunks the myth that (female) translation was necessarily a "degraded, limiting, indirect, or passive activity" (376).

stones to the strengthening of the walles of that Jerusalem, whereof (by grace) wee are all both Citizens and members. (77)

Positioning her translation firmly within the call of duty, Lock also underscores her citizenship in the New Jerusalem, her full membership in a community with a common cause. Her location in this holy city, this extended community, provides both authorization and justifiable motivation for her published work. Displacing the traditional criteria of (private, contemplative) female holiness, Lock suggests that the measure of her authority is in her doctrine, and the measure of her piety is in her zeal to “strengthen Jerusalem.”

The age of religious debate and position-taking, the religio-political value of translation (both in principle and in practice) to the Reformist project, the unprecedented potential for disseminating translated texts in printed form to an increasingly literate populace, the urgency of the cause (whatever religious position one took), and the sense of inhabiting an exceptional time, a pivotal point in history—all these contributed to a religio-literary context in which it was increasingly imaginable to translate for publication, and began to shape a category of translation (especially women’s translation) which was not immediately associated with private study and devotion. This public-oriented translation is represented in terms of duty, generosity, and the urgency of exceptional circumstances—imperatives which counteract (to varying degrees) the traditional, “natural” model of private meditative translation. The ubiquitous rhetoric of exceptionality, whether of class or of historical moment, suggests that the norm for female spiritual and literary/educational pursuits remains located in the private sphere.⁶³ This, I suggest, is

⁶³ If publishing women are routinely portrayed as exceptions, and the circumstances of their publication unique, then the message remains that such activity is not normative. The

attributable not simply to the rhetoric of modesty and the patriarchal desire to contain the feminine mind and voice, but also to the persistence of the traditional picture of the devout, learned (religious) woman, the enduring figure of the cloistered contemplative.

The instructional model of translation reworks and expands the rhetoric of community which inhabits the background in the traditional notion of holy reading. (I will turn my attention to the Protestant reshaping of religious community in the next chapter.) The language of community still serves to form a sort of “buffer” between the woman translator and the public sphere; if the *individual* female voice is particularly threatening, then to locate that voice in a community diffuses some of the anxiety. The invocation of community provides both insulation (from the appearance of self-promotion) and justification for publication. From a polemically-motivated perspective, the traditional admonition to read for self first, and then neighbour, is largely reversed—the language of personal improvement is overwritten by the language of public utility. In the context of religious debate, instructional translation takes on more importance, and right reading, rather than private devotional life (contemplative credentials), can be used to measure or indicate a woman’s piety or holiness. Yet often (as in the case of Bacon’s *Apology*) both these standards are used at once, and remain in tension.

“Occupational” translation: busy reading

If the traditional model of private, meditative reading/translation is sometimes overwritten by the polemical imperative, it is persistently reasserted—in diluted, largely

familiar (dubious) compliment of “a good woman, not like all the other women” reinforces this message.

“negative” form—in the common characterization of reading/translation as a means of occupying time. Even the most enthusiastic advocates of women’s education point out that study is a good way to keep women out of trouble. Vives prescribes both reading and spinning as particularly appropriate to women with time on their hands: “lette her bothe lerne her boke / & beside that to handle wolles and flaxe: whiche are two craftes . . . bothe profitable and keepers of temperance: whiche thyng specially women ought to haue in price” (C3v). Given the instability of the female mind, and its tendency to wander, he continues, “redyng were the best / and therunto I gyue them counsaile specially. But yet whan she is wery of redyng / I can nat se her idell . . .” (C4r). Similarly, Richard Hyrde (prefacing Margaret Roper’s *Devout Treatise*) answers common criticism of women’s learning by arguing that study is more effective in preventing idleness because it keeps a woman’s mind busy, as well as her hands:

redyng and studieng of bokes so occupieth the mynde / that it can haue no leysur to muse or delyte in other fantasies / whan in all handyworkes / that men saye be more mete for a woman / the body may be busy in one place / and the mynde walkyng in another: & while they syt sowyng & spynnyng with their fyngers / may caste and compasse manye peuysshe fantasyes in their myndes / whiche muste nedes be occupied / outhur with good or badde / so longe as they be wakyng. (A4r)

The activity of the female translator, then, in addition to being praised as an example of a fruitful devotional life, is frequently constructed in opposition to the frivolous pursuits of the “idle woman.”⁶⁴ The young Princess Elizabeth acknowledges the repugnance of idleness;⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Vives’ rather fanciful illustration of female idleness is “the women of Perse lande / drowned in volupteis and pleasures / sittynge among the compaignie of gelded men / syngynge and bankettyng continually. . .” (C4r).

Princess Mary is praised for choosing, “emiddes the enticementes of worldly vanities,” to devote her time to translation. “O noble successe of princely spending the time,” effuses Udall, “especially in a woman.”⁶⁶

While this anxiety about the idle woman registers in nearly every male-authored preface to work by a female translator, it takes on grand proportions in the introduction to Anne Cooke’s translation of Ochino’s sermons. Although gentlewomen “commonly are wonted to lyve Idelly,” the author of the preface asserts, this translation happens to be “the honest trauel of a wel occupied Jentelwoman.”⁶⁷ He continues with a tirade against feminine idleness and frivolity:

if any prety pryckemydantes shal happen to spy a mote in thys godly labour (as I doughte not but the nisytes wyl) seynge it is meeter for Docters of diuinitye to meddle wyth such matters then Meydens, let them remember howe womanly they wast their tyme the one part in pryckeynge and trymmynge to vayne hethennyshe ostentacion, and in deuising newe fashyons of apparel . . . the other part speakyng in prynt lyke parates wyth solemne countenaunces, debate matters of importaunce, & graue weight, as though the ordre of realmes appartained to them⁶⁸

⁶⁵ In her prefatory note to the translation of the *Miroir*, Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, eds., *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* 6. It is appropriate that Elizabeth presented this text to Katherine Parr in an embroidered cover which is also her own work, thus exhibiting her facility in both recommended “occupations” for women—sewing as well as study.

⁶⁶ *Paraphrases of Erasmus upon the newe testament*. (1551) 399v.

⁶⁷ *Fouretene Sermons* A2v, A2r.

⁶⁸ A2r-v. It is not entirely clear whether the “pryckemydantes” (‘prick-me’ dainty, OED) the editor criticizes are frivolous women (see Lamb, “The Cooke Sisters,” 118-19 for this reading), or feminized, dandified men (see White, “Renaissance Englishwomen and Religious Translations,” 380). The mention of “speakyng in prynt . . .” seems more likely to refer to self-important male writers, since (as far as we know) in the mid sixteenth century very few women at all (and none of them silly) were published. Despite the ambiguities of the passage, the point here is that wasting time—particularly in vanities and inconsequential

The occupation of the female translator is constructed in opposition to “womanly” wasting of time, suggesting that it has merit primarily in its contrast with feminine vanity, triviality, and idle garrulousness. The activity of translation is praised, not for what it is, but for what it is not.

While reading in general (of approved material, of course) is often cited as a way to keep the minds of literate women occupied, the logical extension of this argument would suggest that the more attention required of the reader, the more “studious” or meditative the activity, the better. Translation, then, for those who were capable of it, might constitute the ultimate “busy reading.” In Nicholas Breton’s *An olde Mans Lesson, and a Young Mans Loue* (1605), a father gives his soon-to-be-married son some fairly conventional advice on the “managing of a wife” and the maintenance of love and domestic harmony. “Let her not want such company, as you thinke fit for her,” he advises, “for idlenes & solitarines, put many thoughts into a womens head, that may anger her husband at the heart.” In addition to encouraging moderation in her dress, diet and conversation, he continues, “let her lacke no silk, cruell, threed nor flaxe, to worke on at her pleasure . . . if she be learned and studious, perswade her to translation, it will keepe her from Idlenes, & it is a cunning kinde taske: if she bee vnlearned, commend her huswifery. . . .”⁶⁹ Translation, like embroidery, is a “safe” pastime; whether she works with words or wool, what matters is that she is kept busy. The emphasis is not on the value of the literary product, nor even on the moral value of the translation process; the “good” associated with this model of translation is a negative good,

chattering, with an inflated sense of self-importance—is considered “womanly.” It is the sort of thing women are expected to do, and that which translation (or lighter reading or spinning) is meant to keep them from doing.

⁶⁹ Alexander Grosart, ed., *The Works in Verse and Prose of Nicholas Breton*, 2 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1966) 2.14. Lamb’s citation of this passage (118) drew my attention to this source; I have slightly expanded the quotation.

primarily a means of avoiding the bad.⁷⁰ Devotional reading loses its intrinsic value and takes on the extrinsic function (interchangeable with spinning or house-keeping) of merely replacing another activity.

The main difference between the discourse of holy reading and that of busy reading is that the former takes the female spiritual life more seriously, while the latter takes a decidedly dim view of the female nature. Holy reading (particularly with its convent associations) can be thought of in terms of vocation (a spiritual “calling”), busy reading as mere occupation. The material read/translated may be identical; the issue is not what is read, but how this reading/translation activity is constructed. Is female piety primarily defined by private contemplative practice, or by distraction from temptation?⁷¹ The notion of busy reading, or at least the preoccupation with avoiding idleness, is always present to some degree in the discourse of (particularly female) devotional practice. However, the increase in literacy throughout the century, combined with the increase in circulation and availability of reading material, gives new shape and definition to this watered down version of the pious learned woman. As more women are able to read, reading becomes a more popular and practical solution to female idleness. While female readers—and especially female translators—remain an elite group (as do leisured women where idleness is even a concern),

⁷⁰ Virtues particularly identified with women, most notably chastity and silence, tend to be “negative” (or passive) virtues—a woman is considered “good” for *not doing* something. While thoughtful writers like Vives offer a more complex view of chastity, which includes morally and spiritually improving the mind in addition to avoiding physical and mental contamination, the watered-down, popularized notion of chastity (that all-encompassing female virtue) characterizes “goodness” almost entirely in terms of avoidance—female virtue is constantly under seige, and perpetually in retreat.

⁷¹ The classic understanding of the contemplative life, of course, includes a considerable emphasis on spiritual discipline, the human inclination to do evil, and the means of resisting temptation. Yet it engages these issues on a much deeper level, and seeks the presence of God as well as the absence of evil.

authorized literary activity is increasingly characterized as a means of controlling the female body and mind. In the discourse of busyness, private literary activity is less an indication of piety than of patriarchal control.

These three models of translation-as-reading—devotional, instructional, and occupational—are, in practice, tightly intertwined. In many cases all three inhabit, in uneasy conversation, the same prefaces and dedications; it is in some ways an artificial (if necessary) exercise to separate them, and it would be misleading to line them up in neat progression. However, the balance between these models does shift over the course of the sixteenth century. The historical context of the Reformation, the urgent cultural negotiation of doctrinal orthodoxy and religious practice, contributes to a climate in which women's public participation in religious discourse (especially through translation) can be constructed as helpful, necessary, and safely exceptional. The Reformation creates the conditions for a hermeneutic posture of reading; this hermeneutic reader is motivated (and authorized) to speak out by the truth of her claims. Right reading, in addition to contemplative reading, takes shape as an indicator of female piety. The expansion of literacy and the printing industry also shapes the cultural construction of religious translation over the century. As reading and translation become more "common," the idea of busy translation gains currency. The traditional figure of the exceptional, saintly educated woman is joined—and to some degree upstaged—by the newer figure of the (upper) "middle-class" well-behaved one.

The development of the polemically or evangelically motivated instructional reader-translator, the woman who reads and interprets in order to proclaim truth or to teach others, illustrates a shift in the terms of female devotional activity and an accompanying

reconfiguration of the complex relationship between female piety and the private sphere—a relationship defined in part by communal identity. While the classic cloistered contemplative reads in one sort of communal context, a godly Protestant reader such as Anne Lock identifies with and derives authority from a different sort of community. The place of the woman reader in the Protestant “family of God” is the subject of the following chapter.

**Reading and Relating:
the *Godly Letters* of the Marian Protestants**

In 1564, following on the heels of John Foxe's first English edition of the *Acts and Monuments*, a related volume was published that was focused exclusively on the letters of the Marian martyrs. *Certain most godly, fruitful, and comfortable letters of such true Saintes and holy Martyrs of God, as in the late bloodye persecution here within this Realme, gaue their lyues for the defence of Christes holy gospel: written in the tyme of theyr affliction and cruell imprysonment* contains some two hundred letters penned by a variety of imprisoned Protestants,¹ with an introduction by Miles Coverdale. The *Godly Letters* are connected to the larger enterprise of Foxe's monumental project—many of the letters appear in both works, the editors clearly shared material, and each work, at multiple points, refers the reader to the other for additional information.² Yet Coverdale's book is not simply an appendix to

¹ The volume includes a few letters each by Thomas Cranmer and Rowland Taylor and a large number by both bishops Ridley and Hooper. Just under a third of the entire book is made up of the letters of the prolific John Bradford; the others substantially represented are Laurence Saunders, John Philpot and John Careless, although letters written by more than a dozen others are also included. The letters are all written by men, with the exception of an individual epistle by Lady Jane Grey, attached in the collection of (perhaps late-received) odds and ends near the back of the volume. The material included in the *Godly Letters* reflects both the editorial decisions of the compilers and the scope and limitations of the initial material made available to them, the various fates and fortunes of such letters over the previous decade. A marginal gloss in the preface includes a promise to publish more letters "if they in whose handes they remaine, wil bring them to light" (A4r).

² For a detailed discussion of the relationship between the two works, see Susan Wabuda, "Henry Bull, Miles Coverdale, and the Making of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*," in *Martyrs and Martyrologies*, ed. Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993). Wabuda identifies Henry Bull (rather than the ageing Coverdale) as the primary editor of the *Godly Letters*, and discusses the processes by which manuscript material was collected, circulated and edited in the process of compiling both works. For more on editorial revision

the *Acts and Monuments*; as a collection of *letters*, it plays a unique role in the formation of *literate* Protestant identity—and particularly the role of the Protestant reader.

While the writers of these letters were men, predominantly clerics, those to whom the letters were addressed—friends, families, congregations—make up a considerably broader demographic. Of the total number of entries listed in the table at the back of the book, over a quarter are addressed specifically to women (nearly a third if one includes letters that name both women and men in a list of addressees), and many are directed to congregations or groups of “friends” that likely included them.³ Many of the letters to women—which frequently acknowledge letters received—are obviously part of an ongoing correspondence; while only one side of this correspondence made it into print, clearly women were significantly involved in the Marian Protestant community as both readers and writers.⁴ In

of collected manuscript material, particularly with reference to issues of gender, see Thomas Freeman, “‘The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women’: The Elizabethan Martyrologists and the Female Supporters of the Marian Martyrs,” *Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000).

³ Of the 200 entries in the table of contents (which closely, but not perfectly, reflects the actual contents of the book), I count 54 addressed to only women and another 9 addressed to groups of individuals in which a woman is specifically mentioned; 81 (approx 40%) are addressed specifically to male individuals or groups. The entries for the remaining (about 55) letters give no indication of gender; many of these are addressed to congregations (eg., to the faithful in a particular city), to friends or “certain godly people.” Of the letters written to women, only around a third are addressed to family members (12 to wives, 7 to mothers or sisters); many others, however, use the language of mother and sister in a much broader sense.

⁴ See Freeman, “Good Ministrye.” The absence of women’s writing from *Godly Letters* may be attributable to any number of factors. Freeman writes: “It is interesting that neither Bull [as the primary editor of *Godly Letters*] nor Foxe ever printed a letter written by a female Marian martyr. It is possible that this was due to censorship by the martyrologists, although no such letter appears in their papers. Another possibility is that the correspondents of the female martyrs may have felt that any moral guidance or theological advice from these women to their families, friends, and coreligionists should not be published because of the gender of their authors” (27 n.93). But we must also bear in mind the uncertain and dangerous context in which such prison correspondence was written, circulated and read; as

their initial manuscript incarnation the epistles included in the *Godly Letters* took part in a circulation of texts that served to connect members of the persecuted community (including those in exile on the continent), and to teach, exhort, encourage and sustain those within that community.⁵ In the maintenance and sustenance of this besieged community, literate women played a vital role.

In these letters, then, we have a clue to the scope and nature of women's involvement in Marian Protestantism. And in these letters *as published* in Coverdale's collection, we have an example of the way Marian Protestantism was represented to the "next generation" of readers. There are two "tiers" of women readers to keep in mind, then—those to whom the letters were addressed, and those who "entered in" to the correspondence as readers of the printed collection.⁶ And we must also keep in mind the variations between the letters as originally penned and the letters as collected, edited and published. Both Susan Wabuda and Thomas Freeman have drawn attention to the editorial changes made to the letters for publication in the *Acts and Monuments* and the letter collection.⁷ Wabuda suggests that Henry Bull's editing "enhanced the scriptural style of the letters, and their universal application, by removing personal or mundane details which otherwise might have distracted

to the letters *received* by prisoners, it is likely that most of them were destroyed for the protection of the parties concerned.

⁵ See Wabuda, "Henry Bull, Miles Coverdale," for a discussion of the circulation and transmission of some of these letters. Many of these letters were intended to be circulated to the broader community connected to the specific addressee.

⁶ For instances of the *Acts and Monuments* as "women's reading" see Freeman, "Good Ministrye," 30-2; presumably *Godly Letters* also had a significant female readership.

⁷ Wabuda, "Henry Bull, Miles Coverdale," and Freeman, "Good Ministrye." It should be noted that both articles discuss the two works in terms of collaboration between the editors (Foxye and Coverdale/Bull), and thus make no particular effort to distinguish between the two works. In terms of "visible" editorial control, however, *Godly Letters* (aside from a short introduction) appears mostly free of editorial commentary, and generally restricts the marginal glosses to referencing the Scripture passages cited in the text. When the same letters appear in the *Acts and Monuments*, they often have more side commentary.

the readers. Bull also withheld original information that showed that the prisoners were involved in the free will controversy” (256). While some of these alterations may have been meant to protect the privacy of individuals, others provide evidence that Foxe and his fellow editors were shaping the image of Marian Protestantism—as “not only heroic, but unified in opinion” (257)—as they presented its artifacts to the public.

Freeman, paying particular attention to editorial alterations to male-female correspondence, notes that Bull and Foxe, in response to Catholic attacks on such relationships, “were careful to excise some of the less restrained expressions of affection that occurred in the letters between the martyrs and their female sustainers” (25). But the most important reason for censoring this correspondence, he argues, was to “conceal the theological and pastoral contributions of the women to these relationships” (26). This was particularly necessary, he argues, because of the didactic purpose of the works, Foxe’s desire to present models of godly conduct: “Both Bull and Foxe eliminated material which suggested that Marian Protestant women had exceeded what were considered to be the bounds of their proper sphere and had usurped traditional male authority over theological matters” (28). Freeman’s print-manuscript comparisons certainly should alert us to an editorial tendency to qualify (or occasionally excise) evidence of “problematic” female activity; however, this does not seem to be particularly systematic or widespread. There are numerous passages remaining in the letters *as published* that one would expect to be omitted by any censor committed to eliminating all suggestion of female “pastoral” activity.⁸ Indeed,

⁸ I am convinced by Freeman’s argument only to a limited degree (particularly as it pertains to the *Godly Letters*, since many of his examples are drawn from Foxe) because it is possible to propose alternate explanations for certain editorial changes, and because so much material which might have been eliminated was not. What Freeman does show is that these editorial changes were subtle. It is perhaps more helpful to think of this sort of censorship as

if the printed letters represent the “acceptable” range of female activity, it is actually broader than one might expect. But is it also in the background, particularly in a text that is devoted to male martyrs. Thus the edited collection in the *Godly Letters* offers a somewhat softened, slanted and muted reflection of the female activity evidenced in the original material.

With that caveat in mind, however, it remains that the *Godly Letters* provide a wealth of material concerning the activities of Marian Protestant women (and men), as well as an indication of how these activities were represented to a later audience. My focus here is not on what has been obscured by the editors, but on what can yet be read “between the lines”—what is being presented as an ideal, and how Elizabethan women might read themselves into the Protestant community through these texts.

Conversation and Community

“It doth us good,” writes Miles Coverdale in his preface to the reader, to read and heare, not the lying legendes of fayned, false, counterfayted, and popish canonized saincts, neither ye triflying toyes & forged fables of corrupted writers: but such true, holy, & approued histories, monuments, orations, epistles & letters, as do set forth unto us ye blessed behauour of gods deare seruauntes . . . [and] by such

smoothing out the “rough edges”—anything that might be embarrassing or divisive or out of step with an idealized Protestant community—rather than any sort of systematic suppression of women’s involvement. It is also useful to remember that the familiar rhetoric of exceptionality—unusual female roles are allowable in exceptional circumstances—might offer a neat way of distinguishing between the exigencies of the Marian persecution and that which is normative in the more “settled” climate of a decade later.

comfortable remembraunce, conceaued by their notable writings, to be conuersaunt with them, at the least in spirite.⁹ (A2r)

The *Godly Letters*—as letters—are particularly conducive to this sort of “conversation,” for they are uniquely immediate and personal. Coverdale continues (citing a familiar letter of St. Jerome’s),¹⁰ “a letter or epistle is the thyng alone yt maketh men present which are absent” (A2v). Moreover, he suggests (citing Erasmus’ commendation of Augustine’s epistles), letters, more than other writings, give us a picture of the whole person. Such writings, “as in a cleare glasse,” show the virtues God has bestowed on his children as well as the “fatherlye care he euer hadde unto them” (A2v); they show “how the same deare children of God in their time behaued themselues, aswel towards hym, as also towards their frendes and foes: yea what the verye thoughts of the hartes were. . .” (A3r). Such letters provide a picture of the details—the habits, the spiritual struggles and comforts—of a godly life lived under extreme pressure, that the reader “might not onely consider what heauenly strength & rich possession of constant faythe, of ardent zeale, of quiet patience, of peace & joy in the holy ghost, [God] useth to arme them, yt can find in their harts to abhor al ungodlines both of doctrine & life: but also to ioine wt them our selues in such sort” (A4r). The reader, then, is

⁹ *Certain most godly, fruitful, and comfortable letters of such true Saintes and holy Martyrs of God, as in the late bloodye presecution here within this Realme, gaue their lyues for the defence of Christes holy gospel: written in the tyme of theyr affliction and cruell imprysonment.* (London: Iohn Day, 1564) A2r. Futher citations of this text will be parenthetical. While I am using sig. references for the prefatory material, the main text is paginated.

¹⁰ Letter 8, to Niceas, sub-deacon of Aquileia, 374 A.D. Jerome, as Coverdale acknowledges, is himself quoting Turpilus.

invited into “conversation”—in the broadest sixteenth-century sense—with the voices in this volume: to “join with” them, to identify with them, to study and imitate their lives.¹¹

There is a strong communal dimension to such “conversation,” for the *Godly Letters* is a collection of writings by individuals who were in conversation with each other. Philpot writes to Careless; Careless writes to Bradford; Bradford writes to Saunders; Saunders writes to Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer; both Cranmer and Bradford write to Anne Wilkinson; both Ridley and Careless write to Mary Glover (Latimer’s niece), and so on. Limiting the scope of the epistolary collection to those imprisoned during the relatively short period of Mary’s reign results in a fairly cohesive sense of place and circumstance throughout the collection, the re-creation on paper of a particular (but also exemplary) Protestant community. This community, at the centre of the Marian persecutions, also functions as an archetypal Protestant community, a microcosm of the true church, and—given Wabuda’s conclusion that the editors tended to omit distracting personal details to enhance the “universal application” of the letters—it was intended to function this way.¹² But as a collection of voices that share not only doctrinal convictions and the experience of imprisonment, but also similar friendships, patterns of speech and thought, devotional habits, and the like, the *Godly Letters* also reflect a Marian Protestant “culture” that (while it may be more homogeneous as

¹¹ The various (now obsolete) senses of “conversation” which seem applicable here include belonging (especially in a spiritual sense) to a place or group of persons (eg., “our conversation is in heaven”), society or intimate acquaintance, and behaviour or mode of life. See OED (2nd ed.), senses 1, 2, 4-6.

¹² Not all personal details are omitted, and indeed part of the power of these letters is that they retain a sense of the humanity of the martyrs. See, for example, Laurence Saunder’s letter to his wife asking her to send him the shirt in which he is to be burned (206). If the reader is to identify with this community of martyrs, there must be enough detail to “personalize” the Marian Protestants, without limiting their relevance to the particulars of their circumstances. To the extent that the letter writers anticipated a fairly wide readership for many of their letters, they themselves likely were conscious of the “universal application” of their epistles.

represented in print than in historical actuality) is larger and more complex than any editorial agenda. This was, above all, a culture of reading.¹³ The Marian community, given the realities of imprisonment, persecution and exile, was connected significantly (sometimes solely)¹⁴ through literary exchange; it is fitting that its print incarnation recreates it in the form of a web of texts. As Mark Breitenberg has argued with reference to the *Acts and Monuments*, "the epistolary form serves the function of presenting a network of religious sympathy connected by the written word—a medium already appropriated as distinctly Protestant. Additionally, the fact that the letters are addressed to living people not otherwise part of the story extends the Protestant community forged by this network beyond the boundaries of the text."¹⁵ And as reading is a primary means of participating in the original community, so it is also the means by which later Protestants "converse" with this archetypal community. The *Godly Letters* provide an excellent avenue for addressing the construction

¹³ I am aware of the potential for circularity in drawing conclusions about the centrality of literate practices solely from literary/textual evidence. It must be acknowledged that, inevitably, the Marian Protestant community represented in the *Godly Letters* comprised largely university-educated men and highly literate women (most of whom apparently could write as well as read), and thus reflects a select strata of the broader Protestant community, and certainly a privileged class within society as a whole. Yet the Reformist focus on the written Word was embraced by some members of quasi-literate and non-literate classes as well, as we have seen in chapter two, and as Foxe's more comprehensive collection of martyr narratives illustrates.

¹⁴ For instance Bradford receives support from, and frequently corresponds with, Lady Vane, whom he has not met (337), and he writes several letters to Mrs. M. H. (Mary Honeywood; see Freeman, "Good Ministrye," 19-20), "althoughe, as I to you, so you unto me in person are unknowen" (303); Ridley writes to Mrs. Glover, whom he has not met, to encourage her to continue to "do accordinge to the report which I here of you: that is, that you be hartye in Goddes cause" (74).

¹⁵ Mark Breitenberg, "The Flesh Made Word: Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*," *Renaissance and Reformation* 25, no. 4 (1989): 391. Breitenberg suggests that "the textual inclusivity of Foxe's book—in fact, all of its formal and structural components—is an attempt to reproduce textually a vision of the English Protestant state church" (389). In the case of the *Godly Letters*, it is a microcosmic, paradigmatic community that is represented; the community-building "inclusivity" of the collection is in the emphasis on textual circulation and the "open space" of the addressee that is available to the reader.

of a Protestant community *as a reading community*, and *through literate practices*. And because women are so frequently the addressees of these published letters, this vision of community foregrounds—in a background sort of way—the *reading woman*.

Epistolary Style and Apostolic Authority: Relating (to) the Early Church

The vision of community represented in this collection is a self-consciously apostolic one. Thus Coverdale, in his introduction, writes:

The more nigh that mens wordes & workes approch unto ye most wholesome sayinges & fruitful doings of ye old auncient Saincts & chosen children of god (which loued not only to heare his word, but also to liue thereafter) the more worthy are they to be esteemed, embraced, & followed. And therefore as we heare & read of many godly, both men & wemen, whose conuersation in old time was beautified wt syngular giftes of ye holy ghost (according as ye Apostle describeth them in the xi.chap. to ye Hebrues) so haue we iust cause to reioyce, that we haue bene familiar & acquainted wt some of those, which walked in ye trade of their fotesteppes. (A2r)

In keeping with the reformist argument that the church of antiquity, of the apostles and early martyrs—rather than corrupt “popish” tradition—is the proper standard by which the True Church should be measured,¹⁶ the voices in the *Godly Letters* consciously emulate this

¹⁶ Robert Glover, describing to his wife Mary his disputes with the examining bishop, writes: “I answered [the bishop], Christ was content that the people should iudge hys doctryne by searching the scriptures, and so was Paule: me thynketh ye should clayme no further priuiledge or preeminence, then they had. I offered hym further, that I was contente the primitiue church next to the Apostles tyme, should iudge betwixt hym and me” (535). When I use the term “apostolic,” then, I refer to this understanding of the “primitive” church, rather than any “papist” notion of apostolic succession.

model. "Was there euer such troubles," Bishop Hooper writes to his wife Anne, "as Christ threatned uppon Jerusalem? Was there sithens the beginning of the world such affliction? Who was then best at ease? The Apostles that suffred in body persecution, and gathered of it ease and quietnes in the promises of god" (156). Many of the prisoners' letters reflect their efforts to cultivate this apostolic "ease and quietnes" in their own painful circumstances. John Bradford writes to his mother rejoicing that, in "prisonyng me for hys Gospel," God is making him "like to hys frendes the Prophets, Apostles, the holye Martyrs and Confessours. which of them dyd not suffer, as the least, imprisonmente or bannyshment for hys Gospel and woorde?" (452). Indeed, suffering is a mark of the true church: "The Church of Christ," writes Robert Glover to his wife, "is, hath bene, and shalbe in all ages, under the crosse, persecuted, molested, and afflicted, the world ever hating them, because they be not of the world" (529). "Wherefore, my deare frendes," writes Hooper to John Hall and his wife, "seyng god of hys part, hath illuminated you with the same gyfte & knowledge of true faith, wherein the Apostles the Euangelists, and all martyrs, suffered most cruell deathe, thanke him for hys grace in knowledge, and pray unto him for strength and perseverance" (137). Positioning themselves (and each other) in solidarity with the teaching, the suffering and the perseverance of the apostles and evangelists, the Marian martyrs self-consciously mirror the trials and triumphs of the "primitive" church; joining with the apostolic church, they also adopt some of its authority.

The Marian prisoners (consistent with Protestant regard for the Bible) cite the New Testament writers frequently and at length; the gospels and epistles are a source not only of

doctrine but also of illustration and example.¹⁷ With most of them occupying pastoral roles prior to the persecutions, it is no surprise that they would continue preaching and teaching from their cells, nor that their teaching would be “Biblical” in content. But beyond this, the letter writers frequently take on an “apostolic persona,” as Laurence Saunders explicitly does in a letter to Lucy Harrington:

as S. Paule expresseth unto his Corinthians that they were in hys hart eyther to liue or to dye, with many other such sayinges uttered unto them and the Galathians, expressing hys vehement affection towards them: so, in some parte I would be lyke affected towards all Gods children, and especially towards you whom I know in Christ, and to whom I will not say, how much I am indebted. (193)

The letters commonly combine expressions of affection and encouragement with pastoral teaching and exhortation. Thus John Bradford writes to Mr. and Mrs. Shalcrosse “aswel to renewe our mutuall loue in GOD and care one for an other by hartye prayer, as to excite and prouoke you bothe, to thankfulness for gods graces, hetherto . . . and to be diligent and wary that you unto the ende continue in the same” (360); he later offers to send them a book he has written “to teach you how you shuld behaue your selues, especially concerning the Masse” (363).¹⁸ The martyrs’ epistles share with the New Testament letters not only a context of persecution and a similar style of doctrinal exposition, but also teachings on domestic conduct and godly example,¹⁹ greetings to be passed on to others of the “faithful,” and

¹⁷ Thus Cranmer, citing both the gospels and the life of Paul, exhorts Anne Wilkinson “as well by Christs commaundement, as by the example of him and his Apostles” (234) to flee to the continent.

¹⁸ This is most likely a version of *The hurte of hering masse*, posthumously published around 1561 and again in 1580. Bradford also sends a copy of this work to Lady Vane (335).

¹⁹ See for instance Hooper “to a certayne godly woman, instructing her how she should behaue her selfe in the time of her widowhode” (142) and “An aunswer to a frende of his for

expressions of thanks for monetary and prayer support; the Marian Protestants, like the New Testament apostles, are concerned with cultivating and instructing a community of the faithful.

The reformist epistles parallel the Biblical letters in form, as well as in content; the appropriation of an “apostolic” voice is reflected in the adoption of New Testament epistolary style.²⁰ Frequently beginning with variations on the “grace and peace” greeting formula common in the New Testament epistles,²¹ most of the letters make extensive use of “Biblical” language—through quotation, paraphrase, allusion, familiar phraseology—with which the writers mark themselves, not simply as expositors of, but also as participants in the apostolic tradition.²² The martyrs’ adoption of an apostolic posture, and a “scriptural style”

a woman that was troubled with her husband in matters of religion, how she should behaue her selfe towards him” (143-5). On widowhood see also Bartlet Green to Elizabeth Clark (555). As Freeman points out, “Good Ministrie,” 13-16, such questions of domestic conduct were pressing issues in a context in which Protestant women often found themselves at odds with their Catholic husbands or fathers, and were torn between the obedience conventionally expected of wives and daughters and their commitment to practicing their reformed faith and avoiding the “idolatry” of the mass.

²⁰ While one would imagine that most of these (Latin-educated) men would be conversant in the classical conventions of letter-writing (as a branch of rhetoric), by far their most significant model in these letters is the Bible. Most of the *Godly Letters* were composed in English (with a few translated exceptions), and many in rushed and inconvenient (and thus “informal”) circumstances (A3v-A4r). For a discussion of (non-Biblical) letter-writing models of the period, see Jean Robertson, *The Art of Letter Writing: An Essay on the Handbooks Published in England during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London: University Press of Liverpool, 1943). She notes that the first book on letter writing to appear in English was not published until 1568 (13), four years after the *Godly Letters* appeared.

²¹ There are numerous examples. Hooper greets “a certayne godly woman” with a simple “The grace of god, and the comfort of his holy spirit, be with you, and all them that unfainedly loue his holy gospell” (142), while Bradford writes to M[ary] H[oneywood]: “I humblye and hartelye praye the euerlyuyng good god and father of mercye, to blesse and kepe your harte and mynd in the knowledge and loue of his truth, & of his Christ through the inspiration and workyng of the holy spyryte, Amen” (298). See any of the Pauline epistles for the Biblical formulae.

²² As Wabuda observes, the prisoners’ “profound biblicism, their vigorous application of Scripture’s verses and topoi to their own circumstances” (“Henry Bull, Miles Coverdale,”

more generally, certainly works to bolster the authority of their own teaching.²³ However, the letters are not simply instructional, and it would be a mistake to reduce them to a series of authoritative voices—amplified and sanctified by apostolic language—directing their readers. Authority in these texts is much more diffuse, refracted through the *Godly Letters* by the multiplicity of authors and the communal, conversational nature of the epistolary network itself. In other words, authority is not located simply in the instructional words of the martyrs, or even in the broader message that they project, but also in the textualized web of communal practices and relationships in which their voices participate.

Thus in content and form, style and structure, the letters of the martyrs—particularly as collected and printed—resemble (and in some sense recapitulate) the New Testament epistles; they function as a sort of secondary scripture, a quasi-sacred text. As such, they invite a particular sort of reading. While certainly the printed letters may function as personal artifacts or historical “monuments”—or even as relics²⁴—they also invite a

249) was not limited to members of the clergy, and was also adopted by martyrs prior to Mary's reign (for instance, Anne Askew); it seems particularly suited to contexts of persecution. A more wide-spread scriptural style is partially explained by increasing exposure to—and interest in—the Bible, particularly as it became readily available in English. For a classification of the various uses and varieties of Biblical language in sixteenth-century German letters, see Reinhard Bodenmann, “La Bible et l'arte d'écrire des lettres: Pratiques dans l'aire germanique du XVI^e siècle,” *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* 141 (1995). Bodenmann suggests that (in the German context) the increasing accessibility of the Bible, through print and sermons, and the “banalisation et laïcisation” of theological debate resulted in an accompanying “laïcisation” of knowledge and use of the Bible among the literate bourgeois (378-9).

²³Bodenmann, “La Bible et l'art d'écrire des lettres,” suggests that sixteenth-century letter writers often use Biblical phraseology in order to sound credible or authoritative, or when they are addressing delicate topics such as death or suffering.

²⁴ See Wabuda, “Henry Bull, Miles Coverdale,” 245 for this suggestion. Certainly this would add another (residually Catholic) dimension of the sacred to the texts. However, while these martyrs may be styled “saints,” it is in conscious opposition to “popish canonized saints” (A2r) and the practices associated with them; if these letters function as “relics,” they do so in a textual context very different from the “material” culture of late-medieval Catholicism.

“Biblical” sort of moral/devotional reading. As the Christian reads, for example, Paul’s epistle to the Colossians as, on one hand a personal letter of instruction and encouragement to a specific community and particular friends,²⁵ and on the other hand, as a document with universal application and divine authority written to members of the Church in every age, so the reformers’ epistles invite reading both as historically particular documents and as texts with a particular “apostolic” spiritual authority.²⁶ Thus Bradford, in the same letter to the Shalcrosses, writes:

I know this kynde of writyng is madnes to the world, folishnes to reason, and sower to the flesh: but to you which are a man of God, and by profession in baptisme haue forsaken the worlde, and do consider thinges after the reache of faythe, and haue tasted of the good spirite of God and of the lyfe to come, unto such a one I say (as I trust you be) thys kynd of writing is otherwise esteemed (362)²⁷

The letters of the martyrs, like Scripture, must be read with a certain “spiritual posture” (of faith, discernment, inspiration) in order to be truly understood and appreciated. And because such reading calls for personal involvement and self-evaluation, the reader is likely to read herself into—and measure herself against—the paradigmatic community represented in the

An idea sometimes expressed in the letters is that the death of the martyr seals the truth of his teaching; the suffering body is a sign of committment to the Word—as Bradford writes to his mother, it is “to confyrme the truth I haue taughte” (293).

²⁵ See Col. 4:7-18 for the personal greetings included in the epistle and for instructions concerning its circulation.

²⁶ A similar “multi-level” use of biblical language occurs with the ubiquitous Psalms, where the words of David (and of God) become the words of those who pray or sing them, both authoritative and personally expressive. See Margaret P. Hannay, ““So May I With the Psalmist Truly Say”” Early Modern Englishwomen’s Psalm Discourse,” in *Write or Be Written Early modern women poets and cultural constraints*, eds. Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001). The Marian martyrs use apostolic discourse in a similar way.

²⁷ Cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25, 2:12-14. While most of the letter is clearly directed to both Mr. and Mrs. Shalcrosse together, Bradford sometimes uses only male terms.

letters. In terms of authority this is a complex process, for in one sense the reader is required to “submit” to the text, to allow herself to be shaped by it; yet the “apostolic” text also confers authority on those who read it rightly. In addition to gaining authority-by-association from knowledge of an “estemed” text, the reader is invited into a pan-historical community of elect readers who “consider thinges after the reache of faythe.” To the extent that the reader understands the letters to be speaking to her in some way, she is reading herself into the position of the initial addressee, and thus into the Marian community, as well as into the broader apostolic community that it models. The spiritual authority that inhabits the epistolary collection and extends to the community it represents also extends to the community that reads it.

In the *Godly Letters*, then, we have a collection of epistles which not only expound but greatly resemble Biblical texts, thus inviting the reader to afford the texts special authority and particular personal relevance. Reading is potentially an act of identification or solidarity, a means of entering into “conversation” with—and claiming membership in—an authoritative apostolic community. For the woman reader, the substantial number of female addressees provides obvious avenues of identification; for any reader, the gender roles and relationships represented in and through the letters work to shape ideas and expectations of an “apostolic” reformed community, and woman’s place in it.

Comfortable Words?: consolation, confession, and male-female correspondence

A quick survey of the male-female correspondence represented in the *Godly Letters* shows that well over half of the epistles are directed to women other than the author’s wife or

immediate family. Some of these letters express thanks for monetary and material support received, others offer advice and theological instruction, and most offer spiritual encouragement, comfort and support. Such "spiritual friendships" between the martyrs or other prominent reformers and their female correspondents have attracted substantial scholarly interest.²⁸ Freeman attributes much of this "unusual" intimacy between the sexes to the "disproportionately intense pressure the Marian persecution brought to bear on Protestant women," setting them at odds with their conforming husbands and families; the result, he suggests, is that "the male martyrs tended to replace the traditional male authority figures" in

²⁸ See Patrick Collinson, "'Not Sexual in the Ordinary Sense': Women, Men and Religious Transactions," in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Hambledon, 1994) for a broad treatment of this phenomenon, and Freeman, "Good Ministry," for a more specific one. Much of the discussion on the subject revolves around the correspondence of Scottish reformer John Knox with Elizabeth Bowes (eventually his mother-in-law) and with Anne Vaughan Locke. See Patrick Collinson, "The Role of Women in the English Reformation Illustrated by the Life and Friendships of Anne Locke," in *Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London: Hambledon, 1983) 258-72; Susan M. Felch, "'Deir Sister': The Letters of John Knox to Anne Vaughan Lok," *Renaissance and Reformation* 19, no. 4 (1995); Christine M. Newman, "The Reformation and Elizabeth Bowes: A Study of a Sixteenth-Century Northern Gentlewoman," in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); and A. Daniel Frankforter, "Elizabeth Bowes and John Knox: A Woman and Reformation Theology," *Church History* 56, no. 3 (1987). (In both cases the nature of the correspondence is particularly difficult to characterize because only Knox's letters survive.) Bowes generally has been described, with more or less sympathy, as chronically (even hysterically) anxious about her spiritual state, requiring Knox to constantly reassure her that she was numbered among the elect. However, Frankforter challenges the frequent dismissal of Bowes as a "pitiful neurotic" (335) by arguing that the personal spiritual struggles and doubts she confided in Knox were instrumental in Knox's own theological development. Additionally, Felch's characterization of the Knox-Locke correspondence as one of mutuality and interdependence suggests that, whatever excesses might be associated with Mrs. Bowes, they need not be taken as normative. Although contemporary scholars acknowledge that spiritual hypochondria was not characteristic of all—or only—devout Protestant women, the fact that the "eccentric" characters (the "Margery Kempes," if you will) still receive the most attention—that Bowes, more than Locke, is used as an example of a female correspondent—tends to perpetuate the stereotype of hysterical female spirituality.

the lives of these women.²⁹ Patrick Collinson has repeatedly suggested that the Protestant divines replace another male authority as well—the Catholic confessor. Their female correspondents, he argues,

belonged to a Church which had only recently abandoned the regular practice of spiritual direction, while laying great emphasis on the doctrine of election, which most of these ladies seem to have found perplexing. From the ‘godly and comfortable letters’ which the preachers addressed to them it is apparent that women sought assurance on this matter especially, and that they leant on the preachers as a Catholic would lean on his confessor.³⁰

Certainly a context of religious upheaval and theological debate would create a special need for spiritual direction among the devout of both sexes; if “these ladies” found election “perplexing,” then they were in good company.³¹ Given the religious and social tumult of the period, it is not surprising that religiously-involved women would want to “consult the experts” on matters spiritual and theological, and there is certainly a pastoral dimension—an apostle-disciple dynamic—to many of the *Godly Letters*. No doubt the male-female relationships represented in Coverdale’s collection served as models for pastor-parishioner interaction in the following generations, contributing to a set of conventions “within which is was appropriate for a godly woman of the upper or middle classes to share her religious

²⁹ Freeman, “Good Ministrye,” 12, 16.

³⁰ “Role of Women,” 275. See also Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988) 75 ff. and Collinson, “Religious Transactions,” 134 ff.

³¹ Freeman suggests that ultimately the support of women for the predestinarian martyrs (rather than the freewillers), due in part to close personal relationships between them, was instrumental in the triumph of that stream of thought in the Protestant community Freeman, “Good Ministrye,” 20 ff.

symptoms with a learned and godly preacher.”³² However, the language of religious “symptom” and male spiritual guidance all too easily obscures the complexity and diversity of the relationships represented in the *Godly Letters*.

Both Freeman and Collinson suggest that one of the motivating factors in the development of intimate spiritual relationships between preachers and their female supporters was the woman’s anxiety about her salvation, and that this concern was exacerbated by the Calvinist doctrine of election. Filled with “guilt and spiritual despair,”³³ so the argument goes, women of a certain class, particularly susceptible to religious melancholia, developed a chronic need to be assured of their elect status. While certainly one can find colourful examples of spiritual neuroses among sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritan women (and there are a host of social and material factors that might help to explain them) this phenomenon is neither unique to women nor a necessary outgrowth of predestinarian theology.³⁴ Moreover, in the context of the radical religious shifts of the mid sixteenth century and the terror of the Marian persecutions, surely not all moments of spiritual doubt or despair can be dismissed as feminine hysteria. Given that the *Godly Letters* are penned by men imprisoned, subject to intense physical, psychological and spiritual strain, and awaiting a painful execution as a result of their uncompromising adherence to certain theological

³² Collinson, “Religious Transactions,” 136.

³³ Freeman, “Good Ministry,” 20.

³⁴ As Collinson observes, “The absence of anxiety, like conventional conformity, has little or no history” (“Religious Transactions,” 135). As Article #17 (of the Thirty-Nine Articles) acknowledges, the doctrine of election can produce strongly opposite psychological responses: “desperation” in those who doubt their election, and “sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ.” There is also a distinction to be made between, on one hand, “legitimate” theological questions, spiritual challenges and moments of doubt resulting in growth and, on the other hand, morbid, inconsolable religious melancholia. The picture is further complicated by the fact that expression of concern about one’s salvation is often taken as a sign of one’s election.

arguments, it is absurd to assume that it is primarily their female correspondents who are in need of comfort and reassurance.³⁵ It also is well to remember—particularly in the absence of the women's letters—that preachers are wont to preach, whether or not their exhortations have been specifically solicited.³⁶

Collinson also has suggested (more convincingly, at least in the Marian context) that in addressing the spiritual issues of female correspondents male reformers had an opportunity to wrestle with their own spiritual challenges as well.³⁷ For instance, John Bradford's letter to Joyce Hales exhorting her not to fear death is also an occasion for him to ponder his own response to it: "halas, yet if death the Lordes palfreye, the Lordes messenger shoulde come, I thynke I should not bee so readye, but be fearefull as you foresee yourselfe to be . . . I hope [God] will neuer tempte me further then he will make me hable to beare . . ." (309). The familiar exhortations to rejoice in suffering and the frequent assurances of God's providential care are similarly applicable to the circumstances of the martyr-writer as well as the woman reader. While the representation of this sort of correspondence may be one-sided, and the ostensible purpose to comfort and instruct a troubled woman, it is fairly clear that many of

³⁵ Freeman suggests that the prevailing assumption that women were more emotional and less rational than men might make it more culturally acceptable for women to articulate their religious anxieties ("Good Ministrye," 16-17). Moreover, while the martyrs do admit to moments of despair, it is clearly not helpful to their cause to dwell on this at length.

³⁶ Bradford's words to a certain "Nathanaell" are illuminating: "For auricular confession, wherein you desyre my aduice for your good yokefellowe and familye . . . I am as readye to geue it, as you to desire it, yea more gladde, forasmuch as halfe a suspition was in me (at the least touching my dere sister your wife) of a lothing of my aduice, that too much had beene geuen, where in deede I shoulde lamente my to little feeding you spirituallie, as both you oute of pryson and in pryson haue fedde me corporallye. But as I alwayes thoughte of her, so I yet thynke, that she is the childe of GOD . . ." (415). Election (and the loving fatherhood of God) is a particularly prominent theme in Bradford's letters.

³⁷ Again, the example is Knox, whom Collinson suggests "found in his mother-in-law a perfect reflection of his own spiritual problems and, in effect, an image of his own soul" ("Religious Transactions," 141). For more on this case see Frankforter, "Elizabeth Bowes and John Knox."

these letters were not a one-way pastoral exercise. Rather, the image of the male pastoral comforter is complemented—and perhaps compromised—by the image of the godly woman comforter.

The martyrs routinely thank their female addressees for their “comfortable letters.” John Careless, writing to Mrs. Cotton, is particularly effusive:

Blessed be the Lord our God, which of hys great mercy hath so beautified hys church in these our dayes, that euen unto many godly women, he hath geuen most excellent giftes of knowledge and understanding of hys truth, so that they are not only wel able to enforme their own consciences in al things necessary to saluation, but also most *swetely to comfort their sorowful brethren & sisters* that sustaine any trouble for the testimony of gods truth, yea & that which is more, euen *in the middes of their greate conflictes of conscience*: Of which most happye number of godly & vertuous women, my deare hart, you are one. . . (579; italics mine)

He asks her to continue to write to him, “for truly I take great comfort & courage therby, specially in my poore conscience, which is sore assaulted of subtyll Sathan, & in a maner oppressed of my synnes” (579).³⁸ In this scenario, not only are women doing the spiritual comforting, but it is part of the role of the “godly woman.” Responding to her letter of “godly and comfortable exhortation” (574), Careless writes to Lady Anne Knevet:

God hath at thys day in hys poore afflicted church, a sort of worthy women, which do him and his such seruice as is acceptable in hys sight . . .

³⁸ This letter is also printed in the *Acts and Monuments* (1563), where Foxe attempts to moderate this comment by his marginal gloss: “Note how God sometime geueth comfort by weaker vessells” (p. 2108).

God for my sinnes hath taken from me the companye of godly learned men,³⁹
 to my great grief and heauy discomfort: but of his great goodnes & mercy he doth
 supply my spiritual lacke by ye good ministry of godly & vertuous women . . .
 (573)

While it is discernible from Careless' letter *as printed* that Lady Knevet's epistle was an authoritatively pastoral one—"you do most godly counsell me with S. Peter," and "your swete examples . . . doe much confirme my faith in Christ" (574)—apparently his enthusiastic appreciation of this sort of comfort caused *discomfort* for the martyrologists; Freeman shows that Bull substantially edited the original letter in a way that downplays Knevet's discussion of doctrine.⁴⁰ The reader of the *Godly Letters*, oblivious to editorial tampering, may nevertheless pick up a certain uneasiness or exceptionality associated with the woman-as-spiritual-comforter model; indeed the prominence of gender in the passages suggests the novelty of the situation. And Careless himself, while receptive to—and even requesting—the spiritual ministrations of several women, is conscious of a reversal: "John was wonte to comfort Mary," he writes to Margery Cooke, "but now good swete Maryes come comfort John" (607).

The role of the godly woman as a *pastoral* comforter or "spiritual physician" to a sorrowful man, then, is discernible in the *Godly Letters*, but in a context that characterizes it as an exceptional role rather than a natural one. It is, one might say, the negotiable upper limit of the acceptable role of the female comforter. But while this hint of spiritual direction "in reverse" may challenge the myth of one-sided "spiritual friendship" between the sexes

³⁹ Bradford and Philpot, his fellow prisoners; see p.605 ff.

⁴⁰ Among the phrases excised is reference to Knevet's treatment of "the most heavenly true and comfortable doctryne of Gods free election and eternal predestinacion in Jesus Christe." See Freeman, "Good Ministry," 29.

(or, alternatively, simply function as the exception that proves the rule), other relationships represented in the *Godly Letters* more effectively undermine this myth through their language of genuine mutual friendship. Laurence Saunders writes to Lucy Harrington that he found comfort in

the expressing of your myndful frendship towards me far unworthy therof. Wherin I take occasion of muche reioising in oure so gracious a god and mercifull father, who . . . lynketh us by loue one unto another, beyng by that bonde compacte together with charitable readines to do good one unto an other. (191)

Saunders does not refer to Mrs. Harrington's friendship in gendered terms, but rather as an occasion to sing the praises of Christian community: "by thys bonde of mutual loue, is set forth the fatherly prouidence of god towards us his children . . . [who hath] apointed us in these present necessities, to stand in his stede one unto an other" (191).⁴¹ A similar tone of mutual friendship in a common cause is audible in many of the letters—the martyrs take comfort in the women's persistence in the faith, and in their good works; they share news and send greetings through them; they send farewell messages when death seems imminent; they offer and request prayer.⁴² The recurrent language of friendship, of give and take, gratitude

⁴¹ This is a common theme in Saunders' letters to Mrs. Harrington (see 212 ff.); in another letter Saunders asks Harrington, as a family friend, to care for his wife and small child after his death, to "be unto her a mother and mystres, to rule and directe her by your discrete Counsell. I knowe she conceaueth of you the same that I doe, and is thankful unto God with me for suche a frend" (193).

⁴² For instance, Philpot sends a farewell to certain women leaving for the continent "not as a thyng nedefull, which know alreedy what your duety is, and be desirous to performe the same, but as one that woulde haue you understand that he is myndefull of your godly conuersation, whereof he hath had good experience, and therefore wryteth this to bee as a perpetuall memoriall betwixt you and hym, untill our metyng together before god, where we shall ioy that we haue here louyngly put one another in memory of our duetye to performe it" (235). Bradford, acknowledging receipt of the tokens sent by Mrs. Wilkinson, writes: "to [God] I know you woulde haue me be thankfull, and I besече you praye that I may so bee, and not

and prayer, is a steady counterpoint to the more unidirectional language of doctrinal instruction and spiritual consolation.

Confession of a different kind

In a similar way, this consciousness of a common cause, prominent in many of the martyrs' letters to their female supporters, provides a corrective to—or perhaps an expansion of—the “confessional” model of spiritual relationships between the sexes.⁴³ The male-female “religious transactions” (to use Collinson's term) represented in the *Godly Letters* arise out of a wide variety of contexts and sorts of relationships, among people of various ages and classes, and exhibit different patterns of (inter)dependency. While many of these relationships are clearly shaped by historical particulars—one is in greater need of a rich benefactress if one is in prison; one is in greater need of spiritual advice if one's husband is demanding one's attendance at mass; one is in greater need of consolation if one's friends and relatives are being executed as heretics—there is nothing particularly novel about male-female “spiritual friendship” per se.⁴⁴ In this respect it indeed may be helpful to characterize these relationships as “confessional,” in order to underscore the continuity of a certain

onelye thankefull for my selfe and his benefites towards me, but also thankefull for you to whome God hath geuen to feare his name and loue his truth” (343-4). There are many other passages similar in tone and content.

⁴³ This “confessional” model as it seems to be used in the scholarship I am discussing is, in my view, an unhelpful conflation of two distinct (if overlapping) roles of the male “confessor”—that of spiritual *director*, and that of spiritual *physician*. The former casts the woman as a student or disciple, the latter assumes she is spiritually diseased. This conflation misleadingly suggests that relationships of spiritual direction are necessarily focused on the woman's internal religious “symptoms.”

⁴⁴ See Collinson, “Religious Transactions,” for a discussion of such transactions in a broader historical perspective. Among other things, he mentions medieval double monasteries and relationships between male and female religious houses. One also might consider the large volume of (generally vernacular) reading material produced by monks for religious women.

gendered dynamic of spiritual direction, and also to emphasize their degree of spiritual intimacy and introspection.⁴⁵ However, as we have seen, not all the transactions represented in the martyr's letters are a ready fit with the procrustean couch of the confessional model. Just as the letters do not necessarily suggest one-sided relationships, so they are not exclusively concerned with inward spiritual symptoms. In the context of the Reformation, we must consider "confessional" motivation from a different angle—the evangelical sense of confession as an externally directed statement of belief.

"Confesse Christ, and be not ashamed, and he wil confesse you and neuer be ashamed of you," writes John Bradford to Mrs. Hall, a prisoner in Newgate, before her examination:

Greater honoure had not hys Prophetes, Apostles, nor dearest frendes, then to beare witnes wyth Christ, as we now doe. . . . Therefore be not carefull (for I heare say thys day you shall be called forth) what you shal answer. The lord which is true & cannot lie, hath promysed, and wyll neuer fayle nor forget it, that you shall haue both what and how to aunswer, so as shall make hys shameles aduersaries ashamed. (378)

Bradford is less occupied with Mrs. Hall's own spiritual state (which he seems to assume is satisfactory) than with her public message. *This* sort of confessional impulse, or evangelical/polemical imperative (as I have called it in chapter three), is a large part of the common cause that draws many of these correspondents together, and prompts them to support each other, both spiritually and materially. Bradford writes a lengthy epistle in

⁴⁵ There is no particular reason to assume that late-medieval Catholic relationships between women and their confessors were necessarily one-sided either, although the structure of the penitential system (in which confessors were necessarily male) codifies a measure of imbalance. The Protestant preachers, in a less overtly mediative role (see chapter 2), nevertheless adopt a similar pastoral function. Freeman suggests that "the relations between martyrs and [female] sustainers foreshadowed the intense emphasis on pastoral activity and the tireless attention to the health of individual souls that characterize later Puritan ministers" ("Good Ministry," 20).

response to Lady Vane's request "to haue somthing sent to you concerning the usurped authoritie of the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome . . . that you may haue as well somethyng the more to stay you on, as also wherwith to answere the aduersaries, because you may perchaunce therin be something aposed" (403-4). Bradford instructs Lady Vane—at her request—in order to equip her to instruct others. John Careless writes to M. C. [Mrs. Cotton] and others to whom she is to convey his greetings: "God strengthen you in all his truth, and make you instrumentes of hys glory, to defend the gospell of his grace against al sortes of enemyes therof" (578).⁴⁶ Religious division (with its attendant proliferation of "enemyes"), the Protestant community's minority status, and certain emphases of Protestant theology all contribute to an increased awareness of a message to be projected (through word or example) to an "outside" world.⁴⁷ Thus while male reformers do indeed concern themselves with the spiritual health of their women correspondents, they also address them as *agents* in a common cause. The martyrs may act as confessors, but they do so within the context of a "confessing" community.

⁴⁶ "Amongst whom," Careless continues, "me thinkes I do foresee deare sister, the great plague that these frewill men shall poure upon the poore afflicted Church of God. . ." (578). This is the sort of internal dissention that, Wabuda argues, the martyrologists tended to edit out. "Henry Bull, Miles Coverdale, and the Making of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*," 256 ff.

⁴⁷ I am in no way suggesting that late-medieval Catholicism was oblivious to other-directed expressions of faith (or to the effect of individual spirituality on a larger community). Rather, Reformation divisions within Christendom created a climate in which "us" and "them" are more readily definable. Recusant Catholics made up a similar sort of persecuted religious minority, with its own martyrs, and its own "evangelical" imperative to re-establish the True Church in England. One can, however, point to the doctrine of election as well as the uniquely Protestant insistence on "informed belief" (see Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 285-95) as theological factors which shaped a Reformed understanding of the nature of the Christian community and its relation to the "world."

Hospitality, Patronage, and the Comforts of Home

One particularly “comfortable” way in which the godly woman could contribute to the common cause was through material and financial support of the male reformers. The martyrs routinely express gratitude for monetary gifts and other “tokens” which they have received from their wealthy female supporters. Bradford writes to Lady Vane: “I haue receaued Gods blessing from you, the which I haue partly distributed unto my three fellowe prisoners Maister Farer, Maister Taylour, Maister Philpot, and the residue I will bestowe uppon iiii. poore soules which are imprisoned in the common Jayle for religion also” (336). Her support extends from specific reformers to the broader persecuted community. Other letters emphasize the women’s generosity.⁴⁸ Ridley commends Mary Glover as a woman “hartye in Goddes cause, and hartye to youre mayster Christ, in furthering of hys cause and settinge fourth his souldiours to hys warres to the uttermost of your power” (74). The women “further God’s cause” and bestow “God’s blessing” through their practical supporting and sustaining role. Certainly such support is significantly motivated by charitable friendship, and the receipt of material comfort is psychologically and spiritually comforting as well.⁴⁹ But in addition to a simple act of friendship or charity, the women’s material support also should be considered as a type of purposeful patronage.

⁴⁸ Bradford writes to Mrs. Brown: “I am afrayd to wryte unto you because you so ouercharge yourself at al times, euen when I do but send you commendations. I wold be more bold on you then on many others, and therfore you myght suspend so great tokens till I shoulde wryte unto you of my nede, which thyng doutles I would do, if it urged me” (412). Hooper thanks A[nne] W[arcop] for her “louing token”: “I pray you burden not your self to much, it were mete for me rather to beare a payn, then to be a hinderance to many”(132).

⁴⁹ With most letters, any attempt to separate material support from its morale-boosting psychological or emotional impact is completely artificial. Many references to material support fall into the “mutual friendship” category of “comfortable” relationships. Certainly,

The sort of “supporting” role for which Ridley praises Glover might be described as a polemically-motivated hospitality, providing lodging and practical assistance to itinerant preachers and reformers in need of shelter. A woman in this role was often known as a “nurse” (in the broad sense of providing care and sustenance) or a “Shunamite,” a reference to the woman of Shunem who housed the prophet Elisha. In this capacity Glover and other women “exercised a type of patronage. By inviting clergymen to preach, or housing them, they sponsored sermons which encouraged or inhibited reform in many places. They played an important part in the effort to increase the number of sermons given in the sixteenth century.”⁵⁰ Such women spread the Word by managing and promoting the circulation of those who preached it. Unlike more formalized patronage structures, this informal but much-needed type of patronage was available to anyone who had the means to offer hospitality.⁵¹

Related to this role of “nurse” is a more recognizable, aristocratic form of patronage practiced by Protestant women of the court.⁵² Such patronage included “hospitality” to

where money is concerned, one cannot dismiss the possibility of flattery and manipulation (on either side); however, in the letters which made it into print, the general sense is that the prisoners had an abundance of material support.

⁵⁰ Susan Wabuda, “Shunamites and Nurses of the English Reformation: The Activities of Mary Glover, Niece of Hugh Latimer,” in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 343. As Wabuda points out, this was not an exclusively Protestant role, and women could (and did) offer similar shelter, provision and promotion to those who worked against reform. See 2 Kings 4:8-37 for the story of the Shunammite woman.

⁵¹ Wabuda writes: “Unlike advowsons, where the right to present a preacher to a benefice was in the hands of a limited number of male patrons, and fewer still women, the opportunity to offer hospitality was much more available for many women” (“Shunamites and Nurses,” 343). For a discussion of Reformation-era debate about more institutionalized forms of lay patronage, including advowsons, see Guy Fitch Lytle, “Religion and the Lay Patron in Reformation England,” in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

⁵² The primary distinction here seems to be one of class (and the accompanying financial resources and political clout). “Nurse” is a much broader term than patron, but the terms have significant overlap. For instance Lady Vane (or Fane) was sometimes addressed as a

reformers—often through appointments as tutors or chaplains—as well as financial support of publishers and sponsorship of particular literary works.⁵³ It was attentive to the Protestant education of the next generation of nobles, as well as the broad dissemination of reformist teaching. Unlike their predecessors, King argues, these Protestant noblewomen were concerned with providing religious material for the common reader: “Their profound innovation was the popularization of Protestant humanism through patronage of devotional manuals and theological translations for the edification of a mixed audience of elite and ordinary readers.”⁵⁴ This, like the role of the Shunamite, was a form of patronage with public intent, dedicated to spreading the Word and furthering the cause of the Reformation.

In the Marian context of the *Godly Letters*, such purposeful support, necessarily constricted in terms of public expression, is largely focused on protecting the reformers still at large and sustaining those in prison. Yet a dynamic of literary patronage remains in the epistolary production of the prisoners. In response to their female correspondents’ questions, encouragement, and material support, the martyrs write letters which can be circulated within the Protestant community. Thanking Elizabeth Brown for her effusive generosity, Bradford acknowledges that, aside from remembering her in prayer, “I can do you no service, excepte it be now and then by my writing. . .” (412); in one respect, the martyrs’ letters are a way of

patroness (see John N. King, “Patronage and Piety: The Influence of Catherine Parr,” in *Silent But for the Word*, ed. Hannay, 55), but Foxe describes her as a nurse.

⁵³ See King, “Patronage and Piety,” for a study of female patrons; for a more general discussion of Protestant patronage see his *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) 76-121. Begun by Queen Katherine Parr and continued by Anne Seymour (as influential wife of the Protector), this tradition of pious patronage was particularly influential during Edward’s reign. Especially active were Catherine Brandon (Duchess of Suffolk), who supported Latimer, went into exile during the Marian years and became a Reformation heroine, and Mary Fitzroy (Duchess of Richmond), who supported and lodged both John Bale and John Foxe.

⁵⁴ King, “Patronage and Piety,” 43.

“repaying” the generosity of their supporters. In another sense, it is the cooperation between correspondents that results in the prisoners’ continuing impact on the Protestant community. If the martyrs can no longer preach in person, they can preach on paper; as Protestant “nurses” managed and promoted the circulation of reformist preachers, so they also have a role in managing and promoting the circulation of the martyrs’ manuscripts. Indeed, most of these epistles would not have appeared in the *Godly Letters* if the addressees had not preserved them and made them available to the martyrologists. As primary readers of the letters sent to them, the women have considerable influence in and over the use and distribution of the martyrs’ writing.

The role of “nurse” or “Shunamite,” of material provider and practical supporter for the sake of the cause, is neither passive nor inconsequential; however, the terms themselves indicate that such hospitable support was viewed as a female role, presumably because of its domestic associations.⁵⁵ This is accentuated by the suggestion of domestic nurturance in the martyrs’ standard practice of addressing female correspondents as “mother” or “sister” (a topic to which I will return below). The broad rubric of familial hospitality—the “comfort” of home—is perhaps the most familiar, and least threatening, framework within which reform-minded women’s various “supporting” activities could be appreciated by their beneficiaries. The godly woman *is* a comforter (not merely someone to be comforted); but this “comfortable” role is most readily expressed with reference to a traditional female sphere

⁵⁵ Wabuda notes: “The activities of nurses were sometimes attributed to their husbands’ generosity; and frequently husbands, as heads of households, were troubled instead of their wives for harbouring preachers” (“Shunamites and Nurses,” 338). This does not detract from the women’s initiative in this role, but rather emphasizes the way in which familiar gendered spheres of activity can be mapped onto more complex situations. One might ask (in chicken-and-egg fashion) whether the activities themselves were “domestic” or whether they were defined as such because women were doing them.

of influence. The role of the female comforter, then, as it is represented in the *Godly Letters*, discreetly encompasses polemically-oriented patronage, uneasily countenances occasional exhortatory sermonizing, and more visibly includes mutually encouraging friendship—but comes across most clearly as a broad sort of familial hospitality. To the extent that the role of the godly female comforter involves the circulation of text, or the encouragement of the writer to produce text for her and others to read, it is also intertwined with the godly woman's identity and occupation as a reader (and writer). One could, perhaps, describe this as a certain "textual hospitality"—receptivity to and practical support of the martyrs' words and teaching, as well as the provision of support through literate means. Particularly in the Marian context, literacy is a primary vehicle for offering and receiving comfort of all kinds. For the godly woman as represented in the *Godly Letters*, reading is not merely a means of passively receiving comfort and consolation revolving around one's inner spiritual state, but rather is directly connected with offering comfort to others and actively promoting and sustaining the common cause. Literacy enables the female comforter, and is part of her identity.

A female "supporting" role, in its various dimensions, is visible and routinely praised in the *Godly Letters*. And, to the extent that it appears as the feminine complement to the apostolic role of the martyrs, it takes on a particular biblical and paradigmatic authority. John Philpot's letter to several women leaving to join the community of exiles on the continent captures the "apostolic" flavour of the role of female comforter, including its evangelical dimension:

I read in the Euangelists, of certain godly women, that ministred unto Christ,
followyng hym in the dayes of his passion and neuer forsooke hym, but beyng dead in

hys graue, brought oyle to annoynt him, until yt he had shewed himself unto them after hys resurrection, and bydden them shewe unto hys disciples, which at his passion were dispersed, and tell them that he was rysen, and that they should see him in Galile. To whom I may iustly compare you, my louing systers in Christ who of late haue sene hym suffer in hys members, and haue *ministred to their necessity, annointing them with the comfortable oyle of your charitable assistance*, euen to the death: and now since ye haue sene Christ to liue in the ashes of them whom the tyrannes haue slayne, he wyllthe you to go away upon iust occasion offered you, & to declare to our dispersed brethren and systers, that he is risen and liueth in hys elect members in England, and by deathe doth ouercome infidelitie, and that they shall see hym in Galile, which is by forsakyng this world, and by a faythful desyre to passe out of this world by those wayes which he with his holy martyrs hath gone on before.

(234-5; italics mine)⁵⁶

Again, the Protestant community is described as imitating or recapitulating the early church; the women's actions are understood as mirroring those of biblical women. They are both "ministers" and messengers, providing significant and varied "charitable assistance" to the communal body of Christ. They are also examples—and for women, with limited opportunities for public expression, this "exemplary" role is particularly central. Philpot writes: "Be examples of faythe and sobrietie to all that ye shall come in company withall. Let your godly conuersation speake where your tonge may not in the congregation Let your faythe shine in a straunge countrey, as it hathe done in your owne" (235). This is not simply an exhortation to "good behaviour," but an acknowledgement that women "preach"

⁵⁶ See especially Matt. 28:1-10 and Luke 23:49-24:11; also John 19:25, 20:11-18.

by example.⁵⁷ There is, then, a chain of exemplarity in which the apostolic women of the gospels are mirrored by the “apostolic” women of the Marian Protestant community, who are praised both for following that example and for being examples themselves; Elizabethan women readers of the *Godly Letters* thus encounter a twofold “apostolic” paradigm, and a rhetoric of exemplarity that invites them to imitate this model of female religious involvement—to join the paradigmatic, pan-historical “apostolic” community and become exemplary figures themselves. And if they read themselves into this apostolic narrative—particularly if they read carefully—they will discover a variety of creative “supporting” roles with which to identify.

The Godly Family; the Family of God

Family relationships are highly visible in the *Godly Letters*, particularly in those letters written to wives and mothers, and about children. Such letters foreground the family connections and responsibilities of the martyrs and provide glimpses of spousal and parental relationships. They also have the effect of “personalizing” the domestic teaching that is delivered in more general terms elsewhere. In the context of the exemplary apostolic community, the martyrs and their families become models of godly domestic relationships.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Foxe prints this letter in his *Acts and Monuments* (1563) with the comment that it is “full of frutefull precepts and lessons for all good women” (p. 2005), at once emphasizing its universality and giving it a moralizing slant not apparent in the letter itself.

⁵⁸ For a discussion of Foxe’s representation of the model family in the *Acts and Monuments* see D. Andrew Penny, “Family Matters and Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*,” *The Historical Journal* 39, no. 3 (1996). Penny argues that “seeing the families of the persecuted reflecting biblically balanced attitudes and practices in familial relationships is crucial to the cause” (616). In the case of the *Godly Letters*, the sense of the “model family” does not appear to be

Because the language of family extends beyond blood relations to spiritual ties between members of the community—brothers and sisters in Christ—the “godly family” as it appears in the martyrs’ correspondence is intimately connected to the spiritualizing discourse of the “family of God.” Further, this language of family, both literal and metaphorical, reflects a particularly Protestant understanding of both familial relationships and religious community. However, exactly what a “Protestant understanding” of family and religious community might be requires substantial clarification. In order effectively to address the familial relationships represented in the *Godly Letters*, then, it is necessary briefly to address the vexed issue of the “Protestant family,” and following from that, to consider the use of familial language in theological discourse and the construction of religious community.

The notion of the “Protestant family”—its definition, its connection to “patriarchy,” its very existence—is a matter of ongoing scholarly debate.⁵⁹ The image of the patriarchal nuclear family—in which father-dominated household religion is a cornerstone of church and commonwealth, and authority structures mirror and reinforce those of the nation—is one which has been assumed often, challenged frequently and nuanced endlessly. It is impossible to address the subject thoroughly here, and indeed it would risk anachronism to do so, since

the product of a particular editorial agenda, but is rather one dimension of the model apostolic community that the martyrs self-consciously enact.

⁵⁹ Lawrence Stone’s classic study *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977) defines this period (1550-1700) in terms of the “reinforcement of patriarchy” and the development of the restricted patriarchal nuclear family. For a basic overview of the literature on the subject and the issues involved, see Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720*, ed. Hugh McLeod and Bob Scribner, *Christianity and Society in the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1993) 38-52, and for a broad discussion of women in both Catholic and Protestant families see Diane Willen, “Women and Religion in Early Modern England,” in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Private and Public Worlds*, ed. Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). Particularly useful is Patrick Collinson’s essay on the subject in Collinson, *Birthpangs* 60-93.

the texts with which I am concerned are a product of the 1550s (published in 1564), and thus prior to—though arguably instrumental in—the solidification of an idealized family unit with a particular place in the Protestant church and nation.⁶⁰ In the case of the Marian Protestant community, it is most fruitful to consider those areas of familial rhetoric or practice which noticeably or deliberately diverge from Catholicism: the legitimization of clerical families, and the reformist understanding of authority and religious community—with the accompanying shift in the familial language used to describe it.

In most respects early Protestant teaching on and practice of family life was *not* a radical departure from the pre-Reformation family;⁶¹ the one obvious novelty of the Reformation family was the married priest. Given that many of the martyrs featured in the *Godly Letters* are clerics, and a substantial number of their letters are addressed to their wives, the clergyman's family has a prominent—and even polemical—place in the epistolary collection: the clerical family and the model family are often one and the same. Of particular interest in this context is the figure of Laurence Saunders, a clergyman whose marital status constituted one of the accusations against him, and who is commended in the *Acts and Monuments* as an example of marital and parental affection. Foxe strategically records an affective moment in which this martyr, holding the small child his wife brought to visit him in prison, asks the bystanders: "What man fearing God, would not loose thys lyfe present,

⁶⁰ Collinson concludes that, while "the doctrine and . . . practice of early Protestantism in respect of marriage and domestic matters generally was not a total novelty, if novel at all," it "can be used to provide a reference point and to stand for an ideal type of certain significant features of the Western European family It was in the form of the Protestant Family that these features became elevated to a high point of explicit consciousness and of emulation and perpetuation in successive generations" (*Birthpangs* 93). The "protestant family" of sixteenth-century England, then, is predominantly a retrospective construction.

⁶¹ For examples of continuity in marriage ideals, see Kathleen M. Davies, "Continuity and Change in Literary Advice on Marriage," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1981).

rather than by prolonging it here, he should adiudge thys boy to be a Bastard, hys wyfe a whoore, and hymselfe a whoremonger: Yea, if there were no other cause, for which a man of my estate should loose hys lyfe: yet who would not geue it, to aduouch thys chylde to bee legitimate, and hys mariage to be lawfull and holy?"⁶² The implication is that Saunders is as much a martyr for the cause of clerical marriage as for the gospel, or rather, that legitimate clerical marriage is part and parcel of that gospel.⁶³ The material collected in the *Godly Letters*, unaccompanied by Foxean interpretive commentary, nevertheless includes a substantial number of letters, by Saunders and other family men, that might function as an apologetic for clerical marriage—letters in which clerical marital and parental relationships are highly visible, are represented as both godly and affectionate, and function in a normative or exemplary capacity.

The Protestant legitimization of clerical marriage does not represent a radical reworking of normative family life, but rather (as I have suggested in chapter two) a removal of the barrier between normative family life and clerical function, between the domestic and the sacred. If one can generalize that the Reformation "removed the parish priest and elevated in his stead the male head of household,"⁶⁴ then this is true not simply in the sense that religious authority was transferred from priestly "father" to paterfamilias, but also that the reformed priestly role (both within and outside the household) could be filled by a family man. This fusion of spiritual and sociobiological fatherhood is most obvious when the roles merge in one person, when a priest *becomes* the head of a household. The visibility of

⁶² *Actes and Monuments* (1563), p.1669.

⁶³ For a discussion of the English reformers' use of clerical celibacy as a distinguishing mark of the Antichrist in anti-papal polemic, see Helen L. Parish, *Clerical Marriage and the English Reformation: Precedent Policy and Practice*, *St Andrews Studies in Reformation History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) 115-37.

⁶⁴ Willen, "Women and Religion in Early Modern England," 140.

clerical families in the *Godly Letters*, then, promotes the integration (conceptually as well as in practice) of the priestly and domestic spheres of religious activity. It suggests that, just as religious practice is a foundational dimension of family life, so family life is compatible with the practice of religion *at the highest level*, rather than in competition with it.⁶⁵ In the *Godly Letters*, that spiritual authority that would traditionally accompany the priestly role is reworked in apostolic terms and harmonized with a—now normative—family role.

Sisters of a different kind

This reworking of spiritual fatherhood is one dimension of a Reformation shift in the language of spiritual family that reflects a movement away from a “priestly class” and toward, in Lutheran terms, “the priesthood of all believers.” Reformist theology, critical of clerical hierarchy and monasticism, re-works the late-medieval “two-tiered” understanding of religious community; the contemplative communities of the Catholic elite are displaced by the godly community of the elect. The primary boundary is re-drawn between the godly and the reprobate rather than between vocational and lay religious practitioners.⁶⁶ Following the dissolution of the religious houses in the late 1530s, the godly family is no longer in competition with the spiritual “family” of monastery or convent. The hierarchy of

⁶⁵ The domestic community played an important role in lay religious practice long before the Reformation, and the idea of the pious father leading his household in devotional activities was certainly not a Protestant innovation. The significant change here is that the godly household is no longer marginalized from the centre of religious authority by its “lay” status. For a survey of pre-Reformation religious practices in the domestic context see Diana M. Webb, “Woman and Home: the Domestic Setting of Late Medieval Spirituality,” in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood, *Studies in Church History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

⁶⁶ The Reformed system, practically speaking, retains an element of exclusivity in that one is either chosen or not; however the unconditionality of election works against any hierarchy of spiritual practice, since one cannot earn any privileged spiritual position.

“contemplative” (cloistered/celibate) over “active” (lay/family) spirituality is largely dissolved—at least for women—with the monastic vocation,⁶⁷ and it is assumed that piety of the highest quality can co-exist with family obligations. The Catholic religious language of father (priest), brother (monk), and sister (nun) is divested of its elite “vocational” context and reconfigured as a marker of membership in the family of God.

The habitual use of “brother” and “sister” in Christ as a form of address in the *Godly Letters* reflects the deliberate adoption of apostolic vocabulary by the Protestant community; it may also be a conscious alternative to monastic usage of the terms. Drawing on the abundant family imagery in the New Testament epistles, the martyrs articulate a system of spiritual relationship in which all believers are children of God (the Father), siblings to each other and to Christ (the Son), and spouses of Christ (the Head of the Church), and in which older believers are spiritual mothers or fathers to the younger generation. The martyrs do draw on the traditional language of bridal mysticism, but apply it beyond the cloister to all children of God,⁶⁸ the “mercifull father, who . . . hath in hys unmesurable mercy by fayth handfasted us hys chosen children unto hys deare sonne our Christ, as the spirituall spouse of suche an heauenly husband.” The emphasis is on “the fatherly prouidence of god towards us his children” (191 [Saunders to Lucy Harrington]), and it is the parent-child metaphor to

⁶⁷ This contemplative/active distinction, often identified with the sisters Mary and Martha in the gospels (see Luke 10:38-42), was sometimes blurred in practice, for instance in the contemplative practices of leisured laywomen. However, while celibate religious men had options beyond the monastery, to the extent that women had had only two choices—marriage or convent—the dissolution of the religious houses made it particularly difficult for women to imagine a religious life in isolation from family responsibilities.

⁶⁸ For a particularly medieval-sounding, affective use of spousal imagery, see Bradford’s letter to “a faythfull woman in her heauines and trouble” [Joyce Hales] (322-30). Hooper, in a letter discussing the case of a woman married to an antagonistic unbeliever, suggests it is permissible for the woman to leave her husband “rather then to breake company and mariage betwene God and her, conioyned by the precious blood of Christ” (145).

which the writers consistently return when discussing assurance and election. Writing to comfort Mary Honeywood, Bradford persistently encourages her to “thynke without al waueryng that you are gods child, that you are a citizen of heauen, that you are the daughter of god” (302), reminding her that “of all thinges god requyreth this faith and persuation of hys fatherly goodnes, as hys chieftest seruyce” (299). Thus the spiritual community is routinely imaged in familial terms, with God the provident Father at its centre.

This emphasis on divine fatherhood, coupled with an increasing overlap (conceptually and in practice) of spiritual and sociobiological paternal roles, contributes to a patriarchal model of spiritual authority that is more easily carried over into domestic relationships.⁶⁹ While this does suggest that human fatherhood is invested with a greater degree of authority in the post-Reformation household, it does not automatically follow—although it often has been assumed—that this patriarchal model of fatherhood is equivalent to male despotism or that it is exclusively “masculine” in character.⁷⁰ Bradford writes in another letter to Mrs. Honeywood:

[God’s sight] is the sight, not only of a Lorde, but rather of a father, which tendreth more your infirmities then you can tender the infirmities of any your children. Yea,

⁶⁹ If priestly and biological paternal authority are no longer mutually exclusive, then there is greater potential for analogy between religious and domestic authority structures, and indeed for a patriarchal template to be applied in multiple spheres of human relations.

⁷⁰ While Stone equates patriarchy, which he suggests is the defining characteristic of the English family from 1530-1660, with the “despotic authority of husband and father” (*The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* 151), Shuger contests the conflation of “father” and “despot,” and argues that Renaissance patriarchy should be understood as a cultural ideal: “The English Renaissance was a patriarchal society because fatherhood came to symbolize an ideal of domestic, political, and religious order. That ideal was not unrelated to actual behavior, but it is the normative and symbolic value of fatherhood during this period, its significance as a conceptual category, that designates the culture as patriarchal. It follows that patriarchy principally refers to the relation between father and child, not husband and wife.” Debora K. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 219.

when in your self you see a motherly affection to your little one that is weake: let the same be unto you a trace to traint you to see ye unspeakeable kinde affection of god your father towards you. (304)⁷¹

Here—and elsewhere in the letters—divine fatherhood is loving, nurturing and maternal;⁷² if the reformers draw on fatherhood images in the context of discipline and obedience, they also repeatedly describe God's fatherhood as a source of comfort, love, assurance and provision for his children. Thus divine fatherhood, as the guiding image for the martyrs' vision of the family of God, does not simply provide a template of authority and obedience to be imposed upon relationships in the human family; it embodies a particular theological message and a distinct notion of religious community in which the mark of belonging is unconditional adoption by God the father. The prominent use of patriarchal and familial language in the *Godly Letters*—in conjunction with Protestant theological exposition, and in the context of personal quotidian domestic duties and the maintenance of communal relationships—facilitates integration of the discourse of spiritual family with actual family and community practice.⁷³ It brings the theological—and particularly the notion of religious community—more comfortably and completely into the realm of the domestic.

⁷¹ Bradford's contrast between Lord and Father supports Shuger's argument that king and father do not necessarily function as analogues in Renaissance thought.

⁷² See also passages on pages 327 (Bradford) and 201 (Saunders), both of which compare God's fatherhood to maternal compassion (cf. Isaiah 49:15).

⁷³ For instance, practical family concerns combine with the language of divine parenthood in John Careless' letter to his wife: "Let not the remembraunce of your children kepe you from God. The Lorde hymselfe wil be a father and a mother, better then euer you or I could haue bene unto them. . . . But if you may liue with a cleare conscience (for els I would not haue you to lyue) and see the bringyng up of your children your self, loke that you nourture them in the feare of God . . ." (604). While commitment to the gospel still trumps family responsibilities, domestic and religious duties are treated as coextensive (rather than conflicting) and are contextualized in the language of spiritual family, so that "good

John Philpot plays on the connections between biological and spiritual family in a letter to his own sister, commending her for showing herself to be

a naturall louyng syster unto me your poore afflicted brother, as by your gentle tokens . . . as also presently visityng me: which well declareth that you be a verye naturall syster indede . . . [But] you be also a syster to me in faythe after Christes gossell . . . and the spiritual consanguinity is more perdurable then that which is of flesh and bloode, and is a worker of that whyche is by nature, for commonly such as be ungodly be unnaturall and onely louers of themselues, as daily experience teacheth us. (236)

Philpot links the affection associated with biological connection with the godliness that accompanies spiritual kinship with Christ—a “natural” sister is one who is faithful and loving toward both biological and spiritual kin.⁷⁴ Sisterhood is not only a family role but a communal and spiritual role as well. Philpot encourages his sibling to

continue a faithfull syster as you are called and are godlye entered, not onely to me but to all the churche of Christe, yea to Christ hymself, who voucheth you in this your unfained faith, worthy to be his sister . . . thereby you are called to an equall portion of the euerlastyng inheritaunce of Christe, yf nowe in no wyse you doe shewe yourself an unnaturall syster to hym in forsakyng hym in trouble, whiche I trust you wyll neuer for no kynde of worldly respecte doe. (237)

The language of family—in this case the name of sister—merges spiritual and communal

parenting” may require abandoning children to the parenthood of God (and the community), and certainly requires raising one’s own children as children of God.

⁷⁴ Philpot uses the term “natural” both in the context of biological relation and in the sense of affection, kindness and constancy (where “unnatural” has connotations of the immoral and monstrous).

identity; particularly in this context of persecution, sister-loyalty to Christ and sister-loyalty to fellow believers are very closely related. Moreover, such sisterhood is trans-historical: together with “Christ oure fyrste begotten brother,” Philpot writes, “all our brethren and systers in heauen desyre to see our faythe, throughe afflictions to be perfecte, that we myghte fulfyll theyr number” (237). In addition to ordering the network of relationships among the faithful of the current generation, then, the language of the “family of God” connotes the pan-historical apostolic community and in some sense the heavenly consummation of history toward which the faithful persevere. The familial language of “natural” affiliation and affection also emphasizes stability and reciprocal responsibility within the religious community—one is a permanent member embedded in a network of relationships, both “horizontal” and “vertical,” time-bound and transcendent, with the attendant familial duties and privileges. The controlling image of the family of God, by casting spiritual identity in familial terms and familial identity in spiritual terms, allows for substantial conflation of spiritual, communal, and family roles. “Household” roles of sister, mother, daughter or wife are not coterminous with a woman’s “familial” identity, but are an integral part of a broader “familial network” of spiritual and communal relationships and expectations. The picture of the godly family that emerges from the martyrs’ letters, then, is framed by the broader discourse of the family of God.

The Family that Reads Together

The domestic role of the godly woman as represented in the *Godly Letters* in many respects replicates the teaching women had been hearing for centuries. John Bradford

instructs his sisters Margaret and Elizabeth to “feare God, use prayer, loue your husbands, be obedient unto them, as God wylleth you: brynge uppe your children in Gods feare: and be good houswives” (454-5). The martyrs’ teaching on household relationships is meticulously Pauline.⁷⁵ What stands out in their instructions to women is a consistent encouragement to read.⁷⁶ Bradford exhorts “my good Syster M. H.” “diligently to labour, as by continual readyng and meditation of gods holy word” in order to grow in “loue and zeale to [God’s] truth” (426). Philpot reminds the widow of a martyred bishop that, in the continual warfare between the spirit of God and the spirit of the world, the spirit of God “is obtained by often and daylye readyng and hearynge the woorde of GOD, ioyned with faithful and hartye prayer: for diligent readyng of Gods worde planteth the holy spyryte in you, and earnest prayer encreaseth the same. Reade therefore the woorde studiouslye and praye hartelye. . .” (249-50). Robert Glover writes to his wife Mary: “let your prayer be to this end specially, that god of his greate mercy woulde open and reuele more & more daily to your hart the true sense, knowledge, and understanding of his moste holy word, and geue you grace in youre liuing, to expresse the fruites thereof” (528). Echoing Philpot’s sense of spiritual warfare, Glover acknowledges “it is, as the holye ghoste calleth it, the woorde of affliction, that is, it is seldome withoute hatred, persecution, peryll, daunger of losse of life and goodes, and

⁷⁵ Prior teaching is also primarily Pauline; what distinguishes the reformers’ teaching is not so much its content but its direct derivation from and self-conscious adherence to the Biblical text as sole authority. See, for example, Bartlet Green to Elizabeth Clark on widowhood (555-7), and Bishop Hooper’s discussion of the case of a godly woman with an unbelieving husband (143-5).

⁷⁶ In addition to simply instructing women to read, the letter-writers direct them to specific passages of Scripture for their study or in support of particular arguments. Robert Glover writes to his wife: “It shall be good for you oftentimes to conferre and compare [the papists’] proceedynges and doinges, with the practyse of those whom the woorde of God doth teache to haue bene true members of the Church of God” (530). In these ways the women are encouraged in a *literate way of thinking*.

whatsoever seemeth pleasante in this worlde . . .” (528). Scripture reading, which fosters personal spiritual development and equips believers to live rightly, is a primary responsibility of a child of God, and one which may be costly. Such reading is potentially an act of resistance—either particular resistance to the Marian authorities or in the broader context of ongoing spiritual battle—as well as a means of identifying with the persecuted apostolic community. In the context of the *Godly Letters*, then, literacy plays an important part in shaping and defining the identity of the godly woman, and the act of reading becomes a significant dimension of her spiritual and communal responsibility.

While it is certainly not a Protestant innovation to count religious reading among the attributes of godly womanhood (see chapter three), what is significant in the case of the *Godly Letters* is the communal and familial context in which such reading is situated. Not only is the act of reading enmeshed in the relational web of the family of God, but it is also represented as a normative domestic activity. Bishop Hooper, writing to his wife Anne about the present persecution, cites a passage in the gospel of Matthew [chapter 24],

of ye which place you & I haue taken manye times great consolation, and especially of the latter parte of the chapter, wherin is contayned the last day and ende of all troubles (I dout not) both for you and me, and for such as loue the comming of our sauour Christ to iudgement. Remember therfore that place, and marke it agayn. . . (156)⁷⁷

The highly-Protestant image of John and Anne Hooper, a bishop and his wife, regularly reading the Bible together, illustrates the blending of spiritual and domestic roles; here the

⁷⁷ Hooper also suggests several other Bible passages and psalms to read in difficult circumstances. At this point in the text the reader of the published *Godly Letters* herself has reading material recommended to her in the (unusually substantial) marginal glosses, drawing her into parallel with the reader addressed in the epistolary text.

spiritual practice of Bible reading is integral to Anne Hooper's domestic role as wife.

Literate spirituality is also connected to the responsibilities of motherhood. John Careless instructs his wife Margaret concerning their daughters:

loke that you nourture them in the feare of God, and kepe them farre from Idolatry, superstition, and all other kynd of wickednes: and for gods sake helpe them to some learning, if it bee possible, that they may increase in vertue & godly knowledge, which shall be a better dowry to mary them withal, then any worldly substaunce: and when they be come of age, prouide them such husbandes as feare god, and loue hys holye worde. (604)

A godly mother promotes learning within the family, and prepares her children for a future domestic life that is Word-centred. (It is assumed that these daughters will marry, and thus pursue their religious lives in a domestic context.) In Careless' view, learning is a highly desirable attribute of a good wife, and an important feature of the godly household.⁷⁸

One more window into the literate activities of the Marian Protestant community is provided by a letter of John Bradford to his mother. In it, Bradford includes a prayer that his mother can pray on his behalf: "Good Mother therefore marke what I haue written, and learne this prayer by hart, to saye it daylye, and then I shall be merye, and you shall reioyce; if that you continue as I trust you doe, in Gods true religion, euen the same I haue taughte you Go to therefore and learne apace" (453). This prayer invites Bradford's mother to read herself (and him) into the Biblical narrative: "As Anna dyd applye and geue her fyrste childe Samuell unto thee: so doe I deare father, besechyng thee for Christes sake to accepte

⁷⁸ There is an echo here of the (pre-Reformation) humanist emphasis on companionate marriage and the value of a learned wife; however in this context Careless is more concerned with the religious cause and the need to marry his daughters within the community of the faithful.

thys my gifte, and geue my sonne John Bradford grace alwayes trulye to serue thee and thy people as Samuells did, Amen" (453).⁷⁹ The prayer blends her domestic role (mother) with her spiritual identity (child of God) as she identifies with the Biblical figure of Anna [Hannah] on both these levels; maternal and spiritual practice are united in the act of praying for her son, an act which also unites her with the community of the faithful. Bradford includes another prayer as well, "for all youre house in your euenyng prayer to pray wt my brother" (454), and which is to be copied and passed on to others.⁸⁰ This snapshot of the Bradford household at regular family prayer illustrates a domestic spiritual community in which reading and prayer go hand in hand, and one that is linked with the larger community through literate practices and common identification with the Biblical text. The godly family reads together, and the family of God comes together through reading.

The enmeshment of literate spiritual practices and family relationships—both household and "apostolic"—in the *Godly Letters* situates the religious activity of the reading woman within the context of familial relationships and domestic responsibility. Religious reading is not a cloistered activity, but is rather a way of joining, strengthening and extending communal networks, both material and spiritual, that are routinely imaged in familial terms. The considerable and wide-ranging contributions of literate women to the Marian Protestant community are, in the martyrs' epistles, most readily understood and appreciated in the

⁷⁹ Cf. 1 Samuel 1-2.

⁸⁰ Bradford emphasizes that his letters should be given "to father Traues to be burned" (454)—an instruction that his mother obviously disregarded—but that the prayers should be copied out separately, and that Father Traves should have a copy of the evening prayer, presumably in order to circulate it further. That Bradford initially indicates that the prayer for his mother will be "copyed out by my brother Roger" (453) suggests that perhaps his mother could read, but not write, a category of limited literacy that was probably quite common.

broadly domestic terms of hospitality and familial friendship, terms which reflect the reformers' controlling image of the family of God, but which also cast such "supporting" and hospitable roles as primarily female. The ideal roles of the religious woman and the domestic woman increasingly merge. While for Marian Protestants and their successors reading wives and mothers are fulfilling a spiritual calling, this "domestication" of the religious reader likely contributes to the conduct-book conflation of the "obedient wife" with the busy reader, the model of "occupational" literate activity that I describe in chapter three.

For the self-conscious community of the godly, however, reading is both an instrument and a sign of participation in a multiplicity of familial identities. As Bradford's mother—as a human mother and as a child of God—reads and prays herself into the Biblical story of Hannah, and into a universal spiritual community, so, even more, the Elizabethan reader of the *Godly Letters* is invited into a familial community on multiple levels. She is invited into "conversation" with both the Biblical apostolic community (which the Marian community emulates) and with the Marian Protestant community as it is represented in the voices on the page; she reads "alongside" the Marian readers addressed in the letters. The godly woman identifies with her Marian predecessors both *through reading* and *as a reader*; together they form an exemplary community of godly, learned women. The culture of reading which is reflected in—and to some extent established by—the *Godly Letters* takes shape in a persecuted minority community; yet after the reinstatement and consolidation of Protestantism as the majority religion it has a significant influence beyond the zealous minority. The early Protestant model of the literate daughter of God helps to shape a broader popular conception of the female reader as she is multiplying in Elizabethan society.

5

Model Behaviour:**Instruction and Imitation**

In the previous chapter I outline the model Protestant community that takes shape on the printed pages of the *Godly Letters*, the paradigmatic “family of God” that is joined and reenacted through reading, and suggest that women readers of the text participate imaginatively in the timeless community of the elect as they identify with models of the recent (Marian) and distant (Biblical) past. This community of reading women, of spiritual sisters and exemplary foremothers, is expanded and codified by reformers who seek to establish a “tradition” of godly, learned women—to construct a Protestant pedigree for the exemplary educated women of the period, as well as to provide models of Protestant virtue for future readers to imitate. This chapter examines the development of this tradition of literate female piety, and begins by considering the reformist shaping of the “godly woman reader” against the backdrop of an ongoing cultural debate about female virtue.

In her study of literary catalogues of women, Glenda McLeod observes that “defining feminineity [sic] within a historical context is more likely to be a pressing issue at times when the historical legacy is subject to reinterpretation on a large scale.”¹ The Protestant Reformation was nothing if not an attempt to reinterpret the historical legacy. Reformers attempted to forge a direct link between their own movement and the apostolic church of late antiquity; to erase or redirect the authoritative symbols and structures of medieval

¹ Glenda McLeod, *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991) 139-40. McLeod uses the term “feminineity”—signifying the “quality or nature of the female sex”—in order to avoid the misleading connotations that often are associated with the word “femininity.”

redefine “orthodoxy” while giving it the weight of tradition. Part of this process included a redefinition of gender ideals—an altered but recognizable pattern of virtuous womanhood. Some of the alterations were shaped by direct social changes: the dissolution of religious houses, together with newly-permitted clerical marriages, were visible markers of a shifting valuation of female roles. The virgin-widow-wife hierarchy of female spirituality was “softening” in the face of a new emphasis on godly marriage.² Various debates over the nature and proper role of women were also fueled, in the early part of the century, by the politically-charged matter of Henry VIII’s divorce, and, throughout the latter half, by the unsettling presence of two successive female sovereigns on the throne.³ The *querelle des femmes*, popular in various incarnations over the previous centuries, had plenty of contributors in sixteenth-century England, many of whom were certainly responding to current social, religious and political questions. Ranging from sober sermonizing to silly satire, the proliferation of texts addressing the nature, role, character and place of woman reflects a climate of negotiation and redefinition of gender expectations.⁴

² For an example of subtle shifts to familiar themes (such as chastity) in the conduct literature of this period, see Margaret Mikesell, “The Place of Vives’s *Instruction of a Christen Woman* in Early Modern English Domestic Book Literature,” in *Contextualizing the Renaissance: Returns to History*, ed. Albert H. Tricomi, Binghamton Medieval and Early Modern Studies (Binghamton, NY: Brepols, 1999).

³ See, for example, John Knox’s unfortunately-timed *The first blast of the trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women* (1558), and John Aylmer’s answer, *An harborowe for faithfull and trewe subiects, agaynst the late blowne blaste, concerninge the gouernment of wemen* . . . (1559).

⁴ For an index of this sort of controversial literature, see Francis Lee Utley, *The Crooked Rib: An Analytical Index to the Argument about Women in English and Scots Literature to the End of the Year 1568*. (Columbus: Ohio St. U, 1944) and Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982; reprint, 1988) 106-26, as well as Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985) and Linda Woodbridge, *Women and the English*

Although these publications about women are extremely varied in tone and intent, they commonly make use of antithetical extremes. While the popular satires revel in misogynistic caricature, elaborate praises of women (sometime equally tongue-in-cheek) rely on similarly exaggerated examples of female beauty or virtue. Moreover, those works that make a serious attempt to define female virtue often rely on popular conceptions of female vice: the “good woman” is praised for what she is not—she stands out as an exceptional island of virtue in a sea of female vice.⁵ Certainly in the broader controversy, and often within the works themselves, women are discussed by means of the juxtaposition of opposing types. Another feature shared by many of these texts is the generous use of examples to illustrate and give weight to these types. Catalogues of notable women, virtuous or otherwise, appear frequently in the controversial literature; both good and bad types are stabilized and naturalized by an appeal to a long line of like foremothers.⁶

Reformers, who had a particular interest in reworking traditional models of virtuous womanhood to reflect Protestant emphases, drew on both of these elements—patterns of antithesis and catalogues of women—common in the *querelle des femmes*. The catalogue

Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

⁵ Since many of the traditionally “feminine” virtues—notably chastity and silence—are defined negatively (that is, the virtue is in NOT doing), it is particularly easy for moralists to characterize female virtue in terms of avoidance, of resistance to a caricature of female vice. Moreover, any praise of a virtuous woman that characterizes her either as an exception to the rule (reading *instead of* gossiping, modest *instead of* vain) or in masculine terms (manly intellectual achievement) only serves to reinforce the dependence of the “good woman” on conventional representations of the “bad woman.”

⁶ McLeod points out that catalogue “compilers” on opposing sides of the debate often used the same exempla; she argues that this interplay between “authoritative” source and manipulative “compiler” is explored in several of the prominent literary catalogues of the later middle ages. I would additionally suggest that this common manipulation of exempla in catalogue compilation reflects the argumentative, rhetorical nature of the genre, and of the *querelle* more generally. Woodbridge argues that the formal controversy was “largely a literary game” (6).

was ideally suited to the establishment of a tradition of “godly, learned women” and the corresponding promotion of female Biblical literacy; the juxtaposition of good and bad female types offered a way not only to define female “goodness,” but also to contextualize it in the terms and images of Protestant-Catholic antithesis. I will look first at some Protestant uses of antithetical female types to define the good woman, and to embed female virtue and vice into opposing religious categories. Then I will turn to the ways in which this model of the godly woman is incorporated into an authorizing—and ongoing—tradition of virtuous women readers.

Virgin, Matron, Huswife, Whore

C. Pyrrye’s *The praise and Dispraise of Women, very fruitfull to the well disposed minde, and delectable to the readers therof* (1569), diplomatically sets out both sides of the woman debate.⁷ While the author’s versifying seems as much aimed to entertain as to edify, the epistle to the reader conventionally insists that the work is meant to motivate the reader to act in a manner worthy of praise (rather than dispraise), and “to the ende that the good examples of good and verteous women if no other thing wil moue them [readers] to do that they ought, may incite and encorage them to do that is good & verteous. . . And the euill examples of the wicked, maye teache them to despise and utterly forsake those things, that are naught and vicious . . .” (A2v). The work is framed, albeit dubiously, in terms of moral

⁷ In the first half he sets out to paint the “ougelye shape and port” of the “Monster fell” that is womankind (A4r), and then begins the second half by comically asking himself “good Lord what man was he: / That with such painfull studie sought, / dispraye of feminie How could his sclaunderous, hurteful tonge / the harmeless so difame” (B5r [misabeled as A5]), and takes up his pen against this “wilfull, witles man” (B5v).

example. Even the scurrilously antifeminist *Schole house of women* makes a gesture toward moral improvement, claiming to provide “for the lewde . . . a myrrour / Hereby to amende, theyr damnable errour.”⁸ The anonymous author exasperatingly suggests that good women will make no objection to his insulting material, while any who express indignation will simply prove his point.⁹ Whatever woman might read either text is prompted to choose a side—to align herself with good women (and against the bad), or to recognize herself as bad (and presumably to repent). While neither of these works makes any serious claims to moral authority, each illustrates the conventional language of exemplarity that inhabits such texts, and the good woman-bad woman dichotomy in which they operate.

Accordingly, an English translation of an Erasmian colloquy, appearing in 1557, promises to be *A mery dialogue, declaring the propertyes of shrowde shrewes, and honest wyues not onelie very pleasaunte, but also not a lytle profitable*—in other words, to provide edifying examples of good and bad women.¹⁰ Typical of Erasmus, however, this dialogue playfully complicates the stereotypes of submissive and shrewish wives, destabilizing the conventional equation of wifely obedience with masculine control.¹¹ The translation and

⁸ *Here begynneth a lytle boke named the Schole house of women: wherin euery man may rede a goodly praise of the condicyons of women.* (London: Thomas Petyt, 1541) D4r. It appeared again in 1560 and 1572.

⁹ “Parchaunce the women, take displeasure / Bycause I rubbe them, on the gall / To them that good be peradventure / It shall not be, materyall / The other sorte, no forse at all / Saye what they wyll, or bende the brewe / Them selfe shall proue, my sayeng trewe” (A1v).

¹⁰ STC (2nd ed.) 10455. A facsimile of this anonymous translation is available in Dickie A. Spurgeon, ed., *Tudor Translations of the Colloquies of Erasmus (1536-84)* (Delmar, NY: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1972) 245-83. The original colloquy was published first in 1523, simply as *Coniugium*. See Craig R. Thompson’s annotated translation, vol. 39 of the *Collected Works of Erasmus*. Toronto: U of Toronto Press, 1997.

¹¹ The good wife Eulalia teaches the shrewish Xanthippe that the secret of a happy marriage is to keep her husband happy and thus patiently to reform him, a difficult but rewarding process that she likens to taming an elephant (A6r) or teaching a parrot to speak (C1v). The careful reader is left wondering where exactly the real power—or the real virtue—lies.

publication of this work at this time reflects the popularity of *querelle*-related literature, and also points to a lively contemporary discussion concerning the nature and value of marriage.¹² Particularly for the reformers, who by critiquing celibacy, dissolving the religious orders, and often getting married themselves had conceded that godly wives do exist and suggested that every man ought to find one, and every woman become one, shaping an ideal of the godly Protestant marriage—and the virtuous wife—must have seemed a pressing concern. While the venerable anti-matrimonial rant, closely connected to a tradition of clerical celibacy, had little to contribute on practical questions of marriage and family life, the juxtaposition of two types of wives allowed space for a model of the good married woman.¹³

An excellent example of the fashioning of the Protestant woman through a dialogue between good and bad female types is found in *The vertuous scholehous of ungracious women* (1548), a work that appears again in 1581 as *A watchword for wilfull women. An excellent pithie Dialogue betweene two Sisters, of contrary dispositions: the one a vertuous matrone: fearing God. the other a wilfull huswife: of disordered behaiouire*. The dialogue is a translation from the German, and is paired with a Lutheran sermon on matrimony; it is meant to provide instruction in both doctrine and wifely conduct, and regularly conflates the

¹² Tacked on the end of the dialogue is John Rastell's tale of a dumb wife, a conventional joke about feminine loquaciousness. This addition further suggests that this book was intended to capitalize on the popularity of the *querelle*. Religious debate over the marriage of priests was in full swing at this point; clerical marriage, permitted under Edward, was revoked by Mary's Catholic government in 1553 (and reinstated, reluctantly, by Elizabeth). Marriage was a popular topic throughout the period, and not only in the context of religious reform. The humanists, including Erasmus, gave it considerable practical attention at the beginning of the century, while a succession of political situations—Henry VIII's divorce, Mary Tudor's Spanish marriage, Elizabeth's suitors and the problem of succession—made it a perennial issue of public concern.

¹³ A good example of the anti-matrimonial tradition is Jankyn's book, that so offends Chaucer's Wife of Bath; Alisoun assumes an antagonism between clerks and wives.

two.¹⁴ The conversation is between two sisters: the godly widow Justina, and the fretful and quarrelsome Serapia, unhappily married to Simplicius (who, it seems, is a decent man, poorly treated). Serapia has familiar shrewish qualities—she scolds and brawls and contradicts her husband and mistreats her children and picks fights with the neighbours—but her failings are spiritual as well. She complains to her sister:

I passe not for his [her husband's] going to Church, hearyng of Sermons, or readyng, the more he goeth to Church or readeth, the lesse I haue: and since Luther, the new preaching, the hereticall bookes and readyng came up, haue I almost loste all that I had, and I thinke I shall neuer haue lucke with him as long as he liueth, would God that the Deuill would shortly rydde hym out of the way.¹⁵

The froward wife falls on the wrong side of the religious divide, pitting herself against reformation teaching and the Protestant culture of sermons and reading. Justina repeatedly stresses the importance of going to sermons and hearing the Word of God, suggesting that this is both the core and the source of virtuous womanhood.¹⁶ Not only does Serapia fail to attend sermons herself, but she is an obstacle to her husband's religious practice. The idea that women (shrewish or otherwise) are an obstacle to male spirituality is endemic to the

¹⁴ The 1548 translation, of *Der Bösen Weiber Zuchtschül* (according to the STC), is by Walter Lynne, whose address to the reader appears (without attribution) in somewhat modified form in the 1581 version. This later version is essentially the same text, in slightly modernized language; it is preceded by a dedicatory epistle, to Lady Mary Rowe, from R.B. (who, in his bid for patronage, conveniently fails to mention that the said epistle is his sole contribution to the book). As the 1581 text is more legible, I take my quotations from it.

¹⁵ *A Watch-word for Wilfull Women. An excellent pithie dialogue betweene two Sisters, of contrary dispositions: the one a vertuous matrone: fearing God, the other a wilfull huswife: of disorddered behaiouere.* (London: Thomas Marshe, 1581) B5r.

¹⁶ Some of Justina's comments suggest that Serapia may not be literate herself, but has plenty of opportunities to *hear* the Word as others, including her husband, read it. Illiteracy is not necessarily an obstacle to participating in Protestant textual culture. The good Justina seems quite clearly to be a reading woman, and her sister remarks on her learning.

rhetoric of clerical celibacy. In this “promatrimonial” dialogue, however, the alternative to a bad wife is not celibacy, but a good wife. While, as Justina laments, the misguided Serapia is not “willing to go to the word of God, or preaching, and also louest not to heare [her husband] read at home (which is a signe of and ungodly conuersation)” (B4r), good wives participate with their husbands in reading the Word and attending sermons. Text-oriented spirituality is a family activity, and it is part of a godly wife’s responsibility to both join her husband in it and to train her children accordingly.

Serapia’s anxiety about losing what she has is, Justina tells her, evidence of her inability to trust God’s provision. The unhappy wife (as Justina admits she herself was, before she changed her ways) is “unwilling to lende to any man, keep[s] house and familye to hard, & [would] be riche all to hastely” (B8v). Serapia is grasping and ungracious because she is trying to make ends meet, working to be prosperous, afraid of losing what she has worked for; she argues that she has no leisure to go to church.¹⁷ She has not learned, explains Justina, that “all our care, laboure, and trauayle, (without the blessinge of God) is lost and in vayne” (C1v), and that “the hearing of a sermon loseth nothing, geuing of Almes, impouerisheth nothing, and euill gotten goodes enricheth nothing” (C2r). Justina promises her wayward sister that, if she seeks God, hears his Word, goes to sermons, and learns to treat her family and neighbours well, she will “find that God almighty shal send and power his blessinge uppon thee, and uppon thy whole house, and shall geue thee more then thou shalt neede” (C1v). The substance of this discussion is shaped by Protestant theology—Justina’s contention that prosperity (like salvation) is a gift from God, rather than

¹⁷ This harried and careworn image of Serapia gives her a more sympathetic, human dimension (one that is strikingly modern) beyond her stereotypical shrewishness. This dialogue seems to be addressing the particular practical concerns of middle-class merchant families.

a product of human striving, echoes the Lutheran rallying cry of justification by faith alone. For Serapia to become a good woman and a good wife, then, she must not simply behave herself, but she must adopt a specifically Protestant outlook on life; she must “reform” in more ways than one.

Thus the brawling huswife, as the 1581 epistle dedicatory summarizes, “sheweth her selfe wilful, disdainfull, stubborne, contemptuous disobedient & irreligious,” while the virtuous matron is “zealously geuen to the maintenance of Gods glory, the practise of vertue, the obedience to her husband, & all other her dealinges leaueled by the squyre & direction of Gods word” (A2v). Conventional wifely virtue is conflated with specifically Protestant religious practice. Justina is not only virtuous but, as Serapia suspiciously observes, “thou canst talke so well, thou couldest serue wel for a preacher, thou art wel sene in scripture, & deeply learned” (B7r). In the end, Justina’s “good counsaile” wins over her sister, who assures her that “thou hast done more on me, with thy earnest exhortations, then all the Priestes and Preachers that euer I heard in this land: and thou art also better learned & more expert in the scriptures then they, and this will I reporte of thee before all men” (D4v). While Justina uses this opportunity modestly to explain that all honour belongs to God, the point remains that this godly wife is defined in part by her learning, as well as by an “evangelical” impulse to correct and instruct her opposite.

The bad wife learns to be better partly through verbal instruction, but also by imitating examples of good women. Justina provides her with several biblical examples: “take the good women of the old Testament for an example, be pacient as Lea, frendly as Ruth, true unto thy husband, as Michol, the wife of David, measurable as Iudith, meeke as

Hester, chaste as good Susanna, and obedient unto thy husband, as Rebecca.”¹⁸ And of course Justina herself also serves as a model of virtuous womanhood, both for the fictional Serapia and also for the reader. R. B., dedicating the 1581 text to Lady Mary Rowe,¹⁹ extends this language of exemplarity to his would-be patroness. Not only does Lady Rowe greatly resemble Justina in the exercise of virtue, but her “example daily allureth & draweth many to the imitation of the like vertues” (A3r). Thus he chooses to dedicate the text to her, not only out of “affection,” but also “hoping that the same going abroade under your name & title, shall to all godly readers be the welcomer and more plausable” (A3r-v). Lady Rowe’s real-life example of virtuous womanhood gives weight and plausibility to the model set out in the dialogue. The woman reader of this text, then, is provided with a multilayered example—Lady Rowe/Justina/biblical women—to imitate and to perpetuate.²⁰

The juxtaposition of these two types of women serves to describe and reinforce acceptable female behaviour for its audience. But these types also can function as emblems of a particular spiritual state or theological position. The dedicatory epistle identifies the bad woman as a symbol of unregenerate humanity,

in whom is expressed a very paterne of our natural imbecillity & weakenes, wherein we lie deeply plunged & filthily wallowing, unlesse by grace we be rectified, & by good education bettered. For as Serapia without respect of her dutifull obedience is

¹⁸ B6v-7r. Presumably Justina is thinking of Rebecca’s willingness to leave her homeland to marry Isaac (Gen. 24), rather than her conspiracy to trick him into bestowing the blessing on their younger son (Gen. 27).

¹⁹ Lady Mary Rowe is the “late wife unto that famous Citizen Syr Thomas Row Alderman of London” (A2r). I have yet to discover the identity of R. B.

²⁰ Unlike many of the satiric texts, this dialogue seems seriously to be directed to women readers (although perhaps not exclusively so). The prologue to the reader makes the conventional suggestion that the examples given will strengthen virtuous women and show the vicious their errors. Virtuous women are to imitate the exemplarity of their role models.

caried headlong by the lore of her owne inclination: so are wee all in her as in a glasse
to see our selues what we be of our selues: on the other side in the good Iustina we
may perceive all things framed & uttered both godly modestly & Christianly.²¹

Instructions for the daily behaviour of middle-class housewives, then, are enmeshed in a broader picture, equally dependent on dichotomy, of the state of the lost or redeemed soul. The same juxtaposition of feminine extremes that characterizes *querelle*-related literature and facilitates didactic representations of female virtue and vice inhabits Protestant polemics as well.²² If good and bad female figures can sometimes be said to mirror the state of the soul, they also lend themselves to memorable representations of the true and false church.

John Bale's commentary on Revelation, the *Image of Both Churches* (1545), popularized the reading of the apocalyptic Whore of Babylon as a symbol of the Roman Catholic church, while the Protestant "true church" is identified with the Bride of Christ and

²¹ A2v-3r. R.B.'s suggestion that "good education" ought to accompany grace in extricating wallowers from the mire is an interesting one. The "subtitle" of the 1581 edition reads: "Wherein is righte Christianly discoursed, what singular commodity commeth by vertuous education, as otherwise what torment to a quiet man, a skowlding & undiscrete woman is." Although it is not clear what this "vertuous education" might or might not include, R.B. is in step with the dialogue itself in conflating education with godliness.

²² It is not surprising that this is the case, given that women are apt to be associated with extremes of all sorts. It has frequently been noted that male writers across many centuries tend to depict female figures as either monstrously evil or inhumanly good; as long as the normative human being is imagined to be male, women are likely to be depicted as especially good, or especially bad, but not as average human beings. For classic, witty essays on the subject, see Dorothy L. Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971; reprint, 1992). The *querelle*, of course, encourages this polarity, and the polarity itself is particularly useful for those trying to represent religious contrast. As Claire McEachern observes: "If the difference between a bad woman and a good one is a persistent archetype of the western imagination, certainly its Tudor manifestations bespeak a particularly potent cultural expressiveness." "'A whore at the first blush seemeth only a woman': John Bale's *Image of Both Churches* and the terms of religious difference in the early English Reformation," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 25, no. 2 (1995): 246-7.

the apocalyptic figure of the Woman Clothed with the Sun.²³ On the final pages of the work, woodcuts of the two opposing women face each other, echoing common patterns of gendered antithesis. Religious allegiance is framed in the familiar terms of female virtue and vice. Christ and antichrist, bride and whore, woman of faith and unfaithful woman line up on opposing sides; stereotypical feminine extremes and polemical theological extremes together reinforce the dichotomizing wedge that separates good women from bad, and Protestants from Catholics. For any reader, such a dichotomy vividly presents religious allegiance as a choice between extremes. However, for male readers the imagery lends itself to the familiar trope of choosing wisdom over folly, pursuing the pure woman while resisting the poisonous advances of the deceptively beautiful seductress.²⁴ For female readers the response may be complicated by an additional element of identification with the feminine figure: the choice is not merely whether to *follow* the “good woman,” but whether to *be* the “good woman.”²⁵

Culturally constructed in diverse but strangely overlapping spheres, from the terms of

²³ See John N. King, “The Godly Woman in Elizabethan Iconography,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1985). The Woman clothed with the Sun appears in Revelation 12, and the Whore in chapters 17 and 18. Bridal imagery is found in Revelation, but also elsewhere, notably in the Song of Songs, which was routinely interpreted as an allegory of Christ and the Church, and in the Parable of the Ten Virgins (five wise, five foolish) in Matthew 25. These Five Wise Virgins with their lamps are sometimes connected to the seven lampstands of Revelation, for instance in the division of Thomas Bentley’s *Monument of Matrones* (1582) into seven “lamps of virginity.” Thus these variations on the Woman of Faith tend to blur into each other to form a composite figure. The Protestant representation of the Roman church as the “painted whore” of Babylon relied in part on comparisons between excessive and deceptive feminine decoration, cosmetics, etc., and the superfluous, vain and idolatrous ceremonies and images of the Catholic church.

²⁴ See Proverbs 1-9 for an extended treatment of these themes. Warnings to men about the dangers and deceptions of female beauty, charm, vanity, etc. are, of course, commonplace.

²⁵ As I have suggested above, the claim that female types will act as “mirrors,” in which women will recognize themselves either as virtuous or in need of repentance, is a frequent one; while it is impossible to say the extent to which individual women might have read themselves into such texts (or resisted such readings), certainly the rhetoric posits a level of identification. For an example of the slippage between allegorical and literal/historical models of female virtue see my discussion of the *Monument of Matrones* below.

domestic conduct to the language of ecclesial symbolism, “virtuous womanhood” oscillates between the abstract-symbolic and the particular-personal. Identifying with/as the “good woman” involves taking a theological and symbolic position as well as a “behavioural” one; personal virtue is linked to Protestant iconography. Thus the good woman can at once be a member of the true church, and an emblem of it. This sense of religious participation on the emblematic level reinforces the association of female virtue with exemplarity—on multiple levels, the good woman exhibits “model” behaviour.

The use of these apocalyptic female types in the construction of a feminine ideal was not new, but they commonly had been used in connection with notable individuals, for instance in iconography associated with the Virgin Mary that was also applied to medieval royal women.²⁶ “What is new in the sixteenth century,” argues John King, “is the extension of these biblical emblems for unique or special women into generic types symbolizing the literacy and pious devotion appropriate to all womankind.”²⁷ Thus in Bale’s *Image*, the figure of the Bride of Christ functions primarily as an emblem of the true church as a whole, a community of “saints” rather than a special mediator. In the wake of Protestant suppression of intercessory figures such as the Virgin and traditional saints, “Biblical figures such as the Five Wise Virgins and the Woman Clothed with the Sun could . . . be treated as generic examples of faith accessible to any woman” (52); they operate multivalently as “figures for the ‘true’ church in general or any faithful Christian” (53). One follows their example by participating in the community of faith—by anticipating (with the wise virgins of

²⁶ For instance, Mary’s role as Queen of Heaven (which frequently assimilates much of the biblical bridal imagery) was readily applied to medieval queens, particularly to emphasize their role as royal mediators between king and subject. See King, “The Godly Woman in Elizabethan Iconography,” 50ff.

²⁷ King, “The Godly Woman in Elizabethan Iconography,” 50.

the parable) the return of the Bridegroom Christ, or by standing (with the apocalyptic Woman Clothed with the Sun) against Satan with the remnant who “kepe the comaundemente of God and haue the testymonye of Jesus Christ.”²⁸ Various types of the “holy woman,” when broadly applied to the church and its rank-and-file members, more plausibly serve an exemplary function for the “average” believer. And as these apocalyptic abstractions were more directly applied to ordinary believers, concrete, historically-situated “saintly” figures also took on an increasingly exemplary role.

Shifting notions of sainthood made it increasingly possible for laypeople to identify with exemplary or emblematic figures. While traditional medieval saints often were marked by their exceptionality and the privileged position that enabled them to be spiritual intercessors for the laity, Protestantism (consistent with the notion of the priesthood of all believers) redefined sainthood as membership in the “true church,” potentially open to any ordinary godly layperson. While the late-medieval cult of the saints did value the saints as examples of a holy life, it tended to be more occupied with the spectacular and miraculous. Eamon Duffy concludes that “the English laity looked to the saints not primarily as exemplars or soul-friends, but as powerful helpers and healers in time of need.”²⁹ In contrast—and deliberate contradiction—Reformers worked to suppress the cult of the saints, with all its miraculous and intercessory associations, and to provide new models of the holy life that were meant to be imitated rather than venerated. This shift from the “spectacular”

²⁸ John Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* (Antwerp: 1545) S7v.

²⁹ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) 178. Duffy suggests that this helps to explain the popularity of virgin martyr legends in late-medieval England—that the model of the virgin saint “gave to the ordinary Christian man and woman . . . not so much a model to imitate, something most of them never dreamt of doing, but rather a source of power to be tapped” (175).

to the imitable saint, however, was not solely a function of theological change; Karen Winstead suggests that as lay readership expanded in the later Middle Ages, hagiographers often catered to lay audiences by recasting saint narratives such as virgin martyr legends in ways that lay people could more readily identify with.³⁰ Such accommodation, she recognizes, had the potential to “undercut the very premise of hagiography, namely, the saint’s singularity . . . it is one matter to encourage professional religious to identify with the saints and quite another to make such an intimate identification available to everybody” (180). In some ways, then, the issue was not *whether* the saints functioned as exempla, but for whom. The broadening of the reading audience potentially worked against the two-tiered system of elite and lay spirituality. The tension between the exemplarity and the exceptionality of holy figures is foregrounded when such figures become exemplars for those who cannot possibly imitate their exceptional qualities.³¹ If sainthood is characterized or defined by exceptionality, the space for an “ordinary” woman to identify with an extraordinary figure is necessarily limited; however, if sainthood is no longer “exclusive,” such identification and imitation are both more plausible and more desirable. While the Protestant “community of saints” was still dependent on constructions of difference—on the distinction of the “elect” from the worldly—the dividing line had shifted. The primary

³⁰ See Karen A. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). These wealthy, often aristocratic lay readers, of course, were not representative of the “average lay person.” Winstead points out that legends of holy virgins in particular might serve to reinforce the “barrier between the laity and a celibate elite of saints and clerics. Though a fifteenth-century mother might see herself in the image of a well-dressed St. Barbara reading in her parlor, Barbara’s virginity would subtly remind her of the distance that separated her from God’s aristocracy” (11).

³¹ Mary, the Virgin Mother, is the most obvious example of a problematic exemplar. Certainly some saints—and some portions of saints narratives—were more accessible as exemplars than others, and presumably devotees were practised at selective imitation. The real issue is where sainthood is located, whether—in the case of Mary—in obedience to the Holy Spirit (which is imitable), or in perpetual virginity (which is less so).

contrast was no longer between “elite” and “ordinary” spirituality, but between “true” and “false” religion—no longer between the virgin and the wife, but between the Bride and the Whore.

Thus both the languages of exemplarity and of antithesis are particularly useful for the Protestant project: antithesis for defining and maintaining an urgent difference from Roman Catholicism, and exemplarity for establishing and perpetuating a replacement model of orthodoxy.³² When these two discourses are gendered they are especially intertwined, for antithetical female types conventionally are treated as exemplary figures—models of female vice and virtue against which female readers are expected to measure themselves. The female audience is faced with a choice between extremes—between the ideal and the execrable—and while on one level the ideal remains unattainable for most women, on another level any woman can participate in the ideal simply by aligning herself with it, and by imitating it as best she can. Serapia may never reach the level of biblical learning that Justina has, but if she earnestly attends sermons she will have made the crucial transition from froward huswife to virtuous matron. She will be aligning herself with a community of godly women that includes biblical exemplars, her sister/instructor Justina, and Lady Rowe, to whom her fictitious dialogue is dedicated. In promoting the sort of virtuous Protestant womanhood that Justina exemplifies, then, reformers extolled numerous models of the “godly, learned woman,” past and present, models which served both to clarify the Protestant ideal and to ground it in an authorizing tradition.

³² See McEachern, “A whore at the first blush,” for a discussion of the complexities and tensions surrounding the articulation of religious difference.

En-listing the Reading Woman

In a flowery epistle addressed to Katherine Parr and found in the English translation of Erasmus' New Testament Paraphrases,³³ Nicholas Udall suggests that the pious and highly educated women of the English court, while exceptionally skilled, nevertheless set an example that ought to be imitated by those of lower degree:

It is now no newes at al to see Quenes and Ladies of moste high estate and progenie, in stede of Courtely daliaunce, enbrace vertuous exercises of readyng and wrytyng, and wyth most earneste studie both erelye and late to applye theymselues to the acquiryng of knowelage, aswel in al other liberall artes and dyscyplynes, as also moost specially of God and hys moost holy worde, wherunto all christen folkes, (of what estate or degree so euer they be,) ought to the uttermost of theyr possible powers, moost principally & most earnestli themselves to geue & dedicat.³⁴

Udall locates these exemplary women in the forefront of a movement in which he hopes "all christen folkes" will participate. Learned women contribute to the cause both by making texts accessible for the "publique instruccion and edifyng of the unlerned multitude" (A1v) and by serving as an example to this multitude.

³³ The epistle in question prefaces the Gospel of John, which Mary Tudor was involved in translating; see chapter two for further discussion.

³⁴ *The first tome or volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus upon the newe testamente*. London: Edward Whitchurche, 1548. A1v. (The pagination starts over with A at the Gospel of John section.) I am using STC (2nd ed.) 2854.3 (the British Library copy); the STC lists several other variant 1548 editions. Note that Udall's praise of learned women contains the common patterns of antithesis: the ladies embrace reading and writing "in stede of Courtely daliaunce," and hold books of Psalms "in stede of cardes and other instrumentes of idle trifleyng" (A1v).

Udall begins his epistle with a list of pagan women “chronicled in hystories as notable, yea and syngulare examplers worthy perpetual fame and memorye for their witte, learnyng, and eloquence” (A1r-v), followed by several highly learned Roman Christians.³⁵ While he firmly situates educated English noblewomen in this tradition of female worthies, he suggests that his contemporaries are unique both by virtue of their numbers and their public impact. While learned women of the past were few and far between, he argues, “nowe in this gracious and blyssfull tyme of knowelage, in whiche it hathe pleased almyghtye God to reuele and shewe abrode the lyght of his moste holy ghospell” (A1v), such figures are much more common. Moreover, they are in a position to make the fruits of their learning common; while the knowledge of the learned women of the past was confined to the “priuate edifyng of their own selves wyth a very fewe others” (A1v), now all England benefits.³⁶ Consistent with the reformist extension of some form of sainthood to all the elect, Udall envisions an evangelical expansion of religious learning, a broadening of that sort of pious study which the godly learned women exemplify—and in which the general population can take part. While model Protestant women participate in a long tradition of virtuous female learning, they are also instrumental in broadening and extending that tradition. Udall suggests that contemporary learned women are both comparable with and superior to the worthy women of the past.

³⁵ It may be helpful here to distinguish between two related (but distinct) uses of the word “example.” I am generally using the term to suggest something that is meant to be imitated—an example or model to be followed. In the case of the catalogues of women to which Udall refers, “examples” may more accurately serve as illustrations, or points in an argument. Often, of course, these meanings blur, but they are not interchangeable.

³⁶ Of course Udall’s remarks are tailored to an (immediate) audience of royal women (who, by virtue of their nobility, arguably have a special duty to the subjects of the realm), and are particularly appropriate to the government-mandated nationwide distribution of the English *Paraphrases*; yet his rhetoric is consistent with a more general reformist impulse to spread Protestant textual culture to the widest possible audience.

Catalogues of exemplary women recall—or create—a tradition, a link with the past; they appeal to authority, and reconfigure it. “In the midst of major paradigm shifts,” writes Glenda McLeod, “authors would logically seek to redefine the cultural legacy, including the notion of femininity, but to do so in a catalog seems to require a special interest in the past, a need to reinterpret—but not necessarily replace—older authorities.”³⁷ For reformers, who aimed to represent Protestantism as a continuation of “authentic” early Christianity, to stress the authority of the Bible while sidestepping much of medieval tradition, such redistribution of the weight of tradition was a primary occupation. Protestant works looked to Biblical figures and the early church for illustrations of the faithful Christian, and fashioned contemporary figures in continuity with those types; they also worked to authorize and valorize the ideal educated Protestant woman by situating her in a long line of women who were both learned and virtuous. John Bale, antiquarian as well as reformer, was particularly adept at wedding historiography with Protestant polemics; in his representation of two of his notable contemporaries, the Henrician Protestant martyr Anne Askew and Princess (later queen) Elizabeth, he uses catalogues of learned women to establish a pattern of godly womanhood in the Protestant tradition.³⁸

Bale published Princess Elizabeth’s *A Godly Medytacyon of the Christen Sowle*—an English translation of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Le Mirroir de l’âme pécheresse*—in 1548, with a lengthy “Epistle Dedicatory” and “Conclusion” that work to establish Elizabeth’s

³⁷ McLeod, *Virtue and Venom* 6.

³⁸ See Krista Kesselring, “Representations of Women in Tudor Historiography: John Bale and the Rhetoric of Exemplarity,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 22, no. 2 (1998). On Bale as antiquarian, see Trevor Ross, “Dissolution and the Making of the English Literary Canon: The Catalogues of Leland and Bale,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 26, no. 1 (1991).

nobility and Protestant virtue.³⁹ Bale is concerned with Elizabeth both as a political agent and as an exemplary religious figure. As Marc Shell argues, Bale the anti-Roman nationalist hoped “to prepare the stage for a mythic if not an actual role for women in future British political life” (82), while Kesselring suggests that Bale recognized Elizabeth’s potential as a model of Protestant womanhood.⁴⁰ Bale’s complex discussion of true nobility encompasses both of these concerns. While he affirms Elizabeth’s nobility of blood, the reformer stresses the primacy of spiritual nobility:

Of the most excellent kind of nobility is he sure (most virtuous and learned lady)
which truly believeth and seeketh to do the will of the eternal father, for thereby is he
brought forward and promoted into that heavenly kindred (John 1). . . . Of this
nobility have I no doubt (Lady most faithfully studious) but that you are, with many
other noble women and maidens more in this blessed age.⁴¹

Bale’s parenthetical references to Elizabeth’s studiousness work to conflate learning with the virtuous nobility that he describes; moreover it is clear that some of her nobility is located in

³⁹ The young Elizabeth presented this translation, as “The Glass of the Sinful Soul,” to her stepmother Katherine Parr in 1545; a facsimile of this manuscript is included in Marc Shell, *Elizabeth’s Glass: with “The Glass of the Sinful Soul” (1544) by Elizabeth I and “Epistle Dedicatory” & “Conclusion” (1548) by John Bale* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993). Bale’s edition was reprinted in 1590 (London: Roger Ward); Elizabeth’s work (without Bale’s commentary) also appears in an edition by James Cancellar (c.1568-70) that includes acrostic prayers on ELIZABETH REGINA. The Cancellar material is reproduced in Bentley’s *Monument of Matrones* (1582)—pp.1-35 of the Second Lamp, with the acrostic prayers at pp.280-96 in the Third Lamp.

⁴⁰ Shell argues that Bale’s comments “participate in a general Henrican and Elizabethan redefinition of the British nation in terms of blood and religion” (77). The origins and early history of the British church, of course, are relevant to Reformation-era debates concerning Roman jurisdiction over the national church. Political issues of succession and legitimate birth were also of great importance, particularly given Henry VIII’s marital complications. Elizabeth’s own legitimacy was questioned on multiple levels (see Shell 8-12 and *passim*), and Bale likely has that in mind in his discussion of true nobility.

⁴¹ Shell, *Elizabeth’s Glass* 88.

the *degree* of her learning (noble works in noble languages, fit for noble young scholars).

However, to the extent that Bale characterizes nobility in terms of “a godly endeavor of Christianity” (86) or adoption into the “heavenly kindred,” it is a nobility that can be emulated by all. This broader application of nobility also is suggested by the reformer’s anti-Catholic definition of false or “monstrous” nobility:

The Romish clergy, imagining to exalt themselves above the lewd laity (as they shame not yet to call the worldly powers), have given it [nobility] in a far other kind to miters, masses, cardinal hats, crosiers, caps, shaven crowns, oiled thumbs, side gowns, furred amices, monks’ cowls, and friars’ lousey coats, becoming thereby pontifical lords, spiritual sirs and ghostly fathers. (84-5)

Bale’s rhetoric runs in two somewhat counterintuitive directions. He satirizes Catholic markers of a spiritually elite class and the associated clergy-laity hierarchy, which has a leveling effect, defining nobility broadly in spiritual, largely imitable terms. But he also consistently reinscribes the concept of nobility by trying to separate true nobility from false pretension and by reconstructing nobility in terms of doctrinal allegiance, conflating Elizabeth’s noble rank with her noble learning and her noble faith. Bale’s fluid characterization of nobility, then, accommodates rank and exceptionality while inviting imitation. While Elizabeth is a paragon of Protestant virtue and learning, the spiritual nobility that she so “nobly” exemplifies is one in which those of lesser degree can participate. Thus in the context of this fluid discussion of nobility, Bale’s lists of notable women shape a tradition that, while illustrated by exceptional figures, also functions as a model for general readers.

“No realm under the sky,” rhapsodizes Bale, “hath had more noble women, nor of

more excellent graces, than hath this realm of England, both in the days of the Britons and since the English Saxons obtained it by valiant conquest" (97). He goes on to list several Briton women known for both their learning and their political or martial skill, followed by Briton Christians and more recent figures notable for their piety, liberal learning, and patronage. Bale strategically situates Elizabeth in a long line of specifically English women, praised for their "beauty, wit, wisdom, science, languages, liberality, policies, heroical force, and such other notable virtues" (100), in a move that both underlines her political potential and stresses her virtuous intellectual achievement. He continues: "Though none in this land have yet done as did among the Greeks Plutarch and among the Latins Boccaccio with other authors aforenamed, that is to say, left behind them catalogues or nomenclatures of famous and honorable women, yet hath it not at any time been barren of them. No, not in the days of most popish darkness. . . ." ⁴² Bale quite deliberately is constructing a comparable catalogue of "famous and honorable" English women, but in doing so he reshapes female "fame and honor" in terms of scholarship, spiritual "nobility" and Protestant activism. And while women of the past were praiseworthy for many virtues, he suggests, women of the present are doubly so: "now since Christ's gospel hath risen, we have beheld them [these virtues] and yet see them still to this day in many noble women, not rising of flesh and blood as in the other, but of that mighty living spirit of His which vanquished death, hell and the devil" (101). Echoing Udall's language of a special moment in salvation history, Bale shifts the "centre of gravity" of this genealogy of godly, learned "noble" women to the present time—while rooted in the past, the continuing tradition is now in full bloom.

⁴² 101. Bale refers to Plutarch's *Mulierum virtutes* and Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*. On both of these works, see McLeod, *Virtue and Venom*.

Accordingly, Bale grafts into his catalogue of “noble” English women the recent martyr Anne Askew, “whose memory is now in benediction (as Jesus Sirach reported of Moses) and shall never be forgotten of the righteous.”⁴³ He continues:

She, as Christ’s mighty member, hath strongly trodden down the head of the serpent and gone hence with most noble victory over the pestiferous seed of that viperous worm of Rome, the gates of hell not prevailing against her. What other noble women have, it doth now and will yet hereafter appear more largely by their godly doctrine and deeds of faith. Mark this present book for one . . . (101-2)

Askew is one example of godly Protestant womanhood, Elizabeth is another—and Bale leaves room for many more. The catalogue is open-ended, ready to incorporate other women who embrace “godly doctrine” and perform “deeds of faith.” Bale expresses the hope that Elizabeth, through her godly example and the production of further religious texts, will “become a nourishing mother to [Christ’s] dear congregation” (92), and that with her, other noble women “like as they are become glorious to the world by the study of good letters, so may they also appear glorious in His sight by daily exercise in His divine scriptures” (102). Through the elaborate praise of Elizabeth as the ideal embodiment of all feminine, scholarly, spiritual, noble and English virtues, Bale weaves these virtues into a distinctly Protestant pattern of godly womanhood. The young Elizabeth represents both the pinnacle of virtuous womanhood thus far, and the potential for the expansion of this ideal to a host of “noble” Englishwomen.⁴⁴

⁴³ 101. Bale identifies Askew elsewhere as a gentlewoman; her prominent inclusion here among higher ranking figures illustrates Bale’s emphasis on spiritual nobility.

⁴⁴ At times Bale’s hyperbolic praise reaches staggering proportions; Elizabeth was at this time simply the fourteen-year-old half-sister of the young king. Aside from the element of pure flattery, Bale’s extravagant praise likely stems from the hope that Elizabeth will grow

While in the case of Princess Elizabeth Bale is particularly interested in “nobility” and the formation of a Protestant English nation, his representation of Anne Askew aims to shape a Protestant model of sainthood and martyrdom that stands in continuity with early Christianity.⁴⁵ To this end, in his “elucydacyon” of Askew’s *Examinations* (1546/47), he situates the martyr in the company of Biblical women and the martyrs of the early church. The reformer introduces Askew by making an extended comparison with the second-century martyr Blandina:

Full of God and hys veryte was Blandina. So was Anne Askew to the verye end.

Christ wonderfullye triumphed in Blandina. So ded he in Anne Askewe Many were converted by the sufferance of Blandina. A farre greater nombre by the burnynge of Anne Askewe. Though Blandina were yonge, yet was she called the mother of martyrs. Manye men have supposed Anne Askewe. for her Christen constancye to be no lesse.⁴⁶

Bale aims to establish Askew as a legitimate martyr—indeed, as an exemplary “mother of martyrs”—by fashioning her after the pattern of the early martyrs. And as she stands in continuity and solidarity with the “prymatyve church,” she stands in opposition to Bale’s satirical catalogue of odd and ignoble “popysh” martyrdoms: “Compare me Anne Askewe and her comdempned cumpanye,” Bale challenges, “with these clowted, canonyed,

into the role that he has described for her. To a significant degree, Bale is creating an ideal by praising it.

⁴⁵ For recent discussions of the shaping of Askew’s image by her contemporaries to serve various polemical and political purposes, see Thomas Betteridge, “Anne Askewe, John Bale, and Protestant History,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27, no. 2 (1997) and Theresa D. Kemp, “Translating (Anne) Askew: The Textual Remains of a Sixteenth-Century Heretic and Saint,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999).

⁴⁶ Elaine V. Beilin, ed., *The Examinations of Anne Askew, Women Writers in English 1350-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 11-12.

solempnysed, sensed, mattensed, and massed martyrs, and tell me by the Gospels tryall, whych of them seme most Christenlyke martyrs” (84). The polemicist uses lists, both of true martyrs and false, to situate Askew in his narrative of Christian history and thus to authorize her as a credible witness (martyr) for an authentic apostolic faith.

Bale is particularly interested in promoting—and defending—Askew’s knowledge and use of the Bible. The martyr represents herself as a great reader of Scripture, and her language is saturated with biblical references. Bale’s “elucydacyons” further contribute to Askew’s image of Bible-based piety, and defend her learning as sound and virtuous against accusations that it is inappropriate for a woman:

Manye godlye women both in the olde lawe and the newe, were lerned in the scriptures, and made utterance of them to the glory of God. As we reade of Helisabeth, Marye, and Anna the wydowe, Lu. 1. and 2. yet were they not rebuked for it. . . . In the prymatyve church, specyallye in Saynt Hieromes tyme, was it a great prayse unto women to be lerned in the scriptures. Great commendacyons geveth our Englysh Cronycles to Helena, Ursula, and Hilda, women of our nacyon, for beyng lerned also in the scriptures. Soche a woman was the seyd Hilda, as openlye dysputed in them agaynst the superstycions of certen byshoppes. But thys chancellour [who rebuked Askew for uttering the scriptures] by lyke, chaunced upon that blynde popysh worke whych Walter Hunte a whyte fryre, wrote iiii. score yeares ago, *Contradoctrices mulieres*, agaynst scole women, or els some otherlyke blynde Romyshe beggaryes. (30-31)

Bale’s examples emphasize proclamation and disputation as well as learning, and he again sets up a contrast between learned holy women and the “blynde” papists and superstitious

bishops who would silence them. The reformer justifies Askew's learning with reference to Biblical models, the primitive church, and Christian Britain—her model of piety, he suggests, is at once Biblical, patristic and English. Bale's Askew carries on a line of female virtue that reflects a reformist understanding of Christian history; Bale en-lists her as a figure of continuity with the “prymytive” past and exemplarity for the Protestant future.

Bale's catalogues of virtuous women, tailored to Protestant interests, did not go unchallenged. The Catholic Myles Huggarde (or Hogarde) no doubt had Bale's work in mind when he penned *The displaying of the Protestants, & sondry their practices, with a description of diuers their abuses of late frequented* (1556).⁴⁷ Huggarde employs catalogues too—as part of his objection to the marriage of priests, for example, he provides a list of women connected to various heretics, followed by a very conventional list of Biblical examples “to proue the redynes of wemen in deceiuyng of menne with their vayne perswasions” (76r-v). Huggarde specifically objects to those women “whiche are curious in all matters, especially of that, wherof they haue nothing to do: I meane these London ladies, & other the lyke, whose talke is nothing but of religion, of Peter & Paule, and other places of scripture. Whose scripture mouthes are ready to allure their husbandes to dye in the lordes veritie”⁴⁸ While Huggarde condemns and satirizes this Askew-like model of female

⁴⁷ *The displaying of the Protestants, & sondry their practices, with a description of diuers their abuses of late frequented. Newly imprinted agayne, and augmented, with a table in the ende, of all suche matter as is specially contained within this volume. Made by Myles Huggarde seruant to the Quenes maiestie.* London: Robert Caly, 1556. STC (2nd ed.) 13558 (identified as 13557 on UMI microfilm reel 570). This is an “augmented” version of a shorter text printed earlier in the same year; it includes a dedication to Queen Mary.

⁴⁸ 77r. Huggarde clarifies: “I speake not here of matrones, whiche are modest & sobre, obedient to their husbandes, contented to applie their myndes to the gouernement of housholde matters, and to bryng up their children in a goodly ordre. . .” (78v-79r). Again we see the juxtaposition of good and bad female types; however, in this case those with “scripture mouthes” are in the bad category. Huggarde repeatedly returns to the theme that

piety as heresy, he also reinscribes the connection between female scriptural learning and Protestantism; the question is not whether Protestant “she Apostles” (margin, 77v) have “scripture mouthes,” but whether this makes them heretics or saints. Huggarde pleads with these “doughters of heresie” to rethink their priorities:

You ought, beyng Christians, and traded up in Christes fayth, rather to spend your liues for the defence of your chastitie, and the liues of your deare husbandes, then in the cause of herisie, the cause of your confusion. We rede of many notable women, which were worthy martyrs We rede of manye other godly women, whiche dyed for Christes fayth, and the unitie of his church: but not as you do against his church and the unitie therof. (77v-78v)

The author then provides a catalogue of women who were sacrificially faithful to their husbands or died to preserve their chastity, arguing that these are better reasons to die than “for a fantasticall opinion newly crept out of the shell” (80r). Most of these examples are classical pagan ones (for instance Lucrece or the fifty virgins of Sparta), and have nothing to do with dying for church or faith. Huggarde may seem simply off topic in his neglect of the “worthy” Christian martyrs to whom he makes fleeting reference—but perhaps this is the point. By substituting a different sort of list of virtuous women he steers the ideals of female virtue away from religious martyrdom altogether, and toward the more conventional virtues of chastity and family duty. These, he suggests, are more “Christian” than an unhealthy interest in “Peter & Paule.”

In reconfiguring the exemplary catalogue, Huggarde redirects the terms of Christian virtue. Consistent with a position that sets normative Catholic tradition against disruptive

heretical women are abandoning their family duties and/or drawing their husbands into heresy.

Protestant innovation, he conflates “Christian” virtue for women with conventionally “feminine” virtue, and tries to distance this from hermeneutic activity, which he implies is outside the scope of female concerns. Throughout this section of his work, Huggarde compares the behaviour of the Protestants with a Pauline warning of vice and false teaching in the last days in 2 Tim. 3—a Biblical passage that facilitates his conflation of female vice with ineffectual learning.⁴⁹ Huggarde describes a wide variety of vicious, deceptive, heretical and misguided women, yet each time he returns to the same pointed characterization: such women are “euer learnyng, and neuer hable to attaine unto the truth.”⁵⁰ “Learning”—which absorbs gendered connotations of gossiping, meddling, deceit and heresy—is set against “truth,” and becomes a mark of the deceitful or misguided woman. Huggarde’s exemplary catalogues aim to distance female virtue from religious martyrdom and to divorce it completely from “learning”; they challenge the reformist construction of the virtuous, learned Protestant saint-martyr by reconfiguring the antitheses on which it relies.

The Catholic polemicist also provides a royal model of godly womanhood that stands in opposition to Bale’s idealized princess Elizabeth; Huggarde finds a paragon of Catholic virtue in Catherine of Aragon. “Who can attribute sufficient prayse to this noble Quene,” he asks, “or whoo can poure out sufficient teares to lament her sorowfull fate?” (104v). He continues:

⁴⁹ Huggarde quotes the passage (2 Tim. 3:1-8) in its entirety, and uses it as a loose outline to structure his following arguments. The section in question, as Huggarde gives it, is this: “For of this sorte are they which enter into houses, and bring into bondage women laden with sinne, whiche women are led with diuers lustes euer lerning and neuer able to come to the knowledge of the truthe” (71r-v).

⁵⁰ See 74r, 74v, 78v, 79v. Huggarde also applies this in passing to “effeminate bishops” (80v).

What obedience or humblenes of harte towardes her husbände, lacked in the good education of this heauenly woman? O what feruent loue towardes the poore commons Her deuocion towardes God was unspeakeable, her zeale towardes the virgin Mary was wonderfull, her continuall meditaciouns in the bloude and passion of Christe moste apparantly is knowen to the worlde. (104v-105r)

Emphasizing her specifically Catholic piety, and her patience and constancy in the face of her suffering, Huggarde constructs Catherine as a kind of Catholic martyr-saint, “more worthy to be crowned in heauen, then to raigne upon earth” (105v). And as Catherine represents *genuine* feminine virtue and piety, so her suffering is a result of Protestant “similitudes of godliness” (108r), the duplicitous maneuverings of Henry VIII’s crypto-Protestant advisors. It is, of course, good policy to praise Queen Catherine and to decry her unjust divorce in a text dedicated to her daughter, Queen Mary. Yet the terms of this praise (and of Bale’s praise of the “noble” Elizabeth) foreground the position of several Tudor royal women as contested sites of political and religious legitimacy. Following from Henry VIII’s matrimonial maneuverings, the economy of legitimacy dictated that the recognition of one woman’s status often nullified the claims of another; claims to moral and spiritual authority often proved similarly mutually exclusive. Competing narratives cast various Tudor royal women as victims or villains, pious examples or bastards and whores; those cast as virtuous often derive moral authority at the expense of another.⁵¹ In this context the exemplary figures of Catherine of Aragon and princess Elizabeth not only compete for attention, but

⁵¹ For example, Elizabeth cannot be legitimate if Catherine was wrongly divorced and Mary cannot be legitimate if Catherine was rightly divorced. Catherine’s reputation of righteous longsuffering is enhanced by the the reputed whorishness of Anne Boleyn; the contested public image of each of these women reflects on her respective religion and on her daughter. Additionally, Elizabeth’s Protestant “Englishness” depends on the foil of Catherine’s and Mary’s Spanish connections.

stand in direct contradiction to one another, emblematic of opposing political, theological and devotional paradigms. One may identify with—or approve of—Catherine, or Elizabeth, but probably not both.

Tudor royal women—both as individual agents and as emblematic figures—had great potential to influence the cultural ideal of virtuous womanhood, and with it, contemporary constructions of history, nationhood, nobility and authority—all of which had bearing on the religious questions of the day. While it was certainly helpful to have the women themselves as allies in a cause, the idealized images of these women were at least as valuable; accordingly, these images are deliberately shaped and appropriated in the service of competing paradigms of piety.⁵² The nature of their exemplarity—what virtues, if any, these women model—becomes a site of contest and competing contextualization. This contextualization is a crucial part of the argument, particularly for Bale. Both Huggarde and Bale seek to incorporate contemporary royal women into their catalogues of virtue, to identify them with or as an exemplary *type*, a contemporary paragon of an authoritative, traditional-historical ideal. Grafting them into a polemical narrative, they “en-list” them in support of their cause.

Such en-listment of contemporary figures is a more prominent—and a more deliberate—feature of Bale’s project. Huggarde’s use of catalogues is perhaps more influenced by his posture of contradiction; not only do catalogues lend themselves to argument, but the Catholic polemicist directly is countering Protestant constructions of

⁵² For Protestants, heroines include Elizabeth, Katherine Parr, and Jane Grey—all of whom are celebrated for their learning; for Catholics the obvious models were Catherine of Aragon and Mary. Nicholas Udall, in his previously-discussed contribution to the English *Paraphrases*, strains to fit princess Mary into the evangelical mold, a move which is decidedly more strategic than believable. It is, of course, only helpful to have an exemplary woman “on-side” if one can control what she exemplifies.

female virtue. Moreover, for both writers, against the backdrop of the *querelle des femmes* catalogues are a standard way of discussing the highs and lows of female nature and behaviour. However, Bale is particularly conscious of disrupting and reconfiguring Christian tradition, while Huggarde draws on very conventional catalogues to reiterate standard female virtues in the face of Protestant deviation. Furthermore, since Bale and others aim to promote a “new,” specifically Protestant brand of female virtue, it is particularly necessary for them to provide as many compelling exemplary figures as possible.⁵³ Bale enlists princess Elizabeth and Anne Askew as models of a distinctly Protestant learning, a scripture-based piety that Huggarde also associates with (heretical) Protestantism. The reformist appropriation of the learned woman for the Protestant cause puts anti-Protestant writers such as Huggarde in a position to do a lot of satirizing of “she Apostles,” but gives them very little ground on which to construct an alternative vision of the virtuous learned *Catholic* woman, and thus to accommodate (or enlist as allies) an increasing population of literate women. Bale’s strategy of enlistment requires an emphasis on imitation. In promoting Elizabeth, Askew and others—in continuity with their “foremothers”—as paragons of Protestant womanhood, he is also promoting a *pattern* of female piety. The catalogue of virtuous women is open-ended, and he hopes to enlist other women to fashion themselves after the pattern of the godly, learned paragons.

⁵³ Of course part of Bale’s objective is to argue that this model of godly, learned womanhood is, strictly speaking, *not* new, but has authoritative precedents. However, there is some room for “newness” in the Protestant language of a contemporary outpouring of grace, in which female Christian virtue is magnified and multiplied (see both Bale and Udall). Moreover, if (as Bale suggests) his model of godly womanhood is not new in the context of classic Christianity, it certainly was new for many of his contemporaries.

Lamps and Mirrors: *The Monument of Matrones*

If Bale and like-minded reformers provide lists of exemplary “godly, learned women,” Thomas Bentley, decades later, provides a library. While Bentley might be said to “inherit” Bale’s apocalyptic imagery and promotion of the godly, learned woman, his text is much less argumentative. Bentley’s *The Monument of Matrones* (1582) collects some sixteen hundred pages of devotional texts written by, for or about women into one large and varied anthology.⁵⁴ Dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, who figures prominently in the collection, the *Monument* is consciously designed for the use of “unlearned readers” as well as for the highly educated. Drawing on a familiar apocalyptic image of the seven virgins with lamps awaiting the return of the bridegroom Christ—a conflation of the five wise virgins of the parable (Matt. 25) and the seven lampstands (churches) of Revelation—the *Monument* is both a tribute to Elizabeth’s “perpetuall virginitie,” as Bentley explains in the dedicatory epistle, and a call to all women “like wise virgins to perseuerance in all good works of the spirit.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *The Monument of Matrones: conteining seuen severall Lamps of Virginitie, or distinct treatises; whereof the first fiue concerne praier and meditation: the other two last, precepts and examples...* London: Henry Denham, 1582. This seven-part quarto has multiple title pages, and the pagination starts over several times. The STC lists three distinct sections, STC (2nd ed) 1892, 1832 and 1894, respectively: Lamps 1-4 (pp.1-49, 1-1000); Lamp 5 (pp.1-213); Lamp 6-7 (pp.1-331). The publisher Thomas Dawson was involved with the printing of the last section. It is likely that some people bought certain sections of the book, rather than the large and expensive whole. Bentley identifies himself as a student of Gray’s Inn, and was likely the churchwarden at St. Andrew Holborn, the Gray’s Inn church. For more on the publication of the work and the compiler himself, see Colin Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, “The Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley, Compiler of *The Monument of Matrones* (1582),” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 31, no. 2 (2000).

⁵⁵ On apocalyptic imagery, see King, “The Godly Woman in Elizabethan Iconography,” and my discussion above. As Patrick Collinson points out, “it was only a year since the French marriage negotiations had been finally broken off, and [the *Monument*] was perhaps the

The *Monument* is divided into seven “lampes of virginite.” The first contains “diuine Praiers, Hymnes, or Songs, made by sundrie holie women in the Scripture,” a collection of Biblical excerpts in a literal or allegorical female voice.⁵⁶ The second lamp is devoted to the devotional writing of women, beginning with Elizabeth’s *Godlie Meditation* and both of Katherine Parr’s major works (*Lamentation of a Sinner* and *Praiers and Meditations*), and including several substantial collections of prayers and related material by other women.⁵⁷ The third lamp is entirely devoted to the Queen in her role as godly monarch, and includes psalms and prayers “to be properlie used of the Queenes most excellent Maiestie,” as well as some expositions on the psalms concerning good government.⁵⁸ The fourth lamp, by far the longest, is an extensive collection of “holie praiers, and Christian Meditations for sundrie purposes. . . to direct all godlie men and women daie and night”—the material does not seem

earliest unrestrained celebration of Elizabeth’s perpetual virginity.” “Windows in a Woman’s Soul: Questions about the Religion of Queen Elizabeth I,” in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), 105.

⁵⁶ Thus along with material such as Miriam’s song and Esther’s prayer, Bentley includes the book of Lamentations, as the voice of the Daughter of Zion, the church. (Throughout this paragraph, if I do not cite page numbers, the quotation is taken from the unnumbered title page of the lamp in question.)

⁵⁷ This text of Elizabeth’s *Godlie Meditation* does not include Bale’s commentary, presumably because Bentley was using the c.1568 edition of the work (which omits it). Material by Jane Dudley is included, and a few prayers by women martyrs, including Anne Askew. Askew’s *Examinations* are not included, I suspect because they were readily available in Foxe’s *Actes and Monuments* (whereas Bentley is more concerned with recirculating works that would otherwise be difficult to obtain). The ubiquity of this other “monumental” work may explain why Bentley gives relatively little attention to women martyrs. Other works of note in this lamp are Elizabeth Tyrwhit’s *Morning and Evening Praiers*, a collection of prayers by Frances Aburgavennie, Dorcas Martin’s *An Instruction for Christians* (translated from the French), and several prayers and exhortations attributed to anonymous “godly gentlewomen.”

⁵⁸ These are Theodore Beza’s *The Kings Heast, or Gods familiar speech to the Queene*, and *The Queenes Vow, or selfe-talke with God*. For a discussion of the way in which this section, and the *Monument* more generally, fashions Elizabeth and instructs the monarch through commendation, see Collinson, “Windows.” The prominence of the Psalms emphasizes Elizabeth’s iconographic role as King David’s daughter.

particularly gendered, but rather aimed to be broadly useful.⁵⁹ With the fifth lamp, however, the *Monument* returns to specifically female interests, providing a collection of prayers and meditations “to bee used onlie of and for all sorts and degrees of women, in their seuerall ages and callings: as namelie, of Virgin, Wiues, Women with child, Midwiues, Mothers, Daughters, Mistresses, Maids, Widowes, and old women.”⁶⁰ The sixth lamp—“containing a Mirrour for Maidens and Matrons”—is essentially a conduct book woven of Bible passages, discussing the “Duties and office of all sorts of women in their vocation out of Gods word.”⁶¹ It is followed by the final lamp, which includes an exhaustive list of “the acts & histories, liues, & deaths of all maner of women, good and bad, mentioned in holy Scripture, as well by name, as without name, set forth in alphabetical order.”⁶² The entire collection, says Bentley to the reader, is “not onelie a burning Lampe for virgins, but also a christall Mirrour for Matrones: as also a delectable Diall for to direct you to true devotion, with a perfect

⁵⁹ It includes, for instance, the litany (p.464ff), and a variety of prayers to be said in connection with various church services.

⁶⁰ About one third of this material is concerned with childbirth. See Colin Atkinson and William P. Stoneman, ““These griping greefes and pinching pangs”: Attitudes to Childbirth in Thomas Bentley’s *The Monument of Matrones* (1582),” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 21 (1990).

⁶¹ In this section Bentley (or his source) has collected all Bible passages concerning various topics relating to women. A similar effect could be achieved by looking up key words—woman, wife, daughter, harlot, maiden, widow, etc.—in an exhaustive Bible concordance. There are a few sections of commentary (with biblical references rather than direct quotations) as well.

⁶² Following the A-Z biblical list, Bentley lists some figures from 3 Maccabees and Josephus. Presumably this section is meant to function primarily as a reference tool. For a discussion of Bentley’s use of—and addition to—the Geneva Bible in the seventh lamp, see Colin Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, “Subordinating Women: Thomas Bentley’s Use of Biblical Women in “The Monument of Matrones” (1582),” *Church History* 60, no. 3 (1991). I am not convinced, as the Atkinsons seem to be, that Bentley has an *agenda* of subordination in his presentation of these Biblical figures; it is more likely that he simply reads (and transmits) the Bible with the subordinationist assumptions that were “natural” to his society. For further description of the whole work, see Colin Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, “Thomas Bentley’s *The Monument of Matrones* (1582): The First Anglican Prayer Book for Women,” *Anglican Theological Review* 74, no. 3 (1992).

President or register of holie praier for all women generally to haue recourse unto, as to their homelie or domestical librarie” (B1v).

While the trope of the lamp, in addition to its apocalyptic allusions, suggests the kindling of virtuous impulses in the reader, the ubiquitous trope of the mirror is even more closely associated with female virtue and vice. The *Monument*, Bentley conventionally claims in his epistle to the reader, serves as a “Mirrour for all sorts of wicked women, as in a cleere glass with Athalia, Jezebell, Herodias” and other notorious figures to see their vice, while it is “a Mirrour contrariwise for all godlie and vertuous women plainlie to behold the faith, religion, modestie” and many other attributes of the good women of the Bible (B2r). In the *Monument*, as in most discussions of female virtue, the good is defined in part by juxtaposition with the bad; while the focus may be on the five wise virgins, we can never quite forget their five foolish counterparts. That Bentley “monumentalizes” the bad with the good reflects the conventional “mirror” approach to female virtue, but it also reflects his impulse, as a “faithfull collector” (B3r), to be thorough.⁶³ Bentley uses the images of the dial and library to illustrate the comprehensive nature of the project, which includes material for all times and seasons, and for all degrees and estates of women.

The rhetoric of exemplarity that so readily accompanies lamps and mirrors permeates the preface and assumes that the woman reader will see herself illuminated and reflected in the contents of the book. Bentley has assembled all Biblical and devotional material that he thinks applies specifically to women—and this includes female allegorical figures as well as historical ones. Atkinson and Atkinson have observed Bentley’s tendency, in lamp seven, to

⁶³ On Bentley as a “preserver of the past” see Atkinson and Atkinson, “Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley,” 334-38.

treat allegorical figures as historical women and to draw moral lessons accordingly;⁶⁴ such slippage occurs throughout the work. Bentley includes allegorical figures of the church (such as the Daughter of Zion and the Spouse of Christ) among his female voices and characters, as well as in the ordering principles of the book. Such slippage between the embodied and the emblematic also makes it possible for Bentley to apply his “lamps of virginity” to “all estates and degrees of women generallie” (B1v). As I have argued above (in connection with Bale and apocalyptic imagery), in the context of Protestant iconography and feminine ecclesial imagery women might be offered exemplars of female virtue that were allegorical or actual—or an uneasy combination of both. This conflation of historical and symbolic models of godly womanhood is especially pronounced in Bentley’s preface to the reader, where a list of the ill-fated wicked women of the Bible includes the whore of Babylon, while a list of good Biblical women and their exemplary virtues ends with Bentley’s wish (with apocalyptic imagery worthy of Bale himself):

that looking in this glasse of the holie liues of their foremothers, [women readers] may christianlie conforme and adorne themselues after their good examples, and become for their rare vertues verie beautifull spouses in the sight of their spiritual bridegroome Jesus Christ: to whom, as the kings daughters, they may appeere all glorious within, and of whom with the lambes wife they may be marked in the forehead with the testimonie of his name Jesus, to the end that being clothed with the sunne of righteousness, and crowned with the twelue stars of God and his word, and treading the moone of this worldlie affections under their feet, they may euermore be deliuered by him their valliant Michael, and his angels from the power of the red

⁶⁴ Atkinson and Atkinson, “Subordinating Women,” 294.

dragon, which so greedilie gapeth to deuoure them: and possesse their soules in patience, in the restfull place of the presence of God, long since prepared for the elect where they shall be nourished and preserued for time & times, and together with all holie virgins, matrones, martyrs, and elect people of God, ioifullie triumph and be glad for the gift of their euerlasting happinesse. (B2v)⁶⁵

This allegorical language of the heavenly marriage and the heavenly kingdom works to expand the female community into a timeless, transcendent dimension. The reader both follows in the steps of her foremothers and joins them in the heavenly company of the elect; while she may identify with her historical predecessors, both past and present women share in the allegorical identity—they are all the Good Woman/Church. Bentley's collection of Biblical (and more contemporary) foremothers, then, combined with prayers for current women readers, functions as a kind of textual mirror of the heavenly community of female saints, in which those on earth are invited to participate.

While Bentley's objectives in compiling the *Monument* remain a matter of speculation⁶⁶—and in any case the multivocality of this diverse compilation works against a monolithic understanding of the text—what does come through clearly in the work is a community of female voices in prayer. Women readers pray in concert with their queen, contemporary women writers, and Biblical women—as well as with the church at large, as the material in lamp four reminds us. What is also clear is that Bentley designed the

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the image of the "kings daughters, all glorious within," see chapter one.

⁶⁶ While some have assumed that the book is designed as an "appeal for court patronage" (King, "The Godly Woman in Elizabethan Iconography," 71) or "to both flatter and admonish the queen" (Collinson, "Windows," 105), others have speculated that it was meant as a statement on the role and place of women or that Bentley's interests were primarily of an antiquarian nature. See Atkinson and Atkinson, "Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley," 329ff.

collection to accommodate less-educated readers. Although Bentley assumes that some of his readers will be highly learned, his preface makes at least ten references to “simple” and “unlearned” readers, for whose benefit he has selected, organized, and in some cases explicated the content of the book. Such “unlearned readers” would presumably have competent vernacular reading skills, but little beyond that.⁶⁷ That Bentley is so conscious of this sort of audience suggests, first, that many such readers existed. Indeed, publishers would be unlikely to take on a project of this size unless they anticipated a substantial market for it.⁶⁸ Beyond this, the assumed participation of the “unlearned reader” sets up a pattern of exemplarity in which “godly, learned women” are set up as models for godly less-learned women. Bentley hopes to

incourage, prouoke, and allure all godlie women of our time, in some measure, according to their seuerall gifts giuen them of God, to become euen from their youth more studious imitators, and diligent folowers of so godlie and rare examples in their vertuous mothers, that as they either in sex, name, or estate are equall with them: so in learning, wisdom, good industrie, and in all holie studies and vertuous exercises commendable for women, they would dailie endeouour themselues to become like them . . . (B7v-8r)

Bentley suggests that for all sorts of “godlie women” the same basic model of piety applies. Different women’s ability to replicate the ideal may differ “according to their seuerall gifts,” but they will nevertheless pursue the same sort of ideal—which prominently includes “learning, wisdom, good industrie, and . . . holie studies.” Such learning, of course, is

⁶⁷ In his references to the “simpler sort of women,” Bentley also may be thinking of illiterate women to whom the *Monument* might be read.

⁶⁸ For a discussion of the publication of the work as it relates to Bentley’s identity and influence, see Atkinson and Atkinson, “Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley,” 324-28.

devotionally directed; Bentley is hardly advocating universal classical education. Yet he goes beyond the more conventional suggestion that literate activity can be a means to virtue, and further implies that it is an imitable virtue in itself.

The female virtues that are “kindled” by reading the various lamps of the *Monument* are for the most part quite conventional ones: “There is nothing that becommeth a maid better,” begins the first prayer of lamp five, “than sobernes, silence, shamefastnes, and chastitie, both of bodie & mind” (1). Bentley’s preface suggests that readers may “shew themselues daughters woorthie such mothers” by fearing God, obeying their prince, and by fighting “the good fight of faith couragiously in the pure loue of their countrie, and christian charitie towards their neighbours.”⁶⁹ However, they fight this fight with the “ghostlie weapons”—the words and examples—of their foremothers; godly womanhood is developed through textual means, in imitative conversation with the female community as voiced and represented in a “librarie” of texts. The prominent inclusion in this library of Tudor-era women—inclusion based on their literary production—results in a collection of contemporary exemplars who represent, above all, a paradigm of “godly learning.” Women readers (who may be “unlearned,” but are nevertheless literate)—simply in the act of reading—imitate this pattern of literate piety and participate with their foremothers (to the degree that they are able) in the female textual community. Following in the steps of the “godly, learned woman” is the less-educated, but equally text-oriented, godly woman reader.

⁶⁹ B4r. In a text dedicated to Elizabeth, this emphasis on obedience to prince and love of country is hardly surprising. The language of spiritual warfare, in the “absence” of external religious conflict (Bentley makes no reference to papists, for instance, and his fulsome praise of Elizabeth implies a Protestant utopia), is now directed toward the inner battle of loving one’s neighbour and other non-“controversial” virtues. For a text that prefers to keep religious controversy at the forefront, see my discussion of Katherine Stubbes below.

A “perfect pattern of true Christianity”: the Life, Death and Creed of Katherine Stubbes

According to her husband Phillip, one could find no woman reader more godly than Katherine Stubbes. In 1591, shortly after the death of his young wife, the zealous Protestant Phillip Stubbes published an account of Katherine’s life and death as a “most wonderfull and rare” example of “a right vertuous Life and Christian Death,” a “mirrour of woman-hood” and a “pattern of true Christianity” (A2r).⁷⁰ The centre and substantive core of Phillip Stubbes’ *A Crystall Glasse for Christian Women* is a relatively lengthy and detailed creedal statement, presented as Katherine Stubbes’ deathbed confession of faith. This confession loosely follows the Trinitarian outline of the Apostles’ Creed, but pays particular attention to points of conflict with Roman Catholicism.⁷¹ Overall, it provides argumentative but clear, well-informed, and fairly comprehensive coverage of the salient points of English Calvinism. Mistress Stubbes’ deathbed speech is bookended by accounts of her virtuous life and her Christian death, both of which are closely connected to the doctrinal exposition that they frame.

The account of Katherine’s “vertuous life” presents her as a model of the pious woman. Her husband praises her for her godliness, honesty and wisdom, as well as her “modesty, courtesie, gentlenesse, affability, and good government, and above all, for her

⁷⁰ Phillip Stubbes, *A Crystall Glasse for Christian Women* (London: 1591) A2r. STC (2nd ed.) 23381. Quotations will be taken from this 1591 edition unless otherwise indicated. For a facsimile of the 1606 edition (STC 23383), see *Brief Confessional Writings: Grey, Stubbes, Livingstone and Clarkstone*. Selected and introduced by Mary Ellen Lamb. *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works* Series I, Printed Writings, 1500-1640: Part 2, Vol. 2. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001.

⁷¹ The confession includes substantial explanation of Protestant teaching on the symbolic nature of the sacraments, justification by faith alone, the falsehood of Purgatory, the supreme authority of the Scriptures, and the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.

fervent zeale which she did beare to the truth" (A2v). She is praised for the familiar "female" virtues of humility, submission, deference and obedience, and even her scrupulous husband—that same Phillip Stubbes who penned the anti-theatrical *Anatomie of Abuses*⁷²—is satisfied with her level of disdain for worldly vanities. But her religious zeal and her "endowments and qualities of the mind" (A2r) are also repeatedly emphasized:

her whole heart was bent to seek the Lord, her whole delight was to be conversant in the Scriptures, and to meditate upon them day and night. Insomuch as you could seldome or neuer have come into her house, and have found her without a Bible, or some other good book in her hand. (A2v)

For Phillip Stubbes, following Bale and other polemically-minded Protestants, the good woman is above all a Bible reader and an informed believer. The life of Katherine Stubbes conforms to—and contributes to—this emerging Protestant ideal of the godly woman reader. Her incessant Bible-reading, as a devotional practice, is evidence of her pious intentions; as a hermeneutic activity it is evidence that her belief is derived from and validated by authoritative Scripture.

Katherine's identity as a Bible reader comes through clearly in her confession of faith, which she delivers from her deathbed, we are told, to an audience of "many . . . neighbors and friends."⁷³ In making a public statement of her belief "for that none of you shall judge that I dyed not a perfect Christian" (B1r), she in some ways is following a

⁷² *The Anatomie of Abuses* London: Richard Jones, 1583. (Facsimile published by Garland, 1973.)

⁷³ A4v. This deathbed speech is (as the title page of the 1606 edition tells us) "set downe word for word as shee spake it, as neere as could bee gathered." While Phillip perhaps contributed to its systematic structure and its ample Biblical references, the entire doctrinal statement is presented as Katherine's own speech.

prescribed pattern of godly dying,⁷⁴ but she also has an evangelistic purpose: so that those listeners “that are not yet thoroughly resolved in the truth of God, may hear and learn what the spirit of God hath taught me, out of his blessed and alsaving Word” (B1r). The dying woman, by proclaiming her creed, adopts the roles of teacher and of witness to the gospel. Mistress Stubbes’ (tenuous) authority as a teacher derives in large part from her scriptural learning.⁷⁵ Her authority as witness is closely associated with the representation of her saintly death.

While Mistress Stubbes dies of natural causes (complications following childbirth) that are completely unrelated to her doctrinal opinions, her death nevertheless is represented as a spiritual victory, in terms that recall familiar images of martyrdom. The convergence of spiritual proclamation and moment of death, as well as frequent language of perseverance in suffering, contribute to this. Moreover, Katherine’s dramatic verbal duel with the devil injects a crucial dimension of conflict into the narrative, setting up a spiritual battle from which the dying woman emerges victorious: “she had no sooner made an end of the most heavenly confession of her faith, but Satan was ready to bid her the combate, whom she mightily repulsed and vanquished by the power of our Lord Jesus.”⁷⁶ Katherine’s scriptural

⁷⁴ In Thomas Becon’s *The Sick Man’s Salve* (1561), a prominent work giving instructions on dying well, the fictional Epaphroditus delivers a confession of faith to his family and friends so that they “may be witnesses before God and the world, that I die a Christian man” John Ayre, ed., *Prayers and other pieces of Thomas Becon . . . edited for the Parker Society, Parker Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844) 135.

⁷⁵ There is, of course, a tension here between Katherine’s “sermonizing” and the conventional injunctions against women’s public speech. Phillip commends his wife for her obedience to “the Commandement of the Apostle who biddeth women to be silent,” yet he also boasts that she “would most mightily justifie the truth of God against blasphemous untruths, and convince them [the papists], yea, and confound them by the testimonies of the word of God” (A2r). Bale walks a similar tightrope in his representation of Anne Askew.

⁷⁶ C2r. Katherine’s conquest of Satan follows traditional Calvinist themes in rejecting despair, dismissing Satan’s reminder of her own unrighteousness, and claiming Christ’s

knowledge serves her well in this confrontation also. She becomes a spiritual heroine waging war against the forces of evil, a saint shouting down the Devil.⁷⁷

Other markers of “saintliness” also give the narrative of Katherine’s life and death a hagiographic flavour. In addition to her superlative perfection of life and virtue (glowingly described by her husband), Katherine has an otherworldliness about her, and desires that her soul may be released from her body so that she may be with God. She prophesies her own death, “which thing no doubt was revealed unto her by the Spirit of God” (A3v), and frequently sees visions of the “joyes of heaven, and of the glory that I shall go unto” (A4v). Appropriately, these saintly priorities are associated with bookishness: the neighbours, Phillips recounts, would ask her “why are you no more carefull for the things of this life, but sit alwaies poring upon a Book, and reading?” (A3r). While the narrative may allude to some more traditional markers of holiness, Katherine’s “sainthood”—like the creed for which she is a witness—is distinctively Protestant.

Katherine’s dramatic victory over Satan is reminiscent of the apocalyptic iconography that colours so many Protestant works. And in this same tradition, in her deathbed speech Katherine projects herself into the timeless heavenly community of the elect, made up of “Martyrs, and Confessors, and Holy Saints of God,” past, present and future (C1v)—a

righteousness to stand in for her own. The episode is distinctively dramatic in *A Crystall Glasse*, however, for Katherine enters into direct verbal combat with a vision of the Devil—in response to which she frowned and looked “as it were with an angry, sterne, austere countenance, as though she saw some filthy, some ugly & displeasing thing” (C2r)—and the vigorous disputation (her side of it) is witnessed by the audience around her deathbed.

⁷⁷ This episode is reminiscent of the lives of the Roman virgin-martyrs Juliana and Margaret of Antioch, both of whom fought battles with Satan. The iconography of St. Margaret, who is conventionally pictured standing over the dragon-Satan she has defeated, was easily appropriated into Protestant apocalyptic imagery. King, “The Godly Woman in Elizabethan Iconography,” 52-7.

community that is united by its faith and its steadfast witness. For Elizabethan Protestants, not far removed from the Marian persecutions, the figure of the steadfast martyr-witness at the stake, popularized by John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, becomes the pattern of spiritual heroism. This language of witness and testimony that is so dominant in the Protestant representation of martyrdom (and sainthood) is one that is fairly easily imported into the broader discourse of Christian death. While the sickbed cannot entirely replicate the authority or drama of the stake, in Katherine's case it can come fairly close. The centrality of Katherine's confession of faith and her role as proclaimer of the gospel, combined with her perseverance in faith, her disputation with the forces of evil, and her spiritual victory in death all work together to fashion Katherine's image after the pattern of the Anne Askews of an earlier period. She follows in a tradition of combative, spiritually victorious women, while providing a model of spiritual heroism for women who die in their beds.

A Crystall Glasse was an extremely popular book, and went through thirty-five editions by 1695. Perhaps much of its attraction was in this marriage of the ordinary with the extraordinary. Katherine was an "ordinary" woman (or at least the sort of woman to whom other literate women could relate), who performed ordinary female roles, and died an ordinary female childbirth-related death. Yet she is presented as an extraordinary spiritual victor, in a context that elevates an ordinary death to the status of near martyrdom, and taps into the apocalyptic struggle between good and evil. Additionally, as an example of literate piety, Katherine embodies the ideal of the "godly, learned woman" as it is translated beyond the noble, educated elite into the lives of more "ordinary" reading women.⁷⁸ For Mistress

⁷⁸ Katherine was apparently born to a wealthy merchant family. There is nothing to indicate that her level of education extended beyond competent vernacular literacy (although it may have); certainly she seems to have made the most of whatever skills she had acquired.

Stubbes, reading is empowering (in her battle against the forces of evil) and authorizing (in her role as teacher to the community); it is also evidence of more conventional Christian/feminine virtues of obedience and devotion, and a sign of a godly life. In Katherine, perhaps, the polemical posture of Askew and Bale and the prayerful piety of Bentley's collection join together in an inspiring yet imitable model of doctrine and devotional practice.

A Crystall Glasse aims to provide women readers with an example both of a "virtuous life" and a "Christian death," and both of these are closely bound up with Katherine's confession of faith. Although there is nothing gender-specific about the creed that Katherine proclaims, it is presented as an integral part of a godly woman's life. The "good woman" is defined by the state of her soul—by her informed, unwavering and obedient belief—and thus also by her identification with a creedal text. Both Katherine's virtuous life and her statement of faith are closely associated with her identity as an avid reader. The exemplary female death is similarly presented as a doctrinal posture—Katherine dies faithful to the text, wielding the Word, and entering a heavenly community of saints. As the narrative of her life and death is circulated in print, Katherine also joins, and helps to define, another community—the growing textual tradition of exemplary Protestant women.

Epilogue

Two years after Thomas Bentley's *Monument of Matrones* appeared, the same printer (Henry Denham) published Anne Wheathill's *A handfull of holesome (though homelie) hearbs, gathered out of the goodlie garden of Gods most holie word . . .* (1584)—a prayerbook dedicated “to all religious Ladies, Gentlewomen, and others, which loue true religion and vertue, and be deuoutlie disposed.”¹ Particularly in concert, these two publications gesture towards a sizeable female reading audience, inclined to buy devotional books. They also illustrate the expansion of the community of literate women embodied in the *Monument*, for Wheathill's text can in some ways be seen as a successor to the *Monument*; as both a reader *and* a writer, Anne Wheathill participates in the tradition of the godly, learned woman.

Wheathill, a gentlewoman, conventionally defers to those better-learned readers who might find fault with her rudimentary skills; perhaps she is thinking of Bentley's learned paragons. Yet, she declares, no one has undertaken such a project “with a more willing hart and feruent mind; nor more to the aduancement of Gods glorie, & the desire of acceptation” than she (a3r). Her “good zeale” and the “holesome” garden (the Bible) from which she has gathered her “hearbs” authorize her work and render it acceptable to God, and by extension, she implies, acceptable to the reader as well.

¹ Anne Wheathill, *A handfull of holesome (though homelie) hearbs, gathered out of the goodlie garden of Gods most holie word . . .* (London: H. Denham, 1584) a2r. STC 25329. For a discussion of the text and speculation about Wheathill herself, see Colin Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, “Anne Wheathill's *A Handfull of Holesome (though Homelie) Hearbs* (1584): The First English Gentlewoman's Prayer Book,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27, no. 3 (1996) and Atkinson and Atkinson, “Numerical Patterning in Anne Wheathill's *A Handfull of Holesome (though Homelie) Hearbs* (1584),” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 41, no. 1 (1999).

Wheathill begins her dedicatory epistle with reference to conventional terms of female virtue. Her book is a “testimonial,” she declares, “how I haue and doo (I praise God) bestowe the pretious treasure of time” (a2r); if her book is well received she will “thinke my time most happilie bestowed: for that thereby I did auoid idleness, to the pleasing of almighty God” (a3v). Avoiding idleness in this context, however, involves contributing to the edification of others; moreover, if publishing this book is a “testimonial” to her virtuous activity, then in some ways Wheathill is setting herself up as a model of devout, industrious womanhood. By publishing she places herself in an exemplary role—in the tradition of the godly, learned exemplars.

What is most striking about Wheathill’s dedication, however, is her sense of a community of women constructed and united by text. If her readers respond favourably, she writes, then she has “gained those, whom I know not, as well strangers to me, as my acquaintance, to be my freends, that shall taste these grose hearbs with me” (a3v). United across space and time by common texts (both Wheathill’s prayers, and the Bible from which she “gathers” them) these reading women join a transcendent community as well; Wheathill prays that she and all her readers will be “worthie to meete together, in the blessed kingdome of our heavenly father” (a4r). This imagined community—of her audience and her fellow readers, as well as her literary foremothers and the timeless community of the daughters of God—shapes and inspires Anne Wheathill’s literate activities, and gives her a context in which to write, as a sister-reader in an ever expanding community of literate women.

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