

RICE UNIVERSITY

**Sacramental Magic and Animate Statues in Edmund Spenser,
William Shakespeare, and John Milton**

by

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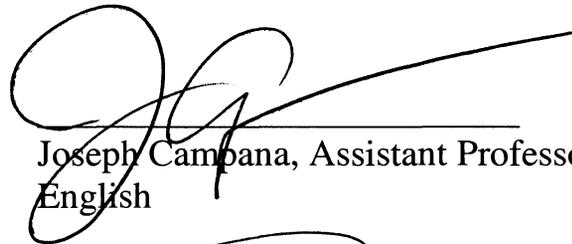
A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

Doctor of Philosophy

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HOUSTON, TEXAS
MAY 2012

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ABSTRACT

"Sacramental Magic" explores the animate statue in early modern romance as an emblem of the potential spiritually transformative power of objects. The tendency of New Historicism to "empty out" theology from Catholicism overlooks the continued power of sacred objects in Reformation literature. My dissertation joins the recent turn to religion in early modern studies—Catholic doctrine and religious experience explain the startling presence of benevolent animate statues in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton; one would expect these statues to be empty idols, but instead they animate, revealing a real presence of the divine.

I first investigate Spenser's Egyptian lexicon for the Catholic veneration of sacred images in the Temple of Isis in the *Faerie Queene*. Embedding Britomart's dream vision of an English empire in Egyptian mythology creates a *translatio imperii* from Egypt to Rome to England, transferring not only political but also religious power. The Isis statue's transformation of Britomart bears striking textual and visual correlations to John Dee's hermetic *Monas Hieroglyphica*.

For Shakespeare, hermetic magic emblemizes the sacrament of penance. Shakespeare's claim "to make men glorious" suggests that *Pericles* transforms its audience by effecting, not merely signifying, grace. The play emblemizes the restorative aspects of reconciliation, the antidote to the seven deadly sins, with alchemical and medical imagery, culminating in Cerimon's reanimation of Thaisa through an Egyptian magic based on the hermetic ritual to ensoul statues.

The Winter's Tale continues Shakespeare's meditation upon the emotional metamorphoses produced by reconciliation. I argue that Shakespeare creates an affective communion among the audience members and the characters, an effect similar to the workings of the Holy Spirit in a Mass, emblemized by the hermetic animation of Hermione.

The final chapter examines the Catholic and hermetic parallels in Milton's "Il Penseroso" and *Comus*. In both works, Milton traces a shared system of correspondences underlying Catholicism and hermeticism in order to explore the relationship between objects and the immaterial, through angelology, Ficinian music theory, the contemplative lives of nuns, the Catholic sacrament of Extreme Unction, and ritual exorcism.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Jane Chance, Dr. Meredith Skura, Dr. Joseph Campana, Dr. Jeffrey Kripal, Dr. Jerry Sullivan, and Dr. Wouter Hanegraaff for their invaluable comments on drafts of these chapters. I thank the Ritman Library in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, for providing me access to first editions of medieval and early modern hermetic works; I also would like to thank various grants from Rice University for sponsoring my research and conference presentations abroad.

This book would not have been possible without the unconditional love and support of my family. I would also like to thank Dr. William D. Rice for his thoughtful discussion and for helping me to awake my faith.

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INTRODUCTION

THE MECHANISMS OF MAGIC AND FAITH

“And (as *Plato* affirmeth) the arte of *Magicke* is the arte of worshipping God”

—Sir Walter Raleigh¹

Animate statues are at the center of Judeo-Christian theology and thus underpin part of the foundation of Western culture. The Book of Genesis begins with an animate statue, a sculpture made of clay and animated by God to create the first human, Adam. The Jewish legends of goloms (man-made statues of clay, animated by text on a scrap of paper) continue this theme. Christians believe that God himself became man in Christ, a total transformation of the physical body by the spiritual. Statues that animate, whether through wires and gears or through imagination and legend, put pressure on many of the issues of the Western intellectual tradition: the dualism of the body and the mind (or the object and the spirit), the sign and the signified, presence and absence, science and art, religion and magic, and rationality and irrationality.

For medieval and early modern Catholics, both sacramental theology and the figure of the animate statue in saint legends posited a connection between the spiritual and the physical, a conduit through which the spiritual could manifest physically and through which humans could access the divine. The physical objects in sacraments are not empty reminders of God’s grace but actually convey grace. Animate statues and the Catholic tradition of reverencing saints by praying before images place these sculptures at the intersection of paganism and Christianity, idolatry and faith, magic ritual and

¹ Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World* (London: 1614), EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 20638, p. 201.

religious devotion. Many religious statues also provide a powerful continuity between the past and the present—not only as tactile objects that have endured for hundreds of years but also as representations of exemplary models of piety that can inspire and instruct the present faithful. Many Catholics also believe that religious statues stand at the boundary between the material world and the spiritual, as a channel to access the divine more effectively—many medieval statues and shrines became centers of pilgrimage because of stories of miracles performed there. For example, the chapel of Our Lady of Walsingham was one of the most important medieval pilgrimage sites in England, until 1538 when the shrine and wooden statue of the Virgin Mary were destroyed. In 1511, King Henry VIII himself walked barefoot from Barsham Hall to give a necklace to the statue. The next year, Desiderius Erasmus made the pilgrimage, later writing “Pilgrimage of Pure Devotion.”² At Boxley Abbey, another important pilgrimage site, the statue of Christ was animated with wires.

The Smithsonian Museum houses one of the few surviving early modern animate statues that still work, a mechanical monk; according to the museum, the figure dates from the 1560s, most likely from Spain. The mechanical monk, though only about fifteen inches tall, is strikingly life-like, with piercing eyes and an expression of determined focus. When he comes to life, he slowly turns his head and seems to peer directly at the person in front of him as he begins to walk forward. He raises his rosary and cross, glancing at them and then back at the viewer. His mouth opens and shuts, and he audibly pounds his chest with his right hand in a *mea culpa* gesture, occasionally

² Desiderius Erasmus, *A dialoge or communication of two persons deuysyd and set forthe in the late[n] tonge, by the noble and famosse clarke. Desiderius Erasmus intituled [the] pylgremage of pure deuotyon* (London: 1540). EEBO, STC (2nd ed.) / 10454.

raising the cross and rosary he carries in his left hand to his lips. His fierce intensity of expression and slow, ritualistic movements seem to rule out the possibility that he is merely a toy, an after-dinner entertainment. Rather, the monk seems to articulate a perpetual call to penance and a demonstration of perfect discipline in prayer and ritual.

This statue will complete the cycle of movements seven times when he is fully wound: according to Elizabeth King, “The uninterrupted repetition corresponds exactly to a trance-like performance of prayer, incantation.”³ The eeriness comes in part from these ambiguous boundaries between prayer and incantation, faith and magic. My dissertation explores this ambiguous dichotomy along with the tensions between Catholicism and Protestantism.

MAGIC AND THE DECLINE OF (CATHOLIC) RELIGION

To understand the mechanical monk in terms that honor the beliefs of early modern Catholics, we must turn toward religion as a valid human experience that cannot be reduced to other factors, such as politics or economics. New Historicism has recently been criticized for its lack of attention to certain aspects of human experience, such as religion and the belief in magic. New Historicists have had a tendency to “empty” religion from cultural objects and practices, pushing for a secularist view of early modern theater and literature. This attitude has been particularly detrimental to understanding the relation between Catholics and Protestants in the period.

³ Elizabeth King,
http://www.blackbird.vcu.edu/v1n1/nonfiction/king_e/prayer_introduction.htm

Greenblatt's most well-known example of the approach, "Shakespeare and the Exorcists," deals with both exorcism and the transition of Catholic vestments into theatrical props.⁴ In order to negotiate the definition of the sacred in the early modern period, Greenblatt analyzes a 1603 anti-Catholic pamphlet, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures to withdraw the hearts of her Majesties Subjects from their allegiance, and from the truth of Christian Religion Professed in England, under the pretence of casting out devils*, penned by Samuel Harsnett. Greenblatt adopts the anti-Catholic mindset of Harsnett to demystify religion and religious awe from exorcism, reducing it to a fraudulent spectacle (and thus related to a secularized theater). Harsnett does, however, pinpoint a fundamental aspect of Catholicism: the belief in the possibility that the spiritual can inhabit a material object or body. When evil spirits inhabit the material object or body, Catholics believe that exorcism can cast that spirit out. Although Harsnett claimed exorcism was a Catholic hoax, Keith Thomas observes, "Basic to [Catholic rituals and sacraments]... was the idea of exorcism, the formal conjuring of the devil out of some material object by the pronunciation of prayers and the invocation of God's name."⁵ If Catholic priests claim to have the ability to cast out demons, it seems probable that humans could also invite good spirits to dwell with and within them. The human body becomes like a hermetic temple statue in Saint Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians: "Or know you not that your members [bodies] are the temple of the holy Ghost which is in you, whom you haue of God, and you are not your owne? For you are

⁴ Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare and the Exorcists," in *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988).

⁵ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner's, 1971), p. 29.

bought with a great price. Glorifie and beare God in your body.”⁶ Greenblatt cites accounts of the affective faked spectacle of exorcism in the period, but he does not pursue them as an indicator of the possibility that, according to Catholics, spirits might dwell in material objects or that material objects, such as those used in religious ritual or in the theater, might possess spiritually affective power.

By emptying the spiritual from the material, Greenblatt rejects the Catholic belief system represented by exorcism and embodied in blessed vestments, even when they are used as a stage prop. For a Catholic, the objects used in sacraments and sacramentals are infused with, and sometimes transformed by, the spiritual. Keith Thomas characterizes this connection between the spiritual and the material as magical: the power of Catholic sacraments relies upon “the magical notion that the mere pronounciation of words in a ritual manner could effect a change in the character of material objects.”⁷ Even when these objects are transferred to a secular setting, they still remain transformed, just as the recusant Catholics secretly maintained their beliefs and customs in an early modern England hostile to their religion.

Thomas Rist, joining others who criticize Greenblatt’s methodology,⁸ eloquently summarizes the underlying problem with New Historicism’s effort to empty religion from the literary artifacts of early modern England: “Part of the problem here is that

⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, in *The Nevv Testament of Iesus Christ, translated faithfully into English... specially for the discoverie of the corruptions of diuers late translations, and for cleering the controversies in religion, of these daies: in the English Colledge of Rhemes*, trans. Gregory Martin (Rheims: 1582), p. 436.

⁷ Thomas, p. 33.

⁸ See, for example, Sarah Beckwith’s essay, “Stephen Greenblatt’s Hamlet and the Forms of Oblivion” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, 2 (Spring, 2003): 261-80; Tom McAlindon’s “Testing New Historicism: ‘Invisible Bullets’ Reconsidered,” in *Shakespeare Minus “Theory”* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 23-43; and Gerald Kilory, *Edmund Campion: Memory and Transcription* (Aldershot, 2005).

Greenblatt's developing argument removes Catholicism from the historical record.... Greenblatt's argument [in "Shakespeare and the Exorcists"] renders explicit what his various approaches to the topic have always implied tacitly: New Historicism's traditional readings of early modern theatre have been Reformist readings.... Seen in the wider perspective of English critical history, it marginalizes the Catholic in a way that is eerily familiar—albeit, one hopes, unconscious."⁹ After the recent movement in early modern studies, now called "the turn to religion,"¹⁰ New Historicists have admitted religion as a category of identity, but only a subordinate one. In 2006, Julia Reinhard Lupton wrote, "religion takes its place after race, gender, and class as a determinate category of cultural identity."¹¹

Yet, according to one of the foundational stories of Western literature, the book of Genesis, the human body is an animate statue, ensouled by a spirit like the hermetic temple statues: God formed the human body from clay, and breathed life (*anima*, the breath, or soul) into this sculpture. According to this story of the origin of the human race, we ourselves are objects that have been spiritually transformed. Instead of joining Greenblatt and followers, what if we changed direction and allowed religious experience to remain, both on-stage and in literary criticism? What does Saint Paul mean when he talks about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and how can a material human body, a statue, or other objects be possessed by a soul that does not belong there, to be in need of

⁹ Thomas Rist, "Shakespeare Now and Then: Communities, Religion, Reception," in *Writing and Religion in England, 1558-1689: Studies in Community-Making and Cultural Memory* Ed. Roger D. Sell and Anthony W. Johnson (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2009), p. 119.

¹⁰ See Ken Jackson and Arthur Marotti's brilliant discussion of the critical movement in "The Turn to Religion in Early Modern Studies," *Criticism* 46, 1 (Winter, 2004): 167-90.

¹¹ Julia Reinhard Lupton, "The Religious Turn (to Theory) in Shakespeare Studies," *English Language Notes* 44 (2006): 145-9.

exorcism? How does it change our readings of early modern literature if we overlook our material/spiritual dualism and imagine the possibility of the spiritual transforming physical objects, as in hermeticism and Catholicism?

Reading with this syncretic context in mind, one can not only explore the relationship between the early modern period and antiquity but also uncover a more complex interplay between early modern Protestantism and Catholicism. Frances Yates was the first to read early modern literature with a focus on hermeticism. Her work has been criticized because she does not acknowledge other forms of magic circulating at the time but privileges the hermetic movement; she has also been criticized for concentrating her analysis on only a few passages of the *Hermetica*.

I have chosen to focus on hermeticism *because* of the controversial (and famous) animate statue passage in the *Asclepius* (24) and the fact that Christian scholars since Augustine saw it as too idolatrous and pagan to be reconciled with Christianity. Because Catholicism has a similar concept of how the spiritual and the material might interact, and because Protestants also demonized Catholics as idolatrous, one would expect any hermetic or Catholic statues in Protestant literature to be destroyed as idols. Yet, these statues are portrayed positively.

Using the findings of iconography and mythography, I argue that by evacuating Catholicism of its theology, historicists have ignored the continued power of sacred objects in Protestant literature. My dissertation turns to Catholic doctrine and religious experience to explain the startling presence of the benevolent animate statues in works by authors who have traditionally been categorized as Protestant;¹² one would expect these

¹² My interest, however, is not to discover a secret belief in Catholicism for these authors,

statues to be portrayed as empty, false idols, but instead they animate, revealing a real presence of the divine and offering spiritual guidance to other characters. Catholic doctrines such as transubstantiation and rituals such as the blessing of holy water are based on belief that the material object can be spiritually transformed and transformative. These romances draw on more than Catholicism's rich historical symbolism; in their fictional worlds, these physical objects have spiritual power and make present a nonmaterial entity, just as Catholics believe the Eucharistic bread becomes the body of Christ and not a mere reminder of Christ's sacrifice. In my project, I extend the syncretic methods pioneered by modern scholars such as Frances Yates, while working to correct their errors.

The first chapter investigates Spenser's Egyptian lexicon for the Catholic veneration of sacred images in the Temple of Isis in Book 5 of the *Faerie Queene*. Though not Catholic, Spenser salvages the spiritual power of material objects for his own literary project. By deploying Egyptian mythology as the setting for Britomart's dream vision of English Empire, Spenser sketches a *translatio imperii* from Egypt to Rome and from Rome to England, a transfer not only of political but also of religious power. Based upon medieval interpretations of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue (Daniel 2:31-35), Rome was thought to be the last great empire before the Apocalypse. The king dreams of a statue with a head of gold (thought to allegorize the Babylonians), chest and arms of silver (the Medians), belly and thighs of bronze (the Persians), and feet of iron and of clay (the Hellenistic period); a stone (Christianity) from a mountain crashed into the feet

although much recent scholarship on Shakespeare in particular has focused on proving him to be a closet Catholic. Rather, I am interested in why these benevolent idols appear in works by authors writing during the Reformation (especially authors such as Milton, who was also simultaneously virulently anti-Catholic).

of the statue, and broke it into a powder that blew away in the wind, leaving only the stone behind. As Spenser explains in the proem to Book 5 of the *Faerie Queene*, the world has degenerated from its golden past to what he calls an age of stone, and, in order to regenerate the world, he must reach back into antiquity for inspiration.

Political transfer of power intertwines with salvation history and so is also a religious transfer of power. When the world did not end with the fall of Rome, it was logical to assume that the empire was transferred to another European king; for England to vie for the inheritance of the Roman Empire, it had to show a lineage to Rome, just as Britomart's dream vision shows Queen Elizabeth's ancestry. In her dream vision, Britomart can be seen not only as Isis but also as the Virgin Mary. Spenser's emphasis on the spiritual power of the Isis statue to transform Britomart leads me to a contemporary title-page image in John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*. The textual and visual correlations between the Isis statue and Dee's monad testify to a shared reverence for images in otherwise Protestant culture. The *Faerie Queene* educates readers, like Britomart, to recognize the difference between sacred art and empty idolatry – to resist seduction by Busirane's statue of Cupid and to acknowledge the power of Isis.

While Spenser appropriates Egyptian and Catholic spirituality for the project of nation-building, Shakespeare deploys hermetic magic as an emblem for the sacrament of penance. The second chapter contends that the Apollonius tale from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* helps Shakespeare to explore the power of reconciliation “to make men glorious.” The tale's claim to glorify men suggests that it transforms its audience by effecting, not merely signifying, grace. The shipwrecks in the play may allude to the Reformation debate over the “second plank after shipwreck,” or the sacramentality of

penance. The play begins with an emblem of the deadly sin of lust, described cryptically by Antioch's incestuous daughter as cannibalistic snakes. This serpentine detail, which does not appear in the riddle in Shakespeare's source, closely corresponds to a printer's mark found on the title-page of Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, a volume that also contains the hermetic *Asclepius*. Even if Shakespeare was not familiar with this book, understanding the juxtaposition of the seven deadly sins with hermetic symbols on this title-page helps to make sense of the play's juxtaposition of hermeticism and reconciliation: both the title-page and the play reveal a cultural trace of belief in the spiritual power of images. The play emblemizes the restorative aspects of reconciliation, the antidote to the seven deadly sins, with alchemical and medical images of purification, culminating in Cerimon's reanimation of Thaisa through a specifically Egyptian magic that closely follows the ritual to ensoul statues in the *Asclepius*. Like Cerimon's magic, Marina's confession of her name revives Pericles from his stony despair and allows him to confess his own identity and reconcile the entire family. As Sarah Beckwith finds in her most recent book, "to confess is to begin to chart paths to self-knowledge, commitments made to different futures, and claims, callings out in the light of these avowals, and admittances which risk and require response, and in kind." She also observes that "the earliest uses of the word 'acknowe' are intimately bound up with the histories of this sacrament [penance], especially in the act of confession. (The first definition given for confession in the *OED* is 'to acknowledge'; the second 'to make oneself known.'"¹³ The music of the spheres and Pericles' vision of Diana of Ephesus confirms the restorative power of reconciliation.

¹³ Sarah Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ.

The Winter's Tale continues Shakespeare's meditation on the emotional metamorphoses produced by the sacrament of reconciliation and by the irenic reunion of faiths. The third chapter argues that Shakespeare creates an affective communion among the audience members and the characters. This communal effect resembles the workings of the Holy Spirit in a Mass, which was incorporated into hermetic theory by Lodovico Lazzarelli in his *Crater Hermetis*, one of the first hermetic writings to explicitly synthesize Christianity and hermeticism. The hermetic animation of Hermione emblemizes the moment of reconciliation, in which the communion of the characters onstage and of the audience in the theater approaches the communion experienced by a congregation in church. As in the Temple of Isis and Diana's Temple at Ephesus, the Apollo Temple in *The Winter's Tale* parallels a Catholic space, and the Oracle's ceremony mirrors the Eucharist. Throughout the final acts of the play, the audience witnesses several moments of communion: the First Gentleman's apocalyptic report of the reconciliation of the kings; the Third Gentleman's empathetic description of Perdita's grief for her mother, which figures the witnesses as statues animated by compassion; and the final miraculous animation of Hermione. Leontes' "saintlike sorrow" is not complete until he reconciles with Polixenes, like the required confession for Holy Communion. Leontes underscores the relationship among hermetic magic, Catholic penance, and transubstantiation: the statue's "Magic... ha's / My evils conjur'd to remembrance," "piercing to my soul," and "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating"(V.iii.39-40, 35, 109-10). Because of the statue, Leontes' obdurate heart softens, and the spirit of

reconciliation descends upon him and upon the audience; the stone of the statue responds by softening into flesh.

The final chapter examines the Catholic and hermetic parallels in Milton's "Il Penseroso" and *Comus*, both written around 1634 well after Isaac Casaubon proved that the *Corpus Hermeticum* was written not by an ancient Egyptian but by an early Christian. In both works, Milton traces a shared system of correspondences underlying Catholicism and the demystified hermeticism in order to explore the relationship between the material world and the immaterial soul in the context of angelology, Ficinian music theory, the contemplative lives of nuns, the Catholic sacrament of Extreme Unction, and ritual exorcism. *Penseroso*'s personified Melancholy has an elaborate pagan pedigree, but her Catholicism is much more explicit than the statues in Spenser and Shakespeare's romances; she is not only a "goddess" but also a "nun, devout and pure" (lines 11, 31). The *Mask's* Lady is also described in Catholic terms, and her story follows the narrative arc of a virgin martyr legend. When *Comus* captures and paralyzes the Lady, the Spirit (in early drafts of the masque, this character was originally named Daemon, a classical instantiation of the guardian angel) arms the brothers to rescue her with the "divine effect" of Haemony, "more med'cinal... then that Moly / That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave" (lines 630, 636-7). Haemony is infused with virtue through the astral-pharmaceutical magic detailed in the *Asclepius* and Marsilio Ficino's writings. However, astral magic alone fails; Sabrina, herself transformed through a ritual strongly recalling the Last Rites of Catholicism, frees the Lady with water from her "fountain pure," recalling baptism, exorcism, and the sprinkling of holy water during Mass; medieval penitentials also recommended holy water as a defense against sexual temptation. Milton

suggests at the end of both the masque and the poem that readers too can be transformed by his poetry, if their “ears be true” to discern what “more is meant then meets the ear” (*Comus*, 997; “Penseroso,” 119).

After the Reformation in England, fiction became the only public forum to experience sacraments, whether represented in a straightforward manner or concealed beneath an allegory of pagan religion. Indeed, the act of imagination potentially approaches a sacramental, religious experience. Shakespeare draws our attention explicitly to this possibility at the end of *The Winter’s Tale*. Watching a play can be a communal experience, like participating in a church congregation; the force of belief in the fictional world creates that world onstage and binds the participants together in a shared vision. Phebe Jenson recognizes this religious potential of drama as a form of community specifically for Catholics who were otherwise isolated.¹⁴ Reading can also approach this religious kind of experience, creating a communal vision between reader and author in the project of animating and vivifying the words on the page. Regina Schwartz suggests a “sacramental poetics” for the period,¹⁵ although for Catholics this would entail a much more specific definition of sacrament than the one that Schwartz proposes. For the Catholic audience, a sacramental poetics would mean a particular kind of communal experience that could potentially convey grace, one that transcends the divide between the material and the spiritual, between death and life, between the secular and the sacred, between the mortal and the divine.

¹⁴ See *Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare’s Festive World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008).

¹⁵ See *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2008).

WHAT'S PAST IS PROLOGUE

The mechanical monk statue moves in several senses of the word. It is animate, soul-filled, seeming to move at its own will, and therefore uncanny; Freud defined this emotion as the uncertainty of the extent to which something is or is not alive. The mechanical monk also moves the viewer affectively: wonder at the miraculous craft (of God or of men), fear, awe, curiosity about how the statue works, philosophical speculation about the difference between human beings and automata,¹⁶ and hatred for the visual symbols of a rejected religion or culture (pagan or Catholic) are among the possible reactions this statue might provoke. The mechanical monk also moves among paradigms, from the Catholic belief in miracles, sacraments, and intercession, to the belief in magic, to the celebration of human ingenuity and scientific technology.

While reformers might have been horrified by this statue and denounced it as evidence of a mechanical, hollow faith, the Catholics who created this automaton and watched it perform would have seen it as an example to emulate, not only in the particular saint represented by the statue (several scholars have suggested that the monk represents San Diego de Alcalà, who died in 1463¹⁷) but also in the figure's perfect and tireless prayer. Like the rosary beads that the mechanical monk holds, this statue enables

¹⁶ See René Descartes' anticipation of the Turing test in his *Treatise of Man* (trans. Thomas Steele Hall [Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2003]) and *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006).

¹⁷ See Elizabeth King, "Clockwork Prayer: A Sixteenth-Century Mechanical Monk," *Blackbird* 1,1 (Spring, 2002): 1-29.

the human viewer to experience an inner transformation through repetitive meditation, whether for the constant intercession of this specific saint or a more general prayer.

The statue may have been commissioned by King Philip II as a gesture of thanksgiving to God for the miraculous cure of his son, Don Carlo, who had fallen down a flight of stairs and suffered a serious head injury in 1562. This miracle inspired both the king and the prince to strive to canonize San Diego as the first Counter-Reformation saint. Despite, and perhaps because of, the ministrations of a team of ten doctors, nearly a month went by after the prince's fall, and everyone was certain that he would die.¹⁸ A woodcut from the period shows the final measure taken to save the prince: Fra Diego's body was exhumed from the Church of Saint Francis and placed on Don Carlo's sickbed, by order of the king. Fra Diego, a local saint or *beati*, had himself died of an infection. Though delirious with fever and blinded by infection, Don Carlos touched the corpse and then touched his own face. Don Carlo later reported that the saint visited him in a vision the night before his miraculous recovery, wearing a Franciscan habit and carrying a small wooden cross, and told him he would survive the infection.¹⁹ According to the hagiography of Fra Diego, he died clutching a wooden cross and praying in Latin, a language he did not know.

¹⁸ As the English Ambassador Chaloner wrote to Queen Elizabeth, "nature hath, in despite of the surgeons' inconsiderate dealing, done more for the prince than they were aware of" ("Chaloner to Cecil [May 12, 1562]," in Louis-Prospere Gachard, *Don Carlos et Philippe II* [Brussels: E. Devroye, 1863] 2:637-39).

¹⁹ See L. J. Andrew Villalon, "Putting Don Carlos Together Again: Treatment of a Head Injury in Sixteenth-Century Spain," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26.2 (1995): pp. 347-65.



As the English Ambassador Chaloner predicted, “if God sende the prince to escape, that fryer is not unlike to be canonized for his laboure.”²⁰

The prince’s recovery was attributed to the material remains of a Catholic friar. The holy body itself, in addition to the intercession of the saint, worked a physical change in Don Carlo. Don Carlo wrote a clause in his will about this incident: “Being in the grip of sickness, despaired of by the doctors and left for dead by my lord father... the body of the sainted Brother Diego was brought to me. And when... I touched it, I felt the improvement which our Lord God saw fit to bestow upon me.... I beg my lord, the king, that as a particular favor to me, he will procure this end [the canonization of Fra Diego] which he too desires.”²¹ Praying to the saint was evidently not enough; both King Philip II and Don Carlo believed that contact with the physical relics of the saint restored the

²⁰ Gachard, 2:640.

²¹ Qtd. in L.J. Villalon, “San Diego de Alcala and the Politics of Saint-Making in Counter-Reformation Europe,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 83, 4 (Oct., 1997): 691-715, p. 706.

prince's health. King Philip II wrote to Pope Pius IV supporting the canonization of Fra Diego as an important Counter-Reformation gesture to inspire Catholics that "would redound... the confusion of the many heretics living in these times."²² San Diego was eventually canonized as the first Counter-Reformation saint in 1588, largely because of this miraculous cure and because of King Philip's persistence.

If King Philip II commissioned the mechanical monk to commemorate the friar who saved his son, he likely hired Gianello Turriano,²³ an engineer and master clocksmith who had made similar statues for the king's father. Turriano had followed King Charles V during his convalescence at the San Yuste monastery; the animate statues and clockwork birds he created to amuse his sovereign gained him the reputation of a magician:

This was the man that, in the Emperours solitary life, daily recreated his spirits, (much taken with such novelties) by shewing unheard of Engines and Inventions: For often, when the Cloth was taken away after dinner, he brought upon the board little armed figures of Horse and Foot, some beat[ing] Drums, others sounding Trumpets, and divers of them charging one another with their Pikes. Sometimes he sent wooden sparrows out of his chamber into the Emperours Dining-room, that would flie round, and back again; the Superiour of the Monastery, who came in by accident, suspecting him for a Conjuror.²⁴

While the emperor delights in Turriano's ingenuity and the author of the passage acknowledges the "Engines and Inventions" that animate these automata, the priest suspects that magic is involved. Catholicism and Catholic attitudes toward animate statues are not monolithic: while some Catholics could reconcile technology and religion (or magic and religion), others could not.

²² Qtd. in Villalon, "San Diego de Alcala," p. 705.

²³ Turriano had made an astronomical clock for King Charles V, and in 1570 John Dee marveled at the fact that it would take 7000 years for one wheel inside the clock to turn.

²⁴ Famiano Strado, *De bello Belgico The history of the Low-Countrey warres*, trans. Sir Robert Stapylton (1650). EEBO Wing / S5777, p. 7.

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English reformers centuries later targeted Catholic statues, encouraging Catholics to assume once again the role of anti-iconoclasts. Reformers aligned Catholic reverence of objects (such as the Host, statues of saints, and consecrated bells) with idolatry and even with paganism, and when they took over the Catholic churches, many of the images (particularly of the Virgin Mary and other saints) had to be removed or defaced, whether through official iconoclastic spectacle or through illicit private destruction, to protect congregations from the temptation to lapse into the old ways of worship. Private acts of iconoclasm occurred early in King Henry VIII’s reign, but after the Dissolution of the monasteries in 1538, official iconoclasm destroyed much sacred art. As Margaret Aston puts it, “The spectacular burning or dismemberment of idols served the purpose of winning support for religious change by calling crowds to witness the ritual dismissal of rejected cult objects. Corporately venerated objects were corporately eliminated. Iconoclasm was a social process, designed to give group solidarity to the inauguration of doctrinal change.”²⁹

One of the most famous statues subjected to the public spectacle of iconoclasm was the Rood of Grace at the Cistercian Boxley Abbey in Kent. Like the Smithsonian’s mechanical monk, the Boxley Rood was mechanized: it could move its eyes and lower lip

²⁸ Kathleen Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England, 1350-1500* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 56, 60.

²⁹ For a detailed account of Reformation iconoclasm, see Eamon Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (Yale Univ. Press, 1992); Margaret Aston’s *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350-1600* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2003), p. 262.

through “certain ingynes and olde wyer, wyth olde roton stykkes in the backe of the same,” according to Geoffrey Chambers’ report to Cromwell.³⁰ The ancient wire and rotten sticks suggest that the mechanism had not been used or maintained in a long time. This evident decay did not stop Cromwell’s men or Bishop Hilsey of Rochester, who staged an elaborate exposé, first parading the crucifix around Maidstone and then through London to Paul’s Cross on February 24, 1538. Bishop Hilsey gave a sermon, both denouncing the Blood of Hailes as duck blood and dismantling the Boxley crucifix to expose its machinery. He invited the congregation to help him tear apart the statue, thus “transform[ing] objects of traditional devotion into a piece of evangelical propaganda.”³¹

The medieval Catholic faith in the possibility of miracles and the ability of material objects to be infused with or transformed by the spiritual (in sacraments such as the Eucharist and in holy relics, for example) could easily be reinterpreted by reformers as thaumaturgy, either in the form of charlatan trickery or soul-endangering pacts with demonic powers.³² According to Helen Parish, “The bold assertion that the age of miracles had passed enabled evangelical writers to reject as frauds and diabolic deceptions a multitude of miracles attributed to the saints of the past, and break apart the foundations of the cult of the saints, pilgrimage and sacred thaumaturgy.... Evangelical interpretations of the miracles of the saints conferred an eschatological dimension upon

³⁰ See *Original Letters Illustrative of English History, Including Numerous Royal Letters; From Autographs in the British Museum, and One or Two Other Collections*, ed. Henry Ellis, 4 vols. (London: Harding and Lepard, 1824-46) 3:168-9).

³¹ Helen L. Parish, *Monks, Miracles, and Magic: Reformation Representations of the Medieval Church* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 79.

³² Later, Puritans would accuse more moderate reformers of both papism and magic. For examples of reformer propaganda linking Catholicism with magic, see E. Worsop, *A Discoverie of Sundry Errours* (1582); Reginald Scot, *A Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584); H. Holland, *A Treatise against Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1590); and A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft* (1516).

the history of the church, but also placed the discussion of the boundary between miracle and magic, saint and sorcerer at the centre.”³³ Associating the Catholic Church with sorcery cast the Church in the apocalyptic role of the false church of Revelations, the Antichrist, and the Whore of Babylon. In the preface to a 1574 anonymous English translation of John Bale’s “The Pageant of the Popes,” the translator decries the Catholic “myning the Sacramentes, theyr sorcerye, charmes, coniurings, familiaritie with deuils, and honouring of euill spirites.”³⁴ William Perkins, in the 1600 edition of his *A Golden Chaine*, writes, “[S]urely, if a man will but take a view of all poperie, he shall easily see, that the most part is meere Magique.”³⁵

For these reformers, Catholic reverence of images constituted idolatry and was linked with the idolatry of sorcery. According to Wouter Hanegraaff, one of the leading scholars in the field of hermeticism, “Renaissance controversies over the acceptability of magic revolved largely around two quite brief but notorious fragments of the Hermetic *Asclepius*. In these so-called ‘god-making’ passages, Hermes Trismegistus describes in admiring terms the ancient Egyptian practice by which the priests used to draw down the powers of the cosmos into their temple statues.”³⁶ In his gloss of the final book of the Bible, John Napier directly follows his denunciation of Catholic reverence to statues with a list of Catholic sorcerers: “What crucifixes and other Idoles of golde, siluer, and other

³³ Parish, pp. 46, 47.

³⁴ See also John Bale, who describes hagiography as “fable” in *The pageant of popes contayninge the lyues of all the bishops of Rome, from the beginnunge of them to the yeare of Grace 1555*, trans. I.S. (London: 1574) EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 1304.

³⁵ William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine...* (London: 1600) EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 19646, p. 51.

³⁶ Wouter Hanegraaff, “Sympathy or the Devil: Renaissance Magic and the Ambivalence of Idols” *Esoterica* vol. 2, available online:

<<<http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumelI/Sympdevil.html>>>

materials, were both priuately in their oratories, and publickly in their Churches adored.... Came they not barefooted, barelegged, bareheaded, grouelings and kneeling with their handes holden vp to these Images, and with their faces and eies direct to them, making such prayers and supplications as in their very boks are intituled, a prayer to the Image of Christ, and a prayer to the crosse of Christ.... 22 Popes or thereby, that were most horrible *Necromancers*, like as there is one part of their seruice that is called *Exorcismus*, contening superstitious and magical enchantments and conjurations of oyl, of salt, of holy water, of belles, beads, *Principiosis*, *Agnus Dei*, and other such like.”³⁷

The seven cycles of the San Diego animate statue may call to mind the seven sacraments, which were categorized as magic by many early modern reformers. For Catholics, both prayer and sacrament claim to effect an inner transformation through words and rituals, a way to access the divine through physical bodies and objects (such as the rosary, the crucifix, and the very statue itself). From a Protestant perspective, sacraments such as the Eucharist are magical (and therefore idolatrous) rituals. Many of the superstitious uses of consecrated objects, for example, to kill weeds or ward off storms, were not officially condoned by the Catholic Church as an institution; however, sacraments such as the Mass were understood to work a material change in objects through ritual. John Bale claimed the Mass, “wyth manye straunge obseruacyons borrowed of the Iewes and paganes olde sacryfyces,” was only practiced by magicians: “It serueth all wytches in theyr wytchery, all sorcerers, charmers, inchaunters, drea|mers, sothsayers, necromansers, con|iures, crosse dyggers, deuyll raysers, myracle doers,

³⁷ John Napier, *A plaine discoverie of the whole Revelation of Saint Iohn* (London: 1594). EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 18355, pp. 136-7.

doggelech, and baw|des. For wythout a Masse, they can not well worke theyr feates.”³⁸ This demonization of Catholic miracle also shored up the Reformation’s emphasis on the Bible; Catholic miracles and saint stories are part of an oral tradition that reinforce doctrine, such as Purgatory, that do not necessarily have a clear biblical source. For evangelicals, Purgatory and other Catholic beliefs were merely fables, authorized only by other fables in saint legends.

Throughout this evangelical propaganda against Catholic saints and miracles, a pattern emerges of identifying Catholic practices not only with magic but also with “feigning” and “fable.” George Joye, for example, condemns the “myserable religion and wretched churche that cannot be defended but with fiche lyes false miracles fayned reuelacions & so pestelent doctryne.”³⁹ In *Actes and Monuments*, John Foxe derides Catholics who “haue replenished the whole Church of Christ with fained fables, lying miracles, false visions, miserable errors contained in their Missals and Portuses, Breuiars, and Summaries, and almost no true tale in all their Saintes lyues and Festiualls, as now also no great truthes in our Lo|uanian bookes.” Foxe dismisses Saint Dunstan’s legend, for example, as fable and also suspects him of sorcery: “The like fainings and monstrous miracles we reade also in chronicles of doting Dunstane, drowned in all superstition, if he were not also a wicked sorcerer.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Anne Askew, *The first examinacio[n] of Anne Askewe lately martired in Smythfelde, by the Romyshe popes vpholders, wyth the elucydacyon of Iohan Bale* (London: 1547), EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 851, Di^r.

³⁹ George Joye, *The subuersio[n] of Moris false foundation where upon he sweteth to set faste and shove under his shameles shoris, to vnderproppe the popis churche: made by George Ioye*. (London: 1534) EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 14829.

⁴⁰ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments...* (London: 1583) EEBO STC (2nd ed.)/11225.

chronological order of the *prisca theologia* was contested). Through Moses, hermeticism intersects with the Christian-Judeo tradition; many Renaissance scholars attributed the miracles Moses performs in the Old Testament in part to the magic he learned from hermetic priests as he grew up in Egypt. For Christians interpreting the *Hermetica*, hermetic wisdom could potentially enable humans to regenerate Adam's knowledge of nature, lost after the Fall; according to hermetic theory, this prelapsarian knowledge had been slowly rediscovered and passed down through Noah, Solomon, and the other adepts of the *prisca theologia*.

Cardinal Cesare Baronius's Counter-Reformation text *Annales Ecclesiastici* (twelve volumes published from 1588-1607) lists Hermes Trismegistus among the ancient prophets of Christianity as part of a retaliation against the Lutheran history of the Church (intended to demonstrate Catholicism's deviation from the early church and its apocalyptic role as the Antichrist). Significantly as part of an anti-Catholic attack on Baronius, in 1614 Isaac Casaubon debunked the author of the *Corpus Hermeticum* as an early Christian rather than an Egyptian priest contemporary with Moses. In demystifying hermeticism, Casaubon shattered the *prisca theologia*, or the belief that a single, true theology transcended time and geographical space to unite all religions, further weakening Catholicism's similar historical claim to authority.

Even before Casaubon's 1614 demystification of the *Corpus Hermetica*, Christians had difficulty assimilating one of the dialogues in the *Corpus*, the *Asclepius*, with their own beliefs. In one of its most controversial passages, Hermes Trismegistus provides instructions for a ritual that would call down the spirits of angels or demons to ensoul and animate a statue: "Our ancestors once erred gravely on the theory of divinity;

they were unbelieving and inattentive to worship and reverence for god.... then they discovered the art of making gods... Because they could not make souls, they mixed this power in and called up the souls of demons or angels and implanted them in likenesses through holy and divine mysteries, whence the idols could have the power to do good and evil.”⁴² The dialogue differentiates these temple gods from the supreme deity. The spirits who ensoul the statue do not require *latría*, just *dulia*, a distinction also made in Catholicism between the worship of God and the reverence of saints.

Saint Augustine was one of the first to make this distinction, and precisely in the context of differentiating between pagan polytheism and Christian reverence of saints and of God. Book 10 of the *De Civitate Dei* is dedicated to making this distinction: “those immortal and blessed spirits established in Heaven as Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, and Powers. The Platonists call them gods or, at least, good demons or even like us, angels. We must ask in what sense it is credible that they should desire from us any kind of religious devotion.” Augustine’s preliminary answer to this question is to abandon the general word in Latin, *servitus*, for more precise terms in Greek: “this is the worship which we owe to the divinity, or, if I must speak more exactly, to the deity. However, since I do not find a sufficiently suitable Latin expression, I must use a Greek term to suggest in one word what I wish to say. Wherever the term *latreia* has been found in Sacred Scripture, our interpreters, I know, have translated it as service. But the service which is due to men... is commonly called by another name in Greek [*duleia*], whereas the term *latreia*, according to the usage of those who put divine revelation into

⁴² Copenhaver, p. 90

human language, refers always or almost always to that service which pertains to the worship of God.”⁴³

The *Asclepius* also refers to this “service” due to the one God: “Cherishing the god of heaven [“him who alone is all and is father of all”] and all that heaven contains means but one thing: constant assiduous service... Heaven and heavenly beings take delight in wonderment, worship, praise and service from humans.”⁴⁴ While the statue gods must be “entertained with constant sacrifices, with hymns, praises and sweet sounds in tune with heaven’s harmonies” in order to ensure “that the heavenly ingredient enticed into the idol by constant communication with heaven may gladly endure its long stay among humankind,” it is sacrilege to make such offerings to the supreme God: “To burn incense and such stuff when you entreat god smacks of sacrilege. For he wants nothing who is himself all things or in whom all things are. Rather let us worship him by giving thanks, for god finds mortal gratitude to be the best incense.”⁴⁵ Both Catholic saints and hermetic statues require *dulia*, or honor and reverence, from men, but God alone requires *latria*.

Though the statue passage is a minor part of the *Hermetica*, it is also one of the most famous; Saint Augustine also quoted the passage at length in order to denounce it as representative of pagan idolatry in chapter 23, book 8 of *De Civitate Dei*; he does not deem the temple statues worthy of *dulia* and interprets the passage as an instance of blasphemous *latria*.⁴⁶ He also interprets the passage typologically as a prediction of his

⁴³ Augustine, *City of God*, ed. Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Image Books, 1958), p. 186-7.

⁴⁴ Copenhaver, p. 72.

⁴⁵ Copenhaver, pp. 90, 92.

⁴⁶ Augustine, p. 166.

contemporary time, when Christians were destroying pagan statues. The Reformation gives this allegory other possible applications. Because reformer polemic often associated Catholicism with the Egyptian and because of the iconoclastic culture of the Reformation, an early modern reader might see a correlation between the *Asclepius*'s apocalyptic vision and reformers breaking statues and desecrating the Catholic religion. As Wouter Hanegraaff argues in his latest book, "the hermetic animation of statues became a central issue in various debates concerning the relation between biblical monotheism and 'pagan' traditions." Hanegraaff suggests that the animation of images "is in fact central to the 'Grand Polemical Narrative' of Western culture, because it is crucial to most of the oppositions that have structured its development, notably monotheism versus paganism, religion versus magic, Protestantism versus Roman Catholicism, materialism versus animism, doctrinal belief versus ritual practice, and even science and rationality versus art and the irrational."⁴⁷

Given the Reformation's attitude toward Catholic statues and saint miracles, it seems particularly unlikely that English poets long-identified as Protestant, such as Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, and John Milton, would include in their romances positive representations of animate statues, especially statues embedded in both a hermetic and Catholic context. One would expect these statues to be torn apart as idols, following the fate of the Boxley Rood of Grace and countless other art casualties of Reformation iconoclasm; however, these statues each, like the hermetic statues, convey truth in their fictional worlds and guide the other characters to fulfill their destinies.

⁴⁷Wouter Hanegraaff, book abstract for *The Presence of Gods: Monotheism and the Animation of Images*, forthcoming. For the full abstract, see Dr. Hanegraaff's website: http://www.amsterdamhermetica.nl/#p/wouter-j-hanegraaff_2.html

CHAPTER 1
READING CATHOLIC ART
IN EDMUND SPENSER'S TEMPLE OF ISIS

—I am all that has been and is and will be, and no mortal has yet dared to
lift my veil.

Inscription on an Isis statue, Plutarch *De Iside et Osiride*⁴⁸

Isis has interceded for the Roman masses since antiquity; the temple of Isis Campenis was one of the most prominent temples of ancient Rome. Even today, when protestors of the government or the papacy wish to voice their objections, they write on a placard and place it on the Piazza di San Marco Isis statue, the only female of five *statue parlanti* scattered throughout the city. Isis thus intervenes for the powerless; it is the colossus who speaks, not the individual, and it is the statue who must be answered. In Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Britomart, the Lady Knight of Chastity, also receives a message from an Isis statue. On her way to rescue her beloved Artegal from Amazonian captivity, Britomart stops to rest at the Temple of Isis. The Lady Knight confronts the Isis statue, meditating upon its mystery. When Britomart prostrates herself in prayer, the statue of Isis miraculously moves, revealing a spiritual presence in the physical object.

⁴⁸ This chapter is forthcoming in *Studies in Philology* 109, 2 (Spring 2012).

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²⁷ For a list of English statues and their miracles, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 27. Perhaps the most influential animate statue is the crucifix in the church of San Damiano that spoke to Saint Francis of Assisi, commanding him to rebuild the house of God.

exempla encourage listeners to treat images as holy beings, a fusion of spirit with wood or stone or paint that is manifested by their movement, speech, bleeding, and powers to effect desired results.”²⁸

English reformers centuries later targeted Catholic statues, encouraging Catholics to assume once again the role of anti-iconoclasts. Reformers aligned Catholic reverence of objects (such as the Host, statues of saints, and consecrated bells) with idolatry and even with paganism, and when they took over the Catholic churches, many of the images (particularly of the Virgin Mary and other saints) had to be removed or defaced, whether through official iconoclastic spectacle or through illicit private destruction, to protect congregations from the temptation to lapse into the old ways of worship. Private acts of iconoclasm occurred early in King Henry VIII’s reign, but after the Dissolution of the monasteries in 1538, official iconoclasm destroyed much sacred art. As Margaret Aston puts it, “The spectacular burning or dismemberment of idols served the purpose of winning support for religious change by calling crowds to witness the ritual dismissal of rejected cult objects. Corporately venerated objects were corporately eliminated. Iconoclasm was a social process, designed to give group solidarity to the inauguration of doctrinal change.”²⁹

One of the most famous statues subjected to the public spectacle of iconoclasm was the Rood of Grace at the Cistercian Boxley Abbey in Kent. Like the Smithsonian’s mechanical monk, the Boxley Rood was mechanized: it could move its eyes and lower lip

²⁸ Kathleen Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England, 1350-1500* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 56, 60.

²⁹ For a detailed account of Reformation iconoclasm, see Eamon Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (Yale Univ. Press, 1992); Margaret Aston’s *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion, 1350-1600* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2003), p. 262.

through “certain ingynes and olde wyer, wyth olde roton stykkes in the backe of the same,” according to Geoffrey Chambers’ report to Cromwell.³⁰ The ancient wire and rotten sticks suggest that the mechanism had not been used or maintained in a long time. This evident decay did not stop Cromwell’s men or Bishop Hilsey of Rochester, who staged an elaborate exposé, first parading the crucifix around Maidstone and then through London to Paul’s Cross on February 24, 1538. Bishop Hilsey gave a sermon, both denouncing the Blood of Hailes as duck blood and dismantling the Boxley crucifix to expose its machinery. He invited the congregation to help him tear apart the statue, thus “transform[ing] objects of traditional devotion into a piece of evangelical propaganda.”³¹

The medieval Catholic faith in the possibility of miracles and the ability of material objects to be infused with or transformed by the spiritual (in sacraments such as the Eucharist and in holy relics, for example) could easily be reinterpreted by reformers as thaumaturgy, either in the form of charlatan trickery or soul-endangering pacts with demonic powers.³² According to Helen Parish, “The bold assertion that the age of miracles had passed enabled evangelical writers to reject as frauds and diabolic deceptions a multitude of miracles attributed to the saints of the past, and break apart the foundations of the cult of the saints, pilgrimage and sacred thaumaturgy.... Evangelical interpretations of the miracles of the saints conferred an eschatological dimension upon

³⁰ See *Original Letters Illustrative of English History, Including Numerous Royal Letters; From Autographs in the British Museum, and One or Two Other Collections*, ed. Henry Ellis, 4 vols. (London: Harding and Lepard, 1824-46) 3:168-9).

³¹ Helen L. Parish, *Monks, Miracles, and Magic: Reformation Representations of the Medieval Church* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 79.

³² Later, Puritans would accuse more moderate reformers of both papism and magic. For examples of reformer propaganda linking Catholicism with magic, see E. Worsop, *A Discoverie of Sundry Errours* (1582); Reginald Scot, *A Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584); H. Holland, *A Treatise against Witchcraft* (Cambridge, 1590); and A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft* (1516).

the history of the church, but also placed the discussion of the boundary between miracle and magic, saint and sorcerer at the centre.”³³ Associating the Catholic Church with sorcery cast the Church in the apocalyptic role of the false church of Revelations, the Antichrist, and the Whore of Babylon. In the preface to a 1574 anonymous English translation of John Bale’s “The Pageant of the Popes,” the translator decries the Catholic “myning the Sacramentes, theyr sorcerye, charmes, coniurings, familiaritie with deuils, and honouring of euill spirites.”³⁴ William Perkins, in the 1600 edition of his *A Golden Chaine*, writes, “[S]urely, if a man will but take a view of all poperie, he shall easily see, that the most part is meere Magique.”³⁵

For these reformers, Catholic reverence of images constituted idolatry and was linked with the idolatry of sorcery. According to Wouter Hanegraaff, one of the leading scholars in the field of hermeticism, “Renaissance controversies over the acceptability of magic revolved largely around two quite brief but notorious fragments of the Hermetic *Asclepius*. In these so-called ‘god-making’ passages, Hermes Trismegistus describes in admiring terms the ancient Egyptian practice by which the priests used to draw down the powers of the cosmos into their temple statues.”³⁶ In his gloss of the final book of the Bible, John Napier directly follows his denunciation of Catholic reverence to statues with a list of Catholic sorcerers: “What crucifixes and other Idoles of golde, siluer, and other

³³ Parish, pp. 46, 47.

³⁴ See also John Bale, who describes hagiography as “fable” in *The pageant of popes contayninge the lyues of all the bishops of Rome, from the beginnunge of them to the yeare of Grace 1555*, trans. I.S. (London: 1574) EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 1304.

³⁵ William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine...* (London: 1600) EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 19646, p. 51.

³⁶ Wouter Hanegraaff, “Sympathy or the Devil: Renaissance Magic and the Ambivalence of Idols” *Esoterica* vol. 2, available online:

<<<http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeII/Sympdevil.html>>>

materials, were both priuately in their oratories, and publickly in their Churches adored.... Came they not barefooted, barelegged, bareheaded, grouelings and kneeling with their handes holden vp to these Images, and with their faces and eies direct to them, making such prayers and supplications as in their very boks are intituled, a prayer to the Image of Christ, and a prayer to the crosse of Christ.... 22 Popes or thereby, that were most horrible *Necromancers*, like as there is one part of their seruice that is called *Exorcismus*, conteining superstitious and magical enchantments and conjurations of oyl, of salt, of holy water, of belles, beads, *Principiosis*, *Agnus Dei*, and other such like.”³⁷

The seven cycles of the San Diego animate statue may call to mind the seven sacraments, which were categorized as magic by many early modern reformers. For Catholics, both prayer and sacrament claim to effect an inner transformation through words and rituals, a way to access the divine through physical bodies and objects (such as the rosary, the crucifix, and the very statue itself). From a Protestant perspective, sacraments such as the Eucharist are magical (and therefore idolatrous) rituals. Many of the superstitious uses of consecrated objects, for example, to kill weeds or ward off storms, were not officially condoned by the Catholic Church as an institution; however, sacraments such as the Mass were understood to work a material change in objects through ritual. John Bale claimed the Mass, “wyth manye straunge obseruacyons borrowed of the Iewes and paganes olde sacryfyces,” was only practiced by magicians: “It serueth all wytches in theyr wytchery, all sorcerers, charmern, inchaunters, drea|mers, sothsayers, necromansers, con|iures, crosse dyggers, deuyll raysers, myracle doers,

³⁷ John Napier, *A plaine discoverie of the whole Revelation of Saint Iohn* (London: 1594). EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 18355, pp. 136-7.

doggeleches, and baw|des. For wythout a Masse, they can not well worke theyr feates.”³⁸

This demonization of Catholic miracle also shored up the Reformation’s emphasis on the Bible; Catholic miracles and saint stories are part of an oral tradition that reinforce doctrine, such as Purgatory, that do not necessarily have a clear biblical source. For evangelicals, Purgatory and other Catholic beliefs were merely fables, authorized only by other fables in saint legends.

Throughout this evangelical propaganda against Catholic saints and miracles, a pattern emerges of identifying Catholic practices not only with magic but also with “feigning” and “fable.” George Joye, for example, condemns the “myserable religion and wretched churche that cannot be defended but with fiche lyes false miracles fayned reuelacions & so pestelent doctryne.”³⁹ In *Actes and Monuments*, John Foxe derides Catholics who “haue replenished the whole Church of Christ with fained fables, lying miracles, false visions, miserable errors contained in their Missals and Portuses, Breuiars, and Summaries, and almost no true tale in all their Saintes lyues and Festiuals, as now also no great truthes in our Lo|uanian bookes.” Foxe dismisses Saint Dunstan’s legend, for example, as fable and also suspects him of sorcery: “The like fainings and monstrous miracles we reade also in chronicles of doting Dunstane, drowned in all superstition, if he were not also a wicked sorcerer.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Anne Askew, *The first examinacio[n] of Anne Askewe latelye martired in Smythfelde, by the Romyshe popes vpholders, wyth the elucydacyon of Iohan Bale* (London: 1547), EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 851, Di^r.

³⁹ George Joye, *The subuersio[n] of Moris false foundation where upon he sweteth to set faste and shove under his shameles shoris, to vnderproppe the popis churche: made by George Ioye*. (London: 1534) EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 14829.

⁴⁰ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments...* (London: 1583) EEBO STC (2nd ed.)/11225.

John Bale further links Catholicism with the fabled magicians of Egypt: “Neuer had the sothsayers of Egypte, nor Pharaoes calcars, more subtile pointes of conueyaunce, wyth all their incantacions and necromancies, than had these relygiouse vowers and ydell braggers of chastite.... And moch helpe obtayned they to practise in that arte, by the fyne wurkes of... fryre Albert, frire Bakon of Oxford, ... frire Bongay, ... and a great sort more.”⁴¹ Albert Magnus was not only canonized as a saint but also named one of thirty-four Doctors of the Church; after his death, many alchemical works were attributed to him, such as the *Theatrum Chemicum*. Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay also had a reputation for occult practices, which were later dramatized by playwright Robert Greene in 1589. Bale claims that these legendary friar-sorcerers learned their magic from the Egyptians, simultaneously fitting them into the hermetic *prisca theologia* and denouncing them as frauds.

Neoplatonism, which had demolished the old cosmology of inanimate planets by ensouling the universe as a cosmic organic unity, was born in large part through Marsilio Ficino’s translations of Plato and texts attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, thought to be an ancient Egyptian. In fact, Cosimo de’ Medici commanded Ficino to stop working on the Plato translations as the hermetic texts were more important; he finished translating the *Hermetica* in 1462. Ficino, ordained a Catholic priest in 1477, believed that the hermetic wisdom had been handed down through the centuries by the world’s greatest thinkers (including Hermes Trismegistus, Moses, Pythagoras, and Plato, although the

⁴¹ John Bale, *The apology of Iohan Bale agaynste a ranke papyst anuswering both hym and hys doctours, that neyther their vowes nor yet their priesthode are of the Gospell, but of Antichrist*. (London: 1550) EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 1275. It is interesting to note that Bale associates Catholic vows of chastity with Egyptian magic and that Spenser chose to represent both Catholicism and Egyptian mysteries in his *Legende of Chastitie*.

After Britomart falls asleep, the statue grants her a dream-vision of her future, announcing the birth of a powerful son.

The veneration of statues is not the only Catholic element in this episode of the *Faerie Queene*. It is not just that the image of Isis seems to act within a Catholic tradition of animate Marian statues; the priests of Isis Temple also seem puzzlingly Catholic, with their moon-like mitres, their belief that wine is blood, and their “morrow Mas” ritual (V.vii.17.8).⁴⁹ Though Spenser labels the statue an “idoll” three times, this statue is also sacred unlike the art of Busirane or Gerioneo, and it is a source of truth and comfort for

I would like to thank Dr. Meredith Skura and Dr. Joseph Campana for their incisive comments and the Margaret C. Ostrum Summer Research Grant for funding my research in Amsterdam. I would also like to thank the J. R. Ritman Library’s curator, Dr. F.W. van Heertum, for granting me access to first editions of John Dee’s *Monas Hieroglyphica*, and Dr. Wouter Hanegraaff for his helpful comments on an earlier draft.

⁴⁹Most scholars focus on book one when discussing Catholicism in Spenser. See the special issue *Reformation* volume 6 and Harold Weatherby, “Holy Things.” *English Literary Renaissance* 29, 3 (Autumn 1999): 422-42. For Catholicism in book 6, see Kenneth Borris, “‘Diuelish Ceremonies’: Allegorical Satire of Protestant Extremism in *The Faerie Queene* VI.viii.31-51.” *Spenser Studies* 8 (1990): 175-209, and Michael Tratner, “‘The thing S. Paule ment by... the courteousness that he spake of’: Religious Sources for Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*.” *Spenser Studies* 8 (1990): 147-74. Beatrice Ricks and Clifford Davidson specifically discuss Catholicism in the Isis Temple. Ricks focuses on book one in her article, but in her conclusion she mentions the Catholic term “mass” in the Isis episode as well as the mitres that recall papism. She argues that the way to tell the difference between good and evil characters’ uses of sacramentals in book one is in their own dispositions and not in the objects themselves or in a Catholic authorization of those objects (“Catholic Sacramentals and Symbolism in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*,” *JEPG* 52 [1953]: 322-331. While I agree that the way in which these objects are used is important, I suggest that in the Isis temple, it’s not just Britomart’s response to the statue that makes it sacred; more importantly, the spirit inside the statue animates it, making it a channel for the divine. Davidson points out the similarity between the priests’ daily sacrifice might recall the “Roman Catholic ritual of the Mass which comprehends the Eucharist as sacrifice” (“The Idol of Isis Church,” *Studies in Philology* 66 [1969]: 70-86, 72). Richard Mallette notes that Spenser uses apocalyptic imagery in the Isis episode, particularly the correspondences between Britomart and the Woman of the Apocalypse, but his overall reading has an anti-Catholic tone and is political rather than aesthetic (“Book V of *The Faerie Queene*: An Elizabethan Apocalypse,” *Spenser Studies* 11 [1994]: 129-59).

Britomart. One would expect the iconoclastic poet who razed the Bower of Bliss in the second book of his epic to break the Isis idol as well, especially given its Catholic context. However, this statue is not hollow; its movement reveals a real presence of the divine, a spirit that provides guidance for Britomart by granting her a true vision of her future. Through the Isis scene, Spenser acknowledges the reliance of his own fiction upon a Catholic belief in the spiritual efficacy of images.⁵⁰

Spenser's engagement with the power of physical objects and images, an engagement that approaches the Catholic use of sacraments and sacred images, is not limited to the fifth book of his epic. In the first book of the epic, Red Crosse Knight only overcomes the dragon after experiencing a transformative baptism in the "well of life" (I.xi.29-30). This baptism is more Catholic than Protestant; the water literally is efficacious, not just a symbol or a remembrance: "For vnto life the dead it could resotre, / And guilt of sinfull crimes cleane wash away," and it is explicitly compared to the "Jordan," in which Christ himself was baptized (I.xi.30.1-6).⁵¹ Harold Weatherby has also argued that the cross on Red Crosse Knight's shield also acts as a spiritually powerful image, as it protects the knight even when he sleeps.

⁵⁰ Many early modern reformers, of course, participated in meditation and may have used visual art to those ends (one thinks especially of the woodcut illustrations in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, located in every church). However, the reformers' fear of idolatry and any behavior toward art that might be construed as idolatry differs greatly from the Catholic embrace of visual art as a devotional aid.

⁵¹ See Clinton Allen Brand's "Sacramental Initiation and Residual Catholicism in the Legend of Holiness." *Reformation* 6 (2002): 133-44 and James. Schiavoni's "Sacrament and Structure in *The Faerie Queene*." *Reformation* 6 (2002): 115-18. See also Harold Weatherby's "Holy Things." *English Literary Renaissance* 29, 3 (Autumn 1999): 422-42; *Mirrors of Celestial Grace: Patristic Theology in Spenser's Allegory* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1994); and "What Spenser Meant by Holinesse: Baptism in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*." *Studies in Philology* 84 (Summer 1987): 286-307.

C.S. Lewis defends Spenser's allegory from Catholic associations by claiming that though "all allegories whatever are likely to seem Catholic to the general reader... the truth is not that allegory is Catholic, but that Catholicism is allegorical."⁵² C.S. Lewis acknowledges that Spenser's writing might seem Catholic, but then he claims this is only because Spenser borrows from the material symbols of the medieval religion. While I agree with C.S. Lewis's claim that Spenser borrows from Catholic symbolism, I argue here that Spenser also relies upon the efficacy of material objects, a position closely associated with Catholicism. Lewis writes, "Allegory consists in giving an imagined body to the immaterial; but if, in each case, Catholicism claims already to have given it a material body, then the allegorist's symbol will naturally resemble that material body." As Andrew Weiner writes, however, according to the Renaissance and medieval theories of allegory, "Allegory is precisely Catholic, based upon the notion embodied in the works of the scholastics that the truths of faith, the mysteries of God, are indeed open to rational understanding" in the book of nature, a concept shared by hermeticists.⁵³ While both Catholics and Protestants might endorse this view of nature, they would understand it differently. For Reformers such as Calvin, human ignorance and natural depravity prevent us from understanding God's truths in the book of nature. For Catholics, however, the material world is necessarily allegorical and can be spiritually efficacious; humans can access the divine through the use of material objects and the human body in

⁵² C. S. Lewis, *Allegory of Love*, p. 322

⁵³ Andrew Weiner, "Spenser's 'Moiopotmos' and the Fates of Butterflies and Men" *JEGP* 203-220, p. 218. Weiner cites both the famous hermeticist Pico della Mirandola and St. Victor: "this whole visible world is a book written by the finger of God, that is created by divine power; and individual creatures are as figures therein not devised by human will but instituted by divine authority to show forth the wisdom of the invisible things of God" (p. 218).

prayer. These objects (a consecrated Host, holy water for baptism, blessed oil for confirmation or the last rites) are not merely objects that remind of us of God's grace; they actually convey grace.

In order to explain the efficacy of this Egyptian statue, which seems strangely Catholic, I first turn to the renaissance of Egyptology and hermeticism in the century before Spenser wrote his epic. Spenser's interest in the affinities between Catholicism and the Isis cult, particularly the belief in the spiritual efficacy of material objects in devotion, leads me to a possible source for the Isis scene in *The Faerie Queene*. By comparing John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* to Spenser's text, I carve out hermeticism and the Egyptian as a trope for Catholicism in the cultural discourse of Elizabethan England. Spenser's verbal imagery of his temple and statue corresponds with Dee's visual image on the title-page of his text. Through textual analysis, I argue that for Spenser and Dee the contemplation of images and material objects leads to moments of spiritual transformation and communion with God. Discussion of Dee's monad illuminates the ways in which both the monad and Spenser's Isis statue are hieroglyphs and the connections between these Egyptian statues and Catholic statues. I conclude my discussion of Spenser and Dee by suggesting that we can read the *Faerie Queene* as part of the genre of hagiography. The ability of readers to imitate Britomart's discernment of the difference between sacred art and empty idolatry – to resist seduction by Busirane's statue of Cupid and to fall to their knees before Isis – is part of the education that the *Faerie Queene* provides.

by which she is worshipped in various places of the world, including Minerva, Venus, Diana, Proserpina, Ceres, Juno, Bellona, and Hecate, ending this catalogue with what is presumably her favorite name, Isis: “et qui nascentis dei Solis et occidentis inclinantibus inlustrantur radiis Aethiopes utrique priscaque doctrina pollentes Aegyptii caerimoniis me propriis percolentes appellant vero nomine reginam Isidem.”⁷⁰ The Virgin Mary also appropriates the role of pagan goddesses, signaled by her attribute of the moon. As Warner argues, “The moon has been the most constant attribute of female divinities in the western world, and was taken over by the Virgin Mary because of ancient beliefs about its functions and role.”⁷¹

As far as I know, this connection between the Virgin Mary and the Isis statue has not been explored in Spenser scholarship, although Beroaldo sees the correspondence in his interpretation of the *Golden Ass*. He even suggests that Lucius’s hymn to Isis be adopted by Catholics as a prayer to the Virgin: “Apuleius’ petitions could be applied most appropriately to the goddess of the Christians, so that whatever is said in this place about the moon or Isis could be said reverently and properly about the blessed Virgin. Countless hymns, petitions, and prayers have been composed to the holy Virgin by learned men, but there is nothing... to be compared with this petition of Apuleius... if she were entreated by it, our goddess would be no less won over and propitiated than by all the prayers of the saints. Look at the language, consider the emotions, ponder the divine mysteries: you will see that nothing more perfect could be devised, and that the prayer is worthy of being incorporated in our rites and of being specifically employed every day to

⁷⁰ “And principally the Aethiopians whiche dwell in the Orient, and the Aegyptians which are excellent in all kind of ancient doctrine, and by their proper ceremonies accustome to worship mee, doe call mee Queene Isis” (Adlington, 11.5).

⁷¹ Ibid.

pray to the saving protectress of the Christian religion.”⁷² As Gaisser points out, Beroaldo uses the exact term for the Virgin Mary that Apuleius coins for Isis: *sospitatrix*, or saving protectress.

The Virgin shares lunar iconography with Isis, often appearing with a crescent moon at her feet. This iconography also conflates the Virgin with the *amicta sole* of Revelations 12:1: “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.” In this image, the sun represents Christ, and the woman usually represents the Church Triumphant. The Song of Songs also contributes to Mary’s moon iconography, further conflating the Virgin, the *amicta sole*, and the bride of Christ who is “fair as the moon” (6:10). In this icon, Mary is simultaneously the mother and bride of God. Even when a particular work of art did not mandate this constellation of references, the moon was a symbol of the Virgin. As Steven Ostrow concludes, “So closely related was the flawless moon to Mary’s identity that artists often portrayed it as her attribute even when depicting a vision of the Virgin different from that in the Apocalypse.”⁷³

The Virgin as both bride and mother of God parallels the marriage of equity and Justice in the relationships of both Isis and Osiris and Britomart and Artegall. Mary has unique influence upon her son/spouse, and later medieval Catholics even venerated her as a co-Redeemer; Catholics continue to perform devotions to Mary because of her powerful intercessory role with Christ who will be the Judge during the Apocalypse. Carol F. Heffernan recounts an early sixth-century legend of an animate statue that illustrates the

⁷² qtd. in Gaisser, p. 210.

⁷³ Steven Ostrow, “Cigoli’s *Immacolata* and Galileo’s Moon: Astronomy and the Virgin in Early Seicento Rome,” *Art Bulletin* 78 (1996): 218-35, p. 225.

parallel *mediatrix/salvatrix* roles of the Virgin and Spenser's Isis. In this story, Theophilus repents his oath to the devil by prostrating himself before an image of the Virgin Mary. While the image of God on the same altar turns his head away, the image of the Virgin responds to Theophilus by leaving the altar and traveling to Hell to gain his freedom.⁷⁴ Mary embodies equity, or the spirit of the law, forgiving and even exacting salvation for those like Theophilus, whom God lawfully rejects and ignores. Similarly, the statue of Isis keeps a firm foot on Osiris, "To shew that clemence oft in things amis, / Restraines those sterne behests, and cruell doomes of his" (V.vii.22.8-9). Britomart must first enter the temple of Isis before she can rescue Artegall from the Amazons, and she must leave Artegall's servant, Talus, outside. Talus, as an "yron man," embodies the rigidity and inflexibility of the letter of the law (V.i.12.2). Though Book V is the legend of Artegall, it is Britomart who first learns the centrality of mercy to the virtue of justice, how to look beyond the literal interpretation of the law by appealing to the spirit of equity. In a temple that is more Catholic than Protestant, Britomart discovers her role in promoting justice as Artegall's queen, in the same way that Isis tempers Osiris and the Virgin Mary intercedes to mediate God's justice.

After meditating upon the statue of Isis, Britomart envisions her own transfiguration. In her vision, she wears the vestments of Isis's priests, "deckt with Mitre on her hed, / And linen stole after those Priestes guize" (V.vii.13.2-3). She performs a "sacrifize / To Isis" (V.vii.13.1-2). As the dream progresses, Britomart is no longer distinct from Isis. Spenser's infamous pronoun ambiguity in the dream vision further identifies Britomart with Isis syntactically, particularly at the emotional climax of the

⁷⁴Carol Heffernan, "Praying before the Image of Mary: Chaucer's Prioress's Tale, VII 502-12" *Chaucer Review* 39, 1 (2004): 103-116, 109.

dream when the Crocodile first threatens and then makes love to an ambiguous “her.” After devouring the sudden fire, the Crocodile “gan to threaten her likewise to eat; / But that the Goddess with her rod him backe did beat” (V.vii.15.8-9). Then, the Crocodile “before her feete he lowly threw, / And gan for grace and loue of her to seeke” (V.vii.16.2-3). In each case the goddess is the closest pronomial referent, but the priest interprets the Crocodile as Artegall and the impregnated woman as Britomart. Grammatically, “her” seems to refer to the goddess, but allegorically the action concerns Britomart’s future.

Britomart also becomes the Virgin Mary as the Woman of the Apocalypse in her dream. Suddenly her Isiac vestments are “transfigured” to “a robe of scarlet red, / And Moone-like Mitre to a Crowne of gold” (V.vii.13.5-6). “[T]o be transfigured” is a religiously loaded verb, invoking the transfiguration of Christ, “to elevate, glorify, idealize, spiritualize.”⁷⁵ In fact, Spenser only uses the verb once more in the *Faerie Queene*; in the Mutabilitie Cantos, he explicitly invokes the transfiguration of Christ as a comparison for the shining light of Dame Nature’s garment:

As those three sacred *Saints*, though else most wise,
 Yet on mount *Thabor* quite their wits forgat,
 When they their glorious Lord in strange disguise
 Transfigur’d sawe; his garments so did daze their eyes.

(VII.vii.7.6-9)

Britomart’s red robe and golden crown are not symbolic merely of her destiny to reign as an earthly queen—Catherine of Alexandria is often depicted in a red robe and with a golden crown to signify her mystical marriage to Christ, as she appears in the *Sala dei*

⁷⁵ Definition 2, s.v. “transfigure,” OED 2d edn.

Santi.⁷⁶ In this transfiguration, Britomart also is a bride of Christ, imitating the Virgin Mary in addition to becoming Isis, both Queens of Heaven. Britomart's vision of her future pregnancy and the birth of her child also identify her with the *amicta sole*, the woman standing on the moon, in John's vision: "She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.... She gave birth to a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter" (Rev. 12:2, 12:5). In both Merlin's prophecy and the Isis priest's interpretation of her dream, Britomart's son is likened to a lion in power and in rule (III.iii.30.1, V.vii.23.8). In addition, the priest greets Britomart in terms that invoke the Virgin Mary: "Magnificke Virgin" (V.vii.21.1). The word *magnific* derives from the same Latin root as the Magnificat, or the hymn of the Virgin based upon Luke 1:46 in which she "magnifies" God and declares her own unworthiness in response to the announcement that she will be the mother of Christ.⁷⁷ In a mystical context and after the vision of the greatness of her future son, "Magnificke Virgin" identifies Britomart with Mary.

By identifying Britomart, the mythical ancestor of Queen Elizabeth, with both Isis and the Virgin Mary, Spenser invokes not only an imperial genealogy but also a religious one. Britomart's transfiguration into Isis follows the trajectory of Lucius in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*. When Isis, the Queen of Heaven, returns Lucius to his human form, he becomes a shrine bearer in the *Roman* Temple of Isis Campensis, another *translatio imperii*. Plutarch explains that the shrine bearers "are they who carry in their soul, as in a

⁷⁶In Hans Memling's *The Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine of Alexandria*, Mary also wears red (ca. 1479, Memlingmuseum, Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges). In Botticelli's *Madonna and Child, With Six Saints*, Saint Catherine wears the same colors as the Virgin, including a red robe (ca. 1470, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence).

⁷⁷ s.v. "magnify," OED 2d edn.

box, the sacred lore about the gods which is pure of all superstition and vain curiosity.”⁷⁸
In the process of his transformation, Lucius deeply internalizes the sacred lore of the gods; Britomart’s transfiguration implies an internalization of not only the Isis lore but also Catholic beliefs about the Virgin Mary. Filled with “sacred lore” or the Word, as in the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, Britomart becomes an animate statue herself.

HERMETICISM IN ISIS CHURCH

Spenser not only draws upon the Egyptian associations of Hermes Trismegistus but also uses the *Asclepius* of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, thought to be written by Apuleius, as a source for the animation of the Isis statue in the *Faerie Queene*. By referring to Isis as a “made” goddess, a goddess whose “fayned colours shad[e] a true case,” Spenser invokes the dialogue in which Asclepius and Hermes Trismegistus discuss sacred art and how gods are made. Hermes asserts, “Just as...[God] is maker of the heavenly gods, so it is mankind who fashions the temple gods who are content to be near to humans.” Hermes explicitly refers to the statues in the temples as the gods that men create, but he specifies that these statues cannot be empty idols. In order to be gods, these statues must be full of spirit: “I mean statues ensouled and conscious, filled with [vital] spirit and doing great deeds.” The souls inhabiting these statues are either “demons or angels.” Like the Isis statue, these Egyptian statues “foreknow the future... by prophecy, [and] by dreams” and help to guide individuals toward their personal destinies.⁷⁹ In *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* (On Obtaining Life from the Heavens), Marsilio Ficino cites Isis

⁷⁸ Plutarch, p. 121.

⁷⁹ Copenhaver, pp. 80, 81, 90, 91

EGYPTOLOGY, CATHOLICISM, AND THE HERMETIC RENAISSANCE

Spenser's invocation of Egyptian monuments, such as the Isis statue, helps establish a cultural imperial genealogy, a *translatio imperii*, culminating in England as the next great empire. The Egyptian obelisks, pyramids, and temples in Rome monumentalize the empire not only of ancient Rome but also of Roman Catholicism. This *translatio imperii* often materialized in the form of dismantling the Egyptian temples and monuments as quarries for Roman memorials. Just four years before Spenser published the first books of the *Faerie Queene*, Pope Sixtus V entrusted Domenico Fontana with the Herculean task of relocating to Saint Peter's square the Vatican obelisk, which was said not only to mark the site of Saint Peter's crucifixion but also to contain the remains of Julius Caesar. After moving the obelisk to the center of Catholic worship, Fontana attached a huge, bronze gilded cross to the top, transforming it into a pedestal for the sign of Christianity. The transfer of empire was also a transfer of the sacred. Sixtus banished any pagan spirits that lurked within the obelisk and even carved a cross onto it: "I exorcize you, creature of stone, in the name of God."⁵⁴ Using the idols of the past as pedestals for Christian images was a triumphalist maneuver of the Counter-Reformation; emptied of evil spirits to make room for the Holy Spirit, the pagan idol became a symbol of the proper use of images and a firm stance against Protestant accusations of idolatry.

Roman Catholics recycled not only the material remains of ancient Egypt but also the Egyptian myths, based upon Plutarch's *Moralia*. Plutarch's allegorical account of

⁵⁴ "Exorcizote, creatura lapidis, in nomine Dei." Qtd. in Michael Cole, *The Idol in the Age of Art* (Farnham UK: Ashgate, 2009), p. 66.

Egyptian mythology, *De Iside et Osiride*, encouraged later Christian readers to see the Egyptian stories as Christian precursors. In one of the few accounts of ancient Egypt available to medieval and Renaissance readers, Plutarch explains that the Egyptian philosophy “is hidden for the most part in myths and stories which show dim reflections and insights of the truth.”⁵⁵ Instead of reading the violent myth of Osiris and Isis literally, Plutarch interprets Osiris as the Logos and Typhon as the destructive force that rends and scatters the sacred Word, “the lore of the gods.” By interpreting Egyptian stories allegorically, Plutarch’s history invited Christians to read the myth typologically: Osiris as Christ and Isis as the Virgin Mary.⁵⁶

The Vatican itself embraces Egyptian myth as an analogue to Christian legend in the *Sala dei Santi* of the Borgia Apartments, commissioned in 1492 by Pope Alexander VI, who claimed he was descended from Osiris through the Egyptian Hercules. Bernardino Pinturicchio incorporates the Roman into Egyptian scenes to establish a *translatio imperii* in the main frescos of the room, particularly in the *Disputa of Saint Catherine* of Alexandria; the foreground of the painting shows the familiar scene of Catherine out-arguing Maxentius and his fifty pagan philosophers, but in the background, the Roman Arch of Constantine looms, out of place. The monument signifies not only Constantine’s eventual victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge but also the birth of a universal Roman Catholic Empire.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, ed. J. Gwyn Griffiths (Cambridge: Univ. of Wales Press, 1970), p. 131.

⁵⁶ Plutarch, pp. 205, 121. N. Randolph Parks argues that in the *Sala dei Santi*, Osiris represents the church militant, Isis symbolizes the Virgin Mary, and Typhon manifests violence against the Word (“On the Meaning of Pinturicchio’s *Sala dei Santi*,” *Art History* 2, 3 [September 1979]: 291-317).

⁵⁷ According to Lactantius, Constantine received a dream-vision instructing him to paint

Just as anachronistic as the appearance of a Roman monument in Alexandria is the Isis and Osiris cycle—Brian Curran calls it an “Egyptian passion cycle”⁵⁸—on the ceiling of a room dedicated to Christian saints. The northern vault depicts Osiris’s invention of agriculture. In the first scene, he marries Isis after renouncing war; the three subsequent fields represent his cultivation of peace as he teaches humanity how to plow, to tend vines, and to gather fruit. The southern vault illustrates the “Egyptian passion cycle.” In the first scene, Typhon murders and dismembers Osiris, scattering his limbs; in *The Restoration and Rites of Osiris’s Body*, Isis recovers all of the body parts and interments them; in *The Advent of the Apis*, Osiris returns as the Apis bull; in the final compartment, *The Procession of the Apis*, a transmogrified Osiris presides as a priest. Like the anachronistic appearance of the Roman arch in Saint Catherine’s fresco, a child carries the papal insignia at the front of the Osiris procession, transferring power from Egypt to Rome. This *translatio imperii*, from Egypt to ancient Rome to Roman Catholicism, is underscored by the placement of *The Procession* above the *Disputa*.

Moses also makes an anachronistic appearance in the *Sala dei Santi* Egyptian cycle, a reference to the syncretic movement of Renaissance hermeticism, initiated thirty years earlier by Marsilio Ficino’s translation of fourteen newly discovered Hermetic texts. Pinturicchio includes this recent scholarship in his cycle in the arch that separates the northern and southern vaults. The intrados of this arch depicts Io’s translation into

the sign of the cross on the shields of his men to achieve victory (*On the Deaths of the Persecutors*, chap. XLIV). Spenser may have been thinking of this legend when composing his own Legend of the Red Crosse Knight. See Parks for a reading of this room as symbolic of Alexander VI’s efforts to expel the Moors from Spain and against the Ottoman Turks to re-establish a Holy Roman Empire.

⁵⁸ Brian Curran, *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 115.

Isis, including Hermes Trismegistus and Moses as the priests who attend Isis.⁵⁹ Hermes Trismegistus taught Isis how to resurrect Osiris; according to legend, he also passed his wisdom down to future generations in writings collectively known as the *Corpus Hermeticum*. This chain of sacred teaching—including Orpheus, Pythagoras, Plato, and even Moses—was called the *prisca theologia*, and it reconciled pagan, classical wisdom with Christianity. In 1462, just thirty years before the *Sala dei Santi* project, Cosimo de' Medici commissioned Marsilio Ficino to translate fourteen books of the *Corpus Hermeticum* from the Greek manuscript into Latin. Ficino believed the supposedly Egyptian texts prophesied Christianity; he entitled his translation, “Book on the Power and Wisdom of God, Whose Title is Pimander.” In his preface, he also relates the genealogy of the *prisca theologia*, authorizing Hermes Trismegistus as a prophet.

Ficino's *Pimander* sparked a renaissance of interest in the Hermetic texts. By the mid-sixteenth century, there were twelve editions of Ficino's translation; translations in French, Dutch, Spanish, and Italian; and Greek editions in 1554 and 1574. In 1591, Francesco Patrizi published a new translation in his *Nova de Universis Philosophia*, arguing that Hermes Trismegistus should replace the academic emphasis on Aristotelian philosophy. The *Asclepius*, a dialogue in which Hermes Trismegistus explains to Asclepius how to call spirits down into statues, also was widely published. A Latin edition was first printed in Rome in 1469 (reprinted in 1488 and 1497) as part of the collected works of Apuleius, including his *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*. Ficino's *Pimander* and the *Asclepius* were also published together along with Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum* in 1532, 1549, 1552, 1570, 1577, and 1607. The numerous

⁵⁹ Hermes Trismegistus also appears prominently in a floor mosaic in the Cathedral of Siena, dating around 1482-83.

editions of the *Hermetica* attest its popularity and influence. Petrarch was among famous readers of the *Hermetica*: a Vatican manuscript of the Asclepius dialogue contains his extensive marginalia.⁶⁰

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF BRITOMART: MYSTICISM IN THE TEMPLE OF ISIS

Spenser creates his own *Sala dei Santi* in his *Faerie Queene*. As we read through the *Faerie Queene*, we walk through a hagiographical series. Each of the books is entitled “The Legende” of its protagonist, referring to the original meaning of the word legend: the life of a saint. This pattern is especially confirmed by the first book, which relates the life of England’s patron saint, Saint George. In the fifth book of this verbal *sala dei santi*, Spenser paints a vivid encounter between Britomart and Isis in her temple to provide a mythical genealogy for Queen Elizabeth, just as Pinturicchio dedicates his ceiling to the Egyptian Queen of Heaven to commemorate Pope Alexander VI’s mythical ancestors.

While many critics find a Protestant inflection in the temple of Isis, the text reads like a woman mystic’s narrative, with its meditation on images that leads to a dream vision, its evocation of the Virgin Mary, and the description of the priests and the temple.⁶¹ Almost a century before the *Faerie Queene* was written, other Roman

⁶⁰See Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), p. xlvii.

⁶¹D. Douglas Waters interprets the temple as a *via-media*, High Church of England that accepts ornamentation but rejects Catholicism. He argues that the priests’ preparation for a “morrow Mas” may as easily apply to a Protestant service as opposed to a Catholic Mass, but he does not account for a possible allusion to Catholic beliefs: “for wine they say is blood” (V.vii.10.3). While he cites the line as evidence for the celibacy of the Isis

Catholics besides Pinturicchio found similarities between the Isis cult in ancient romances and Catholicism. Filippo Beroaldo published a commentary in 1500, with a first print run of twelve hundred copies, that explicitly draws connections between the Catholic and Egyptian rituals and religious experience in the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, one of Spenser's sources for the temple of Isis.⁶² Beroaldo finds the Egyptian Isis cult as a source for many Catholic rituals; he writes, "Undoubtedly from the religion of the pagans are linen vestments, the shaved heads of the priests, the turning around at the altar, the sacrificial procession, strains of music. The obeisance, prayers, and many other things of that sort that our priests solemnly employ in our mysteries have undoubtedly been taken over from the ceremony of the ancients."⁶³ Catholicism not only absorbs rituals from ancient religions but also creates a continuity of religious experience; just as Isis is the sole embodiment of all divinity, so is the Christian God.

priests, he does not address it as a possible reference to transubstantiation ("Spenser and the 'Mas' at the Temple of Isis" *Studies in English Literature* 19 [Winter 1979]: 43-53). While Clifford Davidson suggests that Spenser blends pagan ideas with a sacrificial, Catholic understanding of the Eucharist, he does not address either line 10.3 or the other Catholic elements in the scene. David Macey points out that in Apuleius's story, Isis is "a symbol which directs the worshipper's mind to a mystery" ("Fowle Idolatree' and Fair: Apuleius and the Idol of Isis Church." *Comparative Literature Studies*. 36, 4 [1999]: 279-93, 290). I would like to flesh out the implications this statement has for Spenser's Isis and for the contested role of sacred statues in worship during the Elizabethan period.

⁶²William Adlington, who published the first English translation of the *Golden Ass* in 1566, relied heavily on Beroaldo's edition and commentary (see Robert H. F. Carver, *The Protean Ass: The Metamorphoses of Apuleius from Antiquity to the Renaissance* [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007], p. 311). For Spenser's debt to Apuleius, see Robert Carver, chpt. 10, "Psyche's Daughter: Pleasure and *The Faerie Queene*," pp. 384-428, and Stella Revard, "Isis in Spenser and Apuleius," in *Tales within Tales: Apuleius Through Time*, ed. Constance S. Wright and Julia Bolton Holloway (New York: AMS Press, 2000), pp. 107-21.

⁶³Filippo Beroaldo, qtd. in Julia Haig Gaisser, *The Fortunes of Apuleius and the Golden Ass: A Study in Transmission and Reception* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton Univ. Press, 2008), p. 209.

In his version of the Temple of Isis, Spenser retains many of these details from Apuleius that Beroaldo interpreted as Catholic. The priests wear linen robes and practice a “vow of religion” of “stedfast chastity, / And continence of life”: they sleep on the ground, their “proud rebellious flesh to mortify” and refuse to eat meat (V.vii.9.5-9, 10.1). Like Beroaldo, we can see parallels to the practices of Catholic priests in the Egyptian devotions: the mortification of the flesh, sexual abstinence, and fasting. Critics who argue for a Protestant interpretation of Spenser’s temple often point to the fact that the Isis priests have long hair, as opposed to the shaved heads of the Egyptian priests in both Apuleius and Plutarch. If Spenser thought of these Isis priests as Catholics, why wouldn’t he give them tonsured heads, in keeping with his ancient sources and the common practice of Catholic monks?⁶⁴ In *The Golden Ass*, the Latin clearly states that Lucius only shaves his head when he is initiated into *Osiris’s* cult—“*insuper etiam deraso capite.*” J. Gwynn Griffiths’ translation of this initiation reveals the Osirian context of Lucius’s shaved head: “I had been initiated only into the mysteries of the goddess, but had not yet been enlightened by the mysteries of the great god and supreme father of the gods, unconquered Osiris. For although the principle of the deity himself and of his faith was associated, and indeed was at one, with that of Isis, yet a very great distinction was made in the rites of initiation.”⁶⁵ As a priest of Isis, Lucius’s hair is long; to become a priest of Osiris, he must shave his head. Adlington does not translate this passage literally in his version of the *Metamorphoses*; he only mentions Lucius’s shaved

⁶⁴ See, for example, D. Douglas Waters.

⁶⁵“*Deae quidem me tantum sacris inbutum, at magni dei deumque summi parentis invicti Osiris necdum sacris inlustratum; quanquam enim conexa immo vero unita ratio numinis religionisque esset, tamen teletae discrimen interesse maximum*” (Apuleius, trans. J. Gwynn Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madouros: The Isis-Book [Metamorphoses, Book XI]* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975], pp. 102-5).

head at the very end of the tale. If Spenser had read the Latin in addition to Adlington's translation, he would have known that according to Apuleius, only Osiris priests are compelled to shave their heads.

The similarities between the Isis cult and Catholicism are deeper than outward appearances; they also share a continuity of religious experience, which is reflected in Spenser's temple of Isis. When Britomart awakens from her dream, the Egyptian priest promises to advise her in terms that are similar to the sacrament of penance in the Catholic faith:

Say on (quoth he) the secret of your hart:
For by the holy vow, which me doth bind,
I am adiur'd, best counsell to impart
To all, that shall require my comfort in their smart.

(V.vii.19.6-9)

By acknowledging that Britomart has a "secret," he implies that he will keep her confidences because he is bound by his holy vow. In a similar way, Catholic priests are bound to secrecy in the confessional. The Isis priests not only outwardly resemble Catholic priests, but they also revere a female figure strikingly similar to the Virgin Mary, which is incompatible with Reformed teaching.

Most critics overlook the role that sacred art plays in the mysticism of this episode in their haste to discuss the dream vision. Alice Miskimin identifies the pattern of the episode with the Catholic veneration of saints: "the visitation of a shrine, veneration of an icon, and 'incubation'—the ritual sleep of early Christianity which seeks either a divine dream of prophecy or the healing of disease."⁶⁶ The Lady Knight meditates upon the

⁶⁶Alice Miskimin, "Britomart's Crocodile and the Legends of Chastity" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 77, 1 (January 1978): 17-36, 20. Miskimin points to the similarities between Spenser's iconography and that of Saint Marte's "sacred romance"

statue and when she “Had long beheld [the statue], herself vppon the land / She did prostrate” (V.vii.7.7-8). After meditating upon the statue and bowing to it, she “Vnto her selfe her silent prayers did impart” (V.vii.7.9). The statue responds to Britomart’s reverence, and “Her wand did moue with amiable looke, / By outward shew her inward sence desining” (V.vii.8.2-3). Before Britomart falls asleep, she sees the statue of Isis move. This movement is no mere trick of the light: “her wand she shooke” (V.vii.8.3). Like legends of miraculously moving statues of the Virgin Mary, the Isis statue animates in response to prayer.

The statue’s movement is not the only parallel to the cult of the Virgin Mary; they both also absorb previous goddess traditions as the Queen of Heaven. In the *Golden Ass*, Lucius, a relation of Plutarch, describes Isis with language that typically evokes Mary. According to Marina Warner, this account of the goddess’s clothing and hair “might equally describe the appearance of the Virgin Mary.”⁶⁷ In chapter 47 Lucius, who has been transformed into an ass, awakens in the moonlight, and prays to Isis, invoking her as “*Regina caeli*,” or Queen of Heaven, a common name for the Virgin Mary.⁶⁸ Emerging from the ocean, Isis informs him that she has come specifically in response to his prayer. She identifies herself with all goddesses: “cuius numen unicum multiformi specie, ritu vario, nomine multiugo totus veneratus orbis” (11.5).⁶⁹ She proceeds to list the names

(Martha, the sister of Mary and Lazarus), who helped absorb the Isis cult into Christianity. Saint Marte is often portrayed trampling a reptilian monster underfoot; the tail of the monster is often depicted encircling her waist (p. 25).

⁶⁷ See Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Knopf, 1976), p. 256.

⁶⁸ See Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass, Being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius, with an English Translation by W. Adlington* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), 11.2.

⁶⁹ “my name, my diuinitie is adored thoroughout all the worlde, in diuers manners, in variable customes, and in many names” (Adlington, 11.5).

as one of these spirits that respond to hermetic statue magic: “Trismegistus says the Egyptians used to make such images of specific cosmic materials and used to insert into them at the right time the souls of daemons and the soul of his ancestor Mercury. Likewise the souls of a certain Phoebus and of Isis and Osiris thus descended into statues to help people.”⁸⁰

Hermes differentiates between man-made gods and God the maker. As the prayer that concludes *Asclepius* indicates, God does not need anything, including ceremonies. Temple gods, however, must be “entertained with constant sacrifices, with hymns, praises and sweet sounds in tune with heaven’s harmony: so that the heavenly ingredient enticed into the idol by constant communication with heaven may gladly endure its long stay among humankind.”⁸¹ Copenhaver, unfortunately, does not provide the most accurate translation for the Latin *idola*. *Idolum* only denotes idol in treatises by Church fathers. Otherwise, *idolum* means “an image, form, esp. a spectre, apparition, ghost.”⁸² Temple statues are not idols, according to hermeticism, because they embody divinity, shading the true case of God with a lesser spirit of an angel, or messenger. The statue becomes a portal for “constant communication” between humans and the divine. Hermes grimly prophesies the Apocalypse, a time when the souls of angels will abandon the temple statues, leaving them empty idols: “divinity will return from earth to heaven, and

⁸⁰ Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, ed. Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, vol. 57 (Binghamton NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies / Renaissance Society of America, 1989), 304-7.

⁸¹ Copenhaver, p. 91.

⁸²<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3D%2321361>. See W. Scott for the more accurate translation of “image” for *idola* (*Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus* 4 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 1:361.

Egypt will be abandoned... O Egypt, Egypt, of your reverent deeds only stories will survive, and they will be incredible to your children! Only words cut in stone will survive to tell your faithful works.”⁸³ Spenser follows the apocalyptic rhetoric of this hermetic text, transfiguring Britomart into the woman of the Apocalypse in the dream-vision and confronting the iconoclasm of the Reformation.

Spenser specifies twice in the same stanza that the Isis statue is wrought of silver (V.vii.6.2, 5) because Hermes explains that ensouled statues must be made out of material that has “a natural power of divinity.”⁸⁴ The alchemical symbol for silver was also used in astrology for the moon, further strengthening the identification of the moon goddess Isis with the Virgin Mary, also associated with the moon. Not only is the Isis statue made out of an alchemically virtuous metal, but she also may derive her power from her visual shape, from John Dee’s symbol of “divinity,” the monas hieroglyphica.

THE MONAS HIEROGLYPHICA

The Temple of Isis and the Isis statue strongly resemble both visually and emblematically a contemporary text that also draws upon Egyptian mysticism, the title-page for John Dee’s book, *Monas Hieroglyphica*. In what follows, I trace the visual and textual correspondences between Spenser’s Isis and Dee’s monad, and I also compare the mystical transcendence that both sacred statues can evoke in the reader. John Dee’s hieroglyph, like Spenser’s carved Isis, also emblemizes Catholic reverence of sacred images with an Egyptian carving. Like Britomart’s mystical response to Isis, the

⁸³ Copenhaver, p. 81.

⁸⁴ Copenhaver, p. 90.

viewers' response to the image of the monad can also lead to spiritual transformation. Dee's term *hieroglyphica* links his mystical figure with the Egyptian tradition and thus with hermeticism. In fact, he calls his title-page engraving the "London seal of Hermes," referring to Hermes Trismegistus. Spenser probably knew John Dee and his work through his fame at Elizabeth's court, not only for his immense library but also for his research in cartography, mathematics, and the occult. Spenser further had connections with two of Dee's students, Philip Sidney and Edward Dyer, who may have followed their teacher's writings.⁸⁵ Even if Spenser was not aware of Dee's treatise, both authors share a similar response to images and to Catholicism that operates on the level of cultural discourse.

The striking visual and textual similarities between Spenser's Isis and Dee's monad strongly suggest that Spenser saw and perhaps consciously based his statue on Dee's title-page. Spenser's description of the Isis statue closely traces the shape of Dee's monad, and the details of the title-page temple correspond with Spenser's description of the Isis temple. Dee places the sign of the monad as if it were a sacred statue within the temple of his title-page, much like the position of the Isis statue in Spenser's temple. Several textual details within Dee's treatise and Spenser's canto also uncannily mirror each other, particularly the moon and sun imagery, the importance of fire, and the structural significance of the number 13 in both works.

By privileging the image over the word, Dee's philosophy veers closer to Catholicism than to reformed theology. The monad, as an image, prefigures and transcends all language. It is not only "a mystical emblem for contemplation, a kind of 'mandala,' but also a 'geometrical automaton' which could generate the alphabet of all

⁸⁵ Frances Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 96.

languages, that is, it could represent the universal principle of language.”⁸⁶ While most Protestants emphasize the supremacy of the Word, Dee subordinates all words to a mystical, sacred image. As Diane di Prima remarks in her preface to a translation of Dee’s text, to interpret the hieroglyph, one must “draw the Monad frequently, look long at it, use it in your meditations, and slowly it begins to speak.”⁸⁷ Dee did not identify himself as a Catholic, but Dee’s faith in the power of images to effect spiritual and physical change is associated with Catholic veneration of images and sacramentality. This Catholic subtext also appears in Spenser’s hieroglyph in the temple of Isis.

Discussion of Dee’s monad illuminates the ways in which Spenser’s Isis statue is also a hieroglyph and the connections among these Egyptian statues, hermeticism, and Catholicism. John Dee’s symbol of the monad is a hieroglyph in every early modern sense of the word. It is “a figure, device, or sign having some hidden meaning,” it can produce “picture-writing,” it is “difficult to decipher,” and it has the status of a sacred carving, like Spenser’s Isis statue, not only through the etymology of the word *hieroglyph* but also through its status as an engraving on a title-page.⁸⁸ According to Herodotus, the Egyptians were the first to assign “to the several gods their images and temples, and first carved figures on stone.”⁸⁹ Spenser’s Isis and Dee’s hieroglyph are both artifacts made by the original sculptors of ancient Egypt and are both associated with the most famous

⁸⁶ György Szönyi, “Ficino's Talismanic Magic and John Dee's Hieroglyphic Monad” *Cauda Pavonis: Studies in Hermeticism*, 20, no. 1 (2001 Spring): p. 1-11, 7.

⁸⁷ Diane de Prima, Introduction, *The Hieroglyphic Monad*, trans. J.W. Hamilton-Jones (New York: Samuel Weiser Inc., 1975) p. v.

⁸⁸ s.v. “hieroglyph,” OED 2d edn.

⁸⁹ Herodotus, *Histories* Book II, chapter 2.

of the first sculptors, Hermes Trismegistus; according to Leon Battista Alberti, Hermes Trismegistus was the first maker of religious images.⁹⁰

Not only Dee's title but also his medium of the title-page indicates that his monad is a statue: "From the time of their invention woodcut and engraving were classed under the category of sculpture – partly because the block or plate from which they were made were of the same durable materials, wood or metal, as sculpted work; partly because they were cut with knife or burin."⁹¹ As the title-page for his text, Dee's monad is hieroglyphic in that it is pictured writing and a sacred, sculptural engraving. As an engraving and as a hieroglyph, Dee's monad in its architectural frame resembles a sacred sculpture, like Isis in her temple. The details of this frame correspond directly with Spenser's description of the temple of Isis.

⁹⁰ See Curran, p. 91.

⁹¹ Margery Corbett and R.W. Lightbrown, *The Comely Frontispiece: The Emblematic Title-Page in England, 1550-1660* (London: Routledge, 1979), p. 8.



Figure 1⁹²

When Britomart approaches the temple, she first meets priests wearing “rich Mitres, shaped like the Moone, / To shew that *Isis* doth the Moone portend” (V.vii.4.6-7). These mitres resemble the “crown” of the monad, which also signifies the moon’s apparent suppression of the sun in Dee’s treatise (Theorems 21, 4). The priests lead Britomart into the temple,

Whose goodly building when she did behould,
Borne vppon stately pillours, all dispred
With shining gold arched ouer hed,
She wondred at the workemans passing skill,

⁹² Image photographed by author from John Dee, *Monas Hieroglyphica* (Antwerp: Willem Silvius, 1564), title-page, J.R. Ritman Library, Amsterdam.

Whose like before she neuer saw nor red;
And thereupon long while stood gazing still,
But thought, that she thereon could neuer gaze her fill.
[V.vii.5.3-9]

These architectural elements echo the building that surrounds Dee's sacred carving: Dee's engraved temple also has a prominent domed ceiling, corresponding to the arched gold of the Isiac temple. Dee's "stately pillours" even are adorned with pictures of the sun and the moon, linking his title-page temple with the sun and moon worship in the Isis temple. The woodcut in Figure 1 also flanks the Virgin Mary with the moon and the sun, in addition to representing the crescent moon at her feet. Dee's theorems following the title-page further correspond with Spenser's depiction of Isis. Below these celestial symbols, basins collect drops of water, like the holy water fonts located at the entrances to most Catholic churches.

As in the iconography of Isis and the Virgin Mary, Dee's icon begins with the alchemical symbol of the moon: "The very ancient wise men and Magi have transmitted to us five hieroglyphical signs of the planets, all of which are composed out of the signs used for the Moon and the Sun" (Theorem 11). The monad represents all seven planets, which are generated by the moon's orbit around the Earth. Each orbit produces a different planet; these planets, encompassed by the moon, are joined to the zodiacal symbol of Aries. Like Isis and the Virgin Mary, the monad represents one figure that other cultures separate into several goddesses. The symbol of Aries at the foot of the hieroglyph is also dependent upon the moon, formed by "the double crescent of the Moon..., turned round in a mystical manner" (Theorem 21). The monad stands upon the crescent moon as does the Virgin Mary and wears the moon-like mitre as does Isis and her priests.

Aries, as the sign of fire, is also prominent in Britomart's dream vision, in which flames from the altar threaten to consume the temple (V.vii.14). The fire at the base of the monad represents the sun, according to one of Dee's diagrams that labels this part of the monad as "solis exaltatio" (Theorem 15). Fire is also necessary for the mystical transcendence of the body that Dee describes in Theorem 13. "Pyrognomic art" can separate the soul from the body and "join it by indissoluble ties to the disc of the Moon." Similarly, Britomart perceives the dream vision through her spirit and not through her bodily senses: the "wondrous vision" "appeare[s] unto [Britomart's] heauenly spright" (V.vii.12.8, 7). In this vision, Britomart becomes Isis, transforming into a moon goddess, much in the way that Dee hoped meditation upon the monas hieroglyphica would deify his reader. Britomart becomes an icon that resembles the monad, "deckt with... Moone-like Mitre" (V.vii.13.2, 6). Perhaps only a coincidence, this part of the vision occurs in stanza 13, corresponding with Dee's thirteenth theorem that describes the union of the soul with the moon. Thirteen was an especially significant number for Dee: he was born on July 13, 1527. He also commenced writing his treatise on January 13 and finished it thirteen days later (i).

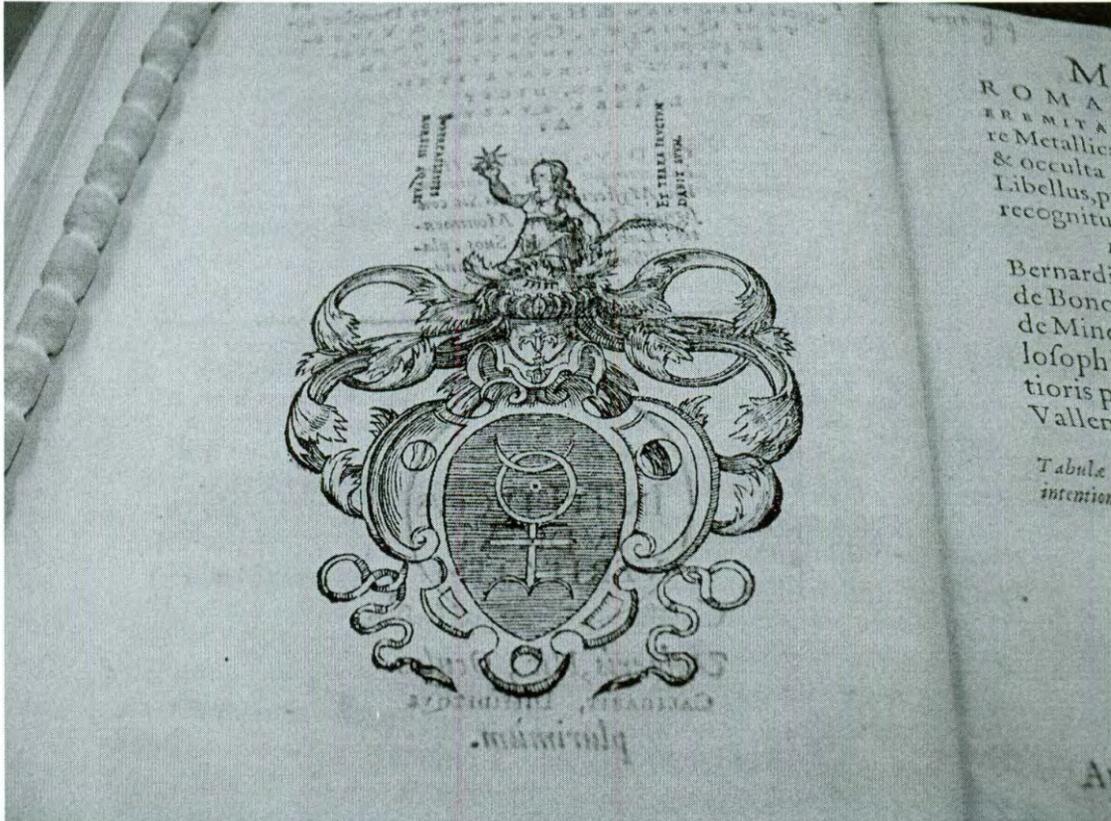


Figure 2⁹³

In addition to the image of the monad on the title-page of Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica*, Spenser may also have seen the final image of the book, reprinted as both a title-page and a final image for *Propaedeumata Aphoristica Ioannis Dee, Londinensis, de Praetantioribus Quibusdam Naturae Virtutibus*, published in London in 1568. The monad adorns the egg-shaped center of what appears to be a shield. Standing on top of the shield is the figure of a woman, holding a star in her right hand and a sheaf of wheat in her left hand. Directly below the woman, the Tetragrammaton is etched into an eye-shaped space. If the title-page monad, with its architectural frame, corresponds to the

⁹³John Dee, *Monas Hieroglyphica* (Antwerp: Willem Silvius, 1564), image photographed by the author, courtesy of the J. R. Ritman Library, Amsterdam; detail of frontispiece. For another instance of this image, see Frontispiece for *Propaedeumata Aphoristica Ioannis Dee, Londinensis, de Praetantioribus Quibusdam Naturae Virtutibus* (London, 1568) EEBO STC (2d edn.) / 494:09;

entrance to the Temple of Isis, this final image makes an apt emblem for Britomart's transfiguration in the Temple of Isis. Like Britomart, the figure in this image holding the star and a sheaf of wheat is transfigured into both the Virgin Mary (the star being one of the Virgin's attributes) and Isis (*The Golden Ass* specifies that Isis holds a sheaf of wheat when she appears to Lucius). The monad is a symbol of hermetic magic, but the presence of the Tetragrammaton authorizes its transformative power as part of the Christian tradition.

Dee believed that meditation upon this all-encompassing symbol led to a connection with the divine, much like the Catholic belief in experiencing God's transformative grace by meditating upon the cross, religious images, or participating in sacraments that use physical objects as channels to the divine. Like the sacraments in the Catholic tradition, this union between the divine and the human transforms human beings; meditation upon Dee's hieroglyph results in the "*exaltatio* or deification of man."⁹⁴ The monad "is supposed to demonstrate all visible and metaphysical aspects of the universe in the form of a geometrical-alchemical-philosophical image. It was to function as a revelative mandala to propel the soul's flight, that is to bring the viewer into the state of *exaltatio*, an intuitive understanding of the cosmos and a unification with the wisdom of God."⁹⁵ Britomart also understands her role in the cosmos through meditation upon the statue of Isis, itself an image of the monad. In a rhetorical move reminiscent of a mystic, Dee claims that he is a tool of God: "In the name of Jesus Christ crucified upon the Cross, I say the Spirit writes these things rapidly through me; I hope, and I believe, I am merely the quill which traces these characters" (Theorem 23). By invoking divine

⁹⁴ Szönyi, p. 6.

⁹⁵ Szönyi, p. 2.

authorship, Dee taps into the authority granted to mysticism. He also worries that he has committed a sin by publishing such sacred mysteries, removing Dame Nature's veils so that the uninitiated can learn these secrets if they can see beyond the veil of Dee's monad (Theorem 20).

Dee and Spenser not only rely upon the power of images in their respective projects; both also display a profound faith in the Tudor dynasty and its roots in Arthurian legend. Spenser uses this national myth as the framework for the *Faerie Queene*. When Dee descends from his mystical heights to the practical matter of exhorting Queen Elizabeth to establish a navy in his treatise *General and Rare Memorials Pertayning to the Perfect Art of Navigation* (London 1577), his frontispiece betrays the monas hieroglyphica as a shadowy presence in this political project. This emblem was entitled a "British Hieroglyphick," and played an important role in Dee's advocacy of England's imperial role. I agree with Lesley B. Cormack's analysis of the appearance of the monad in this frontispiece, but unfortunately Cormack does not take Dee's mysticism as seriously as he did. Cormack recants the role of magic in Dee's vision of the Empire, saying that such "a vague claim to mystical transformation" was not "appropriate" for the audience of the pamphlet, Elizabeth's advisors.⁹⁶ However, Dee's career as the court astrological advisor was based on such mysticism. Frances Yates claims that Dee justified British expansion and colonization with Elizabeth's "mythical descent from King Arthur."⁹⁷ Spenser also writes his epic in order to establish

⁹⁶ Lesley B. Cormack, "Britannia Rules the Waves? Images of Empire in Elizabethan England," in *Literature, Mapping, and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), pp.45-68.

⁹⁷ Yates, 85.

Elizabeth's mythical lineage, hoping "in this antique Image" to reflect Queen Elizabeth's "great auncestry" (II.pr.4.9).

THE LEGENDE OF BRITOMARTIS: A SPENSERIAN HAGIOGRAPHY

Britomart discovers that the difference between "fowle idolatree" and sacred art is not just how the art-object is used but also what kinds of spirits inhabit it. How do Spenser's statue of Isis and Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* ultimately differ from misleading graven images such as Gerioneo's idol and Cupid's statue in the house of Busirane? On the surface, they seem very similar. They all are religious statues, and the last two idols also have connections to Egypt. Busirane may be based on Busiris, the pharaoh that enslaved the Israelites, and the monster lurking beneath Gerioneo's idol is compared to the Sphinx of ancient Egypt (V.xi.25). According to scholarly consensus, Gerioneo's idol represents the political side of the papacy, often associated with a power-crazed materialism and the Spanish Inquisition. This idol requires "daily sacrificize" of "children and my people, burnt in flame; / With all the tortures, that he could deuize" (V.xi.19.6-8). Unlike the statue of Isis, the idol is framed from Gerioneo's "owne vaine fancies" out of "massy gold" (V.xi.19.4, V.xi.21.8). "Vaine" puns on both vanity and emptiness, while "massy" puns on the Catholic Mass as well as the apparent weightiness of the statue. While Egyptians also created statues to honor Osiris and Isis as deities, the principle of justice that they represent is true. Spenser attacks the Catholic papacy's

political greed and tyranny in this passage, neither of which shade a true case of justice or of divinity. Gerioneo is the image *in malo* of the Isis statue.⁹⁸

Just as Gerioneo's idol represents the negative excesses of Catholic politics, Busirane's idol symbolizes the potentially harmful effects of art. Amoret is not strong enough to resist seduction by the courtly love tropes that enslave her in Busirane's house. She literally is "conveyed quite away" by Cupid's masque (IV.i.3.9). The idol of Cupid also is fashioned from "massy gold" but proves as empty as Gerioneo's idol (III.xi.47.5). The tapestries in Cupid's temple are overwhelming in their verisimilitude, surrounding Britomart on every wall with stories of Ovidian love, "mournfull Tragedyes" sacrificed to Cupid (III.xi.45.6). These images do not color divine truth. Rather, they represent in art the tropes of courtly love, itself an artificial construction. Because Britomart is "Neither of idle shewes, nor of false charmes aghast," she can rescue Amoret from Busirane (III.xii.29.9). "Idle" puns upon idol, again conveying the emptiness of Busirane's "straunge characters of... art," "wrate" "with liuing bloud" (III.xii.31.2-3). Unlike the statue of Isis, Cupid's and Gerioneo's idols are empty shells and contain no spirit of divine truth. Britomart's ability to discern the difference between the statues of Isis and Cupid makes Cupid powerless over her. Sacred art "By outward shew" reveals "inward sence" (V.vii.8.3). Even though inherently fictional, the *Faerie Queene* and the statue of Isis can move the discerning reader to a "wondrous vision" (V.vii.12.8).

Spenser states in both his letter to Raleigh and in the proem of Book V that his purpose in writing this epic is both to educate and to transform his readers; by reading Spenser's fiction (or by studying Dee's hieroglyph) and thereby experiencing a wondrous

⁹⁸ See Carol V. Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1999).

vision, readers participate in Britomart's transformation in a communal way, reminiscent of a sacrament. The proem claims that "the world is runne quite out of square" and that this age has "become a stonie one" (V.p.1.7, V.p.2.2). The proem follows Book I of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* quite closely, adding the stone age to Ovid's list of four. The people of this age, contemporary with the speaker of the proem, "are now transformed into hardest stone," like the new human race formed when Pyrrha and Deucalion throw stones over their shoulders, a myth also told in the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Pyrrha and Deucalion were the only survivors of a purging flood, the justice of the gods; the new human race, however, is stonier than the previous version because of their origin in rock.

The proem follows not only an Ovidian source but also a hermetic one. Right after the statue-ensouling passage, the *Asclepius* describes an apocalyptic vision; Hermes prophecies that the angels who inhabit the statues will abandon humanity when humanity degenerates. Humanity

will prefer shadows to light, and they will find death more expedient than life.... The reverent will be thought mad, the irreverent wise; the lunatic will be thought brave, and the scoundrel will be taken for a decent person... They will establish new laws, new justice. Nothing holy, nothing reverent nor worthy of heaven or heavenly beings will be heard of or believed in the mind. How mournful when the [statue] gods withdraw from mankind! Only the baleful angels will remain to mingle with humans, seizing the wretches and driving them to every outrageous crime... Then neither will the earth stand firm nor the sea be sailable; stars will not cross heaven nor will the course of the stars stand firm in heaven. Every divine voice will grow mute in enforced silence... Such will be the old age of the world: irreverence, disorder, disregard for everything good.⁹⁹

As Spenser writes, "the world is runne quite out of square," and like the author of the *Asclepius*, he too is concerned with his contemporaries' ignorance of true justice.

⁹⁹ Copenhaver, p. 82.

Spenser imitates the structure of the *Asclepius*, acknowledging the possibility of regeneration. Just as Hermes predicts that the supreme God will “restore the world to its beauty of old so that the world itself will again seem deserving of worship and wonder, and with constant benedictions and proclamations of praise the people of that time will honor the god who makes and restores so great a work,” Spenser too reaches back to a golden past to reform an age that has turned to stone. To regenerate humanity, Spenser must tell a story of the “antique use,”

when good was onely for it selfe desired,
And all men sought their owne, and none no more
When Iustice was not for most meed outhyred,
But simple Truth did rayne, and was of all admyred.
(V.p.3.4-9)

Like the hermeticists, Spenser must look back to antiquity to discover a *prisca theologia* to renew his time and place, a way of living passed down through the ages, from the golden one to this stone one.

The prologue ends in the same pattern as the rest of the book, with a syncretism of the pagan with the Christian. After consulting “those AEGyptian wisards old,” the speaker finds the planets, especially Mars and Saturn, to be off course (V.p.8.1). This detail especially echoes the *Asclepius* and its dire prophecy that “stars will not cross heaven nor will the course of the stars stand firm in heaven.” The speaker of the proem invokes Iustice, or Astraea, personified by Elizabeth I, and compares her to God: “Most sacred vertue she of all the rest, / Resembling God in his imperiall might” (V.p.10.1-2). Like Britomart, who first becomes Isis and then the Virgin Mary, earthly rulers are transfigured by God: “[P]ower [God] also doth to Princes lend, / And makes them like himselfe in glorious sight” (V.p.10.6-7). Astraea, embodied by Queen Elizabeth, sits “in

th'Almighties stead" and like Britomart, she too is described in the language of the magnificat. Queen Elizabeth's "magnificke might and wondrous wit / Doest to thy people righteous doome aread" (V.p.11.3-4). As Book V unfolds, the reader learns the importance of intercession and mercy in tempering justice, values represented both by Isis and the Virgin Mary.

Because Britomart sees through the veil of art, she engages with the Isis statue using *imitatio*, a style of devotion closely associated with Catholicism. Affective spirituality is a type of *imitatio* in which the individual meditates upon artistic representations of the Passion of Christ or saints' lives to induce empathetic emotions, leading to an inward transformation. Affective spirituality not only calls the individual to imitate outwardly a religious figure but also to imitate inwardly that person's emotions. By titling his third book "The Legend of Britomartis," Spenser locates his heroine in a saint's life, making her story itself part of the *imitatio* genre for his readers, including Queen Elizabeth. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne argues that the romance genre itself grows out of Catholic saints' legends, in which "the virgin is not only the object of quest but in part the subject, the active selector of her bridegroom, Christ."¹⁰⁰ Britomart is one of these active virgins seeking her bridegroom, though her destiny is ultimately a secular marriage rather than the mystical marriage to Christ of a vowed woman. Through her dream vision, she becomes Isis and also imitates the Virgin Mary. Readers who can see through the literal surface of Spenser's words can also participate in *imitatio* of a saint's legend, the "Legende of Britomart.

¹⁰⁰ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c. 1150-1300 : Virginity and Its Authorizations* (Oxford and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), pp. 4-5.

CHAPTER 2

*PERICLES AND GOWER'S CONFESSION*¹⁰¹

When John Gower steps onto the stage and addresses the audience in the prologue of *Pericles*, it is as if his life-sized, painted effigy has risen from his sepulchre in the Church of St. Saviour and walked the few blocks over to the theatre. He comes to life in order “[t]o sing a song that old was sung” to him in one of the books on which his statue rests its head, the *Confessio Amantis* (Shakespeare, I.i.1).¹⁰² The early modern period remembered “Moral Gower” as one of the founders of English poetry and above all as a master storyteller—though it is difficult to determine how often his poetry was actually read. *Pericles* is evidence of at least one early modern writer who had carefully read his Gower.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ This chapter has been accepted for publication by the journal, *Shakespeare*.

¹⁰² All subsequent citations will refer to the Arden 2004 edition and will appear in the text parenthetically by act, line, and scene number.

¹⁰³ I have neither the space in this paper nor the scope of argument to contribute to the debate on the authorship question. Scholars have reached a tentative consensus that George Wilkins wrote much of the first two acts and that Shakespeare wrote the last three. Whether William Shakespeare or George Wilkins, the authorial presence taps into the same culture for the material of the play, including the religious controversy and hermetic emblems that I offer as influences for the play. For this article, I will refer to the authorial presence in the play as Shakespeare. Scott Maisano offers the intriguing possibility that the playwrights, whoever they were, intended the play to be read instead of performed; the play encourages its readers to interrogate the “moldy” sources of old tales, the apocryphal, and the art of memory, especially in the allusion to the poet Simonides, who was hailed as the founder of the art of memory (pp. 167–93). For correspondences in language and in content between Gower and Shakespeare, see Lyndy Abraham, p. 530; Howard Felperin, “Shakespeare’s Miracle Play,” p. 365; P. Goolden, pp. 245–51; Richard Hillman, pp. 427–37; Michael J. Warren, pp. 90–2; and David Hoeniger, pp. 461–79.

In the *Confessio Amantis*, the sacrament of reconciliation, particularly the act of confession, restores Amans to his true identity. Although the medieval and early modern term for this sacrament is penance, I will use the modern name “reconciliation” in my discussion because the Reformation has irrevocably cast a punitive valence on the sacrament; according to Sarah Beckwith, the pre-Reformation understanding of the sacrament emphasised reconciliation over punishment.¹⁰⁴ Gower synthesises classical myth and Christian sacrament in the framework for his *Confessio Amantis*, largely through the relationship between Genius, the priest of Venus, and Amans, an unrequited lover.

In her genealogy of the Genius figure, Jane Chance traces the late medieval religious shift in Genius’s role from earlier scholastic dream visions. Unlike the Genius of Alan of Lille’s *De Planctu Naturae* or of Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la Rose*, Gower’s Genius is “predominantly a priest, and of love, not of generation” and “[h]is priestly role is clear from the beginning” (p. 128).

Though a classical and thus pagan figure, Genius also functions like a Catholic priest, performing the sacrament of reconciliation by eliciting Amans’s confession: “Mi will is ferst that thou be schrive” (Gower, I.190).¹⁰⁵ Genius’s shrift involves giving exempla of the seven deadly sins in the form of 141 classical myths and biblical stories to provoke contrition and a confession from Amans. The tale of Apollonius of Tyre, a source-text for *Pericles*, is the longest and the culminating exemplum of this confession.

¹⁰⁴According to Sarah Beckwith, after the Reformation, “penance became more punitive, public, and juridical” and “automatically shameful and humiliating” (p. 197).

¹⁰⁵All subsequent quotations of the *Confessio* will refer to the Medieval Institute Publications edition and will appear in the text parenthetically by book and line numbers.

After hearing this story, Amans regains self-knowledge and is ultimately able to confess his true identity, remembering that his name is not Amans but John Gower. Venus gives him prayer beads, and Gower ends the *Confessio* praying for unity for the English nation. Russell A. Peck explains the apparent illogic of choosing tales so remote from Christianity and its sacraments in order to facilitate confession: “Gower conjures old tales as a means of wooing an audience toward a confessional self-reassessment” (p. 6). The *Confessio* aims to cultivate a habit of mind, an introspective self-awareness. Because “sin equates with forgetting” for Gower, the lover Amans is subjected to the process of hearing the tales in order to help him to remember himself and, through memory, to create a “unified vision” of himself (p. 13).

Shakespeare deploys the *Confessio*'s main character, Amans/Gower, as a narrator in his play not only to adopt this syncretism of pagan myth and Catholic sacrament from the *Confessio* but also to emphasise the role of reconciliation in the restoration of identity.¹⁰⁶ Gower's framing and choral roles in the play evoke his version of the tale and import its sacramental context into the play; the play becomes an analogue for the work

¹⁰⁶Scholars widely differ on how to interpret the relationship between John Gower the author, John Gower as Amans, and the Gower of Shakespeare's play. My reading most closely aligns with Richard Hillman's analysis of the *Confessio* as Amans learning the difference between a selfish, self-deluding love and a *caritas* that reaches beyond the self into the community; however, Hillman does not see a spiritual framework in Gower/Aman's tale that translates to Shakespeare's play (pp. 427–37). Howard Felperin argues that Shakespeare chooses Gower and his “jingly rhymes, archaic diction, and simpleminded didacticism” to register *Pericles* as part of the medieval religious drama tradition (pp. 365–6). Helen Cooper compares Shakespeare's Gower with Robert Greene's Gower (pp. 99–114). Christine Dymkowski notes that Gower anticipates Barthes: “the poem's author is the listener, who has been told the stories contained in it.... just as Gower becomes the author of the tale told to him, so the audience could become ‘authors’ of the play shown to them” (pp. 235–64). Neil Gilroy-Scott argues that Shakespeare invokes Gower to “ridicule” and “condemn” the medieval author (pp. 30–47). See also David F. Hoeniger.

of confession achieved by Gower's medieval poem. In both Gower and in Shakespeare, the tale veils the mystery of the sacrament—the access to God's grace through the transcendence of pain and loss—like an alchemical treatise. After all, the word “sacrament” was used interchangeably with the Greek word for “mystery” in Christian Latin from the third century AD, and both words were used to denote sacred symbols. Shakespeare's play greatly attenuates the sacramental frame of the *Confessio*'s tale, reducing it to Gower the character, which makes sense given the hostility of early modern England to Catholic sacraments. It is precisely this hostility, however, that makes such an analogue advantageous. In the *Confessio* and in the play, experiencing reconciliation through the tale leads to knowledge of one's true, God-given self.

The syncretic method of *Pericles* blends tropes from Greek romance,¹⁰⁷ Hermeticism, the Pauline tradition, and Reformation controversy, among others. Though this syncretism enables many valid readings of the play, depending upon which interpretative frame the reader or viewer emphasises, this article frames the play in terms of the specific syncretism of the sacrament of reconciliation and hermetic magic. Just as Amans realises his true name is John Gower after Genius's shrift, the characters in *Pericles* also announce their names at crucial moments of reconciliation. Gower's version of the tale in the *Confessio* does not represent confession in a literal way, but it

¹⁰⁷The *Confessio*'s version of the tale is itself based upon the popular Greek romance of Apollonius of Tyre. The first written account, the Latin *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*, appeared in the second or third century. In the medieval period, it was translated into Russian, Hungarian, Icelandic, Danish, French, Italian, Spanish, and English. The fourteenth century Latin translation in the *Gesta Romanorum* was particularly popular, as was Lawrence Twine's sixteenth-century *Patterne of Painefull Adventures*. For a fuller account of the evolution of the tale, see Elizabeth Archibald.

nevertheless is the longest and final tale in Amans's shrift. Although Shakespeare's play never fully represents the sacrament's form, matter, or minister, Shakespeare uses the structure of reconciliation for *Pericles*. As Sarah Beckwith points out, Shakespeare's meditation on forgiveness and reconciliation is more Catholic than Protestant: "Against the Calvinist consensus that we inhabit an utterly depraved nature that can only be redeemed by God's grace, Shakespeare found in Gower's rendering of the Apollonius story grace at work in and through nature."¹⁰⁸ In addition to the play's overtly Christian allusions (miracle plays, iconography, and saints' legends),¹⁰⁹ elements inherited from Greek romances, such as the predominant images of tempest and shipwreck, are associated also with the sacrament of reconciliation.

In this chapter, I argue that Shakespeare creates a series of reconciliation emblems throughout the play, including the resurrection of Thaisa, the conversions in the brothel, and the final reunions of Pericles, Marina, and Thaisa. In each of these scenes, the characters are "restore[d] in peace" and sometimes also "in unity".¹¹⁰ The play, following the sacramental structure of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, uses hermetic magic as a metaphor for reconciliation. Just as the shrift of Amans only ends when he acknowledges his true name, the announcement of their identities brings about reconciliation for the despairing King of Tyre and his family in the play. In both the Apollonius tale of the *Confessio* and at the end of *Pericles*, each titular character refers to

¹⁰⁸ Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness*, pp. 93-4.

¹⁰⁹ See Maurice Hunt's "Shakespeare's *Pericles*," pp. 295-309; Paul Dean, pp. 125-44; Howard Felperin's "Shakespeare's Miracle Play"; Sara Hanna, pp. 92-116; and Lorraine Helms, pp. 319-32.

¹¹⁰ The OED's definition of "reconcile" sums up the plot of *Pericles*: "to restore to peace or unity" "after a period of estrangement" (s.v. "reconcile," 1, 1a). Its etymon in classical Latin, *reconciliare*, also can mean "to bring back into harmony", quite apt for the harmony of the spheres that Pericles hears.

the declaration of his name as a confession. One of the primary definitions of confession gets at the spiritual meaning of reconciliation: “to make oneself known, [to] disclose one’s identity”.¹¹¹ Reconciliation allows the individual to reclaim and assert his or her identity in Christ despite sin. These tableaux articulate a spiritual alchemy, the ability of the sacrament to restore the penitent into an image of God. Throughout these episodes, reconciliation and restoration are likened to alchemical purification or healing; Cerimon specifies his is an Egyptian magic, and his rituals strongly resemble the alchemical descriptions in Book 4 of the *Confessio Amantis* and the hermetic statue magic of the *Asclepius*. The reigning deity of the play works through Cerimon’s hermetic magic to reanimate Thaisa, emblemizing the restorative purpose of the sacrament of reconciliation.

The reanimation of Thaisa reflects a cultural subtext associating the sacrament of reconciliation with hermetic magic in the early modern period. I turn to a printer’s mark found in several editions of Iamblichus’s *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, which also includes the *Asclepius*, that performs a similar syncretism as does *Pericles*. The mark introduces this collection of hermetic texts with imagery of the seven deadly sins and serves as a model to interpret *Pericles*’ association of not only vipers with the incest in Antioch but also hermetic magic with the resurrection of Thaisa and the restoration of Pericles’ family. Whether or not Shakespeare was aware of this particular book and its printer’s mark, the striking visual analog to *Pericles* represents a cultural subtext linking Catholicism to hermeticism and also provides a possible resonance for readers or viewers of the play who had encountered this book.

¹¹¹OED, s.v. “confess,” 1b.

I do not wish to reduce *Pericles* to a quasi-theological manifesto or to a set of doctrinal propositions in my reading of the play; however, I also do not believe that the play is emptied of the religious content of its source-text, as Stephen Greenblatt and others have claimed of Shakespeare's drama.¹¹² Instead, I propose that *Pericles* explores the nature of reconciliation and the benefits it might offer a divided England. As Jeffrey Knapp points out, Shakespeare avoided sectarianism; Knapp suggests that Shakespeare's sympathetic treatment of friars in his plays is an "apparent gesture of reconciliation toward the Catholic members of Shakespeare's audience" (p. 52). For Knapp, friars and theatre players both "perform... a similar kind of spiritual work, outside of 'precise' religious boundaries" (p. 53).¹¹³ *Pericles* also performs spiritual work not only by inviting the audience to participate in a communal imaginative effort, but also by structuring this communal experience around the sacrament of reconciliation. This sacrament leads to the reconciliation of the individual with the community and with God and to a restoration of the individual in God's image. Like Gower's *Confessio*, *Pericles* offers literature as a possible channel to experience reconciliation, a channel available to the audience despite the lack of priests and Protestant sanction. By exploring reconciliation as sacramental, the play and its authors are not committed to advocating a re-establishment of Catholicism, but the audience can potentially access the restorative benefits of reconciliation.¹¹⁴

¹¹²See, for example, Regina Schwartz; Julia Reinhard Lupton; Stephen Greenblatt, p. 126; and Frances Dolan, pp. 213–37.

¹¹³For a discussion of Jacobean ecumenism and the "adiaphorist" movement, which sought to accommodate papists in Anglican services, see Jeffrey Knapp, pp. 42–4, 52–7. In his fourth chapter, "Preachers and Players", Knapp argues that the theatre can forge a congregational fellowship in the audience members through imaginative participation, although this communal experience is Anglican (to "save" God's word "from preachers and papists") in Knapp's reading of *Henry V* (p. 120).

¹¹⁴Regardless of what Shakespeare's intentions may have been, *Pericles* has a record of

In *Pericles*, Gower explicitly informs the audience of his restorative purpose by situating his tale in the lost rituals of medieval Catholic England in his song, that

hath been sung at festivals,
On ember-eves and holy ales,
And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives.
The purchase is to make men glorious.
(I.i.5–9)¹¹⁵

Gower in *Pericles* recites the final pagan exemplum that allowed Amans in the fictional frame of the *Confessio Amantis* to realise his true name: John Gower. Gower informs his *Pericles* audience, “born in those latter times” (I.i.11), of the tale’s restorative benefits for previous audiences (including himself). I suggest that he invites this new audience to respond to the tale in the way Amans did: by gaining self-knowledge and a desire to pray for others. The tale must be important, for Gower spends his precious, resurrected life to tell it: “I life would wish, and that I might / Waste it for you, like taper light” (Prologue, lines 15–6).

The tale’s tempests and shipwrecks are not only a product of Greek romance but also can be seen as emblems of the need for reconciliation in the final exemplum of

popularity with recusants. Phebe Jensen argues that early modern English recusants deployed secular revels to create a Catholic community; *Pericles* was part of the repertoire presented by Sir John Yorke, who was indicted for hosting a seditious interlude during the Christmas festivities of 1609 (pp. 75–102). The play also appears in a 1619 English Jesuit book-list from the mission at Saint-Omer (Willem Schrickx, pp. 21–32).¹¹⁵ Medieval Penitentials often ended with a list of ember days, which further suggests reading the play in a context of confession. See the eleventh-century Canons of Theodore: “These are the proper Ember Days that one should observe, that is in the calends of March in the first week, in the calends of June in the second week, in the calends of September in the third week, and in the calends of December in the next week” (Frantzen, *Canons of Theodore*, B91.01.01). The “holy days” of the Quarto text has been amended to “holy ales” to maintain the rhyme in the 2003 Oxford edition and 2004 Arden edition of the play. Ales were also part of the Anglican tradition, while Reformers banned many of the Catholic holy days, often because of the holy day syncretism of Christianity and pagan customs (See David Cressy, p. 3).

Gower's confessional dialogue. Saint Jerome first made the association between shipwreck and penance in a letter to Demetrias, a girl who had recently taken the vow of chastity. There he describes reconciliation as "a plank for those who have had the misfortune to be shipwrecked" (Letter 130, section 9). Saint Thomas Aquinas quotes Jerome in his *Summa Theologica*, elaborating on the metaphor, and in 1551, the Council of Trent codifies the metaphor as a canon: "If anyone, confounding the sacraments, shall say that baptism is itself the sacrament of penance, as though these two sacraments were not distinct, and that penance, is therefore not rightly called a second plank after shipwreck, a.s."¹¹⁶ Even in 1605, Father Vincent Bruno, a Jesuit, uses this metaphor extensively in his manual on confession, *A Short Treatise of the Sacrament of Penance* (esp. pp. 4–5).¹¹⁷

Reformers were well aware of the currency this image had in the debate over the sacramentality of reconciliation. Martin Luther refers to Jerome's metaphor when he denounces the sacrament: "how perilous, no, how false it is to suppose that penance is the second plank after the shipwreck!" (3.9). Calvin echoes this criticism in his *Institutes on the Christian Religion*: "Likewise they very much torment themselves with a gross error upon the saying of Jerome, that repentance is a second board after shipwreck. Wherein they show that they never waked from their brutish dullness, to feel so much as a thousandth part of their faults" (Book 3, chap. 4, fol. 137r). Calvin himself agreed with Catholicism that repentance is "a true turning of our life unto God, ... which consisteth in

¹¹⁶As Karl Peter points out, the final anathema that ends each canon does not necessarily condemn objectors to hell; rather, it meant "a major excommunication" and was often directed at those who object to church authority (qtd. in Kenan B. Osborne, p. 161).

¹¹⁷Two editions of *A Short Treatise of the Sacrament of Penance* were also printed in 1597.

the mortifying of the flesh and of the old man, and in the quickening of the spirit.” He bases his theology on the Greek term *metanoia* rather than the Latin Vulgate’s *poenitentia*. *Metanoia*, usually translated as repentance, denotes a literal “change of mind”. Repentance, like the Catholic sacrament, brings about a regeneration, “which hath no other mark whereunto it is directed, but the image of God which was by Adam’s offence foully defaced and in a manner utterly blotted out, may be renewed in us” (Book 3, chap. 3, fol. 129r).

However, Calvin diverges from Catholicism by stressing human passivity and lack of free will in this process. Indeed, David Steinmetz remarks that the Reformation was sparked by semantics, a debate about the correct word for “penitence”: *repentance* or *penance*.¹¹⁸ While Catholics see reconciliation as a necessary, sacramental part of the spiritual journey, Calvin sees the Catholic ritual of reconciliation as a challenge to the gratuity of God’s grace (that human beings can somehow cause or merit divine grace) and the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice (that baptism and Christ’s death are not sufficient for the forgiveness of human sins). For reformers, baptism is a sufficient sacrament that can never be lost, and God’s grace prevents metaphorical shipwrecks in the first place.¹¹⁹ Reformers saw the human role in grace as utterly passive and believed that the works theology of Catholicism verged on blasphemy. The reformed confession is adamantly not a sacrament—while it may be psychologically beneficial, it cannot convey grace and is nowhere in scripture clearly instituted by Christ.

¹¹⁸ David Steinmetz, “Reformation and Grace,” in *Grace upon Grace: Essays in Honor of Thomas A. Langford*, ed. Robert K. Johnstone, L. Gregory Jones, and Jonathan R. Wilson (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), pp. 75-86, 75.

¹¹⁹ In his *Large Catechism*, Luther advocates the practice of confession, but it is adamantly not a sacrament and not necessary for salvation.

The debate about the sacramentality of reconciliation emerges in the play after Pericles' first shipwreck, when the fishermen angle his rusty armor out of the sea. Fortune gives him his father's rusty armor to "repair" himself, "though it was mine own, part of my heritage, / Which my dead father did bequeath to me" (II.i.119–20). The emphasis that the scene places on this armor and the protection it provides invokes Ephesians 6, in which Saint Paul compares the power of faith to a shield: "take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore... Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (6:13–6).¹²⁰ Pericles' father commands him to keep the armor: "'Keep it, my Pericles, it hath been a shield / 'Twixt me and death... / For that it saved me, keep it; in like necessity, / The which the gods protect thee'" (II.i.122–4). The shield, a figure of baptism, "protects" against Original Sin and "saves" fallen humanity from a death in which there is no resurrection. Pericles obeys his father's commandment: "It kept where I kept, I so dearly loved it, / Till the rough seas that spares not any man / Took it in rage" (II.i.126–8).

In the context of Luther and Calvin's debate with Saint Jerome, the armor, lost in the shipwreck that afflicts all men, is, like baptism, a shield to protect against Original Sin and death. Corroded by the stormy sea of sin, the recovered armor is symbolic of a second sacrament, a second plank against shipwreck. Pericles takes heart from his recovered armor, a marked emotional shift from the beginning of the scene in which he only hoped "to have death in peace": "My shipwreck now's no ill / Since I have here my

¹²⁰ Peggy Munoz Simonds also identifies Pericles' armor with this metaphorical armor in Ephesians (pp. 121–61). See also Maurice Hunt, "Shakespeare's Pericles," p. 302.

father gave in his will... / spite of all the rapture of the sea / This jewel holds his bidding on my arm” (II.i.11, 129–30, 151–2).¹²¹

The device on this shield also signifies the regeneration Calvin saw in contrition of heart and that Catholics see in the sacrament of reconciliation: “A withered branch that’s only green at top, / The motto, *In hac spe vivo* [In this hope I live]” (II.ii.42–3). Withered at the root, blasted with Original Sin, only the regenerative powers of the sacraments can restore fallen humanity and provide reconciliation with God.¹²² While this image accords with Calvin’s defense of repentance as a regenerative process that restores the sinner in the image of God, it also belongs to a narrative in which Pericles has literally survived a shipwreck; he must recover the shield, which had been lost at sea. Given Jerome’s metaphor about shipwreck, this episode seems to support not only the renewal of God’s image in the penitent but also the belief in the regenerative potential of reconciliation as a necessary sacrament, a second plank after shipwreck.

The confessional frame of *Pericles’* source and the pervasive shipwreck imagery contextualise the reconciliations that riddle the play and allow the individual speakers to recall and to reveal their true identities, thus unifying their present selves with their past

¹²¹The New Cambridge edition of the play (1998) glosses the jewel as Pericles’ shield and the following lines as a promise to find a horse as valuable as the shield. The Oxford (2003) and Arden (2004) editions gloss the jewel as a bracelet that survived the shipwreck, and these editors suggest that Pericles plans to pawn the bracelet for a horse. This reading of the line is supported by Wilkins’s prose, but it seems unlikely that Pericles would not notice his rich possession until the end of the scene.

¹²² See Sara Hanna’s discussion of the iconography of the resurrection in this shield device (pp. 98–100). She bases her reading of the shield on emblems that associate Aaron’s rod with the cross. Alan R. Young argues that the shield might be based upon Sidney’s impresa for a tournament at Whitehall, of a tree half dead and half alive. Shakespeare may have seen Sidney’s shield in the gallery at Whitehall (pp. 453–6). A 1613 document suggests that Shakespeare and Burbage were paid to create and paint impresas for the Earl of Rutland (See David Hoeniger, p. 472).

selves. The Apollonius tale, in both the *Confessio* and *Pericles*, opens with incest, perhaps because incest emblematises the fatal effects of all sin, in the story of Sin and Satan’s incestuous union and the birth of Death.¹²³ This fable held cultural currency throughout the early modern period, from Gower’s *Mirour de L’Omme* (composed around 1376, about ten years before he wrote the *Confessio*) to a Francis Quarles emblem in 1634, to John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1668).¹²⁴ This story of primal incest begins the *Mirour*:

Au piere furent molt cheris
 Pecché sa file et Mort son fils,
 Car trop luy furent resemblant:
 Et pour cela par son devis,
 Pour plus avoir de ses norris,
 La miere espousa son enfant:
 Si vont sept files engendrant.
 (Gower, lines 229–37)

Significantly, Gower refers to cannibalism in this allegory, just as Antioch’s daughter describes her own act of incest as cannibalistic. “De ses norris” can mean to nourish, but it also can mean “to feed on”. Translated with this latter meaning in mind, the passage is literally, “For more to have to feed themselves / the mother marries her child”.¹²⁵

¹²³While scholars such as Charles Runacres have been perplexed by Gower’s choice of the Apollonius tale to illustrate the deadly sin of lust, Russell A. Peck argues that this story is an apt conclusion for the *Confessio* because incest emblematises all of the deadly sins, in addition to lust in particular. Charles Runacres writes, “Some of the *narracions* are simply poorly chosen. Whatever its importance in the context of the whole *Confessio*, “Apollonius of Tyre” is an uninformative and confusing *narracio* about incest” (p. 124). Peck explains the relevance of the tale to the selfishness of incest, a root of all sin (3:37).

¹²⁴See Gower, lines 205–240. John Milton, *Paradise Lost* 2:760–814. See Francis Quarles, Epigram IAM.I.XV, “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death”, in *Emblems, Divine and Moral, Together with Hieroglyphicks of the Life of Man* (1634).

¹²⁵William Burton Wilson translates the passage as “in order to have more offspring, the mother espoused her child” (John Gower, p. 6). However, this translation leaves out the potential cannibalistic pun in the verb form *de se nourrir*.

In Milton's version, cannibalism is also central to the fable. In *Paradise Lost*, Sin reminds Satan that she sprung from his forehead, and "Thy self in me thy perfect image viewing / Became enamoured". Death, her son from this act of incest, rapes her, thus begetting the Seven Deadly Sins. Sin's eight children "gnaw [her] bowels" and "would full soon devour [her] / For want of other prey" (2:760–814). Echoing Gower's *Mirour* and anticipating Milton, in *Pericles*, Antioch's daughter explicitly likens incest to cannibalism in her riddle: "I am no viper, yet I feed / On mother's flesh which did me breed" (I.i.65–6). Though none of these sources explicitly identify Satan, Sin, and the Seven Deadly Sins as snakes, as the princess does in *Pericles*, it makes sense that they would take this shape. Both Gower and Milton point out that Sin and Death look like Satan, who appears to Eve as a serpent in the Garden of Eden. Snakes were also thought to eat their way out of their mother, which corresponds with the cannibalism of the fable.

The princess's image of viper cannibalism not only references Gower's version of the incest of Satan and Sin and of Sin and Death but also emphasises the seven deadly sins and the sacrament of reconciliation as a framing device in the context of the tale. Sinners suffer death because they become consumed with sin, figured as cannibalism, and forget their true selves, made in God's image, until eventually they are incapable of asking God for forgiveness because of their inability to feel contrition. Shakespearean scholars have noted references to the icon of Sin and Satan's child in the first scene of *Pericles*. Here, the king of Antioch corresponds to Satan, the daughter to Sin, and the incestuous union of the two produces Death for the suitors, whose heads testify the danger of Antioch's riddle.¹²⁶ As Spenser might put it, this incestuous relationship is the

¹²⁶ See, for example, Sara Hanna; and Claire Preston, pp. 21–38.

image *in malo* of Pericles and Marina.¹²⁷ When Marina confesses her name, she produces a very different Father/Child emblem that rewrites the wicked daughter's riddle. This reclamation of identity parallels Pericles' awakening from despair and his confession in the temple of Diana.

The cryptic riddle of King Antiochus's daughter reveals, or perhaps confesses, her sinful self in lines that parody confession. The riddle is a confession because it acknowledges and professes their otherwise secret sin; the daughter mocks the sacrament of reconciliation in that she does not meet the requirements of confession: she is not contrite and does not despise her sin.¹²⁸ The mocking confession is bold in its directness: "I sought a husband, in which labour / I found that kindness in a father" (I.i.67–8); the Antioch royalty flaunt their sin instead of seeking forgiveness. Because the king and princess feel no contrition for their sin, they cannot sincerely confess. Gower informs the audience of their hardened hearts before they even enter the scene: "But custom what they did begin / Was with long use accounted no sin" (prologue, 29–30).

The play significantly refuses to name the daughter, perhaps because she has forgotten herself, who she was before she was consumed with incest. Not only do the King and Princess forget their virtue, they also lose all sense of community. The court is a catacomb of skulls, especially in comparison with the celestial courts of Pericles' father and of Simonides:

Yon king's to me like to my father's picture
Which tells in that glory once he was,
Had princes sit like stars about his throne,

¹²⁷For a brilliant discussion of Spenser's pairing of images "*in bono*" and "*in malo*", modeled on biblical repetition of motifs and the hermeneutical strategy of *distinctio*, see Carol V. Kaske's *Spenser and Biblical Poetics*.

¹²⁸See Bruno Vincenzo, p. 19.

And he the sun for them to reverence;
None that beheld him, but like lesser lights
Did veil their crowns to his supremacy.
(II.iii.36–41)

While the community of Simonides's court produces a harmony like that of the spheres, the Antioch court creates only discord. This discord is gruesomely visualised with the corpses of past suitors: "Yon sometimes famous princes" litter the ground "without covering save yon field of stars" (I.i.35, 38).

The Antioch riddle not only mocks the communal and restorative aspects of reconciliation but also parodies the relationship between the Virgin Mary and Christ. The daughter confesses, "He's father, son, and husband mild; / I, mother, wife, and yet his child" (I.i.69–70). Christ is not only Mary's child but also a manifestation of God her Father and her Bridegroom, a tradition reaching back to the twelfth century when Rupert of Deutz and Bernard of Clairvaux identified the Virgin with the Bride and Christ with the Bridegroom in the Old Testament book Song of Songs.¹²⁹ Throughout the medieval period, the Virgin Mary was revered for her role not only as the Mother of Christ but also as the Bride of Christ (who is "one in being with the Father," according to the Nicene Creed recited at every Mass). As the Bride of Christ, the Virgin Mary also represents the ideal relationship between Ecclesia and God. Antiochus and his daughter have literalised these analogies of God's relationship to human beings in their act of incest, inverting the image of the Christian Trinity into two satanic emblems: Satan and Sin producing Death, an incestuous union of father and daughter; and Sin and Death producing the Seven Deadly Sins, an incestuous union of mother and son.

¹²⁹See M.B. Pranger, pp. 145–9.

The princess's reference to vipers in her riddle, which does not appear in the *Confessio*'s riddle, closely corresponds with a printer's mark found on the title page of Iamblichus's *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, a volume that also contains the hermetic *Asclepius*. Shakespeare, who specifies an Egyptian source for Cerimon's magic, may have consulted this book. Even if Shakespeare did not intentionally refer to this book, it forms part of his cultural milieu and was available for audiences and readers to associate with *Pericles*.¹³⁰ The meaning of title page images and their relationship to the text are in part generated by the reader, consciously or unconsciously. In his *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Gérard Genette argues that paratexts, such as printer's marks, provide crucial meaning for a reader, a frame to encounter and interpret the text, even if the reader is not conscious of their effect.

London printers based several English translations on editions published by Jean de Tournes, and the influence of his editions of *Metamorphose d'Ovide Figuree* also stretched across the English Channel, influencing tapestries created by the retinue of Mary Queen of Scots.¹³¹ The 1583 de Tournes edition of Ovid also bears the viper

¹³⁰Nicholas Moschovakis outlines conceptual blending theory and how it can be applied to allusions in his "Titus Andronicus and the Case of William Hacket," pp. 127–50. According to Moschovakis, "In so far as members of a text's intended audience inhabit an author's historical community, their experiences will more or less approximate the author's; hence, they will probably share some similar structures in memory. Such audience members, responding to the activation of particular ingredient concepts or 'input spaces,' will probably access memories resembling those prompted by the like inputs in the author's own mind. These are the conceptual structures to which, we may say, the author intended a text to prompt access. Regardless, it must be noted that any topical identifications that emerge in the minds of audiences do so as conceptual blends—no matter how like, or unlike, they may be to any or all of the blends that have previously emerged in the minds of authors" (p. 129).

¹³¹For example, the English 1593 and 1614 *The Theater of Fine Devices, Containing An Hundred Morall Emblemes* was based upon editions by Jean de Tournes (See Alison Saunders, p. 30n35). For a discussion of Mary Stuart's tapestries, see Peter Sharratt, p.

printer's mark. Even if Shakespeare did not have the opportunity to see the viper's mark on an edition of Ovid or in the *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, the title page juxtaposition of seven deadly sins and hermeticism provides a cultural context that can help to make sense of the play's juxtaposition of hermeticism and reconciliation.



Figure 1: Title page to *De Mysterii Aegyptiorum*, 1607¹³²

The title page displays what on first glance appears to be an ouroboros, or a snake eating its tail, a common emblem for eternity and a hermetical emblem for the universe, according to Horapollo (ca. 500 AD). However, upon closer inspection, there are two snakes. One is eating the head of the other, and their tails intertwine into a knot reminiscent of the infinity or eternity symbol. Their bodies also form a double circle pattern, a circle within a circle. Seven little snakes, representative of the seven deadly sins, erupt from the cannibal snake's side. Inside the double snake circle, a cartouche

201. Jean de Tournes printed editions of *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum* in 1549, 1552, 1570, 1577, and 1607.

¹³²Iamblichus, *De Mysterii Aegyptiorum* (Geneva: Jean de Tournes, 1607). I would like to thank the J.R. Ritman Library for giving me access to the ten editions they have of the *De Mysterii Aegyptiorum* and for granting me permission to take digital images of these books. I would especially like to thank Dr. F.W. van Heertum and Joyce Pijnenburg for their help.

reads: “Quod Tibi Fieri Non Vis Alteri Ne Feceris [Don’t do to another what you don’t want done to you]”. This quotidian golden rule underlies the prohibitive seven deadly sins, especially in its negative rather than the more familiar positive form: Do unto others what you would have done unto you.¹³³

The image visually reinforces this negative imperative with the cartouche wrapping around and imprisoning the two snakes’ bodies. The cartouche clearly binds the snakes’ bodies and may be likened to the Church’s power of binding and loosing sin. Catholics (but not Reformers) find authority for this power in Matthew 16:16, referred to as the power of the keys: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.” Just as the golden rule cartouche binds the bodies of the snakes—representative of Death, Sin, and their offspring, the Seven Deadly Sins—the Catholic Church has the power through the sacrament of reconciliation to bind the Seven Deadly Sins and to free sinners by declaring God’s forgiveness.

Jean de Tournes converted to Protestantism as early as 1545 and may not have intended any Catholic resonances with his printer’s mark; the mark first appears in books he printed in 1548.¹³⁴ Though a Protestant, he collaborated with Catholics including the illustrator Bernard Salomon and authors such as Claude Paradin, and he published a collection of the Catholic Andrea Alciato’s emblems in 1547, which were also illustrated by Salomon. Jean de Tournes’ interest in emblems and the educative possibilities of

¹³³For biblical formulations of the Golden Rule, see Matthew 7:12 and Luke 12:31. This rule was also formulated by pagan philosophers, including Hierocles, Plato, and Aristotle.

¹³⁴The mark appears above the doorway of Jean de Tournes’ home in Lyon, 7 and 9 de la rue Raisin. Because the mark was used as early as 1548, Alfred Cartier reasons that de Tournes had this mark sculpted over the door when he moved into the building in 1555 (p. 37).

images suggest that his snake mark was carefully designed to influence readers, and Bernard Salomon's Catholicism may have shaped that design.¹³⁵ Salomon drafted a Catholic last will and testament on 19 October 1559.¹³⁶ Not only does Salomon declare himself "testateur, comme bon et fidelle catholicque a faict le signe de la croix disant: In nomine Patris et Filii et Spirtus sancti", but he also recommends his soul to "la glorieuse vierge Marie" and requests his inheritors to assist him in his afterlife by attending to "la sépulture de sondict corps, frais funéraires, obsèques, messes, luminaires".¹³⁷ Salomon's Catholicism may have influenced his design of the viper printer's mark, supporting a Catholic interpretation of the cartouche binding the snakes' bodies and reading the seven small snakes as the Deadly Sins.

Appearing on a title page for an alchemical treatise, the golden rule binding the snakes also paratextually points to the spiritual alchemy of reconciliation, an allusion to the esoteric strand of alchemy that focused on purifying the soul. This esoteric movement "gradually developed into a devotional system where the mundane transmutation of metals became merely symbolic of the transformation of the sinful man into a perfect being through prayer and submission to the will of God" (Holmyard, p. 16).¹³⁸ Like the transformation of a base metal into precious gold, the binding of sins through the sacrament of reconciliation can transform the soul.

¹³⁵Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbrown argue that "in these designs we are confronted with conceits of the author, represented at the front of his book in visual symbols that he himself had chosen and designed as its most fitting emblems" (p.1).

¹³⁶For the attribution of the printer's mark, referred to as "les vipères", to Bernard Salomon, see Natalis Rondot, p. 80.

¹³⁷For the full text of Salomon's will, see Peter Sharratt, p. 31.

¹³⁸Lyndy Abraham finds in *Pericles* an alchemical allegory, but she explicitly argues for a "non-Christian" reading of the play (p. 525). My reading differs from hers because I focus on the relationship of esoteric, or spiritual, alchemy and Catholicism.

The association of Catholicism and hermeticism was not limited to Continental writers and artists; the English were also aware of the links between the two traditions. Cesare Baronius's Counter-Reformation text, *Annales Ecclesiastici* (the first volume was published in 1588), lists Hermes Trismegistus among the ancient pagan prophets of Christianity, including Hydaspes and the Sybils. King James invited Isaac Casaubon, a French Huguenot, to take up residence in London in 1610; Casaubon was considered to be one of the most learned scholars in Europe, and King James asked him to devote his intellectual energies to Catholic controversy instead of his classical studies.¹³⁹ In 1612 the king requested him to write an anti-Catholic attack on Baronius. After coming across the reference to Hermes Trismegistus in Baronius, Casaubon acquired a copy of Turnèbe's 1554 edition of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and read it in light of his vast knowledge of Greek culture and literature. He at once saw the syncretism of the *Hermetica* as a product of early Christianity rather than of pagan prophecy: "The style of this book could not be farther from the language that the Greek contemporaries of Hermes used" and "that imposter liked to steal not only the sacred doctrines but the words of Sacred Scripture as well" (qtd. in Grafton, p. 151). In his refutation of Baronius's Catholic work, Casaubon debunked the author of the *Corpus Hermeticum* as an early Christian rather than an Egyptian priest contemporary with Moses. In demystifying hermeticism, Casaubon shattered the *prisca theologia*, or the belief that this ancient wisdom had been handed down through the ages, further weakening Catholicism's similar claim to authority through the traditions passed down by the Magisterium.

¹³⁹See Mark Pattison, p. 309. See also Anthony Grafton's "Protestant versus Prophet: Isaac Casaubon on Hermes Trismegistus," pp. 145–61.

Written before Casaubon's demystification of Hermes Trismegistus, the Antioch riddle draws on the general context of Christianised hermeticism. It registers the incestuous origin of the Seven Deadly Sins by describing Antioch's incestuous union as cannibalistic snakes. Like Sin in the incestuous creation of the Seven Deadly Sins and the seven little snakes, the daughter finds a husband in her father, devouring the head of her family. Incest leads to a vicious circle, in the story of Sin and Satan and in the title page's double-circle pattern, as it does in *Pericles*. The riddle alludes to "How they may be, and yet in two", just as the snakes on the title page appear to be one at first, but with closer inspection they resolve into two vipers locked together. By internalizing another, symbolised by eating, both the cannibal snake and cannibal princess lose their separate identities and become one entity of sin. Antioch and his daughter persist in their sin, and their divine punishment is obliteration. Their bodies disintegrate, mingling in ash: "A fire from heaven came and shrivelled up / Their bodies even to loathing, for they so stunk" (II.iv.9–10). One body is indistinguishable from another because they had so long forsaken their individuality for a delight in shared sin. In order to survive, both in the here and now and in the hereafter, Pericles must learn to disentangle himself from this sin and keep it separate from himself. The wickedness of Antioch motivates the action of the play, sending Pericles sailing toward shipwreck, loss, and ultimately reconciliation. Before discussing the moments of reconciliation in the play, I will first consider another of *Pericles'* emblems of spiritual alchemy in Cerimon's reanimation of Thaisa.

A HERMETIC SAINT

While Gower's Cerymon is "a worthi clerke, a Surgien, / And ek a gret Phisicien, / Of al that lond the wisest on", Shakespeare's Cerimon is decidedly a magician, but one associated with Christianity (8.1.163–5). While he performs miracles, claiming that "immortality attends" on "virtue and cunning", "making man a god" (III.ii.27–30), he also shows charity: the audience witnesses his good works from the moment he enters the stage, as he attends to a sick man and grants shelter to two Gentlemen from the storm. The Second Gentlemen extols Cerimon's charity: "Your honour has / Through Ephesus poured forth your charity", and in the epilogue, Gower underscores Cerimon as emblematic of "the worth that learned charity aye wears" (III.ii.42–3, Epi. line 10). Both charity and good works are part of the Christian tradition, and both are particularly emphasised by Catholicism.

Cerimon's goal to make "a man a god" invokes the deification that many Christian-hermeticists in the early modern period, such as John Dee and Lodovico Lazzarelli, pursued. Both of these early modern magicians believed that magical experimentation would lead to a mystical union with the Christian God and a deeper understanding of the divine mysteries. Lazzarelli believed that the soul, Pimander, which speaks to Hermes Trismegistus, is one and the same as Christ.¹⁴⁰ Cerimon's link with cunning, the "occult art, magic," is reinforced when he describes his "secret art" and when he tells how he heard of necromancy from "an Egyptian / That had nine hours lain

¹⁴⁰In fact, Lodovico Lazzarelli was converted to Christian Hermeticism by Giovanni "Mercurio" da Corregio, who believed that he was himself Christ reincarnated and who introduced himself as "the Angel of Wisdom Pimander in the highest and greatest ecstasy of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (qtd. in Wouter Hanegraaff, p. 29).

dead” (III.ii.32, 83–4).¹⁴¹ The resurrected Egyptian may even refer to Osiris, whom Isis resurrected by following Hermes Trismegistus’s instructions, according to some versions of the myth.

When Cerimon claims that he has “made familiar / To me and to my aid the blest infusions / That dwells In vegetatives, in metals, stones”, he is saying not only that he familiarised himself with the attributes of plants and metals but also that he has harnessed the power of the spirits in those plants and metals, their “blest infusions”, making them familiar spirits (III.ii.34–6). The syntax of the line supports this more occult sense of the word “familiar”: instead of making himself familiar *with* the attributes of plants and stones, Cerimon makes the blest infusions that dwell in these objects familiar *to* him and *to his aid*.¹⁴² Inanimate objects such as plants, stones, and metals, infused with and transformed by a blessing, are possibly reminiscent of Catholic objects transformed by priests, such as the wafer that is transubstantiated into Christ’s flesh, holy water, and other sacred objects rejected as idolatrous by most reformers.¹⁴³ Cerimon’s familiars

¹⁴¹ OED, 4 and 5 s.v. “cunning.”

¹⁴² OED, 2d and 3, s.v. “familiar.” A cursory search on the Early English Books Online database for the syntax “made familiar to me” produced no results; “familiar with” seems to be the most common syntactical form.

¹⁴³ In *Romeo and Juliet*, Friar Laurence makes a similar allusion to the virtue in inanimate objects: “O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies / In plants, herbs, stones, and their true qualities” (II.iii.15–6). Friar Laurence continues in his soliloquy to remark upon the poisonous and medicinal properties in a plant, depending upon how that plant is used. His observations are more naturalistic than Cerimon’s, as Cerimon’s plants, herbs, and stones are *infused* with virtue, in and of themselves, while Friar Laurence’s plants, herbs, and stones are medicinal only if they are applied correctly. The medicinal context of Friar Laurence’s soliloquy, and the confessions he hears from both Romeo and Juliet, may also imply the medicinal qualities of the sacraments correctly administered (perhaps especially of penance and the sacrament of marriage); a few lines later in the scene, Romeo requests the friar’s “holy physic”, making the metaphor more explicit (II.iii.52). Friar Laurence’s reference to “powerful grace” is also a religiously loaded phrase that might bring to mind the grace conveyed by sacraments, especially given his role as a

closely correspond with Gower's discussion of alchemy in book 4 of the *Confessio*. There, Genius distinguishes among three types of philosopher's stone: *lapis* (stone) *vegetabilis*, whose "propre vertu" is to serve humanity's health and to "kepe and to preserve" the body from all sickness; *lapis animalis*, whose "vertu" sharpens the five senses; and Minerall, which "pureth" metals (4.2535–9. 2542–6, 2552).

Gower's description of the third kind of stone, the Minerall, deploys a penitential vocabulary: the Minerall purifies so that "al the vice goth aweie / Of rust, of stink and of hardnesse, / And whan they ben of such clenness, / This Mineral, so as I finde, / Transformeth al the ferste kynde" (4.2552–60). The sacrament of reconciliation, too, serves to "pure" the human soul, so that all vice, figured as rust and stink that corrupts the soul, goes away, often compared to a cleansing in medieval Penitentials. Like the Philosopher's Stone that softens ordinary rocks and metals into gold, reconciliation softens the hardness of heart that prevents true contrition. Gold, linked with the "Sonne" in this passage, may further connect Gower's sun with the Son of God.

The work done by Shakespeare's play in potentially restoring the viewer parallels the work of both alchemical and spiritual restoration. Cerimon's magic, called "charity" by the Second Gentleman, has "restored" hundreds, including Thaisa (III.ii.43, 45). Charity, or *caritas*, is a central part of reconciliation to atone for sins; the sinner must restore *caritas* in his or her community, especially toward the person sinned against. Unlike the Lutheran *sola fides*, Catholics define justification as *fides formata*, a faith shaped by *caritas*, a charitable love. Pericles writes that it is "charity" to bury his queen and invites the finder to keep the treasure; Cerimon charitably taxes his "knowledge",

Catholic priest.

“personal pain”, and “pulse” to bring Thaisa back from the dead (III.ii.74, 45–6). Significantly, Cerimon’s magic is also linked to healing, a common metaphor for reconciliation. Erasmus refers to “the medicine and remedy of penance” to heal “the diseases & sykenesses of the mynde that is to wete, in vices” in his *Lytle Treatise of the Maner and Forme of Confession* (EEBO images 52, 24). Cerimon’s “physic” is as “sacred” as that performed by Marina (III.ii.32, V.i.67).

Though Thaisa’s first words in the play are taken verbatim from the *Confessio*, the play departs from its source in the crucial point of Thaisa’s resurrection. In the *Confessio*, Cerymon finds a pulse in Thaisa’s veins, implying that she never died:

This noble clerk, with alle haste
 Began the veines forto taste,
 And sih hire Age was of youthe,
 And with the craftes whiche he couthe
 He soghte and fond a signe of lif.
 (8.1185–9)

Shakespeare’s Cerimon, however, does not find physical evidence that Thaisa is alive. He says that her body looks “fresh”, but this just implies that she has not been dead long enough for her body to lose its color (which would take several hours). In *Pericles*, Thaisa had died on the ship: Lychorida tells Pericles the dreadful news of his “dead queen” (III.i.18). Pericles sees her corpse and says “A priestly farewell”, casting her embalmed body overboard in a coffin (III.i.69), and when Cerimon first sees the contents of the coffin, he cries, “What’s here, a corpse?” (III.ii.62). Throughout this scene, Cerimon emphasises the lifeless materiality of her body. We know she is dead, although Cerimon feels confident that he can revive her since she has not been dead long: “Death may usurp on nature many hours / And yet the fire of life kindle again / The o’erpressed spirits” (III.ii.81–3).

Cerimon's resurrection of Thaisa, his ability to ensoul her body, anticipates Paulina's call for faith and music to awaken Hermione's soul in a statue. In *The Winter's Tale*, a later meditation on the sacrament of reconciliation, Shakespeare makes explicit the Catholicism of the animate statue. Leontes exclaims, "There's magic in thy majesty, which has / My evils conjured to remembrance", "piercing to my soul." The statue, like the icons used in Catholic worship, affects the viewer emotionally, piercing the soul and calling for reconciliation. When the statue softens into flesh, Leontes compares it to the Eucharist: "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating." Reconciliation is theologically essential to this miraculous animation; according to Sarah Beckwith, "there can be no understanding of the [E]ucharist without penance because the body of Christ was inseparable from a reconciled community in both the medieval and Reformation practice of penance and repentance" (p. 194). Just as the stone transubstantiates into Hermione's flesh, so does the wafer become the body of Christ.¹⁴⁴

Cerimon's animation of Thaisa closely corresponds to the hermetic process for ensouling statues detailed in the *Asclepius*. Cerimon explicitly identifies an Egyptian source for his knowledge of how to bring Thaisa back from the dead: "I heard of an Egyptian / That had nine hours lain dead, who was / By good appliance recovered" (III.ii.83–5). According to the 1577 *Asclepius*, published with the *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, plants, stones, and music are necessary for ensouling statues: "[Asclepius:] the quality of these gods who are considered earthly—what sort of thing is it, Trismegistus? [Hermes Trismegistus:] It comes from a mixture of plants, stones, and

¹⁴⁴See William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, V.iii.35–112. All references to other Shakespeare plays will be to the Clarendon 2005 edition and will be cited parenthetically in text or in the notes by act, scene, and line number.

spices, Asclepius, that have in them a natural power of divinity. And this is why those gods are entertained with constant sacrifices, with hymns, praises and sweet sounds in tune with heaven's harmony: so that the heavenly ingredient enticed into the idol by constant communication with heaven may gladly endure its long stay among humankind. Thus does man fashion his gods."¹⁴⁵

When Cerimon calls for "all my boxes in my closet", with their "blest infusions / That dwells in vegetatives, in metals, stones", he sounds like the alchemical authority Hermes Trismegistus, prescribing "mixture of plants, stones, and spices... that have in them a natural power of divinity." The musical harmony required for Cerimon's spell, "The rough and woeful music" of the "viol" (III.ii.87), is paralleled in Hermes Trismegistus's ritual, which also emphasises music as a crucial component to enticing spirits into an inanimate object: "hymns, praises and sweet sounds in tune with heaven's harmony".¹⁴⁶ Cerimon's music echoes Gower's singing at the beginning of the play and also reverberates with the music of the spheres prompted by Pericles's and Marina's reunion, culminating in the vision of Diana. This "heaven's harmony" symbolises the

¹⁴⁵"ASCLEP. Et horum o Trismegiste deorum, qui terreni habentur, cuiusmodi est qualitas? TRIS. Constat o Asclepi, de herbis, de lapidibus, de aromatibus vim diuinitatis naturalem in se habentibus, & propter hanc causam, sacrificiis frequentibus oblectantur, hymnis, & laudibus, dulcissimis sonis in modum coelestis harmoniae continentibus, ut illud, quod coelestis est, coelesti vfu, & frequentatione illectum in idola possit laetum, humanitatis patiens, longa durare per tempora" (Iamblichus, *Asclepius* in *De Mysteriis Aegyptiorum*, in Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC, p. 537). English translation by Brian P. Copenhaver, p. 90.

¹⁴⁶The viol is perhaps a vial of medicine, though it may also refer to a musical instrument. For an excellent discussion of the "viol" and "rough music" of this passage, see F. Elizabeth Hart's "Cerimon's 'Rough' Music in Pericles, 3.2," pp. 313–31. Hart emphasises Cerimon's medical expertise, while I argue for his hermetic, magical healing of Thaisa.

reconciliation between God and self, Father and child, that allows Cerimon to perform such miracles as calling Thaisa's soul back into her corpse.

“[A] warmth breathes out of her” (III.ii.91)¹⁴⁷— the indirect syntax of the line implies that the *anima* is the agent while Thaisa's body is a passive machine; the warmth is simultaneously her body's exhaled breath and the soul that animates the lungs and breathes through the material body. In keeping with the hermetic ritual, Cerimon's references to “heavenly jewels”, “fringes of bright gold”, and “diamonds” describe Thaisa's body as if it were a statue that is magically coming to life:

She is alive! Behold
Her eyelids, cases to those heavenly jewels
Which Pericles hath lost, begin to part
Their fringes of bright gold. The diamonds
Of a most praised water doth appear,
To make the world twice rich. Live, and make
Us weep to hear your fate, fair creature,
Rare as you seem to be.
(III.ii.96–103)

Cerimon's miracles are not the product of dark magic, but performed through the power given him by the reigning deity, according to witnesses: the First Gentleman exclaims, “The heavens / Through you increase our wonder” (III.ii.94–5), Thaisa identifies Cerimon as the “man / Through whom the gods have shown their power”, and Pericles greets him with “Reverend sir, / The gods can have no mortal officer / More like a god than you” (V.iii.60–4). Cerimon's hermetic knowledge allows him to perfectly

¹⁴⁷ In Q the line reads, “Nature awakes a warmth breath out of her”. As Gossett notes, the text is “clearly defective and was changed as early as Q2” (note to lines 91–2). In Q2, the line is “Nature awakes a warme breath out of her”. Like Malone and Gossett, I find the emendation to “Nature awakes; / A warmth breathes out of her!” more fitted to the magical context of the scene. The emendation further emphasises the materiality of her body: “Nature” as opposed to spirit. It is the body that awakes from death, and the evidence of the body ensouled is the *anima*, or the breath.

channel divine power. Like a Catholic saint, he has become godlike in his holiness, a more perfect image of God—his body becomes a hermetic statue through which divine spirits work. Unlike a dark magician, who would claim all miracles as his own, Cerimon humbly appeals to Apollo to “perfect” him “in the characters”; even the ability to read is attributed to a higher power (III.ii.65).

PERICLES' CONFESSION

Like Cerimon and Thaisa, Pericles does not need to commit mortal or even venial sins in order to benefit from reconciliation. While some critics argue that Pericles is innocent in the play, and only tainted with sin by the incest episode or by his own inaction, they overlook the universal requirement of reconciliation for communion.¹⁴⁸ To prepare for communion, all individuals need to have a clear conscience and to feel at peace with their community, ensured by the satisfaction stage of the sacrament. Pericles lacks this feeling. This spiritual lethargy leads to Pericles' despair, the deadliest of the seven deadly sins. Petrified by his loss, Pericles becomes a statue in his ship cabin, numb and unresponsive: “for this three months” he “hath not spoken / To anyone, nor taken sustenance, / But to prorogue his grief” (V.i.22–4). Pericles' despondence echoes Egeon's despair in an earlier Ephesus play, *The Comedy of Errors*, which was also based

¹⁴⁸See, for example, Thelma N. Greenfield; G. Wilson Knight, pp. 38–40; Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance*, p. 149; John P. Cutts; and W.B. Thorne, p. 47. Perhaps the most convincing is Maurice Hunt, who has argued extensively for the Book of Jonah as a source for Pericles' lack of action. Hunt reads the Fishermen episode, for example, as a call for “spiritual stirring” and a “bold spiritual protest against evil” that Pericles does not comprehend at this point in his development. See “A Looking Glass for *Pericles*,” p. 5; See also Hunt's “Opening the Book of Monarch's Faults: *Pericles* and Redemptive Speech,” pp. 155–70.

upon the Apollonius of Tyre story: “Hopeless and helpless doth Egeon wend, / But to procrastinate his lifeless end” (I.i.157–8). Both Egeon and Pericles must be reunited with their lost children in order to be cured of this despair. Marina animates Pericles by reminding him of his identity when she confesses hers, and Diana requires Pericles to confess his identity as an absolution for his despair.

Lysimachus invokes the sacrament of reconciliation when he calls upon Marina to administer her “sacred physic” to the “kingly patient” (V.i.67, V.i.64). John T. McNeill notes the pervasiveness of this medical analogy in medieval Penitentials: “the penitent was regarded as one morally diseased and ill, and his treatment is... repeatedly, even habitually, referred to as the task of the moral physician. His sins are the symptoms of disease. The penalties enforced are ‘*medicamenta*,’ ‘*remedia*,’ ‘*fomenta*’ —measures designed to restore his moral and spiritual health” (p. 14). In order to heal Pericles, Marina, like Genius, believes that she must motivate him to speak. Like Genius in the *Confessio*, she does so by telling a story, in this case her autobiography, a story that she refuses to tell anyone else in Mytilene: “She never would tell / Her parentage. Being demanded that, / She would sit still and weep”, according to Lysimachus (V.i.177–9).

In revealing her identity, Marina also recalls her true self before misfortune cast her into the brothel. The *Confessio*’s Amans/Gower provides the model for interpreting this reclamation of a name as a confession that ends the shrift. Pericles underscores the importance of memory, crucial for the narrative of confession, in their exchange in his report at Ephesus: “by her own most clear remembrance she / Made known herself my daughter” (V.iii.12–3). Marina’s confession revives her father from his despair, restoring him to his true self, and threatens to shipwreck him again, this time with joy: “put me to

present pain, / Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me / O'erbear the shores of my mortality / And drown me with their sweetness" (V.i.181–4). He confesses, "I am Pericles of Tyre" (V.i.194).¹⁴⁹ This image of shipwreck once again associates this reunion with the salvific grace of penance, the second plank after the shipwreck of sin.

Marina's confession also redeems the sinful parody of reconciliation in Antioch and restores the purity of the father and child relationship.¹⁵⁰ Just as the play's refusal to name the Antioch Princess marks her as sinful, Marina's declaration of her name is a declaration of her virtue. Pericles' reframing of her identity, "O, come hither, / Thou that beget'st him that did thee beget" (V.i.184–5), implies, wittingly or not, that Marina's confession of her identity is the image *in bono* of the Princess of Antioch's confession of incest.

In revising the riddle, Pericles acknowledges Marina as his spiritual parent, in the same way that priests are referred to as Fathers.¹⁵¹ There was precedent for women

¹⁴⁹This scene calls to mind a similar scene in *Twelfth Night*, in which Viola tells her brother her name:

If nothing lets to make us happy both
But this my masculine usurped attire,
Do not embrace me till each circumstance
Of place, time, fortune do cohere and jump
That I am Viola.

(V.i.241–45)

¹⁵⁰According to Howard Felperin in his *Shakespearean Romance*, "The redemptive love of father and child at the center of the Christian mystery" is "paralleled in this play [*Pericles*]" (p. 168); and "Shakespeare takes pains to make clear that we are in a realm of analogy rather than identity" (p. 169). My reading differs from Felperin's in that he does not take into account the Christian use of the pagan story in the frame of the source text. For Felperin, the Christian Father/Child relationship is only an analogy in a strictly pagan world; I read this image as an emblem instead of merely as an analogy.

¹⁵¹Reading Marina as a Catholic priest figure parallels the political readings of the Antioch incest in terms of the Jacobean constitutional debates, in which "incest becomes a figure of absolutist pretensions—or tyranny—as perceived from the point of view of a constitutionalist politics" (Constance Jordan, pp. 331–53).

confessors. In the Patristic period, martyrs, regardless of gender, who survived torture were considered “oracles of the Holy Spirit”, and could pardon apostasy by giving *libelli* (Osborne, p. 60). Marina’s miraculous escape from the brothel certainly is reminiscent of such virgin martyrs as Saint Agnes, Saint Agatha, and Saint Lucy, and would qualify her to be one of the Holy Spirit’s messengers. Especially in early medieval Britain, women confessors were not unheard of. In Ireland, for example, Saint Brendan was said to have confessed to Saint Ida, and Saint Columba also received spiritual direction from holy women. Marina joins this tradition of women confessors and appropriates the role of a priest when she creates a physical space reminiscent of a confessional by demanding privacy with Pericles in his cabin as a condition of speaking with him.

The privacy of the brothel also transforms it into a confessional, in which Marina demonstrates her sacerdotal abilities; the sacrament of reconciliation becomes a weapon to preserve her chastity. As in the fishermen episode, the humorous tone of the converted gentlemen scene also conveys religious and political meaning. Though the comic relief in this scene contrasts with the emotional encounter between Marina and her father, the conversions in the brothel also support reading Marina as a confessor. George Wilkins’s title for the chapter that relates the brothel episode attests to Marina’s religious work: “How *Marina* being thus solde to a Bawde, preserued her virginitie, and how shee conuerted all that euer came to make hire of her beauty from the loosenesse of their desires” (chpt. 10).

Two Gentlemen hold the stage to report their conversions, which happen off-stage in Marina’s brothel room. They marvel at the “divinity preached there”, and the second Gentleman vows never to return to a brothel and craves to “hear the vestals sing”,

showing a newfound respect for women and chastity (IV.v.4, 7). The first Gentleman similarly vows to “do any thing now that is virtuous, but / I am out of the road of rutting forever” (IV.v.8–9). Read through a Protestant frame, Marina is a preacher who inspires her congregation (the two Gentlemen) to reform. However, the privacy of the brothel room (and the Protestant association of the brothel with the confessional¹⁵²), lends itself to the personal conversation of the confessional. Each man goes into the room alone and after talking with Marina, emerges a new man, reclaiming the virtuous image of the divine and casting off the old man of sin. The Gentlemen’s vows of satisfaction are narrated instead of shown, preserving the privacy of the confessional. While the Gentlemen proclaim a general amendment of life, in keeping with a Protestant repentance to God, Marina’s presence and her role as a priest are crucial to the contrition of these Gentlemen, in keeping with a Catholic reconciliation.

The Gentlemen’s conversion literally sets the stage for Lysimachus’s conversion. After he swaggers on stage in disguise, Marina quibbles with his euphemisms, forcing him to acknowledge his shame of speaking his sin. Sarah Beckwith reads this scene in a similar way, although she does not see Marina as a confessor. According to Beckwith, Marina “takes the words of others and holds them to their meaning so that all equivocation, hypocrisy, all the euphemisms that cover over sin are shown to be pitiful

¹⁵²Gracious Menewe provides a 1555 example of this anti-Catholic association of the confessional with the brothel: In his satirical dialogue, the apprentice retorts to the priest that confession was practised in Constantinople “vntill abominable whoredome and adultry was shamfully comitted betwene a Deacon and a noble woeman, vnder the pretence of it” (EEBO images 23-4). The hagiographic tradition also provides many examples, although not anti-Catholic, of a virgin martyr saint converting the patrons of a brothel. Saint Agnes’s legend is perhaps the most parallel to Marina’s story; Jacob Voragine reports in his *Golden Legend* that all the patrons who visit Agnes in the brothel witness her purity and leave the brothel more devout and clean than they had entered. Saint Daria also converts a man in the brothel.

evasions of the fundamental evils they purport to describe.”¹⁵³ Marina exhorts Lysimachus, “If you were born to honour show it now; / If put upon you, make the judgement good / That thought you worthy of it” (IV.v.96–8). Marina’s “holy words” touch Lysimachus and “alter” his “corrupted mind” (IV.v.138, 100, 99).

Here we might read a pun on “altar”: By purifying his mind and altering his lifestyle, Lysimachus makes himself a living sacrifice to God. He protests to Marina that “the very doors / And windows [of the brothel] savour vilely,” perhaps also a reference to the moral corruption in the temple of his body and mind, not fit for the presence of God (IV.v.114–5). Crucially, Marina’s words have caused him to know himself,¹⁵⁴ to see the corruption of his sin and to reform himself into a better image of God. Though he enters the scene demanding the price of twelve virgins and pays the Bawd for Marina’s services, he leaves the brothel “saying his prayers”, according to Boult (IV.v.145).¹⁵⁵ In Wilkins’s prose version, Lysimachus says to himself of Marina (in an “aside”), “Now surely this is

¹⁵³ Beckwith, *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness*, p. 98.

¹⁵⁴ Sarah Beckwith presents a compelling and elegant account of the relationship among language, acknowledgement, and reconciliation in *Shakespeare and the Grammar of Forgiveness*.

¹⁵⁵ Several critics are skeptical about Lysimachus’s conversion. For example, Margaret Healy suggests, though she also notes the lack of direct textual evidence, that Lysimachus has contracted syphilis from his iniquities in the brothel, and that Marina’s marriage to him sentences her to contracting this disease and dying a terrible death instead of living happily ever after (pp. 53–70). Though in the Quarto text Lysimachus claims that he “came with not ill intent” to the brothel and does not have “a corrupted mind”, his demands of Bawd clearly show his ill intent and corruption. Wilkins’s prose version of this scene corroborates Lysimachus’s lustful motives: “I hither came with thoughts intemperate, foul, and deformed, the which your pains so well have laved that they are now white” (Wilkins, Chpt. 10). I agree that it is difficult to believe Lysimachus could realistically have such a sudden conversion. However, the play is based upon the final book of the *Confessio*, which focuses on identifying and healing the deadly sin of Lust; Lysimachus’s revelation, while it may be humorous in its improbability, is in perfect keeping with the source text. Even the worst of sinners can be redeemed, and the play’s emphasis on charity implies grace for all the repentant. The play does not give us evidence to doubt his restoration to virtue.

Virtues image, or rather, Vertues selfe, sent downe frome heauen, a while to raigne on earth, to teach us what we should be". Wilkins underscores Lysimachus's spiritual transformation in a common metaphor for the sacraments of baptism and reconciliation, cleansing: "I hither came with thoughtes intemperate, foule and deformed, the which your paines so well hath laued, that they are now white". In Wilkins's prose, Marina thanks the heavens for "the preseruacion of her chastitie, and the reformation of his mind" (Wilkins, chpt. 10). The purchase of Marina's miraculous purification of the governor and the Gentlemen is to make men glorious; Lysimachus recalls his responsibilities not only as a virtuous, honorable individual, but also as the governor of Mytilene.

By placing these conversions in a brothel, the play refutes the reformers' association of the confessional with sexual corruption.¹⁵⁶ In a place of sexual corruption, Marina preserves her chastity and even inspires others to remember and restore their virtue, much in the way of medieval saints, particularly Saint Agnes.¹⁵⁷ The syncretic method of the play is apparent in this scene as well; Bawd and Pander worry that Marina could "freeze the god Priapus and undo a whole generation", or that she could "make a puritan of the devil if he should cheapen a kiss of her", and that "she'll... make our swearers priests" (IV.v.12-3, 17-8, 20). Marina's saintliness and chastity has the same restorative effect on all men. In provoking confession, Marina reminds the Gentlemen, Lysimachus, and her father of their virtue and their responsibilities to their communities.

¹⁵⁶ "[T]he secrecy of the confessional suggested to reforming sensibilities a corrupt and easily sexualized relation" (Sarah Beckwith, p. 196).

¹⁵⁷ In Thomas Twyne's version of the tale, he calls the Marina character a saint: "Now as he was going, he met with an other pilgrime that with like deuotion came for to seeke the same saint" (chpt. 8). Though this is a facetious description of the brothel, it also suggests the miraculous preservation of Marina's virtue. For readings of the Saint Agnes legend as a source for the brothel episode, see Lorraine Helms, pp. 319-32; Helen Cooper, p. 109; Paul Dean, p. 135; and Howard Felperin, "Shakespeare's Miracle Play," p. 371.

The restorative power of reconciliation is confirmed by the music of the spheres and Pericles' vision of Diana, in which we may see an allusion to the Christian beatific vision that perfects such pagan visions. Reading the play through a Christian lens parallels interpretations produced by a classical lens; the syncretism of the play calls upon multiple traditions and authorities in order to create the emotional effect of the scene. Christianity's cultural appropriation of paganism, particularly the absorption of Diana into the Virgin Mary, is inscribed on the very statues of Ephesus.¹⁵⁸ As Robert Miola points out, "Shakespearian ontology, actually, recapitulates cultural phylogeny. In the fourth century Christians razed the name Artemis from the colonnade of the Ephesian agora, carved crosses on the foreheads of Imperial statues, and erected a Cathedral to the Virgin Mary. Ephesus hosted a new universal mother, as Christians identified the city as Mary's home for the last nine years of her life and as the site of her dormition and assumption" (p. 39). Mary appropriated the attributes of Diana as Christianity absorbed pagan religions: both are virgin Queens of Heaven, both are associated with the moon, and both are represented with silver.

These important markers in Marian history and iconography may have been accentuated by the staging of the final scene. As Miola points out, the "Greek *hiera* becomes Roman vestal becomes, finally, Roman Catholic nun" in the *Comedy of Errors*; Thaisa's transformation echoes the Catholic vocabulary deployed in the final scene at the

¹⁵⁸ In his "Ephesus Restored: Sacramentalism and Redemption in *The Comedy of Errors*," Glyn Austen suggests that "Shakespeare quite deliberately infuses the play with religious, notably Christian, allusions in order to emphasise his own concern that Comedy is a redemptive and sacramental cycle" (pp. 54–69). As in *Pericles*, Austen finds reference to the "old man" and "new man" of the Book of Ephesians in the confusion and rediscovery of the characters' identities.

Temple of Ephesus in the *Comedy of Errors* (Miola, p. 38).¹⁵⁹ Sara Hanna suggests a possible stage tableau in which the Temple's silver statue of Diana is surrounded by Thaisa and other priestesses, dressed in silver robes, to echo the celestial courts of Simonides and Pericles' father. Statues of Diana are traditionally silver (see Acts 19:24), and it would make sense to change Thaisa's costume as she becomes a votaress of Diana. Hanna points out that such a staging of the scene would correspond to the Christian iconography of the Virgin in Morations, Assumptions, and Coronations.¹⁶⁰

The goddess commands Pericles to visit her temple in Ephesus and confess his "crosses", to "give them repetition to the life" (V.i.232–3). While Diana is a pagan goddess, "cross" has strong Christian associations. The first eleven definitions for the word in the OED refer to Christianity. Diana uses the word "cross" to mean misfortune rather than an explicit Christian symbol, but this also has a parallel Christian context: "A trial or affliction viewed in its Christian aspect, to be borne for Christ's sake with Christian patience", a message that several critics view as central to the play.¹⁶¹ While Diana refers to a plurality of misfortunes that have befallen Pericles, the word "cross" might register specifically Christian allusions in the minds of the audiences, especially if the play is viewed through a Christian frame. To give these crosses "repetition to the life" means not only to recount them with rigorous particularity. In repeating his adventures, Pericles remembers and relives them, bringing both the memories and his identity back to

¹⁵⁹Throughout the final act of *Comedy of Errors*, Emilia is referred to as the "abbess" and the Temple of Diana is an "abbey" and "priory" (for example, V.i.117, 133, 122, and 36).

¹⁶⁰See Hart, "'Great is Diana' of Shakespeare's Ephesus," p. 359. See also Hanna, who imagines, "changing the dominant color from silver to gold and the crescent moon on Diana's head to a halo, we would have a... [Marian] icon" (p. 107).

¹⁶¹OED, 2d ed. s.v. "cross." For readings that emphasise patience, as a Christian virtue, in the play, see John F. Danby, Paul Dean, and Sara Hanna.

life. The setting of Ephesus is crucial for Pericles' full recovery. In his letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul writes of the spiritual transformation of casting off the "old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires", and putting on the "new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness", to be restored in the image of God (Ephesians 4:22–24). In reclaiming his name and reciting his history, Pericles casts off his old self and embraces his true identity that reflects God's image, just as Amans releases his carnal desires and remembers that his true name is John Gower.

In fulfilling Diana's commandment, Pericles literally "confess[es]" his name, reclaiming himself as a divine image. He begins his speech, "Hail, Dian! To perform / Thy just command, I here confess myself / The king of Tyre" (V.iii.1–3). The *Confessio* specifically calls this scene a confession in an act of reconciliation:

Wher as with gret devocioun
Of holi contemplacioun
Withinne his herte he made his schrifte;
And after that a riche yifte
He offreth with gret reverence,
And there in open Audience
Of hem that stoden thanne aboute,
He tolde hem and declareth oute
His hap, such as him is befalle.
(8.1837–45)

Gower is very clear about specifying the actions of the sacrament: Apollonius's "gret devocion" allows him to contemplate thoroughly "withinne his herte" to make "his schrifte". This confession is made in the privacy of the temple, but then he completes it with the satisfaction that Diana demands; he tells his story to the "Audience", both the curious crowd gathered around the temple and the readers, listeners, and viewers who witness his story unfold. Shakespeare boldly retains the penitential aspect of this scene by explicitly calling Pericles' self-identification a confession. While the word "confess"

does not necessarily denote a penitential confession, the double sacramental context of Gower's source (Apollonius completes the sacramental steps of reconciliation in a tale designed to provoke such a confession from the listeners, Amans and the reader) gives it this meaning.

Marina's confession of her story and his divine vision remind Pericles not only of his own identity and moral responsibilities as an individual, but they also remind him of his kingly obligations. Following the pattern of the *Confessio*, the king must learn how to govern himself well before he can govern a state; he cannot run away from evil or abandon his country in despair but must learn to bear both crosses patiently. Diana's absolution conforms to the logic behind medieval penitential satisfaction, "the medical principle of contraries"; the opposite, virtuous behavior "cures" the disease of the sin (McNeill, p. 18). By publicly proclaiming his misfortunes, he confronts the evil from which he fled in the beginning of the play.

In *Pericles*, Gower adopts the role of Genius in the *Confessio* and Marina in the tale, that of the priest in confession.¹⁶² *Pericles*, however, is an open-ended confession, and the audience's responses complete it. If they imitate Gower/Amans in the *Confessio Amantis*, they recognise the story as an exemplum, applicable to their own lives. Gower, as the priest of love, creates a sacramental frame for the *Pericles* audience, hoping that attending to the play will convey grace and "make men glorious." Gower ends the play as he began it and as he ends the *Confessio*. He becomes the funerary monument of Patience

¹⁶²Peter Holland perhaps comes closest to my position in his recognition of Gower as "a sort of priest figure", although this is only in relation to the English festivity invoked in the prologue (p. 18). See also Richard Hillman, who concludes that Gower ends his tale by becoming an exemplum himself (p. 437).

that Pericles sees when he first encounters Marina: “thou dost look / Like Patience gazing on kings’ graves, and smiling / Extremity out of act” (V.i.128–30). When Venus and Genius leave him in the *Confessio*, Gower stands “amasid for a while, / and in my self y gan to smyle / Thenkende uppon the bedis blake” (8.2957–9). He remembers his charge from Venus, to pray; these black beads are engraved in gold with the words, “Por reposer”, literally “for to rest” (8.2907).

After receiving his absolution, Gower/Amans is at peace with himself, and he prays that his nation will also find such peace and unity:

Bot thilke love which that is
 Withinne a mannes herte affermed,
 And stant of charite confermed,
 Such love is goodly forto have,
 Such love mai the bodi save,
 Such love mai the soule amende,
 The hye god such love ous sende
 Forthwith the remenant of grace;
 So that above in thilke place
 Wher resteth love and alle pes,
 Oure joie mai ben endeles.
 (8.3162–72)

Charity is the philosopher’s stone that will purify or heal the deadly sin of Lust, the topic of Book 8 and thus of the Apollonius tale. Charity “mai the bodi save,” as Cerimon’s hermetic charity resurrects Thaisa, and “the soule amende,” as Marina restores her father. However, like Cerimon’s powers, this charity is something that God must instill in fallen humanity, along with the remnants of grace. The outward sign leads to an inner grace, or sanctification. The play ends with Gower in the same posture as in the *Confessio*, a monk who will ceaselessly pray for unity, peace, patience, and joy. Because he is dead and will return to his sepulcher in the nearby church, he will say infinite prayers; because he is a

character in the play, he has an infinite potential to resurrect through the alchemy of the theatre.

CHAPTER 3

HERMETIC MIRACLES IN *THE WINTER'S TALE*¹⁶³

The curtain draws back to reveal an exquisite statue of a woman in a chapel. We wait for the promised miracle silently, frozen into statues ourselves like the other witnesses on-stage. Paulina commands,

Quit presently the Chappell, or resolute you
For more amazement: if you can behold it,
Ile make the Statue moue indeed; descend,
And take you by the hand; but then you'le thinke
(Which I protest against) I am assisted
By wicked Powers....
It is requir'd
You doe awake your Faith¹⁶⁴

Paulina forbids us to stir, and we obey. She demands us to awake our faith, and our silence and absorption in the scene indicate our compliance. Music plays, perhaps conjuring a memory of altar bells rung at the raising of the Host, of smoky incense, and of the cold, dusty rock of ancient cathedrals. As emotions rise, empathy for the pain of Leontes and Perdita perhaps mingled with a more pervasive sense of religious awe, the statue transforms into moving flesh: Hermione, brought back to life. The statue's movement embodies the metaphoric stirring of the marble hearts in both the on-stage and off-stage audiences and their awakening faith. The two audiences, both on-stage and off, merge in this scene into one community of affect, analogous to the communion of the faithful enacted by the Holy Spirit. Whether we later rationalize this experience as a

¹⁶³ Part of this chapter has been published in *Lectures de The Winter's Tale*, ed. Delphine Lemonnier-Textier (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), pp. 111-20.

¹⁶⁴ All quotations from *The Winter's Tale* cite the 1623 Folio on EEBO but follow the line numbering provided in *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*: V.iii.86-95.

theatrical trick—Hermione is after all a mere actor (and actually a man) who stands as still as stone and then suddenly moves—or as a fictive miracle, we still participate in this communion of wonder with the characters at this moment.

This affective communion of audience and actors strongly resembles the experience of medieval cycle plays. These plays encouraged audiences to participate in the devotional practice of affective piety, to empathize with the suffering of religious figures (especially Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints). Despite Paulina's protests that Hermione's resurrection is not an act of dark magic (and perhaps because of these protests), the animation of Hermione's statue also participates in the hermetic tradition of calling down souls to inhabit statues. The Whitsuntide setting of the play also calls to mind the Holy Spirit's descent upon and animation of the Apostles in the Book of Acts. Hermione's animate statue recalls not only biblical and hermetic animations, but also the Catholic legends of weeping, bleeding, and moving statues (particularly of the Virgin Mary¹⁶⁵).

Though Paulina explicitly absolves herself preemptively from accusations of black magic¹⁶⁶, the Catholic traces remain in the setting unapologetically: a shrine in a

¹⁶⁵For the treatment of Catholicism in the play, see Ruth Vanita's "Mariological Memory in *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry VIII*" SEL 40, 2 (2000): 311-37; Phebe Jensen's "Singing Psalms to Horn-Pipes: Festivity, Iconoclasm, and Catholicism in *The Winter's Tale*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 279-306; and Frances Dolan's "Hermione's Ghost: Catholicism, the Feminine, and the Undead," in *The Impact of Feminism in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Dymphna Callaghan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 213-37. Dolan particularly empties Catholicism of its theology, which obscures the importance of affective spirituality in the play as a path to achieve grace.

¹⁶⁶Paulina had reason to worry: just a few years before the play was first performed, the 1604 Act Against Conjuratation and Witchcraft sentenced to death those who "use, practice, or exercise any invocation, or conjuration, of any wicked spirit, or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed, or reward any evil and wicked spirit, to or for any intent or purpose."

“Chappel” to the “Sainted Spirit” of a queen whose resurrection depends upon the “Faith” of the living. Shakespeare deploys this hermetic emblem to describe a Catholic miracle—the potential of visual art, such as a statue or a play, to affect an audience both emotionally and spiritually. The narrated absent scenes—the account of the Temple of Delphos and the reconciliation scene—prepare the audience to interpret the animated statue in spiritual and apocalyptic terms. “Appollo’s Temple” at “sacred Delphos” is a surprisingly Catholic space, and the three Gentlemen describe the reunion of the two kings and their children as a salvific sight.

This ambiguity of the animation, between mystical and magical, miracle or theatrical trick, is precisely what evokes a sense of wonder and emotional reaction from the audience. In the fictive world of the play, Shakespeare’s characters have two choices in interpreting this event: on the one hand, Hermione might be a cruel trickster who has watched her husband pay penance for sixteen years only to reemerge from hiding, or, alternatively, Hermione really did die and was brought back to life only after her husband was changed by his atonement and after satisfaction was made for his sins by the return of their daughter.

Shakespeare carefully balances these two interpretations with the textual evidence in the play. Audiences must resolve seven ambiguities to interpret the final scene.¹⁶⁷ As Stephen Crider points out, each reading of the statue’s animation—as miracle or as theatrical trick—can only account for five of these ambiguities. This deliberate balance

¹⁶⁷Paulina’s announcement of Hermione’s death (III.ii.170-241); Antigonus’s vision of Hermione’s ghost (III.iii.115-45); Paulina’s insistence that Leontes remarry when Hermione is alive again (V.i.77-84); the Third Gentleman’s account of the statue (V.ii.102-6); the Second Gentleman’s report of Paulina’s daily visits to the chapel (V.ii.125-30); Hermione’s explanation for the final scene (V.iii.125-30); and Leontes’s statement that he saw Hermione dead (V.iii.139-41).

of textual indeterminacy encourages an irenic experience of the play, an uncertainty of whether to interpret the final scene as a Catholic miracle, as an emblem of Protestant skepticism of representation, or as an instance of hermetic magic that transcends the divide between Catholics and Protestants as part of the *prisca theologia*, an ancient chain of divine wisdom reaching all the way back to the moment when God animated a clay statue to create Adam.¹⁶⁸

Reading the play through a Christian lens parallels interpretations produced by a classical lens; the syncretism of the play calls upon multiple traditions and authorities in order to create the emotional effect of the scene. Though this syncretism enables many valid readings of the play, depending upon which interpretative frame the reader or viewer emphasises, this article frames the play in terms of the specific syncretism of the sacrament of reconciliation, Lazarelli's hermetic magic, and the imagery of the Pentecost.

THE ROOD OF GRACE AT DELPHOS

The Winter's Tale deploys a pagan religion to explore Catholic sacraments such as the Eucharist and penance. Some critics, such as Roland Frye, object to reading the Apollo religion in this play as a symbol of Christianity. Indeed, Shakespeare could only understand antiquity through the cultural lens of his own Christian time and place.

Shakespeare dates the play around the time of the English Reformation when he names the sculptor of Hermione's statue, Giulio Romano. This is the only instance in all of

¹⁶⁸Orpheus seems to be waiting just off-stage: Orpheus sings the Pygmalion tale, the Ovidian source for the play, in his grief for his wife Eurydice. Orpheus, a disciple of Hermes Trismegistus, passes down not only his tales to Shakespeare but also the hermetic ability to animate statues with poetry.

Shakespeare's writing in which he names a real artist and also a near-contemporary (Romano had died in 1546). His name alone resonates a Roman Catholicism. Giulio rejected his family's surname, Giannuzzi, and instead chose to identify himself with his birth city. Walter Lim writes that Giulio's "name cannot be extricated from the contaminating context of papal politics."¹⁶⁹ While Lim finds the association with Catholicism to be "contaminating," Shakespeare may have chosen Romano as a sculptor precisely because of his last name and his work at the Vatican. As a pupil of Raphael, Giulio helped paint the Vatican Loggias. Giulio's later work fuses his experience in painting the decorations of the architectural center of Catholicism with his intense interest in the Roman sculpture of the first centuries after Christ. According to Toby Yuen, Giulio was the first of the Roman school to fully appropriate Roman antiquity into his art.¹⁷⁰

Robert Miola points out that Shakespeare anachronistically refers to Roman Catholic concepts and language—saints, martyrdom, and sacramentality—in most of his plays about ancient Greece and ancient Rome. David Beauregard agrees that "the Greek element is simply a surrogate for Christianity."¹⁷¹ In describing ancient Rome and ancient Greece with a Roman Catholic vocabulary, "Shakespearian ontology, actually, recapitulates cultural phylogeny" (Miola, 39). Miola cites the Virgin Mary as the perfect example: Christians appropriated pagan temples (such as the one dedicated to

¹⁶⁹Walter S. H. Lim, "Knowledge and Belief in *The Winter's Tale*." *SEL* 41.2 (2001): 317-34, 319.

¹⁷⁰ See Toby Yuen, "Giulio Romano, Giovanni da Udine and Raphael: Some Influences from the Minor Arts of Antiquity," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (1979): 263-272.

¹⁷¹ David N. Beauregard. *Catholic Theology in Shakespeare's Theology* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008): p. 110.

Artemis/Diana of Ephesus), effaced pagan statues, recarved them as Christian images, and built cathedrals on top of the ruins of paganism.

Briffault records a specific instance of this phenomenon in Sicily: “at Castrogiovanni on the site of ancient Enna, the great shrine of her worship, there is still a statue of the Virgin, whose divine child is not a boy but a girl, the figure having served as Ceres and Proserpine in a previous sanctuary of the goddess.”¹⁷² While Shakespeare may not have known of this specific statue, it is a striking corollary for his depiction of Hermione’s “sainted spirit” and Perdita. The Virgin Mary displaces and absorbs the pagan goddesses, such as Isis and Diana, reigning as the only queen of heaven. *Pericles* also follows this pattern of cultural appropriation, absorbing the reigning deity of the play, Diana, into the cult of the Virgin Mary. The statue present at the end of the play in the Temple of Ephesus is intertextually recarved into a Christian image: the pagan virgin moon goddess is perfected by the Annunciation of another Virgin associated with the moon.

The Winter’s Tale follows this pattern of cultural palimpsest, reinscribing Diana’s twin, the Roman/Greek god Apollo, with Roman Catholic terminology and practices. The church father, Gregory Nazianzen (ca. 330-389 AD), was among the first Christians to associate Apollo with Christ. The association of Apollo with Christ and Roman Catholicism continued into the Renaissance. Stella Revard claims that “[a]t the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Vatican was popularly called the ‘Hill of Apollo’ because of the interest by Popes Sixtus IV, Alexander VI, Julius II, and Leo X in the cult of Apollo.” The Vatican gained this reputation in part from the famous Apollo Belvedere

¹⁷² Robert Briffault, *The Mothers: A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1927): p. 182-3.

statue, acquired by Pope Julius II and prominently displayed in a central courtyard of that name at the Vatican in 1511. Apollo's defense of his Oracle, the subject of the statue, thus was translated into a symbol of "aggressive Catholicism" and an image that is associated with the Vatican to this day.¹⁷³

In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare borrows Apollo for his representation of Roman Catholicism, just as Michelangelo borrowed the pose of the Apollo Belvedere sculpture for Christ's body in the Pièta. The common English pun, sun-god/Son of God, may have further encouraged Shakespeare's audience to grasp an allusion to Christ in the presence of Apollo.¹⁷⁴ Shakespeare recreates Christianity's cultural appropriation of Apollo in his play, attributing specifically Catholic doctrines to the pagan religion, including the sacraments of the Eucharist and penance.

While many critics focus on the animate statue at the end of the play, *The Winter's Tale* also begins with an animate statue that has an authority the characters never question. The oracle at Delphos prepares the audience to interpret the final animation of the statue as a Catholic miracle. This oracle, though pagan, is the source of truth in the play, and the messengers that consult it participate in what seems like a Catholic Mass before returning to Sicily. Significantly it is the visual splendor that "most... caught" Dion in Apollo's temple. He first remembers "the Celestiall Habits" of Apollo's priests, like the habits worn by Catholic priests.¹⁷⁵ In the next line he dwells

¹⁷³ Stella Revard, "Christ and Apollo in the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric," in *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century English Religious Lyric* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1994): 143-167, p.147.

¹⁷⁴ See John Donne, "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward." The English pun appears as early as 1240. See Frederick Von Ende, "George Herbert's 'The Sonne': In Defense of the English Language" *SEL* 12:1 (Winter, 1972): 173-82, 174.

¹⁷⁵ OED 2d edn., s.v. "habit," 2.

upon his word choice: “Me thinkes I so should terme them.” The word “habit,” and especially a celestial one, has Catholic connotations, and Dion draws our attention to it. The priests wear their vestments soberly and with a “reverence” that impresses Dion. The Apollo priests, like their Roman Catholic counterparts, believe in the salvific significance of ritual clothing and its necessary role in religious ceremony. While celebrating the Mass priests wear, in addition to the usual surplice and cope, the amice, alb, cincture, maniple, stole, and chasuble—all of which are blessed by the bishop, thus transformed into sacred objects. Most reformers rejected elaborate vestments until Archbishop Laud’s revival of church ornamentation decades after *The Winter’s Tale* was written. The Elizabethan and Jacobean clergy wore simple white, linen surplices, and even these garments were contested by certain Puritan factions as “Popes ragges.”¹⁷⁶

The rituals also impress Dion: “O, the Sacrifice, / How ceremonious, how solemne, and vn-earthly / It was i’t’h’Offering” (3.i.7-9). The words *sacrifice* and *offering* associate Apollo’s rituals with a Catholic Eucharist; Martin Luther explicitly rejects a sacramental sacrifice, calling his version of the Lord’s Supper a “testament”; he writes, “We should, therefore, give careful heed to this word ‘sacrifice,’ so that we do not presume to give God something in the sacrament, when it is he who in it gives us all things.” Rather than receiving a promise of salvation through faith alone as Luther defines the sacrament, Dion and Cleomines witness an actual sacrifice and offering.¹⁷⁷ Cleomines most remembers the “ear-deaff’ning Voice o’t’h’Oracle” that “so surpriz’d

¹⁷⁶See Janet Mayo, “The Elizabethan Settlement and the Birth of Protestantism 1559-1658” in *A History of Ecclesiastical Dress* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1984): pp. 68-76, 73, 69.

¹⁷⁷See William T. Cavanaugh, “Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Social Imagination in Early Modern Europe” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31, 3 (Fall, 2001): 585-605, p. 588.

[his] Sence, / That [he] was nothing” (3.i.11-3). The visual details in the temple prepare Cleomines to forget himself in the presence of God when he hears the Oracle’s voice, much like the Catholic mystical use of visual images to transcend all sensual experience.

The sight of this ceremony seems to leave a lasting impression on these two minor characters, and the inward transformations they undergo is significant enough to the play to devote an entire scene to their report. They have a harmony and community in their dialogue: each response completes the rhythm of the line before it. At Apollo’s temple, they experienced something resembling the Eucharist, which has brought them into a greater awareness of the importance of community. They practically finish one another’s sentences in their exuberant recalling of the ritual. This scene hints at the Catholic nature of Apollo’s temple, though part of a pagan religion, and the play takes it seriously as a source of truth and the shaping force of the characters’ fates.

Shakespeare is not the only early modern writer to associate this oracle and Roman Catholicism. Reginald Scot explicitly links the pagan Oracle of Delphos with the Rood of Grace. The rood is a crucifix usually surrounded by statues or images of the Virgin Mary and John the Apostle, mounted on a screen separating the chancel and the nave of a church. According to Eamon Duffy, the rood screen is “a complex icon of the heavenly hierarchy,” representing the saints’ dependence upon Christ and their intercessory position between heaven and earth.¹⁷⁸ Rather than an idolatrous object worshipped as a god itself, the rood actually helped the laity to focus on the centrality of Christ’s sacrifice and on Judgment Day, usually depicted upon the tympanum behind the

¹⁷⁸ Eamon Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 158.

statues and crucifix. In “Apollo, who was called Pytho, compared to the Rood of grace,” the sixth chapter of his 1584 treatise, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Scot writes,

But vaine is the answer of idols. Our Rood of grace, with the helpe of little S. Rumball, was not inferior to the idoll of Apollo: for these could not onlie worke eternall miracles, but manifest the internall thoughts of the art, I belieue with more liuelie shew, both of humanitie and also of diuinitie, than the other.... And yet in the blind time of poperie, no man might (under paine of damnation) nor without danger of death, suspect the fraud. Naie, what papists will yet confesse they were idols, though the wiers that made their eies gogle, the pins that fastened them to the posters to make them seeme heauie, were seene and burnt together with the images themselues.

In chapter ten of the eleventh book (on sacrifice and augury), he continues to associate Apollo and Catholicism: “as Apollos or the Rood of graces oracles.”¹⁷⁹ At first, Scot seems to invoke a nationalist pride of “our Rood” and its ability to match and even exceed the Greek statue. The Rood has more “humanitie” and more “diuinitie,” perhaps an allusion to the dual nature of Christ compared to the divinity of Apollo; however, this comparison also accuses both Catholicism and paganism of idolatry and of the worship of the material objects—the statue in Delphi and the Rood images.

Scot appraises both statues as an art critic, distancing himself from the religious power of the images and reductively equating the two radically different religions with the act of comparison. The Catholic images have “more liuelie shew, both of humanitie and also of diuinitie,” but the lifelike animation of these statues is most emphatically only a show. Following the lead of other reformers, Scot relentlessly breaks the rood into its component parts to reveal the empty materiality of Catholic images: wires move the eyes of the statues, and while they may “seeme heauie,” the statues are vain, literally hollow. For Scot, the temple is inhabited by an idol. Apollo’s Oracle in *The Winter’s Tale*,

¹⁷⁹Reginald Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584) EEBO pp. 137-8, images 83-4; p. 197, image 113.

however, is not an empty idol mechanized with wires; its voice is deafening with the truth. Because the Oracle is the source of truth and inspires religious awe in the play, the play implies that other sacred statues, such as the Catholic Roods (with screens often displaying statues or images of the Virgin Mary), are not empty idols either.

By associating Apollo's oracle with Catholicism and a source of truth, Shakespeare offers an imagined alternative fate for the famous Rood of Grace mentioned by Scot, the Rood of Boxley Abbey. Boxley was one of the most important pilgrimage sites in England before the Reformation. On February 24, 1538, Cromwell ordered the Rood to be torn down, paraded through the village in a mock procession, and dismantled in front of Saint Paul's Church in London so that everyone could see the wires that animated it. Cromwell's men broke the statue into pieces and handed them out to the crowd, in a parody of the Eucharist, before finally burning the Rood; according to a contemporary account, "After the sermon was done, the bishopp [Bishop Hilsey of Rochester] tooke the said image of the roode into the pulpitt and brooke the vice of the same, and after gave it to the people againe, and then the rude people and boyes brake the said image in peeces, so that they left not one peece whole."¹⁸⁰ John Finch reported to an associate in Strasbourg that "it was a great delight to any one who could obtain a single fragment, either, as I suppose, to put in the fire in their own houses, or else to keep by them by way of reproof to such kind of imposters."¹⁸¹ The townspeople turned the Rood

¹⁸⁰ See Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, From A.D. 1485 to 1559*, ed. William Douglas Hamilton (Camden Society, 1875), 1:75-6.

¹⁸¹ See *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, ed. Hastings Robinson, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1846-47), 2:607.

into a mock relic, although perhaps some recusants were present who kept a shard of the statue out of reverence instead of parody.

HERMETIC MIRACLES IN SICILY

Shakespeare alters his source text not only by including an account of the Catholic rituals in the Apollo temple, but also by adding the hermetic resurrection of Hermione and setting this miracle in Sicily. Paulina insists that the context of the final scene is magical, but she qualifies this magic as spiritual and lawful as opposed to black magic—a gesture toward the syncretic project of reconciling Christianity with hermeticism. The intense interest in hermeticism at the turn of the seventeenth century was in part spurred by an irenic hope of finding a third way to relieve the religious strife of the sixteenth century. Hermeticism provided a spiritual path that transcended the divide between Catholics and Protestants by appealing to a *prisca theologia*, a divine wisdom that was more ancient than denominational difference. James Ellison has even called hermeticism the “international language of tolerance and ecumenism” in this period.¹⁸² Frances Yates writes that many hermeticists, particularly Giordano Bruno, pursued the magical arts as a religious mission: the “panacea for the religious situation of Europe [was] a return to *magical* Hermeticism and *magical* Egyptianism.”¹⁸³

¹⁸² See “*The Winter’s Tale* and the Religious Politics of Europe,” in *New Casebooks: Shakespeare’s Romances*, ed. Alison Thorne (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003): 171-204, 189. Ellison also suggests that Rudolph II might be the source for the character Polixenes, stressing Rudolph II’s interest in hermeticism. However, Ellison’s reading of *The Winter’s Tale* prioritizes Protestantism over Catholicism rather than giving each equal importance.

¹⁸³ *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1964):

Hermeticism offered an irenic healing of the Reformation schism, either in the form of a reunion of the two faiths or at least a reconciliation achieved by an atmosphere of religious tolerance that would allow both Protestant and Catholic scholars to join together in hermetic studies.¹⁸⁴ *The Winter's Tale* supports this irenic hope in Elizabethan and Jacobean culture; the play ends with a hermetic miracle, not only in the animation of a statue but perhaps also in the reconciliation of the king of Sicily, a Catholic country, and the king of Bohemia, historically the first nation to establish a reformed church (the Hussites) in Europe.

Sicily played a prominent role in the translation of the Corpus Hermeticum; Lodovico Lazzarelli, the translator of the 1482 *Diffinitiones Asclepii*, wrote the *Crater Hermetis*, a work in which he very consciously combines hermeticism with Christianity, for King Ferrante, the king of Sicily. Even if Shakespeare was unaware of Lazzarelli's hermetic writings, this text provides an interpretive model for the syncretism of hermetic magic and Catholic faith in early modern culture.

In the beginning of the *Crater Hermetis*, Lazzarelli claims that his goal is to “represent the mystic deeds of Christ the divine Man.”¹⁸⁵ Lazzarelli is the first hermeticist to identify the “Poimandres” who appears in a vision to Hermes Trismegistus as Jesus Christ. When the hermetic acolyte has attained the mystical knowledge of

p. 179.

¹⁸⁴ For example, John Dee did not consider himself a Catholic, yet he records in his diary that he took “Ghostly Counsel” and Communion with Hannibal Rosselli, a Capuchin monk, in 1585. See *A True and Faithful Relation...* 1659. image 193, page 398. EEBO <<[<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/search/fulltext?ACTION=ByID&ID=D00000118217310000&SOURCE=var_spell.cfg&WARN=N&FILE=../session/1200522873_17560>>](http://eebo.chadwyck.com/search/fulltext?ACTION=ByID&ID=D00000118217310000&SOURCE=var_spell.cfg&WARN=N&FILE=../session/1200522873_17560)>>

¹⁸⁵ Lodovico Lazzarelli, *Lodovico Lazzarelli: The Hermetic Writings and Related Documents*, ed. Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Ruud M. Bouthoorn (Tempe AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005): p. 54.

Poimandres that Hermes Trismegistus describes, this being “has deigned to take up residence within me as Christ Jesus.”¹⁸⁶ The human being becomes an animate statue, like the ensouled statues of the *Asclepius*, but ensouled by God himself rather than a lesser angel or demon. Lazzarelli understands the Eucharist as a literal sanctification; by eating the mystically transubstantiated body and blood of Christ, one literally takes Christ into oneself and becomes animated by this Christ-within. In Catholic theology, the Holy Spirit transubstantiates the Host and unifies the community formed by participation in the Eucharist. Not only do the faithful ingest the transubstantiated Host, the body and blood of Christ, but in so doing they are also filled with the Holy Spirit, a reenactment of Pentecost.

Lazzarelli, drawing upon the doctrine of the Trinity and of the Eucharistic mystery, conflates the Eucharist and Pentecost, in which the Holy Spirit descends upon the Apostles, inhabiting them and giving them miraculous, magical powers. Each of the Apostles are “filled with the Holy Spirit” in the form of tongues of flame that miraculously enable them to speak in different languages.¹⁸⁷ Pentecost unifies the believers into a community, with the goal of encompassing the entire world. The tongues of flame give the Apostles other magical powers in addition to the ability to speak in foreign languages—God works miracles and wonders through them. This is exactly what Lazzarelli seeks, a hermetic *imitatio Christi*. Through sanctification and being filled with the spirit of God, Lazzarelli hopes that such miracles could be worked in his own age, that he too could be filled with and empowered by this Spirit.

¹⁸⁶Lazzarelli, p. 61.

¹⁸⁷Acts, 2:4.

The hermetic significance of Pentecost might help illuminate Perdita's reference to "Whitsun pastorals" in the latter half of the play: "Methinks I play as I have seen them do / In Whitsun pastorals" (IV.iv.134-5). Karen Sawyer Marsaleck locates *The Winter's Tale* in a trajectory of the reformation of medieval resurrection drama, comparing it to Protestant passion plays that were displaced from Easter itself onto Whitsunday and that often incorporated humanist elements such as classical mythology and Sybilline oracles.¹⁸⁸ While Shakespeare's play resembles Reformation resurrection drama, its focus on festivity is still sympathetic to Catholicism. Phebe Jensen argues that the play's investment in festivity is an "assertion of the value of the aesthetics of Catholic devotional practices," although she does not see it as an endorsement of the "truth-value" of Catholicism itself.¹⁸⁹ However, the play's sincere depiction of the truth-value of the Apollo oracle is transferred to the Catholic religion it veils.

The play's determined ambiguity also encourages the audience to be uncertain as to whether or not the statue actually comes alive at the end of the play. This uncertainty, whether to believe in miracles or to scoff at theatrical tricks, transfers to the truth-value of the Catholic religion itself. Like many of the uncertain audience members, Perdita enters the play wary of Whitsun pastorals and other such gallimaufry, but as the play ends, she falls to her knees before the statue of her mother; her skepticism is inadequate to process this miraculous experience. Whitsuntide, or Pentecost, is more than a mere calendrical

¹⁸⁸Karen Sawyer Marsaleck, "English Resurrection Drama and *The Winter's Tale*," in *Bring Furth the Pagants": Essays in Early English Drama Presented to Alexandra F. Johnston* (London: Univ. of Toronto, 2007): pp. 271-91.

¹⁸⁹Phebe Jensen, "Singing Psalms to Horn-Pipes: Festivity, Iconoclasm, and Catholicism in *The Winter's Tale*," chap. 5 in *Religion and Revelry in Shakespeare's Festive World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), p. 197.

marker in the play; its liturgy and festive pastimes are intimately related to the transformation of Perdita (and potentially of audience members as well).

The unified community described in the Book of Acts was created and celebrated by medieval and early modern holyday pastimes, particularly the Whitsuntide gallimaufry that Perdita rejects in the fourth act. Phebe Jensen argues that Jacobean poets, inspired by Spenser, nostalgically longed for the festivity and community that they located in an idealized English past.¹⁹⁰ The nostalgia Jensen describes is specifically a yearning for a restored, united community. In Catholic practice, Whitsunday was one of the communion holydays, in addition to Christmas and Easter. The Eucharist further unites the believers and fills them with two aspects of God, Christ's body and blood and the Holy Spirit. Like the tongues of flame, the Eucharist transforms everyone present, uniting and empowering them. For Lazzarelli, and perhaps also for Paulina, this power is more than metaphorical—it fills, or ensouls, the merely human and works miracles through the believer.

Like Cleomenes' and Dion's description of their off-stage communion at the Oracle of Delphos, the three Gentlemen of the fifth act provide the play's audience with an example of an affective community formed by witnessing the off-stage reconciliation of Polixenes and Leontes. They describe not only the scene but also their own emotions as simultaneously apocalyptic and theatrical. The first Gentleman relates,

they look'd as they had heard of a World
ransom'd, or one destroyed: a notable passion of Wonder
appeared in them: but the wisest beholder, that knew
no more but seeing, could not say, if th'importance were

¹⁹⁰ Jensen, p. 202.

Joy or Sorrow; but in the extremitie of one, it must
needs be.

V.ii.13-8

The religious descriptors of this reconciliation indicate a larger, irenic reconciliation of two faiths, a foreshadowing of the union in heaven of all true Christians on Judgment Day. The words “ransom’d” and “passion” elevate the reconciliation of the Sicilian, Catholic King and the King of Bohemia, famous as the country of the first reformers, beyond a merely political significance. This reconciliation is more spiritual than it is political, a salvific reunion that further knits itself together by invoking the common belief of both Reformers and Catholics: Christ’s Passion.¹⁹¹ The emotion that the kings experience, at once joy and sorrow, also brings to mind the resurrection of Christ, preparing audiences for the resurrection of Hermione.

The emphasis on the visual and the metatheatrical language in this passage forms an analogy between the sight the Gentlemen have witnessed and the *Winter’s Tale* play that the audience witnesses. In addition to viewing the kings’ reconciliation, the Gentlemen also underscore the importance of vision to the salvific emotions the kings seem to experience: “look’d,” “appeared,” “beholder,” and “seeing.” The witness-relationship between the gentlemen observers on-stage and the noble audience off-stage is directly stated: “The Dignitie of this Act was worth the / audience of Kings and Princes, for by such was it acted” (V.ii.75-6).¹⁹² By describing the off-stage scenes

¹⁹¹James Ellison estimates that Bohemia was approximately ninety percent Protestant although ruled by a Catholic elite.

¹⁹²This line directly refers to the audience when it was performed at court first in November 1611 and again sometime between December 1612 and February 1613, perhaps as an early celebration of the Valentine’s Day wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Frederick V, Elector Palatine. The apocalyptic irenic project also seems appropriate given King James’s plan to balance England’s allies by arranging a Protestant marriage

instead of showing them, Shakespeare deliberately excludes the off-stage audience from the spectacle and creates an affective community among the three Gentlemen. This temporary exclusion prepares the audience for their inclusion as witnesses of a miracle at the end of the play, when both the on and off-stage audiences are united by wonder:

“Who would be thence, that ha’s the benefite / of Accesse? every winke of an Eye, some new Grace / will be borne: our Absence makes us unthriftie to our Knowledge” (V.ii.105-6).

Like the Gospel, hearing about this good news is not the same as experiencing it oneself. The gentlemen can only give “a broken deliuerie” of what they saw, “a Sight which was to bee / seene, cannot bee spoken of” (V.ii.8, 41-2). While they cannot fully replicate the scene, the third Gentlemen relates Perdita’s response to the story of her mother’s death and his own sympathy with her grief “which angl’d for mine Eyes [and] caught the Water”:

Attentiuenesse
Wounded his Daughter, till...
Shee did (with an *Alas*) I would faine say, bleed
Teares; for I am sure, my heart wept blood. Who was
most Marble, there changed colour: some swounded, all
sorrowed: if all the World could haue seen’t, the Woe
had bene vniuersall.

V.ii.82-8

Like the reconciliation scene, the sight of Perdita’s grief inspires an apocalyptic, “universall” “Woe.” The image of Perdita bleeding tears conflates the legends of miraculously bleeding and weeping Virgin Mary statues, while the emphasis on the visual and the salvific once again echoes the practice of meditating on statues to empathize with the human suffering caused by the Passion. This religious empathy leads

for Princess Elizabeth and a Catholic marriage for one of his sons, the heir to his throne.

to a deeper relationship with God and also potentially creates more compassionate, moral interactions with one's fellow human beings. The secular context of Perdita's grief follows the same pattern of affective piety inspired by religious statues. Empathizing with Perdita's pain and loss, the third Gentleman figures his own heartbeat as weeping, mirroring her grief both in imagery and in his chiasmic syntax—"bleed Teares," "wept blood." As neuroscience now corroborates with the discovery of mirror neurons, the visual is a crucial component of empathy, a phenomenon that Shakespeare and Catholics who practice affective devotion intuitively grasped.

Foreshadowing Hermione's animated statue, the third Gentleman creates what Leonard Barkan describes in his study on Ovid as a "protometamorphosis," a metaphor that "rhetorically point[s] out the direction in which an individual will literally travel when his transformation takes place."¹⁹³ A figure of speech becomes literalized through an emotional logic. The witnesses of Perdita's grief are figured as statues animated by empathy: "Who was most Marble, there changed colour: some swounded, all sorrowed." Compassion replaces obdurateness, and the blood rises to the surface of the petrified body, returning color and life. The witnesses are astonished, but any hardness of heart becomes as malleable as Ovidian wax, fulfilling the Biblical promise: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel, 36:26).¹⁹⁴ This description of off-stage metamorphosis cues the audience in how to understand the

¹⁹³See Leonard Barkan, *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 20-1.

¹⁹⁴Ina Habermann also finds "Christian overtones recalling Christ's passion" in this scene. See "Breathing Stones – Shakespeare and the Theatre of the Passions," in *Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 140 (2004): 11-27. She also explains the emotional movement in the final scene in the rhetorical terms of *energia* and *enargia*.

metaphorical transformation of Leontes and Perdita into statues, the literal animation of Hermione's statue, and their own emotional reactions and possible physical paralysis inspired by the play.

Hermione's animate statue materializes the third Gentleman's metaphor of blushing marble, linking the emotional, apocalyptic reconciliation scenes with this final scene of forgiveness. As in the earlier scene, the spectators experiencing strong internal emotions stand transfixed, emotionally pierced and physically immobilized. Paulina implies that the statue pierces and carves the hearts of those who gaze upon it; grief softens the stony heart and contrition becomes a chisel to refashion it. Perhaps disingenuously, Paulina claims, "If I had thought the sight of my poore Image / Would thus haue wrought you... / Il'd not haue shew'd it" (V.iii.58-60). Six of the nine definitions for the word "wrought" in the OED relate to shaping or carving, while two denote an excited emotional state.¹⁹⁵ The statue has indeed astonished Perdita into "Standing like stone" (V.iii.41). Leontes cries out to the statue, "Do's not the Stone rebuke me, / For being more Stone then it?" (V.iii.37-8). The statue focuses Leontes's penance, not only by calling to mind the wife he wronged but also by materializing his hardness of heart earlier in the play. He recognizes the supernatural effect of the statue on his heart; its "Magick... ha's / My Euils conjur'd to remembrance," "piercing to my Soule" (V.iii.39-40, 35). Even after sixteen years of penance, Leontes seems to experience the deepest sense of remorse and contrition only when confronted by the statue in the chapel: his hardened heart has finally been "pierce[d]." Hermione's statue

¹⁹⁵OED, 2d edn., s.v. "wrought."

vivifies Leontes's sins by visually presenting him with his loss, like the function of devotional images of the Passion of Christ and saints.

When Paulina awakens faith in the audience both on-stage and off, she wakens the statue with a ritual strikingly similar to the ancient Egyptian ceremony described in the *Asclepius* for ensouling statues. Indeed, Hermione's very name links her to the realm of statues (herms, or pillar statues used to mark roadways) and Hermeticism.¹⁹⁶ Paulina commands, "It is required / You do awake your faith" (V.iii.94-5); in the passive syntax of a Pentecost miracle, magic is worked through Paulina. By refusing to name the Being who requires faith in order to perform miracles, Paulina implies the real presence of a supernatural God. She uses the same verb, "awake," for both the statue's and the audience's transformation, indicating the direct connection between the two: "Music! Awake her, strike!" (V.iii.98). As in the hermetic ritual described by Hermes Trismegistus, music is essential to animate Hermione's statue. In the *Asclepius*, to "entice" "the heavenly beings" "into the images," "hymns and praises and concord of sweet sounds that imitate heaven's harmony" are necessary.¹⁹⁷ The exact moment of transubstantiation, in which the Host transforms into the material presence of Christ's body, is also signaled with music in the form of a bell chime, and this ritual too is embedded in hymns and praises. The bell reminds worshippers to look up and witness the miracle; for medieval Catholics, just seeing the transubstantiated Host was salvific.

¹⁹⁶ See Mitsuru Kamachi, "What's in a Name?: Hermione and the Hermetic Tradition in *The Winter's Tale*" *Shakespeare Studies* 29 (1991): 21-36. Kamachi discusses the relationship between Hermes as a guide to the Underworld and Hermione. Autolycus also tells the audience that he is the son of Mercury ("being, as I am, littered under Mercury" IV.iii.25). In Greek mythology, Autolycus was the son of Hermes and Chione.

¹⁹⁷ Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), p. 91.

As Paulina calls down Hermione's soul to inhabit and animate the empty stone statue, a similar spirit, perhaps the Holy Spirit itself or a more secularized analog, unites the audience into a community of believers in such miracles that echo the mystery of Transubstantiation—of material objects and bodies being transformed and animated by the spiritual. Leontes makes this connection among magic, faith, and the Eucharist explicit: "If this be magic, let it be an art / Lawful as eating" (V.iii.109-10).). As in alchemy, the spiritual transformation in the magician is directly related to the magical metamorphosis of a material object; a change in one causes a parallel change in the other. As Leontes, and to a lesser extent the other audience members, suffers an acute compunction of heart, a piercing of the soul, he is purified and sanctified; this spiritual purification corresponds to the slow, painful softening of the stone statue into Hermione's flesh, both hermetic miracles.

PAULINA AND THE MAGICIAN MONKS

As the officiator of both the ritual animation and reconciliation that end *The Winter's Tale*, Paulina joins a long line of magician monks. Perhaps the most famous on the early modern English stage were Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, dramatized more than 20 years earlier in the eponymous play by Robert Greene (1589). Shakespeare's Catholic magic departs from Greene's model, and a brief discussion of Friar Bacon's and Friar Bungay's magic will illuminate the significance of reading Paulina's magic in terms of Lazzarelli's syncretic attempt to harmonize Catholicism and hermeticism rather than in the terms of Greene's slightly anti-Catholic satire. Greene's play clearly identifies

Catholicism with magic, as both friars practice “necromancy”; Friar Bacon’s magic is darker than Friar Bungay’s, however, and he must abjure his magic at the end of the play and repent to save his soul. In Greene’s play, hermetic magic cannot be reconciled with Christianity.

The plot of the play is set in motion by an attack on chastity, repeating a theme found in Spenser’s temple of Isis, Shakespeare’s *Pericles*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and Milton’s *Comus*. The villain, Prince Edward, wishes to seduce Margaret without having to marry her, and he decides to enlist the “brave necromancer” Friar Bacon: “it must be necromantic spells / And charms of art that must enchain her love... Bacon shall by his magic do this deed” (i.122-3, 127).¹⁹⁸ This love spell, of course, is a parody of Friar Bacon’s sacramental “magic,” the ability to perform marriages.

A long list of magical and alchemical works were attributed to Friar Bacon, and the play displays a detailed knowledge of these different types of magic: Bacon has

read in magic’s mystery;
In pyromancy, to divine by flames;
To tell, by hydromatic, ebbs and tides;
By aeromancy to discover doubts.
(ii.14-7)

Bacon, like Paulina, is also versed in the magic of animating statues:

Oxford makes report,
Nay, England, and the court of Henry says,
Thou’rt making of a brazen head by art,
Which shall unfold strange doubts and aphorisms,
And read a lecture in philosophy;
And, by the help of devils and ghastly fiends,

¹⁹⁸ All quotations are from Robert Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed. Daniel Seltzer (Lincoln, NE: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1963), and are cited in the text parenthetically by scene and line number.

Thou mean'st, ere many years or days be past,
To compass England with a wall of brass.
(ii.23-30)

Friar Bacon's reliance upon "devils" and "ghastly fiends" is a testament not only to the power of God and Bacon's skill as a magician that can bind evil spirits to a good purpose (that none "should touch a grass of England's ground") but also to a Faustian hubris in the friar (ii.61).

Greene balances the play between overt anti-Catholic parody and a tacit acknowledgment of Catholic magic. Kurt Tetzeli Von Rosador argues that the Hostess episode is an instance of anti-Catholicism, a parody of the Eucharist. When Burden doubts Friar Bacon's magic, the "frolic friar" sends a demon to fetch the book that Burden studied in Henley (ii.53). The demon appears with a Hostess, "the word made flesh."¹⁹⁹ Friar Bacon also interrupts Friar Bungay's attempts to perform the sacrament of marriage between Margaret and Lacy, although perhaps this turns out for the best since the delay in the marriage allows the Prince to reconcile with them and promote their marriage.

However, Friar Bacon's magic allows him to overcome the German magician, Jacques Vandermast. Here, in the magic duel scene, Greene further displays his specific knowledge of hermetic magic. Vandermast invokes the *prisca theologia* ("Hermes, Melchie, and Pythagoras") and cites the authority of Hermes in his choice of pyromancy: "If, then, as Hermes says, the fire be greatest / Purest, and only giveth shape to spirits, / Then must these daemons that haunt that place / Be every way superior to the rest" (ix.29,

¹⁹⁹ Kurt Tetzeli Von Rosador, "The Sacralizing Sign: Magic in Bale, Greene, and the Early Shakespeare," *Yearbook of English Studies* 23 (1993): 30-45, 38.

37-40). He goes on to relate daemons to fallen angels, creating a hierarchy of devils to mirror the celestial hierarchy. The earthly daemons are the worst of the sinning angels, while the fiery ones are “they which offended less” (ix.58, 62). As it turns out, Vandermast’s pyromancy does best Bungay’s geomancy; when Bungay produces the dragon and a golden tree from the garden of Hesperides, Vandermast conjures Hercules to destroy the tree. However, Hercules quails in fear when Friar Bacon enters the room, despite Vandermast’s invocation of angelic power: “By all the thrones and dominations, / Virtues, powers, and mighty hierarchies, / I charge thee to obey Vandermast” (ix.158-60). This conjuration by angels does not compare to the power Friar Bacon wields to “bridle... headstrong Belcephon” and “rule... Asmenoth, guider of the north” (ix.161-2).

Although Friar Bacon’s power is further displayed when the brazen head does in fact speak, this scene also reveals his human frailty. Although he kept his vigil with Friar Bungay for “threescore days” (xi.21), he cannot keep his eyes open any longer, and he falls asleep just before the statue speaks. The statue’s words emphasize another fundamental weakness of human beings; we are creatures of time and therefore are ephemeral: “TIME IS.... TIME WAS... TIME IS PASSED” (xi.53, 60, 66). Like the apocalyptic passage in *Asclepius*, detailing the corruption of the human race and the fall of Egypt, this statue too prophesies the passing of time and mutability. However, unlike the *Asclepius* and Paulina’s magic, Bacon’s redemption requires him to give up magic. While Shakespeare reconciles hermetic magic and faith, Greene does not. Bacon’s ultimate sin is believing that his work will glorify himself alone and not God; commanding Miles to keep watch “by the immortal God,” Bacon speaks his last words

before falling asleep: “If that a wink but shut thy watchful eye, / Then farewell Bacon’s glory and his fame!” (xi.28, 35-6).

Early on in the play, Bacon’s self-aggrandizing motives are made clear when Clement, a fellow academic from Oxford, promises to immortalize Bacon if he can create a talking brazen head: “And Oxford shall in characters of brass, / And statues, such as were built up in Rome, / Etern’ise Friar Bacon for his art” (ii.41-3). The statuary celebrating Roman antiquity and Roman Catholicism are thus translated to English soil, a subtle *translatio imperii*. Indeed, a brass statue dating from around 1509 at Oxford is said to have given Brasenose College its name and may have in part inspired the play.²⁰⁰ Friar Bacon himself swears by the college: “as the college called Brazen-nose / Is under him, and he the master there, / So surely shall this head of brass be fram’d / And yield forth strange and uncouth aphorisms” (ii.166-9). Throughout these early passages in the play, Friar Bacon makes it clear that his magic reflects his own glory, not God’s.

As Friar Bacon reflects upon his use of magic, he understands his error in glorifying himself over God. In “conjuring and abjuring devils and fiends, / With stole and alb,” Bacon deploys material objects from the Catholic Church to force demons to recant their oath to Satan (xiii.90-1). However, his motivation is not to obey the will of God but to make “Hell tremble... at my deep commanding spells” and “Fiends frown... to see a man their overmatch” (xi.110).²⁰¹ He identifies his power as his own and not as a gift from God. Similarly, he “wrest[s]... the holy name of God, / As Sother, Eloim [the name of the angels], and Adonai, / Alpha, Manoth, and Tetragrammaton” for his own

²⁰⁰ Kevin LaGrandeur makes this argument in his “Brasenose College’s Brass Head and Greene’s *Friar Bacon*,” *Notes and Queries* (2000) pp. 48-50.

²⁰¹ According to the OED, “abjuring” primarily means “The action of causing or requiring someone to recant” (s.v. abjuring, OED, 2d edn.).

ends (xiii.92-4). Bacon concludes that these “Are instances that Bacon must be damn’d / For using devils to countervail his God” (xiii.96-7). The emphasis in this line is not on the fact that Bacon’s magic is daemonic (after all, Friar Bungay also practices magic with geomantic daemons, but he does not feel the need to repent or cast aside magic), but on the fact that Bacon’s goal was to “countervail,” or equal, God.

When Bacon realizes the harm caused by his magic (the two young men who kill each other), he acknowledges his human failures: “Bacon, thy magic doth effect this massacre” (xiii.75). Bacon accuses himself before Friar Bungay, and as Friar Bungay patiently listens, the scene takes on aspects of the confessional. Bacon casts aside his heavily hermetic magic for the true “magic” of God: “Think Mercy sits where Justice holds her seat / And from those wounds those bloody Jews did pierce / Which by thy magic oft did bleed afresh” (xiii.101-2). Although Greene cannot reconcile hermetic magic with Christianity in the way that Shakespeare does, he does acknowledge a Catholic magic (here represented by Friar Bungay) in repentance, forgiveness, and the grace conveyed by the sacrament of reconciliation. Friar Bacon, like Leontes, vows to “spend the remnant of my life / In pure devotion, praying to my God / That He would save what Bacon vainly lost” (xiii.106-8). Friar Bacon must abjure his magic in order to participate in God’s grace, while Paulina’s magic (whether a charlatan trick or a miraculous, true magic) harmonizes with Catholic sacrament to bring about reconciliation in the Sicilian court.

Lodovico Lazzarelli’s model of synthesizing Catholicism with hermeticism helps provide a model to understand Paulina’s animation of Hermione and the ways in which Shakespeare departs from Greene’s earlier animate statue on the early modern English

stage. Hermetic animation becomes a metaphor for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and spiritual communion, whether in a church congregation or in a theater audience.

Crucially, Paulina differs from Friar Bacon because she acknowledges that her magic flows from a higher power and because she uses her magic not for her own glory but for reconciliation, the sacrament that unifies Catholics into one body.

CHAPTER 4

CLIMBING TOWARD THE “SPHEARY CHIME”:

ANGELS AND ASTRAL MAGIC IN MILTON’S

***MASK* AND “IL PENSEROSO”**

John Milton’s *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle*, also known as *Comus*, contains a surprising number of positive Catholic references for a writer so virulently anti-Catholic in prose works written around the same time. In his *Areopagitica*, a plea for a free press and religious tolerance, Milton explicitly excludes Catholics: “I mean not tolerated Popery, and open superstition, which as it extirpats all religions and civill supremacies, so it self should be extirpat.”²⁰² Anti-Catholicism becomes the rallying cry in Milton’s treatise to unite the Independents against a common threat; for Milton, Catholicism not only encourages idolatry, but also a “dual system of obedience to sacred and secular powers” in their allegiance to the Pope.²⁰³

²⁰²John Milton, *Areopagitica* (London: 1644), p. 37 EEBO

²⁰³Andrew Hadfield, “Milton and Catholicism,” in *Milton and Toleration* ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), pp. 186-202, 198. Hadfield lists specific criticisms of Catholicism in Milton’s prose works: anti-prelacy (see the 1641 *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*); anti-purgatory (see the 1641 *Animadversions*); and Milton calls transubstantiation a “cannibal feast” in *Christian Doctrine* and marriage a “Papists Sacrament” in *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643).

Yet, in his masque and in “Il Penseroso,” Milton draws upon Catholic beliefs, images, and sacraments in creating his fictional worlds, and his romances seem to condone the Catholic belief in the ability of the spiritual to manifest itself physically. Here, rather than extirpating Catholicism, Milton embraces aspects of it that are the foundation for the astral magic influencing “Il Penseroso” and the *Masque*. Milton may reject the “papism,” or political control of the Pope, but he can still embrace notions of sacramentality that were not endorsed by Reformers or even by the papacy.²⁰⁴ Deborah Shuger suggests that in the masque, “Milton’s theology seems rather closer to the Catholic humanism of Erasmus”; I agree with her that we should not assume that Milton was a “closet Papist,” but drawing upon Catholic theology for his masque does not have to mean that he himself was Catholic.²⁰⁵

Scholars such as John Arthos and Angus Fletcher have noticed the masque’s debt to Renaissance occultists (who were also Catholic) including Marsilio Ficino and Cornelius Agrippa, but they do not explain the details of Catholic language and symbols in the masque, such as the Catholic rites of passage through the seven sacraments. While Fletcher compares the masque to Catholic practice to illustrate his theory of ritual, William Shullenberger, too, emphasizes the ritual aspects of the masque but takes an anthropological approach, comparing the Lady’s rite of initiation to those in African

²⁰⁴ Once again, I would like to stress that Catholicism is not a monolithic entity; in theory, all Catholics should agree with the papacy, but in practice, there is great diversity of beliefs and opinions. This was especially true in Reformation England, because Catholics were separated from the papacy; recusants had to improvise to continue practicing their faith and the sacraments because they did not have regular access to priests. Without the oversight of priests, the idea of sacrament could expand beyond the seven official sacraments.

²⁰⁵ Deborah Shuger, “‘The Bliss of Dreams’: Theology in Milton’s Maske” *Hellas* 7, 2 (1996): 139-53, pp. 148-9.

cultures like the Bemba.²⁰⁶ Sears Jayne maps Milton's Ficinian neoplatonism in the masque onto the generally Christian concepts of nature, grace, and glory, but he too does not mention the specifically Catholic elements of either Ficino's magic or Milton's masque.²⁰⁷ Regina Schwartz perhaps comes closest to recognizing the sacraments in Milton's works, but she defines sacrament too broadly, a capaciousness that excludes Catholicism's specificity.²⁰⁸ For Catholics, a sacrament is the intersection of the spiritual and the physical. Sacraments are not mere symbols or signs to remind worshipers of God's grace; they instantaneously convey grace and make the spiritual physically present.

In the rest of this chapter I argue that reading the masque against "Il Penseroso" brings out Milton's meditation upon the relationship between the material and spiritual worlds, an early formulation of his monism that relies heavily upon Catholic metaphors

²⁰⁶See *Lady in the Labyrinth: Milton's Comus as Initiation* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 2008) and "Circe's Best Boy," in *Uncircumscribed Mind: Reading Milton Deeply* ed. Charles W. Durham and Kristin A. Pruitt (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna Univ. Press, 2008), pp. 67-90.

²⁰⁷See John Arthos, "Milton, Ficino, and the Charmides," *Studies in the Renaissance* 6 (1959): 261-74; Angus Fletcher, *The Transcendental Masque: An Essay on Milton's Comus* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971); and Sears Jayne, "The Subject of Milton's Ludlow Mask" *PMLA* 74, 5 (Dec. 1959): 533-43. John Arthos's reading is strictly Platonic, although he does recognize a Ficinian synthesis of Plato's pagan philosophy and a generally Christianity. I would argue that this synthesis is particular to Catholicism; Ficino translates *sophrosyne*, the topic of Plato's *Charmides*, as *temperantia* and defines this term as a well-ordered body and soul, in harmony with the order of the universe. Ficino writes, "a wonderful power is proclaimed for *sophrosyne*, which happily restores to itself a soul unhappily fallen in bad times... the body can be preserved incorrupt [like Lazarus, Jesus, and a multitude of Catholic saints]... This is furthermore consonant with the Mosaic mysteries at almost every point" (qtd. in Arthos, p. 268).

²⁰⁸Though she does not define herself as a new historicist, Schwartz seems to participate in the trend of new historicism to empty theology from Catholic symbols in early modern literature. For example, she defines sacrament as "sign-making" and specifically wishes to avoid the Catholic "aura" of the word. She goes on to say a sacramental sign "does not contain what it expresses; rather it expresses far more than it contains"; this definition avoids the real, physical presence of the divine that Catholics believe occurs in the seven sacraments (See *Dawn of Secularism*, pp. 4-6).

and beliefs, including angelology, the contemplative lives of nuns, the representation of the Catholic sacrament of Extreme Unction, and ritual exorcism. This syncretic Catholic and neoplatonic context not only reinforces the salvific significance of the Lady's animation after she has been magically "chain'd up in Alabaster" and transformed into "a statue" by Comus (lines 660-1) but also provides echoes throughout the masque of the ability of spirits to manifest physically and ensoul material bodies.

ANGELOPHANY

The masque is structured around the presence of angels and daemons, beginning and ending with speeches made by the Attendant Spirit, first named Daemon in the earliest drafts of the masque. Indeed, the occasion of the masque itself points to the importance of angels, the biblical spirits who physically instantiate on earth to deliver messages from God. Milton wrote *Comus* for a single performance on the eve of Michaelmas, a holy day that significantly influences the content of the masque. In 1725, Henry Bourne observed that Michaelmas "brings into the Minds of the People, that old Opinion of *Tutelar Angels*, that every Man hath his *Guardian Angel*; that is, one particular Angel who attends him from his Coming in, till his Going out of Life, who guides him through the Troubles of the World, and strives as much as he can, to bring him to Heaven." Well after the time Milton wrote his *Mask* and his more famous treatment of angels, *Paradise Lost*, Bourne's treatise indicates that even at the turn of the eighteenth century, there was a widespread association of the holy day Michaelmas and guardian angels in England.

Bourne's account also implies that the holyday of Michaelmas was not emptied of its religious content.²⁰⁹ Michaelmas, as a secular marker of the legal, economic, and agricultural cycles of the year, was an appropriate day for the masque celebrating the new governor of Wales, but even this secular significance of the day is related to its original celebration of angels. In his Chapter 29 entitled "Of Michaelmass: Guardian Angels the Discourse of Country People at this Time: That it seems rather true, that we are protected by a Number of Angels, than by one Particular Genius," he suggests that the reason why Michaelmas's relation to the date for electing civic leaders depends on the guardianship of angels.²¹⁰ This guardian angel tradition is embodied in material culture in churches. Joad Raymond notes, "The most common [surviving angel in church architecture] is Saint Michael, pictured trampling a Satanic dragon or weighing human souls, and he frequently occupied a symbolic place in church architecture, ornamenting the doorways between the nave and sanctuary, the boundary between the profane world and the sacred."²¹¹

Like the angels dividing the nave and sanctuary, *Comus* bridges angelology and neoplatonic magic, tracing the boundary between the material and the spiritual, the

²⁰⁹As David Cressy argues, the secular early modern calendar appropriated Catholic feast days as markers of terms, and although this "calendrical notation was largely [a] conventional... convenient and traditional scheme for organizing and recording the passage of time," "it was difficult to treat the year as a neutral grid when so many of its days and seasons had religious or historical content" (*Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989], pp. 14, 29).

²¹⁰Henry Bourne, *Antiquitates Vulgares; Or the Antiquities of the Common People, Giving an Account of Several of Their Opinions and Ceremonies with Proper Reflections upon Each of Them; Shewing Which May Be Retain'd and Which Ought To Be Laid Aside* (Newcastle: 1725), pp. 219-224. Perhaps it is only a coincidence, but the twenty-ninth chapter on Michaelmas corresponds to the holy day itself, the 29 of November.

²¹¹Joad Raymond, *Milton's Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), p. 5.

profane and the sacred. Henry Bourne's discussion of guardian angels precisely summarizes the action of the masque: Good angels "guide [humans] in the Mazes of the Wilderness of Life, and bring them to their desir'd Homes."²¹² Milton's occasional play was deliberately scheduled and performed in 1634 on Michaelmas, November 29, the holy day of the Archangel Michael and all guardian angels.²¹³ The Archangel Michael also bears an added significance for the Lady protagonist of the masque. The saint's name means "Who is like to God?" (Quis ut Deus), the legendary war cry of good angels in battle against Satan. The Lady must also prove her likeness to God, herself as an image of God, in her trial against Comus.

The Attendant Spirit, known as Daemon in the 1634 performance but renamed for the 1645 publication, frames the masque in this guardian angel tradition by uttering the first and last words of the play. The figure of the angel is itself liminal, related both to the pagan tradition of daemons and genius and also to the biblical messengers of God. Dionysius the Areopagite, the standard medieval source for Christian angel lore, associates angels, Christianity, and magic. He relates the sacraments to "*theurgia*," which he defines as holy works through which divine illumination is immediately transmitted; this term quickly also became associated with magic, *theurgy*.²¹⁴ The standard Latin translation of the Greek *daemon* is *genius*, a figure we have encountered in

²¹²Henry Bourne, p. 221.

²¹³As critics such as Stephen Orgel ("The Case for Comus," *Representations* [2003]: 31-45, p. 33) and Leah Marcus (*The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1986]) note, Michaelmas was an important in the secular calendar as well, marking the beginning of a new economic period and legal session.

²¹⁴For a discussion of the importance of Dionysius to Renaissance angelology, see Feisal Mohamed's *In the Anteroom of Divinity: The Reformation of the Angels from Colet to Milton* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2008).

Shakespeare's Gower, who was guided through his shrift in the *Confessio Amans* by Genius, Love's priest.

The Attendant Spirit maintains this daemonic role, guiding the child protagonists of the masque, despite the change in name. *Daemon* can also mean angel, a being that lives between the air of the Earth's atmosphere and the aether of outer space, the heavens. Apuleius, thought to have written the hermetic *Asclepius*, also wrote a treatise, *De Deo Socratis*, discussing Socrates and his interaction with his personal daemon.²¹⁵ Like the Christian *angelos* messengers, Apuleius affirms the existence of "certain divine powers of a middle nature, situate in this interval of the air, between the highest ether and the earth below, through whom our aspirations and our deserts are conveyed to the Gods. These the Greeks call by name 'daemons,'" and they act "as messengers between the inhabitants of the earth and those of heaven."²¹⁶ Greek translators of the Bible considered using the word *daemon* for angel, but ultimately decided that the word *angelos* (messenger) had less complicated associations.

Milton chose the term "Assistant Spirit" instead of "Angel" for his character in response to the political and religious climate of 1645, which was too volatile for him to risk misunderstanding of his project.²¹⁷ Angels, like church ornamentation, had become a marker of the differences among Protestant sects and of the Laudian movement toward Roman Catholicism. Martin Luther denounced the angelology of Dionysius the

²¹⁵See A. Kent Hieatt, *Chaucer, Spenser, Milton: Mythopoeic Continuities and Transformations* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1975), 163.

²¹⁶Apuleius, "On the God of Socrates," in *The Works of Apuleius* (London: H. G. Bohn, 1853), pp. 350-73, 356. Michael Lloyd shows correspondences between Milton's language in the masque and Plutarch's conception of daemons ("Comus' and Plutarch's Daemons" *Notes and Queries* n.s. 7, 11 [November 1960]: pp. 421-3).

²¹⁷Stephen Orgel also recognizes the Attendant Spirit as a guardian angel from the Christian tradition.

Areopagite, claiming that his classification of the celestial hierarchy into nine choirs of angels was “nothing but idle and useless human ideas... These are trifles worthy for the papists to admire.”²¹⁸ Under William Laud, appointed Archbishop in 1633, angels crept back into the church ornamentation and funerary monuments and even in the liturgy in the form of the “angelic hymn,” the words spoken by an angel at Christ's Nativity. When in 1641-42 the Laudians even began to pray to angels, the more extreme reformers protested. Anti-Catholic polemic in the early 1640s characterized this interest in angels as papist and became “a test of confessional difference: one’s faith in angels or skepticism about the extent of true knowledge of them marked the difference between the Protestant and Catholic faiths.”²¹⁹

The publications in the period reflect the centrality of the angel controversy; Henry Lawrence published his *Our Communion and Warre with Angels* in 1646, which he later republished in two treatises, *An History of Angels* (1649) and *Militia Spirtualis* (1652). Thomas Heywood published *The hierarchie of the blessed angells Their names, orders and offices the fall of Lucifer with his angells* in 1635. George Withers published *Prosopopoeia Britannica Britans genius, or, good-angel, personated; reasoning and advising, touching the games now playing, and the adventures now at hazard in these islands; and presaging, also, some future things, not unlikely to come to passe* in 1648. Feisal Mohamed has written a brilliant study, *In the Anteroom of Divinity: The Reformation of the Angels from Colet to Milton*, of the impact of the angelology of Dionysius the Areopagite on Reformation poets, including John Donne and Milton. However, Mohamed focuses on the later writings of Milton, not taking into account his

²¹⁸ Martin Luther, 1:235.

²¹⁹ Raymond, p. 94

explorations of neoplatonism and angel theory in earlier works that explicitly mention angels, such as the *Mask*, even though it was written and published at the same time as other angel treatises discussed in his book. Mohamed's focus on *Paradise Lost* and his omission of Milton's early works such as the *Mask* and "Il Penseroso" skews his analysis of Milton's engagement with both the neoplatonic and Dionysian angel traditions.

The iconoclasm of the 1640s especially targeted angels. William Dowsing, chronicling the works of art he destroyed by order of Parliament in 1643 and 1644, records in his diary that in the first month alone, he took down in Sudbury "diverse Angels, 20 at the least, on the Roof of the Church" in Peter's Parish and "we brake down 10 mighty great Angels in Glass, in all 80" in Gregory Parish; in Clare, he ordered "20 Cherubims to be taken down"; in Wickham, "We brake down 15 popish Pictures of Angels and S[aints]"; in Ufford, he ordered "40 Cherubims to be taken down of wood"; in Kesgrave, he "gave order to take down 18 Cherubims"; in Ipswich, he destroyed "2 Cherubims painted" in Stoke Mary's and "3 Angels with Stars on their breasts" in Matthew's; in Peterhouse, Cambridge, "we pulled down two mighty great angels, with wings, and divers other angels... and about a hundred chirubims and angels."²²⁰ The controversy over angels and their place in the reformed religion helped create the conditions that lead to the outbreak of the English civil war.²²¹ By 1645, "angel" seems to have been too radical a term, so Milton settled for the more religiously neutral Attendant Spirit, even though the character performs an angelic function.

²²⁰William Dowsing, *The Journal of William Dowsing, Of Stratford, Parliamentary Visitor, Appointed Under a Warrant from the Earl of Manchester, For Demolishing the Superstitious Pictures and Ornaments of Churchs &c., Within the County of Suffolk, In the Years 1643-1644*, Ed. Rev. C. H. Evelyn White (Ipswich: Pawsey and Hays, 1885), pp. 15, 17, 18, 19.

²²¹See Raymond, pp. 63-4.

Daemon, an overtly neoplatonic term, has associations with paganism and a magic that many considered idolatrous. Stuart Clark explains, “Causation was seen in terms of an organically related hierarchy of powers. Influences descended from the angelic or intellectual world of spirits... to the stellar and planetary world of the heavens, which in turn governed the behavior of earthly things and their physical changes.”²²² Critics of magic questioned the ability of conjurers to know the difference between good spirits such as angels and deceptive demons; they also suggested that devils themselves were skilled magicians who used natural magic to deceive people. As Deborah Harkness writes, “Angelology was particularly relevant to those who were attracted to the occult aspects of the Book of Nature, or their magical manipulation. This was the great danger of the syncretistic conception of angels, with its pagan and heretical roots: it could be construed as demonic.”²²³

Conjuring devils endangered not only the soul but also one's life; the 1604 Act Against Conjurament and Witchcraft sentenced to death those who “use practice or exercise any Invocation, or Conjurament of any evill and wicked Spirit, or shall consult covenant with entertaine employ feede or rewarde any evill and wicked Spirit to or for any intent or purpose.”²²⁴ Under this Act, 794 people were indicted, although only 36 of these cases concerned summoning spirits. One way to get around this Act was to claim to speak with angels, although the difficulty of proving the difference between good and bad spirits might also be a liability. According to D.P. Walker, the neoplatonic magicians

²²²Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 217.

²²³Deborah Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), p. 109.

²²⁴The act is quoted in Marion Gibson's *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2003), pp. 6-7.

avoided charges of idolatry by explaining that their magic relied upon naturally enhancing the individual's ability to absorb astral rays and, emphatically, not upon summoning daemons, who might be deceiving devils instead of good spirits.²²⁵ Milton uses both of these techniques, summoning angels and enhancing natural magic, in his masque.

Of course, praying to angels came dangerously close to the invocation of daemons. John Dee famously spoke with angels, and he kept a diary of his conversations that was published by Meric Casaubon in 1659. In the 1640s, many tried to replicate Dee's angelic conversations. John Evans, a Welsh astrologer and physician, supposedly had summoned the Angel Salmon, the mythical author of *Ars Notoria*, a treatise on angel-magic. William Lilly, one of Evans' students, bought one of Evans' personal copies of this angel-magic book in 1633-34, and attempted to summon angels. He later published *The Starry Messenger* in 1645.²²⁶ Those who did converse with angels did not widely advertise the fact, as they could be attacked for conjuring fallen angels and could be indicted for witchcraft or demonology.

Despite the Attendant Spirit's name change, his daemonic qualities remain, and his materialization at the beginning of the play is typical of neoplatonic astral magic. When Jove sees one of his favored about to be tempted, he sends the Attendant Spirit: "Swift as the Sparkle of a glancing Star, / I shoot from Heav'n to give him safe convoy" (1645, 80-1). Explicitly comparing himself to an astral ray, he falls to earth to influence those below. As he tells us in the first lines of the play,

²²⁵Orgel notes the difficulty of telling the difference between the Attendant Spirit and Comus, as both are falsely disguised as shepherds (p. 34).

²²⁶Raymond, pp. 106-11.

Before the starry threshold of Joves Court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aëreal Spirits live inspear'd
In Regions milde of calm and serene Ayr.
(lines 1-4)

Following Apuleius's spirits, Milton's daemons inhabit the space between the earthly air and the heavenly aether. As daemons fall through the spheres, they gain material substance, a process that disgusts the Attendant Spirit. Earth is a "pin-fold" and bodies "confin[e]" and "pester" the spirits they engage (line 7). The Attendant Spirit's descent "soil[s]" his "pure Ambrosial weeds, / With the rank vapours of this Sin-worn mould" (lines 16-7). The mould, or primal clay, gathers on his form, first in the aerial materiality of smell, and then in more substantial flesh and clothes, wrapping him in the "likenes of a Swain," Thyrasis. Though in a material body, the Attendant Spirit retains his magical abilities to disappear: "I must be viewless now" (line 92).

The Attendant Spirit is not the only guardian angel referred to in the masque. In the Lady's first speech, she is frightened both by the "fantastick round" of Comus and his revelers and also by the "fantasies" that "begin to throng into [her] memory / Of calling shapes and beckning shadows dire, / And airy tongues, that syllable mens names / On Sands, and Shoars, and desert Wildernesses" (lines 205-10). To combat the glamour of fantasy, the Lady deliberately redirects her imagination to conjure four guardians: "a strong siding champion Conscience," "pure-ey'd Faith," "white-handed Hope," and the "unblemish't form of Chastity" (lines 212-5). She explicitly identifies Hope as a guardian angel: "Thou hov'ring Angel girt with golden wings" (line 214), replacing the sinister spirits of her frightened fantasy with an angelic daemon. This angel, Hope, inspires in her the trust of being rescued by a more corporeal guardian and appears to the

Lady in an angelophany: “I see ye visibly, and now believe / That he, the Supreme good... / Would send a glistering Guardian if need were / To keep my life and honour unassail’d” (lines 216-20). The Attendant Spirit is in fact on his way to help her, although as Stephen Orgel has pointed out, the Spirit ultimately fails to physically release her from bondage.²²⁷ As a guardian angel, the Attendant Spirit can only work indirectly to free the Lady, through good influence. The Spirit knows his limits, and invokes Sabrina as the final guardian daemon to release the Lady.

The Attendant Spirit, in keeping with neoplatonic astral magic, deploys haemony to help the brothers rescue their sister. According to Marsilio Ficino, the *spiritus mundi*, pervades the universe, vivifying everything. Although mostly immaterial, the *spiritus mundi*, a cosmic spirit, can even enter material human bodies, purifying the spirits trapped there, and humans can attract the *spiritus mundi* by making themselves more similar to the cosmic spirit, more celestial. Humans can attract the *spiritus* by wearing objects and substances known to have absorbed astral rays and *spiritus mundi*, such as astral talismans. To optimize attraction of the most astral rays possible, these talismans are constructed of certain substances, at certain times, and in specific ways, and Ficino provides detailed instructions for attracting several such planetary influences in his *Three Books on Life*.

Haemony is just such a substance, an astral pharmaceutical that has absorbed its virtues and power from astral rays, filtering down from the intelligences or angels that govern the celestial spheres. It is an herb of “divine effect,” “more medicinal” than Homer's Moly. While in school, Milton had expressed his interest in the possibility that

²²⁷Orgel, p. 32.

astral rays imbue material objects on earth with a divine power; in the Third Prolusion, when Milton recommends the “study of the hidden virtues of stones and herbs,” he sounds like occultists such as Zanchi and Cornelius Agrippa.²²⁸ As Girolamo Zanchi, an Italian Protestant, writes, “For there is in herbs and stones and other natural things a marvellous force, although hidden, by which many strange things can be performed.”²²⁹ This “marvellous force” filters down to earth from God, passing first through the angelic Intelligences who govern the harmony of the spheres. Cornelius Agrippa explains, “There is therefore a wonderful vertue, and operation in every Hearb, and Stone, but greater in a Star, beyond which, even from the governing Intelligencies every thing receiveth, and obtains many things for it self, especially from the Supream Cause, with whom all things do mutually, and exactly correspond, agreeing to a harmonioius consent, as it were in Hymnes, alwaies praising the highest Maker of all things.”²³⁰ The hermetic conception of the universe is fractal in nature; each smaller part reflects the structure of the whole—every star, every herb, every human being is an image of the One. Realizing oneself as an image of God, in harmony with all of creation, is an act of devotion, a “Hymne” according to Agrippa.

This system of astral magic is predicated upon the existence of intelligences, often explicitly christened angels, governing the celestial spheres and acting as a crucial link between the Supreme Cause, or God, and the material world. Because it posits a two-way channel between the material world and the spiritual realm, this system of

²²⁸See Milton’s Third Prolusion, “An Attack on the Scholastic Philosophy,” in vol. 1, *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 240-8, p. 246.

²²⁹Girolamo Zanchi, qtd. in Clark, p. 245.

²³⁰Cornelius Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy or Magic* (Kila, MT: Kessinger, 1992), Book 3, chpt. 13, p. 31.

correspondences also parallels Catholic ideas of sacramentality, or sanctifying the material and making physically present the spiritual. D. P. Walker claims that the Catholic Mass, “with its music, words of consecration, incense, lights, wine, and supreme magical effect—transubstantiation... is a fundamental influence on all mediaeval and Renaissance magic.”²³¹

Much ink has been spilled over the question of what haemony might signify in the masque, but few scholars have taken it seriously as a literal pharmaceutical.²³² While the allegorical references are necessary to any interpretation of the herb, it is also important to locate the plant in its context of astral pharmaceuticals. According to an herbal attributed to Apuleius, the moon’s plant, aglaophotis, is capable of routing demons, like the haemony prescribed by the Attendant Spirit in the masque.²³³ English authors were aware of Apuleius’s herbal at least from Thomas Elyot’s 1542 *Bibliotheca Eliotae*, the first Latin-English dictionary based upon humanism: In a description of Apuleius and his

²³¹*Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: Warburg Institute, 1958), p. 36.

²³²Samuel Taylor Coleridge first suggested interpreting haemony as a Christian allegory, specifically redemption by the cross (See *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 1 [London: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1896], p. 407). It might derive from Haemonia, another name for Thessaly, known for its magic and magical plants. Edward S. Le Comte suggested that it might be “grace” or rhamnus, which Gerard’s *Herbal* identifies as the material of Christ’s crown of thorns (“New Light on the Haemony Passage in *Comus*” *Philological Quarterly* 21 [1942]: 283-98). Jayne identifies haemony as divine philosophy, or a symbol of the *prisca theologia* (p. 540). Charlotte Otten reads the Euphrasie and Rue (another name for Moly) in *Paradise Lost* in pharmaceutical terms: Michael uses these plants to clear Adam’s eyes after the Fall), but not in terms of the plants’ astral powers (“Homer’s Moly and Milton’s Rue,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 33, 4 [August 1970], pp. 362-72).

²³³“Si quis a daemone tenebitur, incenses radicibus Aglaophotidis pro thymiamate suffiatur, and mox daemon fugabitur” (Apuleius, *De Viribus Herbarum, ad Veterum Exemplarium Fidem Magna Diligentia Excusus: Cui Adscripta est Nomeclatura, Qua Officinae, Herbaria & Vulgus Gallicum Efferre Solent* [Paris: Pierre Drouart, 1543], Hiiv. Ritman Library, Amsterdam.

works, Elyot writes, “He made also a ryght commendable boke of the names and vertues of herbes.”²³⁴ I do not propose that aglaophotis is the source of haemony, but the existence of an herb that has the same effect as Milton’s haemony in an astralpharmaceutical treatise suggests that haemony is not Milton’s independent invention but rather participates in a culture in which plants are thought to have divine powers sent to earth via angelic Intelligences, and are thus capable of scaring away evil demons.

The Attendant Spirit situates his description of haemony in an astralpharmaceutical context: his companion who first gives him the haemony knows “every vertuous plant and healing herb / That spreads her verdant leaf to th'morning ray”; while modern readers might immediately associate the “morning ray” with sunlight and photosynthesis, early modern readers would have been more likely to see it as an astral ray, the source of this plant’s “strange and vigorous faculties” and “divine effect” (lines 621-30). Haemony can be classed with plants like aglaphotis because of its “sovrán” power “Gainst all inchantments, mildew blast, or damp / Or gastly furies apparition” (lines 639-41). The Attendant Spirit promises that the herb will allow the brothers to “boldly assault the necromancers hall” and to see through his disguise. Significantly, the Elder Brother prays as he leaves the stage, “And som good angel bear a sheild before us” (line 658). While we might assume Thyrsis is this angelic shield because he leads the brothers off-stage, Thyrsis is not present when they battle Comus. It is the plant that has absorbed angelic power; the plant is an astral talisman, a physical object that makes present an angelic Intelligence to shield the boys.

²³⁴Thomas Elyot, *Bibliotheca Eliotae* (London: 1542), Early English Books Online, STC (2d edn.) / 7659.5, image 35.

MILTON'S LADIES

In both the masque and his poem, "Il Penseroso," Milton establishes a relationship between neoplatonic magic and Catholic sacrament. In both these works, a Lady is transfixed and then animated, revealing a physical presence of the spiritual. In "Il Penseroso," written around the same time as the masque, Milton alludes similarly to the system of astral influences by using a Catholic vocabulary. The poem's Lady Melancholy is "holy," "divinest," and her "Saintly visage," dazzlingly "bright," and must be enshrouded with shadows to protect the viewer's "weaker" human senses. As the poem progresses, this invocation becomes explicitly Catholic: "Com pensive Nun, devout and pure." Because she is a contemplative nun, pure in both mind and body, Lady Melancholy is particularly receptive to astral rays²³⁵; she gazes upon the stars, her "looks commercing with the skies, / thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes" (lines 39-40). Ficino also compares the power of astral rays to the rays emitted from eyes in the extramission theory of vision: "Heaven, the bridegroom of Earth, ... regards her by the mere rays of his stars, which are, as it were, his eyes; and in regarding her he fructifies her and so begets life."²³⁶ The astral rays pierce Lady Melancholy's soul through her eyes, transfixing her in a "holy passion still," causing her to "forget thy self to Marble" (lines

²³⁵Milton perhaps was thinking of artistic representations of Melancholy in his portrait of his Ladies. Albrecht Dürer and Lucas Cranach both depict Melancholy with wings, implying that she is an angel. For a brilliant study of Dürer's Melancholy and its relationship to astral magic, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl's *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1964).

²³⁶Qtd in *Saturn and Melancholy* p. 264; (Apologia [Opera, p. 574])

41-2). This “holy passion” invokes not only the emotional inwardness of Lady Melancholy but also Christ’s passion, the Christian bridegroom to whom Ficino refers. The poem thus conveys grace through Lady Melancholy’s earthly experience by relating it to Christ’s suffering.

Penseroso explicitly appeals to Lady Melancholy to gift him with the occult knowledge of her astral magic. As Melancholy is most associated with scholars, particularly of the occult, he imagines himself “at midnight hour” in “som high lonely Towr / Where I may oft out-watch the Bear, / With thrice great Hermes” (lines 85-8).²³⁷ Milton invokes Hermes Trismegistus even though almost twenty years earlier Isaac Casaubon had demystified the *Hermetica* as not the work of an ancient Egyptian but of an early Christian. This allusion allows Milton to draw directly upon the hermetic tradition and its affinities with astral magic. The speaker imagines himself gazing at the stars, just as Lady Melancholy has forgotten herself to marble by staring up at the skies.

Milton creates a condensed *prisca theologia* in the following lines of the poem, reversing the accepted chain of ancient theology. The *prisca theologia* claims that a unified theology connects all religions, transcending cultural and temporal differences, and that this theology was passed down throughout the ages from one great teacher to the next; this chain of teaching was thought to stretch all the way back to Adam, the original man who learned divine wisdom directly from God. Pythagoras and Plato were the great teachers of Greek antiquity, and medieval and early modern hermeticists found a

²³⁷ Dürer’s *Melancholy*, for example, is surrounded by occult and neoplatonic symbols. For a brilliant reading of the hermetic harmony of “Il Penseroso” and its companion poem, “L’Allegro,” see Gerard H. Cox, “Unbinding ‘The Hidden Soul of Harmony’: *L’Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and the Hermetic Tradition,” *Milton Studies* 45-62. In my reading of the poem, I emphasize the syncretic relationship between this hermeticism and Catholicism, and I argue that this syncretism is also present in the masque.

common thread between them in the time they spent in ancient Egypt; they thus postulated that Pythagoras and Plato learned divine wisdom from the same source, Hermes Trismegistus.

Significantly, it was in an anti-Catholic treatise that Casaubon proved Hermes Trismegistus could have been neither an ancient Egyptian nor the source of Greek wisdom. Casaubon was specifically attacking Cesare Baronius's Counter-Reformation text, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, which lists Hermes Trismegistus among the ancient prophets of Christianity. By debunking Hermes Trismegistus as an early Christian rather than an ancient Egyptian, Casaubon hoped to weaken similar claims of the historical authority of the Catholic Church, the Magisterium. One of the major points of contestation for Reformers was the Catholic Church's claim to historical authority for teaching traditions that were passed down from Christ to the Apostles but not written in the Gospels. If one of the prophets embraced by Catholicism turned out to be a fraud, the Magisterium's authority would also be shaken.

Milton does not discount the entire tradition of the *prisca theologia* based upon the demystification of Hermes Trismegistus. He revises the order of the *prisca theologia* in response to Casaubon's recent linguistic argument that Trismegistus followed rather than preceded Christ. While Casaubon used this argument to debunk the whole tradition, Milton's revision of the chronological order of the *prisca theologia* places Plato as the authority who precedes Hermes Trismegistus, maintaining the authority of the tradition. The Miltonic "or," which Peter Herman has characterized as a central device for Milton's poetics of incertitude, allows him to accommodate both the *prisca theologia* and

Casaubon's findings, suspending the choice between the ancient theology and the modern Reformation:

or unsphear
The spirit of Plato to unfold
What Worlds, or what vast Regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in this fleshly nook.
(lines 88-92)

Milton often uses the word "or" in his poetry to "conflate difference" between synonyms and also "to provide a choice between different items but without indicating a preference between them."²³⁸ In this passage, Milton conflates the differences between Hermes Trismegistus and Plato by associating them both with the *prisca theologia* and implicitly provides the reader with a choice to either accept the hermetic tradition or reject it; importantly, Milton does not indicate his own preference in this choice but leaves it suspended in the conjunction.

Watching the stars with Hermes Trismegistus is also related to calling down Plato's spirit from the stars, a conjuration associated with hermetic statue magic. If the spirits of Isis and Osiris, humans who became gods, can inhabit hermetic statues, Plato's spirit can also be summoned. Milton imagines Plato's spirit translated to the stars after his death and transformed into a daemon who can tell Penserose not only about the mysteries of other "Worlds, or what vast Regions" that hold the immaterial mind once it is freed from the material body but also about other daemons. Milton links the two mysteries together with a colon. Plato will teach Penserose about the mind which has the

²³⁸See Peter C. Herman, "Paradise Lost, the Miltonic 'Or,' and the Poetics of Incertitude," *SEL* 43, 1 (Winter, 2003): 181-211, p. 185. This hermetic conceit in "Il Penserose" begins with a Miltonic or, making it one of the possible gifts that Lady Melancholy might bestow.

body “forsook: / And of those Daemons that are found / In fire, air, flood, or under ground” (lines 92-4). Plato, hailing from the stars, has secret knowledge of astral magic to pass on, perpetuating the *prisca theologia*. The daemons’ “power hath a true consent / With Planet, or with Element,” filtering down from the heavens and distilled in the physical elements and objects on Earth (lines 95-6). Reading this passage of the poem against the hermetic *Asclepius*, Gerard Cox argues that “familiarity with the race of demons teaches man that he has issued from the same divine origin: there is one cosmos, one Soul, one God.”²³⁹

Plato’s ascent into heaven in “Il Penseroso” is not the only instance of a philosopher’s apotheosis in Milton’s writings. In the second prolusion, he imagines Pythagoras as a daemon. Noting that Pythagoras was the only mortal to hear the harmonies of the wheeling stars, Milton wonders, “if indeed he was not rather some good spirit and denizen of heaven, sent down perchance by the gods’ behest to instruct mankind in holiness and lead them back to righteousness.”²⁴⁰ Pythagoras here sounds very much like the Attendant Spirit (otherwise known as Daemon) in Milton’s masque. A pattern emerges in Milton’s early writings; in the masque, in “Il Penseroso,” and in his prolusion, he explores the possibility of finding a harmony among neoplatonic theories of daemonic spirits, the hermetic tradition of the *prisca theologia*, and Christianity (particularly angelology).

This apotheosis and deriving power from the stars is reinforced by a protometamorphosis early on in “Il Penseroso.” There, Cassiopeia, like Plato, is translated to the heavens after she is petrified in her chair, just as contemplation first

²³⁹Cox, p. 55.

²⁴⁰Milton, Second Prolusion, “On the Harmony of the Spheres,” p. 238.

petrifies and then sanctifies Lady Melancholy as she “forget[s]” herself “to Marble.” In the description of Melancholy’s blinding beauty, Milton constructs a protometamorphosis in the allusion to Cassiopeia, “that Starr’d Ethiope Queen that strove / To set her beauties praise above / The Sea Nymphs, and their powers offended” (lines 19-21). Cassiopeia is translated to the stars, but imprisoned for eternity in a chair, like Lady Melancholy and the Lady in *Comus*. The earlier pun on “still,” both “always” and “motionless,” continues the protometamorphosis anticipating Melancholy’s transformation. Her constant, motionless thought turns her into a marble statue. The image is both broken and reaffirmed by another pun: “With a sad Leaden downward cast,” Melancholy’s gaze falls from the skies to the earth.

The masque also reflects Milton’s fascination with apotheosis and astral magic. When the Lady sings to Echo, she invokes an Apuleian daemon of the air, one that is material yet transparent, that can only be heard and not seen. The Lady’s very singing is like an Orphic hymn, the same genre as “Il Penseroso”; it simultaneously invites and literally creates Echo’s presence through the reverberation of sound. Echo, like the daemons, “liv’st unseen / Within thy airy shell,” a body that is conjured by another’s voice (lines 231-2). According to Ficino, song is “warm air, even breathing, and in a measure living, made up of articulated limbs, like an animal, not only bearing movement and emotion, but even signification like a mind, so that it can be said to be, as it were, a kind of aerial and rational animal.” By singing, the Lady literally brings Echo to life, in a way more powerful than speaking because of the greater vibrations caused by song, and Echo, a conjured spirit, has the greatest power to affect the Lady’s spirit precisely because Echo has no body. Because they are analogous substances, music can directly

influence and move the spirit, and so Echo can spiritually transform the Lady. Ficino writes, “musical sound, more than anything else perceived by the senses, conveys, as if animated, the emotions and thoughts of the singer’s or player’s soul to the listeners’ souls.”²⁴¹

As a “Daughter of the Sphear” in the system of astral influence, Echo is an angelic intelligence who governs the celestial spheres, and “give[s] resounding grace to all Heav’ns Harmonies” (lines 241-3). Milton here alludes to Ficino’s theory of astrological music. Music is Ficino’s central analogy for the influences of the stars and planets upon the material world: “musical sound, by its numbers and proportions, has a marvelous power to sustain, move and affect the spirit, soul and body.... Similarly, celestial figures act by their movement; for these, by their harmonic rays and motions, which penetrate everything, constantly affect the spirit secretly, just as music does openly, in the most powerful way.”²⁴²

Because music so closely corresponds with astral rays, humans might attract astral rays by imitating them through song: “Our spirit is consonant with the heavenly rays which, occult or manifest, penetrate everything. We can make it still more consonant, if we vehemently direct our affections towards the star from which we wish to receive a certain benefit.”²⁴³ The stars, for Ficino, are like saints; he does not advocate worshipping the stars but imitating them and asking them for aid to receive certain spiritual benefits, which include the act of prayerful imitation and realigning one’s emotions and desires with the celestial. Francesco Cattani da Diacceto, Ficino’s disciple,

²⁴¹Qtd. in D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: Warburg Institute, 2003), p. 10. (FIND ORIGINAL)

²⁴²Ficino, p. 15.

²⁴³Ficino, p. 23.

makes this relationship between astral rays and Christian entities explicit. He associates a daemon with each planet to help distribute that planet's physical and spiritual influences, and he identifies these daemons and astral intelligences as angels. According to astral music theory, humans can literally tune themselves to the celestial spheres and angels, a process that Ficino likens to the resonance of lyre strings; if one string vibrates, the one next to it will begin to vibrate too. Ficino himself sang Orphic hymns with a lyre, and this "astrological singing came near to being a religious rite."²⁴⁴

Milton draws upon not only Ficinian astral music and magic but also upon the English philosopher Robert Fludd's 1617 *De Musica Mundana*, the third book in his treatise on the macrocosm, in which he expresses the mathematical ratios of the universe in terms of musical harmonies. Fludd created a diagram of a divine monochord, an instrument that represents the relationship between the immaterial soul, the material body, and God, the *Pulsator monochordi* or the player of the music of the spheres. Fludd's monochord diagram divides the universe into two octaves, the celestial and the material, and divides them further into consonant intervals corresponding to ratios of materiality to spirituality. Fludd's monochord—legendarily first invented by Pythagoras, one of the earliest teachers in the *prisca theologia*—reveals not only musical ratios but also the mathematical structure of the heavenly spheres and even of the human soul.²⁴⁵ Angels govern the interval of the fourth in the celestial octave and influence the lower levels through resonance. By the same principle, humans singing certain intervals in a

²⁴⁴Walker, p. 20.

²⁴⁵See Penelope Gouk, "The Role of Harmonics in the Scientific Revolution," chpt. 8 in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* (Cambridge, 2002). See also Paolo Gozza's *Number to Sound: The Musical Way to the Scientific Revolution* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000).

particular way in the material octave could resonate with the celestial harmonies.

Through the everyday practice of *musica instrumentalis*, the musician can recognize the deeper harmonies that constitute the soul and the divine, the *musica humana* and *musica mundana* respectively, as Boethius had categorized them in the sixth century.

Echo herself emblemizes the system of correspondences in astral magic, musical theory, and angelic influence; the stars emit not only astral rays that filter down to earth but also the celestial harmonies that were thought to be too ethereal for earthly ears to hear. Milton wrote in his Second Prolusion, “Pythagoras alone among men is said to have heard this music... if our souls were pure, chaste, and white as snow, as was Pythagoras’s of old, then indeed our ears would ring and be filled with that exquisite music of the stars in their orbits.”²⁴⁶ The Lady, influenced by the heavenly harmonies, not only emulates that harmony in her singing but also in her life, echoing grace back to heaven (thus translating Echo to the skies), and the spheres reverberate a “resounding grace” that amplifies endlessly. In terms of physics, the Lady creates a coherent wavelength, in phase with the heavens; her song, like her life, is itself an echo of heaven’s grace. While her grace is not as strong or as pure as the original grace emanating from heaven, she is in tune with the heavenly spheres.

Comus recognizes this spiritual purity within the Lady; when he first hears her voice, he is captivated by her song to Echo:

Can any mortal mixture of Earths mould
Breath such Divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that brest,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testifie his hidd'n residence.

(lines 244-8)

²⁴⁶Prolusion II, “On the Harmony of the Spheres,” pp. 234-9, 238-9.

The male pronoun for this “something holy” suggests that Comus is attracted not only to the Lady as an individual woman but also to her body as a temple to “lodge” a masculine god. This divinity expresses itself through her physical body with song; as in Britomart’s experience with the statue of Isis, the pronouns merge here. It is of course the Lady who sings, but the passage insists that the divinity inside her, this “something holy,” actually expresses itself through her. The song “testifies” to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, “his hidd’n residence,” a power great enough to move Comus to love, in his way, the Lady and wish to make her his Queen and not just the latest addition to his corrupt menagerie.²⁴⁷ Like Lady Melancholy who was petrified by her contemplation of the heavens, the Lady’s body is also an animate statue, containing her own soul and the Holy Spirit, in keeping with Apuleius’s classification of the human soul, embodied, as a type of daemon.²⁴⁸

Comus petrifies the Lady’s body, leaving her only free to speak; he explicitly compares her to a statue and invokes the myth of Daphne, who metamorphosed into a laurel tree to preserve her chastity: “Your nervs are all chain’d up in Alabaster, / And you a statue; or as Daphne was / Root-bound, that fled Apollo” (lines 660-2). It is tempting to see Milton’s description building up an allusion to Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s *Daphne and Apollo*, carved between 1622 and 1625. If this line alludes to Bernini’s statue, it would further reinforce the tension between the Ovidian control of the body that Comus

²⁴⁷Georgia B. Christopher also sees in this passage a reference to the human being as a vessel for the divine, specifically Christ’s indwelling; she cites Luther’s famous formulation of this idea: “There is a double life: my own, which is natural or animate; and an alien life, that of Christ in me” (“The Virginitie of Faith: *Comus* as a reformation Conceit,” *ELH* 43 [1976]: 479-99, 486-9). For a sympathetic reading of Comus and his love for the Lady, see Orgel’s “Case for Comus.”

²⁴⁸Apuleius, p. 363.

proposes and the Lady's ability to draw upon the sacramental power of her unity of body and spirit. In Ovid, Daphne's transformation into a tree takes away her voice; Bernini's representation of this myth in marble permanently freezes her moment of transformation, beginning at her feet but leaving her human face to express her horror, her mouth open in a scream of protest. Bernini delicately carves the micorrhizae of the tree roots, extending from Daphne's toes as bark dynamically sweeps across her body. "Root-bound" may just refer generally to her metamorphosis, but it seems oddly specific to this representation of the myth that emphasizes the tree roots and her feet as the starting point of the bark, "the corporal rinde" that will eventually encase her entire body. In this statue, the marble of Daphne's hair and fingers is cut so thinly that the light glows through the sprouting branches and leaves of her metamorphosis. Though Bernini captures Apollo's anguish at the very moment of metamorphosis, when Daphne is half-human and half-tree, Bernini's treatment of light in the work allows the god of light to caress his beloved, illuminating her.

The Lady has a crucial advantage over Daphne, despite their shared plight; as the Lady points out, though Comus controls her body, he "canst not touch the freedom of [her] minde" (line 663); Ovid is unclear about whether or not Daphne retains her human mind after her transformation, but in any case, she crucially has lost her voice. While Daphne's body is completely metamorphosed in Ovid's tale, the Lady's head remains free from Comus's petrifying enchantment, allowing her to verbally defend her chastity. In this difference, the masque departs from the conventions of an Ovidian tale of metamorphosis to follow the narrative arc of a virgin martyr legend, another Catholic detail. The debate about the Lady's vocation to virginity is expanded in the 1645 text,

giving the Lady an even stronger role in defending herself through rational argument, like many of the virgin martyrs. The brothers disrupt her debate with Comus, perhaps saving her from completing the virgin martyr pattern with a violent death.

The Lady's arguments against Comus recall not only the genre of virgin martyr legends but also a specific saint, Saint Katherine of Alexandria (saint day November 25) in particular: "KATHERYNE is said of catha, that is all, and ruina that is falling, for all the edifice of the devil fell all from her. For the edifice of pride fell from her by humility that she had, and the edifice of fleshly desire fell from her by her virginity, and worldly covetise, for that she despised all worldly things."²⁴⁹ Following the narrative pattern of virgin martyrs, the Lady rejects the pagan tyrant, Comus, and his "treasonous offer" (line 702). Like Saint Katherine arguing with the 50 pagan philosophers, the Lady wields logical premises against Comus's temptation to alleviate her thirst and fatigue: "none / But such as are good men can give good things / And that which is not good, is not delicious / To a wel-govern'd and wise appetite" (lines 703-5). Comus himself recognizes her rhetorical move to appropriate the power of philosophy against him, decrying "the foolishnes of men" who learn to "Prais[e] the lean and sallow Abstinence" from "those budge doctors of the Stoick Furr, / And fetch their precepts from the Cynick Tub" (lines 706-9). Comus realizes that the Lady is immune to carnal temptation and that he must attempt to win her through a logical argument of his own. He offers the familiar *carpe diem* argument of cavalier poets, such as that made in Robert Herrick's poem "Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May." According to Comus and the cavaliers, it is

²⁴⁹Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend (Aurea Legenda)*, trans. William Caxton (London: 1483) EEBO, STC (2nd ed.) / 24873, Document image 395.

ungrateful, even sinful, for humans not to enjoy all that Nature offers and to allow beauty to go to waste.

In her counterargument, the Lady follows Saint Katherine's lead and denounces "worldly covetise" by renouncing worldly goods, following the "holy dictate of spare Temperance" (line 767). She recognizes his attempt "to charm" her "judgement, as [her] eyes / Obtruding false rules pranckt in reasons garb" (lines 757-9). To counter his false shows of both logic and excess (in the wild dancing of his entourage and proffered cordial), the Lady sketches out a thought-experiment of a radical alternative economy:

If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeming share
Of that which lewdly-pamper'd Luxury
Now heaps upon som few with vast excess,
Natures full blessings would be well dispenc't
In unsuperfluous eeven proportion,
And she no whit encomber'd with her store,
And then the giver would be better thank't.
(lines 768-75)

This denouncement of excess jars the genre of the masque, a celebration of extravagance, and social status of Lady Alice, the original actress in the 1634 production. The Lady scorns Comus for his excess, and Alice Egerton scolds her family, the audience of the masque, for their participation in a flawed economic system that "heaps upon som few... vast excess."

The Catholic implications of this generic interrogation become more clear later, when Milton expands the Lady's radical speech in the 1645 edition of the masque, and her arguments against Comus have not just political but apocalyptic relevance. In these revisions, the Lady makes reference to the *amicta sola*, the woman of the Apocalypse that shadowed Britomart in Spenser's Temple of Isis: "a woman clothed with the sun, with

the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head” (Revelations 12:1). The Woman of the Apocalypse appears in the book of Revelations just before the Archangel Michael battles the “ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray” (Revelations 12:7-9), and the rallying cry for the good angels is Michael’s name, “Who is like to God?” In a significant parallel, the Lady must answer this question to defend herself from Comus and temptation in the wilderness, and she appropriates the image of the woman of the Apocalypse to describe herself as an image of God.

As in Spenser, the woman of the Apocalypse is the icon for the purity of the Virgin Mary; Milton’s Lady, like Britomart, becomes the champion of the “Sun-clad power of Chastity,” elevating “Virginitie” as the true wisdom of the *prisca theologia* (lines 782, 787). Virginitie is a secret wisdom, reserved for the initiate and guarded against common understanding; it is a “sublime notion,” a “high mystery” “That must be utter’d to unfold the sage / And serious doctrine of Virginitie” (lines 785-7). Milton’s Lady echoes the invocation of Lady Melancholy in “Il Penseroso”: just as Comus “hast nor Eare nor Soul to apprehend” Virginitie, great bards, such as Milton, create in their poetry, such as the *Mask*, “Forests, and enchantments drear, / Where more is meant then meets the ear” (*Mask*, line 784; “Penseroso,” lines 119-20). The physical purity of the body is connected with spiritual purity in these passages. As in esoteric alchemy, the purification of the physical body simultaneously purifies the soul. The almost magical power of virginitie and its representation by the woman of Revelations, clothed in nothing but the sun and therefore apparently at her most vulnerable, is reflected in the magical texts of the period. The *amicta sola* is found surprisingly often in alchemical texts, such

as Michael Maier's *Symbola Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum*, published in Frankfurt in 1617; John Dee's hieroglyphic monad also draws on this imagery.

In summoning the sun-clad power of the Woman of the Apocalypse, the Lady is almost transfigured into the *amicta sola* herself, just as Britomart was in her dream vision. Should she try to articulate the sacred doctrine of Virginity to Comus,

the uncontroled worth
Of this pure cause would kindle my rap't spirits
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,
That dumb things would be mov'd to sympathize,
And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake,
Till all thy magick structures rear'd so high,
Were shatter'd into heaps o're thy false head.
(lines 793-9)

The Lady appropriates the iconography of the *amicta sola*, surrounding herself with the "flame of sacred vehemence" and embodying the "pure cause" of Virginity. In this imagined transfiguration, the Lady is in perfect harmony with the spheres and can harness the full power of the *spiritus mundi*. The "brute Earth" is a living organism that will "lend her nerves, and shake" upon the Lady's command, a countermagic which will destroy Comus and his illusions. John Arthos argues that the Lady defeats Comus because of "the necessary condition of the efficacy of magic... an unspeakable faith in the magician."²⁵⁰ Comus recognizes the force of her faith, and he confides to the audience in an aside, "She fables not, I feel that I do fear / Her words set off by som superior power" (lines 800-1). Her words, like "the wrath of *Jove*" expressed in "thunder," physically affect him: "though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew / Dips me all o're" (lines 802-4).

²⁵⁰John Arthos, p. 273. Other scholars have also seen the Lady as a magician; see Angus Fletcher, especially pp. 4-5.

The elder brother, trusting his sister's spiritual power, describes her in terms of an encloistered Catholic mystic as well as in the terms of astral magic. He reassures his younger brother,

So dear to Heav'n is Saintly chastity,
That when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried Angels lacky her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in cleer dream, and solemn vision
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear,
Till oft convers with heav'nly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on th' outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the souls essence,
Till all be made immortal.

(lines 453-463)

The angels' voices are like the harmony of the spheres in that "no gross ear can hear" their words, and they speak to the chaste soul in a "cleer dream, and solemn vision," just as Diana appeared to Pericles in a vision accompanied by the celestial music. The angels make a sacrament of the body of the chaste soul, sanctifying the material object until it becomes "the souls essence": Conversation with angels literally casts a "beam," like an astral ray, "on th' outward shape, / The unpolluted temple of the mind." The body, like a hermetic temple statue, holds the daemon or soul, and the angelic conversation slowly glorifies the material object and "turns it by degrees to the souls essence, / Till all be made immortal."

The brother's speech anticipates the story of Sabrina—another classical analog to a specifically Catholic process of sanctification, Extreme Unction—and introduces the daemon that finally does save his sister. Sabrina, the daughter of King Locrinus's mistress, flees from the rage of the Queen, and throws herself into the River Severn.

Nereus's daughters, like the angels in the Brother's metaphor, discover Sabrina's body on the riverbed, and as they "through the porch and inlet of each sense / Dropt in Ambrosial Oils till she reviv'd, / And underwent a quick immortal change" (lines 839-41). This ritual purification resembles the medieval version of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, in which the organs of the five bodily senses are anointed with a consecrated oil, and the individual asks for forgiveness for the sins committed with each of these senses. Jean Calvin describes the consecration of this sacramental oil specifically as an act of magic: "These men do not deign to use any oil but that consecrated by a bishop, that is, warmed with much breathing, muttered over with long incantations, and saluted with nine kneelings thus: thrice, 'Hail, holy oil'; thrice, 'Hail, holy chrism'; thrice, 'Hail, holy balm'" (p. 160). Because the last sacrament overlaps with the Sacrament of Penance, medieval theologians distinguished the two sacraments by explaining that the anointing took away the "remnants of sin," purifying the soul for an encounter with God. As a final purification, this sacrament was administered after the viaticum, or final communion given on the deathbed. The anointing of the five senses persisted in the Catholic Church until 1972.²⁵¹ This ritual remained in a simplified form in the Protestant 1549 Book of Common Prayer but was deleted entirely from the 1552 revision; because of the emphasis on predestination, English reformers did not grant any salvific value to the "greasie

²⁵¹"Anointing of the Sick," in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, vol 1, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 44-5. Ralph Houlbrooke specifies that the eyes, ears, lips, nostrils, hands, feet, and back were anointed in the medieval practice of this ritual (*Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998], p. 149).

sacrament of the Papists.”²⁵² Despite the official banishment of the last sacrament, the recusant community continued the ritual clandestinely in England.

The nymphs’ ritual in the *Mask* not only replicates the anointing of the five senses, but also iconographically echoes the last sacrament. According to Ann Eljenholm Nichols, the bed is one of the major iconographical elements in representations of Extreme Unction.²⁵³ The riverbed of the Severn serves as the traditional bed found in religious art. Sabrina, literally on her deathbed at the bottom of the Severn, receives the final sacrament in the form of ambrosial oils anointing each portal of her five senses and is granted immortal life (“quick” puns upon both a fast and lively change). As the patron saint of the Severn, described as “God-like” by Michael Drayton, Sabrina is the only one who can save the Lady.²⁵⁴

But if Milton intends to invoke a Catholic sacrament at this moment in the play, why do female nymphs officiate the ceremony instead of male priests? As Nichols points out in her study of the iconography of Extreme Unction, the representations of this sacrament were strongly influenced by representations of the anointing and the entombment of Christ. In these images, the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene preside over the burial ceremonies, especially in surviving English artifacts. In the baptismal font in Marsham Norfolk, for example, the panel depicting the last sacrament includes a woman kneeling in front of the bed with a container, presumably of consecrated oil, next

²⁵²William Perkins, *A salve for a sicke man, or, a treatise containing the nature, differences, and kindes of death: as also the right manner of dying well* (1611): p. 93. EEBO STC (2nd ed.) / 19745.

²⁵³*Seeable Signs: The Iconography of the Seven Sacraments, 1350—1544* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1994), p. 287.

²⁵⁴See Michael Drayton, *Polyolbion*, in *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, vol. 3, (London: John and Arthur Arch, 1793), 3:291.

to her on the ground.²⁵⁵ Milton may be drawing on this complex iconography in his treatment of the sacrament in the resurrection of Sabrina.

Just as Sabrina was saved by magic that also strongly evokes a Catholic sacrament, she saves the Lady with ritual magic drawn from Catholicism, specifically the sprinkling of sacramental holy water. R.D. Bedford also sees in this scene an analog to the sacrament of baptism, identifying Sabrina as a version of the Virgin Mary and the water as a symbol of “baptism and the resolving of sins and the restoration of the spirit.”²⁵⁶ The water is not ordinary water, like that used in Protestant baptisms to represent and remember, but crucially not to effect, salvific grace. Sabrina’s ritual requires “Drops that from my fountain pure / I have kept of pretious cure” (lines 912-3). According to the OED, the word “cure” primarily means “I. Care, charge, spiritual charge” and is etymologically related to the word curate; only secondarily does “cure” denote “II. Medical or remedial treatment.”²⁵⁷ Sabrina’s ritual water is not the ordinary water from the river Severn; she has kept this water apart (consecrated) for spiritual use that does not merely remember or symbolize salvation but actually spiritually and physically releases the Lady.

That Sabrina’s “pretious” water represents a specifically Catholic consecration is supported by the ritual that itself recalls Calvin’s description of the blessing of holy oil for Extreme Unction: it involves three groups of three sprinklings, “thrice” on the Lady’s “brest,” on her “fingers tip,” and on her “rubied lip” (lines 911-5). Sabrina touches the enchanted chair to complete the ritual, freeing the Lady:

²⁵⁵ Nichols, p. 300.

²⁵⁶R. D. Bedford, “Right Spelling: Milton’s *A Masque* and *Il Penseroso*” *ELH* 52, 4 (Winter 1985): 815-832, p. 823.

²⁵⁷s.v. “cure,” OED 2d edn.

Next this marble venom'd seat
Smear'd with gumms of glutenous heat
I touch with chaste palms moist and cold,
Now the spell hath lost his hold.
(lines 916-9)

This sprinkling of holy water, followed by the laying on of hands, recalls both the baptism and exorcism ritual for the catechumen in the Catholic Church. Sabrina's use of the third person possessive pronoun "his" suggests that the spell itself is some sort of demon that possesses the Lady and must be exorcised. Conformist Protestants rejected the possibility of demonic possession and also attempts to exorcize such demons because for mainstream Protestants, the spiritual could not physically manifest; the Apostles, directly animated by the Holy Spirit during Pentecost, were the last to perform and experience miracles. Nonconformist Protestants, however, accepted the existence of demonic possession and, like Catholics, saw the ability to conduct exorcisms as a marker of the one true church.²⁵⁸

However, Milton's representation of this sacrament and exorcism is more Catholic than Puritan; like Sabrina's transformation that strongly resembles the Last Rites, the Attendant Spirit's invocation of Sabrina draws upon Catholicism, specifically the practice of praying to saints. The Attendant Spirit asks her to "listen" three times in his song (lines 860, 864, 866), and then twice more in the lines that follow (lines 867, 889). Significantly, he asks her to "Listen and save" twice (lines 866, 889). Sabrina's ritual purification of the Lady is more than just a symbol; it has salvific power and effects

²⁵⁸See Jan Frans Van Dijkhuizen's *Devil Theatre: Demonic Possession and Exorcism in English Renaissance Drama, 1558-1642* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007); Edward Muir's *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), pp. 6-9 and 155-85; Richard Lachmann, "State, Church, and the Disestablishment of Magic: Orthodoxy and Dissent" in *The Production of English Renaissance Culture*, ed. David Lee Miller (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994), pp. 56-93.

grace.²⁵⁹ The sprinkling of water does not just recall the promise of salvation from Original Sin, like the Protestant version of baptism, but literally purifies the Lady and releases her from the snares of sin, like the Catholic sacrament.²⁶⁰ Sabrina clarifies that she is not the original cause of the power she has to rescue the Lady; like Saint Agnes of Rome, a Catholic saint of chastity, it is Sabrina's "office" "to help insnared chastity" (lines 908-9).

CUPID AND PSYCHE

When the children have safely returned to their family, the masque ends by breaking the frame of the fictional world to encompass the audience; the audience becomes part of the fictional world, participating in not only the final dance with the masque characters but also in the sacramental magic of the play. The Attendant Spirit concludes the masque imploring the audience to listen to its salvific message, just as he conjured Sabrina by asking her to listen and save, and just as the Lady tells Comus that

²⁵⁹Angus Fletcher briefly mentions an analogy between the Attendant Spirit and "the priest at Mass," because he "re-enacts her [Sabrina's] death and resurrection in his report of the old legend" (p. 240). While I agree with Fletcher, I also argue that here Sabrina herself appropriates the role of the priest in exorcism and the sacrament of baptism to perform a miracle. Fletcher ultimately argues that Comus parodies Catholicism (pp. 241-2).

²⁶⁰For a brilliant reading of the enchanted chair and "gumms of glutenous heat" as symbolic of involuntary sin and concupiscence, see Deborah Shuger's "'The Bliss of Dreams': Theology in Milton's *Maske*" *Hellas* 7, 2 (1996): 139-53. While Shuger insists on reading the Lady as a man, perhaps even as Milton himself given his nickname "Lady" at Cambridge, I argue that the Lady appropriates the masculine trait of arguing forcefully like the virgin martyrs in Catholic legends in order to overcome her pagan suitor and assailant, Comus. I agree with Shuger that attempted rape should not be read as a test for virtue; however, I also argue that for Milton, the consequences of sin are very real, and even though the Lady did everything in her power to resist Comus, she still must be purified from contact with sin, though the sin is not her own.

he is unworthy to hear her sacred mystery. In his ascent back to the heavens, he imparts one last fable for the audience members who can discern what “more is meant than meets the ear” in “Forests, and enchantments drear” (“Penseroso,” lines 119-20). He commands, “List mortals, if your ears be true” (line 997). In this last fable, the Attendant Spirit contrasts the myth of Venus and Adonis languishing upon the ground (perhaps an allegory of carnal lust) with Cupid and Psyche, translated to the heavens “far above in spangled sheen” (perhaps an allegory for a spiritual marriage) (line 1003). The story of Cupid and Psyche, originally told in Apuleius’s *Golden Ass*, was often interpreted as a mythical allegory for Christian salvation: Divine intervention redeems the soul that cannot save itself, sanctifying the human soul and translating it to the stars.

In Apuleius’s tale, the princess Psyche is so beautiful that her people worship her: “the earth and not the seas, by a newe concurse and influence of the celestiaall Planetes, had budded and yelded foorth a newe Venus, endewed with the flower of virginitie.”²⁶¹ The princess’s beauty is attributed to astral magic and perfected by her virginity, a central virtue in Milton’s masque. Venus, jealous of her rival, commands her son, Cupid, to force the girl to fall in love with the vilest creature he can find. Cupid marries her himself, and he tells her that the one condition of their love is that she must never look at him. She cannot resist the temptation, and he leaves her. Venus mocks her by giving her impossible tasks to prove her love for Cupid and win him back with “diligent and painefull service” (Adlington, p. 129). Psyche fails her final task, but Cupid himself saves her. The tale ends with Psyche giving birth to a child called Pleasure.

²⁶¹*The Golden Asse of Apuleius, Done into English by William Adlington* Book 4, chpt. 22 (London: 1566; rpt. London: Grant Richards, 1913), pp. 98-9.

In Milton's hands, Cupid undergoes a Christian metamorphosis into a ministering angel, mirroring the conflation of Cupid and Christian angels in Renaissance art.²⁶²

Milton's version of the myth emphasizes Psyche's passivity and Cupid's intervention to save her:

But far above in spangled sheen
Celestial Cupid her fam'd son advanc't,
Holds his dear Psyche sweet intranc't
After her wandring labours long,
Till free consent the gods among
Make her his eternal Bride,
And from her fair unspotted side
Two blissful twins are to be born,
Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.

(lines 1003-11)

Psyche's "wandering labours" and those of the children in the masque's woods are not enough to save them; they cannot rely upon their own virtue but must seek help from divine entities—the Attendant Spirit and Sabrina in the masque parallel Cupid's salvific role in the myth. Milton interestingly departs from Apuleius's myth in the children born of Cupid and Psyche's union. In the myth, Psyche gives birth to a single child, Pleasure; Milton's Psyche has twins, Youth and Joy. Perhaps Pleasure is too ambiguous in the context of the masque, since Comus tempts humans to take pleasure from sin. Milton advocates a specific type of pleasure, the joy that can only come from tempering one's appetites to what is good, or attuning one's soul to the harmony of the spheres in Ficino's terms. The masque celebrates not only the Youth of its actors, but also more specifically the youth of the soul that must discern and desire what is good, a lesson that takes a lifetime to learn.

²⁶²See, for example, Giovanni Baglione's 1602 painting, *Sacred and Profane Love*, which depicts an angel in armor, reminiscent of the iconography for Saint Michael the Archangel, standing over and about to stab a naked, winged boy (perhaps Cupid).

The Attendant Spirit ends the masque by addressing the audience directly, inviting us to follow him as he ascends back into the heavens:

thence [I] can soar as soon
To the corners of the Moon.
Mortals that would follow me,
Love vertue, she alone is free,
She can teach ye how to clime
Higher then the Spheary chime;
Or if Vertue feeble were,
Heav'n it self would stoop to her.
(lines 1016-23)

For Milton, virtue is the ultimate astral talisman to harmonize with the “Spheary chime,” to become more like God. Angels in charge of the heavenly spheres may influence humans on Earth below, but is up to each individual to choose to cultivate virtue.

However, human actions are ultimately not enough to gain eternal life in the heavens: the Lady cannot free herself but must be rescued by Sabrina; Psyche can only be saved by the angelic Cupid; and the masque’s audience, even though they can only attain a feeble sort of virtue, can be redeemed.

“Il Penseroso” too ends with an ecstatic vision couched in an explicitly Catholic vocabulary. According to Cox, in this passage “Milton is clearly representing an initiation into hermetic mysteries.”²⁶³ Penseroso imagines waking from “som strange mysterious dream” to “sweet musick breath/ ...sent by som spirit to mortals good,” like the celestial harmonies (lines 147, 151-4). He implores his Muse to let him “never fail, / To walk the studious Cloysters pale” (lines 155-6). His description of the architectural details clearly resembles a cathedral: “high embowed Roof,” “antick Pillars massy proof,” “And storied Windows richly dight / Casting a dimm religious light” (lines 157-

²⁶³Cox, p. 56.

60). “Massy” puns not only on the substantial weight of the pillars, but on the Roman Catholic Mass, the “antick” religion. The “storied Windows,” of course, are stained glass images, many of which were broken during the waves of iconoclasm during the Reformation. He asks Melancholy to

There let the pealing Organ blow,
To the full voic'd Quire below,
In Service high, and Anthems cleer,
As may with sweetnes, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into extasies
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.
(lines 161-6)

The ceremony of this service might also resemble the Laudian movement to reintroduce the church ornamentation, perceived by many as veering too close to Roman Catholicism. The poem's ending, however, is clearly Catholic.

Penseroso imagines himself in his “weary age” as a monk, inhabiting a “peacefull hermitage, / The Hairy Gown and Mossy Cell” (lines 167-9). The hairshirt, or *cilicium*, was worn not only by monks but also by lay Catholics for mortification, penance, and resistance of the temptations of the flesh. As a cloistered monk, he will “sit and rightly spell, / Of every Star that Heav'n doth shew, / And every Herb that sips the dew” (lines 170-2). The solitude of the contemplative life gives him the time and space to perfect his knowledge of the stars and herbs (perhaps Milton was thinking about this line of his poem when he wrote about haemony in the masque), and the word “spell” hints at the possibility of magical or supernatural learning. His “old experience” he hopes will “attain / To something like Prophetic strain” (lines 173-4).

As both the masque and “Il Penseroso” illustrate, Milton thinks about hermeticism and astral magic in terms of Catholic sacramentality. His fictional worlds not only

embrace but also depend upon this kind of sacramental magic; the generic form of the masque lends itself to the idea of conjuring an embodiment of a fictional world in the actors and in the audience's imagination that then spills over into reality when the audience stands and joins in the final dance of the play. Like medieval Catholic passion plays that began outside of the church and ended with a procession into Mass, the masque transcends the boundary between the representation of grace and grace itself.

CONCLUSION

Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton all intervene in the Reformation controversy of magic, Catholicism, and idolatry, a debate largely centered on two infamous passages from the hermetic *Asclepius*. These passages describe the ritual for calling down angels and daemons to inhabit temple statues. Catholicism, too, has many legends of statues animated by God, by the Holy Spirit, and even by the Virgin Mary, and Catholic theology and the seven sacraments are founded upon the assumption that the spiritual can be made physically present (for instance in the Eucharist, in which wafer and wine become the glorified body and blood of Christ). Though writing for a predominantly Protestant audience, these authors embed their animate statues in Catholic contexts (including Catholic spaces, rituals, and sacraments), yet they do not break these images as one might expect. Rather, these statues play integral roles in these romances and intercede for the main characters.

All of the statues discussed in this dissertation are representations of women (except perhaps for Friar Bacon's brazen head, although the play never clearly assigns a gender to the bust). Perhaps this is because of the early modern association of femininity with both passivity and a vulnerable openness that needed to be enclosed or protected by a masculine authority (father, brother, husband). John Donne perhaps best expresses the ideal of feminine passivity in relationship to God in his Holy Sonnet XIV ("Batter my heart, three-personed God"): "for I, / Except You enthrall me, never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste, except You ravish me."²⁶⁴ For Donne, God must forcibly enter human

²⁶⁴ John Donne, Holy Sonnet XIV, in *John Donne's Poetry*, ed. Arthur L. Clements (New

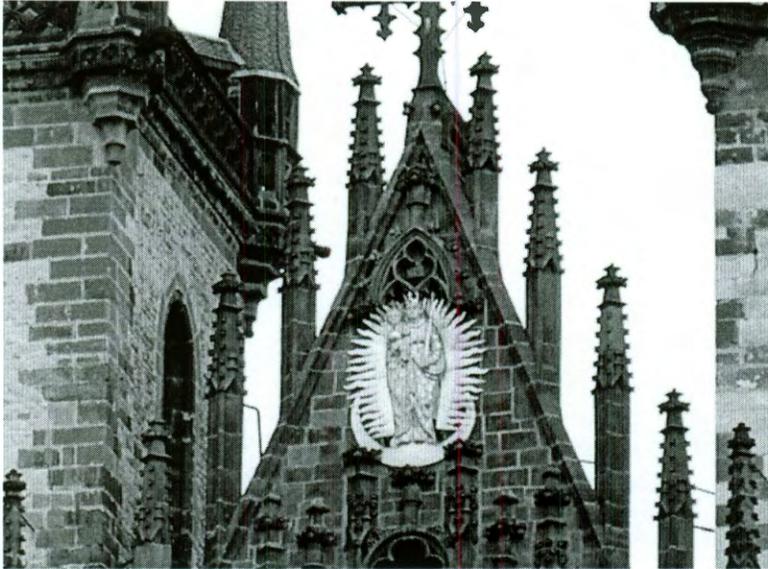
beings, which he imagines as rape. This feminine trope of penetrability lends itself to the idea of spirits, whether the Holy Spirit or angelic daemons, ensouling a human body or a statue. Of course, women also have the capability of containing another soul during pregnancy, and perhaps this might have influenced the association of hermetic animate statues with women.

Most of these animate statues are also associated with either chastity or virginity. When Spenser's Britomart, the knight of Chastity, becomes the Isis statue in her dream vision, she also transfigures into the Virgin Mary. The Virgin Mary in and of herself powerfully models this project of harmonizing pagan wisdom with Christianity, as she absorbs and transforms previous goddess traditions, symbolized by her moon iconography that she shares with both Isis and Diana. Shakespeare's Thaisa, after her resurrection, dons the "vestal livery" of a "nun" in a temple dedicated to Diana in Ephesus while Marina almost miraculously preserves her virginity in the brothel, following the Catholic legends of saints such as Agnes. Shakespeare's Hermione, too, must defend her chastity when Leontes accuses her of adultery, ultimately dying (or perhaps hiding) and then returning as a statue at the end of the play. Milton's Comus magically paralyzes the Lady, and she must defend her virginity against his temptations.

The statue of Isis and the Lady in *Comus* draw upon the imagery of a specific icon of the Virgin Mary, the *Immaculata*, which conflates the Virgin with the Woman of the Apocalypse, clothed with the sun, standing on a crescent moon, and wearing a crown of stars. For Catholics, this image emblemized the Counter-Reformation. For example, in 1626 Prague, after the Battle of White Mountain, the Habsburg Catholics melted down

York: Norton, 1992), pp.115-6, lines12-4.

the golden Hussite chalice that crowned the Church of the Mother of God before Týn (also called Church of Our Lady) and recast this same gold to create the sun, moon, and stars of the *Immaculata* to adorn the Virgin and Child statue that replaced the chalice.



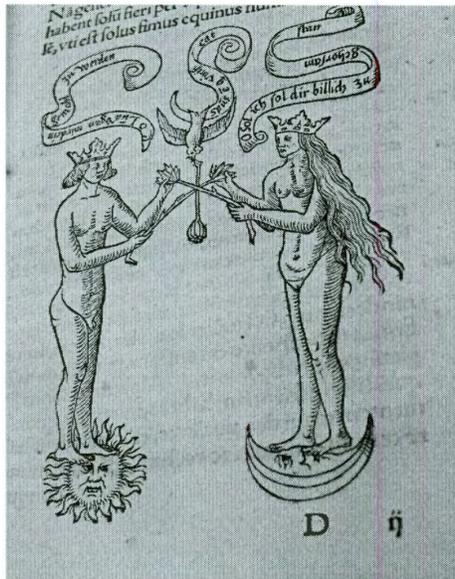
The *Immaculata* on the Church of the Mother of God before Týn, Prague²⁶⁵

The apocalyptic associations of the *Immaculata* and *amicta sola* resonate with the apocalyptic prophecy that follows the statue-making passages in the *Asclepius*. Again, one would expect reformer authors to seize the chance to equate Catholicism with the Whore of Babylon or the Antichrist, as so many polemicists did before; however, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton invoke the *amicta sola* of the Book of Revelations in their representations of animate statues.

The *Immaculata* also has a rich iconographic tradition in alchemical literature, linking this icon not only with Catholicism but also with magic in the romances of Spenser and Milton. The *Immaculata* represents the purity of the Virgin Mary, who Catholics believe was born without the stain of original sin. For alchemists seeking to

²⁶⁵ Photo taken by author.

purify not only dross into gold but also their spirits, this icon represents the human ideal. Imagery from this icon appears in the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, a treatise that visually compares the alchemical process with Christian images:



Images from *Rosarium Philosophorum*²⁶⁶

Though they may not have encountered this famous alchemical text, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton participate in its project of reconciling Christianity with alchemy and magic, and they specifically harmonize magic with Catholicism. One would expect these authors to follow the lead of earlier reformers, such as John Bale and Sir Reginald Scot, in literally demonizing Catholicism by associating it with magic; however, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton forge a different path, finding aspects of Catholicism useful to retain in their romances.

Tracing the figure of the animate statue through the romances of the three canonical authors of the Reformation helps me to redirect the tendency of new

²⁶⁶ Images taken by author, courtesy of the Ritman Library, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

historicism to empty out religion from literature or discuss solely in terms of politics or economics, rather than as a category of human experience that cannot be reduced to other terms.

By turning to religion, my dissertation explores a more complex dynamic between reformers and Catholics. I do not wish to make an identitarian argument about the confessional faiths of these authors; however, they wrote for a predominantly Protestant audience at a time and place that censored religious expression in popular drama, that executed Catholic priests and those who were thought to harbor them, and that severely penalized those who chose not to conform to the official Church of England. It would seem economically sensible to appease Protestant tastes and politically prudent to avoid religious controversy; however, these authors took risks in their romances by representing Catholic sacraments, rituals, and spaces, disguised in a pagan context.

The animate statue puts pressure on many of the oppositions that define the Reformation: Protestantism and Catholicism, sign and signified, idolatry and faith, faith and magic, magic and science, materiality and spirituality, even femininity and masculinity. These oppositions not only define the Reformation as an era but also contemporary Western culture. We are still philosophically grappling with the mind/body problem, even with Descartes' attempt to divorce body and spirit in his theory of dualism. Though our culture has largely become secularized, perhaps a process begun with Cartesian dualism, these issues and tensions are still relevant and in fact haunt the "grand narrative" of scientific progress. In an age of Artificial Intelligence and Turing tests, we too must ask ourselves what it means to be human, whether or not an automaton

can have a soul, and whether or not there is something beyond the material world that science simply cannot detect.

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