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Scattered Prizes: Colonial Fantasies and the Material Body in the English Renaissance
Blazon

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English from
The College of William and Mary

by

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Accepted for _____

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May 4, 2017

In Memory of Dr. Paula Blank

As a result of England's expanding mercantile and diplomatic ventures in the mid-sixteenth century, its influential writers came into contact with a number of fashionable poetic styles that had been developed by generations of continental Renaissance poets. Among the poetic figures imported into the English poetic paradigm, the blazon became one of the most popular, showing up in a wide variety of texts from the late 1570s onward and hitting its high-water mark in terms of usage in the 1590s, at the end of the Elizabethan era. The blazon itself is a poetic figure in which a poet angles the viewer's gaze upon the poem's object and engages in an act of catalogue and comparison, where each individual body part is sequentially singled out and evaluated relative to another valuable object. When writing blazons, some English writers stuck closely to models handed down by classical or early-Renaissance lyric poets such as Ovid or Petrarch as a means of emphasizing their aesthetic lineage. In other cases, the poetic blazon's very nature as a temporary *fashion* made it an easy target for parody – we need only look at Shakespeare's Sonnet 130, "My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun," to remind ourselves how contemporary writers understood the poetic device's essential silliness when pushed to absurd extremes. But to read the Petrarchan blazon only by its caricature would do it a disservice. The Petrarchan blazon's role as a site of invention, nomenclature, and eventually *possession* gave it a great deal of staying power among English poets, so that it remained employed in various ways throughout the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

Among these, English poets appear to have been struck by the blazon's thematic and structural parallels with expanding colonial venture. Many influential lyric poets of the era, from Edmund Spenser to Sir Philip Sidney, Shakespeare to John Donne, paid close attention to the blazon's ability to craft a space to negotiate the politics of physical being, the drive to accumulate material wealth, and the imposition of value on passive objects, and subsequently

applied the figure in order to respond to transforming methods of discovery, trade, and conquest. Ultimately, the blazon as articulated under Petrarchan models of lyric poetry has an implicit goal of “materializing the immaterial”¹ – of transforming inaccessible qualities in a beloved or desired object into tangible substitutes that can in turn be appraised and potentially possessed, which renders it a key witness to English lyric poets fancifully exploring fictive acts of division, evaluation, and desire that would in turn shape the ways that English men and women would imagine and respond to a changing world, an open world – even a New World.

I. The Blazon in Fashion

Although the Petrarchan blazon has been well-studied by literary scholars, and many, such as Nancy Vickers, Stephen Greenblatt, and Roland Greene have incorporated the figure within their own analyses of Renaissance literary subjects, none have offered a thorough consideration of the poetic figure’s development once incorporated into the English tradition. Indeed, I cannot hope to fill that gap with my own work either. With this project, I can only attempt to indicate the importance that this singular poetic device holds in relation to the construction of emergent colonialism’s materializing method of measuring the world and the self in relation to it. After all is said and done, I hope that my attempt to do so provokes further inquiry into the blazon’s role as a site of cultural discourse. So to this end, I intend to explore the blazon in Early Modern English colonial discourse as a means of uniting the emerging lexicon of trade, exploration, and conquest, with a poetics of desire rooted in classical and Petrarchan precedent. The blazon in the hands of English

¹ For this turn of phrase I owe a debt of gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Erin Minear.

poets could be and was used as an extension of developing European practices of “mapping,” and to synthesize contemporary topics of material identification and desire onto new frontiers of exploration, evaluation, and potential possession. In this expression, the blazon takes a new global valence by participating in a discourse that mixes together arguments over religious primacy, economic gains and gambits, and gendered politics of desire that would later become manifest in English colonial undertakings.

To briefly step back and survey the roots of the English Renaissance blazon, we should first recognize that body composition and our relation to it as individuals has long been a fixation in western literature. Medieval meditations on the corporeal body often centered on the symbolic value of its partitioning. As noted by David Hillman and Carla Mazzio, “religious relics, venerated bodies of saints, zodiac figures (with each sign of the zodiac corresponding to parts of the body), the scandalously circulating organs of the fabliaux, and accounts of phantom limbs all marked the body as a charged site of fragmentation” (Hillman and Mazzio, xiii). After the advent of the Renaissance in Europe, artists wrestling with anxieties over corporeality often found classical allies and inspirational figures on which to model their own work in Homer’s story of Zeuxis, who, for lack of a sufficient model to paint Helen, relied on an aggregate of several bodies; and Pygmalion, whose fashioned idealized woman could be brought to life – made tangible and subject to possession (Vickers, “Members Only,” 3). The discourse of body politics during the Renaissance, however, found itself destabilized by innumerable cultural and scientific shifts. The development of anatomical studies beyond those left behind by Galen certainly plays a major part, but also the growth of print culture and its ability to both connect and sever groups of people; the abandonment of feudalism for the more definite hierarchies of centralized states; the fracturing of the Christian church and the Protestant shift of

interpretive authority from Rome to the individual; contact established with the Americas and its indigenous peoples; and indeed, even the cosmological understanding unleashed by Copernicus that we were not, after all, the fulcrum of the universe. The Early Modern period was replete with discoveries that challenged prevailing senses of unity and order that had held out so long in Medieval Europe (Hillman and Mazzio, xiii). So perhaps it should not come as a surprise that we find themes of fragmentation – particularly of a physical nature – so prevalent in Renaissance texts. To scrutinize the body and find meaning in its variance, in its ability to function *as part* and *as whole*, was one of the key efforts of the humanistic project, and in the literary mode, we must look to Petrarch as progenitor of English Renaissance poetic anatomies (Freccero 20).

With respect paid to the connections between Petrarchan and Ovidian lyrical “scattering” drawn by John Freccero (29) and Nancy Vickers (“Diana Described” 269), I contend that the blazon changed radically once Petrarch employed the device in his poetic cycle, the *Rime Sparse*. Fragmentation charts a thematic course throughout the cycle, from the title of the sequence (“Scattered Rhymes”), to poems in which the speaker’s body is repeatedly mutated or reorganized into another form, or in which the speaker exchanges the objectified Laura for disembodied eyes, hair, or articles of clothing, each of which are given referential authority over her unified being. Petrarch’s formulation of the blazon fits neatly within this narrative, too, as the speaker attempts to gather the materials at hand and hastily fashion a substitute for Laura. Sonnet 157 of his *Rime Sparse* serves to illustrate characteristics of the blazon: the *Petrarchan* blazon often follows the pattern of praising the individual body parts of an objectified beloved and comparing them to some other article whose significance, value, and ambivalences are transferred back the now-scattered object:

Quel semble acerbo et onorato giorno
mandò sì al cor l’immagine sua viva

che 'ngegno o stil non fia mai che 'l descriva;
ma spesso a lui co la memoria torno.

L'atto d'ogni gentil pietate adorno
e 'l dolce amaro lamentar ch' i' udiva
facean dubbiar se mortal donna o diva
fosse che 'l ciel rassereneva intorno.

La testa or fino, et calda neve il volto,
ebeno I cigli, et gli occhi eran due stelle
onde Amor l'arco non tendeva in fallo;

perle et rose vermiglie ove l'accolto
dolor formava ardenti voci et belle,
fiamma i sospir, le lagrime cristallo

[That always cruel and honored day
so sent to my heart its lively image
that no wit or style can ever describe it;
but often I return to it with memory.

Her gestures adorned with all noble pity,
and her sweet bitter lamenting that I heard,
made me in doubt if she were a mortal woman or a goddess,
for she made the sky clear all around,

Her head was fine gold, her face warm snow,
ebony her eyebrows, and her eyes two stars
whence Love never bent his bow in vain;

pearls and crimson roses,
where gathered sorrow formed ardent beautiful words,
her sighs flame, her tears crystal.]” (quoted in Petrarca and Durling, 302-303)

On the level of figurative construction, the reader will find the blazon device in this poem quite typical. Starting from her hair, the speaker moves down the reconstructed Laura's face, evaluating each part against an unrelated material comparison. We should look to scholar Roland Greene, who has done much to define what “Petrarchan poetics” *is* and what it *does* in his own work, for some of the deeper operations taking place in this sonnet. For Greene, Petrarchan poetry is characterized by three qualities: “nominativity” and fiction; retrospect and ritual; and the dialogue between forces of fragmentation, assemblage, and *artifactuality*.

By *nominativity*, Greene means the Petrarchan predilection to position the speaker of the poem in question in relation to a character in the role of addressed object, and to fashion a coherent “politics, society, and world from the exchanges from these two” (*Post-Petrarchism* 14). In other words, a fictional microcosm arises from the interaction between speaker and object within the Petrarchan lyric; only the reader can decide whether this microcosm is interpreted *as* essentially fiction, or to what extent the fashioned governing principles can apply to the real world. The *retrospective* mode of Petrarchan lyricism is found in “the obsession with time’s flight and its irretrievability to humankind, the impulse to weigh the present hour against past achievements, the need to give history a segmented order as a means of making it comprehensible to the present” (Greene, *Post-Petrarchism* 46). Ultimately, the mode creates what Greene notes as “the disjuncture between past and present” which itself serves as a foil to the ritual element of Petrarchan lyric (*Post-Petrarchism* 46), or its the ability to engage writer, speaker, and reader in a timeless and cooperative act of objectification and character construction. And finally, we come to *artificiality*, or the cyclical act of “several independently realized voices contributing to a composite fiction” (*Post-Petrarchism* 14), in tandem with the active criticism of this fiction’s construction.

In Sonnet 157, we can find evidence of Greene’s nominative mode, as the speaker finds himself compelled to speak by his first having encountered Laura. In line four, Petrarch indicates the retrospective temporality of his exercise, and the disjuncture between now and then that he must try and surmount in the act of “recreating” Laura. Finally, Petrarch reveals the artificiality of his reconstruction by admitting “no wit or style can ever describe” the impression that he still holds dear (3); indeed, this artificiality implies the following blazon’s *artificiality* by directing the reader to participate in the assembly of Laura’s image out of “gold,” “pearls,” “roses,” and “crystal,” etc. Later poets would

continue this project of assemblage in their emulation of Petrarch, as they challenged, critiqued, validated, and ironized his “recreated” image. Even Petrarch joins in on the critical process, as he frets over the ability of these materials to satisfactorily give an impression of Laura, particularly in the phrase, “warm snow,” a paradoxical impossibility that threatens to render the entire project futile. In poem 323 of the *Rime Sparse*, the speaker elaborates on a daydream had by a window, in which he envisions “a ship with ropes of silk and sails of gold, all fashioned of ivory and ebony” (Petrarca and Durling 502, lines 13-15). The reader at this point can recognize these materials as those that have already been used to “fashion” Laura; in a sense, Petrarch accomplishes his goal in charging each of these objects with the ability to conjure the thought of her. Unlike Pygmalion, however, to whom he calls out with jealousy in sonnet 78: “how glad you should be of your statue, since you received a thousand times what I yearn to have just once” (Petrarca and Durling 178-9, lines 12-14), Petrarch fails to possess his beloved object. The narrative evident in the *Rime Sparse* inscribes the collapse of its greatest construction; Laura dies during its production, and so becomes eternally intangible. As theorized by Vickers and John Freccero, Petrarch’s poetic model “is ultimately no more than a collection of imperfect signs, signs that, like fetishes, affirm absence by their presence” (Vickers, “Diana Described” 275). Moreover, with every reiteration set out by Petrarch and his followers, the materials used to contrive Laura and those in her objectified position, too, grow ever more distant from their referent.

This deepening divide meaningfully underscores the unrequitedness of the speaker’s desire within much Petrarchan lyric poetry. And this fact did not go unrecognized by poets who picked up where Petrarch left off. Many great works of English lyric poetry were written during the latter portion of the sixteenth century, including several sonnet cycles, which, like *Astrophel and Stella*, were modeled closely after Petrarch’s *Rime Sparse*. Petrarchan

lyric poetry was in vogue, with writers like Michael Drayton,² Samuel Daniel,³ Thomas Campion,⁴ Barnabe Barnes,⁵ Fulke Grevill,⁶ and Aemilia Lanyer⁷ all writing tropic anatomical blazons about countless lovers and beloveds, each “riffing” off Petrarch’s pattern with stunning imagination. In order to illustrate the superfluity and variation between the blazons crafted by “fashionable” English Renaissance poets, we will briefly examine a few examples. Richard Linche, in *Diella* 33,⁸ employs a blazon while making material comparisons as a means of heightening fictive sensory pleasures that come from delighting in the body and its sensuality. Bartholomew Griffin, a lawyer and self-styled “gentleman”, features a blazon in his poem, “My ladies haire is threds of beaten gold,” which can be found in his *Fidessa* cycle (Goodwin, “Griffin B.”). Like many Petrarchan blazons, Griffin’s features a twist at the end that locates the obstacle to the poet’s desire in the beloved female’s temperament itself, reducing the male poet’s desire to a futile and unrequited quest for physical satisfaction.

“My ladies haire is threds of beaten gold,
Her front the purest Christall eye hath scene:

² Michael Drayton, “Idea 8,” in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth Century/The Early Seventeenth Century*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 2012), 1021.

³ Samuel Daniel, “Faure is my Love, and cruell as she’s faire” from *Delia*, in *English Sixteenth-Century Verse: An Anthology*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 1984), 578.

⁴ Thomas Campion, “There is a garden in her face,” in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth Century/The Early Seventeenth Century*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 2012), 1020.

⁵ Barnabe Barnes, “Parthenophil and Parthenope 63,” in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth Century/The Early Seventeenth Century*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 2012), 1021-1022.

⁶ Fulke Greville, “*Caelica* when I did see you every day” from *Caelica*, in *English Sixteenth-Century Verse: An Anthology*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 1984), 590.

⁷ Aemilia Lanyer, “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,” *Women Writers in Renaissance England* (London and New York: Longman, 1997) 389-90, stanzas 74-75.

⁸ Linche, “33” from *Diella*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth Century/The Early Seventeenth Century*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company 2012), 1023.

Her eyes the brightest starres the heavens hold.
 Her cheekes red Roses, such as seld have been:
 Her pretie lips of red vermillion dye,
 Her hand of yvorie the purest white:
 Her blush *Aurora*, or the morning skye,
 Her breast displaies two silver fountains bright,
 The Spheares her voice, her grace the Graces three,
 Her bodie is the Saint that I adore,
 Her smiles and favours sweet as honey bee,
 Her feete faire *Thetis* praiseth evermore.
 But ah the worst and last is yet behind,
 For of a Gryphon she doth beare the mind.” (quoted in Sylvester 586).

Moreover, Griffin’s physical itemization of his beloved in this poem precludes the possibility of any subjectivity or interiority, effectively reducing her to an object, or collection of them, to be gained. The turn at the end, finding the root cause of the speaker’s unrequitedness in the beloved’s temperament alone, threatens to circumscribe her identity, her *esprit* and agency, to the place of something aberrant and disjointed with an otherwise harmonious, if no longer unified, body.

In other cases, many English Renaissance *blasonneurs* embraced the tropes of the genre with their tongue placed firmly in their cheeks. George Gascoigne, a friend to Edmund Spenser credited as a major innovator in English poetics for his skill in domesticating foreign genres (“George Gascoigne,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*), nevertheless took to criticizing the Petrarchan conventions that he had helped popularize at home. In his “Certayne notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English,” Gascoigne advises:

“If I should undertake to wryte in prayse of a gentlewoman, I would neither praise hir christal eyes not hir cherrie lippe, &c. For these things are *trite et obviate*. But I would either finde some supernaturall cause wherby my penne might walke in the superlative degree, or els I would undertake to aunswere for any imperfection that she hath, and thereupon rayse the praise of hir commendacion. Likewise if I should disclose my presence in love, I would either make a straunge discourse of some intollerable passion, or finde occasion to pleade by the example of some historie, or discover my disquiet in shadowes *per*

Allegoriam, or use the covertest meane that I could to avoyde the uncomely customes of common writers.” (quoted in Sylvester 318-319, lines 36-50)

Sir John Davies, friend to Sir Robert Cecil and Attorney-General for Ireland under King James I (“Sir John Davies”), also penned several gleefully satirical poems that detailed the anatomical and material constructions of self that encapsulated the *esprit du blason*. In the fifth sonnet of his “Gulling Sonnets,” he composes a terribly choppy drudge of a poem in parody of a well-known verse attributed to Sir Walter Raleigh, “Her face, her Tonge, her Wytte,/ So fayre, so sweete, so sharpe” (quoted in Raleigh and Rudick, attributed in Manuscript, 11.1-2). In Sir John Davies’ imitation, “Mine eye, mine ear, my will, my wit, my heart / Did see, did hear, did like, discern, did love” (quoted in Greenblatt, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth Century/The Early Seventeenth Century* 1021, lines 1-2), the disunity of the blazon compounds to absurdity, turning back upon the fractured speaker who leaves the reader with little besides an exhausting shaggy dog story. And there is, of course, the well-known anti-blazon in Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 130,” in which the Bard plays with convention, referencing a variety of common poetic tropes in order to invalidate and supersede them.

“My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;
 Coral is far more red than her lips’ red;
 If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
 If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
 I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
 But no such roses see I in her cheeks
 And in some perfumes is there more delight
 Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
 I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
 That music hath a far more pleasing sound.
 I grant I never saw a goddess go;
 My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
 And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
 As any she belied with false compare.” (quoted in Shakespeare,
 Mowat, and Werstine 281, lines 1-14)

During the Blazon's heyday among English poets, Thomas Campion, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, The Countess of Pembroke⁹, Lady Mary Wroth¹⁰, and many, many more all either explicitly or implicitly participate in an examination on how relationships of desire are traditionally represented. Frequently, poets attempted to conduct an inquiry into the materializing operation that the blazon typically employs in conjunction with its expression of desire. For example, in his masterwork *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser indicates the threat posed by lingering too long on material surfaces and the physical body, yet also expressed a distinct anxiety over rejecting the importance of our bodily identities. This becomes quite apparent in one of the most famous passages in the poem, the scene in which Spenser describes Sir Guyon's encounter with "The Bower of Bliss." In this scene, Guyon, who represents the chivalric virtue of Temperance, finds himself in the temptress Acrasia's "bower of bliss," a compendium of earthly and sensory pleasures, in the middle of which Acrasia herself is consummately framed:

"Upon a bed of Roses she was layd,
 As faint through heat, or dight to pleasant sin,
 And was arayd, or rather disarayd,
 All in a vele of silke and silver thin,
 That hid no whit her alabaster skin,
 But rather shewd more white, if more might bee:
 More subtile web Arachne cannot spin,
 Nor the fine nets, which oft we woven see
 Of scorched deaw, do not in th'aire more lightly flee.

Her snowy brest was bare to readie spoyle

⁹ See *Antonius*, Pembroke's translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine*, for striking and quite lovely examples of textual anatomization, to the purpose of displaying the significance of corporeal unity between Marc Antony and Cleopatra, rendered as larger-than-life Petrarchan lovers (Herbert 172, lines 717-726; 197, lines 1651-1666; 206, lines 1986-1990).

¹⁰ See Sonnet 8 in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthis*, an anti-sonnet cycle Wroth wrote in 1621, where she upends the traditional Petrarchan perspective by writing as a female subject to male, objectified beloved. The wooing of masculine lyrical verse is gone; she speaks to various figures and allegories as she shows herself faithful, if passive, to a lover who is less so (Wroth 113-4).

Of hungry eies, which n'ote therewith be fild,
 And yet through languor of her late sweet toyle,
 Few drops, more cleare then Nectar, forth distild,
 That like pure Orient perles adowne it trild,
 And her faire eyes sweet smyling in delight,
 Moystened their fierie beams, with which she thrild
 Fraile harts, yet quenched not; like starry light

Which sparckling on the silent waves, does seeme more bright. (quoted in Greenblatt, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth and the Early Seventeenth Century* 943, stanzas 77-78)

The pace of this passage is meant to suggest the languor of an eye slowly moving over Acrasia's body, unable to look away. It manifests several of Greene's principles of Petrarchan lyric poetry, in fact. Although the poem lacks a first-person speaker, the poem nevertheless shows an element of nominativity through its absorbing vision that threatens to dispossess Spenser's Knight of Temperance of his self-governance, to destabilize his "groundedness" in a rational world and propose a dangerous and wholly *material* alternative. The Bower of Bliss contains all earthly pleasures, and, as we can see in this blazon, by all appearances seems to contain an entire universe within the minutiae of its textures and surfaces. Further, by distorting the passage of time in this slow evaluation, Spenser hearkens to what Greene calls the retrospective element of Petrarchan lyric poetry; and indeed, in phrases such as "Her snowy brest was bare to readie spoyle" (78.1), Spenser locates the event in the past, but implicates both Guyon and the reader in a potential future wherein we succumb to the vision and give ourselves over to material satisfaction. By virtue of this text's persistence (the credit for which admittedly cannot be entirely given to Spenser), that potential itself is disjointed from time, or could be said, indeed, to be timeless in its infinite repetition. And in its repetition, it becomes ritual. Finally, by the orientation – perhaps better described as the vision – of the poem, Spenser incorporates the reader in Guyon's encounter with Acrasia, which is a key part of this passage's appeal and impact. The

language is pleasurable, even in the archaic lexicon, and the sights and smells that Spenser describes are lovely. We feel the same seductive tug experienced by Guyon at this locus of material fetishism – in which Acrasia’s body is frighteningly corporeal, tangible, significant – and it’s this tug that makes Spenser’s exercise in desire so potent: the slow, almost reverent identification of Acrasia’s body via the materials that Spenser describes is almost unbearably enjoyable. Sir Guyon’s rejection and eventual destruction of the “bower of bliss,” by contrast, means the erasure of a plenum in which body and space are entirely unified in their physicality and understood pleasure, the rejection of what the body as corporeal object stands for, and the frenzied embrace of a new regime in which words can purportedly destroy and transcend their physical and material meanings.

This ambivalence over the role of the body, and how its experience and identification could run contrary to the values espoused by the dominant religious creed in Early Modern England, earns *The Faerie Queene* a noteworthy position in the era’s material discourse. Spenser appears to recognize an intersection between his day’s popular terms of poetic representation and the language used to represent one’s spiritual identity, a thematic parallel identified through other examples by Francis Barker, in his work *The Tremulous Private Body*, where he argues that Petrarchan poets’ use of substitution mirrors the English Protestant use of “textual” metaphors when describing the relationship between the Christian individual, the Bible, and God (Barker 62). In his essay collection, Barker argues that the goal of this practice of substitution is the replacement of a symbolic and significant corporeal body with a singular textual body whose ultimate interpreter is God himself. But not all English Renaissance poets place uncontested value in the dematerialization of the body and its textual substitution. As we will see, there were poets who, like Edmund Spenser and John Donne, challenged this regime by uniting Petrarchan poetics with their

own appreciation for the body and physical consummation within healthy relationships. By rooting their praise in new forms of contemporary language of colonial and economic discourse, each of the poets we will consider here tacitly resists the “dematerializing” project by endlessly incorporating known materials of value in their poetry. Even Spenser, in Sonnet 15 from his *Amoretti* cycle proves, seems to double back on his fear of “overestimating surfaces” and tries to reimagine the meaning for such a practice of partition and evaluation as takes place in the universe created in the Petrarchan blazon:

“Ye tradefull Merchants that with weary toyle,
Do seeke most pretious things to make your gain:
And both the Indias of their treasures spoil,
What needeth you to seeke so farre in vaine?
For loe my love doth in her selfe containe
All this worlds riches that may be farre found,
If Saphyres, loe her eies be Saphyres plaine,
If Rubies, loe hir lips be Rubies sound:
If pearles, hir teeth be pearles both pure and round;
If Yvorie, her forehead yvory weene;
If Gold, her locks are finest gold on ground;
If silver, her faire hands are silver sheene.
But that which fairest is, but few behold,
Her mind adorned with vertues manifold.” (quoted in Greenblatt, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth Century/The Early Seventeenth Century*, 987)

In this poem, Spenser rather typically marries space, sensation, and real-world commodities to fashion an idealized image of desirable beauty. Spenser employs his blazon to illustrate that his beloved embodies conventional commercial terms of value, and surpasses them with her matchless mind; still, he must use that vocabulary to prove his point. He also makes reference to trade with “both Indias,” grounding his exercise within the real world of English overseas commerce, while insisting that their exotic goods, while desirable, are ultimately unnecessary with women such as his beloved back in England. The *Amoretti* cycle makes an interesting and important departure from much Petrarchan lyric poetry in that the love that Spenser portrays is the real-world Elizabeth Boyle, whom he

would eventually marry. Still, this “wedding march” plays to themes and syntax well-worn by poets in the Petrarchan vein; it is as if Spenser himself recognized the anxiety that precedes the union of marriage as identical to that exhibited in most Petrarchan lyric, wherein the whole project of desire is constantly threatened by a real or felt disparity between the lovers and beloveds, where desire begins to overwhelm, where doubt sets in.

When examined individually, the *retrospectivity*, *nominativity*, and *artifactuality* evidenced in both the poems, as well as those that follow, sets an ordained code of conduct for courtly expressions of desire. The beloved or object of desire, most generally female, must be conspicuously absent from the expression, instead invoked only silently, partially, by an incantatory recitation of various substitutes that together, and with the implied hermeneutic participation of the reader, may summon up her fractured image in the penumbral memory of the poem. The specific poem will either confirm or deny the viability or validity of such a figuration of desire. But when taken as a whole, we can consider the blazon as a type of language disseminated between a very small and closed group of individuals with hereditary and economic ties (or potential ties) to the English monarchy. Early Modern English lyric poets favored manuscript transmission of their works, and thus we must understand these poems – and, like the blazon, their tropes – as having circulated among a very small number of people and thus having relatively limited contemporary *literary* influence. The Petrarchan blazon served English poets as a kind of code, a system of communication between groups that are canny to its understood meanings, forms, and figures. And even while they ruminated over how serious or how silly the Petrarchan blazon was, how sharp or dull the tool could be, they used this code to examine a number of critical shifts in the Early Modern English social order.

As even these few selections will tell, Elizabethan and early Jacobean poets were fully aware of what operations take place in the Petrarchan blazon, and thus held deep ambivalences about their use of the figure. By catching and holding on to the thread of materialism found in the prior poem, however, I believe that we can logically follow the path it weaves through other works by the likes of Spenser and his contemporaries that would come to define the way desire would be lyrically represented in English poetry at a time of emergent colonialism. The English colonial-era blazon charts a fairly parabolic pathway, with its introduction and popularity quickly bookended by ironic reproductions and outright challenges by writers who, like Spenser and Donne, reject the blazon's implicit use of praise as a pacifying and objectifying tool. Writing between them, we find several poets experimenting with poetic "anatomies" and their inherent gender politics. Throughout this trend, too, runs a trend among some poets to leave conventionally "Petrarchan" terms at the wayside in favor of emergent materialist language used to express exchangeable value, as well as Ovidian lyric influences that we shall explore further. As we follow the path of the English Renaissance blazon's development in conjunction with colonial fantasies, the language of partition, evaluation, and possession fills in the gaps left by English poets' ostensible rejection of language typical to the Petrarchan blazon. Their use of colonial language, in essence, "fleshes out" the structures left behind by decades of Petrarchan poetry.

II: New Worlds of Expression

As we established in the prior section, English writers inaugurated the Petrarchan blazon within their writings with various degrees of sobriety. Poets such as Spenser offer convincing alternative systems of representing amorous desire; and writers like Shakespeare and Davies offer bitingly satirical sendups of the genre; and in doing so, prove that Petrarch's poetic hegemony was anything but secure among Elizabethan and Jacobean writers. Despite (and perhaps because of) their efforts, however, the blazon remained popular among English poets throughout the late sixteenth century and well into the seventeenth century. We do not see the device disappear at any clear moment in this period; if anything, we simply see it change. Certain words and phrases fairly common to the Petrarchan convention drop out of fashion. After William Shakespeare, instances of poets implementing such terms as "lips like coral" and "hair like strands of gold" become more rare. The damage had been done, and English writers had evidently grown weary of the Italian Master's gaze over their shoulder. At a loss for words, as it were, these writers instead began to make use of terms of evaluation that had grown in contemporary valence: namely, those associated with colonial explorations, economies, and conquests. While many English poets at the turn of the century spurned the way that Petrarch represented the amorous gaze, writers like Sir Philip Sidney, Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh, and John Donne made a pointed effort to draw analogies between the blazon's articulations of the passive, objectified, and often female body; and the undiscovered foreign bodies of an expanding geographic world.

As we will find in the following selection of poems, Early Modern English poets actively employed the Petrarchan blazon as a fiction-making, or *fictive*, means of forestalling

anxieties inherent in the form, such as unrequited love, and the potential for desire to overwhelm and “scatter” the speaking, gazing subject. They inventively capitalize on the destruction of the object’s body to fashion the subject’s dominating self, and where possible, figure amatory relationships in terms familiar to those engaged in England’s burgeoning imperial and colonial endeavors. In doing so, they create metaphorical relationships analogous to mercantile and colonial “exchanges.” The poets gathered here, many of whom had interests in the burgeoning transatlantic transactions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, use the blazon to interrogate themes of economic evaluation and exploitation, exploration, and conquest; and play them out upon the female body as they or their contemporaries would upon the yet-unexplored New World.

Part of the rupture of Petrarch’s poetic dominance came about as English poets rediscovered a poetic model to precede even the Italian master: Ovid, whose erotic elegies collected in *The Amores* and *The Art of Love* are replete with striking comparisons between the pursuit of erotic desire and warfare. The English “rediscovered” Ovid in through their fashionable exploration of classical arts and artists at the end of the sixteenth century; Petrarch himself drew a great deal of his own themes and narrative models from the Roman poet. But meaningful differences do exist between the two, of which Elizabethan poets readily took note. Their reading of Petrarch and Ovid would have led them to recognize a commonality with the latter, who wrote during the Golden Age of Roman literary arts, and who incorporated striking commercial and martial language in his poetry to better reflect and comment upon the imperial systems that surrounded him. Ovid notes in *The Art of Love*, “Love is a species of Warfare,” and we can already find him digging deep into this analogy in Book 2 of *The Amores*, which was written prior to *The Art of Love*:

“A wreath for my brows, a wreath of triumphal laurel!
Victory – Corinna is here, in my arms,

Despite the united efforts of husband, door, and porter
 (That unholy trinity) to keep her secure
 From all lovers, however artful. This bloodless conquest
 Demands a super-triumph. Look at the spoils.
 What did my generalship win? Some town with crumbling defenses
 And a shallow moat? Oh no, *I capture a girl!*
 When Troy fell at last, after that ten-year struggle,
 How much of the credit went to the High Command,
 And how much to the troops? There's no army to share *my* glory,
 The credit is mine alone, I'm a one-man band,
 Commander, cavalry, infantry, standard-bearer, announcing
 With one voice: *Objective Achieved.* (quoted in Ovid and Green 126-7,
 "The Amores," II.12.1-14).

Ovid offers a visceral alternative to Petrarch's idealized and transcendent conception of courtly love. Perhaps reacting to his context under Augustan rule and the emergence of a "universal" Roman "identity," Ovid casts himself as a challenging figure to that authoritative regime: he possesses the poetic capacity to fashion himself into something greater and besides himself, and as such can will himself into martial greatness, or he can focus his prowess towards another field that is no less subversive – that of sexual conquest. The thematic operation of an active, advancing subject upon passive, receiving (or retreating) object seems to take on a special valence shared by language of warfare, of love, and even of poetry. And in the poem, above, Ovid unites all three. Peter Green evidently recognized this quality as he notes in the introduction to his translation of these two classic works, "above all in *The Art of Love*, but already to some extent in the *Amores*, we see a man to whom women are fundamentally *sexual objects*" (68). This is particularly well-illustrated by one of the early elegies in *The Amores*, wherein Ovid describes a bucolic sexual encounter with his beloved:

"I tore the dress off her – not that it really hid much,
 But all the same she struggled to keep it on:
 Yet her efforts were unconvincing, she seemed half-hearted –
 Inner self-betrayal made her give up.
 When at last she stood naked before me, not a stitch of clothing,

I couldn't fault her body at one point.
 Smooth shoulders, delectable arms (I saw, I touched them),
 Nipples inviting caresses, the flat
 Belly outlined beneath that flawless bosom,
 Exquisite curve of a hip, firm youthful thighs.
 But why catalogue details? Nothing came short of perfection,
 And I clasped her body close to mine.
 Fill in the rest for yourselves!" (quoted in Ovid and Green 92, "The
 Amores" I.5.13-25).

The striking use of a blazon to guide the reader's eye down the page (and Corinna's body), along with the hermeneutic sleight-of-hand that Ovid uses when demanding the reader "fill in the rest" (25), should recall Roland Greene's formulation of the Petrarchan Blazon's artifactuality – its playful (and perhaps sinister) incorporation of the reader into the fiction. When Ovid turns the reader's vision away from his climax (literally and metaphorically), he is not necessarily relegating his sexual encounter to a private sphere, as Francis Barker claims is the ultimate end of the Modern Body Erasure. Ovid in fact makes several references throughout *The Amores* to the poetry collection's public nature, and its consequent ability to "create" and give value to both himself and Corinna. Rather, Ovid here demands that the reader realize the truth of this sexual encounter's occurrence, to recognize a teleological end to his textual "disrobing" of Corinna, and in doing so admit that as soon Ovid begins the first line, the last line – describing the consummation between himself and Corinna, and between speaker and reader, which is filled in by ourselves – must necessarily follow. The speaker here holds all of the chips, and assumes a dictatorial power under the guise of democratic participation.

In such a way, Ovid provides a potent antithesis to the insistence on deferred sexual union between the subject and object within Petrarch's lyric poetry. In the latter, the individual subject is created out of their response to the negation and substitution of the beloved object's corporeal body; in Ovidian verse, however, the individual subject arises

from conquering another singular individual. And yet, despite the incorporation of Ovid's language that we will find in the following works by English poets, we will nevertheless find them sticking close (however intentionally or unintentionally) to Petrarch's model of unrequitedness in their own verse. Unlike Ovid, who signals his own sexual victory without having to speak it, most Petrarchan and post-Petrarchan lyric poets apart from Edmund Spenser and John Donne inscribe failure to consummate in their poetry. After scattering the women in their poems, they instead shift the focus of the lyric on to the remaking of themselves from those images that they have already created. They point only to themselves as possessing the capacity to be singular – individually significant – and to their place in a world that is subject to them and their ability to describe it. This desire to describe, rendered in economic, martial, and colonial terms borrowed from both Ovid and from their contemporary contexts, in some sense fails to appreciate the Other that they objectify. Furthermore, as we shall witness in the following selections, the blazon remains key to the self-fashioning poet, as it assigns structure to the body of the desired and allows that poet, through the speaker, to experience a singular growth and enrichment out of a chaotic world of uncertain meaning.

The first few poems we will consider feature the speaker's adaptation of early modern *econolingua*. Sandra K. Fischer has identified several important and unprecedented events in the early modern English economic sphere, such as “the great price rise, dearth, debasement of currency, an influx of American precious metals, the development of negotiable instruments and representative currency, an evolving concept of human value, and, primarily, the daily necessity of violating basic medieval precepts against usury and for poor relief” (Fischer 14). The new pervasiveness of economic structures in the lives of English subjects gave rise to a fluid new cant, to which Fischer has applied the name

econolingua, in which dramatic characters and poetic personae “test values” and “test words, finding in language [an] infinitely variable exchange medium with which they can reap profits (through wit and *bon mots*) and with which they can commit semantic usury (through puns)” (Fischer 16). In other words, these poets will display a remarkable adaptability to their material and social context as they use language contemporary to their increasingly mercantile world, whose terms of evaluation had begun to reflect both state and individual systems of accumulation, trade, and consumption. The project they enact, whether serious or satirical, at any rate allows them to, as Fischer contends, “juxtapose traditional and new economic values or draw the participants together in a novel economic pact, an acceptance or acknowledgment of their profit-motivated community of interest” (Fischer 17).

We will take a broadly chronological approach as we examine the shift in blazon language in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Doing so will allow us to draw a thematic connection between Edmund Spenser and John Donne, both of whom work within Petrarchan paradigms of comparison and lyric form, yet undertake a greater effort to follow Ovid’s path of seeking physical union (be it in or outside of marriage) through amorous lyric poetry, rather than unrequited love and substituted material self-creation. As we witnessed in the previous selections, Edmund Spenser had an ambivalent relationship with Petrarchan conventions in his poetry, and his uses of the blazon in both the *Amoretti* and *The Faerie Queene* are far from orthodox. In both cases, Spenser recognizes the underlying danger present in expressions of unrequited, objectifying love: what happens if there is no hope of consummating the union between an individual fixed by desire, and another fragmented by it? Must there be an apocalyptic denial of this destructive materializing vision, such as that which Guyon enacts upon Acrasia’s Bower of Bliss? Or can we lift the typical image of active/passive desire from the frames of Petrarchan topos and replace it with a more

wholesome portrait of destined matrimony? To do so, as Spenser consistently enacts within his work, is to radically reinvent the Petrarchan theme. But it is not a wholesale rejection. Spenser is not Guyon, and though his reformulations of the Petrarchan blazon's paradigm provide us with a fresh and nuanced take upon the use and exchange of Petrarchan literary tropes, he nevertheless promulgates the figure throughout his poetic works. His use of the blazon comes loaded with an implicit validation of its parameters; and even as Spenser begins to manipulate his use of particular phraseology so tacitly connected to Petrarch's *Rime Sparse* to point to meanings beyond the failure of sexual union, he starts to incorporate language of evaluation that had grown quite pertinent in his day.

Epithalamion (1595), a long lyric ode that can be considered a sequel to his *Amoretti*, serves to describe in cosmic scope the wedding ceremonials that had been prompted by the earlier sonnet sequence. Of great interest here is Spenser's treatment of the lyric poem form as a sort of wedding gift, or substitute thereof. He notes in the last stanza that this poem is made "in lieu of many ornaments/ With which my love should duly have bene dect" (Spenser, "Epithalamion" 999, lines 427-428), suggesting that poetry and these ornaments are exchangeable or equivalent materials of value. Following this, we can begin to recognize that such descriptions of his beloved, rendered in rather standard terms such as: "Her long loose yellow locks lyke golden wyre/ Sprinkled with perle, and perling flowres a tweene,/ Doe lyke a golden mantle her attyre,/ And being crownèd with a girland greene,/ Seeme lyke some mayden Queene" (Spenser, "Epithalamion" 993, lines 154-159), are in fact used in the construction of a relationship of economic exchange between Spenser and his beloved – here, his wife, Elizabeth Boyle. Moreover, Spenser retains full control over manipulating the value of his currency – words like "gold," "golden," "Perle," and "crownèd" (a pun on the "crown," an English coin), which, like any medium of exchange, are subject to evaluation by

a standard-giving authority. He stands to benefit from this action in two ways: he need not provide a material wedding gift, stating that this poem stands “in lieu of many ornaments;” and by poetically bedecking his betrothed, he raises the value of a “prize” that will eventually return to his own “possession” after the wedding vows are completed. Kim F. Hall remarks, “In a culture and class in which women are literally connected to wealth through the exchange of dowry and portion, it is not surprising that the ultimately desirable sonnet mistress is directly associated with worlds of wealth, having ruby lips, pearly teeth, and eyes like diamonds” (Hall 80). Indeed, as we can see in the economy constructed in this section of *Spenser’s Epithalamion*, material currency, or language reflective of it, is given primary authority over designating value, and can be greatly manipulated to serve the purpose of the poet.

In a similar way, *Amoretti* 81 functions to validate both mercantilism and poetry’s nimble ability to mimic its patterns of evaluation and exchange. In a blazon prompted by his “harts astonishment” (Spenser, “Amoretti” 385, 81.14), Spenser writes of his beloved’s “Fayre Golden Heares” that wave in the loose wind, her skin “Fayre when her brest lyke a rich laden barke / with pretious merchandize she forth doth lay” (Spenser, “Amoretti” 385, 81.1-2, 5-6). The blazon figure at this point needs no great explanation, but it is interesting that Spenser finds the “rich laden barke” an appropriate term of evaluation to describe his beloved, known to be his wife. She carries some object of value within her, which is revealed to be “pretious merchandize” – something perhaps acquired as part of a comprehensive project to accumulate valuable objects. I would suggest that Spenser refers here to the material objects with which he has associated his beloved in his previous poetry – she has only become valuable through a process of evaluation enacted in the prior sonnets. By hurrying this sonnet cycle to its end, that of marriage, Spenser brings home a possession

wrought and speculated upon in the collaborative and fictive mercantile framework of his Petrarchan blazons. If we look back to Roland Greene's theory of artifactuality within Petrarchan lyric poetry, we might recognize the reader's joint participation in Spenser's use of partition and econolinguistic evaluation to create the image of his bride. Ultimately, only the predetermined end to the rite – Spenser and Elizabeth's matrimony – displaces the hollowness of Petrarchan unrequitedness and suggests a more mutually beneficial end for those involved.

Although Spenser understands the artificial nature of his poetic project when he writes, "Deepe in the closet of my parts Entyre, / Her worth is written with a golden quill" (Spenser, "Amoretti" 387, 85.9-10), he betrays no anxiety over his individual stability, as writers of his league more often would, because his betrothed beloved is already *prepossessed*. Unlike poets such as Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh, Spenser need not turn away from his scornful beloved and autonomously, retributively make himself – "self-fashion" in Greenblatt's terms (Greenblatt 1) – out of the accumulated articles of his poetic imagination. Instead, he follows Ovid in fantasizing that his poetic product could itself be exchanged for physical pleasure, which occurs by locating his beloved's body somewhere between text and material object, thus making her, in essence, a manipulable currency. Ovid provides several notable examples of the use of poetry to construct systems of fictive economic exchange, as in the *Amores* he anxiously laments the passing of a time "when poetic talent / Came dearer than gold" (3.8), and yet Corrina's social value – translated to material value by her wealthy suitors – has been "created" by his poetic praises: "If my darling's / On the market, it's all my fault" (*Amores* 3.12). We could say the same for Spenser, except that he has an implicit monopoly in his economy of desire: of the materials, the currency, of the means of production and speculation. That he incorporates these mercantile terms in the poems of

The Amoretti and *Epithalamion* while recently having acquired an estate in Ireland (1588-89) as part of England's colonial ventures there should point us to his sensitivity to changing terms of self-evaluation in the English consciousness and for the English poet (Heatt, "Edmund Spenser", *Encyclopedia Britannica*). The opportunity to self-create and self-assess could be undertaken overseas – whether this venture took place in the real world, the mind, or the microcosm enacted by the utterance of a poem.

If Edmund Spenser served to model an amorous "gift economy," or at least one with civil exchanges, we will find him to be rather unorthodox by such terms. All's fair in love and war, and at times, even poetic *econolingua* found itself subsumed within the painfully unrequited convention of the Petrarchan lyric poem. We shall now turn to a series of poets who extend fantasies of the accumulating of economic wealth to the contests over land that arise from that end, prodding more deeply the connection between the body emblazoned and the figured and figurative landscape of the yet-undiscovered and unconquered land that is the object of colonial venture. Such a topic cannot be broached without due mention of Sir Philip Sidney, who in his time wore the mantle of England's imperial herald almost singly; thus we will begin with him.

All at once, Philip Sidney was "Knight, soldier, poet, friend, and patron," and from his visible place in Elizabeth's court "seemed to the Elizabethans to embody all the traits of character and personality they admired" (Greenblatt, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth and the Early Seventeenth Century* 1037). Sidney's courtier parents had cannily survived the transition from Catholicism under Mary to dedicated Protestantism under Elizabeth, and even retained their faith while raising their son to adapt to the new regime. Indeed, they named Philip after the Habsburg prince that would become Philip II of Spain in 1556, and in doing so, perhaps sparked a nascent desire for succession in their son

that would become more manifest once he “came into” the affairs of the court: namely, to see the victory of Protestantism over Catholicism, of England over Spain, and perhaps, of himself over his royal double (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 173). Sidney completed much of his education while traveling throughout Europe and meeting luminary men and women; it is likely that these travels first opened Sidney up to the prospect of self-definition through individual mobility, or the potential to become at once a self-sufficient individual and a metonymic identity for his nation while acting as an emissary (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 173). Furthermore, while staying in Paris in 1572, Sidney bore witness to the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, in which Catholic citizens slaughtered *en masse* some 50,000 French Huguenots (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 174). This event has been noted as having fanned a flame of resentment in Sidney for Catholicism; during England’s participation in the Spanish War of Succession, Sidney avidly volunteered to lead English troops allied with Dutch protestants during skirmishes in the Low Countries, striking a figure of courtly *noblesse* while serving what he considered to be an ultimate moral and political cause (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 174). He was, at face value (which at a time of ascendant nationalism is the only value), a throwback to classic paragons of chivalric virtue, a poster child for the regime in power keen on claiming validity in roots to an essential “English-ness,” who could speak the new political order into a state of confidence and stability.

Given the importance he placed in his own martial exploits as holding a universal meaning (so much so that the pugilistic Sidney would openly oppose Elizabeth’s early attempts to avoid conflict with Spain through a proposed marriage to the Catholic duke of Anjou), it should not come as a surprise that Sidney’s verse is inundated with allusions to warfare. In his lyric poetry, he frequently draws analogies between the opposing forces on the battlefield (which in his mind, likely referred to the Catholic and Protestant factions that

constituted the major conflict of his time and place) and the antagonistic forces of subjected desire and its objectified unrequitedness that constitute love as imagined by his predecessors in Petrarch and Ovid. In a poem published in a 1593 folio of his poetic works, Sidney seems to actually channel these two ancestors and place them in opposing camps as he blazonically compares his beloved to an assaulting force, himself the embattled city:

“Her loose haire be the shott, the breaste the pykes be,
 Skowts each motion is, the hands be horsmen,
 Her lipps are the riches the warres to maintaine,
 Where well couched abides a coffer of pearle,
 Her legges carriage is of all the sweet campe:

...

Thus natures Diamond receaves thy conquest,
 Thus pure pearle, I do yeeld, my senses and soule.
 Thus sweete paine, I do yield, what ere I can yeelde,
 Reason looke to thy selfe, I serve a goddess. (quoted in Sidney and Feuillerat

236, lines 7-11, 27-30)

The first stanza appears to recall the analogies posed by Ovid in his *Amores* – where love is, at its core, a battlefield. But there exists a critical difference here: the assaulting forces are here captained by his objectified beloved, not himself; though she is rent to pieces by his descriptions, each are charged with action and violence, and the danger of his own obliteration could not seem to follow more closely behind. Sidney, however, chooses the path advocated by Clytaemnestra – he yields himself to his warring woman, and thus seems to freely enjoy the rewards of his surrender. Moreover, the benefit appears mutual: Sidney’s beloved takes her victory and assumes her position of power, while the subversive speaker then grows eminently closer to “nature’s Diamond,” the unified “pure pearle,” and the endless “coffer of pearle” cradling multiplied and untold riches. But make no mistake; Sidney is wise enough to know that a love of this sort could not be brought to a complete close by his own cession. His subjugation is not consummation, and the beloved’s lips, those “riches the warres to maintaine” may still have surplus left to seek a new conquest. In

-serving his “goddess,” it seems that Sidney knows, upon reflection, that he can only serve to make something of himself from the rubble of his recent overthrow by desire.

Sidney extends these martial and material comparisons throughout his masterpiece, *Astrophil and Stella*, the first and most influential English sonnet sequence of the Elizabethan era. Sonnet 12 of *Astrophil and Stella* includes a brief anatomization that directs the reader to enter and attempt to win the various parts of Stella: victory through this blazon partition seems certain at first, but it quickly becomes apparent that Stella’s heart is “a Cytadell” (Sidney and Feuillerat 247, line 12), capable of rebuffing any assault and making fruitless any venture against its walls. And in Sonnet 29, Sidney once more evokes martial imagery, albeit in a sense contrary to that in the sonnet from the 1593 folio above. He figures Stella’s willing yield to Love or *Eros* as an arbiter of desire in order to retain agency over her heart: “And thus her hart escapes, but thus her eyes/ Serve him with shot, her lips his Herralds are,/ Her brests his Tents, legges his tryumphal Chare,/ Herselfe his foode, her skin his Armor brave” (Sidney and Feuillerat 254, lines 9-14). The speaker’s objectification of Stella paradoxically seems capable of liberating her, thus underscoring the paternalistic value system inherent to Petrarchan representations of love and desire.

But how should we understand Stella’s complicity in this blazon? It is, after all, Sidney’s subjective interpretation that is given privilege in this immediate textual universe; Stella has no interiority that isn’t carved out by the speaker’s own chisel. Likely, Sidney’s emphasis on the freedom of Stella’s heart reflects his own masochistic self-denial. He trumps himself both by falling under the catastrophic effects of *Eros*, and by Stella’s ability to evade the end of such desire – sexual consummation – through her own abetment of *Eros*. To drive the point home, Sidney turns in the final couplet, in which the speaker laments, “But for because my chiefest prospect lyes/ Upon [that] coast, I am given up for a slave”

(Sidney and Feuillerat 254, lines 13-14). “Coast,” in this poem, refers to Stella’s body, which has been handed over to the conquering armies of *Eros* that would turn their greedy aims at Sidney’s heart. Taken in context of Sidney’s own exploits in both the Netherlands and across the Atlantic, however, we may read here a reference to Sidney’s exploits in the Low Countries, or we may extend our interpretation of his vision to an unnamed “coast” in the New World. Both would prove fruitful by showing the power of imperial ambition to both *possess* Sidney, as well as galvanize him to seek greater possession for both himself and his nation. Sidney, adapting to the language of his times, saw the meaning of desire as it played out on the extravagant drama of the national and imperial stage.

Indeed, Sidney appears to be grappling with anxieties felt over the possibility of expansion in much of *Astrophil and Stella* – to wit, the inward, fragmented recourse of the individual possessed by unrequited desire, pitted against the terrible prospect of “turning away” and outward from the source of that desire to seek new meaning elsewhere. For Sidney, the idea of following one’s unrequited desires away from the beloved to the place of potential self-actuation could best be tested in the realm of his poetry, where he could realize his drive to self-create and self-evaluate upon fictive geographic spaces. We have already seen this in the paragraph above, but there are several further elements in *Astrophil and Stella* that suggest England’s great chivalric poet was looking beyond the coasts and conflicts of Europe to beaches and riches of the New World in his quest to fashion a stable self. As Roland Greene relates, Sidney’s interest in the New World had first been piqued by Sir Francis Drake’s circumnavigation of the world – the great triumph of the English nationalistic spirit (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 174). Sidney read several books about the New World as a child, many of which in their first publication were dedicated to members of his powerful family (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 173). By his adult life, Roger Kuin

suggests, Sidney's interests had developed into an imperial ambition for the New World that was less motivated by a fetish for material riches to be found there than by a keen desire to compete with and seize Spain's New World ventures (cited in Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 174). Whether this desire points to Sidney's martial piety, as Kuin argues, or to a nascent drive to overcome his Spanish Other, as Greene argues, "deploying openly geopolitical terms ... [while commandeering] the practically obsolete Petrarchan convention of speaking in a spatial register about objectified women" (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 177), is a matter deserving greater speculation than I can currently afford. I believe that Kim F. Hall is right to point out that Sidney and his circle all had significant investments in foreign trade, exploratory voyages, and privateering missions (Hall 73); so deeply was Sidney entrenched in the movement of material wealth in his age that, at the same time he was writing *Astrophil and Stella*, he had purchased a patent to "settle, cultivate, and trade in three million acres" that had were as yet undiscovered in the New World (Hall 74). Such a real connection to the accumulation and exchange of material wealth remains a powerful catalyst felt in his lyric poetry as it takes a complicit stance towards the exploitation of foreign spaces and goods in the creation of an amorous ideal, a liberated (though assailed) subject and a perfected object. To unearth this theme we must dig into a conflict that Sidney enacts between Petrarchan tropic conventions and new, outward-gazing forms of description and comparison.

Like Spenser, Sidney reinvents the Petrarchan paradigm by directly pitting Petrarch's language against Early Modern referents of value. *Astrophil and Stella* 9 contains what is at face value a rather prototypical blazon:

"Queene Vertues Court, which some call *Stellas* face,
 Prepar'd by Natures cheefest furniture:
 Hath his front built of Alablaster pure,
 Golde is the covering of that statelie place.
 The doore, by which sometimes runnes forth her grace
 Red Porphire is, which locke of Pearle makes sure:

Whose Porches rich, with name of chekes indure,
 Marble mixt red and white, doe enterlace.
 The Windowes now, through which this heavenly guest,
 Lookes on the world, and can finde nothing such,
 Which dare claime from those sightes the name of best,
 Of touch they are, that without touch doe touch,
 Which Cupids selfe, from Beauties mine did drawe:
 Of touch they are, and poore I am their strawe. (quoted in Sidney
 and Feuillerat 246, lines 1-14)

Although this blazon is quite full of rich textures and lovely ornamentation, Sidney encodes several problems within this representation, which, if we miss them, suggest our own rapture at the pretty details. First, the speaker leaps into Stella's interior when writing that her eyes or "Windowes" "Lookes on the world, and can find nothing such, / Which dare claime from those sightes the name of best," a claim that fashions a false sense of interiority within Stella, by having her freely "see" or "will" the very superiority that Astrophil, the only valid speaker that we meet in this cycle, has been praising since its beginning. Second, the line, "Of touch they are, that without touch doe touch," contains an irreconcilable sensory paradox that budes against the physics of this universe and reveals the essential artificiality of the whole project. At this point, Sidney may whisper, if we want to hold Petrarchan convention aloft, we'll have to start putting forth more effort lest its excesses bring it crashing down. Further, in *Astrophil and Stella* 32, we find Sidney and Morpheus (the god of dreams) competing and cooperating in order to assemble the image of Stella. "Whence hast thou Ivorie, Rubies, Pearle, and Golde,/ To show *her* skin, lips, teeth, and head so well?" Sidney posits (Sidney and Feuillerat 255, lines 10-11). All things as expected so far. However, "(Foole answers [Morpheus]) no *Indes* such treasures hold, / But from thy hart, while my Sire charmeth thee, / Sweete *Stellas* Image I doe steale to me" (Sidney and Feuillerat 255, lines 12-14). Morpheus reveals the maker's marks on Sidney's representation of Stella – *Inde* contains no fineries that Sidney can exploit in his search for a

substitute of equivalent value for Stella (connoting either the superiority of Stella to countless other beloveds in the Petrarchan paradigm, or else the failure of every one of these projects to hit their mark). Instead, Sidney alone is both the producer and the speculator in this amorous relationship, who creates Stella even as he loves her in a shocking act of narcissism. But Sidney takes no victory here; his creation is made imperfectly and uneasily, for as he falls asleep, Morpheus threatens to dispossess him of these very images and symbolic structures of value that he has created. It implies, as Hall suggests, “he has opportunistically ‘stolen’ Stella’s image while Sidney is musing on the source of wealth” (Hall 84).

In response to the tenuous artificiality that he read as integral to Petrarchan lyric convention, Sidney looks for a more stable sign with which to point back to the loveliness and worth of Stella. And as Roland Greene identifies, Sidney finds this sign in *sugar* (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 186). Sonnets 12, 36, and 73 all contain comparisons between sugar and some aspect of Stella’s physical body. As Greene suggests, “Sugar is Astrophil’s laurel or brazilwood,” a sign of the poet’s own ability to fashion a singular identity out of the outward elevation of an objectified and hidden Other, “and his comical frenzy as producer and consumer reflects the force of an incipient market that will overrun all precedents, overturn all certainties” (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 187). This is commodification at its most immediate and thus most shocking. It makes the idea of material substitution for the increasingly veiled corporeal body suddenly quite real, and asks the reader whether these means are worth the ends of self-fashioning. In the tenth song of *Astrophil and Stella*, too, Sidney evaluates Stella within the parameters of a colonial venture that places articles of mercantile value on the shore, and Love’s gathered and encroaching armies upon the seas:

“Thinke of that most gratefull time,
When my leaping hart will clime,

In my lips to have his bidding,
 There those roses for to kisse,
 Which do breath a sugred blisse,
 Opening rubies, pearles deviding.
 Think of my most princely power,
 When I blessed shall devower,
 With my greedy licorous senses,
 Beauty, musicke, sweetnesse, love
 While she doth against me prove
 Her strong darts, but weake defences.” (quoted in Sidney 484, lines
 25-36)

Sugar in *Astrophil and Stella* becomes the hottest commodity, and provokes the speaker's desire to unmatched heights in this poem, “greedy” as he is to “devower” all beautiful aspects of the partitioned Stella with his “licorous [lecherous] senses” (with a pun on the word “licorous,” which also describes the deliciously sweet odor and flavor of sugar) (32-33). Sidney's *overevaluation* of his term of comparative value, sugar, threatens to consume Stella (or else point to her potential for consumption), which could act as either Sidney's commentary on the poet's fictive and artificial power, or else upon the contemporary craze for New World resources that he would have born witness to in his time. Further, his incorporation of this item into his poetic project creates a fascinating wrinkle in his idealized love when he shows how this sugar is acquired expressly at the cost of an exploited and generally unnamed Other, someone who in this context would have been taken to represent the natives of the New World, or else slaves brought to the West Indies as a part of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Looking back to Sonnet 29, where Sidney remarks, “But for because my chiefest prospect lyes/ Upon the coast, I am given up for a slave” (13-14) we can now recognize that the poet holds no illusions about the suffering that props up the emergent mercantile system of his day. As Greene states,

“The speaker's lust for power, finding no outlet such as Stella's acquiescence, means that his slavery to desire becomes more and more profound; this means, in turn, that his appetite for her “sweetnesse” grows ever stronger, ever more demanding. In other

words, the market for which he slaves – his literal product is the ‘sugred phraise’ of poetry (100.9) – is always expanding because of his own need for the limited gratification each lyric represents, and before long Stella herself is almost irrelevant to this circuit of princely enslavement in the name of sugar.” (*Unrequited Conquests* 187)

Sidney’s “enslavement” within this poetic exchange suggests a double inversion: it not only draws an affiliation between him and the New World slaves subjugated by Early Modern mercantilism, but also implies his “conquered” position in the Petrarchan lyric power dynamic. Moreover, if Ovid is channeled repeatedly through reference to love’s “armed” actions, Sidney nevertheless remains intent on identifying more closely with the receiving, manipulated object than with the acting, abusing subject. He is no victor, because on the field of unrequited amorous desire, no victory is final, no conquest assured; rather, he will be drawn into the pursuit of his desires so far as to become “slave” to them. The liberated self is placed in shackles by its own obsession to be individual at any cost. Ultimately, then, introducing the Petrarchan blazon to the colonial project is, within Sidney’s fictive universe as well as those of his contemporaries, a “rehearsal of a problem that might have a practical immediacy for him” (Greene, *Unrequited Conquests* 177). And for Sidney, his position as social herald of England’s ascendant national identity gave him an unparalleled platform to turn his surprising sensitivity to the interior conflicts prompted by an externally-expanding world, the cost of self-creation through expansion, accumulation, and exploitation of materials and their origins, into a poetic tract that deeply probes the moral deficit mutually enacted by the Petrarchan and imperial projects.

Shakespeare, too, can here be interrogated for his criticism of Petrarchan poetic convention and its natural resemblance to the imperial project, which he admirably displays in his two long lyric poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. I find reading these two texts side-by-side to be mutually enriching, given their common elements as minor epics. Their successive publication at the start of Shakespeare’s career (1593 for *Venus* and

1594 for *Lucrece*) also offers up a fascinating glimpse of Shakespeare first starting to assert himself as an individual poet among many, and how this moment of self-fashioning strikes him in relation to his art, as well as in relation to the materializing contexts that surround him and his contemporaries. *Venus and Adonis* represents Shakespeare's first foray into the literary sphere. It takes its central narrative from an episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Venus, the goddess of love, falls madly for the mortal Adonis. In the Ovidian tale, Adonis is happily compliant with Venus's advances; Shakespeare, however, turns the narrative on its head by having Adonis rebuff Venus, which drives the goddess mad, and causes her to chase her unwilling quarry across the countryside. As such, in his gleefully twisted telling of the Venus and Adonis myth, Shakespeare challenges a contemporary ideal, a Petrarchan ideal, of love as ignited in a male subject (to whose interior we are given access), by the muted presence of a passive female object. Shakespeare even bypasses the gendered aspects of Ovid's martial love tactics, though he borrows the Roman poet's source material. What Shakespeare does keep, however, is an emphasis on fragmentation of the female body as an undercurrent of the gazing male viewer or reader. We can see this in passages like the one presented below, where Venus figuratively splits her own body into parts and draws analogies between each and an aspect of the landscape. In so doing, she equates herself with a fertile mother earth, if not a bower of bliss to rival that of Spenser's Acrasia:

“Fondling,’ she saith, ‘since I have hemmed thee here
 Within the circuit of this ivory pale,
 I’ll be a park and thou shalt be my deer.
 Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale;
 Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
 Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.
 ‘Within this limit is relief enough,
 Sweet bottom-grass and high delightful plain,
 Round rising hillocks, brakes obscure and rough,
 To shelter thee from tempest and from rain.

Then be my deer, since I am such a park;
 No dog shall rouse thee, though a thousand bark.” (quoted in
 Shakespeare, Mowat, and Werstine 377, lines 229-240)

Venus kindly directs Adonis, as well as the reader of this poem, to gaze (and graze) upon her as if upon a pleasant park; the curves of the land pointing to the curves of her body, the gentle streams and dewed grass suggestive of her perhaps-too-obviously veiled sexual organ. Her comparison between Adonis and a deer in this vision, too, should draw the reader's mind back to Ovid's myth of Acteon, wherein the titular character is a hunter (like Adonis) that comes upon a naked Diana washing in a forest glade. The hunter, the ur-figure of the male gaze, observes Diana's forbidden and significant body, and is punished in that instant for the transgression by being turned into a stag and torn apart by his very own hunting dogs. Nancy Vickers has written admirably upon this myth and its reverberations within Petrarchan lyric forms such as the blazon in her essay, "Diana Described," citing the ever-present anxiety by the male observer over the potential fragmentation of self that may come at its expense (Vickers, "Diana Described 274-275). And with her guidance we can see in this moment an aftershock of this mythic original sin; though Venus assures Adonis and the reader that as her tamed deer, "no dog shall rouse thee, though a thousand bark," the destruction enacted upon Actaeon remains a terrifying possibility. It is quite possible, too, that Venus's control over this vision renders it empty of the voyeuristic appeal – the transgressive scopophilia – typical of Petrarchan convention, and thus justifies Adonis's wary disinterest. That Shakespeare has Venus drawing analogies between her body and the natural environment is hardly an isolated event in his work; the comical geographic "anti-blazon" that Dromeo and Antipholus use to describe a lusty cooking-maid in *The Comedy of Errors* (CE 3.2.113-146); as well as Kate's symbolic self-emblazoning in English (a foreign tongue to the French princess) (HV 3.4.1-56) and later conflation with the geographic

regions of France that will together be possessed by the conquering King Henry (*HV* 5.2.171-185), indicate an understanding held between the Bard and his audience about the suitability of the metaphor. Where land can be figuratively explored, it can be figuratively conquered and possessed, and it seems that in *Venus and Adonis*, the goddess of love is quite keen to exploit this fact's appeal while wooing her amour.

The Rape of Lucrece, published one year later, indicates that Shakespeare knew some of the problems posed by an overwhelming acceptance of this analogy. In this minor epic, Shakespeare digs deeply into Petrarchan conventions of directing the reader's eager vision upon a passive female body, but here he attempts to wrench the eye back upon itself so that it might clearly view the blatant offenses made by a gaze too desirous and too self-consumed in its domination of the viewed object. Shakespeare takes the historical rape committed by Sextus Tarquinius, son of the last king of Rome, upon Lucretia, the wife of his friend and kinsman. In his relation of the event, Shakespeare focuses not merely upon illustrating Tarquin's barbaric act, but rather spends the majority of the poem investigating both the psychological conditions necessary for Tarquin to commit such a crime, as well as the powerful – and eventually immitigable – effects they have upon Lucrece's body and mind. Shakespeare finds an easy parallel between the Rape of Lucrece and an act of war, and creates this analogy through the use of blazonic (and more broadly, Petrarchan) descriptions that point to the ease with which the eye descends upon Lucrece's body, along with the use of language that evokes conquest. Often, Shakespeare draws his comparisons equally from the playbooks of Petrarch and Ovid (whose mythographical account of the rape is known to be one of Shakespeare's sources for this poem [Shakespeare, Mowat, and Werstine 445]); he does so with a conditional sense of tension, however, as he places themes of triumph and martial glory next to digressions that reveal the perspective of the conquered and broken, as

if to measure desire of the subject next to the impotence of the object. We can observe this ambivalence in the early lines of the poem, quoted in Mowat, and Werstein's *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Poems*, as Shakespeare mixes descriptions of color and form that evoke Laura from the *Rime Sparse* with battle-tinged comparisons that would not be out of place in Ovid's *Amores*:

“But Beauty, in that white entitulèd
 From Venus' doves, doth challenge that fair field.
 Then Virtue claims from Beauty Beauty's red,
 Which Virtue gave the golden age to gild
 Their silver cheeks, and called it then their shield,
 Teaching them thus to use it in the fight:
 When shame assailed, the red should fence the white.
 This heraldry in Lucrece' face was seen,
 Argued by Beauty's red and Virtue's white.
 Of either's color was the other queen,
 Proving from world's minority their right.
 Yet their ambition makes them still to fight,
 The sovereignty of either being so great
 That oft they interchange each other's seat.
 This silent war of lilies and roses,
 Which Tarquin viewed in her fair face's field,
 In their pure ranks his traitor eye encloses,
 Where, lest between them both it should be killed,
 The coward captive vanquishèd doth yield
 To those two armies that would let him go
 Rather than triumph in so false a foe. (457, lines 57-77)

Hidden beneath the veneer of Petrarchan blazonic comparison is a threatening current of conflict, such as that which Shakespeare indicates in lines “This silent war of lilies and roses, / Which Tarquin viewed in her fair face's field” (71-72). Language used in this manner emphasizes and even prefigures the conquest of Tarquin's aggression – itself apparently prompted by the conquest of desire over himself. Flowers become a recurrent comparison, no doubt to underscore the action of “deflowering” that Tarquin initiates. When this action occurs, too, Shakespeare employs a haunting blazon in which the typical anatomization and evaluation incorrigibly makes the reader an accomplice in Tarquin's

apocalyptic expression of overwhelming desire. Shakespeare's remark upon Lucrece's observation by "lewd unhallowed eyes" does not stop with the villainous Tarquin, but demands that the reader bear witness to and check their own voyeuristic pleasure:

"Her lily hand her rosy cheek lies under,
 Coz'ning the pillow of a lawful kiss,
 Who, therefore angry, seems to part in sunder,
 Swelling on either side to want his bliss;
 Between whose hills her head entombèd is,
 Where like a virtuous monument she lies,
 To be admired of lewd unhallowed eyes.
 Without the bed her other fair hand was,
 On the green coverlet, whose perfect white
 Showed like an April daisy on the grass,
 With pearly sweat resembling dew of night.
 Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheathed their light
 And, canopied in darkness, sweetly lay
 Till they might open to adorn the day.
 Her hair, like golden threads, played with her breath –
 O modest wantons, wanton modesty! –
 Showing life's triumph in the map of death
 And death's dim look in life's mortality.
 Each in her sleep themselves so beautify
 As if between them twain there were no strife,
 But that life lived in death and death in life.
 Her breasts like ivory globes circled with blue,
 A pair of maiden worlds unconquerèd,
 Save of their lord no bearing yoke they knew,
 And him by oath they truly honorèd.
 These worlds in Tarquin new ambition bred,
 Who, like a foul usurper, went about
 From this fair throne to heave the owner out." (quoted in
 Shakespeare, Mowat, and Werstine 479-80, lines 386-413)

This scene of rampant destruction is imagined before it ever occurs, and thus demonstrates its possibility to – and *in* – the mind of each and every reader. Shakespeare's manipulation of the artifactuality of the blazon in this case masterfully criticizes the silent subject of the reader, who silently and impotently looks over Tarquin's shoulder and takes pleasure – perhaps not uncontested – in dumb imitation of the aggressor.

To reckon the explicit language that Shakespeare employs, we can once more find him making several comparisons between Lucrece and flowers: “lily hand,” “rosy cheek,” “her other fair hand . . . showed like an April daisy on the grass,” and “eyes like marigolds.” Fragility marks Lucrece more than any other quality. But then Shakespeare goes on to describe Lucrece’s breasts, “like ivory globes circled with blue, / A pair of maiden worlds unconquerèd” (407-8). Such a description not only finds a microcosmic significance within the corporeal body, it brings to mind the contemporary fascination with exploration that marked Western Europe in the sixteenth century and had recently gripped England’s social elite. Less than twenty years before this poem was published, Sir Francis Drake had completed the second circumnavigation of the world, an event that carries enormous meaning in relation to the presentation of power and reach of influence by a nation. We can interpret this passage as Shakespeare’s recognition of the similar drives that breed exploration of the world and exploration of the body, and with Shakespeare inscribing a natural teleology in words like “unconquerèd,” it would appear that Shakespeare knew all too well that exploration into the unknown breeds a terrifying desire to then possess that which is found, to make the self greater, through any cost. The poet attacks this seemingly perpetual drive more explicitly, lamenting, “What could he see but mightily he noted? What did he note but strongly he desired?” (414-415). But this flash of indignation lasts only an instant before we are thrust back into the grim narrative:

What he beheld, on that he firmly doted,
 And in his will his willful eye he tired.
 With more than admiration he admired
 Her azure veins, her alabaster skin,
 Her coral lips, her snow-white dimpled chin.” (quoted in
 Shakespeare, Mowat, and Werstine 482, lines 416-420)

The rape itself contains a frightening Petrarchan blazon that emphasizes the physicality of the action and its explicit parallels to the atrocities of war. Both Tarquin and

Lucrece are rent apart by the action, which takes on power enough to consume both players in its horrible mingling of violence and pleasure:

“His drumming heart cheers up his burning eye,
 His eye commends the leading to his hand;
 His hand, as proud of such a dignity,
 Smoking with pride, marched on to make his stand
 On her bare breast, the heart of all her land,
 Whose ranks of blue veins, as his hand did scale,
 Left their round turrets destitute and pale.”

.....

“His hand, that yet remains upon her breast,
 Rude ram to batter such an ivory wall,
 May feel her heart, poor citizen, distressed,
 Wounding itself to death, rise up and fall,
 Beating her bulk, that his hand shakes withal.
 This moves in him more rage and lesser pity
 To make the breach and enter this sweet city.” (quoted in
 Shakespeare, Mowat, and Werstine 483 and 485, lines 435-441 and 463-469)

Prior to this scene, the poet gives Tarquin plenty of time to debate his actions in the form of a complaint, or extended interior monologue, which “presents him as divided against himself, driven by the torment of his lust for Lucrece but aware of his betrayal of Collatine and of the shame her rape will bring upon himself and the honor of the royal family” (Shakespeare, Mowat and Werstine 445). But it does nothing to sway Tarquin from giving into the worst of his desires. His final act is that which damns him, damns the worst angels present in the heart of mankind. But the blazon here takes us into the moment of the act, to experience this last throes of madness, to know it intimately. This knowledge is our blighted inheritance, and Shakespeare confidently asserts that it is only this knowledge of our worst acts that allows us to choose to do otherwise, to be better through cathartic experience. The morality of this can, and ought to be debated. I find it useful to read once more into the contextual significance of Tarquin’s ferocious act. Sextus Tarquinius was the last of his line, the Tarquins that ruled the kingdom of Rome before it became a republic. When evaluated

against the rule that followed, Tarquin either stands for a period of barbarism giving way to the order of civilization, of darkness breaking itself before the light of dawn, or else points to a potential for any ruler or empire subject to the same ambitions, to succumb to savage desires.

After this point in the narrative, Shakespeare shifts subjects from Tarquin to Lucrece, who is given the majority of the poem's space to erect new characterizations of Tarquin (Mowat and Werstine, 445). In a sense, she writes the history books for the new order once Tarquin has been banished from the narrative. During this time, Shakespeare includes a large narrative digression in which Lucrece describes a painting of the sacking of Troy. Lucrece finds in Queen Hecuba a like spirit, objectified and beset by the most inhuman – or perhaps precisely human – atrocities. It was the cast away Trojans that mythically founded Rome, however; the sacrifice of one great empire enabled the creation of another. In a similar fashion, in Shakespeare's description of Lucrece's self-inflicted death, he compares her to a conquered state or land, prompting the question of whether we could evaluate her actions as intentionally self-sacrificial, as being made while envisioning Hecuba:

“And from the purple fountain Brutus drew
 The murd'rous knife, and, as it left the place,
 Her blood, in poor revenge, held it in chase;
 And, bubbling from her breast, it doth divide
 In two slow rivers, that the crimson blood
 Circles her body in on every side,
 Who, like a late-sacked island, vastly stood
 Bare and unpeopled in this fearful flood.” (quoted in Shakespeare, Mowat,
 and Werstine 575-576, lines 1731-1741)

Though the body here is made carnal (at this point in the narrative, it becomes redundant to question the surface significance of the penetrating knife), it seems to take on a politically philosophical valence by embodying the cycle of disorder, sacrifice, and order that civilization and savagery pass through. The “island” here could have several interpretations:

one could think of England as the “island”, whose own borders had been provoked by the Spanish Armada six years before the publication of this poem; one could imagine Shakespeare to be referencing any number of “islands” in the Mediterranean that had become contested by the Catholic Habsburg league and the Ottoman empire, as he does in *Othello*, which takes place during a conflict between Venetians and Ottomans on Cyprus; finally, in the evocation of an “island” as the envisioned terrain, it could also be that Shakespeare points westward to the New World, portending the awful havoc that could be (and would be) enacted upon its objectified peoples by an encroaching system of European nations intent on realizing their own imperial regime and the creation of an “order” as they saw fit. It would not be the last time that Shakespeare had subtly voiced his ambivalences over the colonial campaign, as we can find the problematic paternalism evident in the relationship between Prospero and Caliban in *The Tempest*, with the former acting as colonial authority armed with “providential” power but nonetheless subject to egotistical excesses, and the latter, who represents the “rough” native American who has been lately enslaved and made the “villain” of the narrative, despite possessing a leveling tragic potential equal to its protagonists.

Shakespeare’s dense allusions to imperialism in *The Rape of Lucrece* could be interpreted as a thematic criticism of the human desire to wield power to enact possession, which is fundamental to both the horrible erotic story told in *Lucrece* and to its manifestation in those governing the destructive energies of the Early Modern imperial nation. Such acts may, perhaps simply *will*, occur, Shakespeare seems to suggest, because they are an inescapable limit of human experience. Tarquin represents the worst potential in each of us, of the obsessive pursuit of possession and exploitation, of creating the self out of the disassembled wreckage of a desired object. Shakespeare intimates in the second half of *The*

Rape of Lucrece that the conventional “subject” – that which embodies horribly twisted but still recognizably Petrarchan energy – will not succeed for long, though. The acts that they commit and the sacrifices that they allow in the creation of their ego will be recognized and written about by the survivors – by Lucrece as much as any conquered, foreign, or Othered subject – and the words of these survivors will have the power to unravel self-fashioning and its destructive potential.

Such commentary, for all of its power, did not always resonate deeply with writers located within the relative safety of the court. Their living counted on their ingratiating themselves with the monarch through odes of praise, which necessitated turning a blind eye to any negative repercussions of state initiatives. Queen Elizabeth I’s cult of personality was legendary, fashioned in no small part by the poets whose patronage she awarded; like the sacred substantial body of Laura to which Petrarchan poetry irrevocably turns its glance, Elizabeth appeared in many figurations in the poetry of her subjects. Where some of these symbolic depictions layered themselves in dense multivalence, as is the case in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, where each character can be read as signifying a particular virtue or vice playing itself out within the timeless and symbolic body of Elizabeth; there emerged a motif among poets that desired to see the power of Elizabeth, wrapped up in her image, extending beyond the shores of England to encompass the world.

Around 1599, Sir John Davies composed the sequence, *Hymns to Astraea*. In this cycle, he represents Elizabeth with the Greek-by-way-of-Ovid figure, Astraea, the celestial virgin goddess of the stars (Ovid and Raeburn 12, *Metamorphoses* 1.149-150). In one stroke, Davies finds a typological significance between Astraea and the “virgin queen,” which may carry even more significance in Astraea’s prophesied return to earth to herald a new, virtuous golden age. Needless to say, the poems effectively unite the timeless world of classical myth,

the unbounded space of Petrarchan lyricism, and the fervent vision of a comparably rising contemporary England. Many of the poems included in the sequence perform a remarkable quasi-blazonic *sparagmos* of Elizabeth by splitting her name into acrostic, as in the following selection, “Hymne VIII” from *Hymns to Astræa*:

Europe, the earth’s sweet Paradise,
 Let all thy kings that would be wise,
 In politique devotion:
 Sayle hither to observe her eyes,
 And marke her heavnly motion.
 Brave Princes of this civil age,
 Enter into this pilgrimage:
 This saint’s tongue is an oracle,
 Her eye hath made a Prince a page,
 And works each day a miracle.
 Raise but your lookes to her, and see
 Even the true beames of majestic,
 Great Princes, marke her duly;
 If all the world you doe survey,
 No forehead spreads so bright a ray,
 And notes a Prince so truly. (quoted in Davies and Grosart 245, lines 1-16)

Although this poem at first glance may not appear to spend much time imitating the direct form of the Petrarchan blazon, a close reading will reveal that the importance of vision is undoubtedly analogous to that discussed in previous examples. The speaker here commands the reader, ostensibly the “kings” of Europe, to look upon the image of Elizabeth that he is constructing and detailing. That he commands the “kings” is significant, in that it immediately genders the nature of that gaze; among the cool “politique” devotion demanded of one ruler in the presence of another, a certain degree of the scopophilia typical of lyric poetry is expected. This opens the possibility of finding in Elizabeth a Stella or Laura, the unmoved mover of the Petrarchan poetic universe. Davies’ consideration of that prospect appears at its strongest in this poem as he organizes the Queen’s diverse powers around their

loci in her physical body, her “eyes” that can make “a Prince a page” (9) in both the sense of a servant, and as “page” or subject text to “note” (14) and interpret by a greater authority.

This concurs with the argument proposed by Barker that the Protestant modernizing regime demanded the body imagined and performed as a text to be read and interpreted by God. Davies, then, turns the gender and power order of Europe on its head through the assertion of Elizabeth’s virgin rule. Her tongue too, manifests a prophetic power – it is described as the oracle of a saint (8) – further drawing together in uneasy but miraculous union the classical and Christian pasts that will serve as precedent for Elizabeth’s own imperial ambitions. The speaker singles out Elizabeth’s “forehead” too, as a light that “spreads so bright a ray” that it leaves all other imperial and colonial surveys dimmed (12); she becomes a matchless navigational instrument, bringing light upon a world that Davies and his contemporaries viewed as possessible while subsumed under her influence. In this way, the power dynamic enforced within the universe of this poem intimates an apotheosis of both Queen and typical Petrarchan beloved. Davies’ play with Elizabeth’s name has its precedent in Petrarch, as well: in several poems of the *Rime Sparse*, Petrarch puns on “Laura” interchanging it with “lauro,” Italian for “laurel,” the symbol of poetic accomplishment and self-fashioning (Vickers, “Diana Described” 277), or by breaking her name into cognate words such as “l’aura” (“the wind”). In Davies’ acrostic poem, the first letters of each line spell out the name of the mythologized ruler – *Elisabetha Regna* – circumscribing all actions in this poem, from the expected devotion of Europe’s kings to the illumination of the undiscovered world, within the identity and sphere of power of England’s queen. Davies would contend, within this highly eschatological poem, that history will prove a record of the Queen’s ascension over the world. I would contend that the structures he has chosen to detail this ascension should be understood to figure a political destiny and conquering

material accumulation that will point back to and yet cover, like Laura's veil, the body of Elizabeth that has been made timeless by its textual conversion. Davies' figuration of Elizabeth as an enduring collection of English nationalist rhetoric fashions her as the perfect "dis-embodiment" of England's Early Modern aspirations.

Sir Walter Raleigh's "Cynthia Holographs," published in a hasty collection in 1618, offer fascinating variations on this theme. Similar to Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh embodied the hypermasculine, proto-imperialist "Renaissance Man" for England. Raleigh was a favorite courtier to Queen Elizabeth, a state-sponsored explorer, a merchant with several lucrative monopolies, and a writer of poetry, history, and travel accounts (Latham, "Sir Walter Raleigh," *Encyclopedia Britannica*). David Lloyd described him, forty years after his death, as "a great Soldier, and yet an excellent Courtier: an accomplished Gallant, yet a bookish man; a man that seemed born for any thing he undertook" (Raleigh and Rudick xvii). Though his relationship with the queen was not at all times firm (the revelation of his secret marriage to Elizabeth Throckmorton landed both of them in the Tower of London in 1592 ["Sir Walter Raleigh," *Encyclopedia Britannica*]), he nevertheless served as the face of English expansion outward to the New World. From 1584 to 1589, Raleigh attempted to found a colony in North America, which he named "Virginia" after one of the Queen's common appellations, and in 1595, he led an expedition up the Orinoco River in modern-day Venezuela in pursuit of the fabled city of gold, El Dorado.

It should come as no surprise that his poetry, or what we reliably have left of it, incorporates elements of his mercantile and exploratory adventures, while still keeping within the Petrarchan mode. Raleigh's "Cynthia" holographs, published posthumously in 1618 though likely written during or in recollection of a period between 1597-1602 when he once more enjoyed the favor of the Queen, make several references to his New World

exploits. In this collection of poems, Raleigh fashions Elizabeth as “Cynthia,” an epithet of the Greek goddess of the moon and the hunt, Artemis. Ovid would have known her as the virgin goddess Diana, which should prompt the keen reader to note the lasting influence of her mythos as it passed from Ovid’s story of Actaeon to Petrarch, and from Petrarch’s *Rime Sparse* to the English poets of the Elizabethan period. In poem 23, Raleigh first uses rather typical language to describe Cynthia, dubbing her “a flowre of loves own planting/ A patern kept by nature/ for bewty, forme, and stature” (Raleigh and Rudick 46, lines 5-8), and comparing her, in typically paradoxical fashion, to “elemental fier / Whose food and flame consumes not” (Raleigh and Rudick 46, lines 14-15). Raleigh then expands his vision, stating “She as the valley of perue/ whose summer ever lastethe/ time conquinge all she mastreth/ by beinge allwaye new” (Raleigh and Rudick 46, lines 9-12). This geographical terminology fits well within the Petrarchan paradigm. Peru is construed as a realm displaced from time, for the better, by resisting the harsh cycle of life and death that follows the seasons. It is a place of endless newness and harvest, which not only resonates in comparison to the agelessness intimated by much of Elizabeth’s iconography, the Virgin Queen’s everlasting youth and promise; but also indicates the awesome value of a location still half-mythic at the time, and wholly desirable and productive for the imperial Englishman.

Later, in poem 26 of the “Cynthia” holographs, Raleigh makes a direct connection between Petrarchan erotic desire and the proto-capitalist material desires revealed during the English imperial project. If there is a blazon here, it refers to his own mental and spiritual scattering at the prospect of his unrequited desire:

“Out of that mass of mirakells, my Muse,
gathered thos floures, to her pure sences pleasinge,
out of her eyes (the store of joyes) did chuse
equall delights, my sorrowes counterpoysinge
Her regall looks, my rigarus sythes suppressed [...]

“Shee gave, shee tooke, shee wounded, she appeased.
 The honor of her love, love still devisinge
 woundinge my mind with contrarye consayte
 transferde it sealf sumetyme to her aspiring
 sumetyme the trumpett of her thoughts retrayt
 to seeke new worlds, for golde, for prayse, for glory,
 to try desire, to try love severed farr [...]

So my forsaken hart, my withered minde
 widdow of all the joyes it once possest
 my hopes cleane out of sight with forced wind
 to kingdomes strange, to lands farr of adrest” (Raleigh and Rudick 50-1 ,
 lines 45-49, 56-62, and 85-88.)

Cynthia’s introduction is quite sensual, surrounded by aromatic flowers (46), which clues the reader in to the substitution of her corporeal body with phenomenologically erotic referents. Raleigh also makes an important distinction between the vision of his “muse,” or displaced observant ego, and the action of his beloved, which further enables the reader to recognize the undercurrent of Petrarchan power structures of subject and object: Raleigh’s muse, described in the first section, delights in what it sees, but the beloved, in her “contrarye consayte” is potent enough to stymie the scopophilia of the overwhelmed poetic subject (47-49). Once again, Cynthia appears to mirror Laura in her capacity for paradoxical attributes, giving and taking, wounding and appeasing the speaker as she pleases (56). But rather than direct his enflamed passions back upon Cynthia, the speaker expresses them through their subjugation to her own desires.

This is not quite the unrequitedness of Petrarch, or of Sidney and his circle, but instead another deflection of Petrarchan erotic desire upon a more mutually constructive trajectory. Raleigh writing here yokes himself to the idea of fashioning himself out of Cynthia’s own self-fashioning. Though racked by the unmovable Cynthia, the speaker recounts having tried to seek alternative outlets for his energies, from “new worlds,” to “golde,” “prayse,” and “glory” (61). The project, seen in apparently mournful retrospect,

may well be unsuccessful. One may certainly get such an impression from the lines “my hopes cleane out of sight with forced wind (think back to the punishing absence of *l'aura*) / to kingdomes strange, to lands farr of adrest” (87-88). When viewed within the Petrarchan mode of retrospectivity established by Greene, however, this transfer of erotic desire to material desire endlessly plays out its timeless ritual to the reader, who experiences and understands the validation of the speaker’s pursuit by way of its necessity. Those who, like Raleigh, believe in the sanctity of the Elizabethan image and that for which it stands, would have recognized the virtue in applying their desire – whether aimed towards a beloved other, or for the opportunity to self-fashion through poetic, political, or material gains – to a cause whose glorified end may reflect back to Elizabeth, the provenance and prophet of unrequited desire on the English world stage. In other words, to fashion oneself would be to fashion her and the nation that she represents, for lack of a greater consummating union. Such is the end, critically, of this thoroughly English vein of Petrarchan lyric poetry.

At least it would seem, from the perspective loosed in the microcosms of these poems. Last words do not exist, however – only later ones – and even as these writers envisioned the transcendence of their corporeal Queen into the scattered ether of the unfolding world, the drive to challenge these sublimating Petrarchan measures remained strong in poets such as John Donne. I would like to conclude this section by addressing a number of poems written by Donne that upend the way that previous poets wrote on the subject of blazoned and evaluated bodies in the context of the New World. Donne’s poetic representation of women in amorous relationships added significant complexity to the typical Petrarchan themes, considering the potential for lovers to embrace the negation of the physical body in pursuit of a greater union, as in “The Ecstasy,” or harmonize within the act of erotic self-manipulation, as in “Sappho to Philaenis.” Many of Donne’s early poems,

collected in his “Songs and Sonets,” and his “Elegies,” show a greater emphasis on finding new ways to negotiate the essential gender politics that ground Petrarch’s lyric poems, which is to say, the power and pleasure of vision, unrequited love spawning creative expression, and the discourse over a passive and gendered body that is slowly hidden behind terms of evaluation that serve to both elevate and negate it. He takes a hard, yet sly look at the validity of conflating erotic and material desire, of self-fashioning through object-fashioning, within the context of exploration and imperial visions enacted upon the New World.

Neither Donne’s “Songs and Sonets” nor his “Elegies” were published during his lifetime. Donne wrote his early poetry while unsuccessfully making his bid as a courtier in the 1590s. His immediate influences at this early stage were the lyric elegies of Ovid, and his poetic contemporaries, who, as we have seen, were still writing in the vein of or directly against Petrarch. Indeed, the titles of these early collections – “Songs and Sonets” and “Elegies” – should remind us that Donne deeply felt the presence of Petrarch and Ovid looking over his shoulder. But the young “Jack” Donne also felt compelled to fashion an individual identity in and out of his poetry; his influences granted, his take on things is often just a bit different. He makes great use of a penetrating observation of the world when giving flight to his cerebral formulations of amorous desire, too. Among the most charged symbols that Donne found around him at the turn of the seventeenth century were those pertaining to exploration of the New World, in which were wrapped up themes of unrequited desire, Christian providence, and national self-realization through expansion.

Donne levied a charge of ambivalence at these topics, too. We can find Donne ardently working through the influence of his national contexts in the second half of “The Good Morrow,” which appears in his collection of poems, “Songs and Sonets”:

Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let Maps to other, worlds on worlds have showne,

Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appeares,
 And true plaine hearts doe in the faces rest,
 Where can we finde two better hemispheares
 Without sharpe North, without declining West?
 Whatever dyes, was not mixt equally;
 If our two loves be one, or thou and I
 Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die. (quoted in Donne and
 Grierson 7, lines 12-18)

This outburst is provoked by a reflection upon the development of his and his beloved's loving amorous relationship, where "if any beauty I did see, / Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee" (Donne and Grierson 7, lines 6-7). Interestingly, where most poets that we have considered so far have turned from their unrequited love and gazed outward, looking for material substitutes with which they can summon up memories that may allow them to experience the creative conflict spurred by their spurning beloved, Donne instead looks inward. The body does not need a set of signifiers here, he contends; rather, the body can itself signify and replace *anything*. In the case above, Donne flippantly dismisses the "sea-discoverers" that have gone to "new worlds," the "Maps" that show a multiplicity of worlds,¹¹ each with their own seductive promise.

The love that Donne describes is a mutual one, not the love that makes for roving adventurers who seek out their fortunes and stable self-identities in new worlds as a means to stymie the pain caused by an uninterested beloved. Achsah Guibbory rightly notes, "Although Donne's poetry often assumes the inequality between men and women that was

¹¹ Robert L. Sharp, in "Good-Morrow' and Cordiform Maps" has astutely suggested that Donne had a heart-shaped Cordiform map in mind while writing this section, which were the standard of his time. The symmetrical shape of a Cordiform map would account for the mirroring actions that take place in the third stanza. Sharp, Robert L. "Donne's "Good-Morrow" and Cordiform Maps." *Modern Language Notes* 69.7 (1954): 493-95. *JSTOR* [*JSTOR*]. Web. 17 Feb. 2017.

part of early modern English culture, here the lovers are ‘two hemispheres’ (17), equal, neither sufficient without the other. There is a sense of completion, as if the lover has finally found what was missing from life, his other half’ (Guibbory, “Erotic Poetry” 140-1). Interestingly, Donne turns the blazon in this poem back upon himself. Both he and his beloved possess the Petrarchan’s scattering eye, which leads to their simultaneous dispersion in line 15, “My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears.” But this breakdown comes with a promised union, much like in “the Extasie” that Donne penned later, as he writes: “If our two loves be one, or thou and I / Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die” (20-21). In other words, should they mirror each other in their love, they would be unified, made one; and in that unity, even the death of one individual cannot preclude the existence of that *plenum*, as it was “mixt equally” between them (19). It is a powerful antithesis to Petrarchan convention, even as it operates within the limits of its structures and acknowledges the influence of Petrarchan poets’ adoption of imperial themes in their works. “The Good Morrow” is, after all, one among a collection of “Songs and Sonets” descended, if not entirely in form (there are no sonnets, after all, in the collection), then in matter and essence, from those generated from Petrarch. It just happens to be a rather radical mutation.

Donne retains his willingness to challenge convention in his later *Elegies*. Guibbory notes, “whereas Petrarchan poetry idealized women and spiritualized desire, Donne’s Ovidian *Elegies* flaunt the speaker’s sexuality as he describes his escapades” (135). In fact, in the poem, “Loves Progress,” Donne directly opposes the Petrarchan ideal of unrequited love and its creative effect of self-fashioning, as he contends that “Who ever loves, if he do not propose / The right true end of love, he’s one that goes / To sea for nothing but to make him sick” (Donne and Greirson 116, lines 1-3); furthermore, Donne looks critically upon the Petrarchan project that demands that the poet surround the beloved in a negating veil of

metonymic substitutes: he asks instead, “Can men more injure women then to say / They love them for that, by which they’re not they?” (Donne and Greirson 117, lines 19-20).

Among the things that women *aren’t* include “virtue” (which, though an immaterial concept, is a “body political” idea rooted in the physical evidence of female sexual chastity and the protection of transferrable wealth), “beauty,” and “wealth” (Donne and Grierson 117, lines 24-5). Lines 33-96 enact a long blazon that compares the discovery and meditation on the body to exploration, bringing in as many references to the Odyssey as they do to the contemporary adoption of *econolingua*:

“Although we see Celestial bodies move
 Above the earth, the earth we Till and love:
 So we her ayres contemplate, words and heart,
 And virtues; but love the Centrique part.
 Nor is the soul more worthy, or more fit
 For love, then this, as infinite as it.
 But in attaining this desired place
 How much they erre; that set out at the face?
 The hair a Forest is of Ambushes,
 Of springs, snares, fetters, and manacles:
 The brow becalms us when ‘tis smooth and plain,
 And when ‘tis wrinckled, shipwracks us again.
 Smooth, ‘tis a Paradiſe, where we would have
 Immortal ſtay, and wrinckled ‘tis our grave.
 The Noſe (like to the firſt Meridian) runs
 Not ‘twixt an Eaſt and Weſt, but ‘twixt two ſuns;
 It leaves a Cheek, a roſie Hemisphere
 On either ſide, and then directs us where
 Upon the Iſlands fortunate we fall,
 (Not faynte *Canaries*, but *Ambroſiall*)
 Her ſwelling lips; To which when wee are come,
 We anchor there, and think our ſelves at home,
 For they ſeem all: there Syrens ſongs, and there
 Wiſe Delphick Oracles do fill the ear;
 There in a Creek where choſen pearls do ſwell,
 The Remora, her cleaving tongue doth dwell.
 Theſe, and the glorious Promontory, her Chin
 Ore paſt; and the ſtreight *Helleſpont* betweene
 The *Sestos* and the *Abydos* of her breasts,
 (Not of two Lovers, but two Loves the neaſts)
 Succeeds the boundleſſ ſea, but yet thine eye
 Some Iſland moles may ſcattered there deſcry;

And Sailing towards her *India*, in that way
 Shall at her fair Atlantick Navell stay;
 Though thence the Current be thy Pilot made,
 Yet ere thou be where thou wouldst be embay'd,
 Thou shalt upon another Forest set,
 Where many Shipwrack, and no further get.
 When thou are there, consider what this chace
 Mispent by thy beginning at the face. (quoted in Donne and Grierson 117-8,
 lines 33-72)

This blazon partakes in a striking amount of geographical rhapsodizing, expanding the body of the objectified beloved to the outer limits of the globe, if not space itself. Critically, this section is bookended by Donne's reduction of women to "the centric part," the genitals. In typical manner, Donne recenters the focus on the body, ostensibly rejecting its poetic elaboration and embracing the possibility of a more significant and corporeal union through sexual intercourse – Donne admonishes the Petrarchan idealized love as he states, "Although we see celestial bodies move / Above the earth, the earth we till and love" (33-34). In other words, the desire to transcend the body is one that undoubtedly strikes us as wondrous, but in our lives, we recognize the intense practical and symbolic value of the sexual function. Donne then scatters the beloved's features, drawing strong parallels to the mythical story of Odysseus as a prototype for the sort of adventuring that became an alternate outlet for the unrequited Petrarchan lover (54-61), as we have seen with Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Sir John Davies. Furthermore, Donne, like others of his era, unites these timeless classical myths with contemporary points of reference. He alludes here to *India* (65), which had become an important mercantile destination during the Early Modern period, one wrapped in gauzy orientalist seduction, ripe for expressing the mythic power of the European expansion into the unknown, the heretofore legendary, the wholly desirable.

Yet even as Donne risks the pull of Petrarchan convention in these verses, he steadfastly emphasizes the sexual function further in the final lines, where he intimates a bedroom scene, describing the male organ as “the Emblem that hath figured / Firmness” and “the first part that comes to bed” (Donne and Grierson 119, lines 79-80); the female rather unflatteringly split between “two purses,” “their mouths aversely laid” (Donne and Grierson 119, line 92). The conflict between Donne’s sardonic use of Petrarchan structures while modeling his conceits (which by effect, threatens to legitimize those same conceits) and his steadfast assertion that perfection is not found in blazonic itemization and evaluation of the female body but in its “unity” (Donne and Grierson, line 9) once again plays out the paradoxical drama of Donne’s poetry. Resolution of this problem seems to slip out of Donne’s grasp, but this may be exactly what he wants. He shows that for all of the power and influence that Petrarch exerts upon lyric poetry and consequent gender relations, there exists a possible alternative, where the body can be embraced rather than replaced.

The final poem that I will discuss in this section is one that has stirred a considerable amount of critical attention – Donne’s elegy, “To his Mistris Going to Bed.” This poem is considered by scholars to have been directly influenced by Ovidian precedent; Elegy 5 in Book I of Ovid’s *Amores*, shown above, appears a prototype for “To his Mistris.” Andrew Hadfield notes that the two indicate their authors’ recognition that “lust often makes those suffering from its effects appear ridiculous to those immune to its immediate energy” (Hadfield 52). Furthermore, “To his Mistris” is commonly theorized as having been inspired by Donne’s own escapades overseas while sailing with Essex and Raleigh to Cadiz in 1596 (Hadfield 49). “To his Mistris” serves amicably as a capstone example of the Elizabethan/Jacobean writer incorporating both classical and Petrarchan precedent, and the burgeoning modern material contexts of a proto-imperial western world. Its functionality

rests on its blazonic formulation of the female body, as the beloved in this scene is summarized by her corporeal body and implicit sexual function, a passive and yet-unknown form that nevertheless draws the eye into the Petrarchan dispersion method as it pieces her apart and qualifies her being through terms of evaluation embedded in the materialistic contexts of Donne's seventeenth-century England. The unnamed beloved's body is, at the end of all things, after the precedents established by Ovid, by Petrarch, by Sidney and Shakespeare and Raleigh, a body to be undressed, explored, discovered, and conquered:

"Come, Madam, come, all rest my power defie,
 Until I labour, I in labour lie.
 The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,
 Is tir'd with standing though he never fight.
 Off with that girdle, like heavens Zone glittering,
 But a far fairer world encompassing.
 Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear,
 That th'eyes of busie fooles may be stopt there.
 Unlace your self, for that harmonious chime,
 Tells me from you, that now it is bed time.
 Off with that happy busk, which I envie,
 That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.
 Your gown going off, such beauteous state reveals,
 As when from flowry meads th'hills shadow steales.
 Off with that wyerie Coronet and shew
 The haiery Diademe which on you doth grow:
 Now off with those shooes, and then safely tread
 In this loves hallow'd temple, this soft bed.
 In such white robes, heaven's Angels us'd to be
 Receavd by men; thou Angel brings with thee
 A heaven like Mahomets Paradise; and though
 Ill spirits walk in white, we easly know,
 By this these Angels from an evil Sprite
 Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.
 Licence my roaving hands, and let them go,
 Before, behind, between, above, below.
 O my America! My new-found-land,
 My kingdome, safliest when with one man man'd,
 My Myne of precious stones, My Emperie,
 How blest am I in this discovering thee!
 To enter in these bonds, is to be free;
 Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.
 Full nakedness! All joyes are due to thee,
 As souls unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must be,

To taste whole joyes. Gems which you women use
 Are like Atlanta's balls, cast in mens views,
 That when a fools eye lighteth on a Gem,
 His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them.
 Like pictures, or like books gay coverings made
 For lay-men, are all women thus array'd;
 Themselves are mystick books, which only wee
 (Whom their imputed grace will dignifie)
 Must see reveal'd. Then since that I may know;
 As liberally, as to a Midwife, shew
 Thy self: cast all, yea, this white linnen hence,
 There is no pennance due to innocence.
 To teach thee, I am naked first; why than
 What needst thou have more covering then a man." (quoted in Donne and
 Grierson, 119-21, lines 1-48)

The poem opens on the bedroom interaction between the speaker and the beloved, who has apparently resisted the former's sexual propositions. Donne expresses the brutal unrequitedness of mere scopophilia in the third and fourth lines, albeit with a decidedly Ovidian spin, given its conflation of erotic desire and martial opposition: "The foe oft-times having the foe in sight, / Is tir'd with standing though he never fight" (3-4). The following lines fictively reveal the body while artifactually, as always, demanding that the reader half-construct the image of the denuded beloved. And as is typical of Donne, there is a shocking yet still tenable balance between the significance of the material body and the ineffable, manipulable value that one can interpret from it. Although he loves to elaborate upon the body, one should not get the sense that he loses it in the midst of his effusive praise. In the lines, "Like pictures, or like books gay coverings made / For lay-men, are all women thus array'd; / Themselves are mystick books, which only wee / (Whom their imputed grace will dignifie) / Must see reveal'd" (39-43), Donne directs critical attention to what Barker identified earlier as the Protestant aim to replace the material body with a highly allusive textual body. Donne appears to use this transformation merely as an act of deference, however. The female body can only be read by a subject given a woman's "imputed grace,"

he states; in other words, the speaker and viewers of this poem have the creative license to draw meaning out of the collected symbols represented by each particularized part of the woman's body, but such a privilege itself descends from the complicity of the beloved. Since the speaker inscribes this complicity in the mere act of "showing" the reader his beloved, each reader then assumes a tenuous position of authority as interpreter. We can thus confidently follow the speaker's rapturous gloss of the beloved's garments, from her "breastplate" (7), to her "lace" (9), her "busk" (11) "gown" (13), "Coronet" (15), "Diademe" (16), and "shooes" (17). Each of these, by their reference in this poem, can be understood as a metonymic reference to the part of the beloved's body on which they would be worn. Their purpose is one of ornamental obstruction, and Donne's beloved gives both speaker and reader permission to admire those ornaments even as they point to a "fairer world" hidden underneath the strappings.

In the second section of this poem, starting "Licence my roaving hands," Donne begins to draw parallels between the speaker's (and viewers') enthralled exploration of the beloved's body and the explorations sponsored by the English state at the time. Ilona Bell describes it well as she states,

"The language becomes increasingly graphic as the poem unfolds, culminating in an image of geographical exploration that is as unconventional as it is audacious [...] Having politely asked permission to explore every part of her naked body, Donne gets carried away. The outpouring of prepositions, one following another in quick, rhythmic succession, says it all. As the thrill of discovery tears the sentence apart, making the rules of grammar seem as constraining and irrelevant as the clothing the lovers discard, the rhetoric is almost irresistible. At the same time, however, the imagery betrays Donne's masculine desire to conquer and control. If the woman is his kingdom and empire, he is her king and emperor, reveling unabashedly in his masculine dominion over her" (208).

Kim F. Hall recognizes Donne's adaptation of a common Petrarchan theme to his available terms of evaluation in this particular poem as well, citing "To his Mistris Going to Bed" as an example of a "gendered act, located in the feminization of the landscape found in the

rhetoric of colonial expansion,” and further, as an “equation of the beloved with the new world merchandise” (Hall 78-79). Indeed, Donne’s fictive hands, and by extension those of the reader, move “before, behind, between, above, below” the body of the beloved, thoroughly *knowing* her and evaluating her corporeal form; and in such a way, one can see not merely the result but the *process* of the English Renaissance blazon as we have encountered it thus far. It is a vehicle that allows for the speaker and reader to create a fictive space in which the pacified female body is split into so many fragments that are each measured by a cold, yet devoted eye. It creates value in the same object that it destroys, while heralding the speaking subject’s ability to aesthetically represent and fictively possess that object. It legitimizes a way of perceiving the female body that becomes significantly easier to transfer over to Early Modern England’s mercantile and exploratory plans in the New World at the turn of the seventeenth century.

“O my America! My new-found-land,” Donne exclaims, “My kingdome, safliest when with one man man’d, / My Myne of precious stones, My Emperie, / How blest am I in this discovering thee!” (27-30). Within this single statement, Donne captures the *econolingua* of his time that allowed for material mediums of signifying wealth to become textual tools to evaluate the worth of the individual self; the fixation on foreign continents and “worlds” as spaces in which the adept European could enact their own self-creation; and the inevitably binary gender politics entrenched in the Petrarchan regime. Achsah Guibbory offers, as always, a wise consideration of the structures of this poem, stating “once license is given, [the beloved] becomes a territory to be possessed and ‘man’d’ [...] she needs no more clothes than he does, [and] his body is the only ‘covering’ that she needs – an apt image for showing that man should be ‘on top’... this poem, like Donne’s other elegies, expresses a

fantasy of male power that may also have sociopolitical significance, obliquely articulating discomfort with serving a woman monarch in a patriarchal society” (136).

I am inclined to agree. The sociopolitical repercussions, which for the first time in European history could be fictively tested and tried within the imaginative space sparked by the prospect of the New World, were nigh without limit. We still see them today, as products of colonial structures legitimized by fictive explorations like the one above. We can look back to Edmund Spenser and John Donne as bookends to a body of Colonial Petrarchan poets that attempted to envision a unifying and corporeal alternative within their lyric poetry, integrating Ovidian patterns of amorous verse with Petrarchan conventions of blazonic description, united by language reflecting their own context of English national expansion and self-definition. But with this poetic statement, Donne, for all of his concentration on rewriting the Petrarchan project to include the basic physical instinct and identity of women, cannot help but to powerfully sum up the theme that we have undertaken to follow: that Elizabethan and early Jacobean poets, regardless of their conviction in Petrarch’s politics, nevertheless worked out of necessity within the poetic structures descended from his lyric sequence; that among the most potent tropic devices employed by these English poets in their expressions of erotic and amorous desire was the blazon; and that the blazon, threatened with irrelevance by the fierce satires and poetic criticisms of the English Petrarchan writers, nevertheless found new valence for these anxiously individualistic poets once charged with the martial drives of Ovid and realized within the quasi-fictive space of exploration, exchange, and conquest of the New World.

* * *

As I hope to have proven through this exercise, the foundational motivation of the Petrarchan blazon – chiefly, the desire to create an idealized image of a beloved yet inaccessible object and the use of real and valuable materials as a means to possess this object by substitute – also foregrounds the essential vanity of its project. Barker and Freccero may convincingly argue that as Petrarch’s “ivory and ebony” ship moves ever further away from Laura after her death and eventually flounders, the materials lose touch with the power that charged them and eventually begin to refer only to themselves. Such a thesis finds suggestive corroboration within the poetry of the early English imperialists Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Philip Sidney. Hopefully, however, we have come to find that several of these poets’ contemporaries also offered explicit and implicit challenges to the outward drive of “unrequited” imperialism by examining the problematic structures of representing desire inherent to the Petrarchan blazon. The development of the blazon among English Renaissance poets displays neither a homogenous tendency towards classically Petrarchan dematerializing praise, nor a cycle of gainful representations of desire as an obsessive yet inconsequential pursuit of material goods. What I hope to have proven here is that among English *blasonneurs*, self-creation and nation-building were entirely linked, yet interspersed between new “individuals” who could fashion universes in which they have ultimate creative, evaluative, and destructive power. While embedded in the discourses of economic prerogatives of self-creation and self-measurement, politics of gender and desire, and eventually in the colonial project of Early Modern England, the Petrarchan blazon marked the development of a distinct system of conceiving the self in relation to desired objects. Critically, as English lyric poets participated in this system, they came to find that the blazon’s anxious, unstable, and yet obsessive ordination of value and desire had parallels

with an emergent sphere of exploitative materialism and territorial expansion that were well worth exploring.

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