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Women Writing of Divinest Things: Rhetoric and the Early Modern Poet

by

Evelyn Nora Bennett

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

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Halifax, Nova Scotia
July 2002

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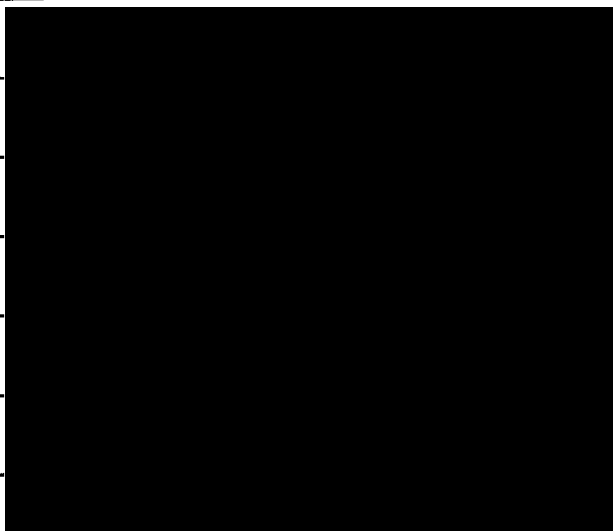
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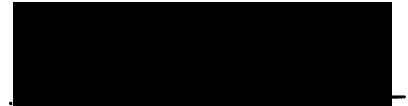
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Abstract

Literary scholars have long produced rhetorical analyses of early modern verse written by men, but have virtually ignored the role women poets might have played in the rhetorical tradition. In this study, I address this gap by analyzing the verse of three prominent women writers of Elizabethan and Jacobean England: Mary Sidney Herbert, Lady Mary Wroth, and Aemilia Lanyer. The work of these writers demonstrates that their habits of thought were as rhetorical as those of their male contemporaries. Part of this study is thus comparative: the work of each of these women writers is closely considered in relation to that of one or more of the period's male poets.

The thesis begins by sketching the sociocultural and literary milieu in which these women wrote, and goes on to highlight some of the conceptual and rhetorical issues that figured prominently in early modern England. The subsequent chapters examine how each of these three poets relies on rhetorical tools and thought for poetic expression, and show how rhetoric enables the articulation and comprehension of what sixteenth-century rhetorician Henry Peacham calls "diuine and humane thinges." I argue that these women writers are not only as rhetorically and poetically accomplished as their male counterparts, but that they are sophisticated thinkers who willingly tackle some conceptual problems that remain as challenging today as when their poetry was written. Despite differences in genre and emphasis, their work nevertheless reveals that all three poets are deeply aware of the ambiguous nature of language and the complex relationship of things human and divine.

Chapter One

Women Writing of Divinest Things

Mary Sidney Herbert, Lady Mary Wroth, and Aemilia Lanyer were among the most prolific women writers in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Their various literary achievements have, accordingly, attracted much critical attention in recent years. Among other things, all of these women wrote verse, and they did so in an age in which poetry and rhetoric were intimately allied. Because poetry “*moves men more,*” notes Brian Vickers, it was “seen as being even more rhetorical than prose” (*Classical Rhetoric* 37): indeed, the age believed not only that poetry was “a species of traditional rhetoric” but also, as Thomas O. Sloan points out, that it was “a superior rhetoric” (“Rhetoric and Poetry” 222). As Vickers’s and Sloan’s words imply, literary critics have long recognized the symbiotic nature of poetry and rhetoric in early modern England — and they seldom hesitate to discuss the verse of a Wyatt, Surrey, Donne, or Jonson in rhetorical terms. Critics have, however, paid little attention to

the rhetorical accomplishments of women who wrote poetry; in fact, the role rhetoric played in shaping women's poetry — and the role women's poetry played in shaping and reshaping the rhetorical tradition — has been virtually ignored.

Scholars have, it is true, lately begun to consider women's place in the history of rhetoric, but they are mostly rhetoricians rather than literary critics *per se*. Recent volumes such as *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, *Listening to Their Voices*, and *The Changing Tradition* draw our attention to the visible role women from antiquity to present day have played in rhetorical history.¹ Important as it is, though, much of the work so far done on the topic of women and rhetoric focusses almost exclusively on prose. Perhaps because rhetoric has always been most readily associated with oratory, prose seems the most likely place to look when writing about women in the history of rhetoric, or about any topic having to do with rhetoric. Yet it is unfortunate that collections such as those mentioned above tend to overlook the fact that many

¹ See Andrea A. Lunsford, ed., *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1995), Molly Meijer Wertheim, ed., *Listening to Their Voices: The Rhetorical Activities of Historical Women* (Columbia SC: U of South Carolina P, 1997), and Christine Mason Sutherland and Rebecca Sutcliffe, eds., *The Changing Tradition: Women in the History of Rhetoric* (Calgary: U of Calgary P, 1999). Jane Donawerth's article "The Politics of Renaissance Rhetorical Theory by Women" offers an informative discussion of the ways that women who published rhetorical theory in seventeenth-century England appropriated the Renaissance for their own purposes; elsewhere, she provides a useful compilation of prose works by and about women as teachers and theorists of rhetoric ("Bibliography of Women and the History of Rhetorical Theory to 1900," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 20 [1990]: 403-14). For a more theoretical discussion, see Barbara Biesecker's essay "Coming to terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric," where she asks us to think more critically about the feminist challenges this kind of work presents.

women also wrote verse, and that the relationship of poetry and rhetoric in women's writing remains largely unexamined. The failure to talk about women's poetry in rhetorical terms applies to the work of women writers from all periods, not only that of early modern women. Even so, one might argue that this particular omission is the most unfortunate of all, since these women did live in what was the most self-consciously rhetorical of all English-speaking cultures.

Christine Mason Sutherland, one of the editors of *The Changing Tradition*, makes an obvious but necessary point when she notes that women belong not to the margin but to the matrix of any culture and have always "been an important — a vitally important — part of the human activity from which the particular rhetorical tradition has sprung." Put this way, few would dispute such a claim. Mason Sutherland goes on to articulate more specifically women's role in this particular human activity: "We are anterior to," she writes, "rather than exiled from, that rhetorical tradition; our part in it has been to feed it, to support it, to enable it" (10). As much as I agree with Mason Sutherland's revisionist aim, I wouldn't describe the role of poets such as the Countess of Pembroke, Lady Mary Wroth, or Aemilia Lanyer as anterior to the rhetorical tradition, nor would I describe their role in that tradition as one that only perpetuates and endorses. On the contrary, I would suggest that the role these women poets played was one of active participation, the kind of participation that revises (and in some instances improves upon) even as it relies on established conventions.

That literary critics haven't considered the role rhetoric played in women's poetry does seem astonishing if we believe, as Sloan does, that rhetoric was "a mode of thought" (*Humanist Rhetoric* 87) as much as it was a school subject or an oratorical practice. This neglect is even more surprising when we consider that Mary Sidney Herbert's translations of the Psalms are bristling with rhetorical figures, that Lady Mary Wroth's sonnets demonstrate an easy familiarity with rhetorical conventions (her "A crowne of Sonetts dedicated to Love," in particular, is nothing less than a virtuoso performance), and that Aemilia Lanyer's plea for gender equality is surely an exhortation designed to persuade. Not only does the verse of these three writers in many ways confirm that at least some women shared modes of thought with their male counterparts; it also attests to the active role women poets played in rhetorical history. The example of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer suggests that early modern women did inflect, challenge, and rewrite even as they drew on the conventions of this ancient and always androcentric tradition.

Early modern habits of thought were very much rhetorical but they were also, as Debora Shuger has demonstrated, "by and large religious" (*Habits* 9). And rhetoric and religion were no more separable, at least not in absolute terms, than any other early modern ways of thinking. Rather, as Victoria Kahn reminds us, Renaissance theologians were acutely aware that "linguistic usage could have formidable theological implications" (75). The same goes for Renaissance rhetoricians. Henry Peacham, for one, says as much in his 1593 rhetorical handbook, *The Garden of*

Eloquence, where he affirms that eloquence “is the light and brightnesse of wisdom,” and wisdom “the knowledge of diuine and humane thinges” (sig. AB2^v). In exploring the dialectic of women poets and the rhetorical tradition, we need to consider not only the ways that rhetoric facilitates poetic expression, but also how its practice enables the rhetor’s understanding of things both human and divine.

That Renaissance habits of thought were as deeply religious as they were rhetorical is as clear in the writing of Mary Sidney Herbert, Lady Mary Wroth, and Aemilia Lanyer as it is in the verse of many of their male counterparts. The Countess of Pembroke’s version of the Psalms, the most conventionally religious work that I will consider in the chapters to come, does in many ways suggest that what is sacred can only be expressed with some help from the secular, be it the tools of rhetoric or the experiences of earthly life. Conversely, Wroth’s “crowne of Sonetts” indicates not only that secular love poets drew on the conventions of rhetoric, but also that their verse was in many ways shaped by habits of thought that can only be described as religious. That Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, an apparently devout retelling of Christ’s Passion, comes with an unambiguous (and highly rhetorical) protofeminist argument suggests that political concerns can and often do encroach on the most sacred of topics.

Richard Rambuss demonstrates that many seventeenth-century “poets and divines activate the corporeal as an expressive mechanism of devotion” (17). This statement is, I think, as true for Lanyer and Pembroke as it is for, say, Donne or

Herbert. The movement Rambuss describes does, however, go both ways. As much as Pembroke's and Lanyer's expressions of devotion "activate the corporeal," Wroth's poetry, to recast Rambuss's phrasing, activates the devotional as an expressive mechanism of earthly, and sometimes erotic, love. As Rambuss also reminds us, "The term *devotion*, as we know, can signify either erotic attachment or religious worship and oftentimes . . . both at once" (101). Pembroke's renditions of the Psalms are almost exclusively sacred, and it seems safe to say that her work is unambiguously devotional in the religious sense. Wroth is a primarily secular writer and her sonnet sequence, though shaped in some significant ways by her own religious habits of thought, is largely secular and even erotic. Lanyer's work seems to fit somewhere between the two: she is a religious poet, but her lengthy devotional poem does come with clearly stated secular commitments. These generic and substantive differences are important because they attest to rhetoric's value in enabling different kinds of poetic expression. I have chosen to consider the work of these particular writers partly because they offer examples of verse that is sometimes sacred, sometimes secular, and sometimes both; in other words, I focus on these poets also because the devotional work of each is in some way significantly different from that of the others.

I have selected these particular writers for a more obvious reason as well. My overarching argument is an historical one, and Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer are near-contemporaries. Even so, as Jean E. Howard reminds us, "'woman' is not in any simple sense a unitary social category" (305), and this is as true for the female subjects

of my study as it is for any women: their lives may span less than two generations, but temporal coincidence does not in itself constitute “a unitary social category.” Pembroke was a socially influential aristocrat, Wroth was a once-prominent aristocrat who would fall from favour, and Lanyer may have had courtly connections, but she did not belong to the social elite. In these and other ways, Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer represent social differences that are as distinct as the verse they write. Though this literary and social sampling is, I will readily admit, a modest one, it is nevertheless telling that all three writers — despite their poetic and biographical differences — are accomplished rhetors. That this is the case does, I think, say much about women, poetry, and rhetoric in early modern England, and it doesn’t seem unreasonable to suggest that much of what their poetry tells us about them might very well apply to many of their female contemporaries as well. To varying degrees and in many ways, the verse of these Renaissance writers confirms that rhetorical and religious habits of thought were as much second nature for women as they were for men.

Before I go on to consider this claim in more detail in subsequent chapters, I will start by contextualizing, both historically and theoretically, the critical discussion to follow. Since eloquence was, as Vickers says, believed to be “the greatest human achievement, and rhetoric the key to all literature” (*Defence* 258), I will begin in the first section of this chapter by identifying the importance of rhetoric in early modern society, its relevance to writers (especially writers of verse), its role in male and female education, and its ubiquitous influence on poetic production. Throughout this more

historical discussion, my aims are to demonstrate that early modern women's poetry has often been excluded from the history of rhetoric, to show how and why their role in rhetorical history has been all but ignored, and to suggest that early modern women had ample opportunity to learn, and some did learn very well, this art of speaking and persuading. My exploration of the relationship of rhetoric and women's poetry in the chapters that follow is not, however, intended to focus only on the how and the where of their rhetorical training. Though such questions will be addressed, and addressing them may also lead to some tentative answers, I am not as interested in the how as I am in the *what*, that is, what these women do with the art of rhetoric.

As I will later demonstrate, the verse of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer equally confirms rhetoric to be an invaluable poetic tool, and it is clear that its tools and its practices afford these writers a great deal of expressive control. Control is not, however, the whole story. As Thomas M. Greene reminds us, "for most medieval and Renaissance writers, the recognition of linguistic mutability was a source of authentic anxiety" (6): this anxiety, manifest in Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer's shared uncertainty about the extent of language's expressive capacity, is as discernible in the work of these writers as it is in that of their contemporaries and antecedents. I will thus in the second section of this chapter explore some of the problems any writer encounters when he or she strives to render thought into words and consider what some early modern writers have to say about the writing process. In so doing, I will suggest that some of the expressive difficulties with which Pembroke, Wroth, and

Lanyer by their own admission contend have much to do with the nature of their verse.

Finding a happy correspondence of writing and meaning is, it seems, especially difficult for poets who write about the kinds of topics these women do: at the same time, however, it is precisely those difficulties that give their verse much of its vitality and, as a result, its mimetic value. In the interest of at least partly explaining this expressive paradox, I will also draw on the work of Lev Vygotsky, a twentieth-century theorist of thought and language. I do so partly because I share Derek Attridge's belief that, because literary and linguistic theories often follow a "direct line of descent," it is necessary to pay attention "to similarities between the discursive systems of the past and those of the present": doing so, says Attridge, "will make possible an analysis of both" (18). Though my aim here is to explore a discursive system of the past and not of the present, Vygotsky's work is nevertheless valuable because it does, I think, communicate in a more precise and encompassing way some discernible, but not necessarily articulated, early modern conceptions of the nature of language.

Because my discussion will consider religious as well as rhetorical habits of thought, I am also interested in exploring some of the ways that rhetoric helps to bridge the abstract and the concrete. Though it is true that, as Sloan points out, humanists generally believed that "Dialectical thought was abstract" while "rhetorical thought was experiential" (*Humanist Rhetoric* 96), this distinction is not as clear in

practice as it is in theory. To illustrate this point, I will consider some of the central premises of Renaissance rhetorical theory and offer some suggestion of the ways that rhetorical conventions allow the poet to comprehend abstract truth by expressing it in concrete terms. Given that my discussion of Pembroke's, Wroth's, and Lanyer's verse centres on the ways their verse negotiates the relationship between these dichotomies, I will in the third section of this chapter also consider the influence of the Ramist revaluation of rhetoric. Most relevant to my discussion of the abstract and the concrete is the significance of Ramist attempts to systematize and separate the processes of thought (logic) and verbal expression (rhetoric), a distinction that was, as Sloan has argued, also aligned with the perceived difference between the sacred and the secular, the plain and the eloquent.

The fourth and final section of this chapter focusses on women's poetry and rhetoric. In it, I offer a generalized account of some of the ways the verse I will later consider in detail is as rhetorical as much of the poetry written by men. I will also clarify what my approach to rhetorical analysis entails, and I will end by offering some suggestions about what we have to gain from reading women's poetry in rhetorical terms. My overarching intent here is, of course, to situate early modern women's poetry within the "superior rhetoric" the genre represents: as Vickers observes, "The period roughly between [Philip] Sidney and George Herbert sees the flowering of rhetoric in English literature" (*Classical Rhetoric* 44), and Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer, I will argue, are as much a part of that flowering as anyone else.

In this opening chapter and throughout this study, I hope my approach will prove a fruitful means of examining the complicated relations of thought, belief, and language, and of deepening our understanding of the complex relations of gender, faith, and poetic expression in the early modern period.

I. Rhetoric, Poetry, and Early Modern Women

“Historians,” Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford confirm, “have tended to assume that women were culturally impoverished because of their exclusion from elite literate culture” (218). Seldom explicitly asserted, the exclusion of women from “elite literate culture” is also implied by the failure of literary criticism to discuss women’s poetry in rhetorical terms. That literary critics have overlooked the active role early modern women played in rhetorical culture is both attested to and explained by an overwhelming tendency to imagine that culture as the sole province of early modern men. In the first half of the twentieth century, for instance, C.S. Lewis wrote that “nearly all our older poetry was written and read by *men* to whom the distinction between poetry and rhetoric, in its modern form, would have been meaningless” (emphasis added, 61). Though Lewis likely uses the word to mean “humanity,” he was no doubt thinking mostly (if not exclusively) about “men” when he wrote these words. Regardless of his intentions, his word choices do imply that only men wrote (or even read) poetry: in the world of exclusively male poets (and readers) this critic

describes, only men were so well acquainted with rhetorical conventions that the distinction between rhetoric and poetry never arose.

Though it may be tempting to dismiss Lewis's unfortunate word choices as the unfortunate quirk of a less politically enlightened age, this is not the case. New Historicist critic Stephen Greenblatt is not alone when he similarly implies women's exclusion from rhetorical culture in his seminal work, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. In his discussion of this art, what he calls "the common ground of poetry, history and oratory," Greenblatt emphasizes the reciprocity of rhetoric and culture: "Rhetoric," he says, "served to theatricalize culture, or rather it was the instrument of a society which was already deeply theatrical" (162). Here, Greenblatt seems to highlight the integral role of rhetoric in very inclusive terms, describing its centrality within both "culture" and "society." Yet Greenblatt's statement is not as inclusive as his word choices may suggest. Sounding very much like Lewis, Greenblatt also observes that rhetoric served the early modern function of "Encouraging *men* to think of all forms of human discourse as argument." Rhetoric thus, Greenblatt goes on to argue, "offered *men* the power to shape their worlds, calculate the probabilities, and master the contingent" (emphasis added, 162). Much as Lewis does, Greenblatt highlights the role of men in rhetorical culture and thus also excludes, at least implicitly, their female counterparts; as Marguerite Waller says, "Greenblatt's text is unselfconsciously sexist" (3). Greenblatt and Lewis alike assume that only early modern men knew anything about rhetoric even though, they argue, its conventions were internalized to the

extent that the distinction between rhetoric and poetry became virtually indiscernible to all who wrote and all who read poetry.

I offer this example not to dismiss the importance of Greenblatt's work, but to show how easy it is for us, even now, to perpetuate the assumptions implicit in his words. Like Lewis, Greenblatt includes only men in his account of the role rhetoric played in early modern thought, but in a culture as rhetorical as the one he describes, his omission of women has further implications. By ignoring the role women might have played in rhetorical culture while simultaneously claiming that rhetoric gave shape to the early modern world, he also bars women from participating in shaping the culture, or indeed the society, in which they lived. Few historians or literary critics would make such a statement intentionally. Yet such a suggestion is always implied in claims that affirm the all-pervasive importance of rhetoric in early modern culture yet exclude, if only by neglect, women from their discussions of that culture. This is not to say that Greenblatt is the only recent critic to exhibit such a tendency. Greenblatt's references to "men" alone are the surface manifestation of a problem that is, I think, systemic. Our collective tendency to reimagine the past in androcentric terms means that we also tend *not* to think of women as active participants in the intensely rhetorical culture they inhabited. I am not suggesting that the general exclusion of women from rhetorical culture is a willful omission or that it is deliberately misleading, but Lewis's and Greenblatt's assumptions suggest that we do

need to think more critically about our reimaginings of women in early modern society.

To be fair, there are many historical, social, and cultural contingencies that can help to account for the assumption that, as Mason Sutherland puts it, “women have played no part in the rhetorical tradition” (9). The most obvious cause is found in the history of education, a history that, together with a lingering tendency to imagine women as the constituents of “a unitary social category” (Howard 305), has served to perpetuate the belief that early modern women did not play an active part in the rhetorical tradition. The women writers who are the focus of my study were, of course, supremely well educated. Even so, it is undeniably true that the education of most early modern girls differed not only in degree but also in kind from that of most boys. Both difference and similarity thus go a long way toward explaining why critics have tended to overlook the role any early modern women — even those who prove the exception rather than the rule — might have played in the history of rhetoric. As I will go on to explain, the logical foundation on which this assumption lies consists of the knowledge that most girls were educated differently from boys, the understanding that all girls will (hopefully) become women, and the conclusion that all women therefore knew nothing about rhetoric.

Since the intellectual training of girls aimed to develop judgment and intelligence in students who would, presumably, become wives and mothers, a girl’s education was regarded as not merely an advantage to her, but, perhaps more

importantly, as “an asset to her husband and family” (Sowards 89).² A woman’s role was primarily that of an asset, first to her father’s family and then to her husband’s. Thus “The education of women,” as Retha Warnicke says, was primarily “directed toward keeping them absorbed in the business of the private household and preventing them from becoming knowledgeable about public matters” (130). For the most part, education was seen as an important means of increasing a woman’s value as a marriageable commodity or as the governess of her husband’s house. In fact, as Mendelson and Crawford have shown in their history of early modern women, the vast majority of girls received little or no formal education: “the bulk of the female population,” they note, “was illiterate” (238), and even girls of the social elite “remained under their mothers’ tutelage to complete an education that was increasingly focused on their prescribed gender role as housekeepers, child-bearers, and child rearers” while their brothers went off to school (83).

Though there were many early modern men, including influential educators and writers such as Erasmus, Thomas More, and Roger Ascham, who believed women to be the intellectual equals of men and advocated their formal education, “most humanists,” as Hilda L. Smith notes, would almost always also raise the “question of what they would do with such learning and whether it might interfere with their more important responsibilities as wives and mothers” (11). As Erasmus and other

² According to Ruth Kelso, arguments made on behalf of female education often pointed out that learning increased marriage prospects for all young women, “even in the case of girls of lower parentage” (65).

educators saw it, the primary goal of education was the service of society, and men and women did assume very different roles within that society. In any early modern formulation, the respective educations of boys and girls tended to be antithetical in their aims: to put it rather reductively, women were educated in the interest of the private good, while men were educated in the interest of the public good.³

The most important tool one could possess in serving the public good was eloquence. Yet “the importance of eloquence in the humanist curriculum,” as Pamela

³ In *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance*, her groundbreaking and encyclopedic study on Renaissance constructions of woman, Kelso identifies the differences between male and female education and the reasons for that difference, which, broadly speaking, have to do with public versus private concerns. Kelso admits that scanty evidence and the fact that “available schemes range all the way from negation to something comparable to what was generally agreed upon for boys” allow us only to guess a “middle ground,” an educational standard that is “probably nearest to anything that can be called a general ideal for girls” (58). Even so, within this general ideal, she argues, we can identify a prevailing “opposition to educating girls on the same lines as boys.” This opposition, Kelso concludes, was based “on occupational grounds,” that is, the education of girls centred on “attaining the skill necessary to run their households well” (60). This is not to say, though, that the distinction between the private, domestic world associated with women and the public, political world associated with men was always clearly differentiated. Though, as Warnicke notes, early modern connotations of the words public and private were distinct and thus very similar to the meanings they denote today, this similarity also means that the public and the private are not always diametrically opposed. Rather, as Barbara J. Harris argues, the recognized difference between public and private was often ignored, especially for those associated with the court and the great aristocratic households. “Thus women,” she points out, “moved unselfconsciously into the world of politics as they fulfilled their responsibilities as wives, mothers, and widows” and frequently engaged “in activities that even the dichotomies of contemporary social paradigms would recognize as political and public” (260). Though early modern boundaries between public and private were more fluid than the terms themselves may suggest, they were conceptually if not always practically distinct, and male and female education differed largely on the basis of that distinction.

Joseph Benson remarks, stands in noteworthy contrast to “the significant omission of the subject or even the explicit exclusion of it from girls’ curricula” (*Invention* 161). Eloquence did, of course, demand a knowledge of rhetoric. Since rhetoric was seen as an art rightly used on behalf of public and especially political concerns, rhetorical training was not included in feminine education. Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni, for one, averred that “rhetoric in all its forms — public discussion, forensic argument, logical fence, and the like — lies absolutely outside the province of woman” (qtd. in Sowards 79). Bruni was not an Englishman but, Patricia Parker notes, his text was “widely disseminated,” and the answer to what women should have to do with rhetoric was rarely, if ever, different from his. “[C]ountless Renaissance conduct books and treatises,” Parker says, insist “that rhetoric is one thing that women should not be taught”: the reason for this prohibition, she explains, “had to do with the nature of rhetoric as specifically *public* speaking” (104).

Early modern women, Suzanne Hull has demonstrated, were repeatedly exhorted to chastity, silence, and obedience, and public speaking wasn’t seen to correspond with these feminine ideals. What Hull so aptly calls the “drip-drip-drip of the message” (142) she illustrates with, among other things, a passage from Thomas Bentley’s *The Monument of Matrones*. “There is nothing,” Bentley writes,

that becommeth a maid better than sobernes, silence,
shamefastnes, and chastitie, both of bodie & mind. For

these things being once lost, she is no more a maid, but a
strumpet in the sight of God. (qtd. in Hull 142)

As Bentley's words suggest, chastity and silence were seen as mutually constitutive, and women were thus repeatedly told to avoid any kind of public speech. But men were evidently not alone in issuing this injunction. Bentley's text claims to include works written by women as well: its subtitle confirms the volume to be

. . . the woorthie works partlie of men, partlie of women;
compiled for the necessarie use of both sexes out of the
sacred scriptures, and other aprooved authors by Thomas
Bentley of Graies Inne.⁴

It is true that Bentley claims his volume to be intended for men as well as women, and this may be equally true of the text I have quoted above. But the passage is nevertheless about women in general and "maids" in particular: since the volume's contributors include women, it seems that both sexes advocated the ideal of feminine silence. Evidently, early modern men and women alike believed that not only did women not need to learn rhetoric, but that learning the art of speaking might very well render them strumpets in the sight of God. Silence was the mark of womanly virtue, and rhetoric emphasized not the art of silence but the art of speaking.⁵

⁴ From the bibliography of Betty Travitsky's book, *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance* (New York: Columbia UP, 1989), p. 267.

⁵ "A woman's eloquence," Constance Jordan points out, was "paradoxical" (45). Jordan invokes a passage from an Italian Renaissance text, Francesco Barbaro's

Some English men thus argued that certain types of education did more to corrupt women than to improve them. Thomas Salter makes such an argument in his 1578 treatise, *The Mirror of Modesty*. “I am therefore of this advice,” Salter writes,

that it is not meet nor convenient for a maiden to be
taught or trained up in learning of humane arts, in whom
a virtuous demeanour and honest behaviour would be a
more sightlier ornament than the light or vainglory of
learning. (178)

Learning of the “humane arts,” Salter goes on, has two aims — profit and recreation — neither of which are deemed suitable or necessary for women but present only “great danger and offence to the beauty and brightness of her mind.” Women need no such training because they do not govern estates or “public weals,” they do not write laws, they are not “professors of science and faculty,” and they do not and must not teach (178). Without access to the professions that provide a constructive outlet for a humanist education, such learning is even more likely to corrupt.

The education of women might also impede feminine industry: “there is no less danger,” Salter believes, “that they will as well learn to be subtle and shameless lovers, as cunning and skilful writers of ditties, sonnets, epigrams and ballads” (178). Women don’t need a humanist education because such unnecessary learning may lead

De re uxoria (1416), to illustrate her point: women, Barbaro insists, “should think that they shall obtain the glory of eloquence, if they adorn themselves with the famous ornament of silence” (qtd. in Jordan 45).

them to squander their time as much as to compromise their virtue, wasting both on the trivial pursuit of writing love poetry. Chastity and silence are thus as closely intertwined in Salter's view as they are in Bentley's — to defy the latter is to compromise the former. In Salter's more exact formulation, though, it is the verse of "subtle and shameless lovers" in particular rather than speech in general that is most clearly both corrupt and corrupting. According to these men, women must refrain from public speech in any genre, oral or written, because they must practise silence, which is both the evidence and the guarantor of a woman's industry and, most importantly, of her bodily and mental chastity.

The corollary implied by all of this is, of course, the belief that women didn't need to learn rhetoric because they were, for what were believed to be very good reasons, barred from public speech. If women were to become capable rhetors, they might also present a serious threat to male hegemony; as Parker suggests, there is in early modern culture a discernible anxiety about the "weapon rhetoric would provide in the arsenal of scolding wives" (104). Richard Mulcaster certainly expresses this anxiety in his *Positions Concerning the Raising Up of Children* (1581). In his treatise, Mulcaster argues for prudence in the education of girls, for "if we tender not their education dutifully," he writes, "they maye urge that against us, if at any time either by their owne right or by our default, they winne the upper roome and make us stand bare head" (qtd. in Jordan 215). For this and other reasons, even the most privileged and well-educated girls apparently received little or no formal training in rhetoric

which, along with grammar and logic, made up the *trivium*, the central component of the Renaissance boy's humanist education. The views expressed by Bruni, Bentley, Salter, and Mulcaster, though perhaps rigid, are not atypical: the words of these men do articulate quite accurately some of the prevailing beliefs about women, poetry, and rhetoric.

But for every early modern rule there are notable exceptions. George Puttenham, for one, challenged such beliefs when he published the *Arte of English Poesy* in 1589. Puttenham's guide to poetry and rhetoric was written, he claims, "for the learning of Ladies and young Gentlewomen, or idle Courtiers, desirous to become skilful in their owne mother tongue." Puttenham addresses his work not only to courtiers in general but also to "Ladies and young Gentlewomen" in particular: his stated intention is to teach women as well as men the art of skillful speaking, an intention that marks a refreshing departure from the more usual injunctions to female silence. Even so, his treatise is not as egalitarian as it might at first appear. Like many of his contemporaries, Puttenham also excludes his feminine audience from the realm of serious study. Since "to such manner of mindes," he goes on,

nothing is more combersome then tedious doctrines and
schollarly methodes of discipline, we haue in our owne
conceit devised a new and strange modell of this arte,
fitter to please the Court then the schoole, and yet not

unnecessary for all such as be willing themselves to
 become good makers in the vulgar. (158-59)

Puttenham's belief that women lack the kind of disposition most suited to "scholarly methodes of discipline" does exclude them from partaking in the rigorous formal education so many of their male counterparts enjoyed. Here, Puttenham's view of women's education corresponds with that expressed by men who, like Bruni, Bentley, Salter, and Mulcaster, suggest that such training is wholly unsuited to feminine nature.

Though Puttenham clearly doesn't advocate formal rhetorical training for women, he nevertheless believes that women are well suited to learning its conventions, even if that learning is informal and its aims are decidedly trivial, that is, to teach them to write the kinds of ditties, sonnets, epigrams, and ballads Salter complains about. Or, as Puttenham himself rather cautiously puts it, his aim is to teach women how "for their priuate recreation to make now & then ditties of pleasure"(158). Puttenham's anticipated audience is one of private, not public or professional poets; these are amateur writers who practice not the art of making serious and lofty verse, but who now and then make pleasurable ditties. Despite his obvious biases (though, to be fair, we should acknowledge that those biases include "idle Courtiers" as well as women) and his stated intentions, Puttenham, unlike many literary critics today, recognized that women didn't necessarily need rigorous formal training in rhetoric to become familiar with its conventions. In fact, his treatise belies

the assumption that informs so many discussions of early modern rhetoric, the assumption that women were not just implicitly but also explicitly excluded from participating in rhetorical culture. Puttenham's expressed aim is to include women in that culture, and we underestimate this aim if we assume that, because women lacked formal training in the discipline of rhetoric, they also were somehow wholly oblivious to its conventions and the advantages it offered.

Why have literary critics been so reticent in reading women's poetry in rhetorical terms? Though it is true, for the most part, that women did not receive the kind of formal rhetorical training their male counterparts enjoyed, this does not necessarily imply that women needed such training to comprehend and to participate in rhetorical culture — surely the very existence of Puttenham's volume supports such a claim. Women who were literate and who had access to books could readily consult popular treatises like Puttenham's, and could very easily teach themselves the art of rhetoric.⁶ "Renaissance poets," James Biester notes, "learned about style above all from manuals of rhetoric" (8). As Biester's observation implies, Puttenham was not the only English rhetorician to suggest that formal education was unnecessary to rhetorical expertise. Though he doesn't include women in his discussion, Thomas

⁶ Drawing on evidence gathered in J.J. Murphy's bibliography of Renaissance rhetorical texts and estimating the number of books that were likely published, Vickers speculates that "there must have been several million Europeans with a working knowledge of rhetoric." To the numerous professionals he cites as being inevitably familiar with rhetorical practices, Vickers adds "all the poets and dramatists, including the women, who were otherwise not granted much education" (*Defence* 256).

Wilson does make this point very clearly in his equally well-known handbook, *The Art of Rhetoric*: “an eloquent man,” Wilson writes,

being smally learned can do much more good in
persuading by shift of words and meet placing of matter
than a great learned clerk shall be able with great store of
learning, wanting words to set forth his meaning. (187)

According to Wilson, the art of persuasion depends much more on learning eloquence, something even the “smally learned” can achieve, than it does on a sweeping breadth of knowledge. Here, Wilson’s view very much corresponds with Puttenham’s belief that “schollarly methodes of discipline” are not essential to learning the art of rhetoric. I would take Wilson’s claim further, however, and suggest that women, or anyone else for that matter, not only didn’t require a “great store of learning” but that they also didn’t necessarily need access to popular texts like Wilson’s or Puttenham’s in order to have at least some understanding of rhetorical conventions.

To claim that women who were neither trained formally nor read informally in the art of rhetoric knew nothing about it is, I think, tantamount to saying that lesser educated people living in present-day society can’t understand or replicate the conventions of, say, televised situation comedies or action films because they lack the appropriate training in scriptwriting or film making. As the work of Greenblatt and others has shown, rhetoric had an influence on early modern thought and culture that

is in some ways immeasurable. Rhetoric affected everyone living in that culture at least as much as television and films have influenced the world in which we live, and surely no scholars of popular culture would claim that those who have not received as much formal education as they have aren't active participants in that culture.

Certainly, too, scholars of Renaissance literature don't hesitate to claim, as Donald Lemen Clark once did, that "It is asking too much to expect that a man can shake off at once the traditional habits of thought which are part of the air he breathes" (87) — and those habits of thought, habits that permeated the minds of everyone who lived in early modern society, were decidedly rhetorical. Indeed, we might very well ask if women inevitably picked up the habits of a rhetorical culture not only without formal education or informal reading, but also without always being consciously aware that they were doing so.

II. Writing Infinite Complexity

Because early modern women were barred from public oratory, they seldom acted as rhetors in the classical sense. But Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer did live in a culture in which poetry and rhetoric were intimately allied, and they wrote in a time when neither was necessarily oratorical. These women also lived in an age where poetry was believed to offer the most efficacious means of articulating what might otherwise be inexpressible. Juan Luis Vives makes this belief clear in his 1531 treatise

On Education, where he observes that the charm of poetry lies in its harmony, a harmony that “corresponds with the melody of the human soul” (126). Poetry by its very nature allowed some writers to posit tentative answers to the most elusive of questions, questions that consider what Vives calls “the melody of the human soul.” Implied in Vives’s comment is the belief that the expression — and indeed the attainment — of reason is not separate from but is enabled by the senses, through the kind of harmonious appeal that he sees as corresponding with the soul’s melody. Important as poetry is, rhetoric is equally important to expressing abstract reason and concrete sense — if poetry is the means, then rhetoric is the method.

But the tension between reason and sense was heightened even as it was mediated by rhetoric. “Deep within the art,” Sloan observes, “were unresolved questions concerning the rhetor’s appeals to other men’s reason, the highest faculty of their immortal soul, and appeals to their passions, which were aroused through inciting their senses, faculties of their animal soul” (“Rhetoric and Poetry” 215). Taken together, Vives’s and Sloan’s observations point to an important, and seemingly contradictory, correspondence between poetry and rhetoric. The most crucial function of both poetry and rhetoric is, I think, found in a paradox: poetry and rhetoric equally offer the potential to articulate what might otherwise be inexpressible, but at the same time their dependence on the senses heightens our awareness of just how far we are from attaining the perfection of reason, the ideal that allows for the full comprehension of that most elusive of abstractions, the “immortal

soul." The paradox of reason and passion Sloan describes remains, of course, unresolved and unresolvable: the questions he points to cannot be answered with any more certainty today than they could four hundred years ago.

What is interesting here, however, is not so much the destination as the process. The most intriguing implication of Sloan's comments is that the process of answering such questions was not simplified but complicated by rhetoric, which suggested even as it enabled the sensory expression of reason that its perfection would always remain out of reach. Seen in this way, rhetoric had a dual and even contradictory effect, enabling the articulation of what would otherwise be inexpressible while simultaneously raising additional and more elusive questions, in effect intensifying instead of mastering the unknowable. Rather than allowing for the expression of absolute truth (which logic aimed to do), rhetoric perhaps emphasized the impossibility of ever knowing with certainty. Thus "Humanist pride and humanist despair," as Greene observes, "emerge really as two faces of a single coin." Greene's comment does, I think, apply as much to the early modern understanding of rhetorical practice as it does to the humanist's simultaneous recognition of both the "satisfaction" and "tragic limits" of learning he describes (9). Indeed, the practice of rhetoric may have made its practitioners even more aware of the tremendous difficulty that lies in the accurate expression of anything, let alone poets who, as Lanyer puts it, are "writing of divinest things" ("To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie" line 4). In a culture in which both the realist and the mystic, as C.A.

Patrides reminds us, recognized “the need to respond to demands of authorities beyond himself and of quarters beyond the visible” (295), it seems that the best one can do is imperfectly express “divinest things” in a simultaneous appeal to reason and the passions.

Generally speaking, though, poets do seem to find the expressive process a more complicated one than those who write on the topic of writing itself. Recusant writer Robert Parsons, for one, expresses his certainty about the sufficiency of language to communicate thought. In his lengthy volume, *A Treatise Tending to Mitigation towards Catholike-subjectes in England*, Parsons aims to justify equivocation in certain cases: for persecuted Catholics, he argues, lying is not always a sin. But he also insists that when one outwardly equivocates, one nevertheless knows a truth that is absolute. This applies both to speech and writing: “according to *Aristotle*,” he says,

as the externall writing representeth unto us a mans
speech, so the externall speach representeth unto us the
internall speach, affection, or asseveration of the mind.
Wherefore of this there can be no controversy, but that
there is a true internall speach of the mind, affirming and
denying, approving or rejecting, consenting or repugning
as well as in externall speach, and consequently are there
true mentall propositions to be graunted and allowed.

(325)

Parsons is quite right to identify separately thought, speech, and written word. Other early modern writers, though, seem to understand that the three are not as distinct as Parsons makes them sound, and that the connections among them are not as simple or as linear as his words indicate. Other of Parsons's contemporaries seem well aware that "true mentall propositions" do not often translate readily into speech, and that the process of expressing thought in language is even more difficult when it comes to writing.

Though born two years after the publication of Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* and some twenty years after Pembroke completed her *Psalmes*, Margaret Cavendish offers a more accurate (and perhaps more honest) account of the writing process. In her autobiographical memoir, "A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding and Life," Cavendish suggests that the process of expressing thought is not a straightforward one, and that it does not go only one way as Parsons claims. Rather than describing a unidirectional transition from thought to word, Cavendish describes a process in which writing and thinking are reciprocally enabling: "when some of those thoughts are sent out in words," she remarks, "they give the rest more liberty to place themselves in a more methodical order: marching more regularly with my pen on the ground of white paper." Writing for this woman is not, however, as easy as she may initially make it seem. As she goes on to explain,

. . . my letters seem rather as a ragged rout than a well armed body. For the brain being quicker in creating

than the hand in writing or the memory in retaining,
 many fancies are lost, by reason they oft-times outrun
 the pen. Where I, to keep speed in the race, write so fast
 as I stay not so long to write my letters plain: insomuch
 as some have taken my handwriting for some strange
 character. (94)

Thought, as Cavendish describes it, doesn't lend itself to systematic transcription; it is fleeting and ephemeral, most often too quick and too cryptic for the hand. But she does describe her hand making the attempt to keep pace with her brain, and by so doing, she offers a description that could, hypothetically at least, serve as the source for a comment George Bethune would make about women writers in the nineteenth century. In his 1848 anthology, *British Female Poets*, Bethune argues that women "write from impulse and rapidly as they think . . . without the slow process of reasoning through which men have to pass" (qtd. in Walker 199). Cavendish's words might very well seem to prove Bethune's point: she most clearly indicates that she at least tries to write as rapidly as she thinks.

As much as Cavendish's account might seem to corroborate Bethune's claims about women writers in general, the rhetorical expertise evinced by the poets of this study, as I will go on to show, suggests something quite different. Though Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanier may be accomplished rhetors (users of rhetoric), they do not claim to be rhetoricians (teachers and theorists of rhetoric). Their work does, however, tell

us much about rhetorical practice: none of these women, so far as we know, wrote specifically about the writing process, but their work does in many ways attest to their shared understanding of the difficulty Cavendish describes. Like Cavendish, these writers seem to recognize that capturing the fancies of the mind in writing is not easy, but they seem equally aware that writing is a crucial process because it also helps to generate such fancies. Many of these fancies, as Cavendish says, may be lamentably lost, but at least some thoughts are adequately captured, finding their proper order — and thus their meaning — through the very process of trying to articulate them. In this respect, Cavendish's understanding of the writing process is not so different from Wilson's, who nearly a century earlier recognized, according to Janel Mueller, "the function of prose as an instrument of thought" (*Native Tongue* 350). For these and many other early modern writers, writing is not only a means of expressing thought, it is also a means of discovering it: "language is," as Yvor Winters maintains, "conceptual in nature" (xii), and the poet's medium "is his finest mode of thinking and perceiving, of being, of discovering reality and participating in reality" (xx-xxi). The process through which conceptual fancies become communicable understanding — a process that is recognized in different ways by Cavendish, Wilson, and Winters alike — is, in rhetorical terms, known as invention.⁷

⁷ Fittingly enough, Cavendish also wrote about rhetoric. As Donawerth notes, "rhetoric is an informing principle" of Cavendish's encyclopedia, *The Worlds Olio*. In it, Donawerth explains, "Cavendish scatters her rhetorical theory throughout," covering topics such as "invention, levels of style, nature *vs.* art in eloquence, discourse as promoting society, and the dangers of words over things"

Unlike Cavendish, Parsons expresses a belief in the adequacy of language to represent thought accurately in clear and certain terms, a point that seems verified by the smooth eloquence of his own written speech. The “true mentall propositions” his words aim to convey suggest little doubt that external writing is a sufficient vehicle for expressing thought. Puttenham, too, makes a similar claim when he discusses speech and writing in tandem, as though one were the direct and accurate representation of the other. Puttenham is explicit about this in his discussion of decorum, where he notes that “because writing is no more then the image or character of speech, they shall goe together in these our obseruations” (264). We might be tempted to conclude here that the differences between the process these men set out and the one Cavendish’s account describes have much to do with gender difference. But the nature of the poetry Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer write, together with some expressed doubts that confirm Cavendish’s beliefs about the limits of language, suggest that this distinction can be largely explained by the fact that these male writers are expressing something they believe to be fully knowable. Both men are thus able to present the writing process in a matter-of-fact way, as though it were reducible to a two or three-stage transcription process guided by a set of clearly laid-out rules.

(260). Like most contemporary rhetoricians, Cavendish recognizes that the successful use of language depends to some extent on an awareness of its nature, parts, and uses, but she also recognizes that there is no tried-and-true formula for effectively translating thought into words.

More recent theorists of thought and language recognize more fully the tremendous difficulty inherent in communicating thought. What Parsons calls “internall speech” and how this speech relates to rational thought would be taken up again some three centuries later by the cognitive psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky did formulate his theories long after Parsons wrote his treatise, but he nevertheless articulates the expressive struggle to which the work of many early modern writers attests. Like Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer, Vygotsky recognizes the distinct kind of difficulty inherent in written communication even as he also acknowledges that the process of transforming thought into writing is, as Parsons maintains, a tripartite one, that is, a process in which written speech represents external speech, and external speech in turn represents the “true internall speech of the mind.” Even though Vygotsky sees such thoughts as more cryptic than speech and thus more difficult to express in writing than Parsons does, both do allude to the difficulty that lies not in understanding these propositions ourselves but in communicating them to others.

The problem is, however, a thornier one for Vygotsky, Cavendish, and for the writers who are the focus of this study than it is for Parsons, who makes the transition between thought and word seem a rather straightforward process and their correspondence accordingly precise. The question that remains, though — and it is a question Parsons doesn’t address — is how accurately written language represents “internall speech.” Like Parsons, Vygotsky understands that this inner, or “internal”

speech, does indeed represent “true mental propositions.” Yet, Vygotsky argues, such truths are not easily expressed because external and internal speech are distinctly different. “In external speech,” Vygotsky points out, “thought is embodied in words” while inner speech “is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings” (249). In Vygotsky’s formulation, abstract meanings may be different from but are integrally connected with speech.

In fact, Vygotsky argues, it is only because we know language that we are able to think in the kinds of abstractions that include “pure meanings.” In the developed and literate adult mind, thought is an idiosyncratic and ephemeral abstraction of speech: the problem for any writer lies in translating these abstractions back into comprehensible speech. Since “Written language,” as Vygotsky observes, “demands conscious work because its relation to inner speech is different from that of oral speech,” the difficulty in communicating abstract truth is even more intense when it comes to external writing. Written speech or “external writing” is, as Parsons notes, two degrees removed from inner speech. But external writing is different in kind as well as degree, “implying,” Vygotsky claims, not a simple transcription, but “a *translation* from inner speech” (Emphasis added, 182). Both the seventeenth-century English religious recusant and the twentieth-century Russian intellectual heretic, then, acknowledge the existence and the primary importance of these “true mental propositions.” For Parsons, however, language is simply the means of articulating (or choosing not to articulate) what has already been invented and is thus thoroughly

understood; his words deny that expressing such propositions is a means of discovering as well as communicating thought. For Vygotsky, on the other hand, language is ontologically the sole means of invention; language not only expresses but gives birth to the sort of “true mentall propositions” Parsons describes.

Vygotsky’s “thinking in pure meanings” seems especially relevant to a discussion of poetry that makes the attempt not only to express but also to comprehend “divinest things”: the “central epistemological issue” Sloan identifies in Donne’s work belongs as much to the women of this study, who likewise grapple with “the problem of trying to grasp a sensed, immutable truth with mutable, human instruments of perception and analysis” (*Humanist Rhetoric* 18). The knowledge of divine things, as Sloan’s description suggests, is most often conceived of as a kind of inner knowing, the intuitive understanding that Parsons calls “true mentall propositions.” Sensed truth this may very well be, but it is also true that such immutable truths are to a large extent learned from the eloquence of others, from speech that engenders even as it corroborates that which is understood intuitively. Certainly Peacham suggests as much when he says that eloquence “is the light and brightnesse of wisdom,” and wisdom “the knowledge of diuine and humane thinges” (sig. AB2). The knowledge of things human and divine is, at least in Peacham’s understanding, inevitably linked. The association that Peacham makes at least implicitly acknowledges the cognitive interdependence of that which is concrete and that which is abstract. In order to comprehend one, Peacham’s formulation

suggests, one needs to have some understanding of the other. Thus “the knowledge of diuine and humane thinges” comes through means both abstract and concrete, that is, through thought and speech, wisdom and eloquence.

Cavendish’s description of the reciprocally enabling nature of thought and language is, as I have noted above, a description of the inventive process. Cavendish’s, Vygotsky’s, and Peacham’s words alike confirm, indirectly at least, that invention is an invaluable tool that aids both written expression and understanding. The verse of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer equally attests to invention’s importance, and their work may even imply that invention is the most crucial of all rhetorical practices: their understanding of the importance of invention is, I will go on to show, the epistemological foundation on which their rhetorical expertise is built. Yet, even as Pembroke’s, Wroth’s, and Lanyer’s verse demonstrates that the tools of rhetoric afford these poets a great deal of linguistic control, their writing demonstrates the inevitable difficulties with which they, as much as Cavendish, must contend: in as many ways as their verse attests to their expressive expertise, their work also confirms that the inner knowing of devotion can never be wholly or fully expressed. What neither Cavendish nor these three poets uphold is a clear transition from thought to written word: writing, for them, can never wholly and precisely capture the “true internall propositions” of the mind.

Much of Pembroke’s, Wroth’s, and Lanyer’s verse is thus as often tentative and exploratory as it is certain; it articulates their attempts to find the right words as

much as it attests to their expertise in using language effectively and accurately. Cavendish may be a competent prose writer and Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer may be capable poets and rhetors, but they also know that rhetoric does not and cannot offer an infallible formula for easy and precise expression. Like the writing process Cavendish describes, the poetry of these earlier writers confirms how difficult it is to express fully and accurately, especially when one writes "of divinest things." Writing may be the best means of articulating and discovering abstract truths, but written language for Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer, as much as for Cavendish, has its limitations. For these poets as much as for Cavendish, the expressive process is sometimes easy, sometimes difficult, and always less than complete — but it is nevertheless rewarding in that it goes a long way toward bringing the linguistic chaos of the mind into comprehensible order.

For poets of both genders, a rhetorical analysis of their work can account for many of the ways that, as Vygotsky and Parsons would put it, the language of inner speech can be expressed in the language of external writing. Men and women poets alike successfully use rhetoric as a means of conveying their own "true mental propositions," but the process of expressing thought is not as easy or as straightforward for them as it appears to be for Puttenham, for Parsons, or for the Ramists. Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer are, it is true, trying to express something quite different from any of these theorists, all of whom write practically about writing and none of whom purports to be exploring the ineffable or the realm of the

unanswerable. In all of these instances, the intent is not to complicate written expression but to simplify it, whether by offering an account of how straightforward the writing process can be or by offering a vast array of devices that can be readily deployed as circumstances demand. These writers are not so much expressing mental propositions as they are talking about how one can readily express such propositions.

Because of their subjects and not, I would argue, because of a lack of eloquence or rhetorical expertise, the struggle to capture their own understanding is more clearly expressed in the verse of these women poets than it is in either Parsons's or Puttenham's prose. In his 1848 study, *Female Poets of Great Britain*, Frederic Rowton judiciously argues that the "mental efforts of woman have as good a claim as man's to be recorded" (qtd. in Walker 199). Rowton's brief comment, I think, captures a more accurate authorial picture than the assertions of at least some early modern men: he not only confirms that women's writing is equally worthy of dissemination and investigation, his term "mental efforts" says much more about the processes of using rhetoric and of writing poetry than Puttenham, Parsons, and the Ramists are willing to admit. Good poetry is not a static finite product. Any poetry worthy of record, it seems safe to say, captures a mental effort that remains as animated today as when it was written: this is, I hope to show, certainly true of the verse penned by Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer. As Vygotsky suggests, verbal thought is a "dynamic structure" of "infinite complexity" (254). Whether its object is the Hebrew God, as in Pembroke's *Psalmes*, the god of Love, as in Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts," or Christ, as in Lanyer's

Salve Deus, the external writing of these women writers is as dynamic and complex as the inner voice that sustains their devotion.

III. Reason and the Sweet Fruits of Nature

In Parsons's formulation in particular, the act of expressing thought in writing is reducible to a systematized process. This is not surprising, considering that his treatise was written in 1607, a quarter century after continental rhetorical theories began to influence English notions of rhetoric. I refer here, of course, to the ideas of Pierre de la Ramée and his followers. Ramism, as it is known, attempts to systematize and separate the processes of thought (logic) and verbal expression (rhetoric) and thus finally to sort out what Ramus calls the "confusion of dialectic and rhetoric" (563). Simply put, Ramist notions about the relationship between thought and language, as Sloan describes it, force "into rhetorical theory a linear separation of thought from speech" ("Rhetoric and Poetry" 219). Ramist rhetoric, like traditional rhetoric, recognizes that there is a difference between thought and speech, but Ramists also believe that the difference can be minimized. If thought and speech are separated linearly, then it follows that thought can be transcribed into speech in an orderly and systematic way. Ramism, in theory at least, offers a systematic method of capturing thought in the purest possible verbal form.

Ramism also argues that three of the five traditional divisions of rhetoric — invention, arrangement, and memory — are the province of logic, while the remaining two — style and delivery — belong to rhetoric (Ramus 570). For this and other reasons, the movement did much to precipitate the idea that rhetoric is mere ornament, all about style and delivery and not about substance. Though sixteenth-century students and teachers of rhetoric believed, Vickers points out, that “eloquence was neither trivial nor decorative” (*Defence* 283), Ramism nevertheless succeeded in casting further suspicion on traditional rhetoric. The movement’s influence, in fact, reaches far beyond its initial appearance in the final quarter of the sixteenth century. The wariness that Ramism did much to intensify is perhaps even more visible in today’s culture, where most people hear the term “rhetoric” used as a pejorative that almost always connotes an intention to manipulate and deceive.

In retrospect, it does seem that Ramism succeeded in undermining rhetoric’s respectability. The dichotomy it imposes on logic and rhetoric was not, however, so enduring. Many theorists, Plato included, adamantly support the distinction Ramism upholds, but in practice the division between logic and rhetoric is not so rigid. Nor are some of the other dichotomies that Ramism intensified. Though the Ramist distinction between logic and rhetoric was also aligned with the perceived difference between the sacred and the secular as well as the plain and the eloquent, the verse of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer indicates that these writers are, at least to some extent, aware that these dichotomies can be as difficult to sustain as the one imposed on logic

and rhetoric. Likewise, their verse also suggests that the division of the offices of rhetoric into categories belonging within the jurisdiction of either logic or rhetoric was not as clear as Ramus and his adherents maintained. Memory and delivery are important in oratory but not necessarily in writing. Of the remaining offices of rhetoric, invention and arrangement are (as they have always been) as separately identifiable in work of these writers as in any: but, in the work of these three poets at least, these aspects of Ramist logic are integrally bound up with and never wholly separable from style, which Ramism believes to belong to the distinctly different discipline of rhetoric. Again and again, the work of these writers suggests that the kinds of rigid theoretical divisions that came either directly or indirectly out of the work of Ramus and his followers were ultimately untenable and impractical — even false.

Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer all seem to believe, with Peacham, that eloquence is a gift from God and that, as Peacham says, “if we consider the inuentions thereof they are wonderfull, if the works they are infinit, if the frutes, they are in vse sweete, in nature necessarie, both for the search of truth and for the direction of humane life” (sig. AB2^v). For Peacham and for the poets of this study, any meaningful search for truth is firmly rooted in the more earthly realities of rhetoric: the wonderful and the infinite are not divorced from but find their expression — and their meaning — in the sweet fruits of nature. Indeed, it is perhaps in the poetic expression of the divine that the sacred and the secular most explicitly (and perhaps inevitably)

meet. In his illuminating discussion of “lyric wonder,” Biester alludes to this point when he notes that “To emphasize the incomprehensibility of God, poets such as Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, and Traherne frequently drew comparisons from objects and areas of experience usually considered least divine” (21). Or, as Donne puts it in his *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, “My God, my God, Thou art . . . a figurative, a metaphorical God” (qtd. in Rambuss 83). Rambuss makes a more inclusive assertion when he suggests that many women writers understood as well as their male counterparts that the divine can only be conceived metaphorically, in comprehensible concrete terms. As with many of their contemporaries, men and women alike, poetic expressions of divinity in the work of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer require the simultaneous expression of secular things.

The interdependence of logic and rhetoric — and, by extension, the abstract and the concrete, the sacred and the secular, the plain and the eloquent — is most clear when poets write about reason, the highest faculty of the immortal soul. There was perhaps no English writer more concerned with the relationship between human reason and human immortality than John Milton, whose *magnum opus* in many ways illustrates the interdependence of logic and rhetoric. Though Milton’s epic appeared some forty years after Wroth’s sonnet sequence, what he thought about the relationship of these great disciplines is not so different from what is suggested by the verse of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer. To draw a specific example, I turn to Milton’s Raphael, who tells his eager pupil that reason is the soul’s being. According

to the archangel, reason is not arrived at through rational thought alone. Rather, Raphael instructs Adam, reason is received through both “Fancy and understanding,” that is, the imaginative as well as the rational. Raphael goes on to explain that fancy and understanding can lead to reason either discursively or intuitively, through verbal persuasion or through instantaneous comprehension. Reason by intuition, however, belongs mostly to the hierarchically superior angels as, he says to Adam,

. . . discourse

Is ofttest yours, the latter most is ours,

Differing but in degree, of kind the same. (5.488-90)

Raphael does make it clear that intuitive and discursive means of attaining reason are different in degree, but he makes it equally clear that the two are not wholly separable, neither for the angels nor for humanity. More significant is Raphael’s insistence that the discursive and the intuitive are not different in kind, that is, that they are equally valid forms of proof: reason arrived at through words, Raphael suggests, is as valuable as reason attained instantaneously through thought.

Discourse was, of course, inseparable from the art that gave it its shape, an art that made Milton himself one of the foremost rhetors of his age. Though it may very well be true that, as Sloan argues, Milton believed there to be “a ‘right reason’ that is beyond the discursive” (*Humanist Rhetoric* 263), this does not also mean that he did not recognize that reason and discourse were, for humans at least, almost always interdependent — or, to borrow Donne’s memorable coinage, one “Interinanimates”

the other ("The Ecstasy" line 42). Not only for Milton but also for his predecessors, fancy and understanding are the means of attaining reason, and discourse, not intuition, is their primary vehicle. In this formulation, rhetoric is not simply a means of communicating truth, it is also a means of discovering it: as a means of discovery, it is informed equally by fancy and understanding, imagination and rational thought.

Neither the example of Parsons, whose words surely allude to the Ramist view of rhetoric, nor the example of Milton's Raphael, who clearly tells Adam that discourse is the primary means by which humans attain reason, supports what adherents to different versions of Christianity themselves believed they thought about rhetoric. Parsons was a Jesuit priest and, ultimately, a Catholic martyr, and Milton is one of the most well-known Puritans of the seventeenth century. Puritans, however, more explicitly embraced Ramus's theories than Catholics. Sloan points out that "in their eagerness to be taught by the Ramists (whom they saw as disciples of a great 'Protestant martyr')," the Puritans "appeared to exalt 'logic' over 'rhetoric' and to become militant iconoclasts, preferring plainness and shunning sensuousness in any form"; the Catholics, on the other hand, "continued the ancient insistence that abstract thought is best grasped when given some more or less tangible embodiment" ("Rhetoric and Poetry" 227). The theoretical distinction outlined by Sloan, a distinction that Puritans and Catholics themselves made, is challenged by both Parsons's and Milton's stated views on the relationship between thought and its verbal expression. The distinction between Protestant and Catholic types of rhetoric

becomes even less tenable when we also consider the verse of the expressly Protestant women who are the focus of my study.

The key word in Sloan's summary is "appeared" — though the Puritans and their Protestant antecedents may have appeared to exalt plainness while the Catholics appeared to continue the rhetorical tradition of amplification through ornament, it is clear that what is advocated in theory doesn't always apply in practice. What these examples further suggest, and what Milton's Raphael affirms, is that logic and rhetoric were not only inseparable, they were also at least equally important. Whatever these writers themselves believed about the primacy of logic or of rhetoric or about the right use of rhetoric, the writings of the Catholic Parsons and the Protestant poets of this study equally suggest that the matter wasn't as cut-and-dried as many seemed to believe: their writings further suggest that the distinction between Ramist and traditional rhetoric is just as tenuous, more readily identifiable in theory than it is in practice.⁸ What Raphael calls "fancy and understanding" converges in the invention of Pembroke's, Wroth's, and Lanyer's verse alike. For these poets, invention is much more than simply a means of expression: it is the interanimating device that allows these poets to express and to comprehend, at least to some extent, the kinds of

⁸ This claim holds true even for the work of Ramist rhetoricians. Of all Elizabethan rhetoricians, Vickers observes, the Ramists were "the least interested in stressing the imaginative potential of rhetoric." Their theoretical claims were, however, challenged by their own instructive practices. Ramists consistently "illustrated their textbooks with examples taken from contemporary poetry" and in some of them, Vickers observes, "One looks in vain for any advance on the generalized concept of rhetoric as being ornament or 'garnishing'" (*Defence* 327).

abstractions their verse represents. In other words, the work of Milton and of these poets equally supports the claim that “Centering on *inventio*,” as Sloan puts it, “allows us to see some of the reasons why traditional rhetoricians insisted on the interconnectedness of the five offices” (“Rhetoric and Poetry” 214); their example further confirms that Ramism could not decisively separate logic and rhetoric nor did it serve to define in unambiguous terms the modes of expression that came to be associated with either Catholicism or Protestantism.

Ramism, it seems, has attracted far more attention than it deserves. Sloan certainly suggests as much when he notes that “had not the Ramists appeared on the scene with something that *looked* like a new rhetoric at the time the call was out for a new rhetoric, it is unlikely that we should ever have heard of them except in a few mouldering footnotes” (“Rhetoric and Poetry” 217), while Vickers makes a similar claim when he argues that “Ramist rhetoric was doing the same things that other rhetorics were doing, only perhaps more efficiently” (*Classical Rhetoric* 42). There is much literary evidence to support these claims. The work of many early modern poets — Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer included — indicates that, despite their manifest anxiety, these writers did not see the rhetoric of external writing as separable from (or less valuable than) the logic purportedly represented by internal thought. Rather than decisively severing logic from rhetoric, Ramism might even have had the converse effect on poetic production. By the time we get to the metaphysical poets, Ramism had been around for about a quarter of a century but even then, Rosamond

Tuве concludes, poetry was seen as having “free right to all that had been preserved in the names of the two great disciplines which in that day governed thought and expression — logic and rhetoric” (410). In poetic practice if not in the popular imagination, Ramism didn’t wholly succeed in effecting the final separation of these two great disciplines. In fact, it isn’t a stretch to say that the movement might have, at least for a time, brought them closer together.

In his influential book of 1956, Wilbur Samuel Howell observes that logic in the English Renaissance was “a theory not so much of thought as of statement” (3). As a theory of statement, then, logic was never wholly separable from but always inextricably bound with rhetoric. At the same time, however, that logic was a theory of statement may also have provided Ramism with the impetus to sever it from rhetoric. In effect, such a theory presented to Ramism a practice that could be readily systematized, as it implied the potential for the kind of orderly progression from thought to word Parsons describes. Arguably, Ramism was positioned to make its attempt to sever logic from rhetoric only because thought and word were so closely connected in the first place: “For all practical purposes,” Howell goes on, “the distinction between thoughts and statements is not a very real distinction” (3). This distinction became even less discernible with the rise of Ramism, which compelled poets and other writers to become even more conscious of ensuring that their written forms of expression, when necessary, adequately capture the abstract reasoning they wanted to represent.

Ramism, then, seems to have had much more influence than I have suggested above. If the correspondence between thought and word became more direct, then much of rhetoric also became more clearly the province of logic: “Thinking, the Ramists insist over and over again, may be done without speaking, but the reverse is not true,” and thus in their view, Sloan points out, “Logic comes before rhetoric” (*Humanist Rhetoric* 218). But — and this is a significant “but” — we can only accept such a claim if we first of all believe that logic and rhetoric (or thought and language) are and could be wholly distinct. Such a claim is surely challenged by Howell’s belief that logic was, for the Ramists as much as anyone else, a theory of statement as much as it was a theory of thought. If this is indeed the case, then early modern rhetoric was never entirely divorced from logic. Thus Ramism, as Sloan argues, wasn’t really anything new; it only appeared to be different in that it asserted the primacy of logic over rhetoric but could not and did not succeed in its attempt to sever the two.

Perhaps equally influential in fuelling the assumption that rhetoric and logic were and are distinctly separate was the sixteenth and seventeenth century rise of what we now know as “science.” The Ramists, Sloan observes, represent the seventeenth-century’s “major conduit of communicative confidence,” and Ramism feeds into, or at least coincides with, the development of modern science and the concomitantly growing belief that “man is best taught by offering him a form of thought that is most like the operation of natural reason.” Purely distilled, not artfully contrived, language came to be seen as the best means of communicating

scientific “fact.” Because both movements focus on, as Sloan says, “*finding a form* by which sense experience could be controlled and judged,” scientific discourse, then and now, seldom appears in verse. Indeed, Ramism and science together enabled even as they coincided with what Sloan calls “the rise of confidence [that] propelled a separation of the processes of thinking from other rhetorical instruments” (*Humanist Rhetoric* 217). But, again, what is advocated in theory doesn’t necessarily apply in practice; believing that language and the knowledge of scientific “fact” are not interdependent doesn’t make it so.

On the contrary, the work of many early modern writers — including those of this study — illustrate their own understanding that we are able to comprehend “higher concepts” only because we also know language. For these writers, it is in the rhetorical process known as invention that language and thought come together in a reciprocally enabling way: often, the language of rhetoric enables the comprehension of “higher concepts” even as it offers a means of expressing them. In using this term, Vygotsky refers to the kinds of abstract truths we now most readily associate with scientific reasoning. Though there undoubtedly exists, Vygotsky acknowledges, “A prelinguistic period in thought and a preintellectual period in speech” in every individual’s development, these developmental stages do not allow for the comprehension and inception of scientific concepts. Vygotsky has convincingly demonstrated to many that, on the contrary, this sort of higher, more abstract thought is enabled by one’s mastery of language. In other words, we are able to think

in empirical abstractions only because we have learned to think in linguistic abstractions: as Vygotsky sees it, language gives birth to complex thinking even as it enables the expression of thoughts both simple and complex.

Given the interdependence (or interanimation⁹) he traces, “It would be wrong,” Vygotsky goes on, “to regard thought and speech as two unrelated processes, either parallel or crossing at certain points and mechanically influencing each other.” On the contrary, neither thought nor word, “taken separately, possesses the properties of the whole”; rather, what he calls “meaningful speech” is always “a union of word and thought” (210-11). Vygotsky radically revises the beliefs of his predecessors who saw the connection between a given word and its meaning as “a simple associative bond,” a bond that saw the word “as the external concomitant of thought, its attire only, having no influence on its inner life” (214). Vygotsky’s words here challenge not only the beliefs of the earlier Würzburg school of cognitive psychology, but also the divisive tenets of Ramism: if we accept Vygotsky’s theory that thought and word are ontologically inseparable, then the epistemological separation of rhetoric and logic insisted on by Ramism is untenable in any context.

⁹ This term is associated in the English critical tradition with the work of I.A. Richards, who used it to denote the interplay of meanings among words in an utterance. I am using it to describe how each side in a pair of conceptual opposites (thought and word, art and nature, logic and rhetoric, sacred and secular) confirms and regenerates the other, lending it force and meaning without necessarily producing dialectical synthesis.

This is not to say, though, that early modern writers in any way suggest that they believed there to be absolutely no distinction between thought and word; as Howell observes, what distinction there is between early modern logic and rhetoric “consists in a differentiation between mental phenomena and linguistic phenomena” (3). For the poets I will consider in this study, rhetoric functions as a kind of bridge between these two phenomena, enabling the free and two-directional flow of the conceptual traffic it helps to create. Because it casts abstract mental phenomena in worldly terms, rhetoric is the tool that not only enables its practitioners to communicate abstract truth (or something approximating it), but is often (as Vygotsky claims) also the means by which such truths are discovered. Rhetoric plays a central role in enabling many poets of the early modern period, men and women alike, in their attempts to navigate between abstract thought and its concrete, verbal expression: to extend the metaphor, rhetoric for these poets allows them to traverse what Vygotsky so aptly describes as “the watershed between thoughts and words” (250). Though we all know how difficult this transition can be, it is a problem that seems especially troublesome to the early modern writer, who wrote in an intellectual climate that saw a concerted effort, however unsuccessful, to sever the logic of thought once and for all from the rhetoric that enables its expression.

Even so, the poetry of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer equally suggests that the Ramist belief in abstract thought as distinctly separable from the colours of rhetoric was, at least for these poets, illusory. As I argue in the preceding section, the verse of

these three writers especially attests to the centrality of traditional rhetoric's emphasis on "invention." Invention was, as Sloan describes it, always seen as "a means of 'analysis' as well as 'genesis'" — these are the terms, Sloan also points out, that are insisted on by the Ramists. Again, Ramism proves itself to be nothing new. The concepts signified by those terms had always been a major part of rhetorical theory: traditional rhetoric likewise believes that invention is both a means of analysis and of genesis, "useful," Sloan says, "both for examining a case, issue, or document and for generating ideas." Moreover, Sloan goes on to suggest, "as this is a central principle of traditional rhetoric, *idea and utterance were not conceptually or even theoretically distinct*" ("Rhetoric and Poetry" 216). As much as I agree with Sloan's comments, I would nevertheless refine his observation and emphasize that, although idea and utterance were never in the history of rhetorical theory regarded as distinctly separate, thought and its verbal expression could take distinctly different forms.

Given the abstract and idiosyncratic nature of inner speech as Vygotsky describes it, that difference in form is most likely found in the elaboration and filling out of an idea in its utterance. Or, as Wilson colourfully puts it, "elocution getteth words to set forth invention and with such beauty commendeth the matter that reason seemeth to be clad in purple, walking afore both bare and naked" (187). Though altered in its form, Wilson's words suggest, an idea filled out in its utterance nevertheless embodies the same message: the bare and naked thought is not altered in essence but is amplified — or clad in purple — in order to be expressible and

comprehensible. Regardless of whether a poet was male or female, Protestant or Catholic, a Ramist or a traditionalist, if purple cladding was necessary to convey the thought most effectively, so be it. Though it is true that plainness became increasingly valued during the Renaissance and that, as Peter Auksi says, the emphasis on plainness “implies, first, that stylistic adornment either is irrelevant to meaning or by its excesses is attempting to hide weakness in substance; and, secondly, it identifies verbal beauty with falsehood because error needs cosmetic, decorative coverings” (246), it is also true that the kind of poetic ornament found in the sweet fruits of nature did not disappear with the advent of Ramism.

IV. The Feminine Colours of Rhetoric

Ramism might have had the effect, though, of transforming what may have once seemed mere ornament into something quite different. More than ornament for its own sake, the kinds of rhetorical forms suggested by Wilson’s purple cladding became, in the poet’s hands, more integrally connected with meaning. Ornament is ornament only when it is superfluous: it is something else altogether when it is necessary to expression and comprehension. In the post-Ramist literary milieu, amplification remains crucial to poetic expression, but poetry at the same time evinces a movement toward the plainness that came to be associated with the sacred — a style that, incidentally, also more closely resembles what Vygotsky describes as the

abbreviated mode of inner speech, that is, “speech almost without words” (244). The poetry of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer equally reflects the growing importance of the plain style. Pembroke’s *Psalmes* are, Gary Waller notes, “calculatedly simple” (*Mary Sidney* 228), the language of Wroth’s “crowne of Sonetts” is, Elaine Beilin remarks, more “spare, plain, and less self-indulgent” than that of the rest of her sequence (“Constancy” 236), and critics unanimously agree with Lanyer’s description of her own volume of poetry as an offering of “plainest Words” (*Salve Deus* line 311).

Plainness is not, however, synonymous with antirhetorical. Kenneth Graham argues that plainness is really a rhetorical paradox; it is at once antirhetorical and rhetorical. Using the specific example of Thomas Wyatt’s anticourtly verse, Graham describes this duality: “On the one hand,” he says, “the plain heart, secure in its own virtue, appears to be unconcerned about the opinions of others; on the other, plain speech attempts to express clearly and emphatically an aggressive response to perceived injustice and so to determine the opinions of others” (33). Graham identifies a paradox that has more to do with persuasive intent than it does with the colours of rhetoric, but the same kind of rhetorical-antirhetorical paradox presents itself in the work of these later writers, especially Lanyer’s, whose verse boldly speaks out against a perceived injustice. The verse of all of the women writers I consider in this study also evinces what Graham, in his discussion of rhetorical plainness, identifies in Wyatt’s verse as “a deep love for a fixed truth known through a particular use of language” (36).

In speaking of plainness and truth, though, the *Psalmes* of Mary Sidney Herbert most readily come to mind. Her spare and elegant translations of the Psalms, as I will show in the following chapter, do seem very different from those offered by some earlier poets, including Wyatt. We thus might be tempted to argue that they are, in their comparative plainness, even more antirhetorical than Wyatt's. At the same time, though, her versions of the Psalms skilfully deploy the colours of rhetoric in a way that makes them highly rhetorical. Seemingly paradoxically, Pembroke's verse illustrates the compatibility of often-elaborate rhetorical forms and the devotional content that comes from what Graham describes as a "plain heart." It is through "rare inuentions & pleasant deuises," Peacham says, that "the deepe vnderstanding, the secret counselles, & politicke considerations of wisdom, are most effectually expressed" (sig. AB3). Pembroke's *Psalmes* corroborate Vives's assertion that poetry is the most efficacious genre for expressing devotion, and her work also offers an especially lucid illustration of Peacham's claim: in her poems of devotion, the "rare inuentions & pleasant deuises" of rhetoric prove crucial to the efficacy of poetic expression.

Pembroke's verse most clearly suggests the compatibility of poetry and rhetoric in her use of invention and in the *energeia* invention brings to her work. It is because of *energeia*, Vives points out, that poetry is able to display "human passions in a wonderful and vivid manner." Importantly, too, as I have argued above, the passions Vives describes are not opposed to but work in tandem with reason — or, as

Vickers puts it in his discussion of Peacham's treatise, the early modern rhetorician makes it readily apparent that the figures of rhetoric appeal "both to the emotions and to the intellect" (*Defence* 327). What poetry does is to display these emotions (or passions) in a manner so vivid that, Vives argues, "There breathes in them a certain great and lofty spirit so that the readers are themselves caught into it, and seem to rise above their own intellect, and even above their own nature" (126). Rising above one's own nature means rising above one's sensual animal nature, the aspect of humanity that embodies passion and is thus theoretically opposed to reason. But passion is, seemingly paradoxically, also the instrument through which one rises above one's baser intellect to the "great and lofty spirit" that is humanity's immortal soul. As Vives describes it, the passion enabled by *energeia* is not separate from reason. Rather, passion is an aid to reason, allowing those who read the best kind of poetry to discover something greater and loftier than the passions themselves. Vives is not alone in his belief, nor are his notions about the interpenetration of passion and reason peculiar to a distinctly pre-Ramist age: Milton's Raphael would say something very similar over a hundred years later, long after the ideas of Ramus and his disciples made themselves known in England.

Writing after Vives and on the cusp of Ramism's arrival, George Gascoigne was among the first specifically English writers to discuss poetry in rhetorical terms. What Vives describes as *energeia*, Gascoigne describes in his *Certayne notes of Instruction* (1575) as the "depth of device in the invention." Inventions, Gascoigne

maintains, enable the writing process as much as they help the writer to communicate a thought: once a fitting invention is found, he says, "pleasant words will follow well enough and fast enough" (163). Vives's and Gascoigne's statements equally challenge the distinction between the earthly (and thus suspect) reality associated with rhetoric and the abstract truth associated with logic, between thought and its verbal expression. The subjects of *energeia*, as Vives points out and the work of these women poets verifies, "are taken partly from the spiritual, and partly from the bodily, life" (126); the same goes for Gascoigne's invention.

Gascoigne's belief that a fitting invention enables both thought and expression anticipates Vygotsky's theory on the mutually constitutive nature of thought and word. As we shall see, the articulation of abstract understanding is for Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer, as it is for Gascoigne and Vygotsky, inseparable from the sensory word and therefore also inseparable from the worldly experience against which it often seeks to define itself. Though the apparent plainness of much of their verse perhaps evinces the influence of Ramism, the work of these women writers is also eloquent and very much indebted to the conventions of traditional rhetoric; in terms of both comprehension and expression, their success is in large measure attributable to *energeia* and to the depth of their inventions. This is not to say, however, that poetic expression is construed by these women as an easy task: their work is also very much about the inadequacy of language to convey thought. In this and in other ways, the work of these early modern poets illustrates the capacity of rhetoric to enable both

thought and its verbal expression, while also recognizing its inevitable limitations — language will always fall short of expressing fully our most abstract of thoughts, our always less-than-perfect understanding of “divinest things.”

I have so far considered some of the larger and broader concerns one must take into account in any discussion of early modern rhetoric and poetry. My intent is not, however, to focus only on these larger issues. Too often, I think, critics talk about rhetorical culture in a way that is all-encompassing and consequently vague, as though culture can be abstracted from the innumerable and ever-changing exigencies of daily life. Discussions of rhetorical culture tend to occlude the quotidian operation of rhetoric in a way that suggests details aren't as important as the “big picture.” Overviews such as those implied by the very term “rhetorical culture” seem actually to work against the premises of New Historicism. Focussing on the social and the cultural, New Historicism as a critical movement identifies itself in opposition to a presumably “old” historicism in that it professes to treat equally of all members of a given historical period, as well as day-to-day concerns that may have seemed trifling and insignificant to their predecessors. Though the movement has drawn our attention to the work of women and other previously overlooked writers, New Historicism really hasn't done all that much to include women in rhetorical culture or in the history of rhetoric.

Such an inclusive view, as I argued at the beginning of this chapter, actually works against what are probably very good intentions. Discussions of rhetorical

culture tend to become exclusive through what is, ironically, an antithetical intent. In order to be inclusive, one must focus on establishing some identifiable generalities, and such generalities inevitably exclude someone or something — in the case of the rhetorical tradition, that someone has been women and that something is often the specificities of rhetorical practice. Equally important to understanding the role women in general, and poets in particular, played in shaping rhetorical culture is a more focussed examination of the ways these writers use rhetorical conventions. Too often, critics seem to believe that identifying the presence of rhetorical tropes and figures is enough to indicate the effects of rhetoric on a given writer's work. Critics seem especially fond of describing any discourse that attempts to make an argument (and every utterance arguably makes an argument of some kind) as "rhetorical." Often, the term rhetoric is used as a synonym for "discourse," not in the way Milton uses it, but in the way it is used in many recent volumes and articles which propose to examine the "rhetoric" of a given topic but really don't address rhetorical issues at all. What many such works do is identify the assumptions and values that inform discussions within or on a given subject. As valuable as this kind of work may be, it is different from rhetorical analysis in that it identifies prevailing themes, topics, or beliefs rather than the methods used to discuss such things. In other words, there is a marked tendency in much criticism to use the term "rhetoric" in a rather superficial way, describing any utterance that attempts to make a particular argument as rhetorical without really showing *how* such utterances are rhetorical.

Even analyses that claim to be rhetorical and do identify rhetorical conventions, figures, or tropes seldom go beyond superficialities, seeming content to note the presence of rhetorical figures or the evidence of rhetorical training in the work of a given writer. Vickers thus seems quite right to suggest that "What we generally find in both ancient and modern times is not the evaluation but the simple enumeration of rhetoric" (*Classical Rhetoric* 152), that is, the identification rather than the interpretation of rhetorical technique. My aim is not merely to affirm that women's poetry is as rhetorical as that of their male counterparts by enumerating their use of rhetorical techniques. Rather, my approach largely corresponds with what Vickers believes should be the aim of all literary scholars who are interested in illuminating the relationship of rhetoric and poetry: "what we should demand of rhetorical analysis," Vickers argues, "is not only an appreciation of the purely rhetorical function of the tropes and figures, but also an assessment of their literary value, or their contribution to the poem's literary worth" (*Classical Rhetoric* 149). As Vickers suggests, we need to identify not only the use of rhetorical conventions, but also make some attempt to account for what those tropes and figures *do*.

I do agree that any rhetorical analysis is beneficial only insofar as it moves beyond the simple appreciation of rhetorical functions, but my aim beyond that point does differ from the one Vickers advocates. First, the verse of these women writers never suggests a "purely rhetorical function," as though rhetoric is absolutely definable or as if rhetoric itself can be abstracted from everything else within and

without a given poem. Second, my intent in transcending what Vickers describes as the simple enumeration of rhetorical techniques is not only to assess the literary value or the ostensible worth of the work of these poets. Qualitative evaluation is, of course, inherent in any literary analysis, and I willingly admit that I believe Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer to be the rhetorical and poetic equals of many of their male counterparts. Indeed, I would very much like to see all three sealed as full-fledged members of the early modern canon in particular and the English canon in general. Even so, my primary aim is to discover how rhetoric enables poetic expression, and to consider the advantages rhetoric offers them in their attempts to express and comprehend. Such an assessment, I hope to show, also allows us to appreciate more fully the role of rhetoric in literary history, as well as the important role some women writers played in shaping that history.

These women were as much a part of that culture as their male counterparts, and they were not, as Germaine Greer would have it, “untrained, ill-equipped, isolated and vulnerable.” Greer makes this comment in her introduction to *Kissing the Rod*, a now well-known anthology that must be acknowledged for the role it has played in establishing a female presence in the early modern poetic landscape. Timely and important this collection of women’s verse has proven itself to be, but it is nevertheless time to unsettle some of the assumptions it upholds and lay to rest many of the apologies it makes. I, for one, do not share the problem Greer identifies in *Slipshod Sybils*, where she suggests that “The dilemma of the student of poetry who is also

passionately interested in women is that she has to find value in a mass of work that she knows to be inferior” (xi). Certainly, the work of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer in itself offers a notable challenge to Greer’s belief that early modern literary activity was, as she puts it, “exclusively oriented to the concerns of the classically educated males who formed the ruling class” (“Introduction” 1). It is true that early modern literary activity was, as Greer claims, oriented toward males, who were more likely (or at least more likely than their female counterparts) to have been the beneficiaries of a classical education. It is highly debatable, though, whether education or the literary activity it may have inspired was “exclusively” oriented towards men or towards the ruling class: surely, the work of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer suggests something quite different. Indeed, that Greer makes such an insistence renders her words, to borrow Marguerite Waller’s description, as “unselfconsciously sexist” (3) as C.S. Lewis’s or Stephen Greenblatt’s.

This statement takes me back to where I began, with women’s education. Identifying and analyzing the specificities of these poets’ use of rhetoric might also lead to some tentative answers to the obvious question of where and how they learned this art. This is not, however, my aim in this study. As I have argued in the first section of this chapter, to assume that women knew nothing about rhetoric simply because they weren’t, like many of their male counterparts, also subject to endless drills in the schoolroom is not only rather naive, it also implies that early modern girls weren’t alert or perceptive enough to pick up the prevailing habits of their

culture, a culture where rhetoric was almost literally part of the air that they breathed. Such a claim also suggests that girls lacked the initiative to read about rhetoric and to learn its conventions on their own, an assumption that is most clearly challenged by the work of the women poets I will consider in this study.

Of those poets, the work of the Sidney women, the Countess of Pembroke and her niece Lady Mary Wroth, most clearly suggests that some girls not only learned the tropes, figures, and conventions of rhetoric, but that they learned them so well that they did become second nature. Ironically, it seems arguable that Pembroke's and Wroth's use of rhetoric hasn't attracted critical attention precisely because they are so accomplished. Pembroke's *Psalmes* in particular attests to at least one woman writer's attainment of the courtly ideal of *sprezzatura*, advocated by Castiglione as the art of making seem natural and spontaneous that which was acquired by diligent effort. As Castiglione's Count Lewis says, study and practice are what make the ideal courtier, who must "use in everye thing a certaine disgracing to cover arte withall, and seeme whatsoever he doth and saith, to doe it without paine, and (as it were) not minding it" (46). In many instances, Pembroke's use of rhetorical technique is so skilled that it does conceal her own art, becoming one with a poem's form and its content. Indeed, Pembroke's brother could very well be describing his sister when he maintains in his *Defence* that he has found a more "sound style" in some "smally learned courtiers" than in "some professors of learning," a difference he attributes to the former's ability to use art to hide art (72).

The verse of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanier tells a story very different from that implied by their respective educations, formal training that may have touched on but did not foreground the study of rhetoric. More directly relevant, perhaps, is Puttenham's similar comment on the *trivium*. "I call those artes of Grammer, *Logicke*, and *Rhetorick* not bare imitations," he writes,

but by long and studious obseruation rather a
 repetitio[n] or reminiscens naturall, reduced into
 perfection, and made prompt by vse and exercise. And
 so whatsoeuer a man speakes or perswades he doth it not
 by imitation artificially, but by obseruation naturally
 (though one follow another). (306)

Like Castiglione and Sidney, Puttenham argues that learning can become internalized and that the art of speaking and persuading can become like second nature. Both his statement of intention in particular and the aim of his manual in general further confirm his belief — a belief shared by Sidney and Wilson — that one doesn't need a lengthy and intensive formal education to become an accomplished speaker and persuader. In light of Puttenham's manual especially, the exclusion of early modern women from the history of poetry and rhetoric is not just unfortunate, it is also surprising.

But such an oversight is also debilitating. Our collective reluctance to talk about women's poetry and rhetoric has, I think, kept us from appreciating their work

as much as we might. Furthermore, this critical reticence also suggests a lingering tendency to reimagine the past along sharply delineated lines of gender. That tendency can be loosely characterized as an impulse to compartmentalize women, their experience, and their relationship to the cultural and social milieu in which they lived. Yet the poetry of some of these early modern women, especially when read in relation to the rhetorical tradition, reveals something very different. Though it is undeniably true that early modern society attempted in many ways to contain women, it is also true that many women resisted such attempts. In his analysis of the ways critics construct and reconstruct gender in their readings of the Countess of Pembroke's *Triumph of Death*, Jonathan Goldberg seems right to suggest that "the lines to be crossed are ones we put there" ("Literal Translation" 334). Early modern women's poetry doesn't fit into clearly outlined compartments any more readily than the women who wrote it. Whether those compartments are labelled with the terms feminine, or private, or with any of the other circumscribing characteristics so often attributed to women's writing, such labels do justice neither to these women nor their work.

I thus agree with Margaret Ezell's observation that the critical impulse has been to limit the relevance of early modern women's writing: "the theoretical model of women's literary history and the construction of women's literary studies as a field," she says, "rest upon the assumption that women before 1700 either were effectively silenced or constituted in an evolutionary model of 'female literature' an

early 'imitative' phase, contained and co-opted in patriarchal discourse" (4). It seems safe to say that neither approach within this theoretical model applies to the women of my study, none of whom can be relegated to the insular and inevitably marginalized sphere of "female literature." Nor does the work of these writers represent what we might call "an early 'imitative' phase," the tentative offerings of neophyte writers who are in the process of learning by imitating, presumably in an amateurish and inferior way, the conventions of a superior discourse. Even to identify these writers as women, I would suggest, is to some extent marginalizing. I thus also agree with Margaret W. Ferguson when she says that "the very phrases 'woman writer' and 'woman author' usually imply that these concepts, when unmodified, are gendered masculine" (145): though it seems difficult to avoid doing so at this point in critical history, that we need to identify these writers as "women" says much, I think, about how far we have yet to go before they become truly a part of the literary and cultural canon.

Even so, I believe that the verse of Mary Sidney Herbert, Lady Mary Wroth, and Aemilia Lanyer is neither contained nor co-opted by a discourse they can hope only feebly to replicate and surely not hope to influence in any significant way, nor can it be relegated to a sphere of exclusively feminine (read "inferior") literature. The example of these poets indicates that at least some women writers possessed much in the way of literary strength and offered much potential to influence: their work should not be read as literary history has conventionally presented it, that is, as what

Ann Baynes Coiro metaphorically describes as “the lacy, decorative frill on the edge of a fabric that has not changed” (358). I don’t believe that their contributions to both poetry and rhetoric should or even can be read as primarily those of women, especially not if such a reading also means that they can, as women, only draw on the conventions of a discourse they are powerless to shape. Rather, the work of these writers should be read first and foremost as the product of working poets, poets who were not merely “anterior to,” as Mason Sutherland would have it, but who actively participated in and thus inevitably influenced the rhetorical culture they so thoroughly inhabited.

Chapter Two

Rhetoric and Devotion in Pembroke's *Psalmes*

I begin with Mary Sidney Herbert not only because she comes chronologically first among the poets I will consider in this study, but also because her translations of the Psalms offer an especially vivid illustration of the active role women poets played within the rhetorical tradition. The Countess of Pembroke was, of course, for a long time best known as the sister of Sir Philip Sidney. Philip's sister has, however, more recently emerged from her brother's shadow, and she is now recognized as an accomplished poet in her own right, largely because of her work on the *Psalmes*. As Noel J. Kinnamon points out, "Mary Sidney Herbert and her contemporaries believed that her metrical paraphrase of the Psalms was her most significant poetic achievement," a belief that is surely affirmed by the fact that her portrait shows her holding a copy of the Psalms of David (44). The *Psalmes* may be her most significant

achievement, but it is also true that Pembroke took up the project as both a real and a symbolic continuation of her brother's efforts on behalf of the Protestant cause.

Philip Sidney, as we know, had died in 1586 from wounds suffered at the Battle of Zutphen, where he fought in the Protestant effort to free the Dutch from Spanish oppression. After her brother's death, Pembroke became the primary female patron of English letters; as such, there were numerous literary works dedicated to her, and she used her influence to encourage writings that glorified her brother — not just as a poet, but also as defender of the faith.¹ By fostering his legend, she played a crucial role in developing Philip Sidney's hagiography as a Protestant martyr. Within her private domain, then, she took on a public role on behalf of a political and religious cause; as Louise Schleiner puts it, Mary Sidney Herbert established "in her own carefully formed reading circle a base for addressing a broader audience to urge commitment to international Protestantism" (*Women Writers* 53).

¹ Kathleen M. Swaim offers a partial list of the writers Pembroke knew personally and likely influenced directly: "She was a catalyst," Swaim points out, "for the writings of, among others, Abraham Fraunce, Gabriel Harvey, Thomas Nashe, Edmund Spenser, Samuel Daniel, Nicholas Breton, William Browne, Sir John Harrington, Sir John Davies of Hereford, [Ben] Jonson, and John Donne" (262). Such claims have, however, been challenged by other critics. Mary Ellen Lamb, in her article on Pembroke's patronage, suggests that Pembroke's influence as a patron has been exaggerated, and that her influence on contemporary writers was not as significant as Swaim and others propose. Pembroke, Lamb points out, had little influence, literary or otherwise, after her husband's death in 1601. It is clear, however, that she was engaged with her literary circle throughout the writing of the *Psalmes*, sometime between 1588 and 1599.

Acting as her brother's literary executor, Pembroke also took on the task of editing the forty-three psalms he had translated before his untimely end. Perhaps finding solace in such work,² Pembroke went on to complete Philip Sidney's unfinished project, translating the one-hundred and seven remaining Psalms, 44-150. According to Margaret P. Hannay, Pembroke's most recent biographer, she likely completed the psalter in time for Queen Elizabeth's intended 1599 visit to her country house, Wilton (*Phoenix* 84).³ The Sidney-Pembroke psalter, as it came to be known, remained unpublished until 1823, but the poems did circulate widely in manuscript during the later years of the sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth century; as Wendy Wall notes, these private, meditational poems "went on to become highly public texts, circulating widely enough to be read by Donne, Lanyer and Herbert, and surviving to be disseminated in the next centuries" ("Our Bodies" 53).⁴ Both John

² Philip's death marked the culmination of a series of personal tragedies for Pembroke. The previous fall saw the death of her young daughter, Katherine, which was quickly followed by the deaths of her father, Henry Sidney, in May 1586 and her mother, Mary Dudley Sidney, in August of the same year. Pembroke remained in mourning at Wilton for two years following her brother's death in October 1586. (See Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix*, esp. 54-6).

³ "Although that visit was canceled," Hannay points out, "Elizabeth did visit Penshurst." Penshurst was, of course, the seat of Pembroke's brother, Robert Sidney, celebrated by Ben Jonson in his famous country house poem, "To Penshurst." But, Hannay goes on, Pembroke stayed home with her then-dying husband, and "was with him rather than with her brother Robert and the queen" (*Phoenix* 240, n. 3). Pembroke's psalter evidently never reached its intended recipient.

⁴ Seventeen extant manuscript copies of the psalter attest to its wide circulation. However, it is important also to note that Pembroke often received no credit for her tremendous contribution to the collection. As Susanne Woods points out, out of the three copies at the Huntington Library, "two attribute the entire

Donne and Aemilia Lanyer wrote poems commending the literary and religious value of the Sidney-Pembroke psalter; Donne's poem is well known, and Lanyer's poetic tribute to her literary predecessor is quickly becoming so.⁵ More recent readers of the *Psalmes* also acknowledge the superiority of the Sidney psalms, invariably recognizing poetic merits that exceed those of contemporary and antecedent versions. Hannay, for instance, proposes that "the Countess' version is technically and poetically superior to all of them but the best of Marot" ("Genevan Advice" 32), while Gary Waller proclaims that Pembroke brought to Psalm translation "a style that was flexible, calculatedly simple, muscular and evocative" and thus rescued "both psalm metaphrase and original religious verse from the gallumphing poetasters" (*Mary Sidney* 228). Theodore Steinberg's praise is perhaps the most forthright: he maintains that, out of the three hundred editions of the psalter in English published by 1640, the

collection to Sir Philip Sidney, and the third, which lacks a title page, has his name following Psalm 43 but no mention of the Countess of Pembroke" (*Natural Emphasis* 169-70). Pembroke's authorship was further obscured by some of her near-contemporaries. John Aubrey, who also made specious accusations of Sidney incest in his book *Brief Lives*, mentions in *The Naturall History of Wiltshire* "a translation of the whole book of Psalms, in English verse, by Sir Philip Sidney, writt curiously, and bound in crimson velvet and gilt" but makes no mention of Pembroke (qtd. Waller, "Gendered Reading" 337).

⁵ Pembroke scholars are fond of quoting Donne's line "They tell us why, and teach us how to sing" (line 22) from his poem "Upon the translation of the Psalms by Sir Philip Sidney, and the Countess of Pembroke his sister," and draw attention to the fact that Donne gives Pembroke equal credit. Lanyer, however, reserves her praise almost exclusively for Pembroke in her dedicatory poem "The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of *Pembrooke*," one of several such poems that preface *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, her poetic reimagining of the passion of Christ that I will take up in Chapter Four.

Sidney version “is surely the best” (2). Other literary scholars, most notably Coburn Freer and Barbara Lewalski, have shown that the book of Psalms, the Sidney-Pembroke psalter included, played an important role in the development of the seventeenth-century religious lyric.⁶

Because Pembroke was nominally “translating” devotional works, she was able to act on behalf of a political and religious cause without being seen to transgress gendered codes of behaviour; though she couldn’t fight physically as Philip did, she could act with her pen on behalf of the Protestant cause and still be taken seriously.⁷ In early modern England, translation was an acceptable activity for women, especially when they worked on religious or devotional texts. Not only was this kind of literary enterprise an acceptable occupation for women in post-Reformation England, it also offered them a previously unrealized opportunity to speak publicly; “religious

⁶ For other accounts, see Roland Greene’s “Sir Philip Sidney’s *Psalms*, the Sixteenth-Century Psalter, and the Nature of Lyric,” Richard Todd’s “‘So Well Attyr’d Abroad’: A Background to the Sidney-Pembroke Psalter and Its Implications for the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric,” and Woods’s full-length study, *Natural Emphasis: English Versification from Chaucer to Dryden*.

⁷ Eloquence was arguably as important a social and cultural tool for the women of the Sidney family as it was for the men, even though they were necessarily more constrained in its use. Lamb proposes that Pembroke’s mother, Mary Dudley Sidney, used her deathbed as an opportunity to speak publicly. Pembroke’s mother succeeded and was subsequently praised in Holinshed’s *Chronicles* for her good death and for her verbal grace: “Whichever the exact version of *ars moriendi* the Countess’s mother followed,” Lamb notes, “the emphasis upon her eloquence of writing and of speech, unmatched by any that the compiler had known or read of, demonstrates the way in which dying enabled the elder Mary Sidney’s display of her skill with language or, even more, public recognition of a skill she had demonstrated during her lifetime” (123).

translation,” as Hannay points out, thus “provided one of the primary opportunities for a woman to enter public discourse” (“Woman’s Role” 47). Though translation did allow women to enter the realm of public discourse, its very nature also limited the extent of their expressive freedom. “Translation,” Hannay observes elsewhere, “both empowered and controlled women’s speech,” since it gave women the opportunity to write, but it also meant that they were “translating male words about God” (“Spirituality” 65). For Pembroke, however, translation proved to be more enabling than constraining. Jonathan Goldberg notes in his discussion of Pembroke’s *Triumph of Death* that cross-gender translation can also “relocate gender as an unstable and less fully determined site” (“Literal Translation” 326). Goldberg’s statement, it seems safe to say, is as relevant to a discussion of Pembroke’s *Psalmes* as it is to her rendering of Petrarch. Pembroke was a proper aristocratic woman of the Renaissance and she was careful to conduct herself as such, but translation allowed her to cross gender lines without being seen to exceed the bounds of feminine propriety.

Pembroke may also have felt a familial obligation to take up the work her brother started. The Book of Psalms did take on an enhanced religio-political significance with the Reformation, but it seemed especially significant for the Sidney family. Psalm translation was, in fact, a kind of family tradition: as Hannay points out, two of Pembroke’s maternal uncles, John Dudley and his brother Robert (who later became the Queen’s favourite, the Earl of Leicester), translated Psalms of vengeance while imprisoned in the Tower for their father Northumberland’s role in

conspiring to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne ("Genevan Advice" 27). Jane Grey was another important Protestant martyr, one who famously recited a vernacular version of the penitential Psalm 51 on the scaffold and whose status as a martyr was enhanced by her prominent place in John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. Far from being apolitical, Pembroke's rendering of the Psalms, which were intended for and dedicated to the queen, came with an implicit political message. As Hannay has demonstrated, the prefatory poems, in particular, urged the monarch to continue to champion the Protestant cause and to help the oppressed Huguenots on the continent.⁸

With Pembroke's religious and thus inevitably political intent in mind, critics often point to the ways many of the *Psalmes* themselves advance their political message.⁹ Pembroke's appeal to the monarch to protect the reformed religion is

⁸ The inclusion of these two poems, the dedicatory "To the Thrice Sacred Queen Elizabeth" and the epitaph "To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney," in the presentation copy of the psalter intended for the queen, Hannay explains, meant that "the political intent of her gift would be unmistakable," and that is perhaps the reason why the psalms never reached their intended recipient ("Dedication" 164). Beth Wynne Fiske also acknowledges the political intent of both poems: in the former, she identifies "a strong partisan religious and political statement concealed under the conventional humility *topos*," and she proposes that the latter "is quietly subversive on a private as well as a public level" ("Angell spirit" 265).

⁹ This is not to say that Pembroke added such a message to her *Psalmes*. Rather, she used what was already available in her sources; as Hannay points out, "her psalter retains the political cast of these sources, particularly in psalms such as 82, 83, and 101" ("Genevan Advice" 32). Typically for her, the cautious and conservative Pembroke drew on what was already extant in a way that enhanced the Psalms' contemporary relevance.

implicit in many of her psalms; as Hannay points out, the Sidneian psalms “carry a subtle but highly charged political statement — as did their Genevan models — giving advice to the monarch about the means necessary to maintain the one true faith” (*Phoenix* 85). Surprisingly enough, even though her readers have consistently acknowledged the political intent of Pembroke’s *Psalmes*, both in individual poems and as a collection, her work hasn’t really been the subject of extensive rhetorical analysis.¹⁰ This is a telling oversight, since rhetoric had always been upheld as the most important political tool one could possess, and it is an oversight that is more credibly attributed to our own lingering tendencies to exclude women from the rhetorical tradition than anything inherent in the *Psalmes* themselves. Such a claim is surely supported not only by long-standing assertions of what Lewalski describes as “the poetic nature of the Bible” and the presence of “over one hundred and twenty

¹⁰ Sallye Sheppard suggests that modern scholars do “examine Mary Herbert’s rhetorical technique.” It is true that, as Sheppard points out, critics such as Rathmell and Freer have identified in some *Psalmes* “an *argumentative momentum* not present in earlier Renaissance versions of the psalter,” and it is also true that many critics note Pembroke’s extensive use of rhetorical figures; her recent editors, for instance, observe that she uses many of the tropes outlined in Puttenham’s *Arte* and go on to identify some of them (“Introduction” 58-9). What Pembroke’s readers don’t do, however, is offer an interpretation of their observations, either in terms of how Pembroke’s work relates to the larger rhetorical culture or in the ways her use of specific figures relates to the meaning of individual poems or to the themes of the *Psalmes* as a whole. Rivkah Zim, for instance, notes in reference to Psalm 141 that “The additional figures of chiasmus and epizeuxis . . . demonstrate her taste for those rhetorical ornaments which were considered poetical” (193). Typically for Pembroke’s critics, Zim doesn’t go on to consider what those figures *do*, and thus fails to recognize that their function is often much more than ornamental. Simply identifying an “argumentative structure” as Sheppard does or the presence of rhetorical figures as Zim does doesn’t really tell us anything new about the poems or about Pembroke’s place in rhetorical culture.

rhetorical figures in the Psalms alone" (*Protestant Poetics* 7-8), but also by the fact that Pembroke's translations of the Psalms are, both in form and in content, as rhetorical as the originals. For Pembroke as much as her contemporaries, poetry and rhetoric are inseparable. Her brother, for one, makes this clear in his *Defence*, where he insists that "poetry is of all human learning the most ancient and of the most fatherly antiquity, as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings" (48).

Pembroke understands as well as her brother that poetry is not an offshoot of rhetoric but the reason for rhetoric and, indeed, all "other learnings," and her psalms offer much evidence to suggest that she was intimately familiar with sixteenth-century rhetorical practices.

The most recent editors of her works suggest that Pembroke may have been taught rhetoric.¹¹ Though the textual evidence presented in her *Psalmes* surely supports her editors' proposal, my aim here is not to identify where and how she mastered this art. Even so, her use of rhetoric in the *Psalmes* does suggest that she was aware of the rhetorical and poetic conventions described in contemporary works such as Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* and Wilson's *The Art of Rhetoric*, even if she

¹¹ In the brief biography included in *The Collected Works* (Ed. Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan), Pembroke's editors propose that "The countess's later writing suggests that they [i.e., Mary and her sister, Ambrosia] may also have studied rhetoric" ("Introduction" 3). Though they don't specify here, they may be referring to her translation of *A Discourse of Life and Death*. In their introduction to her translation, Pembroke's editors identify her concern with heightening the effects of the original's rhetorical devices, especially parallelism and repetition, and illustrate the pervasiveness of Pembroke's concern for rhetorical effect ("Fidelity to Originals" 221-25).

didn't draw on such guides directly or use them as handbooks in the process of writing her *Psalmes*: it warrants mention as well that, as Robert M. Coogan points out, "It is known that [Philip] Sidney translated Aristotle" (255).¹² The pressing question is not, however, whether Pembroke actually drew on the work of contemporary or ancient rhetoricians, a claim that would be difficult to prove with certainty. Rather, my interest here is in what she does with some of the rhetorical conventions and techniques advocated by Elizabethan theorists.

In exploring this question, I will begin by showing how Pembroke relies on rhetorical technique at the most local level, illustrating some of the ways she uses specific rhetorical figures and tropes and showing how they serve both the content and the form of an especially political poem, Psalm 72. In this section, I will also compare her use of figures in the *Psalmes* with the ways that some of her male antecedents, specifically George Gascoigne and Sir Thomas Wyatt, use rhetoric in their own renditions of particular Psalms. Though I will at times refer to other translations, such those found in the English psalter or those produced by Genevan translators, I have chosen to compare Pembroke's verse, for the most part, with that of other, more literary writers. This is not to say, though, that the work of English

¹² Coogan's evidence comes from John Hoskins's *Directions for Speech and Style*: "Sir Philip Sidney," Hoskins writes, "betrayed his knowledge in this book of Aristotle to me before ever I knew that he had translated any part of it. For I found the two first books Englished by him in the hands of the noble studious Henry Wotton" (qtd. in Coogan 255). According to Coogan, William A. Ringler proposes that the translation was made "around 1569 or later" in his edition of Sidney's verse (255 n. 1).

translators such as Tyndale, Coverdale, or Matthew is not of literary interest. But more germane to my discussion is a comparison of Pembroke's work with writers who, like Pembroke herself, are not only well known as poets but are also primarily known as poets, rather than as biblical scholars or translators.

I have decided to limit my comparison for two reasons. First, the sheer number of psalters produced in the sixteenth century — some ninety of them — makes it impossible to undertake a fair or even barely adequate comparison of Pembroke and her antecedents in a single chapter, or even a single book. Second, comparing Pembroke's work with that of other writers who, like her, are known primarily as poets affords the opportunity to identify more clearly Pembroke's place in literary and rhetorical history. Again, this does not mean that the work of other Psalm translators is neither literary nor rhetorical. I would, however, suggest that the primary interest in translators such as those cited above is perhaps more closely related to the history of biblical translation than it is to literary or rhetorical history. Certainly, too, the most popular psalter of the sixteenth-century, the Sternhold-Hopkins or the "Old Version," has proven interesting to literary scholars largely because of its failure to meet the criteria of good poetry; the psalter's "poetical level," as C.S. Lewis once observed, "has been a butt for critics almost ever since it appeared" (246). My interest here is not in the ways English poetry was perhaps constrained by the conventions of biblical translation, as it was in the Sternhold-Hopkins psalter, but in the role rhetoric played in shaping and expanding poetic possibilities. There is a

marked generic and qualitative difference between the work of psalmists like Sternhold and Hopkins, whose “clumsy and occasionally ludicrous metaphrases,” Waller points out, were an “acknowledged embarrassment to lovers of poetry” (*Mary Sidney* 187) and that of a writer like Mary Sidney Herbert, whose work may have had a profound effect on the development of English poetry and whose *Psalmes*’ significance, as her 1963 editor J.C.A. Rathmell observes, is “primarily literary” (xv).

The subsequent sections of this chapter will consider Pembroke’s *Psalmes* more generally, both as a collection and in the ways her work follows some of the broader conventions and the professed virtues of rhetorical practice. To this end, I will demonstrate Pembroke’s primary concern with some of the principal tenets of rhetorical theory that figure prominently in contemporary discussions of the topic. More specifically, I will begin by considering some of the ways Pembroke’s verse shows how *energeia*, a perceived virtue of poetry and rhetoric alike, enables the poet’s expression of devotion and the believer’s comprehension of the divine. Following this discussion of the depth and the effectiveness of the *Psalmes*’s inventions, I will go on to show how the *Psalmes* in many ways confirm the interconnection of logic and rhetoric. This more general discussion of the *Psalmes* will therefore also consider the relationship of both rhetoric and logic in early modern rhetorical theory. I am especially concerned with how the poet’s and the rhetorician’s understanding of these disciplines is influenced by the Ramist revision of rhetoric, a disciplinary and conceptual shift that had a discernible effect on Pembroke’s writing.

In this chapter's final section, I will show how Pembroke's *Psalmes* evince her concern for the principles of decorum, a demonstrable preoccupation that further indicates that early modern women were not only aware of the conventions of and changes in rhetorical practice, but that at least some of them were able to achieve a lively and comprehensive understanding of how to use its tools effectively. Granted, the extent of Pembroke's familiarity with the intricacies of rhetorical technique is likely the exception rather than the rule; she was remarkably well-educated for a woman of her day, and her position as a prominent member of a powerful family did not come without its own impetus for political persuasion. But if rhetoric is, as Aristotle defines it, not the art of using language to persuade but "an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion" (1.2.1, Kennedy 36), then the Countess of Pembroke's *Psalmes* prove her a master of seeing the available means of persuasion.

I. Private Rhetoric and Public Oratory

To illustrate the extent of Pembroke's familiarity with rhetorical practices, I begin by offering a close reading of one of the more overtly political Psalms. Psalm 72 is one of a group biblical scholar Robert Alter loosely categorizes as the "monarchic psalms" (*Guide* 248), and one that can be easily read as petitioning both a heavenly and an earthly monarch. This psalm opens with an appeal to God to "Teach the kings

sonne" (line 1), and goes on to identify what in particular this speaker wants God to teach the king's son, that is, to "make him the weake support, th'opprest relyve" (line 11). The political message is unmistakable here and throughout the psalm, where the speaker repeatedly asks God to mould a wise and just ruler. This poem, then, is rhetorical in that its topic is political and that its intent is to persuade. Psalm 72 offers a useful illustration of the poet's political tendencies, and it exemplifies the kind of argumentative momentum that some critics have identified in her work. But I have chosen to start here because this psalm also offers many examples of the ways she skilfully deploys the colours of rhetoric, and — more importantly — illustrates the reciprocity of rhetorical form and devotional content that characterizes much of Pembroke's verse.

One such example is found in the second stanza, which begins with a rhetorical figure that is a version of *zeugma*. Puttenham calls *zeugma* "the single supply" because, he says, "by one word we serue many clauses of one congruitie, and may be likened to the man that serues many maisters at once" (163-4). This particular version of "the single supply" is known as *prozeugma*, colourfully dubbed by Puttenham "the Ringleader" because it is at "the forefront of all the seuerall clauses whom he is to serue as a common seruitour" (164). In this instance, the Ringleader is "Make him," which serves "the weake support," "th'opprest relyve," "supply the poore," and "the quarrell-pickers quaile" (lines 11-12). In the fifth stanza, we find another version of the single supply, known as *hypozeugma*. Puttenham calls this

figure “the Rerewarder” because, he writes, “such supplie be placed after all the clauses, and not before nor in the middle” (164). This figure is found in the penultimate section of the stanza, where the final line “hee shall their soules redeeme” (line 47) serves the preceding clauses (or lines) “from hidden sleight” and “from open might” (lines 45 and 46). Each of these uses of *zeugma* emphasizes the supply, which is in both instances the power of God that is equally implied by “Make him” and “hee shall their soules redeeme.” The figure not only stresses divine power, but also carries it forward through the clauses it supplies in the first instance and refers back to the clauses it supplies in the second, thus capturing something of what Pembroke elsewhere calls God’s “eternall essence” (Ps 68, line 7). By rhetorically extending beyond the limits imposed by the poetic line the power of the divine both to mould and to redeem, both figures, *prozeugma* and *hypozeugma*, equally suggest divine omnipresence and allude to God’s eternity.

Also occurring several times in the psalm is the figure of repetition known as *ploce* (or *plоче*), dubbed by Puttenham “the Doubler.” This figure, as Puttenham describes it, is found in “a speedie iteration of one word, but with some little intermissio[n] by inserting one or two words between” (201). The Doubler appears in the sixth stanza “they gold to hym, Arabia gold, shall give” (line 53), and also in the psalm’s opening line, where “kings sonne” becomes “king.” In both instances, the word is modified or revised to take on a new and more significant meaning — gold becomes the more valuable “Arabia gold,” and the crown prince becomes the king.

The allusion to Elizabeth, the “kings sonne” who is now “king,” is clear here: as we know, Elizabeth often referred to herself as “prince,” and princes, as the speaker proclaims in Psalm 47, are “the shields that earth defend” (line 20). Repetition is also important in this opening stanza in another way. Notably, Pembroke chooses to repeat the words “justice” and “judgement” throughout the verse. This repetition of judgement and justice emphasizes the political appeal Pembroke makes here and in the psalm as a whole, whose overarching argument is that with right judgement will come justice, and with justice will come plenty and peace. This poem is undoubtedly an appeal to and celebration of divine justice, but it is also an exhortation that aims to persuade an earthly monarch.

Other kinds of repetition, not in words but in sound, are found throughout. What we call alliteration, Puttenham dubs “the Figure of Like Letter” (174): instances of this figure include “quarrell-pickers quaile” (line 12), “agelesse ages” (line 13), “meades new mown” (line 19), “peacefull plenty” and “plenteous peace” (line 22). These examples are taken from only the first three stanzas, but there are many more. As with Pembroke’s use of *zeugma*, this sort of repetition, by extending the occurrence of a sound across a line or throughout a stanza, echoes and supports the poem’s theme of eternity. Such repetition also creates aural and visual balance, a kind of poetic equilibrium that corresponds with that highlighted in the psalm’s penultimate stanza. In this, the eighth stanza, we find the figure *parison* (or *isocolon*), what Puttenham calls “the Figure of Euen” (214). Here, the speaker’s imaginary

rendering of what perfect justice looks like is fully realized in the stanza's pattern of "perfect blisse" (line 79). Each of the caesuras of the stanza's first four pentametre lines is preceded by two metrical feet, each is followed by three metrical feet, and all four lines are clearly end-stopped. These lines are perfectly balanced, but they are not perfectly symmetrical. They are, however, asymmetrical in an especially fitting way: the increased number of metrical feet after each caesura formally depicts the increasing plentitude described throughout the psalm, abundance that comes with divine justice. The perfect balance the speaker imagines is realized in the stanza's final lines, where all of earth's dwellers will be

as one that is

of perfect blisse

a patterne to the rest. (lines 78-80)

The proper balance of justice and judgement, the speaker claims, will lead to the kind of perfectly balanced pattern described by the stanza's content and most aptly illustrated by its form.

The psalm's most prominent rhetorical figure has a similar effect. I am referring here to the figure known as *antimetabole*, or what Puttenham calls "the Counterchange." This figure, as Puttenham describes it, "takes a couple of words to play with in a verse, and by making them to chaung and shift one into others place they do very pretily exchange and shift the sence" (208). This figure is found twice in the third stanza, in the lines "peacefull plenty joine with plenteous peace," and

“decreas’d shall grow, and grown again decrease” (lines 22 and 24), and in the fourth line of the sixth stanza, “which scantnes dere, and derenes maketh scant” (line 54). In Pembroke’s psalm, these figures do more than “pretily exchange and shift the sence.” *Antimetabole* is a figure that is inherently circular, one that always brings us back to the beginning, since the final word of the figure is a variation of the first — “peacefull” becomes “peace” and “scantnes” becomes “scant.” Pembroke’s use of this figure is not merely rhetorical in the ornamental sense, but is intricately linked with the meaning of the poem as a whole.

The circle, as Puttenham reminds us, is “The most excellent of all the figures Geometrical” (98), and

There is no body nor no place,
Nor any wit that comprehends,
Where it begins, or where it ends:
And therefore all men doe agree,
That it purports eternitie.¹³

In its perfect symmetry, Puttenham also says, the round is “euen & smooth, without any angle, or interruption”: the circle is both “the author of life” and the most perfectly balanced of all patterns (98). That divine circularity could be closely associated with language Thomas Greene makes clear in his discussion of Dante’s use

¹³ These lines are from Puttenham’s poem, “A generall resemblance of the Roundell to God, the world and the Queene” (lines 22-26), which is used to illustrate his description of “The Roundell or Spheare” (98-101).

of a familiar biblical metaphor. "The metaphorical equivalence between the godhead and the letters Alpha and Omega," Greene remarks, "not only points to the supreme circularity of Source and End; it not only exalts human language in its rudimentary alphabetical constituent; it also dramatizes an enduring continuity of linguistic usage and communication through time" (12). For Pembroke, as for "all men," the circle also signifies eternity, the completeness and oneness of the never-ending God who is "of perfect blisse / a patterne to the rest" (lines 79-80).¹⁴ Like Dante, Pembroke also dramatizes "an enduring continuity of linguistic usage," but she does so by using a rhetorical figure rather than the first and last letters of the alphabet.

Pembroke's psalm ends on a note of jubilant celebration: "lett all this Round," the speaker proclaims, "thy honour sound, / so lord, ô be it so" (lines 88-90). This ending provides a sharp contrast with that of the Geneva Bible, which, Pembroke's editors note, definitively stops with "HERE END THE praiers of David, the sonn of Ishái," and it also differs significantly from the ending found in the Sternhold-Hopkins psalter, which concludes the psalm with a simple "Amen" ("Commentary"

¹⁴ Pembroke seems particularly fond of figures that suggest circularity, and they seem especially suited to the divine content of the *Psalmes*. Psalm 90, for example, features the rhetorical figure *chiasmus*, which is really an extended version of *antimetabole*. This psalm, which Pembroke's editors describe as "A meditation on mortality as contrasted with God's eternity and a prayer for God's protection" ("Commentary" 401), ends with a plea for the divine to "supply with aid what we attempt, / our attempts with aid supply" (lines 55-56). As in Psalm 72, this inherently circular figure alludes to the divine eternity that contrasts with human mortality. By beginning and ending with "supply," the figure also emphasizes the never-ending power of God to aid and to redeem humanity.

386).¹⁵ Here, Pembroke doesn't call for an end to prayer, but a beginning.

Pembroke's psalm thus "exalts human language" even as it dramatizes the possibility of "communication through time" (Greene 12): her imagined prayer is not the individual one of David (or of Dante), but an offering of praise sounded by all. As Pembroke's editors note, the "Round" she describes is the sphere of the earth.

The *OED*, in fact, cites the Countess of Pembroke's Psalm 72 as the earliest instance of this usage: I would, however, like to propose a corollary meaning for "Round" in this context, one that is equally suited to the poem's form and its themes. The *OED* also attributes many other contemporary meanings to the word "round," including that of a song "sung by two or more persons, each taking up the strain in turn," and it dates the first English example of this usage as 1530. Given the psalm's substantive emphasis on eternity and its formal preoccupation with circularity, the "Round" might also be read as an explicit reference to the psalm's generic form and, by extension, to the enduring continuity of language. According to her editors, the *OED* "credits Pembroke with the first recorded use of twenty-seven words"

¹⁵ As Pembroke's editors note, this psalm also marks the end of the second book of Psalms. Pembroke here chooses to close this book in the same way her brother closed the first, with "the Geneva rendering 'So be it, even so be it'" that is found at the end of his Psalm 41. This is a departure not only from the "Amen" that ends Psalm 72 in the Sternhold-Hopkins psalter, but also differs from the later King James Version, which closely follows Geneva in ending this second book of Psalms with "the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." Pembroke's choice here indicates not only her independence from antecedent translators, but also her acute sensitivity to the subtleties of form and content — the ending she has chosen seems much more fitting.

("Introduction" 65), and she may very well have invented a new, additional meaning for "round." Even so, it seems unlikely she would have done so wholly unaware of the word's extant meanings or the appropriateness of other connotations of that word within the context of her psalm. If all the singers of this "Round," that is, all the inhabitants of the earth, each take up a strain in turn, then the celebratory song would be literally, not just figuratively, never ending. Read in this way, Pembroke's ending offers a psalm that is also is a never-ending round of song, one that describes and celebrates perfect justice and judgement and is intent on expressing not an end to prayer but an eternal prayer that corresponds with God's eternity: both will become, the speaker proclaims, "in glory one" (line 72). Note also that the final lines of the psalm repeat in assonance the letter "o," which both visually and aurally refers to the "Round," both of the earth and of the song: the "o" is a repeated circle within the circle of the poem's form itself, and both refer by extension to eternity.¹⁶

Pembroke's expression of oneness and eternity in this monarchic psalm is achieved as much in the poem's form as in its content, and much of that poetic form is indebted to the conventions of rhetoric. In this woman poet's version of Psalm 72, alliteration (both assonance and consonance), variations of the figure *zeugma*, and the figures *ploce*, *parison*, and, especially, *antimetabole* emphasize and capture, either

¹⁶ Circularity and eternity are closely connected throughout the *Psalmes*. In Psalm 89, for example, the speaker is more explicit about this connection, describing eternity as "circling time, still ending and beginning . . . where stopp nor start appears" (lines 73-4).

through repetition or through their inherent circularity, the eternality of perfect justice. The rhetorical figures used in this psalm are fully in keeping with and support the poem's content. Pembroke's Psalm 72 aims to collapse the past of King David, the present of Elizabethan England, and an imagined future into one perfect eternity that we can see all at once; as the speaker proclaims at the beginning of both the seventh and eighth stanzas, we need only "Looke" and we shall see a peaceful earth and the eternality of the divine. Pembroke's version of Psalm 72 bridges not only the past, present, and future, but also links poetry and rhetoric in a way that supports Puttenham's claim that "there is nothing so fitte for [the poet], as to be furnished with all the figures that be *Rhetoricall*, and such as do most beautifie language with eloquence & sententiousnes" (196). "Teach the kings sonne" also offers an instance of a woman poet using the art of rhetoric for political purposes, making an appeal to a monarch "to rule thy Realme as justice shall decree" (line 3), and doing so in a way that demonstrates not only her poetic and rhetorical expertise but also her understanding of language's enduring power.

We may, of course, be tempted to ask if Pembroke ranks as either a true poet or a serious rhetor, since her *Psalmes* are, after all, translations (or paraphrases or metaphrases) of extant works.¹⁷ Puttenham, who makes a very sharp distinction

¹⁷ Recognizing the originality of Pembroke's "translations," critics have used various terms to describe the kind of work her *Psalmes* represent. Kinnamon calls the *Psalmes* "paraphrases" (88), while the Sidneys' 1962 editor, William Ringler, prefers "metaphrase." Waller suggests that we use the term "imitation" (*Mary Sidney* 177), as does Fischen when she proposes that the *Psalmes* "would be more rightly termed

between translation and “original” work, might argue that she is neither. “[T]he very Poet,” he maintains, “makes and contriues out of his owne braine both the verse and matter of his poeme, and not by any foreine copie or example, as doth the translator, who therefore may well be sayd a versifier, but not a Poet.” Yet Puttenham also blurs this distinction when he goes on to claim that the poet is “both a maker and a counterfaior: and Poesie an art not only of making, but also of imitation. And this science in his perfection, can not grow but by some diuine instinct, the Platonicks call

‘imitations’ in the classical sense” (“Angell spirit” 263). Hannay, like Kinnamon, favours “paraphrase” (“Mary Sidney” esp. 139). The distinctiveness of Pembroke’s “translations” is attested to by this critical dissatisfaction with the term. But Pembroke’s apparent originality might also be accounted for by the fact that she worked from not one but multiple sources. Hannay identifies Pembroke’s most significant sources as the work of Huguenot and Calvinist writers and the translations of the Marian exiles: “Mary Sidney,” she notes, “consulted the published works of the Genevan community: the annotated Genevan psalms; the commentaries of Calvin in the original and as translated by Golding; and the commentaries of Bèze, dedicated to her uncle the Earl of Huntington, and the English translation by Gilby, dedicated to the Countess of Huntington. To this we may add the metrical psalms begun by Clément Marot and completed by Bèze at Calvin’s request. The countess ‘almost certainly’ would have known Wyatt’s *Seven Penitential Psalms* in terza rima as another literary model” (“Unlock my lipps” 29). One critic, Steinberg, identifies a broader range of sources, proposing that Pembroke may have known Hebrew and worked from the originals as well as other translations. The most thorough account of Pembroke’s sources is, however, found in the “Literary Context” section of the recent Hannay *et.al.* edition of Pembroke’s work. It is clear that Pembroke was influenced by many commentaries on and versions of the Psalms. But most scholars suggest, as does Michael G. Brennan, that the Sidneys’ “primary literary model was the French Psalter of 1562,” begun by Marot and completed by Bèze (42), and most agree, with Fisker, that Pembroke’s *Psalmes* “are the result of extensive and judicious comparison of other translations and commentaries” (“Sacred Parody” 225). From extant manuscripts and from the length of time she worked on the *Psalmes*, it is clear too that Pembroke revised extensively; Ringler famously describes her as an “inveterate tinkerer” (qtd. Waller, *Mary Sidney* 154).

it *furor*" (3). It is true that translation is not wholly "original" work. But, as R.E. Pritchard notes, early modern readers and writers would have had no sense "that engaging in translation-adaptation was a merely parasitic or secondary activity" ("Introduction" 10).¹⁸ It seems clear, too, that Pembroke worked not only by imitation, but also by "some divine instinct." The originality and the poetic sensibility of her renderings of the psalms becomes especially clear in comparison with the translations of other poets. If we consider Pembroke's *Psalmes* side-by-side with some translations of her near-contemporaries, we might very well be tempted to ask if she is doing something as original with her sources as Shakespeare is so famous for doing with his.

In the interest of at least partly illustrating this rather bold claim, I turn to Pembroke's version of one of the seven penitential psalms, Psalm 130: *De profundis*, and consider it in comparison with some versions of her literary predecessors, George Gascoigne's and Sir Thomas Wyatt's translations from the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁹ In his discussion of Gascoigne's and Pembroke's versions of this well-known psalm, Roy

¹⁸ Zim also refutes the belief that translation is "an inferior, non-creative activity." "The argument that metrical psalm versions cannot be considered new or original works because 'the act of translation is a species of submission'," Zim argues, "is based on a misunderstanding of the significance of imitation for a humanist poet, and of the literary processes of imitation themselves" — whether sacred or secular, the art of poetry itself "was considered an art of imitation" (7).

¹⁹ The other penitential Psalms are 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, and 143. I will later discuss Psalm 51.

T. Erikson argues that “Gascoigne provided a model for the technical felicities of the Sidney psalter.” In his comparative reading of this, Gascoigne’s “only metrical paraphrase of a Psalm” (1), and Pembroke’s Psalm 130, Erikson points to many rhetorical similarities between the two, and he makes some astute observations. Given the connections Erikson identifies, it is telling that critics haven’t paid more attention to Pembroke’s poem: Yvor Winters, for example, readily offers *De profundis* in support of his claim that Gascoigne is “one of the great masters of the short poem in the century” (15), but he makes no mention of Pembroke’s or any other translations of Psalm 130. I would like to argue a different point than either Erikson or Winters. The differences between these two penitential psalms are, I think, more significant than their similarities, and it seems that Pembroke’s version has more in common with Wyatt’s than Gascoigne’s: more than that, though, I would suggest that it is precisely those differences that prove Pembroke, in this poem at least, to be the greater master.

Gascoigne’s opening stanza is far more wordy than either Wyatt’s or Pembroke’s; the psalm begins with

From depth of doole wherein my soule doth dwell,
 From heavy heart which harbours in my brest,
 From troubled sprite which sildome taketh rest.
 From hope of heaven, from dreade of darkesome hell.
 O gracious God, to thee I crye and yell.

My God, my Lorde, my lovely Lord aloane,
 To thee I call, to thee I make my moane.
 And thou (good God) vouchsafe in gree to take,
 This woefull plaint,
 Wherein I faint.

Oh heare me then for thy great mercies sake. (lines 1-11)

Erikson makes some important points about the similarities between this and Pembroke's version of Psalm 130, especially in relation to their varying line lengths and their resultingly similar stanzaic forms. The effect of this linear variance is particularly striking at lines 9 and 10 in Gascoigne's poem, where the dimetre couplet replicates the weak voice of the fainting speaker; as Erikson puts it, "When he speaks of fainting, the verses also fail to reproduce the full pentametre pattern established in the first eight lines" (2). It is quite true, as Erikson claims, that the poet here sustains an admirable correspondence of form and content.

But Pembroke's version, with its prevailing rather than secondary dimetre lines, is much more spare and eloquent:

From depth of grief
 where droun'd I ly,
 lord for relief
 to thee I cry:
 my earnest, vehment, cryeng, prayeng,

graunt quick, attentive, heering, waighing.²⁰ (lines 1-6)

In terms of its brevity, Pembroke's version of Psalm 130 shares more with Wyatt's, which begins with a similar expression of despair:

Ffrom depth off sin and from a diepe dispaire,
 From depth off deth, from depth off hertes sorow,
 From this diepe Cave off darknes diepe repayre. (lines 1-3)

From the depths of this cave of despair, Wyatt's speaker goes on in the second stanza to make the appeal to be heard:

To The have I cald O Lord, to be my borow.
 Thow in my voyce, O Lord, perceyve and here
 My hert, my hope, my plaint, my overthrow. (lines 4-6)

Like Gascoigne's version, which also repeats in the second stanza the appeal made in the first, pleading with God to "bende thine eares attentively to hear" and "behold me how I wayle" (lines 12 and 13), Wyatt's psalm manages in two stanzas what Pembroke's achieves in one: both poems by Wyatt and Gascoigne have eight stanzas in total (the same number as the original), while Pembroke's has only six. This is a significant difference, and the brevity of Pembroke's version can, I think, be

²⁰ Pembroke often uses similar techniques to reinforce a speaker's tone of desperation and despair. The despairing speaker of Psalm 69, for example, describes in typographically uneven lines a "sincking soul" that from a "gulph" or "whirling hoale" calls out to "god with bootlesse crying" (lines 2-6). The paired dimeter line is also featured among the dominant tetrameter lines in Psalm 88, where the speaker also describes calling out to God from a deep and dark "pitt."

attributed to her arguably keener and more subtle understanding of how rhetoric can be used to poetic advantage.

Both Gascoigne and Wyatt also rely heavily on alliteration, most notably in Gascoigne's use of "depth," "doole," "doth dwell," and "dreade of darkesome," and Wyatt's similar "depth," "diepe dispaire," "depth off deth, and "darknes diepe." This heavy alliteration and pointed consonance does capture the heavy heart and the weariness of the despairing speaker. But, as Puttenham points out, this "Figure of Like Letter" should not be over-used; rather, it "doth well if it be not too much vsed, for then it falleth into the vice which shalbe hereafter spoken of called *Tautologia*" (174). Pembroke, however, uses a much less heavy-handed approach to achieve the same effect, one that allows for a more harmonious merging of form and content. The fairness of the drowning speaker's voice is captured, as it is in Gascoigne's *De profundis*, by the stanza's dimetre lines; in Pembroke's version, the stanza begins with four of these faint lines. The speaker's urgency and desperation, though, are captured not in many lines and through heavy consonance, but more adeptly and elegantly with the rhetorical figure *brachiologia*, seen in the lines "my earnest, vehment, cryeng, prayeng, / graunt quick, attentive, heering, waighing." This figure Puttenham calls "the Cutted Comma," and "we vtter in that fashion," he says, "when either we be earnest, or would seeme to make hast" (213). Both effects seem to apply here, where the speaker in Pembroke's psalm pleads in earnest for hasty rescue from the "depth of grief" (line 1). Pembroke, then, manages in far fewer words to evoke the drowning

despair of the speaker and articulate an urgent plea for relief, and she does so without relying on the heavy alliteration, repetition, and lengthy lines of her predecessors.

The resulting effect is distinctive. This distinction is most aptly described as a more harmonious merging of form and content. To take this claim further, it also seems safe to say that, where the others offer oratorical assertion, Pembroke's Psalm 130 mimetically demonstrates. This is not to say that Pembroke's psalm is not rhetorical, but it does see her using the conventions of rhetoric to dramatic (or poetic) rather than oratorical effect. This is a subtle distinction to make, for certainly much oratory is highly dramatic. Fisker makes a related point when she describes Pembroke's experience with psalm translation as a learning process: "by setting herself the task of condensing and tightening her brother's stanzas," Fisker explains, "Mary Sidney taught herself how to sharpen an image by eliminating superfluous expressions and how to dramatize rather than explain" ("Education" 169). Fisker's words perhaps more accurately identify the difference I am trying to establish here, that is, that to a greater degree, Pembroke's psalm dramatizes the speaker's situation while Wyatt's and Gascoigne's speakers spend a great deal more time and energy explaining it. Pembroke's plea to God to be heard is far from being non-rhetorical in either its form or its aim, but it is rhetorical without being obtrusively so.

Both the poet and the orator do rely on the conventions of rhetoric, and it is true that the orator's function is conceived in terms very similar to the poet's. But there is, nevertheless, a distinct and crucial difference between the two. Philip Sidney

in his *Defence* explains that "poesy" is "a speaking picture — with this end, to teach and delight" (25); in his study of poetry and courtliness, Daniel Javitch confirms that "the orator," on the other hand, "must fulfill three functions: to prove (or to instruct), to delight, and to persuade." What is missing from the former description stands out in the latter: for the orator, Javitch explains, "persuasion is the object of highest priority" (39). Pembroke is, of course, a courtier as well as a poet, and "the prime function for the courtier," Javitch says, "is to delight" (40). It is clear that Pembroke's poem aims to teach as well as delight, but her social standing must be acknowledged. Though her aristocratic status and courtly associations might at least partly explain her poem's closer connections with Wyatt's, class difference surely has much to do with the most salient distinction between her *De profundis* and the non-aristocratic Gascoigne's. In the latter's version, persuasion rather than delight is obviously the object of highest priority, while in Pembroke's psalm, the speaker's persuasive intent fades into the background. Though all poetry to some extent aims to persuade, Pembroke's psalm more closely resembles a delightful (and instructive) "speaking picture" than it does a persuasive oratory.

This difference can be largely explained by Pembroke's comparatively more dramatic and mimetic use of the colours of rhetoric, and it is perhaps no where more obvious than in the two poems' closing stanzas. In Gascoigne's psalm, the speaker adamantly insists that God will rescue the despairing believer:

Hee wyll redeeme our deadly drowping state,

He wyll bring home the sheepe that goe astraye,
 He wyll helpe them that hope in him alwaye:
 He wyll appease our discorde and debate,
 He wyll soone save, though we repent us late.
 He wyll be ours if we continewe his,
 He wyll bring bale to joye and perfect blisse.
 He wyll redeeme the flocke of his electe,
 From all that is,
 Or was amisse.

Since *Abrahams* heyres dyd first his Lawes reject. (lines 78-88)

As Erikson points out, this stanza is not only dominated by the figure *anaphora*, with eight of its eleven lines beginning with "He wyll," the lines' beginnings also constitute a loose version of the figure *chiasmus*. That is, the opening words of the first two lines, "He wyll redeeme" and "He wyll bring," are mirrored by the identical words, inverted, at the beginnings of the stanza's seventh and eighth lines, which read "He wyll bring" and "He wyll redeeme." Gascoigne, in this final stanza, also departs from the established pattern of four opening anaphoras found in the poem's preceding stanzas, and this introduction of another (and very striking) figure, Erikson points out, "draws further attention to his invention" (3).

Erikson's point is a good one; Gascoigne's use of figures in the psalm's last stanza does indeed emphasize his invention. But it remains questionable whether that

invention should be highlighted: it does seem conventional and overworked, and it doesn't really exemplify the kind of fresh invention Gascoigne himself advocates in his other writings. But, as Douglas Peterson observes, Gascoigne the poet doesn't always correspond with Gascoigne the literary critic. Psalm 130 aptly illustrates Peterson's claim that, although "Gascoigne had urged originality of invention in *Certain Notes of Instruction*," such originality didn't necessarily apply to his own work; rather, this poet "showed little inclination to follow his own advice" (167).

In their discussions of Gascoigne's invention, both Erikson and Peterson thus point to an important difference between Gascoigne's *De profundis* and Pembroke's. In urging his argument that Gascoigne's poem influenced Pembroke's, Erikson perhaps over-emphasizes the psalms' similarities at the expense of minimizing some of their important differences. The crucial distinction to make here between Gascoigne's psalm and Pembroke's is that Gascoigne's deliberately draws our attention to the "invention," that is, both the poem's poetic form and its prominent use of rhetorical figures, which result in what Erikson admits are Gascoigne's "slightly heavyhanded paraphrases" (7). Pembroke's poem, though, is far from "heavyhanded." Rather than drawing our attention to her invention as Gascoigne does, she manages to achieve a kind of harmonious merging of form and content that is marked by her unobtrusive and scarcely discernible, yet highly effective, use of rhetorical figures.²¹

²¹ Other critics, such as Waller and Elaine Beilin, make similar claims about the fitting correspondence found in Pembroke's verse, but, I might add, they do not do so in rhetorical terms. Waller, for instance, points out that "the Countess of Pembroke

Pembroke's psalm also ends with a mirroring figure. Rather than extending over several lines like Gascoigne's *anaphora* and *chiasmus*, though, the figure she uses achieves the same effect in a single line. As in Psalm 72, her version of *De profundis* employs the figure *antimetabole* to striking effect with the poem's final words, "forgetting follies, fautes forgiving" (line 36). Rather than being absolutely *antimetabolic*, though, this line constitutes a synonymous Counter-Change, "forgetting" being synonymous with "forgiving" and "follies" with "faults." As with Gascoigne's *chiasmus*, Pembroke's line repeats words (or, in this case, synonyms) in inverse order, which brings us back to where we began. As much as the line's content confirms closure, the figure it employs alludes (as it does in Psalm 72) to the eternity of the divine. The poem's last words insist that God's forgiveness is complete and final; at the same time the form those words take confirms that God can and will perpetually forgive and forget our never-ending faults and follies. The figure's repetition of the soft alliteration of the letter "f" also aurally supports its substantive description of an eternally loving and gently merciful God.

This figure also achieves its effect through contrast and increase. Though synonymous, the first and last parts of the line also contrast in a way that suggests the

clearly endeavoured to match form, meaning, and tone" (*Mary Sidney* 193), while Beilin notes that "by marrying form and content, her writing escapes the safety and disguise of being mere doctrine, and becomes poetry." Pembroke's *Psalmes*, Beilin goes on, thus mark "the first time that form has been elevated to the central role of moving readers' minds and penetrating their consciences" (*Redeeming* 146). I wholly endorse both Waller's and Beilin's comments, but I also think that rhetoric plays a large role in determining Pembroke's success.

increasing plentitude celebrated in Psalm 72: forgiving is greater than forgetting, and faults are greater than follies. Four short words capture the tremendous range and power of God's infinite mercy: the speaker confirms that God can forget the smallest follies and will forgive the greatest faults, and the arrangement of those words suggests that He will do so eternally. This figure is not repetition for its own sake, nor is it superfluous ornament. Integral to the poem's meaning, it is a stunning example of the Gascoignian principle that advocates "depth of device in the invention" (163). Again, in contrast with Gascoigne's psalm, Pembroke manages to demonstrate mimetically rather than oratorically assert, and she manages to communicate — substantively, formally, and rhetorically — in a single tetrametre line (with the addition of a feminine ending) what Gascoigne adamantly avers over a lengthy and rather plodding eleven-line stanza. Pembroke thus uses rhetorical technique to achieve an originality and freshness of invention that Gascoigne's poem lacks, even though his poem is equally indebted to the conventions of rhetoric.

Wyatt's Psalm 130 ends in a similarly exhortative mode, but without the kind of mirroring or circular figures seen in Gascoigne's and Pembroke's:

Let Israell trust unto the Lord alway,
 Ffor grace and favour arn his propertie:
 Plenteus rannzome shall come with hym I say,
 And shall redeme all our iniquitie. (lines 28-31)

Like Gascoigne's, Wyatt's *De profundis* tends to assert rather than demonstrate; it doesn't dramatize so much as it exhorts. Wyatt asserts the speaker's presence and vehemence with the metadiscursive "I say" rather than allowing the discourse itself to define the mood and shape of that presence, as Pembroke does so deftly in her psalm. In both of these antecedent versions of Psalm 130, the speakers' voices are those of the orator: where Pembroke's poem lets the speaker's anguish, vehemence, and despair do the persuading, their poems offer speakers who are manifestly aware of an audience that needs to be persuaded. Read in this way, it becomes clear that Zim's comment about Pembroke's tendency "to overdo the surface detail of rhetorical ornamentation" (195) misses the mimetic point: such a claim seems better applied to Wyatt's and Gascoigne's work than it does to Pembroke's. Both Wyatt's and Gascoigne's psalms, the latter's in particular, are overtly and distinctly oratorical; as a result, both speakers sound very much like Calvinist preachers exhorting a wayward congregation.

Such a distinction might lead us again to question whether Pembroke's intent is indeed rhetorical. In response, I would again suggest that the difference between Pembroke's Psalm 130 and those of her predecessors is oratorical rather than rhetorical. This difference is at least partly accounted for by the possibility that the Sidneys didn't compose their psalms with public speaking in mind: critics do generally agree that the Sidney-Pembroke psalter was, as Richard Todd puts it,

“intended to serve a private, devotional purpose” (77).²² That the *Psalms* were not intended to be public poems is further suggested by the means chosen for their dissemination. Ann Baynes Coiro reminds us that the growth of print culture meant that “manuscript became, in practice, a feminine mode of writing, suspect but carefully surveilled, containable and decorous; print, on the other hand, was figured as a more daring, aggressive, *masculine* mode”; accordingly, Pembroke appeared in print “only as the ministering handmaiden for the body of a dead brother’s works” (359). That her psalms were meant to be private Pembroke suggests in their content as well as through their scribal publication: these poems are very much about their speaker and God, a God who only can know the “closest clossett of my thought” (Ps 139 line 6).

Despite the many interpretive claims and the historical evidence to the contrary, I would still argue that Pembroke’s intent is rhetorical and public, even though the *Psalms* themselves seem intent on capturing something very private, the devout Protestant’s personal relationship with the divine.²³ The sharp distinction

²² Some argue that the Sidney-Pembroke psalms were also not intended for singing either. Fisker, for one, suggests that “the Sidneian psalms” were not meant for public oratory or for public singing as other psalters were, but that they “addressed a parallel tradition of reading and reciting the psalms in solitary, meditative sessions, examining the relationship between the individual spirit and God” (“Education” 167).

²³ This is not to say that other critics don’t recognize the private/public duality I am highlighting in Pembroke’s work. Beilin, for instance, makes a similar point when she suggests that Pembroke’s *Psalms* can be seen “both as a public act of devotion and a private dedication of Mary Sidney to the role of divine poet. The prefatory address to the queen confirms the first, and the dedication to her brother

between private and public critics tend to make when discussing the Sidney-Pembroke psalter is more convincingly attributed to Pembroke's mode of representation than the *Psalmes*' intent. First, manuscript circulation does not necessarily imply a desire to remain out of the public eye. We are all familiar with what Wall describes as "an aristocratic resistance to publication" (*Imprint* 15), and it is well known that aristocrats of Pembroke's stature looked down on print and believed scribal publication to be more suited to writers of their class. Second, it is also possible that Pembroke did write her psalms with singing in mind. Aemilia Lanyer certainly believed this to be the case: in her dedicatory poem "The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of *Pembrooke*," the speaker dreams of those "holy Sonnets" sung at the spring of "*Pergus*," and they prove to be "the heavenli'st musick . . . / That ever earthly eares did entertaine" (lines 129-30). In light of this evidence, what might appear to be Pembroke's emphasis on the personal and the private is perhaps more self-protective than anything.

Such an inference seems especially plausible in light of Ronald Huebert's recent discussion of the gendering of early modern privacy, where he identifies "a

bears witness to the second" (148). Hannay is more explicit about Pembroke's public intentions when she notes that her elegiac statement in "To the Angell spirit," one that implies that her *Psalmes* are addressed to her dead brother alone, "is immediately contradicted by the placement of this dedicatory poem beside one to Queen Elizabeth, implying a royal audience, and by her circulation of the Sidneian *Psalmes* through the aristocratic medium of scribal publication" ("Woman's Role" 44).

deep-seated ambivalence about privacy in women's writing" (59).²⁴ Since public speech was considered inappropriate for all women, and was thought to be wholly unsuited to virtuous women in particular, what might appear to be Pembroke's privatizing tendencies are perhaps strategic in that, by substantively emphasizing the private, she at least appears to avoid the realm of public discourse. Pembroke, as I have shown above, does use an art that had always aimed to serve the public speaker: even if she uses that art to express something intensely private, such usage doesn't necessarily exclude an intention more public than the poems' content may at times suggest. Pembroke uses rhetoric on behalf of a genre that is perhaps an inherently private one, but the privacy depicted in her verse doesn't also mean that it is not intended to serve a public function or that it isn't a publicly oriented expression of a personal experience.

Moreover, to emphasize the privacy of her *Psalmes* at the expense of minimizing or altogether occluding Pembroke's more public intentions denies the dual role of the Psalms themselves. With the Reformation, in particular, the biblical Psalms came to encompass more clearly both the public and the private. In sixteenth-century England, psalms became very popular and their public singing, by private

²⁴ Huebert also observes that this ambivalence can be seen in more recent scholarship on early modern women's writing, where "There appears to be a rhetorical trope by means of which women's privacy is first rehabilitated and then reinscribed as belonging to the public sphere" (66 n. 31). This trope is, I would suggest, an important one in Pembroke's *Psalmes* and also in the writings of her niece, Lady Mary Wroth. Aemilia Lanyer, on the other hand, makes no attempt to disguise her public intentions: she is, however, the early modern exception and not the rule.

individuals rather than the Latin-speaking clergy, was encouraged. Coverdale, for one, “wanted carters and ploughmen to whistle ‘psalms, hymns, and such godly songs as David is occupied withal’ and women to sing them as they spin” (Hannay, “Woman’s Role” 45). At the same time, though, the Psalms also became more private; as Hannay points out, they were also “considered particularly appropriate for private meditation” (“Woman’s Role” 46). But this psalmodic duality was nothing new. The Reformation did not invent but rather highlighted the Psalms’ inherently public and private nature, which, I suspect, simply became more noticeable with the shift to the vernacular, a change that meant the Psalms could now be recited in public and read in private by many. In fact, the simultaneously public and private nature of the Psalms is a feature of the originals, where the presumed poet, David, evinces what Jan Lawson Hinely describes as a “dependence on art in his search for a savable self and union with God [that] emphasizes the interrelated significance of poetry as both the ‘private’ expression of the inward psychology of the poet and as a ‘public’ statement to and for an external audience” (150). Hinely goes on to describe “The nature of the psalms . . . as simultaneously private outpourings and public prayers” (156).²⁵

²⁵ Greenblatt, referring to Wyatt’s penitential psalms specifically, makes a similar point when he argues that “the inwardness of these poems can in no way be conceived as Wyatt’s private affair, any more than can the controversial writings of More and Tyndale.” Rather, “The intensely personal moment,” Greenblatt goes on, “is intertwined with the great public crisis of the period, with religious doctrine and the nature of power” (119).

Like David, Pembroke dramatizes the private individual's daily struggle with faith, and her readers often point to the ways her *Psalmes* highlight this struggle. But there is also much evidence, both formal and substantive, to indicate a more public aim. I would suggest that the critical tendency to emphasize Pembroke's private intentions and the *Psalmes*' private content may very well have something to do with her perceived tendency also to feminize the psalms. Fisker, for instance, observes that "one facet of this private Mary Sidney shines through in her images of birth and child care." In such imagery, Fisker goes on, she "invested a unique tenderness" that "renders those sections of the *Psalmes* softly luminous." This uniqueness Fisker attributes to Pembroke's private and personal experience as a woman. Having borne children and having suffered a miscarriage herself, Fisker goes on, Pembroke "never forgot the reality of the experience behind the comparison" ("Education" 176).²⁶ Fisker does have a point, and a valid one. We might, however, also ask if the influence of separate sphere ideology, which twenty-first century readers know perhaps all too well, doesn't also colour our readings of Pembroke's *Psalmes*. It is arguably true that the division of public and private did become more distinct in the early modern period, and also that the private became increasingly associated with the

²⁶ Elsewhere, Fisker suggests that Pembroke "drew upon her private perceptions as a woman and a mother to transform her paraphrases of the Psalms into individual exercises in meditation" ("Angell spirit" 263).

feminine.²⁷ But the poetic articulation of a private and feminine experience doesn't necessarily imply a non-rhetorical intent.

One critic, Suzanne Trill, objects to the critical tendency to read the *Psalmes* as feminine and private for reasons similar to my own. To read Pembroke's work as a personal account of distinctly feminine experiences as Fisker does, Trill argues, "demonstrate[s] a desire to recover a 'feminine' voice in these psalms which is inappropriate." Rather than looking for such examples of femininity, Trill goes on, "it is more productive to examine the ways in which the form of her translations self-consciously draws attention to the fact that they are poetic" ("Sixteenth-Century" 150-1). I am here attempting to do something very similar to what Trill suggests, except my interest lies in how these translations are self-consciously both poetic and rhetorical. Elsewhere, Trill suggests that it was not the femininity sought by latter day critics that attracted contemporary readers to the *Psalmes* but their value as a poetic and devotional text. Pembroke's contemporaries, Trill points out, "seem to have appreciated her translations as poetry, as poetry, moreover, which brings glory to God and to the nation" ("Spectres" 206). Here, Trill resists the kind of

²⁷ See, for example, Retha Warnicke's "Private and Public: The Boundaries of Women's Lives in early Stuart England." Though there has, as Warnicke acknowledges, been much debate about what public and private meant to the early modern English man or woman, and that the extent to which women were expected to keep "private" lives varied according to social factors such as class, it is true that the lives of early modern women were, as Warnicke proposes, "expected to be and were much more private than those of their modern counterparts" (129) or, I would add, those of their medieval predecessors.

compartmentalizing of women and their writing to a rigidly feminine realm to which I object in Chapter One: she, too, recognizes that reading women's writing as first and foremost the product of women limits our appreciation of their work and their place in literary history.

The point both Trill and I make is suggested most clearly, I think, in the way Pembroke uses maternal imagery in her version of Psalm 51. Rather than supporting the claims of critics who argue that Pembroke's *Psalmes* attest to the necessarily private nature of feminine experience, her version of Psalm 51 leads to a very different conclusion. This psalm, I will go on to show, suggests that what is so often read as distinctively feminine imagery is in this instance used on behalf a public, political, and even persuasive intent. Pembroke's intentions become especially clear when her psalm is compared with Wyatt's. First, I would like to point out that this particular Psalm, another of the seven penitential psalms, is one that already held special political significance for Pembroke. Psalm 51, Hannay notes, was recited by Lady Jane Grey on the scaffold, it is alluded to by Philip Sidney in his *Defence*, and it has a special prominence in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, a volume Pembroke likely knew well.²⁸ The significance of Psalm 51 is also indicated by its form: as Hannay observes, Pembroke's use of rime royal in her version further "underscores its importance" ("Unlock my lipps" 28).

²⁸ Hannay notes that the Sidneys "owned a copy of 'two books of Martirs' (the two volumes known as *Foxe's book of Martyrs*)" and that they "would have been particularly interested in the account of their aunt" ("Spirituality" 70).

Psalm 51 also held special political significance for Wyatt, who may have translated the penitential psalms while imprisoned in the Tower, accused of various political, religious, and sexual offences.²⁹ As a penitential psalm, Wyatt's version of "*Miserere mei Deus*," emphasizes the sinfulness and the remorse of the speaker.³⁰ Given that David's poem was written in response to the sexual crime he committed with Bathsheba and that Wyatt was imprisoned in the Tower because he was, among other things, suspected of adultery with Anne Boleyn, it is appropriate that Wyatt's lines also stress conception, birth, and original sin: "Fformed in offence; conceyvid in like case," the speaker confesses, "Ame nowght but synn from my natyvite" (lines 31-32).³¹ In Wyatt's poem, though, conception and birth are allotted two short lines that seem intent on asserting the speaker's hopelessly fallen nature.

²⁹ If not written precisely at this time, his *Paraphrase* of the seven penitential psalms was written during a very tenuous time for Wyatt, when a number of his friends and associates lost their heads, and he likely lived in daily fear of losing his own. As Alexandra Halasz points out, Wyatt's psalms were written "between 1534 and 1542, a period that encompasses the deaths by execution of Thomas More, John Fisher, Anne Boleyn, and Thomas Cromwell" (325).

³⁰ This is also the title of Psalms 56 and 57. But "This most familiar of the seven Penitential Psalms," Pembroke's editors point out, "is usually known by its Latin incipit, '*Miserere mei*'" ("Commentary" 368).

³¹ Pembroke's editors point out that the emphasis on original sin is conventional, and is found in both the Bèze and Genevan versions. Bèze, they note, "acknowledges the special theological significance of the Psalm," in which he identifies "two principall pointes of true religion: the one, of Originall sinne . . . the other of the abuse of sacrifices" (qtd. "Commentary" 368). "In all the Genevan versions," they also observe, "the treatment of these central doctrines is nearly identical" ("Commentary" 368).

These references to conception and nativity take on a greater and different significance in Pembroke's version of Psalm 51. The most salient difference is perhaps seen in Pembroke's expanded use of maternal imagery, where she can be seen to take advantage of an opportunity, one afforded by the original, to speak in defence of her sex. By so doing, she presents an argument that has sociopolitical and thus public intentions. The significance of Pembroke's use of maternal imagery becomes especially clear in comparison with Wyatt's "Fformed in offense; conceyvid in like case." Pembroke expands the image and lingers on the topic:

My mother, loe! when I began to be,
 conceaving me, with me did sinne conceive:
 and as with living heate shee cherisht me
 corruption did like cherishing receive. (lines 15-18)

Pembroke's more expansive and more emotive rendering of conception and gestation presents a notable contrast with Wyatt's rather conventional assertion of the doctrine of original sin. Pembroke's interpretation and her rendering of these lines contrasts not only with Wyatt's version of the Psalm, but also with the interpretation offered in Calvin's commentary, where, Pembroke's editors point out, he "expounds verse 7 as 'a lightsome text for the proof of original sin, wherin Adam hath wrapped all mankynd'" ("Commentary" 369). Though we might argue here that Calvin's emphasis on Adam marks a refreshing departure from the more usual emphasis on Eve as the cause of humanity's fall, Calvin's decision to delete her altogether is suspect

— such a glaring omission also suggests her lesser importance if not utter insignificance.³² Unlike Wyatt's psalm or Calvin's commentary, Pembroke's description centres not on original sin nor does it focus on Adam alone. Rather than altogether occluding woman from the passage as Calvin does or highlighting original sin as both Wyatt and Calvin do, Pembroke's passage foregrounds the feminine. Her rendering of these lines centres on maternity, and she stresses not feminine culpability but maternal love.

Typically for Pembroke, the shift in emphasis I am describing here is in large measure rhetorically achieved. Pembroke's suggestive use of rhetorical technique is especially notable in the *epanalepsis* found in the stanza's second line. Puttenham calls this figure "the Eccho sound," or "the slow return" (200), terms that equally suggest the emphasizing effects of such repetition. This figure features the same word at the beginning and the end of a line; in this case, the figure offers variations of the same word, "conceaving" and "conceave," at the beginning and end of line 16. Pembroke's

³² This reading is suggested in Calvin's other writings. In his *Commentaries* on Genesis, Eve's story seems as important as Adam's, but it does end with Calvin's rather willful reading of her sentence. Eve's subjection to her husband had, Calvin claims, been previously "liberal and gentle," but she and all her progeny are "cast into servitude" because of her transgression. Calvin is able to draw this conclusion because he assumes that "Thy desire shall be unto thy husband" is synonymous with "Thou shalt desire nothing but what thy husband wishes" (172). Calvin's tendency to read (or not read) what he wishes is also apparent in the *Institutes*. In his lengthy discussion of original sin in Chapter One of Book Two, Calvin focusses almost exclusively on Adam, referring to Eve only once as "the woman" whose "disobedience was the beginning of the Fall" (245). Eve is not absolved, but her presence is occluded — Adam takes center stage while she almost completely disappears.

use of this figure reorients the emphasis on original sin found in Wyatt's paraphrase and in Calvin's commentary on the psalm. Rather than stressing original sin as these antecedent writers do, Pembroke's rhetorical figure highlights conception. The "conceaving" that becomes "conceave" at the end of the stanza's second line directs our attention toward conception, even though "sinne" remains integral to that very act. Original sin does remain explicitly present, as it must: bearing children in pain was, after all, believed to be a consequence of the Fall, and Eve's punishment is very clearly stated in Genesis. Dispensing with the concept of original sin entirely would be unfitting for any believer and perhaps even more unfitting for a devout woman. Even so, the doctrine of original sin is no longer the sole occupant of the stanza: it must share the stage with maternity. What Wyatt forthrightly terms "nowght but synn" becomes much more complicated (and thus more ambiguous) in Pembroke's psalm; her version of Psalm 51 stresses the maternal act of conception as much as it does the sinfulness inherent in that act.

Conception is emphasized in different ways at the beginning and at the end of Pembroke's line. This change in emphasis is achieved in the line's differing semantic representation of agency. In the first instance, "conceaving me" depicts the speaker's mother as the active agent, the animated subject who conceives the speaker. There is a notable shift in agency after the caesura, though, where the mother has effectively disappeared and sin becomes the agent, "with me did sinne conceave." Certainly, the speaker here could be suggesting that the mother is still the agent in that she is

conceiving the child with or in “sinne,” but the fact remains that agency, if not entirely redirected, becomes at least ambiguous. To put it another way, it is arguable here that the mother remains active, conceiving “me” with sin, but the way the figure is used leaves open the possibility that the conception of and in sin is separate from the mother’s conception of the child. In effect, this figure puts enough distance between the mother and sin to separate the two — original sin, in this formulation, remains semantically distinct from maternity.

A similarly bifurcating effect is apparent in the stanza’s subsequent two lines, where “cherisht” in the first instance becomes “cherishing” in the second. This rhetorical figure of repetition rhetorician Richard A. Lanham calls *conduplicatio*. Though Puttenham doesn’t offer a precisely synonymous figure, it might also be considered a version of *ploce* or *traductio*, or what Puttenham calls “the Tranlacer” (203). This repetition emphasizes the idea that with maternity comes “cherishing,” an emphasis that further complicates the line’s simultaneous rendering of the concept of original sin. In effect, love and sin are brought together in a kind of oxymoronic juxtaposition, one not so different from that of Eve and Mary. It is possible that Pembroke may have had a distinctly Christian reading in mind when she wrote this psalm: Eve’s original sin may be the cause of conception, but the emphasis on “cherishing” does suggest an underlying association with the Christian belief that she and all of humanity are redeemed through Mary’s immaculate, sinless conception of Christ. Read in this way, this juxtaposition offers a further comment on the doctrine

of original sin, suggesting that conception can't be all bad if it brings forth maternal love in general and, for this Christian psalmist, the birth of the Redeemer in particular.

Though maternal love, as the speaker admits, originates in the corruption of "sinne," it is suggestive that the speaker acknowledges this corruption on a distinctly separate line from "and as with living heate shee cherisht me" (line 17), which semantically and visually separates the two. It is important to note as well that, in this line, the subject and object are perfectly clear: "shee cherisht me." The mother figure is here most clearly depicted as an active, loving agent who cherishes the speaker with "living heate." It is true that the mother is quickly displaced, fading into the background with the subsequent line's "corruption did like cherishing receive" (line 18). At the same time, though, corruption may be associated with the kind of "living heat" embodied by a mother's earthly love, but the mother is also partly disassociated from "corruption" through the use of rhetorical repetition.

In Pembroke's Psalm 51, a mother's love is depicted, rhetorically and semantically at least, as transcending earthly corruption even as it affirms the impossibility of escaping that corruption; or, as Fisker puts it, this stanza offers "a striking portrait of frustrated maternal energy that is not only helpless to save the child from sin, but actually generates the child's fate" ("Education" 178). It is true, as Fisker claims, that the psalm does offer a portrait of a very earthly kind of love, and it is also true that the speaker is careful to distinguish between the mother's love and

that of the divine. Pembroke makes this distinction within the same stanza, where she describes divine love in terms very different from those used to describe a mother's cherishing. Unlike the inevitably tainted love of the earthly mother who lives in the fallen world, God's "love to purest good doth cleave" (line 19). This love seems quite different from the "living heate" offered by the speaker's mother; as Fisker points out, the "instinctive animalism" implied by this description does emphasize "our sensual origins" ("Education" 178). Certainly this sensuality, as well as the oppression suggested by "living heate" is articulated in other images of gestation in Pembroke's psalms, including that found in Psalm 71, where the speaker proclaims to have once been "imprison'd in my mother" (line 19) before being freed by God. Yet the very fact that maternal love and divine love are described within a single stanza is suggestive, for it links together even as it contrasts these sacred and profane versions of love. More importantly, this speaker is capable of comprehending both: this love of "purest good," we are told, "my trewand soule in thie hid schoole hath learned" (line 21). In this psalm, the divine and the maternal are closely linked, and it doesn't seem implausible that maternity is associated both with corruption and with divine love.

In these ways, Pembroke's Psalm 51 offers a subtle reworking of the original source, using rhetorical technique to shift the substantive emphasis in a way that resists foregrounding the human frailty and sinfulness implicit in the doctrine of original sin and explicit in David's lament over his own sexual sins. The passage

might also be read as Pembroke's oblique defence of her sex, who, through the figure of Eve, is so often blamed for humanity's fall from grace. It is true that many exegetes, Calvin included, hold Adam at least if not more responsible than his wife for having "wrapped all mankynd" in original sin. But it is also true that Eve and, by extension, all women had for centuries carried the brunt of the blame, and that Calvin's reference to Adam alone may not represent so much a desire to hold him primarily responsible as it does a belief in Eve's ultimate irrelevance. Pembroke reorients the focus toward woman, and this, together with the passage's emphasis on cherishing, both of the maternal and the divine kind, may very well represent a subtle attempt to persuade the reader from perpetuating the general condemnation of all women that is so often concomitant with any declaration of the concept of original sin. Or, at the very least, the stanza suggests an attempt on Pembroke's part to dissuade the reader from unconsciously subscribing to the sort of regimented and doctrinal thinking Calvin's interpretation and Wyatt's treatment of the subject in his psalm suggest. Seen in this light, not only the form of the stanza but also its content become rhetorical.

This psalm also shares some rhetorical similarities with Psalms 72 and 130. Most notably, the figure *antimetabole* is also found in Psalm 51, where it makes a notable appearance in the second line of the second stanza, where the speaker acknowledges "my filthie fault, my faultie filthines" (line 9). In this instance, though, the inherent circularity of the figure does not allude to divine eternity, as it does in

Psalms 72 and 130, as much as it does to the speaker's limitless potential to err. By acknowledging the "filthie fault" in *antimetabolic* form, the line alludes to the endless cycle of sin and repentance that marks the postlapsarian Christian's earthly existence. Here, we may appear to have a rhetorical contradiction, witnessed by Pembroke's use of the same rhetorical figure to depict both the goodness of the divine and the depravity of human nature. But the never-ending devotion necessary to human redemption does correspond with the eternity of the divine; as Helen Wilcox observes, "devotion is by its very nature a constantly repeated experience" ("My Soule in Silence" 22). Given the necessarily perpetual nature of devotion, both human frailty and divine eternity are properly expressed through the same rhetorical figure, as the former is in this psalm and the latter is in Psalm 72. Moreover, Pembroke elsewhere explicitly affirms this correspondence of devotion and divinity. In Psalm 93, for instance, the speaker describes the eternal God as "he who endles one remaines, / one, the same, in changlesse plight" (lines 7-8), and also proclaims the necessity of eternal devotion when she later asserts that "holy worshipp never dies / in thy howse where we adore" (lines 15-16). In Psalm 67, this similarity is depicted substantively and formally, again in *antimetabolic* form: "God, the nations praise thee shall, / thee, shall praise the nations all" (lines 9-10). Rather than marking a contradiction in rhetorical terms, Pembroke's use of such figures demonstrates her intimate familiarity with the conventions of rhetoric; as Brian Vickers points out, "figures are not fixed" but "flexible." That Pembroke is aware that the figures and tropes of rhetoric "can be

effective channels for quite varied states of mind or levels of argument” (Vickers, *Classical Rhetoric* 121) is surely attested to by her fluid and thorough understanding of how they can be used to expressive advantage.

Not surprisingly for readers of a woman poet whose work had long been regarded as secondary or even irrelevant next to her brother’s, some critics offer a very different assessment of Pembroke’s work and the extent of her literary expertise. Freer, for instance, cites such rhetorical figures as evidence of Pembroke’s poetic shortcomings, though he doesn’t seem to recognize the evidence he invokes as rhetorical. For example, this critic uses the line quoted from Psalm 51 above, “my filthie faulte, my faultie filthines,” to illustrate Pembroke’s ostensibly awkward use of repetition, what Freer suggests is “only for repetition itself, rather than for logical linking.”³³ Such repetition, Freer goes on to argue, makes the line “confusing or trite” (*Music* 95). Freer offers other examples of the limitations attested to by Pembroke’s use of repetition in other Psalms, particularly 73, 74, 76, and 77. In these examples, he acknowledges, “some of this repetition is of course present for the rhyme, and some of it for the meter” (*Music* 95-96). Though Freer does recognize that Pembroke’s use of repetition at times serves a discernible poetic purpose, the problem with his assessment, as the preceding statement indicates, is that he evaluates Pembroke’s use of

³³ Pritchard also reads this line as evincing a flaw in Pembroke’s artistry, and cites this *antimetabole* as an example of what he describes as Pembroke’s over-eagerness “to deploy rhetorical figures such as parallel [sic] and repetition” (“Introduction” 14). Pritchard does, however, go on to acknowledge that Pembroke uses such figures effectively in other psalms, such as 57.

repetition in either/or terms. According to Freer, Pembroke uses repetition on behalf of content, which makes the line “confusing or trite,” or, alternatively, she uses repetition on behalf of form, where it is present merely to serve the rhyme or the metre. Neither reading does Pembroke’s work justice. What Freer misses is the reciprocity of form and content that is one of the strengths of Pembroke’s verse, an oversight that has much to do with his neglecting to read her work in rhetorical terms. Freer’s rather cavalier and, I think, uninformed dismissal of what is arguably Pembroke’s conscious and careful use of rhetorical technique as mere carelessness or evidence of her lack of skill seriously underestimates Pembroke’s poetic and rhetorical capabilities.

Rather than attesting to Pembroke’s shortcomings as a poet generally and a psalmist specifically, the *antimetabole* in Psalm 51 attests to her skill at using rhetorical form in a way that relates to and supports the poem’s content, which in this instance centres on affirming the infinite regeneration that comes only from the divine. Read in rhetorical terms, this line, far from being “confusing or trite,” is crucially linked with the meaning of the poem as a whole. The endless cycle of sin and repentance suggested by this line also works in tandem with its imagery; the birth and re-birth of the penitent sinner is further suggested by the Psalm’s depiction of maternity, offered in an image more hopeful than that found in other versions of the Psalm — more hopeful in that it emphasizes birth, and thus the implied potential for re-birth, rather than original sin. By failing to consider that Pembroke here deftly and

meaningfully deploys a rhetorical figure, Freer underestimates her creative skill and, again, the reciprocity of form and content that is a stunning feature of many of Pembroke's *Psalmes*, including Psalm 51.

Such a reading also belies Pembroke's intimate familiarity with the Psalms and psalmodic conventions. It is possible as well that, as Steinberg proposes, Pembroke may have known Hebrew: indeed, he musters some convincing evidence from her *Psalmes* for her "familiarity with the Hebrew originals" (7), a familiarity that is attested to by the pervasive "accuracy of her translation" (15). Though it is, as Pembroke's editors note, "impossible to ascertain whether or not Pembroke did study Hebrew" ("Literary Context" 16), her use of figures (what Freer calls repetition for its own sake) often replicates, in English, some of the features of the Hebrew psalms. As Steinberg readily admits, Pembroke's versions of the Psalms aren't necessarily literal translations, but "The primary requirement of any translation," Zim rightly observes, "was fidelity to the *sense* of the original" (emphasis added, 11). In keeping with this premise, Pembroke's figures capture the sense or the spirit, if not the letter, of the parallelism that is a distinctive feature of the Hebrew Psalms.³⁴

³⁴ Robert Alter in *The Art of Biblical Poetry* gives a very thorough account of the tradition of Hebrew parallelism and its semantic effects. Syntactic parallelism is a distinctive feature of Hebrew verse. It is a kind of repetition that sees a statement made in the first half of a line rephrased in the second, as in the opening lines of Psalm 1, which Alter translates as follows:

	Happy the man:	
Who has walked not in the council		nor on the way of sinners has
of the wicked		stood

Pembroke's use of repetition as an English equivalent to the repetition found in Hebrew parallelism provides a specific example of Swaim's more general praise of the *Psalmes* as translations, what she describes as the "exquisite adjustment of artistic means to the original's content and tone" (267). Swaim's assessment here is, I would

Alter typographically renders an otherwise "impossibly long rhythmic unit" in parallel columns not only to overcome its awkwardness in English but also more clearly to illustrate the technique of parallelism (114). As we can see from this example, the meaning of these parallel phrases is essentially the same: not to walk in the council of the wicked is semantically the same as to avoid standing on the way of sinners. But Alter disagrees with earlier scholars of biblical verse whose various descriptions of the effects of parallelism assume "a considerable degree of *stasis* within the poetic line," an assessment not so different from Freer's reading of Pembroke's use of repetition as repetition for its own sake. What Alter proposes is "an argument for dynamic movement from one verset to the next" (10). I would suggest that Pembroke's use of repetition results in a similar dynamic, one that articulates the enduring but always changing relation of the speaker to the divine, that is, the cycle of sin and repentance, birth and rebirth.

The circularity inherent in many of the rhetorical figures Pembroke uses further suggests her understanding of psalmodic conventions. Not only do these figures offer another instance of repetition of the parallel kind, their tendency to return us to where we began imitates on a smaller scale the envelope structure Alter also identifies as a defining characteristic of Hebrew verse. The envelope structure essentially brings us back to the beginning, as in Psalm 8, whose first and last lines, as Alter renders them, both read, "O Lord, our master, how majestic Your name in all the earth" (118). In Hebrew poetry, the envelope structure is also found within and between verses, using repetition on a smaller scale.

One scholar of Hebrew verse, Douglas K. Stuart, makes a claim about parallelism very similar to the one Freer makes about Pembroke's use of repetition. As Alter describes the argument, this critic "rather lamely" identifies parallelism as appearing when the poet "needs more syllables to pad out his idea to the end of the line" (3). This is a limited and constraining view, argues Alter, one that can be revised by recognizing "what is involved in the parallelism and where parallelism begins to turn into something else" (7) — substituting "repetition" for "parallelism" here would very well describe my own interest in Pembroke's work. Like Alter, I am interested in exploring the possibilities such figures open up for the poet, and I object to Freer's assessment as much as Alter objects to Stuart's.

agree, an accurate one. Even so, her reading of Pembroke's verse doesn't capture the whole picture, and I disagree with her conclusion that Pembroke "generally tends to erase the insistent syntactical parallelism of Hebrew poetry" (266). To claim that the details of the Hebrew are erased is to read too closely to the letter. It is true that parallelism as it is rendered in the Hebrew is not literally reproduced in the *Psalms*, but Pembroke has found some particularly English poetic equivalents to Hebrew parallelism — and she finds them in the figures of rhetoric. Taken together, both Swaim's and Freer's claims about Pembroke's verse present an especially salient example of how the tendency *not* to think about women's poetry in rhetorical terms limits our understanding and appreciation of the complexity of their verse. In these and in other uses, such figures attest to Pembroke's strengths as a rhetor and as a poet, and this figure in particular indicates the depth of her understanding of the nature and form of biblical poetry.

II. Bringing God Before our Eyes

Psalm 139, like Psalm 51, is often cited as an example of this woman writer's use of gestational imagery; because of its imagery, it is also often invoked as another example of Pembroke's perceived tendency to feminize the Psalms. Psalm 139 begins with an assertion of divine omniscience: "O lord in me," the speaker proclaims, "there lieth nought, / but to thy search revealed lies" (lines 1-2), and goes on to

consider God's infinite presence from the "starry Spheare" to the depths of hell, "dead mens undelightsome stay" (lines 24 and 26). The poem offers some vivid imagery as the speaker imaginatively figures God's presence everywhere. But the most striking image of the poem, and perhaps the most famous of all in Pembroke's *Psalmes*, is the *in utero* description found in the psalm's eighth stanza. Affirming divine omnipresence and omniscience, the speaker proclaims that God knew her intimately even before she was born, and

Thou, how my back was beam-wise laid,

and rafting of my ribbs dost know:

know'st ev'ry point

of bone and joynt,

how to this whole these partes did grow,

in brave embrodry faire araid,

though wrought in shopp both dark and low. (lines 50-56)

The image of maternity and gestation offered here is a memorable one, and it is a notable expansion of an image that appears only fleetingly in antecedent versions of this Psalm.³⁵

³⁵ Critics often cite this image as an example of Pembroke's tendencies to expand on and reshape the images used by antecedent psalm translators. Both Hannay ("Woman's Role" 63) and Sheppard (144) refer to Rathmell's discussion of the image in his introduction to the 1963 edition of the Sidney psalms, where he outlines Pembroke's use of Calvin's *Commentary*. In it, Rathmell points out, Calvin elaborates on the biblical image, explaining "at length the comparison of the mother's womb to what he calls the 'dark denne' of the tailor's workroom." This elaboration, Rathmell

The poet, as Pembroke's brother says, "lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew" (*Defence* 23). Given that this is an unlit and inaccessible workshop where there exists only the speaker and God, Pembroke here presents an image more clear than nature could, in this case at least, ever bring forth. As a result, this is also a very intimate psalm, one that centres on capturing the speaker's relationship to the divine and uses some stunning imagery to do so. Surely there are few images more intensely private than this one, and there are likely few images that seem more feminine than this one, a vivid and intimately detailed portrait of the contents of a fruitful womb. As feminine and as private as this description may appear to be, though, this gestational image has broader applications than its depicted intimacy suggests. The encompassing nature of imagery that is, at the same time, also intensely personal is at least partly suggested by the fact that, although pregnancy may be an exclusively feminine experience, the poem does not stress motherhood. Though there clearly is a mother involved, this image represents not maternity but gestation — an experience not particular to women but common to all who have been born.

The detail offered in this gestational image is perhaps unrivalled in Pembroke's *Psalmes*. The raftered ribs and bones and joints grow, eventually becoming fairly

goes on, "gives rise to the metaphors of 'embrod'ry' and 'shopp' in the Countess of Pembroke's bold version." Or, as Hannay puts it, "Pembroke extends the metaphor to detail the construction of the body" ("Woman's Role" 63), which imparts what Rathmell describes as "her sense of personal involvement" and "her capacity to appreciate the underlying meaning" (xx).

arrayed in the metaphorically “brave embroidery” of the fully developed body, now visible to human eyes. But this is much more than a clinical account of the gestational process; as a visual image, it is also a very fine example of *energeia*, what Aristotle so vividly describes as “bringing-before-the-eyes.” The concept of *energeia* is most often associated with metaphor, and the fetus here is described both as a building under construction and a needlework in the process of being created. Pembroke’s adept use of this imagery confirms that metaphor is the most effective means of bringing before the eyes; we can visualize this growing fetus far more vividly than we could with a more literal description. But metaphor does much more than bring before the eyes a particular image. As Leland Ryken says, metaphor is also

a way of discovering as well as expressing reality or truth. In the actual process of composition, the poet tends to come upon metaphors by intuition rather than conscious reflection. But once a connection has been made between the two halves of a metaphor, the relationship tends to generate further meanings. (21)

This particular metaphor readily generates further meanings that surely wouldn’t have escaped a writer as self-conscious and as thorough as Pembroke.

The image does take on quite a different character if we think of it as a metaphor for poetic expression — early modern poetry was, after all, believed to be the most “brave embroidery” of thought. Hannay certainly alludes to this possibility

when she proposes that “There may be a suggestion here that the words of the poet are in some sense engendered in the same way that the speaker is formed, that God’s creation and the poet’s are connected” (“Woman’s Role” 63). Pembroke’s “brave embrodry” is an example of what Aristotle calls “actualization and metaphor,” that is, “making the lifeless living through the metaphor” (3.11, Kennedy 249). The image of the *in utero* fetus is, of course, first and foremost the ultimate expression of the speaker’s (and, by extension, everyone’s) intimate relationship with the divine. Yet, as Ryken puts it in his discussion of metaphor in the Psalms, metaphor “uses one area of human experience to shed light on another area” (21), and, as we know, maternity and gestation had often been used as a metaphor for poetic expression. Tellingly, one of the most famous instances of this kind of metaphor appears in Philip Sidney’s opening sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella*, where the poet complains of being “great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes” (line 12); a similar birthing metaphor, some critics have argued, is also found in one of the psalter’s introductory poems.³⁶

³⁶ Wall suggests that Pembroke’s “To the Angell Spirit” also plays upon the tradition of the text as birthing with its “interactive” muse and its casting of the *Psalmes* “as the product of an erotic entanglement.” Pembroke’s “muse and Philip’s,” Wall goes on, thus “‘combine’ to produce a child: that text which is first ‘raised’ by Philip’s hand and later described as well ‘borne’ (in the sense of carried forth and birthed)” (“Our Bodies” 55-6). Pritchard offers a similar reading of the poem’s use of “a metaphor whereby the volume of psalms becomes the Sidneys’ joint brain child, produced by a quasi-sexual union (of their Muses),” and suggests that he is the first to note the metaphor’s implications (“Dedicatory Poem” 2). Given that Aubrey’s accusations of Sidney incest have cast such a suspicion over the siblings’ relationship since he first made them in the seventeenth century, Pritchard’s decision to refer to the Muses parenthetically is (perhaps deliberately) suggestive.

This reading of the developing fetus as a metaphor for poetic expression becomes more clear as Pembroke's psalm progresses. In the subsequent stanza, the speaker, continuing her direct address to God, proclaims that

Nay fashionles, ere forme I toke,

thy all and more beholding ey

my shaplesse shape

could not escape. (lines 57-60)

Unlike mere mortals, this omniscient God can see and fully comprehend a "shaplesse shape"; form is, apparently, as unnecessary to divine understanding as it is necessary for human expression. God is everywhere, God knows everything, and His "all and more beholding ey" can see that which we can't even imagine. Though we can visualize raftered ribs laid beamwise, we cannot conceive of the formless. On the contrary, we can comprehend only that which has visible or auricular form, form seen in the raftering of ribs or heard in a poem: "the minde," as Puttenham puts it, "is not assailable vnlesse it be by sensible approches" (197). It is through "sensible approches" that Pembroke's Psalm 139 is able at once to be an expression of God's omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence and a demonstration of poetic form as the most adequate vehicle for the expression of divinity and devotion. Just as the emerging shape of the fetus comes to take on a recognizably human form in Pembroke's psalm, so the external writing of poetry gives shape to inner thought: it is the most fitting outward form of the kind of inwardness that Pembroke's gestational image suggests

and Sidney's muse alludes to in his sonnet's final line — "'Fool,' said my muse to me; 'look in thy heart, and write'" (line 14).³⁷

The imagery of Pembroke's Psalm 139 fulfills not only Aristotle's criteria but also the criteria of early modern notions of *energeia*, which was seen as a crucial component of effective rhetoric and moving poetry. As Puttenham describes it, *energeia* (which he carefully distinguishes from *enargia*, the sort of ornament designed "to satisfie & delight th'eare onely") is exemplified "by certaine intendments or sence of such wordes & speaches inwardly working a stirre to the mynde," and *energeia*, he says, is "wrought with a strong and vertuous operation." Figures, Puttenham goes on

³⁷ Critics often read the phrase "Look in thy heart" as referring, in typically Petrarchan fashion, to the image of the beloved (in this case, Stella) imprinted there. Yet it is not unheard of for poets to appropriate this Petrarchan trope as a metaphor for interiority. In her reading of the poem, Anne Ferry suggests that the metaphor as it is used in this sonnet is meant to be read as more complex than the speaker realizes: "If Astrophil looks in his heart," she says, "he will find there more than Stella's image; he will find a tangled inward state his unsubtle Muse knows not of" (130). Astrophil may not be as introspective as he should be, but this does not mean he could not find his inward state if he were only to "Look." Later, Lanyer appropriates this metaphor as one of sacred, not secular, devotion: near the end of *Salve Deus* she tells the countess to whom she writes that

. . . in your heart I leave
His perfect picture, where it still shall stand,
Deeply engraved in that holy shrine,
Environed with Love and Thoughts divine. (lines 1325-28)

The "perfect picture" to which this speaker refers is, of course, one of Christ. In his discussion of the corporeality of Lanyer's religious devotion, Richard Rambuss points to two other appearances of metaphors that depict the heart as a cabinet of devotional interiority: these figurative images are found in lines 1-7 of "To the Ladie *Lucie*, Countesse of Bedford" and on line 143 of "To the Ladie *Anne*, Countesse of Dorset" (143 n. 23).

to explain, can bring about either *enargia* or *energeia*, “some seruing to give glosse onely to a language, some to geue it efficacie by sence, and so by that meanes some of them serue th’eare onely, some serue the conceit onely and not th’eare: there be of them also that serue both turnes as commo[n] seruitours” (142-43). It seems clear that Pembroke’s metaphor for poetic expression serves both the ear and the conceit; it is wonderfully melodious and poetic, but it also works an inward “stirre to the mynde” — its accomplishments go far beyond those of figures that “satisfie & delight th’eare onely.”

Psalm 58 offers a similar example of *energeia* at work, and, like Psalm 139, it is also frequently cited for its vivid gestational imagery. Psalm 58 is a psalm of vengeance, one which, Pembroke’s editors note, was read as David’s plea for retaliation against those who had falsely spoken against him (“Commentary” 373). The poem’s climax is found in its penultimate stanza, which opens with an exhortation to God: “Lord crack their teeth,” the speaker urges, “lord crush these lions jawes” (line 17). This is a jarring and effective visual image, bringing before the eyes something we can’t actually see, the power of God, by metaphorically depicting something we can, the strength of the enemy, here figured as “these lions.” The speaker goes on to bid God to wreak the worst on these foes, and

. . . make them melt as the dishowesd snaile

or as the Embrio, whose vitall band

breakes er it holdes, and formlesse eyes doe faile

to see the sunn, though brought to lightfull land. (lines 21-24)

In the above passage, the speaker quickly deflates the strength of these metaphorical lions, depicting the now-helpless enemy in similes that emphasize human fragility; these once powerful adversaries are now analogous to the “dishowesd snaile” or the miscarried embryo in the face of the all-powerful God’s imagined wrath. The helplessness of the smitten foe is brought before the eyes in a way unmatched by antecedent versions of the Psalm; as Rathmell observes, the vividness of “The image of the stillborn embryo has an immediacy that is certainly not present in the formal metaphor of the ‘untimely frute’ that we find in both the Geneva and the Bishops’ Bible” (xxi). Both in likening the enemy to a snail and to an embryo, these similes depict the defeated foe’s helplessness in terms of loss. They are weak in the face of God’s wrath, and their weakness is analogously depicted in both instances as the loss of an external, containing shape that is crucial to their survival — the snail’s protective shell in the former and the embryo’s uterine home in the latter. Essentially, these images indicate that the speaker’s stricken enemies are helpless because they are also formless, as formless as the snail out of his shell or the undeveloped embryo torn from its “vitall band.”

The loss of vigour that is portrayed as concomitant with the loss of form is also more directly stressed in the poem. Equally vivid in this psalm is the description of the imagined embryo’s “formlesse eyes.” These formless eyes, we are told “doe faile / to see the sunn, though brought to lightfull land.” So it is with all of us — without

form, we are as unable as the formless embryo to see the sun, the divine presence of a “lightfull” rather than dark and formless land. For this Christian poet, “the sunn” is likely meant to refer also to the divine presence of God in Christ, comprehensible to us only in human form. Like God in man, form is what makes “bringing before the eyes” possible; without it, seeing the light is as impossible for the poet or the reader as it is for the embryo. As in Psalm 139, the images offered in this poem indicate that *energeia* is much more than simply “bringing before the eyes.” It is what Puttenham calls the kind of speech that achieves its effects by “inwardly working a stirre to the mynde” (142); for the rhetorician as much as for the rhetor, language very much enables thought. In the case of Pembroke’s embryonic image, metaphorical language effects a stirring of the mind that leads the reader to see the crucial connection between comprehension and form. Pembroke thus offers a concrete, visual example to illustrate what is abstract and cannot be seen: the fetus’s formless eyes, read as a metaphor for the absolute necessity of form to understanding, provide a concrete way of showing the larger, abstract claim to be true. “Metaphoric truth,” as Ryken so aptly puts it, “is in the final analysis empirical, in the sense that the correspondence can be demonstrated. Metaphor is not literally true, but it asserts truth” (24). So it is with the visual imagery found in this psalm, where *energeia* can be most clearly seen to act as a link between thought and words, the bringing-before-the-eyes that enables us to comprehend the larger meaning of the image and the importance of form to comprehending the divine and expressing devotion. In other words, this poem most

clearly affirms that the shapeless shape of unarticulated thought is not enough for the full realization of human devotion. This is why people pray and why some devout women write poetry: God can comprehend us even formless, but we need form to comprehend the divine.

This is not to say that expressing devotion is an easy task or that human understanding of the divine is not always less than complete. "Religious models," as Thomas F. Merrill points out, "are never absolute in themselves"; rather, "they are merely aids — directional signposts — which provide only the barest hints of the reality they seek to evoke" (53). Pembroke is well aware of the limits of language to express devotional or divine reality, and she often struggles with what Vygotsky calls the watershed that divides thought and words. In many ways throughout the *Psalmes*, she makes clear the difficulty of finding appropriate signposts for the "divinest things" about which she writes; she does, however, express this problem most adamantly in Psalm 106. This psalm begins with the speaker asking a series of questions that can only be rhetorical:

Where are the hymnes, where are the honors due

to our good god, whose goodnes knowes no end?

who of his force can utter what is true?

who all his praise, in praises comprehend? (lines 1-4)

Given our severely limited capacity to comprehend the divine or to "utter what is true," form is the only means we have to ask such questions, and it is the only means

we have to worship a goodness that “knowes no end.” The necessity of form both to comprehending the divine and to expressing devotion is, as I have argued above, emphasized through the imagery of Psalms 139 and 58, and the impossibility of wholly achieving either is most clearly articulated in Psalm 106. But the crucial importance of form is not only stressed in examples such as these; the necessity of form to expressing devotion or to achieving even our limited comprehension of the divine is of primary importance in Pembroke’s work more generally.

The necessity of form to devotional expression is further implied in Pembroke’s *Psalmes* as a whole, suggested again and again by the remarkable range of forms she uses. Deploying, according to Hannay, some “126 verse forms” (“Mary Sidney” 139), the Sidneian *Psalmes* draw attention to their formal inventiveness and to their formal variety.³⁸ The formal distinctiveness and the formal range of Pembroke’s

³⁸ Referring to Lewalski’s *Protestant Poetics* (esp. 241), Swaim notes that Pembroke’s *Psalmes* “have been labelled a virtual encyclopedia of contemporary poetics” (267). Some of those verse forms, Swaim observes, include “rhyme royal, ottava rima, terza rima, heroic couplets, ballad stanza, epithalamium, sapphics, and even some quantitative meters,” as well as an acrostic (Ps 117) and an alphabet poem (Ps 111), and Psalm 119 itself is made up of “twenty-two separate poems of strikingly varied sizes, shapes, and tones each beginning with one of the letters of the alphabet” (269-70). Hallett Smith, although referring only to Philip Sidney’s forty-three psalms, made a similar point when he suggested that Pembroke’s brother “compiled what might be regarded as a School of English Versification,” a description that becomes more apt when Pembroke’s 107 psalms are also considered. In her book *Natural Emphasis*, Susanne Woods offers a summary of the psalter’s many verse forms, as do Pembroke’s recent editors. The collection is so complex and so diverse it demands this sort of systematic cataloguing; as Lewalski points out, “there are only four instances in the entire Sidney collection of an exact repetition of any one combination of rhyme scheme and stanza form,” and they offer “intricate and almost infinite varieties of stanzaic forms and metrical patterns” (*Protestant Poetics* 45, 241). This is not to say,

Psalmes further suggest that devotion requires form for its full expression, but it also indicates that such expressions of devotion and the understanding of the divine they aim to convey can take many, perhaps infinite, forms. The vast number of forms used in the *Psalmes* also indicates that the perfect form for expressing devotion remains elusive, still out of this restless poet's reach. Paradoxically — but not atypically — Pembroke's *Psalmes* seem at once to suggest that poetic language is adequate to representing the ineffable even as it will always be inadequate to expressing divine understanding.

III. *The Particular and the General*

In many ways in her *Psalmes*, Pembroke performs a delicate balancing act, carefully articulating devotional truth while maintaining the proper measure of devout humility. Poetic language, she demonstrates, is perhaps the best vehicle for attaining and maintaining this balance, and it is clear that many of the conventions and the tenets of the rhetorical tradition play an important role in shaping the ways in which that language is used. The *energeia* brought about by the rhetorical tropes of metaphor and simile discussed above do capture as much as we can understand of the

though, that Pembroke relied on her brother's poetic expertise. As Woods notes, "She not only provides different forms for the 107 poems which translate psalms 44-150, but also manages different forms for the twenty-two sections of Psalm 119, for a total of 128 separate lyric forms, which in turn do not precisely copy any of Sidney's forty-three verse constructions" (*Natural Emphasis* 170).

ultimately inexpressible God while also acknowledging that we can never attain the divine's ready comprehension of that which is formless. Metaphor is perhaps the most effective means of expressing at once this double-edged truth of human limitation and human potential, and gestational imagery perhaps most aptly captures both sides of this truth. Seen from a rhetorical perspective, it becomes clear that the gestational imagery used in Pembroke's Psalms 139 and 58 is perhaps not so much a product of the fact that a woman wrote these poems, but more the result of the possibilities such images open up for the poet and the rhetor.

In a number of her psalms, Pembroke invokes imagery that allows for the simultaneous exploration of the human's relationship with the divine and the importance of form, both bodily and poetic, in enabling our comprehension of that relationship. Such imagery also enables the expression of a universal experience in very particular terms: "the peerless poet," says her brother, "coupleth the general notion with the particular example" (*Defence* 32). Psalms 58 and 139, and perhaps also Psalm 51, by coupling the experience of pregnancy that is particular only to women with the experience of gestation that is common to all of humanity, equally confirm Pembroke's status as a "peerless poet." Though the kinds of images Pembroke uses may very well be shaped by her own feminine experience, she does extend that experience in a way that is not gender specific. By depicting events that are comprehensible because they are particular to the individual, Pembroke is able to capture something more universal. Through its poetic reimagining, concrete

experiential evidence becomes abstract interpretive supposition; from the only kind of truth we can concretely know — that of experience — comes a larger understanding that is shown to be equally true.

Not all of Pembroke's readers interpret her *Psalmes* this way.³⁹ Freer, for instance, thinks that much of Pembroke's imagery has to do with the particular; this, he suggests, is one of the strengths of her verse and "one of the Countess's contributions to psalmody in general." It would be difficult and unreasonable to object to this obviously accurate claim about the literal meaning of Pembroke's imagery. But the problem with Freer's assessment is that he limits his reading of the *Psalmes'* imagery to the literal, thus obscuring the potential figurative meanings such imagery also presents. Pembroke's contribution to psalmody, Freer goes on to explain, lies in "her emphasis on the literal level of meaning, her tendency to view requests to God in terms of specific tasks on a specific earth" ("World" 38-39).⁴⁰ Her

³⁹ Some readers do, however, recognize a broader relevance in the personal experiences many of Pembroke's *Psalmes* describe. The critic who comes closest to making a claim similar to the one I am making about universality in Pembroke's "personalizations" is Swaim. The most noticed of these "personalizations," Swaim argues, actually "target particular and universal female experiences: aristocratic daughters (45, 144), birth and children (48, 51, 58, 71, 128, 131, 139), or gender restrictions" (269). Swaim is quite right to point out that Pembroke's imagery is not as personalized in its impetus as critics tend to suggest. Nevertheless, her reading differs from mine in that she limits the universality of Pembroke's "personalizations" to the feminine, where I would argue that much of it concerns all of humanity, and not only women.

⁴⁰ Freer's comments as well as the comments of other critics do, I think, offer yet another instance of how our tendency to compartmentalize women and their writing limits our understanding of their work. Rathmell, for example, also reveals

use of figures, Freer also suggests, is a mark of her originality, “for often she has clarified or elaborated, by means of secondary sources, what was only feebly imaged in the original” (“World” 39). As laudatory and as accurate as this discussion of Pembroke’s imagery may be, it doesn’t capture the whole picture. Freer’s view is rather limiting in that it suggests a rather narrow and even quotidian interest on Pembroke’s part, a view that, by limiting her imagery to the literal and specific, also excludes the figurative and the general.

What I am suggesting is that the nature of Pembroke’s imagery needn’t be the question of either/or that Freer’s evaluation implies. Again, Freer’s assessment of Pembroke’s work can be seen as impeded by a broader and perhaps even systemic neglect, that is, the failure to read women’s poetry in relation to the rhetorical culture in which they lived. That culture did not necessarily subscribe to the kind of rigid binary thinking suggested by Freer’s words — the so-called Cartesian divide hadn’t happened yet. Certainly the particular that allows this critic to limit the range of possible meanings in Pembroke’s imagery to the kind of specificity he describes wasn’t so clear for some of her contemporaries. In terms of early modern rhetoricians, the most notable example of this resistance to the kind of rigid

this tendency in his discussion of Pembroke’s use of metre: “It is through her heavily accented metres and artfully marshalled phrasing,” he writes, “that the Countess enforces a sense of anguish that is not generalized, but personal and individual” (xxiii). Both in their discussions of form and of content, the critical impulse seems to be to impose limits on the mode and the relevance of Pembroke’s work, however unintentional such an imposition might be.

categorizing Freer proposes is perhaps found in the work of Thomas Wilson, whose book was well known to all literate schoolboys and perhaps equally well known by at least some of their sisters.

Like Freer, Wilson doesn't hesitate to define the particular and the universal, but, unlike Freer, he also complicates the idea that these concepts can be held in binary opposition. The particularity Freer identifies as a characteristic of Pembroke's imagery does correspond with Wilson's conception of questions "definite." As he describes these "questions," those that involve issues that are definite "set forth a matter, with the appointment and naming of place, time, and person" (45). Here, Wilson could easily be speaking of Freer's notions of "specific tasks on a specific earth." Wilson also describes more "general" questions, those he categorizes as the "infinite" kind; such questions, he explains, "generally are propounded without the comprehension of time, place and person" (45). At first glance, Wilson's seemingly rigid categories seem not to apply to Pembroke's imagery or to the claims I am making about that imagery's embodiment of both the particular and the universal. Wilson explicitly states what Freer's argument assumes, that the "definite" and the "infinite" (or the particular and the universal) are indeed binary opposites that encompass antithetical "questions" or issues. Wilson seems to suggest, like Freer, that the presence of the "definite" — or, in Freer's terms, the "specific," — necessarily excludes the "general."

Wilson goes on to outline this distinction more clearly, and, in so doing, reinscribes the division between logic and rhetoric that had been propounded since antiquity, when Plato first attempted to define the *techne* or expertise of dialectic as something very different from the “knack” of rhetoric (462a, Waterfield 28-31). Like Plato, Wilson very carefully distinguishes the rhetor from the logician, and proposes that “the definite question (as the which concerneth some one person) is most agreeing to the purpose of an orator,” while “Things generally spoken, without all circumstances, are more proper unto the logician, who talketh of things universally, without respect of person, time, or place” (45-46). The relevance of Wilson’s “infinite” and “definite” to my argument quickly becomes clear, however, when he goes on to maintain that these seemingly opposed terms are never wholly separable: “notwithstanding,” he explains, “whosoever will talk of a particular matter must remember that within the same also is comprehended a general” (46), much as Psalm 51 suggests that the particular, profane love of an earthly mother also comprehends the general, sacred love of a heavenly father. The general or universal issue, as Wilson sees it, is not the exclusive province of the logician; on the contrary, he says, “a general question agreeth well to an orator’s profession and ought well to be known for the better furtherance of his matter” (46). Logic and rhetoric, then, are not wholly opposed for Wilson; rather, the two overlap. The same goes for the definite and infinite, the particular and the universal — according to Wilson, one always encompasses the other. Wilson’s view of the interdependence of the particular and

the universal aptly applies to Pembroke's Psalm 139, where the speaker describes a particular, individual relationship with the divine, and by so doing also comprehends a "general," that is, God's equally intimate knowing of us all. Pembroke's use of gestational imagery in Psalms 51 and 139 thus meets the basic criteria of the logician's argument and the rhetor's, at least as Wilson defines them.

The temptation here is to argue that the gestational imagery of Pembroke's psalms offers proof of the mimetic rather than the logical or oratorical kind; or, as Waller puts it, "The emphasis in 139 is, as with Herbert, not to versify the doctrine of God's omnipotence, but to evoke the experiential roots of the doctrine, to dramatize mood and emotion rather than theology" (*Mary Sidney* 202). Waller here emphasizes the dramatization of mood and emotion — or the mimetic quality — of Pembroke's psalm, and he is quite right to do so. But his words assume that these "experiential roots" her psalm's imagery captures so vividly are somehow separable from the doctrine of God's omnipotence; such an assumption does justice neither to Pembroke's image nor to the complex layers of meaning rendered by that image. The poem may be dramatically mimetic, but that does not mean it is not also doctrinal in the larger sense, aiming to capture God's omnipotence through its representation of experience. Nor does the poem's mimetic quality necessarily mean that it doesn't encompass proof of both the "definite" and the "infinite" kinds. As Ryken aptly puts it, "Metaphor is one way of overcoming the impotence of the abstraction" (111), and Pembroke's gestational imagery offers an especially lucid example of the way that the

concrete and “definite” transcends the particular to encompass a larger truth, that of the abstract and “infinite.”

The movement toward the kind of mimetic or metaphorical “proof” Pembroke’s psalms illustrate was in large measure effected by Ramist attempts to sever the ties between logic and rhetoric, the very practices that Wilson, in his insistence that the infinite is always implied by the definite (and vice versa), attempts to bridge.⁴¹ Ironically, and rather paradoxically, the originality and the freshness that has been attributed to Pembroke’s verse can, I think, be largely accounted for if we consider her *Psalmes* as perhaps among the first poetic works to manifest the influence of the Ramist revaluation of rhetoric. As Tuve suggests, Ramus’s influence was felt by all Renaissance writers, no matter how indirect their understanding of his work was. Pembroke’s familiarity with Ramism’s tenets was, however, most likely far from indirect. Ramus’s influence was most certainly acutely felt by this poet, whose close association with Ramists, most notably Abraham Fraunce, is well known.⁴² Ramism’s

⁴¹ Though it is true that the aim of Ramism was to define logic as distinctly different from rhetoric, and that Wilson clearly attempts to bridge the two, the differences between Ramists and earlier rhetoricians are not as distinct as we might suppose. Abraham Fraunce, for instance, sounds very much like Wilson when, in *The Arcadian Rhetorike*, he maintains that “If you put downe one, more, or all the specials, you also put downe the generall, for that the nature and essence of the generall is in every of the specials” (qtd. Tuve 348).

⁴² Fraunce is, of course, the author of the Ramist guidebooks *The Arcadian Rhetorike* and *The Lawier’s Logike* (both pub. 1588). At the centre of what Ong calls “Cambridge Ramist activity” (15), Fraunce had also written a treatise on the use of dialectic when a very young man, described by Ong as “the precious and taut work of one hardly out of his teens” (139). Gabriel Harvey, another member of the Cambridge

influence on poetry, as Tuve describes it, is witnessed by a change in “the general conception of the nature of proof,” and this applies even for those “who had never read Ramus’ books” (341). Tuve goes on to describe this change in the nature of proof: “the Ramist extension of dialectic to cover all forms of discourse,” she argues, did not so much impel a poet to “‘prove something’ in every poem” but instead “to declare reasons and causes, to examine the nature of something, to consider from various sides, to figure out, look into, mull over” (342).

This is the primary distinction that may be made between Pembroke’s psalms and those of her predecessors, and the prominence of imagery in her work, as Psalms 139 and 58 demonstrate, has much to do with this difference. Rather than aiming explicitly to “prove something” as Gascoigne’s version of Psalm 130 most obviously aims to do, Pembroke’s poems work much more subtly, examining the nature of something by mimetically bringing it before the eyes. As much as Pembroke’s *Psalmes* may illustrate the effects of Ramism on early modern poetry, they also hint at the possibility I have suggested in the previous chapter, that is, that Ramist attempts to sever logic and rhetoric may actually have brought the two great disciplines closer together. That this may be the case is suggested, in part, by comparing Pembroke’s approach to writing poetry with Puttenham’s account of “sensible approaches” to assailing the mind: “the audible,” he says, “is of greatest force for instruction or discipline” and “the visible, for apprehension of exterior knowledges as the

Ramist group, also played an active role in Pembroke’s literary circle.

Philosopher saith.” Puttenham goes on to emphasize the primacy of the “audible” to the poet: “Therefore,” he concludes, “the well tuning of your words and clauses to the delight of the eare, maketh your information no lesse plausible to the minde than to the eare” (197). Pembroke’s poetry surely gives “the delight of the eare” its due, but her verse is equally concerned with bringing “the visible” before one’s eyes. Arguably, her *Psalmes* bring closer together the “instruction or discipline” of the rhetor and the “exterior knowledges” of the philosopher that Puttenham’s discussion keeps distinctly separate.

As I have argued above with regard to Pembroke’s use of gestational imagery, mimetic representation in the *Psalmes* isn’t limited to looking into the nature of a particular something; her imagery generates additional meanings, examining also the nature of humanity’s relation to the divine and the necessity of form to our expression of that relation. Pembroke’s work is thus in many ways mimetic, capturing not only the specific experience of the devotional speaker, but also something of the expressive process. Rather ironically, Freer makes this point clear when he compares the style of her verse to Philip Sidney’s: “Unlike her brother,” this critic points out, “she favors frequent repetition, using parallel structures, possessives, and adjectival modifiers,” and, he goes on to suggest, “These can create the sense of a mind working by distinct stages” (*Music* 95). This expressive process, as Freer’s words indicate, is seen to take place in a course of stages, and it is often depicted as a struggle to find the appropriate words and the appropriate mode of speech. Throughout the

Psalmes, Pembroke repeatedly affirms the necessity of form to the act of devotion. At the same time, she also makes it clear that expressing devotion appropriately is an arduous process, and her speaker makes many false starts and frequently stumbles along the way.

Pembroke's *Psalmes* do, however, begin with a declaration that makes this process seem easy. The second of her contributions to the psalter, Psalm 45, confidently declares that this speaker will use "My tongue the pen to paynt his praises forth," and "shall write as swift, as swiftest writer maie" (lines 3-4), a claim that is most clearly challenged by the passage from Psalm 106 that I have quoted above. Despite the confidence the speaker declares in this psalm, the collection as a whole and the extensive revision seen in extant manuscripts equally indicate that Pembroke doesn't really believe such a declaration to be true, even as her own and every poet's commitment to revision "implies," as Winters says, "a belief in absolute truth" (xx). For the most part, Pembroke's *Psalmes* suggest that effective writing does not come quickly or easily; as Roger Ascham writes, "the quickest wits commonly may prove the best poets but not the wisest orators — ready of tongue to speak boldly, not deep of judgment either for good counsel or wise writing" (21). In many ways, Pembroke makes it clear that she aspired to be both the best poet and the wisest orator, and in many ways she shows the attainment of both to be not the result of swift writing or a readiness to speak boldly. Despite the bold claims of Psalm 45, Pembroke's *Psalmes* as

a whole repeatedly indicate that wise writing comes only through the careful and practised exercise of decorum.

IV. *Devotional Decorum*

Decorum is one of the principal tenets of early modern rhetorical theory, but “In the case of the metrical psalmists,” Zim notes, “a special sense of decorum prevailed.” Quoting Thomas Norton, the translator of Calvin’s *Institutes*, Zim elaborates: “where matters of faith and religion were involved it might be ‘perillous . . . to erre’” (24). Pembroke’s concern with decorum is apparent throughout the *Psalmes*, but it is perhaps especially visible in her translation of Psalm 73. In this, one of the appropriately named “wisdom” psalms, the speaker laments past acts of rashness committed in God’s presence:

I was a foole (I can it not defend)
 so quite depriv’d of understanding might,
 that as a beast I bare me in thy sight.⁴³ (lines 64-66)

⁴³ Hannay notes that this psalm “paraphrases both the fifth poem of Philip Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* and the Psalms commentary of Bèze” (“Mary Sidney” 143). The dual influence of secular and sacred modes of writing Hannay’s observation identifies is an important aspect of Pembroke’s work. The convergence of the sacred and the secular is, however, a subject I will take up later, in concluding my discussion of the *Psalmes*.

This acknowledgement of the speaker's own folly, baring herself as a beast in God's sight, at first seems like a strange apology to make to an omnipresent and omniscient God. If God is omnipresent and omniscient, how can one choose to bare oneself before God when one is presumably always already bare? Given that the divine is everywhere and knows everything, it also follows that one is always fully exposed before God and that the believer's implied choice is really not a choice at all, or if it is, it is one that compromises the belief in God's omnipotence and omnipresence; there can be no human choice involved if God always and already knows "the closest closet of my thought" (Ps 139, line 6).

What the speaker describes here is not the freedom to bare or not to bare oneself before God, since one is presumably always bare before God. One can, however, choose to be exposed to God with or without "understanding might" — the choice is whether one is bare as a beast or not as a beast. The speaker's claim that she chose, at one time, to bare herself inappropriately in God's sight doesn't represent a theological contradiction; rather, this psalm offers another of the many examples suggesting that the principal tenets of rhetorical practice are never far from Pembroke's thoughts. What the speaker describes here is not the human ability to hide one's true self from God, but the human freedom to choose decorum over beastliness. This belief that, as Lanham describes it, "style should fit subject, audience, speaker, and occasion," has been of primary importance throughout the history of

rhetoric: “No idea,” Lanham points out, “was more carefully worked out in rhetorical theory nor more universally acclaimed” (45).

Accordingly, decorum figures prominently in all Renaissance discussions of rhetoric. Wilson, for one, calls this virtue “comeliness,” and maintains that it “must ever be used, and all things observed that are most meet for every cause” (195).⁴⁴ Though often associated with style, decorum extends beyond the superficial niceties the term “style” may imply. Cicero, for one, expressly believed that decorum “applies to social behavior, ethics, and politics as much as to style,” and the importance of the concept is reinforced by the frequent appearance of the word in his *De oratore* (Rebhorn 6). Puttenham very much admires Cicero, calling him “the wisest of any Romane writers” (292), and in keeping with his professed admiration, makes a similar point late in the *Arte*. In his third book, “Of Ornament,” Puttenham discusses “dece[n]cy in behaiour” as well as in poetry (277). “[T]he good maker or poet,” Puttenham avers, “who is in dece[n]t speach & good termes to describe all things and with prayse or dispraise to report eury ma[n]s behaiour, ought to know the comelinesse of an actio[n] aswell as of a word” (276). The practice of decorum is crucial to the successful courtier and poet, but it is not just a primary practice of courtly behaviour and good poetry. Decorum, Puttenham also maintains, should be applied “euen to the spirituall obiectes of the mynde, which stand no lesse in the due

⁴⁴ Gascoigne also uses the term in his poem, “Woodmanship” (line 102): I discuss this passage in the third section of Chapter Four.

proportion of reason and discourse than any other materiall thing doth in his sensible bewtie, proportion and comelynesse" (262).⁴⁵ Appropriately, decorum is as important in Pembroke's psalm as Puttenham feels it ought to be; the speaker must not bare herself as a beast before God, but only with "understanding might."⁴⁶

Psalm 73, with its emphasis on decorum, usefully illustrates Fiskens' observation that Pembroke did indeed transform "her verse translations into independent poems and exercises in private meditation, teaching herself not only how to write poetry, but ultimately, how to speak to God" ("Education" 166). Though Fiskens doesn't use the term, the concept of decorum is implied in her account of Pembroke's learning "how to speak God." In his *Commentary*, Calvin also alludes to decorum when he describes the Psalms as providing "an infallible rule for directing us with respect to the right manner of offering to God the sacrifice of praise," and insists that "there is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God" (qtd. in Trill, "Sixteenth-Century" 151). As Calvin's words further

⁴⁵ People were, in fact, exhorted to practice decorum even when alone. Though she doesn't use the term, Warnicke nevertheless describes the concept when she points out that "In 1614, Robert Horne warned his readers that when they were in their 'privatest' rooms such as privy chambers or bed chambers, they were 'to do nothing that shall be uncomely' and to refrain from doing 'privately that we should be ashamed should it be brought before the face of men'" (129).

⁴⁶ Puttenham was, in fact, so concerned with this "decencie in behaiour" that he claims to have written a book on the subject. Offering some examples of "this maner of dece[n]cy in behaiour," he leaves us for "the rest to our booke which we haue written *de Decoro*, where ye shall see both partes/handled more exactly" (277). The book is, apparently, lost.

suggest, the speaker's process of learning "how to speak to God" involves learning how to speak with decorum, or what Calvin calls "right manner." Though it is true that the speaker of this psalm, as Pembroke's editors point out, "learns not to be disquieted by the temporary prosperity of the wicked" ("Commentary 386), achieving decorum goes hand-in-hand with learning how not to be disquieted. The mutually constitutive nature of understanding and decorum is suggested by the speaker's narrative, which describes a past when "allmost I fell / from right conceit into a crooked mynd" and the eventual attainment of the decorous eloquence that comes with "understanding might" (line 65).

Learning is not an easy process, and it take forty or so lines of verse before the speaker achieves understanding. Describing how "my boiling brest did chafe and swell" (line 8), the speaker quickly moves into the present tense two lines later, and maintains the present over most of the next forty lines. The speaker claims to have learned "understanding might" but boils again (or still) in recounting the process. This apparent contradiction might be an example of *occupatio* (also called *paralepsis*), a rhetorical figure Peacham describes as occurring "when the Orator faineth and maketh as though he would say nothing in some matter, when notwithstanding he speaketh most of all, or when he saith some thing: in saying he will not say it" (130-31). The past seems conflated with the present, as though the lesson learned needs to be learned over and over again. What this self-contradictory raging suggests is cathartic reenactment. Like much of Pembroke's verse, Psalm 73 is highly dramatic and highly

rhetorical, and it offers concrete experiential evidence rather than abstract musings on devotional decorum. As such, it is an example of mimetic persuasion, the kind of representation that persuades the reader of its authenticity and seems also to persuade the writer, once again, of the importance of decorum to the faithful. Decorum is thus not only a rhetorical principle with spiritual value but an integral part of spiritual understanding. More than an end in itself or a means to an end, decorum is a skill that must be continually relearned, an ongoing process that plays an important role in the necessarily continuous maintenance and renewal of faith.

In addition to affirming that there is a "right manner" in which to address God, the speaker of Psalm 73 also makes it clear that language must not be used to speak publicly in disservice to God. The psalm's speaker is rankled at seeing the ungodly thrive while the godly are burdened with afflictions, but appears to be aware of the importance of decorum as she struggles not to express her gall at this apparent injustice. The speaker's struggle, one that arises because she is aware of the difference between decorous and indecorous speech, leads her to God, to whom she turns and asks if "shall I then these thoughtes in wordes bewray?" (line 43). The implied answer is "no," but the speaker's response to this rhetorical question is an appeal to God for the necessary restraint: "ô lett me lord," the speaker pleads, "give never such offence / to children thine that rest in thy defence" (lines 44-45). Decorum is thus an intrinsic part of faith and devotion, leading the speaker to God even as it enables her to speak to and of God in an appropriate way. Instead of raging publicly, the speaker turns the

appropriate mode of speech toward the appropriate audience and issues a humble plea to God for verbal restraint. The speaker has finally learned that emotion, as Aristotle says, “in the case of impious and shameful things,” is most appropriately expressed as “one who is indignant and reluctant even to say the words” (3.7, Kennedy 235). Sometimes, the poem also suggests, decorum means knowing when *not* to speak as much as it does what and how to speak.⁴⁷

Psalm 73 insists that it is not fitting to bare oneself to God as a beast or a fool, and that it is equally inappropriate to use language to express one’s lack of faith to others, at least not in public. The poem thus, as Kim Walker suggests, offers “an explicit contrast between thought and word” (95), even as it also suggests that speech is rightly used only in the service of God: the psalm ends with a vow to use language only to serve the almighty. Though many will remain “faithlesse fugitives” (line 79), this believer will “cleave to god, my hopes in hym to place, / to sing his workes while breath shall give me space” (lines 83-84). This speaker will exercise decorum not only

⁴⁷ Decorum might also include knowing when to listen, for knowing when to listen also means knowing when not to speak. Listening is emphasized more explicitly in other *Psalmes*, such as 85, where the speaker bids herself to silence:

What speake I? ô lett me heare
 what he speakes: for speake hee will
 peace to whome he love doth beare. (lines 21-3)

In Calvinist theology, speaking when we should be listening can work very much to our detriment. The faithful should always be diligently vigilant to a sign that they may be of the elect, and we might not hear God’s words of “peace” if we are always busy talking. Psalm 116 also stresses the importance of listening for an answer: “The lord receaves my cry,” the speaker maintains, “and me good eare doth give” (lines 1-2).

in God's presence, but also "to sing his workes" to others, that is, to praise God and thus speak of the divine in a way that suits the subject, the audience, and the speaker.⁴⁸ In many ways throughout the *Psalmes*, speaking to God is indeed represented as a private experience, as Fiske and other critics observe. But this speaker is also, as she says in Psalm 78, teaching a "grave discourse" (line 1), and Pembroke's Psalm 73 does express anxiety about speaking decorously in public. The sense of these poems as public verse is quite apparent in the speaker's concern with decorum, not only in speaking to God herself, but also in speaking (or not speaking) to others of God.

In outlining the speaker's struggle with learning the right use of rhetoric, Pembroke's Psalm 73 describes what seems to be a very personal history, an account of one believer's journey toward "understanding might." But the history recounted in this psalm has more universal applications; it is very similar to the more general account of humanity's enlightenment that Wilson offers in his *Art of Rhetoric*. After

⁴⁸ Trill makes a similar point about Psalm 75. The version in the Geneva Bible, she points out, "simply exhorts the reader to praise God but says nothing of the manner or mood in which this is to be done." Pembroke's version, however, "accentuates both" ("Sixteenth-Century" 152). By identifying Pembroke's concern with finding the appropriate manner and mood in which to address God, Trill also points to some of the rhetorical characteristics and themes of Pembroke's *Psalmes* I am describing. But Trill doesn't use rhetorical theory or use rhetorical concepts such as *decorum* in her analysis. I would like to suggest that Trill's discussion of Pembroke's work, insightful as it is, would be enhanced by thinking about her poetry in rhetorical terms. Trill's article is important and what she has to say is, I think, accurate. At the same time, though, it also provides another example of how our tendency not to explore the relationship of poetry and rhetoric in women's writing curtails our understanding of the role such writers played in contemporary rhetorical culture and in literary history.

the Fall, Wilson maintains, godliness returned to humanity, as it does to Pembroke's speaker, only through the right use of rhetoric: "when man was thus past all hope of amendment" he tells us,

God, still tendering his own workmanship, stirred up his faithful and elect to persuade with reason all men to society. And gave his appointed ministers knowledge both to see the natures of men, and also granted them the gift of utterance, that they might with ease win folk at their will and frame them by reason to all good order.

(41)

The speaker of Pembroke's Psalm 73 does seem to be positioned at the moment in Wilson's history where God's divine workmanship "stirred up his faithful and elect." With help from the art of persuasion and "the power of eloquence and reason," Wilson goes on, "they became through nurture and good advisement, of wilde, sober; of cruel, gentle; of fools, wise; and of beasts, men" (42), just as Pembroke's speaker eloquently persuades herself, once a "foole" (line 64) and a "beast" (line 66), to speak now only in praise of God, and "sing his workes while breath shall give me space" (line 84).

Pembroke's and Wilson's use of the words "fool" and "beast" in very similar contexts is perhaps more than simple coincidence. Both writers describe a human progression, individual in the former and collective in the latter, from foolish and

beastly ignorance to the eloquence and reason that can come only with “understanding might.” Taken together, Pembroke’s and Wilson’s histories link the particular and the universal; within the personal experience recounted in Psalm 73 is also comprehended the more general experience Wilson describes. Both accounts promote the belief that eloquence is best and most rightly used in the service of the divine, a belief that would be taken up and expounded most insistently by George Herbert, and one that is surely implied in Psalm 73.⁴⁹

This belief might in large part account for this psalm’s oft-noted and unmistakable allusions to *Astrophil and Stella*. In Psalm 73, as Walker hypothesizes, Pembroke does indeed lay “claim to the territory of the secular lyric even as it rejects it for the privileged voice of the divine poet” (94). As Walker goes on to explain,

The first stanza, “It is most true . . . Most true” echoes the repetition of [Philip Sidney’s] sonnet five, “It is most true . . . True (Ringler 1962, 167), while the opening question of the final stanza — “O what is he will teach me clyme the skyes?” — echoes the lover’s address to the

⁴⁹ Psalm 73 is not an isolated example of Pembroke’s examination of the right use of rhetoric. Such a belief is clearly and explicitly expressed in other *Psalmes*. In her version of Psalm 105, for example, Pembroke’s speaker exhorts all believers to use language on God’s behalf: “to him your songs, your psalmes unto him frame,” the speaker urges, and “make your discourse, his wonders celebrate” (lines 3-4). Psalm 89 ends on a similar note. Language, the speaker argues in this psalm, is most fittingly used in perpetual praise of the divine, with “all at thee and at thy Christ directed: / to endlesse whom be endlesse praise assign’d” (lines 126-7).

moon in the opening line of sonnet 31, "With how sad
steps, o Moone, thou climb'st the skies." (94)

The secular lyric may very well be rejected as Walker claims, but Pembroke's allusions to her brother's sonnets also indicate that what is divine cannot be expressed without some help from the secular. It may be most decorous to use poetic art in the service of devotion, but this does not also mean that it is indecorous to use poetic conventions that, like those of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, are associated with the secular.

Concomitant with the *Psalms*' concern with decorum is an equally present preoccupation with misinterpretation. In Psalm 56, for example, the speaker suggests that the exercise of decorum and the use of appropriate speech will not necessarily avoid the risk of being misread. The psalm opens with a complaint about the speaker's enemies:

Fountaine of pittie now with pittie flow:

these monsters on me daily gaping goe.

dailie me devoure these spies

swarmes of foes against me rise,

ô god that art more high then I am low. (lines 1-5)

Such complaints about gaping spies and foes can certainly be read biographically, as Hannay does when she points out that many of the Psalms offered Pembroke the opportunity to address her family's enemies. "Slander," Hannay observes, "plagued

the Dudley/Sidney alliance at court,” and it plagued the alliance for a number of reasons. “Leicester’s opportunity to marry the Queen after his wife’s death,” Hannay explains, “Sir Henry’s conduct of Irish affairs, and Sir Philip’s role in the public arena all were casualties of slander — at least in the eyes of the Sidneys” (“Genevan Advice” 39).

It is true that the speaker of this psalm is complaining bitterly of slander and is asking for “pitty.” But there is something more than malicious gossip about the Sidneys being addressed here. Typically for Pembroke’s verse, what may be read as distinctly personal has broader, more universal applications, and this particular psalm also offers the opportunity to explore the consequences of misinterpretation and the limitations of rhetorical practice. The speaker goes on to suggest that misinterpretation goes hand-in-hand with such slanderous offenses. To exercise decorum, that is, to “think, speake, and doe the best,” the speaker complains, is not a guaranteed safeguard against willful misreaders. Despite this psalmist’s best efforts, these deliberate misinterpreters “to the worst my thoughts, wordes, doings wrest” (lines 11-12), and they are able to do so despite the speaker’s cautious adherence to what is perhaps the primary tenet of early modern rhetorical theory.

Pembroke’s expressed doubts about the efficacy of decorum become more clear when her version of this psalm is compared with antecedent translations.

Pembroke’s editors note that in the English Psalter, Sternhold and Hopkins render this line as “They daily mistake my words,” while Bèze’s version reads “whatsoever I

entende, I speake or doe, they may pervert it" ("Commentary" 372). Pembroke's line obviously bears a closer resemblance to Bèze's than to the Sternhold-Hopkins rendering, as it also emphasizes the willfulness of such misreading and does not allow for the possibility of a simple "mistake." Yet there remains a small but important difference between Bèze's line and Pembroke's: though both acts of misinterpretation are described as willful, there is a subtle but distinct difference between "perverting" one's intentions, actions, and speech and wresting one's thoughts, words, and doings to the "worst." By ascribing to the slanderers the extreme of willful misinterpretation, Pembroke also emphasizes the limitations of decorum. To "think, speake, and doe the best," that is, to exercise decorum most carefully, cannot guarantee to safeguard one's public persona against one's enemies. Seen in this light, the potential benefits of even the most judicious exercise of rhetorical practice become questionable if not entirely negated.

The ease with which spies can read the worst out of the best appears again in a later poem, Psalm 71. The slandering tendencies of these "spies," her editors note, Pembroke added to the biblical "enemies" in both this psalm and Psalm 56 ("Commentary" 372), a change that can also be read as biographically significant and certainly as a comment on the dangers and intrigue of Elizabethan courtly life. Psalm 71 features an aged speaker looking back at a time "when all me so misdeemed, / I to most a monster seemed" (lines 22-23). As in Psalm 56, Pembroke describes not a slightly wrested or unintentional misreading, but a willful and deliberate worst

reading — this speaker is misdeemed a “monster.” Despite the efforts of these slanderers, the speaker of Psalm 71 trusts that God will read her words, thoughts, and actions rightly: “yet in thee my hope was strong” (line 24), the speaker professes. Or as Psalm 56 insists, God knows the true story and has watched the speaker’s every move with “carefull counting looke” (line 21); this truth will not be forgotten, for “these matters are all entred in thy book” (line 25). God, it seems, is the truly accurate interpreter.

Tellingly, God is also ultimately a writer as well, one who inscribes the exact truth in His book. Evidently, the truth enrolled in God’s book is enduring; unlike the efforts of human writers, God’s written truth will always be exactly that, the absolute truth. Given the psalm’s contrast of earthly misinterpretation and God’s ready understanding of the actual truth, it seems safe to say that the poem further suggests that human writing bears the same relationship to divine writing as human interpretation does to divine understanding. That is, the corollary implied here is that our efforts at writing are as given to deviation from the absolute truth as our interpretations. In this way, Pembroke’s psalms evince the Platonic-Ramist suspicion of rhetoric as a possible vehicle for expressing truth; in writing, in public speech, and in the more general exercise of decorum, the practice of rhetoric not only falls short of attaining truth, any glimmer of truth it might hold is subject to so many degrees and variations of readings and misreadings that its purported truth becomes

indiscernible, obscured by the interests and the perceptions of many readers and writers.

This implied suspicion of rhetorical expression appears again, in Psalm 120, in a more explicit way. In this psalm, the speaker pleads to God for protection against committing her own rhetorical offenses: "Lord ridd my soule," the speaker implores,

... from treasonous eloquence

of filthy forgers craftily fraudulent:

and from the tongue where lodg'd resideth

poisoned abuse, ruine of beleevers. (lines 5-8)

As her editors note, Pembroke here follows Calvin in describing a twofold abuse of language, the abuse of the slanderer and the abuse of the persuader. Pembroke, they point out, has in this psalm retained "Calvin's distinction between the two ways deceitful tongues work" ("Commentary" 432), that is, by verbal seduction or by calumny; as Calvin puts it, "eyther in compassing them by wyles and captiousnes, or by deffaming them falsly" (qtd. in "Commentary" 432). Speaking in public is a rhetorical act, and it can be dangerous for two reasons, both because it can lead to misinterpretation and because it can corrupt those who do speak publicly.

This distrust of rhetoric is communicated both substantively and formally in the stanza quoted above. The first example of deceitful tongues at work, those that work through "treasonous eloquence," is a telling one. This dangerous eloquence figures rhetoric, indirectly at least, as a pejorative, the kind of speech the speaker

pleads God to “ridd my soule from.” The superfluous ornateness that had come to be associated with over-elaborate and thus suspect rhetoric is reinforced again in the subsequent line, where the speaker identifies those who deploy such “treasonous eloquence” as “filthy forgers craftily fraudulent.” Rhetorical abuse is depicted here quite clearly on the literal level, in the description of those who commit such offenses as fraudulent forgers. Such abuse is also, typically for Pembroke, depicted figuratively. Here, Pembroke uses “the Figure of Like Letter” to an effect very different from its effect in other psalms, such as Psalm 72, in part because the alliteration isn’t also determined by another, dominant figure, such as *antimetabole* or *ploce*.

Pembroke uses alliteration here in a way that gives the line a particular vehemence, as though the speaker is spitting out this description in utter disgust. The speaker’s fury has, apparently, affected her own capacity to be eloquent; such a figure, says Puttenham, is “much vsed by our common rimers, and doth well if it be not too much vsed.” As noted earlier, overuse of the Figure of Like Letter is not a rhetorical virtue, but “it falleth into the vice which shalbe hereafter spoken of called *Tautologia*” (174). Puttenham explains *Tautologia* more extensively much later in his *Arte*. This figure he calls “the figure of selfe saying,” and he reiterates his point that overusing it is “nothing commendable,” for “if it be too much vsed, and is whe[n] our maker takes too much delight to fill his verse with wordes beginning all with a letter” (254). The speaker here seems to be taking too much delight in disgust, and has (at least in

Puttenham's terms) become ineloquent as a result. Pembroke thus uses a rhetorical figure in a way that suggests that "treasonous eloquence" is not only a mark of corruption, as it is for the "filthy forgers," but that it is also corrupting: rhetorical abuse, it seems, is dangerously self-perpetuating, creating a tautology of indecorous ineloquence that renders rhetoric abused and abusing.

What is perhaps more important in this plea is the speaker's recognition of her own propensity to be guilty of such "treasonous eloquence." Lurking behind this recognition is, of course, the Ramist suspicion of rhetoric. Unlike Calvin, whose interpretation of the psalm focusses solely on the way that the deceitful tongues of others work, Pembroke's complaint is a twofold one in that it applies to the speaker as much as it does to others. In her subtle reworking of her sources, Pembroke has phrased this line in a way that accuses others of rhetorical abuses but also acknowledges the possibility that she also may commit or has already committed the same offence. But, as Mary V. Silcox points out, "The bearer and the reader who are skilled in decorum can discover a deeper decorum, a hidden truth, beneath an apparently indecorous surface" ("Ornament" 45). The truth that lies beneath this indecorous surface is the recognition of the speaker's own potential for committing rhetorical abuses, which is also imparted more explicitly in the speaker's plea to God to "ridde my soule" from such offenses. The passage opens with a declaration of penitent confession, one that identifies the speaker's own culpability and remorse for her own sins, which would weigh far more heavily on her soul than such sins

committed by others. The speaker's penitent plea suggests that the rhetorical offenses committed by others have blighted her own soul, both by accusing falsely and by causing the speaker to commit the same offence. In this psalm, the dangers of rhetoric are very clearly illustrated, both through the poem's content and through its use of rhetorical tropes and figures.

Pembroke's subscription to the Ramist suspicion of rhetoric seems clear here, and her adherence to its principles seems further supported by the opening stanza's offering of a kind of proof very different from that which is often found in her *Psalmes*. Ramism's influence is perhaps also seen in Psalm 120's opening lines, where the subsequently anxious speaker expresses no doubt of being heard by God: having called out in "anguishes" that were "never unanswered," this time the speaker does "doubt not againe to receave an answer" (lines 1-4). Pembroke has here inflected her source, adding, as her editors note, "to the biblical text the idea of repeated past answers as an indication of future answers" ("Commentary" 432). This is a telling addition to make, and it is one that centres on past evidence as proof of future actions. It is, in effect, a logical syllogism, one that is roughly equivalent to "I have called out to God before, God has never failed to answer, therefore God will answer this time."

Though the poem opens with the certainty that God will answer, it ends with no answer from God and no resolution toward peace with the slandering enemies. The lack of a reply belies the speaker's opening certainty, and the speaker remains trapped in an accelerating war of rhetorical abuses: "who when to peace I seeke to call

them,” the speaker finally laments, “faster I find to the warre they arme them” (lines 23-24). The kind of certainty syllogistically expressed in the speaker’s call to God is, it seems, unwarranted. Evidently, the logical syllogism isn’t the best means of expressing devotion; in this case, the syllogism hasn’t even expressed a truth, for the psalm ends with the speaker more deeply immersed in the metaphorical battle than when the poem opened. Arguably, the certainty inherent in a syllogistic mode of address is also a mark of arrogance or, at the very least, evinces a decided lack of humility wholly unsuited to an appeal to God. In this psalm, Pembroke appears to subscribe to the Ramist distrust of rhetoric. At the same time, though, her use of a logical syllogism casts suspicion on Ramist rhetoric: it does so by showing that logic is an insufficient means of finding and articulating absolute truth, especially when one is attempting to express the ineffable or is addressing the divine. Though Ramism aims to avoid the ostensible speciousness of rhetoric, it here becomes itself suspect in its belief that logic can lead us to know with absolute certainty.

The speaker’s own rhetorical abuses are represented both formally and substantively in Psalm 120 as a tautology of sinfulness. Such a tautology inscribes a circularity very different from the eternity and oneness of the divine that is figuratively suggested in other psalms; as noted earlier, Pembroke uses similar rhetorical devices to depict scenarios that couldn’t be more antithetical. In other instances, the *Psalmes* use other, inherently circular figures in a way that suggests that rhetoric offers the most apt means of expressing eternal goodness, but this psalm uses

rhetoric in a way that suggests it is also the most apt means of expressing humanity's never-ending depravity. Again, rhetoric seems to serve opposing purposes. Yet this opposing usage mustn't be read as revealing something faulty or unresolved in this writer's comprehension and use of rhetoric. Not only does it suggest, as I have argued above, her familiarity with its practice, it also reveals her understanding of the dual nature of rhetoric identified by rhetorical theorists from Aristotle onward.

As Erich Auerbach points out, "the Fathers themselves did not scorn the conscious employment of the art of rhetoric, not even Augustine." The problem is not with rhetoric itself, Auerbach goes on, but "The crux of the matter is what purpose and what attitude the artistic devices serve" (*Mimesis* 199): rhetoricians have always recognized, as Vickers puts it, that "there is good rhetoric and bad rhetoric" (*Classical Rhetoric* 166). Pembroke thus uses a particular rhetorical figure in a way that implies a more universal understanding about the practice of rhetoric as a whole. Seen in this light, it becomes clear that the problems with language and interpretation depicted in *Psalmes* such as 71 and 120 haven't so much to do with the nature of rhetoric but the purpose for which it is used. It is important to remember as well that the rhetorical abuses committed by the speaker of Psalm 120 arise in response to the rhetorical abuses of others. And although such a response itself alludes to the Ramist suspicion of rhetoric, it is also true that, taken together, Pembroke's *Psalmes* show rhetoric to be a very valuable, and probably indispensable, tool in enabling poetic expressions of devotion.

Pembroke seems to drive this point home in her final contribution to the *Psalmes*, a psalm written in the form of a sonnet. In this, Psalm 150, Pembroke's concern with the relation of poetic form and devotional expression is most apparent; as Trill observes, "That Sidney's main purpose in translating the psalms was to praise God in poetic form is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the fact that she transforms the final psalm into a sonnet" ("Spectres" 206). Devotional poets, Zim points out, "did not repudiate their amatory and classical verse in order to write imitations of biblical verse" (4), a claim that is as true for Pembroke as it is for Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney, and Spenser. It is here, in the final words of the *Psalmes*, that sacred content and secular form most explicitly meet. In its call to all believers to "laud the Lord" and "the God of hoasts commend," Pembroke's Psalm 150 invokes collective devotion in a poetic form most often associated with the profane. Secular form and divine content are not, however, brought together in a jarring or discordant way; the poem is as lyrical and as decorous as the music it aims to inspire. Even so, though the numerous musical instruments the poem invokes will sound the celebration of praise, it is not the instruments themselves that will bring forth the "greatest praise upon his greatnes" (line 4). Rather, it is "in their tunes," the speaker anticipates, "such melody be found, / As fitts the pompe of most triumphant king" (lines 11-12). Like rhetoric itself, these musical instruments will help give shape to the perfect praise the poem describes, but they cannot in themselves shape that praise — the nature of musical expression is not determined by its tools alone anymore than the nature of poetry is

determined solely by the tools of its expression. What Pembroke again suggests is that it is not the means of expression that is important in any articulation of devotion, but the fitting correspondence of mode and subject.⁵⁰ And the most fitting subject for any linguistic act, and poetry in particular, is to praise God: “conclud,” both the psalm and the psalter end, “by all that aire, or life enfold, / lett high Jehova highly be extold” (13-14). The sequence thus ends with a joyous celebration of God’s beneficence and an equally joyous celebration of the capacity and the duty of human language to praise the divine.

Much has, of course, been made of Psalm 150’s Petrarchan form, and that it is one of only two psalms in sonnet form in the entire collection,⁵¹ and it is true that, as critics have noted, this sequence of psalms can in many ways be likened to her brother’s highly influential *Astrophil and Stella*, as well as to sequences produced by

⁵⁰ Steinberg, who suggests that Pembroke may have known Hebrew, argues quite convincingly that the form Pembroke chooses for Psalm 150 more closely replicates the mode of the Hebrew original than other, more literal translations. Even though her translation “totally dispenses with the Hebrew form,” Steinberg suggests, “that sonnet does a far better job of conveying the feeling and therefore the sense of the psalm than does the Geneva Bible version”: whereas the earlier translation “is fairly literal and yet distorts the original,” Steinberg argues, “Mary’s gets to the heart of the psalmist’s words.” One example Steinberg uses to illustrate his argument comes from Pembroke’s opening words, “O laud the Lord,” which, he points out, are much closer to the lightness of the Hebrew *Hal’lujah* than Geneva’s rather heavy “Praise ye the Lord.” For this and other reasons, Steinberg believes that Pembroke’s sonnet captures more closely “the unmitigated joy of the original” psalm (4-5).

⁵¹ The other is Psalm 100, a sonnet in Spenserian form. See Woods’s *Natural Emphasis* and the Hannay et.al. edition of Pembroke’s writing (Volume 2, pp. 469-83) for tables of the *Psalms’* verse forms.

other sonneteers such as Samuel Daniel and Fulke Greville, whom Pembroke knew well. It is equally true that many of the *Psalmes* express courtly or anticourtly sentiments.⁵² As Waller argues, the Sidney Psalms as a whole “reveal a fascinating and hitherto unexplored complexity in the intellectual history of the Sidney circle, a tension between Courtier and Christian, between Castiglione and Calvin” (24). There is much to be said about the tension between the secular and the sacred that Waller identifies, and it is clear that the *Psalmes* in many ways reveal Pembroke’s aristocratic status and her concern with things courtly. At the same time, though, I think that to claim, as Fisker does, that Pembroke’s *Psalmes* focus on “a drama in which the psalmist, like the lover in the sonnet, is a bewildered victim, not a master of his or her experience” (“Sacred Parody” 235) is to overstate the case.

There is no disputing the claim that Pembroke’s *Psalmes* depict many moments of bewilderment and that they very often centre on the speaker’s wavering faith. But it is important also to remember that Pembroke’s verse, despite its many and varied secular influences, is ultimately what Philip Sidney calls in his *Defence* “a divine poem” (22). These poems are first and foremost expressions of sacred devotion. To read Pembroke’s *Psalmes* as the psalmodic equivalent to the courtly sonnet sequence is to place too much emphasis on the biographical details of Pembroke’s life, both as

⁵² In Psalm 75, for example, the speaker bids the reader to “seeke not the fountayne whence preferment springeth.” Rather, it is wiser to turn all one’s attention to the only constant in an everchanging world, that is, “gods only fixed course that all doth sway,” a course that “lymitts dishonors night, and honors day” (lines 15-17).

“Sidney’s sister” and as a prominent aristocrat: or, as Goldberg puts it, “To make the woman and her writing disappear into the male text or into male-dominated society means to be giving more power to men than they had” (“Literal Translation” 324). My aim here is not to dismiss the usefulness of biographical criticism, but to suggest that it is time to add something more to the interpretive mix. To read the *Psalmes* primarily in biographical terms, that is, to maintain what Walker calls her “derivative status as student-sister of master-brother” (72), is also to read Pembroke’s work in a way that impedes our attempts to understand the significance of women’s poetry in literary and rhetorical history. To compartmentalize women’s writing in this way is also to read their work according to a model that has dominated discussions of early modern women writers, a model that limits the relevance of women writers to the history of *women*. This is an unfortunate restriction, and the example of Pembroke’s *Psalmes* suggests that we have much to gain by thinking about women’s writing in a broader context.

In his treatise, Puttenham urges his readers not to be too closely critical of women’s poetry: “vndue iteration or darke word, or doubtfull speach,” he opines, are not to be too narrowly looked upon, “specially in the pretie Poesies and deuises of Ladies, and Gentlewomen makers, whom we would not haue too precise Poets least with their shrewd wits, when they were married they might become a little too phantasticall wiues” (249). Here, I must disagree with Puttenham’s words.

Pembroke’s *Psalmes* cannot only withstand such close critical scrutiny, her shrewd wit

and her mastery of rhetorical and poetic technique demand it. Pembroke's *Psalmes* offer an especially salient example of the active role women played in rhetorical culture as they revised, affirmed, and challenged the conventions of a discipline and a practice that both characterized and shaped the early modern world. Given both the influence of rhetoric on Pembroke's work and the role her *Psalmes* played in shaping literary history, this woman poet is surely as important a figure in the history of rhetoric as she is in the history of English poetry. Yet the example of Pembroke's translations of the Psalms is also more broadly illustrative of the rhetorical nature of the writings of many women of her day — writers such as Lady Mary Wroth and Aemilia Lanyer — whose work equally suggests that just because women may not have been formally trained in rhetoric does not also mean that they did not know how to use this art of seeing and persuading.

Chapter Three

Sacred and Secular in Wroth's "A crowne of Sonetts"

Far from exemplifying what her uncle Philip Sidney might call a "divine poem," Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is a notable example of English Petrarchism — or, as some would have it, anti-Petrarchism — and it is also the first complete Petrarchan sequence written and published by an English woman.¹ As Wroth's

¹ Another English woman, Anne Lock (Lok or Locke), published in 1560 a group of twenty-six sonnets based on Psalm 51, *Miserere mei Deus*: Lock's editor, Susan Felch, has recently claimed that "the twenty-six sonnets constitute the earliest sonnet sequence written in English" (127), predating Thomas Watson's *Hekatompathia* and Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*. But Wroth's readers give *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, which was published over sixty years after Lock's sonnets, the distinction of being first: on the first page of her book, Naomi Miller notes that "Mary Wroth wrote the first sonnet sequence in English by a woman" (*Changing the Subject* 1), while Elaine Beilin opens her article with the assertion that "it was the only Renaissance sequence to be written by a woman" ("Constancy" 229). Though Lock's sonnets have only recently appeared in a modern edition, *The Collected Works of Anne Vaughan Lock*, the reasons for overlooking her possible claim to a literary first have more to do with the nature of her collection than anything else. As Thomas P. Roche, Jr. notes in his discussion of religious sonnet sequences, the issue for Lock's and other similar works is that "One might argue that none . . . is anything more than a random

readers have long noted, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* imitates and revises established Petrarchan conventions; by doing so, it actively participates in a poetic tradition most often associated with profane love. Generically and substantively, Wroth's sonnet sequence does seem very different from the *Psalmes* of her aunt Pembroke. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* was also written by a woman who was certainly not held up as a model of worldly virtue and devotional piety. As we know, Wroth was often the focus of scandal, most notably for her affair with her cousin (and Pembroke's son), William Herbert, which resulted in the birth of two illegitimate children and her own exile from court.² Wroth also attracted negative attention with the 1621 publication of her prose romance, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, to which *Pamphilia to*

collection of religious poems, that they do not show the structural complexity of the so-called 'secular' sequences" (154). Roche is non-committal on whether Lock's sequence exhibits the requisite "structural complexity," but he does point out that "If it should be considered as a sequence, then it should be granted the privilege of being the first sequence in English" (155). Wroth's editor, Josephine Roberts, gives this poet credit for a different kind of originality; as "the first English writer to reverse the sexual roles within a complete sonnet collection" (48) Wroth holds an indisputable revisionist first.

² Though her readers have often assumed that Wroth lost courtly favour because of her sexual behaviour, others have challenged this view. Barbara Lewalski points out that, "as several critics have supposed, the powerful Sidneys and Herberts rallied 'round to shield Wroth and foster the natural children, as was often the case in aristocratic families." Lewalski also quotes Edward Herbert of Cherbury's poem, "A Merry Rime Sent to Lady Mary Wroth upon the birth of my Lord of Pembroke's Child," as possibly attesting to the ready acceptance of her and William Herbert's illegitimate offspring. There might, Lewalski suggests, have been other reasons for Wroth's exile: "Some episodes in the *Urania*," she notes, "suggest that Wroth was disgraced at court over the Pembroke relationship, but ascribe the fall from grace to the Queen's jealousy rather than to bastard children" (*Writing Women* 248-49).

Amphilanthus was appended. The example of the *Urania* surely illustrates Ann Baynes Coiro's point that "the risks of leaving the private world of manuscript circulation and entering the print market were high" for any woman (360), but it was not only the means of the book's dissemination that created problems for Wroth. The *Urania* is a revealing *roman à clef*, and the reaction to it was, in fact, so vitriolic that Wroth even petitioned Lord Buckingham's assistance in retrieving copies already sold. Given all of these literary and contextual differences, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* does seem an odd companion to Pembroke's *Psalmes*, whose author Edward Denny famously described as Wroth's "vertuous and learned Aunt" and held up as a literary example for her wayward niece to follow.³

A discussion of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* in this context might, of course, be readily justified by Wroth's close relation to Pembroke. Wroth's status as a member of a powerful literary family and as the niece of a woman who had already written and published undoubtedly had much to do with the nature of her writing, and with her even choosing to write; as Margaret Hannay points out in her discussion of the Countess of Pembroke's role as literary mentor, "When Wroth began to write, she saw herself not merely as a woman, but as a *Sidney* woman with a clear sense of poetic

³ Denny, as Lewalski notes, "saw himself and his family barely concealed" in the *Urania*'s story of Sirelius, whom Denny read as his son-in-law Sir James Hay, and "whose violent jealousy of his wife (Denny's daughter Honoria) led him to torment her but then to rescue her when her own father (Denny) attempted to kill her" (*Writing Women* 249). Denny's letter is reproduced in full in Roberts's edition of Wroth's poems (238-39).

authority in her lineage" ("Mentor" 16). It would be foolhardy and even impossible to ignore the significance of what it meant to be a woman writer, and a Sidney at that, in early modern England.⁴ Indeed, Maureen Quilligan is right to suggest that "Wroth's membership in the Sidney family goes a long way toward explaining how she could overcome the massive social injunctions against female authority," injunctions that, she goes on to note, "functioned throughout the Renaissance to silence female would-be writers" ("The Constant Subject" 307). Yet we would do well also to remind ourselves that we don't often have a problem talking about men's poetry without emphasizing gender, nor do we tend to apologize for reading male-authored works outside the context of the family tree. Though I would not deny the importance of reading women's (and men's) writing biographically and sociohistorically, I am also sympathetic to critics who, like Linda Woodbridge, suggest that we may do women writers a disservice by reading them first and foremost as the inhabitants of "history-land" (62).

At the same time, I also share Quilligan's belief that, as she argues elsewhere, our efforts to "deghettoize" women writers must also involve an attempt "to place them in that local historical context where they, like their male counterparts, are most specifically revealed" ("Conversation" 42). As Quilligan's words suggest, historical

⁴ Authorial lineage is as important to Wroth the romance writer as it is to Wroth the poet; as Kim Walker remarks, the heroine of the *Urania*, Pamphilia, "notably inherits her kingdom from her uncle, not her father; and it is Sir Philip Sidney whose status provides Wroth with the literary genealogy that gives her access to a privileged territory" (171).

context is important in any attempt to move women writers from the margins to the centre of the literary landscape, and that context is, of course, not made up exclusively of either men or women: to privilege gender when reading women's writing is, in a sense, to occlude the fact that gender is always a binary construct. I would also add that the gender-inclusive context Quilligan advocates when reading women's writing cannot be accurately reimagined without also acknowledging that early modern culture was shaped by many things, including rhetoric. If we really want to read women's writing within its "local historical context" as Quilligan proposes, then we must also read their work in rhetorical terms: though arguably dominated by men, rhetorical culture was no more the exclusive province of one sex than was the society it helped to shape. Accordingly, my intent is not to read Wroth's work as the product of a woman (and a Sidney) so much as it is to try and reshift the critical focus away from gender and genealogy and toward a broader literary-rhetorical context.

Gender and genealogy aside, the history of the sonnet sequence and of the Petrarchan tradition itself suggests that a study of devotional verse might also consider work of a less conventionally devotional nature than Pembroke's *Psalmes*. Again, Richard Rambuss seems quite right to remind us that "The term *devotion*, as we know, can signify either erotic attachment or religious worship and oftentimes . . . both at once" (101). Neither for Petrarch nor for his imitators was the sonnet sequence restricted to the expression of earthly devotion. Erwin Panofsky notes that Petrarch's Laura remains "a real human being," but she is nevertheless glorified to the

point of being “treated as a saint sharing the honours of Christ” (100), while “Petrarch himself,” Heather Dubrow reminds us, “was anti-Petrarchan in that his sequence pivots on a renunciation of the love of Laura in favor of the love of God” (62). Many of his English admirers followed Petrarch’s lead in this as well, as devotional verse such as Fulke Greville’s *Caelica* and Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” attest. Speaking more generally, Rivkah Zim observes that “studies of renaissance culture and of all the poetry (not only metrical psalms) of the period should seek to restore a balance between religious and secular kinds.” It is only reasonable to do so, since, as Zim goes on to observe, “The arts of reading and writing were connected with the whole experience of the whole man” (6). The Neoplatonism that marks many sonnet sequences less explicitly devotional than Greville’s and Donne’s does indeed suggest that early modern poets themselves didn’t always make clear distinctions between religious and secular kinds of poetry.⁵

Zim makes an important point, and this critic’s words illustrate my argument in two ways. First, Zim reminds us that the early modern experience was a whole one, and that certain aspects of that experience can only be arbitrarily, and unrealistically, cordoned off from others. Second, and rather ironically, Zim’s words

⁵ Edgar Wind points out that “The notorious ease with which the Renaissance transferred a Christian figure of speech to a pagan subject, or gave pagan features to a Christian theme, has generally been interpreted as a sign of the profound secularization of Renaissance culture” (24). I am not offering such an interpretation: on the contrary, I believe that the simultaneous presence of the sacred and the secular apparent in much early modern writing attests to the pervasiveness of that culture’s religious habits of thought.

demonstrate that our assumptions about gender in the early modern period remain deeply internalized; in this case, so much so that this critic can make claims about reading, writing, and the “whole man” in a book that includes a lengthy discussion of Pembroke’s *Psalmes*. As we all know, early modern women had “whole” experiences too, and the many facets of that experience do not fit into clearly labelled compartments any more than those of early modern men. At the risk of belabouring the point, I must stress again that Renaissance habits of thought were as religious as they were rhetorical, and that neither rhetoric nor religion, as integral parts of the “whole experience,” can be wholly divorced from thought or from its verbal articulation. A study that considers rhetoric and early modern women’s verse can, I think, only benefit from considering not only the ways that the secular enables the expression of the sacred, as it most clearly does in Pembroke’s *Psalmes*, but also how the sacred enables the expression of the secular, as it does in Wroth’s explicitly Petrarchan sequence. Like the psalms of her aunt, Wroth’s sonnet sequence affirms the interdependence of the sacred and the secular, and thus suggests that these concepts are seldom, if ever, wholly separable.

What we might call the interanimation of the sacred and the secular is most obvious in Wroth’s “A crowne of Sonetts dedicated to Love.” That Donne coins the term in “The Ecstasy” does, I think, make it an especially appropriate one to use in a discussion of Wroth’s crown sonnets. Indeed, Donne’s poem perplexes us in much the same way as Wroth’s corona: in reading “The Ecstasy,” it is difficult to tell

whether Donne's poem is meant to be secular, as it initially appears to be, or whether we are meant to read it as sacred, as its diction, imagery, and ending strongly suggest. "Thus readers," Louis L. Martz notes, "have disagreed over whether 'The Extasie' is a poem of seduction or a deep theological and philosophical exploration of the relationship between body and soul." The best answer seems to be, as Martz suggests, is that "it is all these things, simultaneously" (212).⁶ I agree with Martz that Donne's poem is definitively neither one nor the other, but that it is both secular and sacred. It is clear throughout the whole of Wroth's sequence that the secular is a distinct and identifiable category, but her "crowne of Sonetts," like Donne's poem and like Pembroke's *Psalmes*, also suggests that what is often conceived of as a dichotomy of sacred and secular is not exactly that.

Like the *Psalmes* of her aunt before her, Wroth's corona also demonstrates an achieved mastery in the art of rhetoric; thus her poetry, like Pembroke's, also challenges the arbitrary (spoken or unspoken) exclusion of women poets from the rhetorical tradition. In order to demonstrate Wroth's understanding of the many ways that rhetorical technique can serve poetic and expressive purpose, I will offer some close readings of the corona's poems to show how Wroth uses the conventions of rhetoric in her "crowne of Sonetts." Through this close rhetorical analysis, I will

⁶ As Martz goes on to explain, "The wit of the title depends upon the double reference to 'sensuall Extasie' [or orgasm?] and mystical *extasis*; the whole poem develops from the physical desires implied in the curious 'composition of place' with which the poem opens" (212), that is, the "pregnant bank" that resembles "a pillow on a bed" ("The Ecstasy" lines 1-2).

demonstrate that Wroth uses the conventions of rhetoric in a way that unites the corona's form and its content and also bridges some of the dichotomies, including that of the sacred and the secular, that are often invoked to describe her sonnet sequence.

Following this rhetorical analysis of Wroth's corona, I will compare her use of rhetoric with that of her poetic contemporary (and counterpart), John Donne. I will focus on Donne's "*La Corona*" and discuss some of the ways his use compares with Wroth's, considering their similarities as well as their differences. Before taking up my detailed discussion of Wroth's corona, however, I will first offer a brief survey of critical readings of her work in general and of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* in particular. My aim in doing so is to offer a sketch of some of the ways readings of Wroth's verse are heavily, and perhaps unduly, shaped by notions of gender. By privileging gender in reading her work, critics obscure the possibility that Wroth was a knowing and active participant in her era's highly rhetorical culture.

Even more than in discussions of Pembroke's *Psalmes*, Wroth's exclusion from rhetorical culture is implied, if not directly articulated, in terms of privacy; as Rosalind Smith has recently noted, "The identification of the sequence as an excursion into interiority, and thus as a private text, represents an increasingly consistent approach toward *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*" (414). Not only is the private nature of Wroth's sonnet sequence, as Smith claims, imagined by latter-day readers as diametrically opposed to the public, this particular opposition is consistently

presented in a way that valorizes the public and denigrates the private. These terms are often used with the assumption that the private and the public were always mutually exclusive; thus to emphasize the private nature of Wroth's work excludes her from the public realm and, by implication at least, further excludes her and her work from the realms of the masculine and the rhetorical.⁷ Jeff Masten, for instance, implies such an exclusion when he describes Wroth's "almost inscrutable private language" and concludes that it evinces her "refusal to speak in the public, exhibitionist voice of traditional Petrarchan discourse" (69). Nona Fienberg describes Wroth's speaker "as a subject not in the theatrical sense, but in a private accounting," an accounting that rejects even as it is excluded from the "masculinist stage-play world" Greenblatt identifies in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* ("Poetic Subjectivity" 181).⁸

⁷ One exception to this general rule is found in May Nelson Paulissen's critical introduction to Wroth's sonnets. Paulissen was one of the first critics to write extensively on Wroth's verse, and her discussion recognizes the publicly oriented impulse of her work. The final chapter of Paulissen's study also mentions some of the rhetorical figures found in a few of Wroth's sonnets. The copiousness of Wroth's verse, she suggests, is at least partly explained by "her careful adherence to the requirements of the Italian sonnet genre and to the argument and devices of classical rhetoric" (174). Paulissen's rhetorical analysis of Wroth's verse is not extensive, but it is nevertheless enticing.

⁸ This is not to say that all of her critics have read Wroth's work this way. In fact, Fienberg has recently revised her earlier position, arguing that some of the references to contemporary events in Wroth's verse indicate "that her female poetic subjectivity negotiates the complex territory of both private and public, familial and mythological discourses" ("Poetics of the Self" 127). While the earlier work of Ann Rosalind Jones identifies "the public ambition Wroth hoped to satisfy by writing and publishing her poems" (152), Mary Moore counters Masten's argument directly when she notes that his reading "overlooks the mode's simultaneously public and private nature, exaggerating the role of public display on the one hand and, on the other hand,

When discussing Wroth's verse, critics thus tend to add another binary opposition — public versus private — to the male-female dichotomy that is implicit in our collective tendency to read early modern women's writing as first and foremost the product of women.⁹

Elizabeth Hanson's argument clearly illustrates the primacy of gender in Wroth criticism. In her discussion of Wroth's and Mary Stuart's sonnets, Hanson suggests that Wroth's sequence is "boring" because of "its failure (or refusal) to give the reader contexts for the speaker's exquisitely rendered emotion" (177). Hanson compares *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus's* substantive shortcomings to the richly contextualized work of other women writers: "unlike other texts by women in this period," she explains, "it doesn't offer as explicit content the gender issues which it

ignoring the ingenious paths women poets found around injunctions against public speech" (*Desiring Voices* 126). Though I agree that Wroth's poems are at once public and private, I also think that they are more public in nature than Fienberg, Jones, or Moore indicate.

⁹ Pointing out that Wroth's "status as a Sidney may well be as important as her status as a woman," Dubrow argues that this "is only an extreme case of the multiple forms of identity and identification which may challenge gender for primacy" in reading women's writing. Dubrow's concern, like mine, is "not to deny the profound significance of gender but to emphasize its complex interactions with other components of identity and identification" (144). Unlike Dubrow, however, my concern is not to read Wroth's work in terms of her status as a Sidney and all that it entails, but to read her work in relation to the rhetorical culture in which she — like her uncle, father, and aunt — actively (and inevitably) participated. And unlike Moore, whose reading of Wroth's verse as public and private depends on also reading her work as first and foremost the product of a woman, my intent is to shift the critical focus away from gender. I do not deny the significance of Wroth's status as a woman and a Sidney, but I would like to challenge the primacy of genealogy as well as gender in reading Wroth's verse.

has been placed on the syllabus to signify" (177). As Hanson's comment indicates, Wroth's readers are most troubled by the sequence's lack of biographical and historical reference. Although the *Urania*, as Elaine Beilin notes, may provide "a context for the sonnets" ("Constancy" 230), Wroth's revealing *roman à clef* evidently doesn't offer substance enough for some of her critics.¹⁰ Wendy Wall (*Imprint* 331) and Masten (67), for example, both describe the experience of reading Wroth's sonnets as "privative." The sequence's "relentless privacy" relegates her voice to a non-public (and thus distinctly non-masculine) place, but the contextualizing lack critics repeatedly identify in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* leads them to situate Wroth's verse in opposition not only to the work of men but also to the writing of other women. In Hanson's terms especially, Wroth the poet is neither woman nor man, but remains the "Hermophradite in show" Denny addresses in his poetic objection to the *Urania*.¹¹

That Wroth's verse is still characterized by some unquestioned assumptions about what it meant to be a woman living in the seventeenth century Hanson's

¹⁰ That context may not be especially valid, however, since it is possible that the sonnets may have been written, as her editor proposes, sometime before 1613 and thus long before the publication, or even the writing, of the *Urania* (See Roberts, "Introduction" 19).

¹¹ Denny's poem, titled "To Pamphilia from the father-in-law of Seralius," is reprinted in Roberts's introduction to Wroth's poetry (32-33), which also includes Wroth's spirited poetic response, "Railing Rimes Returned upon the Author by Mistress Mary Wrothe" (34-35). Wroth's reply begins "Hirmophradite in sense in Art a monster" (line 1), and, as Roberts notes, she was "not intimidated by Denny's power, influence, or insults." On the contrary, Wroth used Denny's own weapon against him, and "responded by turning the verses back against him, and her rhymes match his, word for word" ("Introduction" 34).

discussion makes clear. Referring to women more generally, she complains about their lack of formal education. Pointing to the undeniable gender bias of the early modern educational system, Hanson concludes that “to precisely the same degree that men were enabled as writers by their access to that educational system, women were hobbled by their absolute exclusion from it” (170). It is true, as Hanson claims, that women were largely excluded from the educational system, and she also rightly points out that, despite their distinct disadvantages, some women (she specifically mentions Elizabeth Cary) did manage to achieve extraordinary educations. Yet the picture Hanson paints seems incomplete. Though much of what she says is true, Hanson’s conclusions about the results of gendered education are, I think, overly determined in a number of ways. First, to argue for women’s “absolute exclusion” from the educational system is to suggest that all early modern education took place within clearly defined and impermeable boundaries, as though the Elizabethan schoolroom were a hermetically sealed environment where nothing trickled out nor in. Surely many women who did not attend school spent much of their time in the company of those who did, and they would need to be incredibly dull not to assimilate, if only indirectly, some of the formal learning of their male counterparts. Second, one might also argue that early modern women’s writing, quantifiably limited though it is, was not so much “hobbled” as it was perhaps enabled by less formal learning: a self-directed *ad hoc* education, as Hanson’s own example of Elizabeth Cary suggests, might

very well enable a writer both intellectually and imaginatively.¹² Learning what one wants to learn rather than what one is forced to learn might also allow one to write more freely — to think outside the box, as recent advertising would have it. Finally, Hanson's claim that early modern educational differences meant that women were impeded "to precisely the same degree" as their male counterparts were enabled seems unduly rigid: it posits a remarkably static view of early modern culture, it assumes that we can recreate the past with absolute precision, and it implies that the benefits of formal education can be readily identified and accurately measured. In these ways, Hanson's comments illustrate a larger, if not so obvious, critical trend.

As all of the above readings indicate, Renaissance women are often defined in debilitating opposition to instead of in league with their male counterparts: for the critics who write about them, most of these writers are disadvantaged women *before* they are accomplished psalmists, sonneteers, lyricists, or rhetors.¹³ Though it is true

¹² Cary was the first English woman to compose and publish an original five-act play, *The Tragedy of Mariam*. As we know from *Lady Falkland, Her Life*, Cary was an enthusiastic and determined scholar. According to the daughter who wrote her biography, Cary learned French, Italian, Spanish, and Latin "without being taught" (186) and bribed servants for candles so she could read all night (187-88). Lewalski summarizes Cary's largely self-directed education: she was a voracious reader who read widely in "especially history, poetry, moral philosophy, and the Church Fathers" and "also read 'most that has been written' in religious controversy — Luther and Calvin, Latimer, Jewel, and 'all English writers of name'" (*Writing Women* 182).

¹³ One exception to this admittedly generalizing rule is found in Smith's excellent article on Wroth's political intentions. Smith believes, as I do, that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* does not succumb to the self-effacing *humilitas topos* associated with many of her female contemporaries. Smith suggests as much when she claims that Wroth's "own text is set up as an exemplary model to other writers." "In a

that Wroth's readers do acknowledge the autonomy and the agency implied by her distinctly feminine subjectivity, which Smith summarizes as a critically identified "alternative space for the construction of a nascent female subjectivity," it is also true that this space is most often "characterized by its interiority and privacy" (413). Smith objects to such readings, arguing that the tension between the "private and public spheres" constructed throughout *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* marks not a rejection of the public. On the contrary, she says, this tension evinces Wroth's engagement with the public and the political, even though that engagement may be "muted in comparison with some male-authored sequences of the period" (423). If we read early modern women's writing in a way that attempts to see how these women are enabled before we assume that they are deprived, we might, like Smith, draw some very different conclusions.

I agree with much of what Smith says, and I wholly agree that Wroth's writing needs to be read in a broader public context. That context extends beyond the boundaries conventionally imposed on the early modern female experience, and it includes what I see as woman's participation in rhetorical culture. To relegate Wroth's verse to a clearly defined feminine and private sphere is to situate it in

sense," she goes on, "nothing could be further from the withdrawal from circulation advocated by Masten and Wall" because Wroth positions "her sequence in a wide political and religious frame." Smith's approach to Wroth's sequence is very different from mine, but she nevertheless reads this woman poet as an accomplished sonneteer with a political purpose rather than as a disadvantaged woman. Gender in Wroth's sequence, Smith argues, enables rather than precludes "a political purpose" (431).

opposition to the masculine and the public, and it is to further imply that her verse is antirhetorical (without public intention) or even arhetorical (lacking any conscious understanding of rhetoric). As with Pembroke's *Psalmes*, it is arguable that the critical emphasis on privacy in Wroth's verse is impelled not so much by the poems themselves, but by the prevailing critical tendency to read women's writing as the work of writers who are definitively female. Perhaps because they are so intent on gendering women's writing, it seems difficult for critics to accept that poetry written by a woman can represent two seemingly opposite impulses at the same time.

There is a critical irony in the fact that, even though *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*'s lack of biographical and sociohistorical evidence is often noted, readings of Wroth's poetry are still very much informed by the substance of her life. If we really want to read biographically, here we might also argue that the meeting of the private and the public is especially apt in Wroth's case. As a favourite of Queen Anne, Wroth lived her youth at the centre of the court, where she participated in a number of courtly entertainments, including Ben Jonson's and Inigo Jones's *Masque of Blackness*.¹⁴ Wroth seemed to enjoy life in the Jacobean court, and we cannot assume

¹⁴ See Roberts's introduction to Wroth's poems and Waller's chapter, "Like One in a Gay Masque: The Sidney Cousins in the Theaters of Court and Country" (*Family Romance* 221-45) for an account of Wroth's courtly activities. Roberts gives a detailed account of poets who penned Wroth's praise ("Introduction" 17-22). Jonson appears to have been one of Wroth's most ardent admirers: as Roberts points out, he dedicated his play *The Alchemist* and wrote three poems to her, *Epigrams* CIII and CV, both titled "To Mary, Lady Wroth," and *Underwoods* XXVIII, "A Sonnet, to the Noble Lady, the Lady Mary Wroth." Two of these poems, the first and third, are sonnets. Given Jonson's acerbic wit and his occasional cynicism, the fact that these are

that her enforced withdrawal diminished her desire to participate in it.¹⁵ Yet some critics, perhaps in the interest of identifying a distinctly feminine subjectivity, look for evidence of Wroth's expressed desire to retreat from the world and her rejection of the kind of public performance that went hand-in-hand with courtly life.

Masten and Fienberg, for example, find such evidence in sonnets such as P48, where the speaker laments that "I should nott have bin made this stage of woe / Wher sad disasters have theyr open showe" (lines 12-13), while Gary Waller invokes the same sonnet to argue that Wroth's stage is woeful because it is one "on which others' desires rather than her own are acted out" (*Family Romance* 211).¹⁶ It is this kind of poetic evidence that leads critics such as Masten to conclude that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is, more than anything else, "vehemently anti-theatrical" (84). Wroth's

the only sonnets in his *oeuvre* gives cause for suspicion. As John Baxter points out, Jonson seems to have admired Wroth's poetry, claiming that his exscribing of them made him "A better lover, and much better poet" (*Underwoods* XXVIII, line 4), but it is well known that Jonson "disliked sonnets" ("Divining Love" 2). Though the content of Jonson's poems is laudatory, his atypical choice of form is not without a hint of mockery.

¹⁵ As noted earlier, the reasons for Wroth's banishment are unclear. It is clear, however, that she had at this point fallen from favour. Roberts argues that Lord Cherbury's poem, as well as (perhaps) celebrating the birth of her illegitimate child, also "strongly suggests that she has acquired enemies and lost favor" (26). Both Lewalski (*Writing Women* 248) and Roberts quote Cherbury's poem from C.G. Moore Smith's edition, *Poems English and Latin of Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932), in which it is undated (Lewalski 403, n. 41).

¹⁶ Lewalski offers a parallel reading when she notes that the suffering caused by Amphilanthus's as well as Cupid's blindness "ironically exposes her publicly, making her a 'stage of woe,' and an 'open showe' of disasters" (*Writing Women* 255). Though Lewalski doesn't come right out and say it, her ironic reading suggests that Wroth's speaker has no public intentions.

more recent readers largely ignore Paulissen's recognition of Wroth's "dramatic sense," an "ability for scene-setting, character realization, a forward movement of action" that would have been the byproduct of a "life of play-going, talk about plays, and conversations with playwrights" (164). We might do well to remind ourselves here that the "antitheatrical metaphor," as Wall points out, is "a traditional sonnet trope" (*Imprint* 331), and that it is also possible Wroth wrote these poems long before her husband's 1614 death and her subsequent "decline in social status" (Roberts, "Introduction" 22-26).¹⁷ Surely Wroth's choosing to write a sonnet sequence, at the time a decade or more out of fashion, at least hints at a nostalgic wish to rejuvenate a courtly past, perhaps her own:¹⁸ as Dubrow says, "Petrarchism is the genre that

¹⁷ Drawing on contemporary poetic praise of Wroth's "music" found in the commendations of Ben Jonson, William Drummond, George Chapman, John Davies of Hereford, and George Wither, Roberts proposes that the dates and the content of these compositions suggest that Wroth "was writing poetry by 1613, long before the publication of her work in 1621" ("Introduction" 19). Lewalski cites Josuah Sylvester's sonnet to Wroth, which appeared in his 1613 elegy for her brother, William Sidney, and speculates that "Some tributes indicate that Mary Wroth was recognized as a poet and that her poems had some currency beyond the family circle long before their publication" (*Writing Women* 247); later, Lewalski asserts that some of the *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* poems "were known before 1613" (251).

¹⁸ Waller notes that the date of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*'s appearance is important. Even if the sequence was written earlier, its 1621 publication meant it was also "a culturally marginal work." That date, he goes on, "is some thirty years after the main vogue of sonneteering in England (and twelve years after even Shakespeare's belated and probably pirated collection appeared)" (*Family Romance* 191). If the sequence was, in fact, written much earlier as Roberts proposes, it was nevertheless still out of fashion at the time.

always looks back over its shoulder — at footprints of its lost beloved, traces of its speaker's lost youth, poems by earlier writers" (142).¹⁹

Critical readings of Wroth's work, then, are not unsupported by the poems themselves, and it is true that the sequence offers much evidence to justify its readers' conclusions about the feminine and private nature of Wroth's verse. Perhaps more than anything else, the kinds of arguments Wroth's critics tend to make are shaped by the nature of her poetic persona. As her readers have many times observed, the sonnets' speaker tells us little about the circumstances of the woman who wrote them and, as a result, she seems very much detached from and unconcerned with the larger world. It is true that Wroth's speaker is evasive, impenetrable, and in a sense unknowable. Wroth's poetic persona does, in many ways, support the arguments and justify the complaints of her readers. The sequence's title does encourage us to read a unified "Pamphilia," but to do so may underestimate the scope of Wroth's mimetic capabilities.²⁰ More than this, though, that the elusiveness of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus's* speaker is perceived as a problem rather than a strength of Wroth's

¹⁹ Beilin suggests that Wroth's choice of genre may have proven strategic. Because sonnet sequences were out of vogue at the time Wroth wrote hers, their conventions were no longer being implicitly enforced: thus "their demise," Beilin proposes, "meant that the first woman to write in these genres had greater freedom to adapt them to her special perspective than if she had followed a current fashion" (*Redeeming Eve* 213).

²⁰ Paulissen, who recognizes Wroth's dramatic talent, points to P52, which presents "a scene involving a madwoman as speaker" as a particularly good illustration of Wroth's "dramatic sense." The persona, Paulissen suggests, must not be mistaken for the poet whose "metrics and rhetoric are too sane for a madwoman" (164-65).

verse tells us more about her critics than it does about her: one doesn't hear scholars complaining that Donne's *Elegies*, for example, tell us little about the man himself. Frustrating it may be, but Wroth's changeful speaker — like the parade of personae who deliver Donne's *Elegies* — does tell us as much about the poet as it refuses to tell us about the woman. Read in this way, Wroth's complex persona might point to a reading very different from those posited by many of her critics: like much of Donne's, Wroth's verse is highly performative and very far from being "vehemently anti-theatrical" (Masten 84). Like Donne as well, Wroth is accomplished enough as a poet and as a rhetor to leave us frustrated in our attempts to discover a simple picture of the woman behind the sequence.

As a virtuoso poetic and rhetorical performance, Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts" submits to a reading different from those of critics who characterize Wroth's verse as primarily private, feminine, and frustratingly "privative." By consistently ascribing these characteristics to her verse, her readers indicate that the tendency to read women writers in terms of opposition is especially true for Wroth, and not only in relation to her being not-male (and sometimes not-female). At the risk of oversimplifying, I would suggest that the overall tendency is to read both Wroth and her poetic creation in terms of difference: the critical emphasis is on the woman and her work as constant, present, private, and feminine, qualities that are, in turn, opposed to an inconstant, absent, public, and masculine antithesis. Janet MacArthur, for one, makes this tendency very clear when she claims that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* fails to meet

our poetic expectations because it doesn't adequately sustain the kinds of binary oppositions we expect to encounter in Petrarchan verse. Thus, MacArthur argues, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is an imitative exercise that fails because it consistently depicts only one half of a binary while excluding its defining other. As a result, MacArthur concludes, her sequence "loses the oxymoronic dynamism of Petrarchism, achieved by the uneasy fusion of contraries, because Lady Wroth often only presents the negative side of the binaries that give Petrarchistic love poetry its vitality" (14-15). Like Hanson and others, MacArthur reads Wroth's poetry in terms that deprive before they enable.

We may take a different approach, however, and consider the ways that Wroth's verse negotiates and in many ways attempts to resolve what MacArthur calls "the uneasy fusion of contraries." What MacArthur identifies as lacking in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* evinces not Wroth's inability to achieve the "oxymoronic dynamism" that makes Petrarchan poetry so vital. On the contrary, it is Wroth's ability to resolve some of the poetic conundrums presented in the work of her sonneteering predecessors that gives her work a vitality of its own. Instead of failing to meet the criteria of a standard already set, Wroth's sonnet sequence reworks while drawing on the conventions of an established genre. Wroth's verse presents many contraries of the Petrarchan kind but refuses to maintain their polar opposition. In her corona especially, Wroth uses the tools of rhetoric to challenge even as she

represents the dichotomies that are also the poetic and rhetorical commonplaces of much Petrarchan poetry.

I. The Rhetorical Sonnet

“A crowne of Sonetts dedicated to Love” (P77-P90) is *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*’s most stunning achievement; as Jones says, “The fourteen sonnets are certainly a technical tour de force, and the ingenuity of the allegory is impressive” (152).²¹ The corona, a strict Italianate form, consists of a sequence of sonnets where the last line of one sonnet becomes the first line of the next. A complete corona, like Wroth’s, sees the last line of the final sonnet as the opening line of the first: Wroth’s corona begins and ends with “In this strang labourinth how shall I turne?” (P77 line 1; P90 line 14). The sonnets thus form a circular crown, one whose ending brings us back to the corona’s beginning. As a highly contrived poetic form, the corona inevitably draws attention to its own artificiality. Few would, I think, object to the claim that the “crowne of Sonetts” is a display piece designed to show off its maker’s skill: because it is a display piece, I would add, the corona is also a publicly directed performance.

²¹ Though earlier editors have numbered Wroth’s poems differently, here and throughout this chapter I use those Roberts assigns to *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*.

Wroth's performative intent seems further evidenced by her corona's exceeding, in length and perhaps also in strength, those of her male contemporaries and antecedents. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*'s crown is the longest and the most elaborate in English, surpassing her uncle's ten dizaine experiment in the *Old Arcadia* and the incomplete attempts at writing in this form made by her father in his *Rosis and Lysa*, and by Samuel Daniel in his sequence, *Delia*; Wroth's fourteen sonnets also exceed the seven of "*La Corona*," Donne's crown of devotion.²² It is important to note as well that, although *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* may have been written before 1613, Wroth did choose to append it to the *Urania*, a work whose publication suggests that she anticipated a public audience.²³ As Lewalski and Roberts indicate, it

²² In her article, Miller suggests that Wroth's corona measures the influence of Philip and Robert Sidney. Philip, she notes, "presents one of the first instances of the *corona* in English, in the form of ten linked dizains" found in the *Old Arcadia*, and mentions Robert's incomplete crown of four sonnets ("Lyric Fictions" 300). In her earlier essay, Beilin notes that "the extended repetition into as many as fourteen sonnets seems to be unique to Mary Wroth's sequence" ("Constancy" 236). The fact that neither critic mentions the coronas of other sonneteers, namely Daniel and (especially) Donne, illustrates the tendency to read Wroth's work in relation to her literary lineage: genealogy is second only to gender in critical readings of Wroth's verse. In her brief generic introduction to the crown sonnets, Roberts does identify all of the partial and complete coronas I mention, but adds to the list George Chapman's "A Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy," a series of ten linked sonnets that appeared in *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* (1595). Wroth's editor, however, also follows (or perhaps sets) the critical trend when she notes that "Perhaps the most immediate influence was Lady Mary Wroth's father, Sir Robert Sidney" (127).

²³ It is true that Wroth, in her letter asking for Buckingham's help in retrieving copies of the *Urania* already sold, claimed that they "from the first were solde against my minde I never purposing to have had them published" (See Roberts's "Appendix" 236), yet it seems that Wroth made this claim after her romance had unleashed "a storm of criticism" (Roberts, "Introduction" 36). It is difficult to know whether

is also possible that the poems of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* — like other sonnet sequences — circulated in manuscript before they were published.²⁴

Given all of these circumstances, it seems odd that Wroth's readers tend to focus on the sequence's inherently private nature and, as a result, minimize the significance of its function as public performance.²⁵ As a performance, the corona is also rhetorical; as Greenblatt says, early modern rhetoric "served to theatricalize culture" even as it was also "the instrument of a society which was already deeply

Wroth is being truthful or self-protective here; as Roberts notes, although Wroth "protested to Buckingham that her purpose in writing the *Urania* was in 'no way bent to give cause of offence,' she chose to deal with extremely sensitive court intrigues" ("Introduction" 35). That Wroth's romance brings to light what otherwise would have at least seemed private suggests that she may have had more of a public intention that her disclaimer to Buckingham suggests.

²⁴ Masten, however, disagrees implicitly with Lewalski and explicitly with Roberts. In his discussion, Masten refutes Roberts's evidence: he proposes a date of composition earlier than 1613 and argues that "the manuscript known as *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* may not be a circulating sonnet sequence at all" (67-68). Within the context of *Urania*, Wroth's sonnet sequence, Masten concludes, articulates an "unwillingness to circulate among men" (69). Though I am not prepared to challenge the manuscript evidence Masten uses in his attempt to counter Roberts's argument, the poems themselves — as I will go on to demonstrate — in many ways challenge his reading of Wroth's sequence as "relentlessly private" (69) and thus his corollary claim that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* was not meant to circulate.

²⁵ One notable exception to this general rule is found in Christina Luckyj's recent discussion of Wroth's uses of genre. Luckyj hints at the performative nature of Wroth's verse when she notes that "As a highly conventional, impersonal art which represented the trifling subject of love without acting it out," Luckyj says, "sonnet-writing among aristocratic women could be tolerated as a feminine courtly accomplishment — and was hardly as subversive as critics often claim" (263). Sonneteering may have been a tolerable and not very subversive activity for women but it did, as Luckyj's words also suggest, afford women the opportunity to perform love poetically without incurring the stigma that might come with actually acting it out.

theatrical” (162). Taken together, the poems of Wroth’s “crowne of Sonetts” are perhaps the most theatrical of the entire sequence.²⁶ The corona’s performative nature is partly indicated by its marked difference from the rest of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*; as Beilin points out, the crown’s first sonnet “marks the transition from love poet to divine poet” (*Redeeming Eve* 238). That this coronal change can only ever be temporary — the corona’s form does demand that the speaker return to where she began — further suggests that the “crowne of Sonetts” is meant to be read as a performance within the performance of the sequence itself.

I would only add to Beilin’s comment that, as Walker puts it, we need to make it clear that “the Crown of Sonnets talks of ‘divine love,’ [but] it is a love still grounded in the material world of human relationships” (188). That the heavenly and the earthly are not, for this poet, categorical absolutes is most obvious in that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*’s devotional subsequence is, as Beilin says, a “perfect circle dedicated to praising love” (*Redeeming Eve* 234). Wroth’s circle explicitly praises the God of Love, but the corona’s marked Neoplatonism, together with her own religious habits of thought, makes it at times difficult to decide whether her speaker praises the Neoplatonic ideal of heavenly love or the Christian God; as Jones suggests, the early sonnets of the corona see Pamphilia using both “Platonic and Christian discourses to

²⁶ Jones suggests the same when she points out that “the introspective scene of the pastoral songs is further transformed into a public pageant in Wroth’s corona” (151).

sermonize" (152).²⁷ Wroth may have intended her sequence and her "crowne of Sonetts" to be read as secular verse, but her poetry is not without sacred influence. As Martz says about Donne, this sometimes sacred and sometimes secular poet "moves along a Great Divide between the sacred and the profane, now facing one way, now another, but always remaining intensely aware of both sides" (215). Martz's description might as well serve Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts."

That the corona, in particular, is meant to be read as a rhetorical as well as poetic performance Wroth makes clear in a number of ways, the most obvious being its salient concern with arrangement (or *dispositio*). One of the five divisions of rhetoric, arrangement in writing is as important as invention and style, while memory and delivery aren't as significant as they are in oratory: as Thomas Wilson puts it in a rhetorical question of his own, "what availeth much treasure and apt matter, if man cannot apply it to his purpose?" (49). As Wilson goes on to define it, *dispositio* "is nothing else but an apt bestowing and orderly placing of things, declaring where every argument shall be set, and in what manner every reason shall be applied, for

²⁷ Neoplatonism and Christianity both adhere to a transcendent ideal of love. The effects of Renaissance Neoplatonism, as Richard Hooker points out, spread thoroughly and quickly throughout Europe. Inspired by Ficino's concept of Platonic love, "Suddenly writers, artists, poets, philosophers, and women's communities began discussing sexual love in terms of spiritual bonds, as reflecting the relationship between the individuals and God" ("Renaissance Neo-Platonism," *The Italian Renaissance/Early Modern*, posted 6 June 1999, <<http://www.wsuedu:8080/~dee/REN/NEOPLATO.HTM>>). Though Wroth's corona centres on the mature Cupid, the spiritual bond between this God of Love and the crown's speaker does reflect the relationship between the individual and the Christian God.

confirmation of the purpose" (49). Both the corona and the sequence attest to Wroth's more general interest in the "orderly placing of things."²⁸

Wroth's awareness of the importance of rhetorical arrangement is also clear in the crown's opening sonnet. The arrangement of Sonnet 1, in fact, imitates that of much contemporary prose: it is, in effect, a rhetorical argument writ small.²⁹ As a

²⁸ Wroth's concern with the "apt bestowing and orderly placing of things" is also evident in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* as a whole. The sequence's ordering, as Lewalski describes it, evinces a keen interest in right arrangement: "The first fifty-five poems," she notes, "constitute a very regular Petrarchan sequence — forty-eight sonnets (numbered sequentially) arranged in groups of six, with each set followed by a song." Though half of the sequence seems very carefully arranged, the latter part of the sequence does seem more random. The remaining poems of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Lewalski goes on to point out, may be "numbered discretely," but are nevertheless substantively ordered: they are, as Lewalski says, "arranged in several shorter sequences loosely related through the speaker" (252). Wroth's concern with symmetrical arrangement may be less obvious in the latter half of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, but we must not forget as well that the latter part of the sequence also includes Wroth's very carefully arranged "crown of Sonnets." I note here, however, that Lewalski describes the ordering of Roberts's text, which follows that of the 1621 version of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* appended to the *Urania*. There are, as Roberts points out, some significant differences between the published version and the Folger manuscript, the version written in Wroth's own hand and the one Roberts uses for her copy-text. Roberts suggests that she has adopted the 1621 arrangement because "it appears to represent the author's final intentions regarding the order of the poems," and the revised order "is clearly not the kind of change likely to have been made independently by a compositor or typesetter" (See Roberts, "The Editorial Procedure" 73-75). All of this depends, of course, on the assumption that Wroth did in fact have a hand in seeing her volume through publication: if the volume was published against Wroth's will, as she claims, then the poems of the 1621 *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* may not have been ordered by their author at all.

²⁹ Paulissen identifies a similar rhetorical structure in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*'s opening sonnet. The argument of P1, Paulissen observes, "conforms to the seven parts of an oration — the entrance, the narration, the proposition, the division, the confirmation, and the conclusion" as Wilson describes them (180). However, far from containing lyrical flights within a "rigid framework" as Paulissen would have it, Wroth's use of rhetoric in many ways enables even as it expresses the

carefully arranged presentation that declares, in order, a proposition, an examination, a summary, and a conclusion, the sonnet opens with the rhetorical proposition, "In this strang labourinth how shall I turne?" (P77 line 1). The proposition, as Wilson defines it, is "a pithy sentence, comprehending in a small room the sum of the whole matter" (50).³⁰ Wroth's line does indeed comprehend in "a small room" not only the sum of the sonnet or of the corona, but also the sum of the whole of the sequence, one that depicts its speaker struggling within her own "labourinth" (or labour) of love.³¹ As Wroth's recent readers have observed, the labyrinth of the corona's opening proposition is also the primary invention of the entire sequence: by summarizing the whole of the sequence's content in a single opening sentence, the opening proposition also signals the corona's importance to *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* as a whole.

poet's flights of fancy.

³⁰ The additional meaning of "room" as a closed-off space within a building suggests a spatial metaphor that is especially apt in a discussion of Wroth's corona. The form of the corona, Mary Moore points out, is itself enclosing and the sonnet form mimics the larger formal enclosure; as Moore reminds us, the sonnet is also an "enclosed space and highly crafted form," as Donne's "We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms" ("The Canonization," line 32) attests ("Labyrinth" 109).

³¹ Dubrow points to the pun inherent in Wroth's spelling: "labourinth," she notes, "may also contain a punning reminder of how much work is involved in either of the two types of love Wroth evokes" (152). As Dubrow also observes, the image of the labyrinth doesn't make its first appearance here. On the contrary, Wroth's sonnets as a whole are as labyrinthine as Shakespeare's: "Not only do they explicitly invoke the image of a labyrinth," she explains, "but they mime one as well in their knotty syntax, refusal of a linear plot, evocation of psychic entrapment and, above all, the critical conundrums they pose for their readers" (134-35).

The speaker then proceeds with an examination (or what Wilson calls “confirmation”) of the problems presented by, in turn, desire, danger, jealousy, and shame. Pamphilia affirms that one of these problems will be encountered no matter which direction she turns; even doing nothing provides no relief, but to “Stand still is harder, although sure to mourne” (line 8). Here, Wroth’s speaker offers what Wilson calls “a declaration of our own reasons with assured and constant proofs” (51) as she examines the various ways she suffers in love, declares all of her options, and by so doing, proves that neither moving nor standing will bring relief. The third quatrain moves on to provide a summary, or peroration, to what has come before. These four lines of the poem sum up the impossibility of the speaker’s finding resolution: whether going left, right, forward, back, or standing still, she maintains, “I must the doubts indure with out allay / Or help” (lines 11-12). The difficulty in identifying one correct solution to the speaker’s multifaceted problem is reaffirmed as the quatrain ends.

The line that begins “Or help” introduces another pun into the poem, one that corresponds with “labourinth.” The speaker ends by claiming that she can only “butt traveile find for my best hire” (line 12). Within its context, the word “traveile” seems to mean something very similar to the word we know as “travel.”³² By invoking travel, the speaker further confirms that she can neither stand still nor choose a

³² Wroth’s editor evidently believes this to be the case. In her note to the line, Roberts remarks that “The 1621 text used ‘travel,’ probably to insure the regularity of meter,” but doesn’t point to other connotative possibilities.

direction within the labyrinth of love. Thus the maze is also a labour of love: the necessity of the suffering lover's never-ending movement through it entails as much "travail" as it does travel. The *OED* lists multiple spellings for what is now standardized as "travail," and it offers several definitions: that Wroth means to signify "Bodily or mental labour or toil" seems clear but, given the similar pun on "labourinth," it is also a distinct possibility that she also means to refer to "The labour and pain of child-birth." There are, it seems, nearly as many connotative possibilities within the poem as there are directional choices: the difficulty of making one clearly correct decision is reflected in and heightened by what seems to be deliberate semantic ambiguity.

The poem does, however, conclude with a solution to the opening proposition: after examining and refuting all other possibilities, the only answer "Is to leave all, and take the thread of love" (line 14). Clearly, Wroth means to offer the classical solution to solving mazes by choosing to allow the "thread of love" to guide her through the maze. Yet, given the allusions to childbirth inherent in the puns of "labour" and "travail," Wroth might also mean to suggest in "thread" a kind of poetic umbilical cord, that which ties the poem to its creator. The poem may end with a self-reflexive metaphor, and it undoubtedly ends with an answer to its opening question. Wroth is as self-conscious a rhetor as she is a poet: the sonnet, in its ending and throughout, follows an established rhetorical form used in many well-wrought arguments, and an abbreviated version of the arrangement Philip Sidney uses in his

Defence. The corona's Sonnet 1 is certainly circumscribed in its brevity, but Wroth's evident concern with careful arrangement does place her in the company of other rhetors. The poem may depict a psychological and emotional experience, but its use of rhetorical technique also strongly suggests that representing interiority is not necessarily synonymous with resisting public performance.

If the "crowne of Sonetts" also enacts a Petrarchan counterdiscourse "more seriously than other segments of Wroth's sequence" (*Desiring Voices* 144) as Moore suggests, then it follows that the crown's intent to persuade is also more serious. Though *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* may not fully represent what Kenneth Graham calls the "performance of conviction," it does, at the very least, illustrate a process that culminates in the speaker's own conviction. That Wroth sees the poetic process as, among other things, a process of attaining conviction is surely attested to by *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* as a whole; the sequence does, after all, end with the speaker's resolve to "Leave the discourse of Venus" (P103, line 9), and instructions to her muse to write "noe more" (line 3).³³ In his discussion of anticourtly verse, Graham argues that Wyatt "requires a public profession of his belief to convince

³³ Whether Wroth's speaker succeeds remains debatable. The experience of the sequence as a whole gives us plenty of room to doubt; as Dubrow says, "this poem cannot help but remind us of Wroth's previous assays at subscribing to a purer, more serene love." Wroth's decision not to place the corona immediately before the sequence's culmination is also a telling one: "by not doing so," Dubrow points out, "she encourages us to feel uneasy about its conclusion" (156-57). Regardless of the speaker's degree of success, however, the important point here is that she most clearly does make an attempt to persuade.

himself,” and because he is both convincing someone (if only himself) and making a public statement, “his attitude is not completely antirhetorical, and his independence is not complete” (48). We might make the same point about Wroth, whose self-persuasion seems also to require “a public profession,” and thus to demand that she likewise have “an audience in front of whom [s]he can perform” (Graham 48). Wroth’s speaker certainly seems to anticipate a future audience in the sequence’s final sonnet, where she tells her muse to “lett thes phant’sies move / Some other harts” (P103, lines 3-4).

In its arrangement and in its invention, the corona’s Sonnet 1 equally suggests an intent that is public and rhetorical. The speaker’s use of rhetorical technique further suggests an intent to persuade, if only herself, of the truth of the speaker’s argument. Wroth’s persuasive aim is suggested not only by the poem’s striking invention, an invention that also allows it to end (as any well-arranged argument should) with a solution, but also by the ways she uses some more specific rhetorical tropes and figures. The poem’s most obvious trope is, of course, the metaphor of the labyrinth, which, as a figurative rendering of suffering in love, expresses in concrete and comprehensible terms the constantly shifting emotions of the speaker. In Sonnet 1, we also find the figures *antipophora*, *etiologia*, *merismus*, *parison*, and *syneciosis*. All of these figures work either to support the poem’s argument or to mimic at a more local level the larger, controlling metaphor of the labyrinth; in some cases, a figure does both.

The sonnet's opening line is a rhetorical proposition that explicitly introduces the poem's and the corona's invention; it is also an example of the figure *antipophora*. This figure Puttenham calls the "Figure of responce," and it is used "when we will seeme to aske a question to th'intent we will aunswere it our selues" (204).³⁴ Puttenham further explains that *antipophora* is a figure of both argument and amplification:

Of argument, because proponing such matter as our
aduersarie might object and then to answere it our selues,
we do vnfurnish and preuent him of such helpe as he
would otherwise haue vsed for himselfe: then because
such obiection and answere spend much language it
serues as well to amplifie and enlarge our tale. (204)

Asking the question "In this strang labourinth how shall I turne?" (line 1) and answering it herself, Wroth uses the figure as Puttenham describes it, in a way that serves both argument and amplification. By examining all of the possible solutions to her question, that is, turning right, forward, left, back, or simply standing still, the speaker anticipates possible objections (or in this case, proffered solutions) to the

³⁴ Wilson calls this figure "Asking Others and Answering Ourselves," and says that by doing so, "we much commend the matter and make it appear very pleasant" (208). The way Wroth uses this figure certainly commends her matter in that it verifies the truth of what the speaker says, but she does much more than "make it appear very pleasant": Wroth uses *antipophora* in a way that reveals just how complex her speaker's problem is.

problem she sets up in the proposition; in this way, the figure serves her argument. The speaker's use of *antipophora* also allows her firmly to rule out a list of alternative solutions to her problem, thus justifying her conclusion that the only answer is to "take the thread of love" (line 14). At the same time, addressing these possible objections to her proposition amplifies the argument she makes. By demonstrating that there is no other solution to her propositional question because she will meet any or all of burning desire, danger, suspicion, or shame, she also emphasizes the seriousness of her situation. In this case, the amplification that is concomitant with the speaker's use of the extended rhetorical figure *antipophora* works to demonstrate the difficulty of her problem, to persuade of the rightness of her answer, and to show just how much she suffers in love.

Another figure that is perhaps inevitably present wherever one finds *antipophora* is *etiologia*. Puttenham dubs this figure "the Reason renderer" or "the Tell cause," and defines it most simply as "to tell the cause that mooues vs to say thus or thus"; the figure is, he says, an "assignation of cause" (228). This "manner of speech is alwayes contemned," Puttenham says, "with these words, for, because, and such other confirmatiues": the confirmative of Wroth's poem is "Thus" (line 9). As in Puttenham's examples, Wroth's speaker offers a series of causes that lead to her "surmise," and she offers much fortification and proof to give her conclusion "great

credit.”³⁵ Most interesting, though, is the association Puttenham makes between this rhetorical scheme and logic. Puttenham goes on to invoke the authority of his antecedents, pointing out the importance they give *etiologia*. Aristotle, he says, “neuer propones any allegation, or makes any surmise, but he yeelds a reason or cause to fortifie and proue it, which geues it great credit,” while his near-contemporary “Master Secretary *Wilson* geuing an English name to his arte of Logicke, called it *Witcraft*” (228). “Figurative expression,” as Janel Mueller observes, “ranks consistently with *Wilson* as a sign of special wit” (*Native Tongue* 366): by the time Wroth wrote her sonnets, “wit” had become perhaps the most admired virtue of poetry, and *Wilson*’s “*Witcraft*” is certainly apparent in her extensive — and skilful — use of figurative expression. The way Wroth uses *etiologia*, together with what Beilin describes as the corona’s comparatively “sparse” and “plain” diction (“Constancy” 236), suggest that this poet was quite aware of rhetorical trends and poetic practices.

Sonnet 1 also offers an example of the figure *merismus*. This figure Puttenham calls “the Distributer,” and he defines it as another figure of amplification. In this case, Puttenham says that amplification is achieved by uttering “peecemeale and by distributio[n] of euery part” what we might utter “in one/entier speach or

³⁵ The figure as Wroth uses it also corresponds with Peacham’s definition of “*aetiologia*” as “a forme of speech by which the Orator joineth reason or cause to a proposition uttered” that “serveth to confirmation and confutation” (184-85).

proposition" (222).³⁶ Wroth's Sonnet 1 provides a notable instance of this figure at work, an example that perhaps serves Puttenham's illustrative purpose better than the one he cites from Surrey, "Set me whereas the sunne doth parch the greene," and misattributes to Wyatt. The figure works in tandem with the metaphor of the labyrinth, as it allows the speaker to divide piecemeal the whole of suffering in love into a number of distinct emotions that share the same cause. These varying emotions are represented by the different and clearly separate options one has in a labyrinth, but they are also interconnected by their inclusion within the maze's, and the corona's, larger form. Puttenham also uses a spatial metaphor in his own description of *merismus*. Rejecting the simple statement that a house has been "outrageously plucked downe," this figure is not "satisfied so to say" but will, he says, describe the event piecemeal: "they first vndermined the groundsills, they beate downe the walles, they vnfloored the loftes, they vntiled it and pulled downe the roofe" (222). Just as Puttenham's metaphor shows the many ways that, together or individually, a house may be brought down, so Wroth's description of the labyrinth of love shows the many ways that, separately and together, one can suffer in love. Distribution gives depth to Wroth's invention even as the nature of the labyrinth of love allows for distribution: the containing yet internally diverse metaphor of the maze is deep because it is also broad.

³⁶ Wilson defines this figure as dividing "the whole into several parts" (211), Peacham describes the second kind of *distributio* as "partition of the whole" (123), while Lanham defines it as "Dividing the whole into its parts" (*Handlist* 59).

Wroth's sonnet further captures the labyrinthine sense of difference and similarity with her use of the rhetorical figure *parison*, "the Figure of euen" (Puttenham 214). As noted in the previous chapter, Pembroke also uses *parison* in her *Psalmes*, and Puttenham defines this figure as present when there are clauses of equal length within a line of verse. *Parison*, or its near equivalent, is found in four consecutive lines of Sonnet 1. These lines begin at the end of the first quatrain's "If to the right hand, ther, in love I burne; / Lett mee goe forward, therin danger is" (lines 3-4), and continue into the next quatrain with "If to the left, suspition hinders bliss, / Lett mee turne back, shame cries I ought returne" (lines 5-6). After the uninterrupted line that reads, "Nor fainte though crosses with my fortunes kiss" (line 7), the second quatrain ends with *parison*, apparent in "Stand still is harder, although sure to mourne" (line 8).

As noted above, not all of these lines are precisely even: only lines 4 and 8 are true examples of *parison*. While these two lines are equally balanced, the symmetry of line 3 is disrupted by the appearance of a second comma, and lines 5 and 6 are uneven in that each of their first clauses consists of two metrical feet, while each final clause is made up of three metrical feet. Even so, the use of something approximating *parison* in all five of these lines links through formal similarity all of the speaker's choices — right, forward, left, back, and standing still. At the same time, though, the difference between these choices is underscored by a slight asymmetry in three of the lines, and by the fact that each occupies its own separate line. This, together with the

disruption to the relative symmetry of the “figure of even” by the necessary caesura in two of the lines, suggests both the symmetry of a labyrinth and the repeated interruptions one would encounter in a maze. Like the clauses of each line, and like the lines themselves, the paths of a labyrinth can be very much the same; yet, like the paths of a maze, both the clauses and the lines are subtly different. As much as the caesuras determine that the lines’ clauses are distinctly separate yet contained on the same line, and as much as these lines are similar yet even more separate than the clauses within them, so are the paths of a labyrinth separate but conjoined. Just as the lines are contained within the sonnet, and just as the sonnets are contained within the corona, so are the intersecting paths of a maze contained by a single structure.

This correspondence between the poem’s rhetorical form and its controlling metaphor is further suggested by the placement of the only interruption to these very similar lines in what is also the only line in a sequence of six that does not present one of the speaker’s five choices. This line, “Nor fainte though crosses with my fortunes kiss” (line 7) neither directly speaks of nor formally mimics the labyrinth. Yet Wroth here uses another rhetorical figure, *syneciosis*, that suggests both a maze and the oxymoronic nature of suffering in love. Puttenham calls this figure “the Crosse copling” because, he says, it takes “two contrary words, and tieth them as it were in a paire of couples, and so makes them agree like good fellowes” (206). The oxymoronic words in this line are, of course, “crosses” and “kiss,” and it may be more than simple coincidence that Wroth’s figure employs the plural form of one of the words

Puttenham uses to describe it. The meaning of “crosses” Wroth clearly intends here is the meaning of a burden, and it is a meaning that stands in opposition to that of “kiss,” which (it seems safe to say) most often represents a reward (or perhaps relief) of some kind.

As a metaphorical burden, “crosses” has clearly Christian significance: though perhaps a dying metaphor by Wroth’s time, it seems unlikely that any seventeenth- (or even twenty-first-) century Christian would use the word in this way without being reminded of the burden Christ bore through the *Via Dolorosa*. It doesn’t seem unreasonable to suggest, either, that this speaker chooses “crosses” (instead of another possible metrical equivalent) to allude to the injustice of her own suffering. This speaker is a lover of a man, and martyr-like she suffers in love; Christ is a lover of humanity who also suffered for love. In addition to the meaning of a cross or burden to bear, the metaphor also, as I have noted above, works with the image of the labyrinth. In a labyrinth, one “crosses” many paths and, as the speaker has already told us, all of those paths entail suffering. The suffering suggested by “crosses” is diametrically opposed to the joy implied by “kiss”: in this instance of *syneciosis*, suffering in love is cross-coupled with the joy one should feel in love. Read in the Christian terms that “crosses” encourages, however, these images are not as contrary as they might seem. Christ’s story also tells us that a kiss can inflict the utmost of suffering: he may never have had his cross to bear if it weren’t for Judas’s kiss. Christ’s passion is, as Aemilia Lanyer puts it, an oxymoronic “joyfull sorrow” that

sees “our Joy and Griefe both at one instant fram’d” (*Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, line 912 and line 1216), and in Wroth’s poem as much as in Lanyer’s, one interanimates the other. More specifically, the rhetorical figure Wroth uses here works with the image of the labyrinth and the amorous torments it represents; at the same time, this “Cross copling” alludes to the higher and more ideal kind of love the corona’s speaker seeks, a love that may be only metaphorically Christian but nevertheless seeks to transcend earthly desire and the suffering it entails.

Reading this sonnet in rhetorical terms makes it difficult to subscribe to Waller’s view that the crown explores its maze “from the viewpoint of the woman lover trapped within, certainly not a designer of labyrinths” (*Family Romance* 218). Just as the poet creates the corona, so she also creates the maze within it: Wroth’s speaker designs her labyrinth as much as Wroth the poet creates her crown, and both the poet and her persona rely heavily on the techniques of rhetoric to do so. The lines that describe a series of (non-) options that might lead the speaker out of the tortuous and torturous maze, a maze that the speaker herself has at least in part created, also refer to the emotional suffering that goes hand-in-hand with lustful and burning love. Yet the speaker’s account of her multifaceted dilemma, her series of bad choices that are the only choices when “in love I burne” (line 3), is momentarily interrupted with the suggestion of something more transcendent: by using *syneciosis*, Wroth brings together even as she contrasts the suffering and joy of love and, by

using all of the rhetorical figures discussed above, she makes it clear that she is both the creator and the speaker of her labyrinth and crown.

In many ways throughout Sonnet 1, Wroth uses rhetorical figures in a way that suggests a comprehensive understanding of how rhetoric can serve poetic expression, and the structure of the sonnet as a whole evinces her awareness of the importance of rhetoric to any linguistic act of persuasion. I have drawn examples from Puttenham because his guidebook offers a uniquely lively and insightful approach to the poetic use of rhetoric and not because I aim to prove a biographical point. At the same time, it seems reasonable to suggest that Wroth may very well have been familiar with Puttenham's work. *The Arte of English Poesie* was very popular, had been around for at least two decades when Wroth wrote her poems, and was intended for the sort of courtly circle that would have included Wroth. Wroth's familiarity with rhetorical conventions also suggests that her understanding of rhetoric was more conscious than a process of acquiring rhetorical knowledge through some sort of secondhand, trickle-down process of assimilation would indicate. The crown's opening sonnet neither rejects nor places its speaker in opposition to rhetorical culture; on the contrary, its careful arrangement and deft use of rhetorical figures attest to Wroth's full participation as a poet and a rhetor. In many other ways as well, Wroth's "Crowne of Sonetts" further supports what its opening poem most clearly indicates.

II. Reading in Circles

Before going on to examine some of the corona's other rhetorical features, I would like to turn to some critical readings of Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts." This more focussed metacritical discussion is directly relevant to my concerns in this chapter, since I will here consider some of the ways that readings of the corona also work to effect this poet's arbitrary exclusion from rhetorical culture. That exclusion, as I have argued above, is allied with the tendency to read Wroth's work primarily from the perspective of gender: to read primarily in terms of gender comes with a corollary tendency to read Wroth's verse largely in terms of opposition. Rather ironically, the corona is a place where some critics seem especially eager to define her speaker as constant, present, private, and feminine, even though — as I will later show in more detail — the corona is also the place where Wroth's verse most clearly resists the binary oppositions that are often invoked to characterize her work. As they do in readings of Wroth's sequence as a whole, the tendencies we see in critical interpretations of the corona further imply this woman poet's exclusion from the larger rhetorical culture.

Like Pembroke's critics, readers of Wroth's corona often focus on its use of reproductive imagery. In addition to the allusions to childbirth seen in "labourinth" and "traveile," metaphors of pregnancy and labour are found in the corona's second sonnet (P78), where love is described as (among other things) a "wombe for joyes

increase" (line 12), in the seventh sonnet (P83), where love is "A lyfe wherof the birth is just desire" (line 2), in the ninth sonnet (P85), where lust is likened to a child "who ought like monster borne / Bee from the court of Love, and reason torne" (lines 13-14), and in the eleventh sonnet (P87), where the speaker describes "A timeles, and unseasonable birth" (line 5) as the unfortunate result of lustful liberty. Unlike many of Pembroke's readers, though, Wroth's critics do acknowledge that male poets had also often used reproductive imagery in their verse; Fienberg, for one, explicitly acknowledges that "Male appropriation of birth to provide metaphors for poetic creation . . . constitutes a poetic commonplace" ("Poetic Subjectivity" 183). When discussing women writers, however, it seems inevitable that critics will ultimately read as constraining images of an experience that, though it may be exclusive to the female sex, is not exclusively used by women.

Citing the reproductive imagery of the corona's Sonnet 9, Naomi J. Miller concludes that "For Wroth, metaphors of pregnancy and childbirth become a vehicle to convey the falsehood of male lovers, who disguise their lust with the name of love in order to 'begett / This childe for love' [P85, lines 12-13] without shame" (303). Pregnancy and birth are not gendered here, since Miller sees Wroth as using these metaphors to expose "the falsehood of male lovers." In this formulation, imagery that might otherwise be figured as distinctly feminine is used by Miller to argue that metaphors of pregnancy and childbirth in Wroth's crown actually reveal something about men. Miller also knows that the use of such imagery is not exclusive to women

writers, and, like Fienberg, she acknowledges that many male poets, Wroth's uncle and father included, also use reproductive imagery. Instead of showing how such imagery attests to this poet's inescapable femininity, here Miller suggests that Wroth uses it in a way that is more gender inclusive than it is exclusive.

Ultimately, though, Miller does read Wroth's birth metaphors from a distinctly feminine perspective. Images of childbirth, Miller says, are deployed by Wroth "to acknowledge the shared female experience of suffering for love" (303). We might argue here that the critic reads Wroth's metaphor for amorous suffering in a way that refuses to inscribe gender distinctions. In other words, we might conclude that Miller sees Wroth's metaphor of birth as a means of affirming that women share with other women, and presumably also with men, the experience of suffering in love that is so often depicted by male sonneteers. Miller does, however, go on to suggest that Wroth reclaims maternity in a way that is gender exclusive: "Pamphilia," she writes, "removes the prerogative of claiming love's pregnancy from men concerned with lust, restoring it instead only to those lovers who 'wantones, and all those errors shun' (P86)" (303). In this formulation, the experience of lust is exclusive to the men from whom Pamphilia has reclaimed what Miller calls "love's pregnancy": Miller seems to have forgotten about the burning desire the presumably female speaker struggles with in the corona's opening sonnet.

Miller's argument avoids suggesting that Wroth's speaker makes this claim solely on behalf of women, since this critic does not also claim that true lovers are

given an exclusive gender by the poet who writes about them. Yet Miller's words do create a gender opposition in that all of these true lovers, which may include both men and women, are opposed to the lustful who, according to Miller, are exclusively male. Women writers, it seems, will inevitably be seen to use images of birth and maternity in a way that enacts some sort of gender exclusion. Though it is clear that this is not Miller's intention, it seems that critics often read reproductive imagery in terms that eventually position the women who use it in opposition to at least some men. As we saw in critical readings of Pembroke's gestational imagery, birth metaphors used by female poets will also — and seemingly inevitably — become gendering metaphors.

Mary Moore uses the corona's reproductive imagery to conclude that the corona's form, as well as its content, is meant to suggest maternity and gestation. Arguing that the corona's content and its form work in tandem, Moore maintains that the corona's "gendered imagery of reproduction suggests female poetic production" ("Labyrinth" 115). Moore doesn't, however, make it clear how the corona's images of maternity and birth also apply to the form of the crown itself, nor does she specify how images of reproduction suggest a gender-specific kind of poetic production. Moore genders the corona's reproductive imagery, which leads her to gender its form, which in turn allows her to make claims about an exclusively feminine mode of writing: her reading of the corona culminates in its classification as "a womb for poetic production" ("Labyrinth" 118). As is usual with the critical

feminizing of form and content, this reading translates into something disabling: the corona's uterine form is suggested by its circularity, and this uterine circularity, Moore claims, creates an enclosure of the self that "constrains as well as contains" ("Labyrinth" 116).

Moore uses the corona's reproductive imagery to create her own metaphor for the form of the corona itself, and it is one that couldn't be more feminizing or more privative. It is undeniably true that only women (and some hermaphrodites) have wombs and that no one (at least not in the seventeenth century) can see into or speak out from an enclosed womb, but reading reproductive imagery in this way unduly constrains and contains the women writers who use it in that it relegates their voices to a severely circumscribed feminine and private sphere (or, in this case, uterine crown). As we saw in Pembroke's *Psalmes*, the critical tendency to read in terms of privacy seems concomitant with the desire to read in feminine terms. Such readings are, of course, also motivated by a tendency to read Wroth's (and Pembroke's) poems as first and foremost the products of women.

Moore's metaphor perhaps tells us more about her than it does about Wroth's corona: it suggests that the critical impulse to read women's writing as primarily writing by women takes primacy over reading what is actually on the page. Reproductive imagery is far from dominant in the corona, the sequence itself gives no suggestion that its form is also meant to be read as a womb, and the speaker gives no indication that she is not meant to be heard. Reading the corona's metaphors of birth

in exclusively feminine terms perhaps overreads what Wroth the poet has written; at the very least, Moore's reading curtails the "whole experience" of Wroth the person by emphasizing one aspect of that experience — gender — while occluding or altogether ignoring aspects that may very well have little or nothing to do with gender. Here, I will again stress that Wroth's male predecessors often used tropes of maternity and gestation, and add that such images didn't translate into their creating and sustaining "an enclosed womb of poetic production." The reason for this difference is obvious. In women's writing, metaphors of gestation and birth are read as implying an exclusively feminine space, even though the gestational experience itself is not gender specific but, as I point out in the preceding chapter, common to all who have been born.³⁷ Because Moore reads the corona's reproductive imagery in this way, she also reads it in terms that are constraining and containing: this writer is read as a woman, and she is, as a result, deprived before she is enabled.

To be fair, Moore does acknowledge the corona's "simultaneously public and private nature" (*Desiring Voices* 126), and her overall reading of the corona is not as circumscribing or as gender specific as I have perhaps made it seem. Even so, Moore

³⁷ Speaking not of containing metaphors but of Wroth's struggle "to achieve an anti-Petrarchan stance that proves no more stable than Petrarchism," Dubrow usefully reminds us that we mustn't overemphasize the significance of gender when reading women's writing, at least not to the extent that we present "a reversed analogue to patriarchal condescension." As she puts it, "critics who assess the relationship of gender and genre need to beware not only of subscribing to these oversimplifications but also of labeling as distinctively female those qualities that are also gendered male in Petrarchism" (146-47).

acknowledges but nevertheless minimizes the corona's participation in an overwhelmingly male poetic tradition. Her reading of the corona as public and private overemphasizes the private because, I think, it also approaches the work primarily from the perspective of gender. Readings that consider women's writing primarily from a gendered perspective are too often informed by the assumption that women were, as Hanson would put it, "hobbled," and that they also shared our modern belief that they were constrained and contained because of gender. The overall poetic form of the corona, a labyrinth within an enclosing crown, may indicate that this is, in Wroth's case, true. The form of the corona may very well support the private and antirhetorical intent Miller's figurative discussion implies. On the other hand, when we read the poem's prevailing imagery in rhetorical terms, we see something very different.

The corona is a closed form, and it does depict inwardness; it is in many ways, both formally and substantively, inherently private. But, as Masten reminds us, "the terms 'public' and 'private' are emergent in the discursive world we interrogate" in Wroth's texts (70). Private it may seem, but Wroth's corona is also a lengthy and meticulously orchestrated soliloquy, one that is perhaps not designed to exclude so much as it aims to persuade — if not an imagined or even imaginary audience, at least the speaker herself. Inwardness and enclosure may *depict* privacy, but it doesn't necessarily follow that these features of Wroth's verse also "foreground a refusal to speak in the public, exhibitionist voice" (Masten 69) attributed to sonnet sequences

written by men.³⁸ Though Masten is quite right to point out that public and private were emergent terms in the early seventeenth century, his conclusion that Wroth's texts "also work to create" their distinction overstates the case.

I would argue, on the contrary, that Wroth's verse resists such distinctions and in many ways works to bring together concepts that, though clearly understood, were perhaps too quickly becoming opposed. Though Wroth's corona does acknowledge that difference will always exist in an imperfect world, it also suggests that the very same rhetorical tools that often work to uphold opposition can also minimize it, bringing closer together rather than driving further apart the kinds of contraries her verse depicts. Just as the speaker's transition from what Beilin describes as the alternatively grieving, weeping, and celebrating lover to the more firm and self-assured poet ("Constancy" 236) is eternally temporary, so are the corona's many other binaries not so much opposed as they are mutually sustaining and inseparably linked.

Wroth's corona most obviously brings together contraries in its juxtaposition of form and content. As Wroth's readers have often observed, the circular form of the corona signifies the constancy of the speaker's love. At the same time, though, the corona's labyrinthine imagery, the maze of worldly love in which the speaker of

³⁸ It also warrants mention here that Petrarchan poetry is itself often inward and very private, as Fienberg acknowledges when she notes that inwardness is "part of the sonnet tradition in the line of Wyatt, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and perhaps Donne" ("Poetic Subjectivity" 176). At the same time, Petrarchan poetry also served a highly public purpose. Quoting the work of Arthur F. Marotti, Masten recognizes that "the sonnet sequence was a public, courtly genre, circulating widely, expressing 'social, political, and economic suits in the language of love'" (70).

the opening sonnet seems hopelessly trapped, suggests confusion, inconstancy, and continual change, or what Beilin describes as “her inability to find the true path” within its asymmetrical form (“Constancy” 236). The corona’s speaker, as Beilin goes on to say, “explicitly abandons worldly concern” — that is, the emotions of desire, fear, jealousy and shame — at the end of Sonnet 1, where she resolves “to leave all, and take the thread of love” (line 14). Though the thread, the speaker proclaims in Sonnet 2, “straite leads unto the soules content,” it becomes clear that the speaker hasn’t escaped the labyrinth any more than she has wholly transcended the emotions that continue to plague her. In Wroth’s corona, the constancy implied by its circular form coexists with the inconstancy suggested by the sustained presence of its substantive maze.

Throughout the “crowne of Sonetts,” circular form and tortuous substance are brought together in what may seem to be a discordant way. But, as Aristotle says, “refutation is a bringing together of contraries” (Kennedy 242), and Wroth in many ways makes this very attempt.³⁹ It is in the corona that Wroth’s verse most clearly

³⁹ Lewalski points to such a reading in her discussion of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*’s Sonnet 17 (P19), where the speaker claims to feel “Heat in desire, while frost of care I prove” (line 12). The poem’s speaker describes at once the sensations of burning and freezing; as Lewalski notes, “Both terms of the classic fire-ice paradox reside in her” (*Writing Women* 254). Wroth’s speaker is neither like to ice nor to fire, as Spenser would have it (*Amoretti* 30, line 1), but both: the two are not mutually exclusive as they are in Spenser’s poem but, it seems, mutually constituting. In much the same way, Wroth’s corona refutes the mutual exclusivity of the binaries her sequence is seen to represent by implying their union within the representative images of, in this case, labyrinth and crown.

brings the sequence's binary oppositions together, and it is here that we are perhaps best poised to understand the sequence as a whole. My reading thus seems wholly opposed to Hanson's belief that Wroth's poetry attests to her opting for the "safer choice" of a woman poet, that is, "to rigorously repress contradiction" (183). Far from rigorously repressing contradiction, Wroth's corona highlights, negotiates, and attempts to bring together a number of binary oppositions.

The corona's title, "A crowne of Sonetts dedicated to Love," is immediately followed by its opening line, "In this strang labourinth how shall I turne?" (P77 line 1): the corona begins by drawing our attention to both its circular form and its labyrinthine invention. Wroth's invention isn't, however, a new one. Petrarch himself uses the image of the labyrinth of love, and Wroth is far from being the first poet to compose a crown of sonnets.⁴⁰ What is unique about Wroth's corona is the way she brings the two together: in the "crowne of Sonnets," labyrinth and crown are equally present and equally important. But they are more than just equal; they are also interanimating. Together, Wroth's maze and crown present a very fine example of *energeia*, one that vividly illustrates Gascoigne's definition of this poetic and rhetorical virtue as "depth of device in the invention" (*Certayne Notes* 163). By

⁴⁰ In her notes to the poem, Roberts points out that the image appeared in Petrarch's *Rime* (211, line 14), and that Lisle John in *Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences* records subsequent uses of the image of the labyrinth. Roberts specifically mentions Watson's use of the labyrinth of love in his *Hekatompathia* (128).

bringing together the contrasting but complementary images of maze and circle, Wroth's invention not only unites but also animates the similar yet disparate concepts of earthly and transcendent love. The corona's immediate juxtaposition of the two also suggests that the speaker is now prepared to tackle head-on the struggle of contraries described throughout the whole of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*.

The corona's co-existing images converge in a single labyrinthine circle to create a twofold image that is striking, original, and wholly suited to Wroth's concomitant and simultaneous depiction of love both earthly and transcendent. The image of the labyrinth as a metaphor for tortuous and torturous suffering in earthly love contrasts yet is conjoined with the crown's smooth circularity, a circularity that suggests oneness, constancy, and eternity. As Vives says, the subjects of *energeia* "are taken partly from the spiritual, and partly from the bodily life" (126): it is through Wroth's unique example of *energeia* that both we and her speaker learn that transcendent and lustful love are no more separable than the images she uses to represent them. Rather than presenting only "the negative side" of Petrarchan binaries (MacArthur 15), Wroth's invention brings antithetical images together in a way that presents them as complementary rather than contradictory, and thus further implies the complementarity of the abstract oppositions they represent. As the speaker tells us at the end of Sonnet 1 (and at the beginning of Sonnet 2), it is the thread of transcendent love, the kind of love associated with the coronal form, that will lead her through the maze of earthly desire. The poem thus ends as it began,

highlighting its dual invention and showing how the the depth of its device enables even as it is constituted by the examination.

Because its invention is a twofold one, form within the corona suggests not only the circularity of the crown it metaphorically makes. There are also some formal features within the sonnets themselves that correspond with the sequence's substantive labyrinth.⁴¹ In terms of syntax and diction, the internal features of the corona seem opposed to the circularity of its larger form, yet Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts" formally unites even as it contrasts the images of maze and crown. Moore's reading of the ways poetic form within the corona mimics the image of the labyrinth highlights formal difference and thus, indirectly at least, draws attention to contrast. I would add to Moore's discussion that the corona's circular and labyrinthine forms are also complementary, and not only in their shared connotations of enclosure.

Circular and labyrinthine form most clearly come together in the corona's rhyme scheme, which simultaneously suggests a constant circle and an irregular maze. Since the form of the corona demands that the last line of one poem be carried forward to serve as the first line of the next, Wroth's highly patterned rhyme scheme of *abab/baba/cdcd/ee* means that the end rhyme of *ee* is always carried forward, where

⁴¹ As Moore points out, the internal form of the sonnet itself and Wroth's elaborate syntax are also suggestive of a labyrinth's "enclosure and complexity" (*Desiring Voices* 125). Referring more specifically to the corona's Sonnet 1, Moore observes that "Brief clauses and repetitive diction . . . enact labyrinthine turns and returns, dead ends, and restarts," and that these formal features "stylistically mimic the labyrinth" (*Desiring Voices* 142-43).

it becomes *a* in the two opening quatrains of the next sonnet. Since the rhyme scheme eventually brings us back to the beginning of the corona, it is as circular as the larger poetic form; at the same time, both the repetition of words and the repetition of rhyme mimic the similarity of a labyrinth's many dead ends. Because the corona's aural endings are repeated multiple times but a given line is repeated only once, the rhyme strongly suggests continuity even as the lines' slightly different endings mimic the dead-ends of a labyrinth that is both changeful and repetitive. In this way, the corona's smooth circularity doesn't simply coexist with, but is also constituted by and inextricable from, its substantive and formal labyrinth.

The only exception to the rhyme scheme noted above is found in the monorhymed P79, the corona's third sonnet. Here, there are only four different line endings, "might," "white," "light," and "requite." These words are repeated in the same order as the endings of the four consecutive lines in each of the poem's three quatrains, while "might" and "light" alone end the lines of the final couplet. Again, the repetitious rhyme suggests two seemingly contradictory things. Because the same sound appears at the end of each line, we repeatedly return, as we would in a maze, to endings that are often similar and sometimes the same; as in a maze, it is difficult to tell what is the same and what is different. The labyrinthine feeling is perhaps even more intense in this particular sonnet because it is not only the sound, but also the words that are repeated. Yet, because it presents the same sound repeatedly, the monorhyme also alludes to steadfastness and constancy. In the coronal form as well,

the monorhyme means that the repeated aural ending of the third sonnet has already been carried forward from the second sonnet, is sustained throughout the subsequent third sonnet, and is then carried forward to the fourth sonnet, where it becomes *a*. The rhyme scheme thus strongly suggests continuity not only within Sonnet 3, but also through its shared rhyme with the preceding and subsequent sonnets 2 and 4: at the same time, the shared rhyme of Sonnets 2, 3, and 4 expands on the labyrinthine image the monorhymed sonnet evokes. The labyrinth, it seems, grows not in opposition to but in tandem with continuity: what we might call the interanimation of constancy and change is further intensified by Wroth's use of the same rhyme again in the corona's eleventh and twelfth sonnets (P87 and P88).

It is true that, throughout the whole of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, constancy is attributed to the female speaker and is thus opposed to a distinctly male inconstancy. It is also true that the constancy suggested by the corona's never-ending circle is mitigated both formally and substantively by the tortuous and ever-changing image of the labyrinth: yet the meeting of the two contrasting but complementary forms within the "Crowne of Sonetts" suggests that constancy and inconstancy are not polar opposites. Equally serving what Sloan calls "analysis" and "genesis" ("Rhetoric and Poetry" 216), Wroth's dual invention of crown and maze allows the poet to depict and to examine the nature of transcendent, constant love and earthly, changeable desire in a way that seems inevitably to generate further ideas. Though Wroth's critics repeatedly identify the constancy of the sequence's speaker as

diametrically opposed to the inconstancy of the male love object,⁴² the way their respective metaphorical representatives are brought together in the crown sonnets suggests that these characteristics do not remain firmly in line with the female/male dichotomy Pamphilia may seem intent on illustrating.

It may very well be that, as Lewalski suggests, "Pamphilia defines herself and her determined, constant love by direct and persistent introspection and self-analysis" (*Writing Women* 256), but at the same time, Wroth's introspective speaker doesn't always depict a love that is constant in itself: it is not insignificant that, although the object of Pamphilia's love may not change, her emotions in love change constantly.⁴³ In the crown's opening sonnet, in particular, the constancy of Wroth's poetic persona wavers as it moves through the darker emotions of desire, fear, jealousy, and shame.

⁴² One exception to this general rule is found in Waller's psychoanalytic reading of Wroth's verse, where he argues that constancy "is hardly the virtue it seems." On the contrary, he claims, "*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is a remarkable demystification of the ideal of constancy as, in effect, a device of patriarchy to keep women under control" (*Family Romance* 209). Waller's aim differs radically from mine, however. In his discussion, he valorizes a gendered approach to reading Wroth's work. My intent is not to show how Wroth's poetry resists even as it evinces her own internalization of "masculinist ideology" (210) but to show how she, like other women poets, actively participated in rhetorical culture. This is not to say that the corrective I aim to bring to Wroth criticism is without feminist intent. Even so, my revisionist reading of Wroth's poetry is literary-critical in its method, while Waller's is, it seems safe to say, as ideological as it is psychoanalytical.

⁴³ Lewalski alludes to this notion when she notes that "chastity is sometimes linked to constancy in the corona, but in the sense of fidelity to one, not the renunciation of desire" (*Writing Women* 260): I would add that fidelity to one does not also mean that the speaker is not subject to the changefulness of desire, that is, the changes that are concomitant with the danger, jealousy, and shame the speaker encounters in the shifting labyrinth of Sonnet 1.

The speaker is not presented in either/or terms any more than the labyrinth and the crown are presented as distinctly separable.⁴⁴ Wroth's speaker seems not so different from the masculine inconstancy critics consistently identify as her opposition: Pamphilia's insistence on her own constancy is to some extent belied by the inconstancy of her faith in love itself. The corona doesn't so much polarize constancy and inconstancy as it brings them together in a way that corresponds with the simultaneous suggestion of continuity and change inherent in the meeting of labyrinth and crown. Bringing the circular form of the corona and the asymmetrical imagery of the labyrinth together doesn't polarize the presumably feminine and masculine traits of constancy and inconstancy so much as it attempts to bring them together: in Wroth's corona, masculine and feminine kinds of love are not synonymous, but they aren't wholly antithetical either.

Though Wroth's "labourinth" is clearly meant to suggest the torments of inconstant earthly love, the image itself is not without religious or devotional connotations; as Moore points out, Wroth might have been aware that the labyrinth also symbolized "Protestant inwardness" in some contemporary emblems and sermons (*Desiring Voices* 133). The constancy suggested by the corona's circularity might also allude, as it does in Pembroke's *Psalmes*, to the oneness and eternity of

⁴⁴ Though it is perhaps true, as Beilin claims, that Pamphilia's faith by the end of the sequence "emerges as a spiritual steadfastness and a constancy that transcends earthly concerns" ("Constancy" 232), Wroth's post-corona return to representing Cupid as mischievous boy further indicates a wavering faith in the constant ideal that might seem to be achieved in the "crowne of Sonetts."

the divine; as Helen Wilcox points out in her discussion of Donne's circular metaphors, "This circle is, like God but unlike the circle of human life, totally independent of the progress of time, being complete from the beginning and for all time" ("Squaring the Circle" 69). This constant, divine love may seem very different from the changeful, secular kind suggested by the labyrinth, but in Wroth's corona the two are as interdependent as her dual invention. As many scholars recognize, Wroth's verse is of the Neoplatonic kind. But, as much as Neoplatonic conventions in many ways appeal to and draw on some distinctly Christian habits of thought, the formal union of crown and labyrinth that I have described above also implies some new and interesting perspectives on Christian love.

III. Figuring the Sacred and the Secular

In much seventeenth-century devotional verse, Rambuss observes,

. . . we find relays along which the soul and the body, the figurative and the material, the other-worldly and the this-worldly, even the sacrosanct and the profane, have served, sometimes in contest with each other, sometimes in collusion, in the stimulation of devotion and ecstasy. This is to say that religion and sex have done, and still continue to do, each other's affective work. (101)

What Rambuss describes as a generally identifiable feature of devotional verse applies particularly well to the nature of Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts." The exploration of the relationship between soul and body in Wroth's corona, as in the devotional verse Rambuss describes, inevitably brings together that of "the other-worldly and the this-worldly." As much as distinctly religious verse relies on the interanimation of the series of binaries Rambuss describes, so does Wroth's crown of love employ the parts of these pairs to do "each other's affective work."

The presence of two distinctly different representations of Cupid in Wroth's sequence as a whole in itself suggests a meeting, or at least the juxtaposition, of some of the binaries both Rambuss and I recognize. It has been often observed that the sonnets preceding the corona present an Anacreontic Cupid, the mischievous boy who delights in inflicting pain on hapless lovers. In the corona, however, Cupid becomes the mature king conventionally depicted as ruling wisely and justly over the Court of Love. The former, as Beilin also notes, represents "earthly love" while the latter represents "the love of virtue," and the corona is the focal point for these two Cupids ("Constancy" 233-34). Marking the coronal change in Cupid's representation is the preceding sonnet, an apology to Cupid that functions as an introduction to the corona proper (P76).⁴⁵ Sounding remarkably like a prayer, the sonnet begins with "O pardon, Cupid I confess my fault / Then mercy grant mee in soe just a kind" (lines 1-

⁴⁵ In her note to P76, Roberts says that "This formal apology to Cupid announces the sequence of fourteen poems, the *corona*, to follow" and asks us also to note that the poem's speaker now dubs her earlier berating of Cupid as "folly" (line 5).

2), and it ends with a promise to celebrate his glory, to “give a crowne unto thy endless prayse / Which shall thy glory, and thy greatnes raise” (lines 12-13).

This sonnet marks a notable shift in tone from those that precede it. The poem certainly signals a change, but it also suggests that the two kinds of love the boyish and mature Cupids represent are not entirely distinct — Wroth’s speaker is, after all, apologizing to Love personified, the very same figure she has chastised all along. The lustful love associated with the boy Cupid and the ideal love associated with the mature king are, as we shall see, as symbiotic as they are separately identifiable. Just as the corona’s introductory prayer addresses a Cupid who is at once boyish and mature, so the corona proper suggests that “this-worldly” love can never be wholly transcended in favour of the “other-worldly” love Wroth’s crown professes to embrace. The “crowne of Sonetts” makes it clear that what C.A. Patrides describes as those “quarters beyond the visible” (295) can be expressed and comprehended only through the simultaneous expression of that which is concrete and experiential. Thus Wroth’s poetry, as much as Petrarch’s, suggests that knowing secular love can lead to an understanding of the sacred kind, just as comprehending divine love can sometimes clarify and therefore enable the earthly kind.

Wroth uses many rhetorical techniques that unite even as they juxtapose images of lustful desire and ideal love: in her corona, rhetorical figures as well as form and imagery work to bring together the sacrosanct and the profane. In the third sonnet (P79), the representation of Cupid as mature king becomes most apparent; as

Wroth's editor notes, it is here that "the speaker now turns to examine an opposed concept of Cupid as a noble monarch" (129). The shift is, however, enacted in the preceding Sonnet 2, which, of course, opens with the Sonnet 1's answer to the corona's opening question, "to leave all, and take the thread of love" (P78 line 1). Sonnet 2's subsequent line clearly indicates that its speaker has escaped the twists, turns, and repetitive stops of the maze by taking hold of the thread of love, "Which line strait leads unto the soules content" (line 2): the unbroken poetic line also formally replicates the straight line of its substance — the content, it seems, is now "content." The speaker is, apparently, liberated from the maze of burning desire and all the suffering that goes with it; she claims to have found peace with "chaste thoughts" (line 5).

With these transcendent thoughts come increasingly religious diction and imagery: "Light of true love," she maintains at the end of the second quatrain, "brings fruite which none repent / Butt constant lovers seeke, and wish to prove" (lines 7-8). The rhetoric of sacred devotion, however, comes to the forefront in Sonnet 2's third quatrain, where the speaker's praise of the mature Cupid is expressed in conventionally sacred terms:

Love is the shining starr of blessings light;

The fervent fire of zeale, the roote of peace,

The lasting lampe fed with the oyle of right;

Image of fayth, and wombe for joyes increase. (lines 9-12)

The imagery that appears here expands on the second quatrain's "Light of true love": this is the ideal love through which "constant lovers" transcend lustful secular love, which is, of course, also associated with the Anacreontic Cupid the speaker has left behind. Love as light has unmistakable religious connotations, and here the speaker offers three such metaphors: "shining starr," "fervent fire," and "lasting lampe" all represent transcendent love, a love that is here described in terms usually associated with the divine.⁴⁶ In this particular poem, the allusive eternality those tropes evoke is underscored by the pointed alliteration of each metaphorical description, which formally echoes, through repetition, the constancy of the love the speaker describes.

Constancy is even more emphatically suggested in this quatrain with the use of *zeugma*. As noted in the previous chapter, this particular version of what Puttenham calls "the Single Supply" is known as *prozeugma* because the verb precedes the clauses it serves (163-64). In this case, the subject as well as the verb serves a number of subsequent clauses. The quatrain's opening "Love is" is followed by its various metaphorical definitions, all of which depict intense yet lasting light. "Love is" is thus carried through the entire quatrain, serving not only its figurative illumination but also its final line, "Image of fayth, and wombe for joyes increase" (line 12). The constancy (emphasized especially by the alliteration) and the endurance (emphasized

⁴⁶ In his discussion of the poem "The Dart" by the Interregnum poet Eliza Rambuss points out that she "elaborates another devotional convention of the time in christianizing the tropes of secular love poetry" (78): I would again borrow and recast Rambuss's phrasing to suggest that Wroth, in her expression of secular devotion, tends to secularize the tropes of Christian love poetry.

especially by the sustained syntax of the *prozeugma*) of the speaker's newly found transcendent love is described in the quatrain's content and amply illustrated through rhetorical form. In this and in other ways, the sonnet very much suggests divine eternity; as Beilin observes, "Love, no longer the boyish prankster, is being defined in a new context created by celestial and sacred imagery" ("Constancy" 236). Beilin seems quite right to suggest that lustful earthly love, in this sonnet at least, seems to have been completely abandoned in favour of a Neoplatonic love that is divine insofar as it is transcendent and enduring.

But reading Wroth's verse is not simply a matter of reading in terms of either/or. The speaker does seem to have left behind the torments of love wrought by the mischievous boy to discover a love marked by, as Beilin puts it, "different qualities from those previously attached to Cupid" ("Constancy" 236). Despite the marked change taking up the thread of love seems to indicate, the remainder of the corona in many ways suggests that Anacreontic Love hasn't been entirely transcended, and that "thread of love" has not led the speaker in as straight a line as she had hoped. As Walker puts it, "Love, no matter how constant, still participates in the labyrinth of a divided and divisive world" throughout the corona (189). Sonnet 2's closing couplet begins with the same words that open the preceding quatrain, "Love is," and it also uses the rhetorical figure *prozeugma*. But *prozeugma* is here used to very different effect. In this case, the opening verb (the third person singular conjugation of "to be") serves both clauses of the couplet's first line: "Love is true

vertu, and his ends delight" (line 13). The couplet's final line repeats the use of *prozeugma*, again using the verb "to be": here, the speaker tells us that "His flames ar joyes, his bands true lovers might" (line 14). As in the preceding quatrain, these uses of *prozeugma* in the final couplet can be read as alluding to the constant and enduring nature of the love the sonnet's content aims to capture. But the allusion to constancy isn't sustained to nearly the same extent as it is earlier, where "the Ringleader" serves not one, but five additional clauses. Even as the figure suggests constancy, it also subtly alludes to change, and that allusiveness is heightened by this figure's juxtaposition with a much more extensive use of *zeugma*.

The poem's closing lines also suggest change in other ways. First, the subject in both of the couplet's uses of *zeugma* is repeated rather than implied; the subject is asserted and not assumed as it is in the extended *zeugma* of the third quatrain, where the subject "Love" serves as many clauses as the verb "is." In the couplet, the subject itself is not simply repeated, but changes with each use of the figure: "Love" becomes "his ends" in the couplet's first line, while "His flames" becomes "his bands" in the second. Unlike the "Love" of the preceding lines, the couplet does not sustain the implied presence of the whole of Love, but uses the figure *prozeugma* in a way that features different aspects of love personified. This very different application of the same rhetorical figure, together with the use of *parison* in each of the couplet's two lines, indicate a love that is as divided and changeful as the love of the preceding

quatrain is whole and constant: transcendent and earthly love thus remain distinctly separate categories.

This distinction is further suggest by the appearance of a new subject in each of the couplet's clauses; the use of *prozeugma* in each of its two lines involves the verb alone. The stated verb in the couplet's opening clause is the third person singular conjugation of "to be" found in "Love is." The verb "to be" is implied in the line's second clause, but it is implied in a different conjugation: if not for the *zeugma*, the clause would read "and his ends [are] delight." The third person plural conjugation of "to be" is used or implied through the couplet's remaining two clauses: "His flames ar joyes, his bands [are] true lovers might." Though it is true that the same conjugation of the verb "to be" is sustained (both implicitly and explicitly) through the couplet's final three clauses, the shift from the opening clause's third-person singular conjugation connotes something quite different from the previous quatrain's use of *prozeugma*. Implied or stated repetition of the same verb may suggest continuity, but at the same time the marked difference in its use seems to work against the constant, transcendent love the poem describes and the sonnet's previous use of *prozeugma* captures. The changeful "this-worldly" kind of love associated with the labyrinth is not entirely occluded, but is implicitly present even in the expression of something that is constant, "other-worldly," and divine.

That Wroth recognizes that the same rhetorical figure can be used to different, and sometimes opposing, effects attests to the extent of her rhetorical sensitivity and

her expertise. As I showed in my discussion of the *Psalmes*, Pembroke often uses figures to very different expressive ends: in her case, she employs *antimetabole* in a way that suggests divine eternity in Psalms 72 and 130, but in Psalm 51 effectively uses it as a formal counterpart to the endless cycle of sin and repentance the poem describes. In Psalm 93 and 66, *antimetabole* suggests a correspondence between God's eternity and the necessarily perpetual act of devotion.⁴⁷ Wroth, I think, demonstrates an equally fluid understanding of the conventions of rhetoric that is, in her case as well, attested to by her recognition of the multiple applicability of its techniques. "[I]n the best work of great writers," Brian Vickers maintains, "each use of a figure is organically determined by the movement, emotional and intellectual" of a given play or poem (*Classical Rhetoric* 122). This sonnet offers an especially clear example of the ways Wroth uses the figures of rhetoric — in this instance the same figure — in a way that supports and intensifies her corona's emotional and intellectual movement, its rendering of the distinct and simultaneous, but never mutually exclusive, presence of love's binaries.

⁴⁷ That rhetorical figures can be used to a variety of effects, depending on content and context, is further attested to in Patricia Parker's discussion of Shakespeare's use of *antimetabole* in some of his plays. Parker offers a reading that sees Shakespeare's use of the figure in terms of "its linking precisely with structures of reversal, in logical and in other senses." Because "antimetabole is never far from the question of logic and the linear ordering of ends and means," it thus works in tandem with the content of the examples she cites, which show Shakespeare consistently using the figure "in relation to logical processes" (90). Later, Parker shows how *antimetabole* is related to reversal (111).

In Sonnet 3, the speaker activates the devotional to extol the virtues of the god of love in a way that even more strongly suggests divinity. This monorhymed sonnet opens, of course, with the final line of Sonnet 2, and thus also uses the rhetorical figure *prozeugma*. Constancy and change are again suggested by the repetition of the rhetorical figure, but this dual effect is found in the poem's rhyme scheme as well. As discussed above, consistent repetition of the same aural ending strongly suggests constancy and eternity even as the repeated line endings also mimic the repeated dead-ends of a labyrinth. The second quatrain, however, uses the rhetorical figure *zeugma* in a way that more explicitly brings binaries together:

Heere are affections, tri'de by loves just might
 As gold by fire, and black desernd by white,
 Error by truthe, and darknes knowne by light,
 Wher faith is vallwed for love to requite. (lines 5-8)

With the exception of the "affections" that are "tri'de by loves just might" and "gold," which is not really antithetical to "fire," the speaker describes a series of things that are understood in terms of opposition: "black" is known by its contrast with "white," "error" is known by "truthe," and "darknes" is understood in opposition to "light." The repeated juxtaposition of binaries alludes to their mutually constitutive nature, drawing our attention to the idea that we are able to recognize one thing only because we also comprehend its antithesis. That these binary oppositions are brought together within shared clauses that are distinctly separated from other clauses further

suggests their interdependence: it is through their direct contrast and their containment that we see both their difference and their complementarity.

The interconnection of binaries is further indicated by Wroth's use of *zeugma* in lines 5, 6 and 7. Even as each line is broken by a heavy caesura, the rhetorical figure works to bring the lines' two different yet similar parts together. All of these uses of *zeugma* are, in effect, twofold; each use of *zeugma* brings together the clauses of a given line and connects one line to another. This effect is achieved because every appearance of *zeugma* in the stanza functions as both *prozeugma* and *hypozeugma*: the former version places the verb before the clauses it serves, while the latter, which Puttenham calls "the Rerewarder," sees the "supplie be placed after all the clauses, and not before nor in the middle" (164-65). In this case, the verb "tri'de" functions as *hypozeugma* in serving "Heere are affections" (line 5), while it becomes *prozeugma* in serving both "loves just might" (line 5) and "As gold by fire" (line 6). The latter clause is also supplied by the verb "desernd," which functions as *hypozeugma* in relation to "As gold by fire," and as *prozeugma* in relation to "Error by truth" (line 7): this latter clause is, in turn, also supplied by the *hypozeugma* of "knowne" (line 7).

As in Pembroke's *Psalmes*, Wroth's use of this particular rhetorical figure emphasizes the supply, which in this case are verbs ("tri'de," "desernd" and "knowne") that equally express the attainment of understanding. We know "affections" because they are "tri'de by loves just might," we recognize gold because it both survives and is illuminated by fire, we know black because we also recognize white, error because we

understand truth, and darkness because we also know light. By highlighting verbs that denote comprehension, and by using those verbs to supply clauses both fore and aft, the figure draws attention to and underscores the epistemological interdependence of seeming antitheses; by using each verb to serve two or more sets of unlike or antithetical things, these instances of *zeugma* further indicate that this interdependence applies to more than one kind of binary opposition. Rhetorical form thus corresponds very closely with the lines' content, that is, that we cannot fully comprehend one thing if we do not also understand its antithesis: both formally and substantively, these lines work not to negate oppositions but, on the contrary, to define them by doubly affirming their mutuality.

Because these figures work to unite separate lines and clauses within those lines, Wroth's use of both *prozeugma* and *hypozeugma* strongly suggests continuity. This continuity is, of course, disrupted by the lines' pointed caesuras, but the grouping of defining opposites within their own graphic space on either side of each line break, and on either side of each caesura, simultaneously suggests their interdependence. Wroth's use of rhetorical and poetic technique in this passage is thus fully in keeping with the corona's coextant images of circle and maze; like the meeting of contraries the quatrain's substance describes, the rhetorical figure *zeugma* suggests continuity even as the broken lines formally mimic separation and change. Thus the stanza also works to bring together inconstancy and constancy and, by extension, the changeful earthly love and the enduring divine love the labyrinth and

crown respectively represent. The form of the lines strongly suggests that the sonnet's speaker is yet struggling with the fits and starts of secular love, but the way the rhetorical figures used in this quatrain also suggest that, even as the corona's poems "do not offer an escape into divine love any more than departure from the imprisoning Temple of Love in the *Urania* represents liberation from love itself" (Walker 189), they also suggest that Pamphilia, "like other lovers, can try to bring her understanding of divine love to bear in the world" (Beilin "Constancy" 239).

Miller discusses this sonnet at length, and also quotes the stanza I have cited above. Miller argues that "The series of similes, from 'gold by fire' to 'darknes knowne by light,' suggests the intensity of the speaker's dedication to love, a dedication admitting of no compromise or inconstancy" ("Rewriting Lyric Fictions" 300-1). Though Miller is quite right to identify similes here, she isn't at all clear on how these rhetorical tropes serve as evidence of the speaker's uncompromising constancy, and she overlooks the ways the lines can also be read as the formal representation of inconstancy. Even so, identifying the presence of *zeugma* in these lines and the continuity the figure suggests would make her argument more convincing: constancy is suggested much more strongly by the rhetorical figure *zeugma* than it is by Miller's unsubstantiated claim of an analogously depicted refusal to compromise. Applying rhetorical analysis to Miller's unsupported reading of these lines offers a useful illustration of one of the many ways that reading poetry in rhetorical terms can also help us to understand what its author is trying to say.

Reading rhetoric in women's poetry, in particular, also enables us better to appreciate the complexity of their verse. In this case, that complexity is evident in the way that the *zeugma* complicates the inconstancy suggested by the enforced stops and starts of the repeated caesuras. To read this stanza as Miller does, as a series of similes that evince the speaker's constant dedication, is to ignore an ongoing struggle that may be substantively glossed over but remains formally very much alive.

Wroth's use of poetic and rhetorical technique in this sonnet makes it very difficult to sustain the kind of black-and-white reading Miller's discussion implies, and this difficulty is as apparent in Sonnet 3's overall rhetorical mode as it is in its use of particular rhetorical figures. This sonnet, like many in the corona, sounds very much like a prayer. That it is not a private meditation, however, becomes especially clear in the third quatrain and closing couplet:

Please him, and serve him, glory in his might,
 And firme hee'll bee, as innosencye white,
 Cleere as th'ayre, warme as sunn beames, as day light,
 Just as truthe, constant as fate, joy'd to requite,

Then love obay, strive to observe his might,
 And bee in his brave court a glorious light. (lines 9-14)

Here, I agree with Beilin when she notes that Pamphilia's diction in the corona not only becomes "spare, plain, and less self-indulgent," but that her "exhortation to join

love's service [also] sounds more like a call to love God" ("Constancy" 236-37). The plainer style, which by Wroth's day had come to be associated with the sacred, strongly suggests that this a poem of devotion. But, as I argued in Chapter 1, the stylistic parallels that some Renaissance theorists of language attempted to establish did not always work in practice. What might at first appear to be a divine meditation is mediated by the strongly exhortative mode of the passage, which, with its repeated use of the imperative, seems clearly aimed to persuade a general audience.

Thus the corona's Sonnet 3 represents two of the three branches of rhetoric. In its praise of the god of love, it is an example of *epideictic* rhetoric; in its exhortations to "Please," "serve," and "glory" in the god of love, the sonnet is also an example of deliberative rhetoric. Sonnet 3 evinces two rhetorical impulses at the same time. The speaker's intent is to praise and to exhort, and in this sense the poem is highly rhetorical. Yet the public intention praising and exhorting suggests is not opposed to the notion of the sonnet as a devotional meditation any more than deliberative rhetoric is opposed to *epideictic*. These two branches of rhetoric are not mutually exclusive or even incompatible; similarly, the devotional state that prayer suggests is not necessarily opposed to the public intention indicated by the sonnet's strongly exhortative stance. The sonnet is, rather, a very good example of what Hinely calls "simultaneously private outpourings and public prayers" (156): the public and the private are no more incompatible in Wroth's sonnet than they are in the Psalms of David. In its simultaneous representation of two of the traditional three

divisions of rhetoric, Wroth's sonnet again suggests that her aim is not, as critics like MacArthur have claimed, to represent only one aspect of a given thing, be it one half of a Petrarchan binary or one of the three divisions of rhetoric. On the contrary, the sonnet's simultaneously private and public mode strongly suggests that Wroth's aim is, if not to transcend, at least to minimize the difference between the many binaries her corona represents.

The crown's speaker makes this desire perfectly clear in the subsequent poem. Sonnet 4 of the corona continues to exhort in imperatives, which it must do if it picks up the last line of the preceding poem. In the second stanza of Sonnet 4, the speaker urges her assumed audience

Never to slack till earth noe stars can see,
 Till Sunn, and Moone doe leave to us dark night,
 And secound Chaose once againe doe free
 Us, and the world from all devisions spite. (P80, lines 5-8)

Wroth's editor here notes that "secound Chaose" refers to the "ultimate destruction of the world" (130), that is, the second coming of Christ. This reading is entirely plausible, but Wroth's choice of words here is an odd one. This speaker does not wish expressly for the more usual "Last Judgement," "Day of Judgement," or "Doomsday," the time when the dead will be raised and the righteous granted

immortality.⁴⁸ Instead, Wroth's speaker chooses a term that looks back as much as it looks forward.

Chaos is, of course, what existed before God ordered the cosmos and created the world. Before divine intervention, "the earth was without form, and void" (Genesis 1-1); there was only discrete matter, a chaotic disorder where nothing was distinguishable from anything else. Creation out of chaos meant also the creation of difference. When God said "Let there be light" (Genesis 1-3), He necessarily created an antithesis to the darkness that would be unknowable without light. In the post-chaos world, many things are understood in terms of binary oppositions, as the speaker points out in Sonnet 3. But this speaker longs for the time when God will "once againe" free humanity, and all things in the world, "from all devisions spite" (lines 7-8). With a second chaos, there will be no divisions and there thus can be no binary oppositions. This desire may not represent the final resolution of contraries, but it does suggest that binaries would cease to be distinguishable — and thus in a sense cease to exist — in the utter disorder chaos implies. In other words, though the corona in many ways suggests that binaries can to an extent be resolved in the pre-"second Chaose" world, it is only through divine intervention that "devisions" will

⁴⁸ The *OED* gives examples of all of these terms, ranging in dates from 975-1672. It does not, however, offer a single example of "Chaos" used with "second" to mean the Day of Judgement. The closest contemporary example given is Bacon's "the order and disposition of that Chaos or Masse, was the worke of sixe days" from his *Advancement of Learning* (1605): Bacon clearly refers back to the original Creation and not ahead to Doomsday.

cease to exist altogether. As Wilcox reminds us, "it is in the nature of fallen existence that no language can exist which is able fully to match or express God" ("Squaring the Circle" 63): in the fallen world, divisions must exist because we cannot express or even fully comprehend the perfect oneness that is God's alone.⁴⁹

In discussing a poem, and a collection of poems, that show a keen awareness of the ways that language works both literally and figuratively and an equally keen awareness of the limitations of language, it warrants mention that the Judeo-Christian creation story emphasizes the centrality of language in creating order — God said, "Let there be light." As the Genesis story tells it, all of God's creations are part of a logocosmogony: the world and the people who inhabit it are, like the rest of the cosmos, brought to order through words. In a logocosmogony, language creates order and therefore must also create the kind of binaries that, the Creation story also tells us, are an inevitable product of ordering. Because language is responsible for the very existence of binary oppositions, it would be a distinct impossibility to transcend

⁴⁹ Some Neoplatonists conceived of God as a union of contraries. According to Wind, the fifteenth-century Italian writer Nicholas Cusanus (who also claimed to have squared the circle) imagined "The union of contraries in the 'absconded God,' whose blinding light is impenetrable darkness" (221). Cusanus's knowledge, Wind notes, was "spread in England by the visit of Giordano Bruno" and through the writings of others: "The correspondence between Harvey and Spenser," Wind points out, "shows that they were studying the works of Gianfrancesco Pico, which abound in quotations from Cusanus" (225). Cusanus apparently also "invented experiments in metaphor" that "consisted in finding within common experience an unusual object endowed with the kind of contradictory attributes which are difficult to imagine united in the deity": Wind points out that Cusanus's inventions were designed "to guide the mind towards the hidden God" (222).

them utterly through the very medium that gives them being in the first place. And because one half of a binary cannot exist without the other — if there is no darkness, then there is no light — its defining other is always at least implicitly present.

The impossibility of wholly negating or transcending binaries in the fallen post- and pre-chaos world is made more clear as the sonnet progresses. “Till then” (line 9), the speaker tells us in oxymoronic terms, we can only “taste this pleasing sting” (line 11). The poem’s speaker goes on to depict worldly love as a paradox, proclaiming that this “hapy smarting” (line 12) of earthly affections will no doubt burn, “yett burning you will love the smart” (line 14). Constant love may very well be attainable, but it cannot attain earthly perfection: it can never free itself from the “sting,” “smarting,” and “burne” of secular love. Human love, the sonnet suggests, cannot entirely transcend the secular to achieve a sacred ideal, at least not before “secound Chaose.” This imperfect resolution of a love that is figured in both sacred and secular terms is further suggested by Wroth’s use, again, of the rhetorical figure *syneciosis*. In the “crosses” and “kiss” of Sonnet 1, the figure suggests religious connotations. Within the context of the poem itself, however, the sacred is more than just a suggestion: in this later poem, the religious context of the “hapy smarting” of lovers is clearly indicated by the speaker’s reference to the “secound Chaose.” Less obviously, the figure has Christian connotations in its juxtaposition of suffering and joy. The cross-coupled suffering of the lovers this speaker describes isn’t so different from Sonnet 1’s “crosses” and “kiss,” or from the *pathos* inspired by Christ’s

oxymoronic “joyfull sorrow” (Lanyer, *Salve Deus* 912). Though it is clear that Wroth’s crown is not a conventionally devotional work, secular love is nevertheless depicted in terms that aren’t so different from those used to describe love of a specifically Judeo-Christian and sacred kind.

In Wroth’s corona, binaries are quite often explicitly coextant, sometimes side-by-side as they are in Sonnet 4. Language will always be inadequate because it cannot negate the binaries that are inescapable in the created and fallen world; with concentrated effort, however, language can work to resolve them to the extent that one of its components does not outweigh the other. Ironically, though, the ultimate inadequacy of language is further suggested by the speaker’s inability to sustain the distinction she strives to impose on the corona’s lover and the love object. Ultimately, the antithetical qualities assigned to Pamphilia and Amphilanthus prove to be no more distinct than the two lovers themselves are in relation to the larger world; as disconnected as Wroth’s speaker might seem, neither she nor the beloved can be wholly disconnected from the contraries of the larger world.

Wroth alludes to this notion in many ways throughout the crown sonnets, but she most clearly suggests that this is so in Sonnet 4: she does so by enjambling the pronoun “Us” onto the line whose remainder reads “and the world from all devisions spite” (line 8). This pronoun may represent only the speaker and the beloved, it might refer to “all true lovers” as Lewalski suggests (*Writing Women* 260), or it might signify a collective “us” that represents all of humanity and its relation to the world.

If the first reading applies, “Us, and the world” works not to isolate the speaker and her lover, or the speaker alone, in an enclosed space. The comma after the pronoun may suggest separation, but the enjambment also works to extend the energy of “free” into the next line while simultaneously emphasizing the connection between “Us” and the rest of the world. This line may allude to but does not unequivocally represent the corona’s oft-proclaimed insularity; its construction suggests a non-insular kind of freedom and destabilizes the distinct opposition of “us” and “them,” even as it seems formally to represent this binary. If the pronoun unites “all true lovers” together in a collective “Us” that is in turn linked with even as it is separated from the rest of humanity, then the enjambed line works to negate the kinds of binaries that might be used to define true lovers in opposition to all others. If the pronoun refers to all of humanity as “Us,” then the enjambment works to unite even as it separates humans from the rest of the natural world. In this and in other ways, poetic technique and rhetorical uses of language bring together the contraries the sequence also creates: *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* may seem an insular excursion into interiority, but it also evinces a keen awareness of the impossibility of completely opposing oneself, or one’s language, to the rest of the world.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ This point is equally true in larger terms. As Baxter points out, the corona is also not a hermetically sealed circle in that it “is clearly part of the larger sequence, and themes that are discussed in it are also treated and developed elsewhere” (“Divining Love” 8).

The corona's speaker does, however, go on to speak in terms that seem very much to define herself, and her love, in opposition to the world. In Sonnet 7 (P83), the "sweet flame" kindled by her constant love is contrasted with the earthly kind: "Yett wheras fire distroys," the speaker explains, "this doth aspire, / Increase, and foster all delights above" (lines 7-8). Instead of destroying as burning desire so often does, this flame of love inspires creation, and it does so in overtly Petrarchan terms:

Love will a painter make you, such, as you
 Shall able bee to drawe your only deere
 More lively, parfett, lasting, and more true
 Then rarest woorkman, and to you more neere. (lines 9-12)

Idealizing as this depiction might be, love here seems to be as much of a pragmatic means as it is a "parfett" and "lasting" end. Though the sonnets of the corona may represent a Neoplatonic ideal, this particular poem suggests something else altogether; as Lewalski says, "Unlike the traditional Neoplatonic ladder of love, which leads the lover away from the particular object to the eternal form of Love, Wroth's Neoplatonism leads back to the eyes of the loved one . . . [which] make the lover an artist in the Petrarchan mode" (*Writing Women* 260). What is striking about this description of the lover as painter is the absence of the beloved, "your only deere." The emphasis is not on the physical features of the love object, as it is so often in the countless blazons of Petrarchan verse, but on the lover's ability to create.

In rhetorical terms, the most noteworthy feature of this passage is the sole appearance of the figure *brachiologia* in the entire corona, found in the line “More lively, parfett, lasting, and more true” (line 11). Puttenham calls this figure “the Cutted comma” and points out that “we vtter in that fashion, when either we be earnest, or would seeme to make hast” (213). Here, it does impart the sense of earnestness Puttenham describes, but the speaker doesn’t seem rushed or hasty. The poem opens with “How blest bee they then, who his favors prove” (line 1), and Wroth’s later use of *brachiologia* captures a speaker who seems to believe that she is truly blessed and does have the patience necessary to produce a “true” painting — fine works of art, everyone knows, are rarely produced in haste.

Yet the speaker is perhaps not as serene as she may at first appear. The quatrain’s opening line, “Love will a painter make you, such, as you” (line 9), hints at the speaker’s psychological struggle. Repetition of the pronoun “you” here marks an instance of the figure *ploce*, the “speedie iteration of one word, but with some little intermissio[n] by inserting one or two words betweene” (Puttenham 201). The figure appears for a reason; as Puttenham says, “a figure is euer vsed to a purpose, either of beautie or of efficacie” (202). In this context, the repeated pronoun might be the universal “you” that often stands in for the more formal “one,” it may represent the speaker’s exhortation to her beloved to realize the ideal the corona appears to uphold, or, alternatively, it may be Pamphilia speaking to herself. Regardless of which meaning Wroth intends, the effect is the same: repetition imparts a sense of

earnestness, and it reveals the speaker's aim to persuade that love will make "you" a painter to excel the "rarest woorkman."

Even as the corona appears to celebrate the speaker's attainment of the ideal of constancy, this sonnet's use of *ploce* also suggests that the threat of change is ever-present: that the speaker needs repeatedly to remind herself and/or others of the virtues and the benefits of ideal love suggests that the potential for change remains. As much as the poem insists on continuity and constancy, taking up the thread of love doesn't entirely free this speaker from at least the threat of again succumbing to the labyrinth's psychological twists and turns. Indeed, the labyrinth makes another figurative appearance in the *parison* of the subsequent line, which divides even as the line unites its two halves, "Than rarest woorkman, and to you more neere" (line 12). Wroth's use of rhetorical figures again suggests that the corona's twofold invention of maze and circle remain equally present, as do the changeful desire and ideal love they represent.

The tone of the corona continues to grow more vehement as it progresses. The subsequent sonnet (P84) is perhaps even more rhetorically insistent, as it describes

The worth of love, wher endles blesednes

Raines, and commands, maintaind by heavnly fires

Made of vertu, join'de by truth, blowne by desires

Strengthened by worth, renewed by carefullnes
 Flaming in never changing thoughts, briers
 Of jelousie shall heere miss wellcomnes. (lines 3-8)

This is a lengthy and breathless description of "The worth of love." None of these lines is end-stopped, every line but the last contains at least one caesura, and line 5 is broken by two heavy pauses. The form of these lines doesn't impart a sense of the smooth circularity the corona supposedly represents; on the contrary, they are much more suggestive of a labyrinth's repeated twists and turns, its endless starts and stops. The speaker may profess that "briers / Of jelousie shall heere miss wellcomnes," but the lines that culminate in this assertion strongly suggest that their speaker is yet caught up in the torments that may be different from but are no less present than those with which the corona began. The corona's speaker repeatedly reminds us (and herself, it seems) that labyrinth and crown and the binaries they may seem to represent are not always simple oppositions.

In Sonnet 9, the abstract love on which the preceding sonnet centres becomes distinctly personified. The Neoplatonic ideal the speaker strives to present in Sonnet 8 is found in a physical place, "Wher Venus follyes can noe harbour winn" (P85 line 2). Throughout the poem, the ideal of love is evoked in physical, experiential terms; the poem offers evidence of both the "this-worldly" and "other-worldly" kinds. Though the speaker insists that the follies of earthly love, if they dare to appear in this idealized place "chased ar as worthles of the face / Or stile of love who hath

lasivious binn" (lines 3-4), but the use of the verb "chased" here is suggestive. In a sequence of poems that purports to advocate chastity in love, Wroth surely wouldn't use this particular word without being aware that it is a homonym of "chaste." The speaker insists that "Venus follyes" will be quickly "chased" away from this idealized place, but the implied pun also suggests that the "chaste" are as "worthles of the face" as those "who hath lasivious binn." The paradox hinted at by the word's double meaning is allied with that suggested in Sonnet 8, in the *syneciosis* of "chastly lett your passions move" (line 11) that harkens back to the "chaste thoughts" upheld in Sonnet 2 (P78 line 5). Yet what might in secular terms be read as a paradox of "chaste passion" would in sacred terms be read as a non-paradoxical and self-evident ideal, an ideal that embodies what Vives suggests is the necessary interpenetration of passion and reason and Peacham calls "the knowledge of diuine and humane thinges" (sig. AB2^v). The abstract ideal "the court of Love" (line 14) represents cannot, it seems, be expressed without some help from earthly desire.

That this is the case becomes even more clear as the poem unfolds. The second stanza, which comes after an opening reference to "Venus follyes," unmistakably refers to Cupid in its first line, "Oure harts are subject to her sunn" (line 5). Yet there is another familiar pun found here, and it is one that has distinctly sacred connotations: in religious or devotional verse, as we all know, "sunn" often refers at once to the daytime star that lights the earth *and* to the Son of God. The allusion to Christ I am proposing here becomes clearer as the line and the stanza progress: "wher

sinn / Never did dwell, or rest one minutes space" (lines 5-6). This Cupid was born sinless, apparently without the taint of original sin, since "What faults hee hath, in her, did still begin, / And from her brest hee suckd his fleeting pace" (lines 7-8). Of course, that this incarnation of Love is meant to be read as distinctly different from the divine incarnation is clear in the suggestion that this deity is tainted by his mother's influence — and the corollary suggestion that what is feminine is also corrupting. But this distinction cannot entirely negate the significance of the poem's allusion to the Son of God. In much the same way as the personification of love in Eliza's poem "The Dart," as Rambuss says, "turns out to be Christ in the guise of Cupid" (78), so the god of love of Wroth's poem can be read as Cupid dressed in at least a part of Christ's own metaphorical garb: earthly love, it seems, is best expressed with some help from the sacred.

The speaker indicates again in Sonnet 11 (P87) that the labyrinth and crown are mutually constitutive, and thus also suggests the same for the binaries they represent. The previous sonnet, for instance, insists that "Reason adviser is, love ruler must / Bee of the state which crowne hee long hath worne" (P86 lines 5-6), an assertion that further alludes to the necessary interpenetration of passion and reason. That their harmony can't be sustained for long, however, is quickly affirmed by a rapid shift from calm assertion to vehement disgust. In the subsequent poem, the speaker describes the fruits of wanton liberty, that is, the "plenty that in ills abound / Which ripest yett doe bring a sertaine dearth" (P87 lines 3-4). Here, the rhetorical

figure *syneciosis*, the figure that takes “two contrary words, and tieth them” (Puttenham 206) appears again. Cross-coupled here are “plenty” and “ills” in the first line, and “ripest” and “dearth” in the next. The poem describes earthly (read lustful) love in terms that highlight its inherently deceptive nature. Profane love, the figure suggests, may seem to represent ripeness and plenty, but appearance belies the reality of the “ills” and “dearth” that, seemingly paradoxically, go hand-in-hand with lustful love. The idea that profane love can mask as something ideal is not a new one. What is interesting here is that Wroth again suggests that one cannot know the profane without some recognition of the sacred: we wouldn’t mistake lust for something more transcendent without having some notion of its contrasting ideal. At the same time as an understanding of divine love allows for the recognition of its lesser counterfeit, the knowledge of profane “ills” and “dearth” allows for the recognition of a higher ideal. Wroth’s cross-coupling again suggests that the sacred and the secular are mutually constitutive.

The sonnet’s second quatrain goes on to describe in more detail the “plenty” that is also “dearth.” The product of lust is

A timeles, and unseasonable birth

Planted in ill, in wurse time springing found,

Which hemlock like might feed a sick-witts mirthe

Wher unruld vapors swimm in endles rounde. (lines 5-8)

The imagery of this quatrain very much captures the paradox of plentiful dearth. The “unseasonable birth” is “Planted in ill,” springs at an even “wurse time,” and is fit as poisonous “hemlock” to feed not the emotionally healthy but a “sick-witts mirthe”: all of these images are well suited to the speaker’s apparent intent to persuade that lustful love can bring forth only undesirable fruit. At the same time, though, the quatrain’s final line, “Wher unruld vapors swimm in endles rounde,” seems ironic or, at the very least, out of place when read within the context of the corona as a whole.

Earlier, the corona’s speaker longs for the “secound Chaose” (P80 line 7), and it is more than likely that the final judgment to which the speaker refers is meant to suggest order rather than disorder. Yet Wroth’s choice of this particular term, when she could have chosen another more familiar one that would still fit the metre, seems deliberately provocative. As I argued above, her word choice here comes with an implicit reference to pre-Creation chaos, where “unruld vapors” did indeed swim about in disorder. That these “unruld vapors” are associated with lust and chaos is not in itself remarkable, nor does it seem out of place in the poem’s context. What is remarkable is Wroth’s choice of the words “endles round” here, whose allusion to the form of the corona itself is unmistakable. It seems unlikely, too, that Wroth would have used these words unaware of the significance of endless rounds, both literal and figurative, throughout Pembroke’s *Psalmes*. In her aunt’s poems and elsewhere, the endless round conventionally suggests eternity, constancy, and oneness. Wroth may, of course, be very well suggesting the kind of “endless round” represented by the

labyrinth, an unproductive spinning in circles that never goes anywhere. At the same time, though, the “unrul’d vapors” of lust are described as taking the form of the corona itself and, by extension, the form most usually associated with divine love. The two kinds of love are interconnected and even mutually constitutive: just as the “endles round” gives form to the “unrul’d vapors,” so do the vapors of lust give substance to the circle of love.

That Wroth’s corona is not meant to be read in terms of either/or, as representing only one half of a series of Petrarchan binaries, is most evident in its closing sonnet. In the corona’s final contribution, the speaker’s insistence that her faith is “untouch’d” and her thoughts only “pure,” that “constancy bears sway” and is “unharm’d by envyes sore” (P90 lines 5-8) is quickly compromised by the striking *volta* that opens the third quatrain, where the speaker now says

Yett other mischiefs faile nott to attend,
 As enimies to you, my foes must bee;
 Curst jealousie doth all her forces bend
 To my undoing; thus my harmes I see. (lines 9-12)

Far from reaching and sustaining the ideal of love, the speaker falls very quickly into the torments that are concomitant with profane love: “in Love,” she says next, “I fervently doe burne” (line 13). The corona ends, of course, by bringing the speaker back to where she began, with the proposition “In this strange labourinth how shall I turne?” (line 14). The process that never ends will, paradoxically, begin all over again.

Just as the labyrinth and the crown equally constitute the corona's invention, so are the stops and starts of the labyrinth of desire inseparable from the "endles rounde" the corona inscribes.

Wroth's corona, like the sequence itself, is very much *about* binaries. But, whether those binaries are sacred and secular, constant and inconstant, private and public, suffering and joy, Wroth uses the very tools of their being to show that they needn't (and most likely can't) always exist in absolute opposition. If the sequence is, as Waller maintains, "a dream of a still to be found autonomy that will lead not to dominance but to mutuality" (*Family Romance* 219), then Wroth's "crown of Sonetts" goes a long way toward achieving this end. Far from presenting only "the negative side of the binaries that give Petrarchistic love poetry its vitality" (15) as MacArthur claims, Wroth's use of language, both poetic and rhetorical, suggests that the binaries this critic refers to are not one-sided, but that they are complementary. Neither the poet's dual invention nor the two kinds of love it represents are absolutely opposed: secular and sacred love — and all of the other binaries the sequence depicts — are as inseparable and as interanimating as the corona's maze and crown.

In discussing *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus's* concluding sonnets, Dubrow notes that "the crown is followed by other poems that record the effort to abandon a destructive love for a purer, more constant alternative" (155). Yet Dubrow doesn't see that effort as fulfilled. Instead, she goes on to disagree with Beilin, noting that the latter critic "claims unpersuasively that the sonnets after the crown sequence refer

covertly to divine love (*Redeeming Eve*, pp. 240-241),” while herself maintaining that “that ideal is as elusive and unstable as the attacks on Petrarchism in many earlier sequences” (155, n. 135). Here, we have another instance of reading Wroth in either/or terms: I am sympathetic to Beilin’s reading, which concludes that the speaker manages to resolve her dilemma of love in the sequence’s final sonnets. The corona, Beilin notes, is followed by “Pamphilia’s acknowledgment of her true poetic vocation” (*Redeeming Eve* 234): the sequence’s penultimate sonnet ends with Pamphilia’s decision to “Think on thy glory which shall still assend / Untill the world come to a finall end” (P101 lines 13-14). Pamphilia’s seemingly sacred near-ending, though, doesn’t negate the importance of her experience with “destructive love,” an experience that helps her to realize this “purer, more constant alternative.” In fact, the sequence itself ends with a reference to Pamphilia’s finest worldly quality: “Now lett your constancy,” she instructs her muse, “your honour prove” (P103 line 14). At least to the extent that one enables the speaker to comprehend the other, sacred and secular love are not wholly separable: the ideal of divine love cannot be fully realized in earthly terms, but it is, at the very least, less elusive and less unstable because Pamphilia has journeyed through the coronal labyrinth.

There is yet another, related binary in the sequence’s final sonnet, one having to do with poetic style. In his discussion of P103, Baxter suggests that Jonson, who wrote three poems to Wroth, may have admired it for its “plain style.” The poem is not, however, rigidly or indisputably plain: Baxter observes that it is not only a

“combination of English and Petrarchan structures,” but it is also “figurative (albeit conventionally so) in its first and third quatrains, and plain (and more overtly didactic) in the second quatrain and in the couplet” (“Divining Love” 4). The poem, then, does not represent a definitively Petrarchan or anti-Petrarchan style so much as it represents a convergence of English and Italian conventions. In other ways as well, Baxter goes on to argue, Wroth’s verse brings together pairings that we may, it is implied, too often read as distinctly separate and mutually exclusive. What Jonson would probably have admired about *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*’s antepenultimate sonnet (P101), Baxter suggests, “is its combination of the particular and the general, the secular and the sacred, the Petrarchan and the plain” (“Divining Love” 12). I would only add to Baxter’s reading that it seems safe to say that Jonson would have admired the ways that Wroth’s verse brings together such oppositions not only in this poem but throughout her sequence in general and within her “crowne of Sonnets” in particular.

I hope my discussion of the “crowne of Sonetts” has shown how reading Wroth’s use of rhetorical and poetic technique — which are themselves inseparable — also suggests that some of her critics have missed the mark in reading *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* in general and the “crowne of Sonetts” in particular. It is true, as Luckyj says, that Pamphilia’s sonnets, especially when read in the context of the *Urania*, represent an “old-fashioned conventionality” (264) and that they are, as a result, not meant to be read as generically subversive. Wroth’s corona, like the rest of

her verse, is in many ways conventional, but I would also add that it complicates, in ways not yet noted by other critics, the conventions it may appear to replicate. Instead of representing only one (feminine) half of a series of binaries, Wroth's corona reveals her profound engagement with something more intellectually rigorous and epistemologically curious than her recent readers indicate. Aristotle also says that "opposites are most knowable and more knowable when put beside each other" (3.9.7, Kennedy 243), and Wroth's head-on negotiation with difference in the "crowne of Sonetts" is perhaps a means not only of gaining understanding of how those contraries complement as well as sometimes contradict each other, but also a means of understanding "diuine and humane thinges" by minimizing their difference. Those binaries include the sacred and the secular, which are not alternatively privileged in Wroth's verse as some of her readers suggest, but are, in the corona at least, simultaneously (if not always proportionately) present.

IV. Crowns of Devotion

In this and the preceding chapter, I have aimed to show how rhetoric plays a crucial role in devotional expression, whether that devotion centres on "erotic attachment or religious worship" or, as it sometimes does in Wroth's sonnets, "both at once" (Rambuss 101). In this chapter's final section, I will focus specifically on how the use of rhetoric compares in secular and sacred expressions of devotion. To

this end, I have chosen to consider Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts" and Donne's "*La Corona*." Though there is much in Wroth's sonnet sequence to suggest a fruitful comparison with other poets, her apparent admirer Ben Jonson in particular, the formal similarity of Wroth's and Donne's crowns of devotion makes their verse an especially inviting comparison; that the intended objects of devotion differ between the two crowns makes this prospect even more intriguing. As with the works of the three poets this study investigates, considering these two sequences together might tell us much about how rhetoric can be used toward expressive ends that may be as different as they are similar.

It is important, as Quilligan indicates in her own discussion of Donne and Wroth, to read women's writing within its literary-historical context, and I agree with her that, in both biographical and thematic terms, these poets have much in common.⁵¹ The two crowns, as I will go on to show, also share some significant rhetorical similarities. Dubrow suggests that Wroth may have even known Donne's

⁵¹ As Quilligan points out, "Donne and Wroth both appear to have freely risked virtually their entire social position in order to make their own affectionate choices." Here, Quilligan refers to Donne's unapproved marriage to a teenage Ann More and, of course, Wroth's relationship with William Herbert. Quilligan reads these two poets' verse in terms of "both their experience of the patriarchally organized traffic in women and also of developing institutions of New World colonization" ("Conversation" 43); the latter reading involves a discussion of Donne's Elegy 19 ("Going to Bed") and *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus's* Sonnet 22 (P25 "Like to the Indians"), while the former briefly compares Donne's "The Canonization" and "The Sun Rising" with one of Wroth's *Urania* poems.

corona,⁵² which was likely written before her “crown of Sonetts.”⁵³ This doesn’t, however, necessarily also mean that poetic influence only went one way; as Quilligan observes, “Wroth and Donne could easily have known of each other’s work” (“Conversation” 44).⁵⁴ Again, I can only agree with Quilligan when she maintains that “To take Wroth up as not merely a member of her family or her gender, but of her generational cohort, promises to add something that heretofore has been missing from our sense of the dominant poets themselves” (42). Comparing Wroth’s and Donne’s crowns of sonnets also seems especially promising in light of Donne’s status as one of the most admired rhetors of his age: considering his crown in relation to Wroth’s should, I think, tell us much about her place in rhetorical culture.

⁵² This would be true, Dubrow suggests, “especially if the scholars who argue that a copy of it was sent to Magdalen Herbert are correct” (151). Donne addressed his “Holy Sonnets” to Magdalen Herbert, who was also the mother of canonical poet George Herbert and of his brother, the less-than-canonical poet Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury. We know from the poem the latter wrote in honour of the birth of Pembroke’s child that Wroth likely knew Lord Cherbury, and thus may also have known Donne.

⁵³ As A.J. Smith points out, Donne’s sonnets were composed before they were sent Magdalen Herbert in July 1607, provided that they were in fact included in the “Holy Sonnets” he sent her at that time, or they were written, as D. Novarr proposes, later in 1608 or early in 1609 (“Notes” 619). Regardless of whether the earlier or later date is correct, Donne’s corona precedes Wroth’s. Even if *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* was composed before 1613, as Roberts suggests may have been the case, it seems unlikely that she started writing her “crowne of Sonetts” before Donne completed his.

⁵⁴ Quilligan points out that Wroth’s and Donne’s manuscripts did circulate in the same society, and reminds us as well that Ben Jonson, who wrote three poems to Wroth, also knew Donne (“Conversation” 44).

As noted earlier, Donne's "*La Corona*" consists of seven sonnets, exactly half the number of poems that make up Wroth's "crown of Sonetts." Donne's crown is, it is true, explicitly Christian, but much of Wroth's "crowne of Sonnets" is, as I have aimed to show in the preceding sections, at least implicitly so.⁵⁵ Donne's sacred content, though, is far from metaphorical: that his crown is a Christian one he makes crystal clear from the very beginning. After its opening sonnet prayer, the remaining six poems present the stages of Christ's life in chronological order: they are accordingly titled "Annunciation," "Nativity," "Temple," "Crucifying," "Resurrection," and "Ascension." Like the poems of Wroth's crown of secular love, though, Donne's corona also suggests that what is sacred and what is secular are not always diametrically opposed: "the knowledge of diuine and humane thinges" (sig. AB2^v) is as interdependent as Peacham's linking suggests. Donne's coronal sequence, like Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts" and many of Pembroke's *Psalmes*, confirms that the sacred and the secular are equally important to the poetic expression of devotion.

The meeting of contraries in Donne's corona is, of course, most obvious in that its explicitly sacred verse takes a recognizably secular form: "*La Corona*" is part of the well-known group of devotional poems that are, seemingly paradoxically, called the "Holy Sonnets." The convergence of the sacred and the secular is also apparent, as it is in Wroth's crown, in other ways as well. Most notable is that Donne's corona, like all complete crowns of sonnets, brings the sacred and the secular together within

⁵⁵ The imagery of P101 in particular, as Baxter argues, is highly Christianized.

the larger coronal form: as much as the sonnet suggests secular love, circularity alludes to divinity.⁵⁶ Donne's "*La Corona*" uses circular and sonnet forms, and it also uses the conventions and the figures of rhetoric in a way that affirms the necessary interconnection of the sacred and the secular. Though not all of his readers believe this to be the case, I must disagree and suggest that Donne's corona, like Wroth's, depicts this particular binary in terms that suggest something less than absolute opposition.⁵⁷

Like Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts," Donne's "*La Corona*" uses many of the techniques of rhetoric in a way that emphasizes its correspondence of form and content. This is especially true of Donne's opening sonnet, "*Deign at my hand this crown of prayer and praise,*" and for this reason I will focus on comparing its rhetoric with that of Wroth's corona. Particularly noteworthy in his crown's first sonnet is the sustained use of repetition. Tellingly, rhetorical repetition is most obvious in the

⁵⁶ This might be especially true in Donne's case, for he makes the metaphorical significance of the circle clear in his prose as well as in his poetry, and, Alan Fischler points out, "Both the metaphor and the rationale for its use" are especially apparent in Donne's seventh sermon:

Fixe upon God any where, and you shall finde him a
Circle; He is with you now, when you fix upon him; He
was with you before, for he brought you to this fixation;
and he will be with you hereafter, for "He is yesterday,
and to day, and the same for ever." (qtd. in Fischler 171-
72)

⁵⁷ Fischler, for instance, takes a very different stance, arguing that Donne's crown of sonnets "emphasizes the opposition between this divine circularity and that of Nature" (173).

frequent appearance of the word “crown” that is featured in the poem’s opening line: “crown” appears no less than five additional times in the course of a fourteen-line poem. In repeating the word that signifies the corona’s overall form as much as it serves as the sonnet’s specific content, the poem immediately and insistently tells us that “*La Corona*”’s form and its content are meant to be read together.

More than emphasizing the crown’s formal and substantive significance, though, the poem’s circular imagery and the sequence’s poetic form become in Donne’s hands the image of an actual crown. In fact, *energeia* in this poem moves beyond the metaphorical and into the realm of the literal, uniting even as it juxtaposes what Rambuss calls the “the figurative and the material” (101). This poetic crown, the sonnet’s opening line suggests, is intended to crown God: Donne’s corona is, it seems, a poetic creation meant for the Creator. Though the speaker here addresses God in the optative subjunctive typical of prayer, there is nevertheless something imperious about the way his offering is expressed, an effect that is at least partly accounted for by an opening trochee (“*Deign at*”) that is followed by a strong iamb (“*my hand*”). As we might expect, what could be read as the dangerously hubristic imperative of the poem’s opening line is mediated somewhat by the speaker’s assumption of an appropriately humble stance. Using the same metrical pattern, the poem’s speaker goes on to qualify his demand, claiming that the crown of verse was “Weaved in my low devout melancholy” (line 2). Cautious backpedalling (or even genuine humility) this qualification may very well be, and I don’t aim to dismiss

entirely the authenticity of what the speaker later calls his muse's "white sincerity" (line 6).⁵⁸ Yet it is telling that the poet uses an equally forceful metre in an assertion of humility, and that he clearly does not aspire to "a vile crown of frail bays" (line 5), the usual earthly reward for extraordinary poetic achievement.

Rather, Donne seems to want the biggest prize of all in return for his poetic efforts: "But what thy thorny crown gained, that give me," he demands as much as he asks, "A crown of glory, which doth flower always" (lines 7-8). Repetition of the word "crown" in these two successive lines marks an instance of the rhetorical figure *conduplicatio*. Though neither Wilson nor Puttenham describes it, *conduplicatio* is a recognizable rhetorical figure that, as I noted in Chapter Two, might be read as a version of *ploce*. Like *ploce*, the "speedie iteration of one word" (Puttenham 201), this figure emphasizes both the earnestness and the vehemence of the speaker, much as it does in Wroth's Sonnet 7.⁵⁹ The gesture of humility seen in the first reappearance of

⁵⁸ Other critics have, however, questioned Donne's authenticity in this poem. Anne Ferry, for instance, suggests that the poet of Donne's crown "refers to his words as having a separate existence like an object — 'this crown' — independent of himself." Seeming to sense their apparent lack of sincerity, Ferry goes on, "he needs to defend them as a true representation of his inward state when he asks God to 'Reward my muses white sincerity' with an immortal crown" (223).

⁵⁹ In her *A Handbook to Sixteenth-Century Rhetoric*, Lee A. Sonnino includes Puttenham's definition of *ploce* under the term *copulatio*, which she equates also with *conduplicatio* and *diacope*. Peacham calls the figure "*diacope*" and describes it as one "which repeateth a word putting but one word betweene, or at least verie few." Peacham goes on to describe its use as "to expresse any affectio[n], but it is most fit for a sharpe inuective or exprobration" (48).

“crown” is quickly challenged, if not entirely negated, by the speaker’s subsequent request for reward.⁶⁰

Less obviously, repetition of the word “crown” in the three lines noted above represents the figure *antistasis*. This figure, also known as *contentio* and *refractio*, Lanham defines as “Repetition of a word in a different or contrary sense” (*Handlist* 15-16): the word “crown” does take on very different iconographic meanings in “crown of frail bays,” “thorny crown,” and “crown of glory.” Though Puttenham doesn’t use any of Lanham’s terms to describe this figure, these three occurrences of “crown” might be read as an instance of *traductio*, what he calls “the Tranlacer” (203). This figure, Puttenham says, is used “when ye turne and tranlace a word into many sundry shapes as the Tailor doth his garment” (203-4).⁶¹ The word “crown” doesn’t itself assume different forms among the three usages, but in each instance it is modified in a way that radically alters its meaning: with the addition of their respective adjectives,

⁶⁰ It is true that the kind of Calvinist grace to which the “crown of glory” seems to refer is not a reward at all, but a gift of grace that is unearned by the Christian but granted to the believer by Christ. Donne may very well intend to mean the grace that comes only by “what thy thorny crown gained” (line 7), but the Catholic idea of reward for good works is at least implicitly present. Donne may have been on the verge of taking holy orders in the Anglican church when he wrote his corona, but this does not necessarily mean that he ever managed, as John Carey has argued, wholly to shake off his Catholic habits of thought: as Carey says, Donne “could never believe that he had found in the Church of England the one true church outside which salvation was impossible” (15).

⁶¹ Peacham offers a similar definition: “Traductio,” he says, “is a forme of speech which repeateth one word often times in one sentence, making the oration more pleasant to the eare” (49).

these three crowns represent poetic achievement, Christ's Crucifixion, and eternal life. Donne's insistent repetition of the word "crown" does much more than draw attention to the corona's form and the poem's substantive correspondence with it. Repetition is also an example of rhetorical amplification, in this case, amplification that is served by "the Tranlacer": the rewards these various crowns represent become progressively higher, beginning with poetic achievement, moving on to Christ's selfless sacrifice, and ending with the greatest reward of all, the "crown of glory."

In contrast, Wroth uses the word "crown" only three times, and never in the same poem. In the prayer-like sonnet that precedes Wroth's corona, the speaker offers to "give a crowne unto thy endless prayse" (P76, line 12), a line that does resemble Donne's opening "*Deign at my hand this crown of prayer and praise.*" The similarities, however, stop here. Unlike Donne, Wroth does not explicitly and repeatedly draw attention to her corona's form. The word "crown" is not repeated multiple times within the corona itself, but appears only twice, in Sonnet 10's declaration that "love ruler must / Bee of the state which crowne hee long hath worne" (P86 lines 5-6) and in the penultimate line of the corona's penultimate poem. In the latter instance, the speaker addresses the "King of Love," offering to him "This crowne, my self, and all that I have more" (P89, line 13). By contrast, the speaker of Donne's sonnet isn't much interested in self-sacrifice: he offers not "my self, and all that I have" as Wroth's speaker does, but only the crown that is his poetic product — a product he believes is fairly exchangeable for an actual "crown of glory."

The word “crown” appears twice more in the next line of Donne’s opening sonnet, “The ends crown our works, but thou crown’st our ends” (line 9). Repetition in this line marks the appearance of the rhetorical figure *antimetabole*, the inherently circular figure Pembroke uses so skilfully in her *Psalms*. As a circular figure, *antimetabole* mimics the overall form of the corona to which the line explicitly refers. Apart from the opening definite article, the line both starts and stops with the word “ends”; the line’s ending brings us back to its beginning, as the figure always does. It may seem odd that Donne chooses the word “ends” if his aim is to suggest circularity and thus eternity. But, in Christian terms, one’s end always marks a beginning, just as the divine circle “is an apt representation of the Being who is at once Alpha and Omega” (Fischler 171). This is a paradox of faith not so different from sorrow and joy, and it is one that Donne’s speaker further refers to in the sonnet’s later use of *syneciosis*. The figure Puttenham calls “the Crosse copling” is found in the phrase “This first last end” (line 11), which also refers to the corona’s form. As it should, the circular sequence ends with the imperative to “*Deign at my hands this crown of prayer and praise*” with which it begins: it is also a “first last end.” The end of his corona, like the end of a Christian’s earthly life and like the circle of the divine, also marks a beginning. Donne’s use of the rhetorical figures *antimetabole* and *syneciosis* closely corresponds with both the corona’s form and the sonnet’s content.

Donne’s rhetorical expertise is indisputable, and he uses that expertise in a way that very much serves his poetic and expressive purpose. This sonnet alone uses many

rhetorical figures to impressive effect: also noteworthy are the repeated use of the figure *syneciosis*, found again in the speaker's description of "a strong sober thirst" (line 12), the use of *ploce* in "at our end begins our endless rest" (line 10), and the appearance of the figure *traductio*, which is more obviously apparent in the line "All changing unchanged Ancient of days" (line 4) than in the earlier example. All of these figures, like most of those discussed above, similarly work to bring together what might otherwise be irresolvable contraries: "thirst" is "sober," "rest" is "endless," and "unchanged" days are "All changing" — as with the humanist pride and despair Thomas Greene describes, these are "two faces of a single coin" (9). The opening sonnet of Donne's corona alone strongly suggests, once again, that the conceptual minimization of difference is very much enabled by the conventions of rhetoric.

In his explicitly secular verse, Donne proves himself a master of the rhetorical and logical paradox, which he usually manages to resolve in a memorable and clever, though not always entirely convincing, way. In the specifically Christian context of "*La Corona*," however, Donne's speaker seems to be doing something more than impressing with his rhetorical and poetic agility. In his corona, Donne uses these figures in a way that doesn't emphasize difference so much as occlude it, which is to some extent necessary if we are even to try to comprehend or to express what Sloan so aptly describes as "a sensed, immutable truth" (*Humanist Rhetoric* 18). Though the defining characteristic of metaphysical wit, as Samuel Johnson famously observes, is that "The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together" (678), the effect is

not quite the same here. Though the metaphysical yoking Johnson describes does draw our attention to similarities that might otherwise have gone unnoticed, the still-present differences of unlike things do seem less apparent in "*La Corona*." In the absence of Donne's trademark "violence," the more harmonious convergence of images in his crown of sonnets offers something that more closely approximates — but, of course, can never wholly achieve — the eternal oneness of the divine and the Christian ideal of "endless rest."

Wroth's corona, as I have argued, works in much the same way; it neither negates nor absolutely opposes binaries, but brings them together in a way that emphasizes similarity as much as it affirms heterogeneity. If it is true, as Wilcox suggests, that women writers of Donne's day seem "to prefer the language of relationship to that of geometry, and to use simile or even negation rather than to assert by means of metaphor" ("*Squaring the Circle*" 77), then Wroth's corona offers a clear exception to the rule. She, like Donne, uses geometrical metaphors — both the circle and the labyrinth — to realize the meeting of contraries, and, like Donne as well, she also uses many of the tools of rhetoric to achieve this end. The crucial difference between the two is, of course, most obvious in religious terms. Even though it is true that, as Alvin Sullivan claims, Donne "establishes analogies that confuse sacred and profane love" (118-19) in many of his poems, he makes it very clear in the corona that it is a Christian celebration and praise of the life and death of Christ and all that He entails. The "confusion," or what I would call the sustained

exploration of their similarities and differences, of the sacred and the profane seems more applicable to Wroth's corona than Donne's. Though she does use some specifically Christian diction and imagery, Wroth's "King of Love" is probably meant to be read as the pagan and not the Christian kind. But Wroth's work might offer enough hints to indicate that the king of her "crowne of Sonetts" may be both: it does suggest, at the very least, that Wroth imagines her pagan god of love in terms that she might know best, those of the Judeo-Christian tradition.⁶²

As much as Donne can be seen to "activate the corporeal as an expressive mechanism of devotion," as Rambuss claims many devotional poets do (17), so Wroth can be seen to activate the devotional as an expressive mechanism of earthly, and sometimes erotic, love. Perhaps this shared ability to see similarity in difference, or even in contraries, is a reflection of intellectual history in that both Wroth and Donne wrote on the eve of the so-called Cartesian divide, and were thus not so quick to read what seem to us to be impossibly contradictory things as simultaneously untenable; perhaps their shared resistance to dichotomies can be attributed to their and their era's religious habits of thought, which include paradoxes such as that Thomas F. Merrill describes as the simultaneous belief "that God is unknowable" and "that God can be

⁶² As Beilin's reading of Wroth suggests, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Wroth's depiction of the pagan God of Love might also serve as an expression of devotion to the Judeo-Christian God. Wind points out that "To Renaissance Platonists, as to Plato himself, a generous and varied use of metaphor was essential to the proper worship of the ineffable god" (218): Wroth's Neoplatonic corona might, accordingly, also represent the poet's metaphorical worship of the Christian's "ineffable god."

known" (41); alternatively, their equal engagement with binary correspondence might be explained by the fact that they both lived and wrote in a highly rhetorical culture, and that Renaissance rhetoric did teach its pupils to argue both sides of a given proposition. The answer most likely lies in the convergence of all three propositions and the similar habits of thought they engendered. From this, we might also conclude that the way rhetoric is used in both Donne's and Wroth's verse strongly suggests that thought and word are not separable, but are as interdependent as all of the other binaries their respective coronas bring together: "meaningful speech," as Vygotsky says, is always "a union of thought and word" (210-11).

Despite their revealing similarities, though, there is an important difference between these two crowns of devotion: what we might call the Christian certainty of Donne's "*La Corona*" provides a distinct contrast to the sustained ambivalence of Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts." This difference is visible not only in the content of their respective coronas, but also in the ways they use rhetoric. The rhetoric of Donne's corona, as his opening sonnet suggests, is a sustained rhetoric of certainty: his crown of devotion is overtly and explicitly rhetorical, and it draws attention to the poet's command of rhetorical and poetical technique in a variety of ways, most notably in the opening sonnet's insistent repetition of the word "crown." Wroth doesn't draw attention to her skill to the same extent. Not only in refraining from bombarding us with the repeated reminder that she has composed a crown but in other ways as well, Wroth uses rhetoric in a way that tends to resist drawing attention

to itself. This may, of course, represent another manifestation of what so many critics have identified as Wroth's "privative" impulse. I would argue, though, that Wroth's verse compares with Donne's in much the same way Pembroke's compares with Gascoigne's and Wyatt's: as Ferry suggests, in the opening sonnet of Donne's corona, the speaker's is "a representative public voice," and the poem is, for the most part, a "liturgical performance" (226-27). It seems safe to say that Wroth's use of rhetoric is, like Pembroke's, less oratorical than that seen in this opening sonnet of her poetic counterpart's corona.

Certainly, the deeply mimetic quality of Wroth's verse hasn't escaped her readers. Moore, for instance, describes "Pamphilia's thought as [a] labyrinthine source of mimetic writing," and also notes that "Wroth's artifact represents perplexity even as it perplexes" (*Desiring Voices* 125). What critics haven't done is acknowledge how Wroth's poetry is, like her aunt's, both mimetic and highly rhetorical. If Pamphilia's thought is, as Moore suggests, a "labyrinthine source of mimetic writing," then the artifact her thought produces, quite nicely I think, illustrates the point Robert Parsons makes about external writing. What Parsons says I quote at length in Chapter One, but I will repeat his words again briefly. External writing, Parsons notes, "representeth unto us a mans speach, so the externall speach representeth unto us the internall speach, affection, or asseveration of the mind" (325). Though the process of translating Pamphilia's thought into external writing likely wasn't as easy for Wroth as Parsons makes it sound, the poetic product — as Wroth's readers,

including Moore, consistently acknowledge — does represent (in a comprehensible way) the “internall speach, affection, or asseveration of the mind.” At the same time, what appears to be her greater reticence at calling attention to her own rhetorical mastery might be read as this poet’s unstated recognition that rhetoric does not and cannot offer an infallible formula for easy and certain expression.

It may be that Donne’s poem is more overtly rhetorical than Wroth’s corona because Donne would almost certainly have had a great deal more rhetorical training than any of his female counterparts. Accordingly, we might argue that Donne’s use of rhetoric had become second nature to the extent that he wasn’t always fully aware of just how much he was drawing on its conventions when writing his verse. This may very well be true, but such an argument isn’t very convincing. It is difficult to believe that someone who also wrote the sermons he did, and whose verse in many ways exhibits a desire to persuade and to impress, wasn’t always fully aware of what he was doing — of all the Jacobean poets, Donne is perhaps the most artful. We might argue, too, that Wroth’s use of rhetoric is more subdued because she lacked rigorous formal training in the discipline, that is, that she is tenuous rather than bold in using rhetoric because she is a woman. On the other hand, we might also contend that Wroth knew rhetoric well enough to see how it could serve poetic expression without overshadowing it. The latter hypothesis would grant Wroth a very high degree of poetic and rhetorical expertise indeed, and suggest that although her verse

may seem quite different from that of her male contemporaries, she is no less accomplished as a poet and a rhetor.

This is not to say that Wroth's critics do not recognize that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* has its own poetic value or that they don't acknowledge that the influence of rhetoric isn't discernible in Wroth's verse: what they most often fail to do is explore their recognition in any meaningful way. Quilligan, for example, specifically mentions rhetorical figures in her comparison of Wroth's and Donne's poetry, and notes that Donne's "The Canonization" is "bristling with chiasmus and zeugma" (43). She does no more than mention these figures in passing, however, and she doesn't stop to consider how they might serve Donne's expressive purpose. Tellingly, this is also the only time Quilligan uses rhetorical terms: rhetoric in Wroth's verse goes unmentioned, even in passing. Beilin, too, fleetingly suggests that Wroth may be participating in the rhetorical tradition when she notes that, in writing a Petrarchan sonnet sequence, she also uses "the male wooer's rhetoric and imagery of passion, praise, desire, guilt, despair, and fulfillment" ("Constancy" 229). Though Beilin does go on to show how Wroth adapts male sonneteering conventions, she doesn't again bring up rhetoric even though rhetoric in male-authored sonnet sequences has often been a topic of literary criticism.⁶³ Similarly, Waller describes the

⁶³ See, for example, Sullivan's article "Donne's Sophistry and Certain Renaissance Books of Logic and Rhetoric," the collection of essays titled *The Rhetoric of Renaissance Poetry from Wyatt to Milton* (Ed. Thomas O. Sloan and Raymond B.

sequence's "rhetorical smoothness and lyric grace," mentions that the "I" of the speaker is a "rhetorical and psychological device," and later asserts that that voice is "rhetorically confrontational" (*Family Romance* 194, 197, 198). Like Beilin, though, Waller doesn't go on to explain what he means by these descriptions, nor does he discuss the particulars of Wroth's use of rhetoric.

Miller also alludes to rhetorical influence when she argues that Wroth's speaker navigates the labyrinth from its margins to its heart "until her experience enables her to command her own rhetoric of love" ("Rewriting Lyric Fictions" 304). Pamphilia's rhetorical inclinations don't, however, establish her as a participant in the larger scheme of things. Rather, her "rhetoric of love" is defined in opposition to that of male rhetorical culture: Pamphilia, Miller also argues, rejects "the egocentrism of masculine rhetoric" (296). Miller's word choices, like those of the critics noted above, seem to indicate her recognition that Wroth was a part of the highly rhetorical culture in which she lived, and that rhetoric must have had some influence on her own work. However, she doesn't elaborate on or illustrate her claims about rhetoric. Miller's stated aim is to show how Pamphilia speaks "as a woman cognizant of the shared female experience of suffering for love" (296), and a rhetorical discussion might very well help her argument along, since it concerns speech and focusses on showing how that speech minimizes gender distinctions through women's equal suffering.

Waddington), Brian Vickers's *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry*, Paula Payne's essay, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in Sidney's Eighth Song," and John Porter Houston's *The Rhetoric of Poetry in the Renaissance and Seventeenth Century* to name only a few.

Yet Miller — like Beilin, Quilligan, and Waller — never actually discusses rhetoric. This neglect is, I believe, at least partly attributable to her use of the term in a way that would not have been meaningful to someone living in Jacobean England. This critic's somewhat dismissive use of "rhetoric" occludes both its importance in its literary and cultural milieu and overlooks the usefulness of a rhetorical approach to reading early modern writing. This is not to say that Miller is alone. On the contrary, she uses the term as many literary critics do, in a way that seems indifferent to its history: in current critical discourse, rhetoric seems to mean something closer to "ideology" than it does to early modern conceptions of the term. Wroth's critics thus miss some exciting opportunities to consider the ways in which her verse might be actively participating in rhetorical culture. These opportunities are missed, it seems safe to say, because that culture is most often misconceived as the exclusive province of men and because our assumptions about women's lives in early modern England include the belief that women knew little or nothing about rhetoric. Like the *Psalmes* of her aunt, Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts" tells a story very different from the one heretofore told — or, rather, not told — about women's poetry and rhetoric.

Chapter Four

Persuasion and Praise in Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*

Printed in London in 1611, Aemilia Lanyer's poetic retelling of Christ's Passion appeared a dozen years after the scribal publication of the Countess of Pembroke's *Psalmes*.¹ Like Pembroke's "translations," Lanyer's central poem reinterprets and rewrites some familiar biblical texts and, although the *Salve* is perhaps more daring in its revisionism, it is also explicitly devotional. That Lanyer admired Pembroke's work she makes clear in her dedicatory poem "The Authors Dreame to the Ladie Marie, the Countesse Dowager of *Pembrooke*," where she praises the "holy Sonnets" (line 121) that merit inscription "in th'eternall booke / Of endlesse honour" (lines 127-28). As do most of her contemporaries, Lanyer also acknowledges "great

¹ Barbara Lewalski notes that *Salve Deus* "was entered in the Stationers' Register on October 2, 1610, by the bookseller Richard Bonian," and that it was "issued twice in 1611." Lewalski also speculates that the cash-strapped Lanyer didn't linger in publishing her work, and suggests that her "poems were probably written within a year or two of that date" (*Writing Women* 218).

Pembroke to be "Sister to valiant *Sidney*" (lines 137-38). In Lanyer's poem, however, Pembroke does not play her usual role as second fiddle to her brother but, the speaker insists, "farre before him is to be esteemd / For virtue, wisdom, learning, dignity" (lines 151-52). Pembroke's work is, apparently, to be esteemed above Lanyer's as well: the countess's "sugar," this poet maintains, is "more rare" and "more finer" than her own metaphorical "hony" (lines 195-98). At the same time as she asserts Pembroke's poetic superiority, though, Lanyer works to establish a close correspondence between her volume and those "higher priz'd" *Psalmes*: she does so by reminding her reader that her offering is not only equally sweet, it "is both wholesome, and delights the taste" (lines 197-98).

Lady Mary Wroth is not acknowledged in Lanyer's volume, most likely because the latter's poetry was published a decade before *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* appeared with the *Urania*. It is possible that Wroth's sonnet sequence was written before *Salve Deus*, but the years that separate their publication make it unlikely that Pembroke's niece had any poetic influence on a writer who was also twenty years her senior. The *Salve*, in fact, seems to share much less with Wroth's poetry than it does with Pembroke's *Psalmes*. Though Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts" is arguably more focussed on the sacred than her readers tend to acknowledge, and the sacred story Lanyer tells in *Salve Deus* is not without a secular agenda, it does seem fair to say that the latter's explicitly devotional verse is radically different from Wroth's overtly Petrarchan sequence. Indeed, the parallels between these women writers are perhaps

more biographical than poetic. Though not an aristocrat, Lanyer also moved in courtly circles, and her liaison with Elizabeth's Lord Chamberlain, like Mary Wroth's relationship with William Herbert, resulted in the birth of a child — in this case one who was spared illegitimacy by Lanyer's arranged marriage "for collour" to court musician Alfonso Lanyer.²

² This quotation comes from the diary of Simon Forman, an astrologer and consultant whom Lanyer visited a number of times. Much of the evidence about Lanyer's life comes this source (Lewalski, for one, quotes at length from Forman's diary; see *Writing Women* 214-17). Lanyer's relationship with Henry Cary, Lord Hunsdon and the reasons for her marriage are widely accepted by Lanyer scholars, but her behaviour — unlike Wroth's — seems to have attracted little attention in her day. There seems to be no extant record of Lanyer's having been morally castigated by her contemporaries; though it is true that Lanyer also did not write a social exposé in the guise of a romance, the evident lack of moral censure probably had more to do with Lanyer's lesser social status than with the nature of her writing. Lanyer has, however, become the focus of scandal in more recent years, largely because of A.L. Rowse's identification of her as the elusive female addressee of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Posited in his now infamous 1978 book, *The Poems of Shakespeare's Dark Lady*, Rowse's theory has been hotly disputed and largely refuted: his argument is, as Jonathan Goldberg remarks, "everywhere belied by false syllogisms" (23). With the 1993 appearance of Susanne Woods's edition of Lanyer's verse, Lisa Schnell points out, "Lanyer's name and poetry were restored to her," an act that also put "the assassination of her character by Rowse quite firmly behind her" ("Breaking" 77). In a recently published collection of essays on Lanyer, David Bevington offers the most thorough challenge to Rowse's argument and to his historical and critical procedure. Rowse's evidence might not be very convincing, but he has nevertheless played a crucial role in Lanyer criticism: "Simply by discovering her," Bevington points out, "Rowse has done much more for her reputation than he could have imagined possible" (10). Though it is true that much of what Rowse says is unprovable (and unconvincing) assertion, we might also pause to consider whether our vehement rejection of his thesis has to do with its improbability or with the understandable offense many critics take in response to an older scholar's obvious biases and lamentably lacking methodology. Lanyer's defenders are especially prone to object to Rowse's description of "To the Vertuous Reader" as "a piece of rampant feminism" and his suggestion that its writer was as "promiscuous and false" (20) as the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* — it probably doesn't help, either, that Rowse patronizingly refers to Lanyer as "Emilia" throughout

More than these poetic and biographical similarities, Lanyer shared with Pembroke and Wroth the benefits of an education that at least approached those enjoyed by the Sidney women. In her most recent account of Lanyer's life, Susanne Woods proposes that Lanyer most likely received her education while in the service of Susan Bertie, the dedicatee of Lanyer's "To the Ladie *Susan*, Countesse Dowager of Kent, and Daughter to the Duchesse of Suffolke." Woods speculates that Lanyer may have entered Bertie's household soon after the death of her own father in 1576, and "In that service," she proposes, "encountered humanist learning, probably in the manner advocated by Ascham and Wilson, and a distinctly Protestant spirituality" (*Lanyer* 9).³ It is possible, too, that Lanyer might have received some formal training in rhetoric through her association with the woman she calls "The noble guide of my ungovern'd dayes" ("To the Ladie *Susan*" line 2).

Woods certainly points to this possibility when she notes that the sons of Catherine Brandon Bertie, the woman who would later become Susan Bertie's mother

his discussion. As much as Rowse's argument is conjectural and informed by some distinctly misogynistic notions, we should remind ourselves, as Ann Baynes Coiro does, that his theory is not entirely "implausible" and that "given the connections Rowse traces, Shakespeare would have known her" (362).

³ Leeds Barroll argues that it is unlikely Lanyer spent her younger years in the same household as Susan Bertie. That she lived in Bertie's household sometime after 1576 is also unlikely, he claims, because it "is commonly assumed" that the dowager Countess of Kent was at Court during those years (33). Even if Barroll is right and Woods wrong about Lanyer's tenure with Bertie, this does not mean that Lanyer did not know Susan Bertie, nor does it prove that her "noble guide" had absolutely no influence on her. Lanyer may not have known the *Psalmes'* author either, but the Countess of Pembroke had more than a little influence on her and her work.

when she remarried, were “educated by John [sic] Wilson, whose *Rule of Reason* (1551) and *Art of Rhetorique* (1553) were written in her household” (*Lanyer* 9).⁴ That (Thomas) Wilson wrote his rhetorical guidebook while living with the very family Lanyer would join a generation later makes it more than likely that this future poet became familiar with Wilson’s work while in Bertie’s service or, at the very least, that she became somewhat familiar with the practices he advocates through her close association with Susan Bertie and her family.⁵ Lanyer’s volume certainly supports such an hypothesis. As I will go on to show, her poetry not only indicates that she was as accomplished a rhetor as Pembroke and Wroth, but also that her rhetorical style was particularly shaped by Wilson’s notions about rhetoric. Because Lanyer’s work confirms that the achievement of rhetorical expertise was not limited to women of the upper classes any more than rhetorical culture was the exclusive province of early modern men, her example is important in terms of both gender and class.

Yet, as much as these three women have in common generically, biographically, and rhetorically, Lanyer’s verse is in some ways as different from

⁴ Susan’s mother was, like Lanyer, an independently minded woman. Her story is well-known and mentioned by a number of Lanyer’s readers. Janel Mueller briefly describes Catherine Bertie as “an outspoken Protestant who went into voluntary exile under Mary Tudor, taking her children with her.” Bertie might also have provided the inspiration for *The Duchess of Malfi*: as independent as Webster’s tragic heroine, Mueller points out, Susan’s mother “had married her former steward, Richard Bertie, in an earlier notable act of self-assertion” (“Feminist Poetics” 209).

⁵ Later in her discussion, Woods does conclude that Lanyer’s “work shows clear evidence of education in the rhetorical arts consistent with training in the Protestant humanist tradition of Ascham and Wilson” (*Lanyer* 14).

Pembroke's *Psalmes* as it is from Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. This is a difference Lanyer herself identifies in her dedication to Pembroke, where she contrasts the "higher style" of "that learned damsell" with her own "unlearned lines" (lines 201-3); as Lanyer's own description suggests, the way she uses the art of rhetoric differs significantly from Pembroke's and Wroth's. This difference, I would argue, is partly one of kind and not of degree, and it is found primarily in the way the *Salve* relies more heavily on some of the larger guiding principles of rhetoric but doesn't use its more local tropes and figures in the same way as the Sidney women. Generally speaking, Lanyer's verse is as good an example of skilful rhetorical argument as it is of a poet using, to borrow Robert M. Coogan's apt description, the conventions of "microscopic rhetoric" (260). Lanyer, as she herself proclaims, may speak with "plainest Words" (*Salve Deus* line 311), but her extensive and conscious adherence to many of rhetoric's overarching principles suggests that she was well aware of its importance to any successful attempt at persuasion, be it in prose or in verse.

There are, of course, a number of influences that may account for Lanyer's stylistic choices. The comparatively low style of her verse may have much to do with her obvious class-consciousness, the ever-present awareness of difference that moves Lanyer to assume a suitably humble posture before her social superiors. Her poetry's predominant style might also mark an instance of the antirhetorical mode Kenneth Graham identifies in much of Wyatt's verse, a mode that is equally apparent in the work of some of Lanyer's contemporaries. In speaking of seventeenth-century

plainness, the writings of Ben Jonson most readily come to mind; Jonson, as we know, openly scorned the artful ingenuity of rhetorical figures. Lanyer's work is, however, perhaps best described as an example of the mixed style Erich Auerbach calls "*sermo humilis*," a style that sees "the presence of the tragic or sublime in a lowly existence depicted with the utmost realism." Auerbach finds the originating and paradigmatic example of *sermo humilis* in the "Acts of Perpetua," a first and third-person narrative of an early Christian woman's martyrdom. As with all works in the Christian mixed style, Perpetua's story "has its model, in literature as well as reality, in Christ's Passion as related in the Gospels." In the case of Lanyer's *Salve*, not only its style but also much of its content is found in the Gospels: her verse is, as Auerbach suggests it should be, an appropriate mixture of the "sublime and the lowly" (*Literary Language* 65).

It is arguable as well that the apparent differences in rhetorical emphases among these three women might have much to do with the fact that Lanyer is, as Woods puts it, "the first self-proclaimed public woman poet in English" (*Lanyer* 41). Not only in publishing what Wendy Wall calls "her direct, public, and polemical religious work" (*Imprint* 330), something Pembroke did only semi-privately in manuscript and Wroth expressly claimed to have been done against her will, but also in her self-presentation, Lanyer's volume is unique among early modern women writers. Pamela Joseph Benson has recently argued that "Lanyer was an exception even among the exceptional few Elizabethan and Jacobean women who published

their writing" ("To Play the Man" 243), and she finds that difference in Lanyer's self-publicization and the quest for patronage it implies.⁶ Despite her poetic professions to the contrary, that acquiring the support of a patron was one of Lanyer's aims seems indisputable. Because the volume's numerous dedicatory poems prefacing its central narrative of Christ's passion are addressed mostly to aristocratic and royal women, Lanyer's critics are justified in being suspicious of this poet's claim to expect no "future profit" ("To the Ladie *Susan*, Countesse Dowager of Kent, and Daughter to the Duchesse of Suffolke," line 47).⁷ "Pleading for patronage was," as Mary Ellen

⁶ Benson's argument is unique in that she discusses Lanyer's self-promotion in relation to her Italian heritage and some of the aspects of Italian culture; Lanyer was, of course, the daughter of Italian court musician Baptista Bassano. But Benson is far from being the only critic to note Lanyer's desire for patronage. Lewalski, for instance, notes that "some kind of formal patronage is implied in the dedications" ("Of God and Good Women" 206), while Mary Ellen Lamb's more recent article is more forthright about Lanyer's intent. Lanyer's volume, Lamb points out, "shows evident, even blatant, signs of its production under a patronage system," and goes on to argue that critics have unduly overlooked this poet's desire to earn financial compensation ("Patronage and Class" 38).

⁷ It seems that Lanyer faced financial difficulties from the time she married until her death: she apparently complained to Forman about her financial need, she opened and ran a school from 1617-1619 in an attempt to earn money after her husband's 1613 death, and she spent most of the 1630s in litigation with Alfonso's relatives over hay and grain patents (see Woods, *Lanyer* 3-33, for the most thorough account of her life). Because of her established need and the nature of her volume, Sharon Cadman Seelig points out, "Most readers put the number of Lanyer's dedications down to her straitened economic circumstances," and "she addresses the most prominent female members of the Jacobean court, some of them apparently well known to her, others clearly not" (49-50). Tellingly, Lanyer's dedicatees include Lucy Harrington Russell, the Countess of Bedford, who was nearly as influential a patron as the Countess of Pembroke and is well-known to us through her associations with John Donne and Ben Jonson. As suggestive of financial need as her dedications might be, we shouldn't be too quick to jump to conclusions that might have much to do

Lamb observes, “a tricky rhetorical task” (“Patronage and Class” 47) and, given that Lanyer’s writing was at least partly motivated by the possibility of monetary or social gain, it is tempting to read her rhetorical (and poetic) differences in terms of class. As enticing as such an inference might be, though, we shouldn’t hasten to conclude that Lanyer’s distinctly different use of rhetoric can be wholly explained by class distinctions.

Lanyer’s bid for patronage is, I can only agree, largely motivated by her lower class status and, concomitantly, by financial need. Yet the overtly rhetorical style of her verse cannot be explained by class issues alone: though her social standing likely had much to do with her willingness to speak in a distinctly public voice, the way

with notions we hold about gender and class; as Tina Krontiris notes, both Elizabeth Tudor and Anne Locke dedicated their translations of religious works to women, Catherine Parr and Catherine Brandon (Bertie) respectively, and the use “of multiple dedications was not uncommon” (103) — Krontiris is not the only critic to observe that Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* includes no less than seventeen dedicatory sonnets. That readings of Lanyer are informed by our own tendency to read in gendered terms is further suggested by Kari Boyd McBride in her pastoral analysis of Lanyer’s work. Among other things, the critical habit of reading in such terms is illustrated by, she notes, the frequent pointing out of “the dubiousness of the poem’s presentation of Lanyer’s close relationship with Margaret, Countess of Cumberland, and her daughter, Anne Clifford.” McBride argues that the possibility that Lanyer constructed a relationship with her primary patron is beside the point because “The purpose of the poem is to articulate poetic voice through poetic construction.” To scour the Clifford women’s extant writings for references to Lanyer only to accuse her of misrepresentation when we can’t find them arguably says more about us than it does about the poet; as McBride reminds us, this woman poet creates a “pastoral relationship” in much the same way as her male counterparts, and “Lanyer’s claim to have a relationship with these women should not necessarily drive us to biographical research (any more than we should scour the records for references to Milton’s — or Spenser’s, or Virgil’s — lost years as a shepherd)” (91).

Lanyer uses rhetoric is also determined by her comparatively bold and overtly public self-presentation. Unlike the verse of Pembroke and Wroth, this poet's public intent is clearly stated throughout her volume. For this reason, critics have been more ready to recognize her participation in rhetorical culture. Certainly, the nature of Lanyer's rhetoric likely has much to do with her subject, as Mueller seems to indicate when she describes the *Salve's* central poem as a "strongly rhetorical rehearsal of the climactic events in Christ's life" ("Feminist Poetics" 217). Reading the volume's numerous "feasts and mirrors" as evidencing Lanyer's use of "the rhetorical device of metaphor" to subvert contemporary constructions of woman ("Metaphoric Subversions" 102), Lynette McGrath suggests that Lanyer's rhetorical style is also shaped by the argument she makes. Both of these readings are important in that they point to different, but equally important, exigencies that go a long way toward explaining the poet's "plainest Words." More generally, their comments also demonstrate that literary scholars have been comparatively quick to recognize that Lanyer did command some understanding of the art of rhetoric.

The critical discussion most thoroughly grounded in early modern rhetorical theory is found in Lorna Hutson's 1992 article, where she does an impressive job showing how readings of Lanyer's poetry are (erroneously) informed by the assumption that "a 'true' poem" should not use a "rhetoric of praise" that "is in turn associated with a want of moral integrity, or chastity" (157). To assume so, Hutson argues, is to allow our preconceived notions about gender to obscure literary evidence

that strongly suggests otherwise, and to read in this way is to contradict the example of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. As she goes on to explain, Shakespeare's poems demonstrate the early modern belief "that things can only be made known in discourse by being displayed and praised" and Lanyer, a writer of her day, similarly "makes extensive use of this trope in nearly all of her nine dedicatory poems" (160). Hutson's discussion of Lanyer's verse is not only convincing, it is sensitive to this poet's rhetorical sophistication in a way that exceeds any readings that have come before or since: that sensitivity seems to include the understanding that Lanyer's rhetoric is multi-faceted, differing from the central poem in its dedications, different within separate sections of the *Salve* itself, and different again in the volume's concluding poem, "The Description of Cooke-ham." It thus seems especially revealing that Lanyer's subsequent readers don't follow Hutson's potentially fruitful lead.⁸ Instead of building on an approach Hutson's essay proved promising, critical readings have largely been limited to acknowledging that the art of rhetoric is at work in Lanyer's verse without really exploring the implications of this observation — at least not in early modern terms.⁹

⁸ Most of them do, however, cite the article Michael Schoenfeldt calls a "fine essay" ("Religious Devotion" 230 n. 7) and Kim Walker describes as "perhaps the most fascinating discussion of Lanyer's work to date" (116).

⁹ Other examples of this tendency include Brenda J. Powell's descriptions of Lanyer's "rhetorical finesse" (7), "rhetorical positioning" (9), "rhetorical flourish" (14), "rhetorical status" (16), and "rhetorical strategies" (19): in an otherwise excellent article, Powell doesn't really explain what she means by "rhetorical," nor does she undertake a rhetorical analysis of Lanyer's verse. The same is true of McBride's essay,

Lewalski, for example, refers only in passing to Lanyer's "rhetorical force and flair" ("Of God and Good Women" 212; "Re-writing Patriarchy" 102), and she arguably does herself and Lanyer a disservice when she acknowledges that the section of the poem known as "Eves Apologie" is "a rhetorical *apologia*" ("Seizing Discourses" 52) but neglects to explore the rhetorical nature of Lanyer's defence. Lewalski really misses the boat, however, when (in no less than three separate articles or chapters on Lanyer) she points out that this poet "uses rhetorical schemes — especially figures of sound, parallelism, and repetition — with considerable skill," but doesn't consider how rhetoric functions within either the form or the content of Lanyer's verse ("Of God and Good Women" 213; *Writing Women* 227; "Seizing Discourses" 53). As much as I admire Lewalski's work and appreciate the many contributions she has made to our understanding of early modern poetry, it is telling that she thrice misses the opportunity to use an invaluable approach to reading this particular poet's verse.

In his article on Lanyer, Boyd Berry proposes to discuss her central poem's "rhetorical textures" and quite convincingly identifies the *Salve*'s "fundamental rhetorical strategy" of digression (212). Later, Berry mentions the poem's "time-centered rhetorical structure" (214), talks about the Lanyer's use of the "rhetorical 'I'" (220), and uses the term "rhetorical havoc" to describe the representation of "evil-speakers" in both *Salve Deus* and the volume's concluding celebration of Cookeham

where she seems right to argue that "Lanyer's rhetoric of patronage subverts the traditional motifs of epideictic" ("Sacred Celebration" 64) but doesn't draw on contemporary rhetorical theory to make her case.

(227). Much to his credit, Berry is quite clear on what he means by “digression,” and he is careful to distinguish the concept from Patricia Parker’s notions of “dilation” (213). At the same time, though, in an article that claims to explore the rhetoric of Lanyer’s verse, Berry doesn’t discuss contemporary concepts of rhetorical digression, nor does he ever really get down to the business of analyzing Lanyer’s work in early modern rhetorical terms.¹⁰ This seems like an especially unfortunate neglect, since the rhetorical technique of *digressio* (also known as *parecbasis*, *excursus*, and *egressio*) is taken up in not only in the work Cicero and Erasmus but also in the more popular and accessible discussions of Wilson, Puttenham, and Peacham (See Sonnino 73-74) that Lanyer would have been more likely to read. In fact, it seems fair to say that Berry’s article is more about narrative strategies than it is about how Lanyer uses rhetoric to persuasive effect.

Lanyer’s editor seems more rhetorically aware in her recent book on the poet. Focussing especially on the prose dedications “To the Lady *Margaret*” and “To the Vertuous Reader,” Woods points to some of the Ciceronian features of Lanyer’s writing, and she also discusses the rhetorical arrangement of *Salve Deus* as a whole.

¹⁰ Berry says that he defines rhetoric as the way in which words are used by persons to treat persons, and explains that this definition is “informed by an acute sense of the *polysemous* nature of language and hence of all rhetorical performance.” His discussion of Lanyer’s rhetorical “insubordination” is engaging and illuminating, but his approach — as his poststructuralist definition suggests — doesn’t take up early modern notions about rhetoric’s nature and function. To an extent, then, Berry’s reading doesn’t wholly avoid the abstracted kind of formalism he explicitly rejects in maintaining that the aim of his project is not “New Critical” (229 n. 4).

More than simply asserting the presence of that arrangement, she does show how the narrative poem's "structure loosely matches the parts of oration described by Wilson" (*Lanyer* 11-12). Woods is ready and able to note that Lanyer's work shows her to be "at ease with rhetorical figures and constructions" (11). Yet Woods does stop short of engaging in meaningful rhetorical analysis even though she is quick to acknowledge that this woman writer does demonstrate a degree of familiarity with the art of rhetoric. Though seemingly more at ease herself with rhetorical terms and conventions than many of Lanyer's critics, Woods doesn't really move beyond noting the presence of rhetorical features in the *Salve* and thus she, too, misses her own proffered opportunity to consider how Lanyer may be using rhetorical technique to poetic and persuasive advantage.

Rhetorical readings of Lanyer's verse may be so far limited, but it is nevertheless refreshing to see critics willing to recognize, however obliquely or explicitly, an early modern woman poet's participation in rhetorical culture. At the same time, though, that readiness seems rather ironic, especially when compared with the general reluctance to discuss Pembroke's and Wroth's work in rhetorical terms and the prevailing tendency to explain Lanyer's choices in terms of class. Their willingness to identify Lanyer's verse as rhetorical may very well have something to do with the financial motives critics repeatedly identify, motives that come with an implied desire to inspire benevolent action. Yet, the fact that so many critics mention rhetoric when discussing Lanyer's verse also suggests that they may, to some extent,

suspect that this middle-class poet might have received a more thorough (or more formal) early modern education than the aristocratic Sidney women: that so many critics likewise miss opportunities to engage in something more than simple observation suggests, at the same time, that we may be reluctant to believe that this might be the case.

To be sure, Lanyer criticism has come a long way in the dozen years that passed between Lewalski's apologetic description of the *Salve's* "real, if modest, poetic merit" ("Of God and Good Women" 203) and Judith Scherer Herz's relatively recent affirmation of Lanyer's "considerable generic and metrical competence" (122), yet it still seems doubtful that her admirers would knowingly or intentionally claim that a non-aristocratic writer like Lanyer might have been better educated than the Sidney women. Ann Baynes Coiro is right to observe that the recent recovery of many long-neglected writers into the literary canon has effected "a series of subtle and radical shifts in our assumptions about Renaissance and seventeenth-century literature and culture," but she is equally right to point out that we have yet to question "our still-lingering sense of Renaissance writing as somehow aristocratic" (357). Though Coiro wrote these words almost a decade ago, that Lanyer's critics are as reluctant as they are eager to discuss her work in rhetorical terms implies that we do tend to assume the early modern upper classes to be more capable than their social subordinates.¹¹

¹¹ This tendency can be detected in discussions of other women writers as well. In her analysis of Bathsua Makin's *An Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen* (1673), Donawerth not only registers a degree of surprise at the extent

Lanyer's rhetorical expertise strongly suggests that we need to question that assumption, not only for women writers but also for their male counterparts. The reluctance of critics to hold middle-class poets in as high regard as their social superiors is perhaps as prevalent when it comes to men's writing: the example of the long overshadowed and working-class Jonson, for instance, strongly suggests that this might be the case.

Such an assumption might, at least in part, explain why no one has yet undertaken a thorough rhetorical analysis of Lanyer's highly rhetorical verse: to put it more bluntly, that she was not aristocratic may have much to do with the critical hesitation in attempting to identify her role in the history of rhetoric.¹² Again, I will point out that we have much to gain by reminding ourselves of rhetoric's ubiquity and to acknowledge that the role it played (and continues to play) in shaping the means and the nature of literary production is universal and profound. As Woods points out elsewhere, Lanyer's verse may be unique, but her "poem does not exist in a

of Makin's rhetorical expertise, but also identifies the *Essay's* plea to revive the previous century's experiments in female education as a myth of Makin's own making. "Most women were not rigorously educated," Donawerth remarks, and "certainly not women of Makin's class" (263). Contrary to what Donawerth asserts, Lanyer's example shows that at least some women of Makin's class, in the sixteenth century, certainly were rigorously educated.

¹² This neglect, in other words, says more about us than it does about Lanyer and the historical place of her work. Herz suggests as much when she notes that literary history, "despite often heroic attempts to make the past speak in the accents of the past," has always depended on the "practice of anachronism, of reading backward" (123). In Lanyer's case, we read her verse with Rowse's distinctly misogynistic and, I would add, rather snobbish introduction to her work pushing us.

poetic vacuum, nor does she give her women power as if no poet had even done so before" ("Women at the Margins" 108). Both in formalist and literary-historical terms, reading Renaissance writing in general and Lanyer's poetry in particular through the lens of early modern rhetoric has much to offer: doing so would, I think, make some already excellent readings of the *Salve* even more enlightening.

The reluctance of critics to adopt a genuinely rhetorical approach to reading Lanyer's volume might also have something to do with its substance. Lanyer's choice of subject, Christ's Passion, is an unusual one.¹³ But Lanyer's *Salve* also differs from the writings of her male contemporaries (and, I might add, from the Sidney women's psalms and sonnets) in that it is expressly written about and for women. As Woods points out, Lanyer uses her book "to construct an identity as a woman poet and a woman's poet" (*Lanyer* 33); her work, Naomi J. Miller explains, thus stands out as "a remarkable choice at a time when the few women who published tended either to apologize for their effrontery in presuming to use their voices, or to discount the value of their words" ("Maternity and Subjectivity" 145). Lanyer's reimagining of the

¹³ Debora Shuger points out that there were only a "dozen or so passion narratives published in England between 1550 and 1650," a figure that includes translations (*Bible* 89). It seems arguable that Lanyer chose this rather uncommon subject partly because of its subversive potential. As Shuger goes on to explain, the story of Christ's passion had become in the largely Calvinist culture of the sixteenth century what she describes as "end myth." Having lost the cultural significance it held in the Middle Ages, the end myth, she says, "does not validate traditional symbols but discloses their inadequacy to provide moral coherence, stable boundaries between right and wrong, strategies for escaping dread" (*Bible* 90). Seen in Shuger's terms, the Passion story was ripe for rewriting and reinterpretation in Jacobean England.

Passion is prefaced by numerous dedications, in both prose and verse, that are addressed exclusively to women, the volume's central narrative is addressed primarily to the Countess of Cumberland, and the book as a whole is intensely focussed on showing how women's virtue is synonymous with Christ's.¹⁴ Throughout her reimagining of Christ's Passion, Lanyer foregrounds woman's crucial and exemplary role as the embodiment of Christian virtue and, as Wall puts it, "the instruments of God sent out to counter sinful men" (*Imprint* 60). For very good reasons, most of Lanyer's recent readers follow Lewalski's lead in reading *Salve Deus* as a "Book of Good Women" ("Of God and Good Women" 207; "Re-writing Patriarchy" 102), a

¹⁴ Lanyer also points out the importance of women to Christ in the last of her dedications, "To the Vertuous Reader." In it, she points out that the Saviour was "begotten of a woman, borne of a woman, nourished of a woman, obedient to a woman; and that he healed woman, pardoned women, comforted women: yea, even when he was in his greatest agonie and bloodie sweat, going to be crucified, and also in the last houre of his death, tooke care to dispose of a woman: after his resurrection, appeared first to a woman, sent a woman to declare his most glorious resurrection to the rest of his Disciples" (lines 43-50). What is noteworthy here is not only what Lanyer says about women, but also the way that she rhetorically emphasizes the subject of her argument, women, using the figures of repetition *antistrophe* and *conduplicatio*. Lanyer doesn't stop here, though, but claims that she could also muster numerous examples of "divers faithfull and virtuous women" who have lived "in all ages" (lines 51-52). Seelig is thus quite right to describe the passage above as "a highly rhetorical elevation of women" (56): like many of Lanyer's readers, however, Seelig recognizes that rhetoric is indeed at work in Lanyer's writings but, like her other readers as well, she doesn't explain how rhetoric helps to achieve this end. Louise Schleiner's essay on Lanyer's "Epistle" perhaps comes closest to rhetorical analysis. Drawing on the work of Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, Schleiner uses the related tools of discourse analysis to show how Lanyer's dedication participates in the *querelle des femmes* tradition and, by pointing out the syntactic and lexical similarities her epistle shares with Jane Anger's *A Protection for Women* (1589), shows how this particular dedication is not only substantively but also generically a defence of women.

description that clearly doesn't apply either to Pembroke's *Psalmes* or to Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*.

Given her own explicit emphasis on gender difference, Lanyer's example seems to counter the argument against privileging gender in reading women writers that I have been making all along. Gender issues do seem more important (or at least more obvious) in the *Salve* than in the work of other Elizabethan and Jacobean women poets, Pembroke and Wroth included. Yet the fact that a central purpose of Lanyer's volume, as Jacqueline Pearson puts it, is "to celebrate and legitimize women's roles as both writers and readers" (45), doesn't also mean that we must necessarily read Lanyer's work biographically — nor, I would add, does Lanyer's foregrounding of gender mean that we must read her poetry as distinctly feminine in its form or in its means of argument. Just because the female gender is more substantively visible in Lanyer's poetry doesn't also mean that her poetic style and her rhetorical technique, even though they may be used to foreground gender issues, are somehow distinctively or uniquely "feminine."

Woods makes a similar point about Lanyer's use of the *humilitas* topos: "By collapsing her unworthiness as a woman into the general unworthiness all poets must acknowledge in their dedications to the high born," Woods argues, "she renders the happenstance of gender as visible as, and as ultimately inconsequential as, the male poet's happenstance of birth" ("Introduction" xxxiii). I would follow Woods's lead here and argue that Lanyer's use of rhetoric — rhetoric used by, about, and for

women — may make gender issues very visible but, at the same time, also makes gender ultimately inconsequential — inconsequential in that, by attempting to prove her argument, she proves herself to be no less capable a rhetor than her male counterparts. Lanyer's poetry, in fact, shares much with that of many of her male contemporaries and antecedents, especially in its practice of a style that collapses distinctions between high and low. In its ready familiarity with stylistic and rhetorical techniques used by theologians, poets, and orators alike — professions we most readily associate with early modern men — *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* does much to blur the kinds of gender distinctions its content might encourage us to make.

In a work as extensive as the *Salve*, attempting a thorough analysis of its use of rhetoric would be an enormous undertaking, a task impossible to perform adequately in a single chapter. I will thus focus, as I have in my discussions of Pembroke and Wroth, on sections and features of the volume that seem especially useful in identifying the nature of Lanyer's contribution to rhetorical culture. Beginning with her oft-anthologized "Eves Apologie," I will show how Lanyer's use of rhetoric evinces her thorough understanding of its importance to any linguistic act of persuasion. The apology is especially useful in that it offers a lucid illustration of this poet's more general reliance on rhetorical strategies that are most aptly described as oratorical: this tendency, I will show, is particularly obvious in the way Pilate's wife uses the "artificial proofs" of rhetoric to make her argument. Next, I will relate my discussion of Lanyer's use of rhetorical proof in "Eves Apologie" to some other, larger

issues that I have considered in earlier chapters. These issues include the relationship of logic and rhetoric, the possible influence of Ramism, and the nature of the apology's invention. This section will conclude by reconsidering the critical tendency to categorize Lanyer's verse as epideictic rhetoric: using "Eves Apologie" to show how both it and the *Salve* as a whole represent not one but all three rhetorical species, I will argue that the tendency to read Lanyer's volume as poetry of praise is informed by a related tendency to focus on the ways that women writers are deprived before considering how they might be enabled.

Following these discussions of a particular section of the *Salve*, I will then consider the poem's more general concern with the rhetorical practice of decorum. I do so not to reaffirm Lanyer's necessary deference to her social superiors, however, so much as I aim to show how this guiding principle of early modern poetry and rhetoric, though very much about appropriateness, is also crucial to the efficacy of this (or any) rhetor's argument. The chapter will conclude with a section that considers some formal and substantive features of Lanyer's work in relation to that of her contemporary, George Herbert. Here, I will point to some of the ways these two poets similarly rely on the art of rhetoric in their respective attempts to achieve the poetic ideal Lanyer describes as the "equall sov'raigntie" of art and nature ("The Authors Dreame" line 93), and suggest that they equally confirm, with Peacham, that the inventions of eloquence "are in vse sweete, in nature necessarie, both for the search of truth and for the direction of humane life" (sig. AB2^v). My aim throughout

this chapter is not only to demonstrate that this non-aristocratic woman played an active role in shaping her era's highly rhetorical culture, but also to give some indication of the extent of Lanyer's familiarity with the art of poets and rhetors and, in the process, to show how this particular poet's use of rhetoric enables the expression of sacred devotion even as it provides the means for making her secular argument.

I. Proving Woman's Worth

I begin my discussion of Lanyer's volume *in medias res* for several reasons. First, "Eves Apologie" is not only a notable exception to Lanyer's "biblical literalism" (Mueller, "Feminist Poetics" 218), it is also the place where her persuasive intent is most clear.¹⁵ As an apology in the early modern sense, "Eves Apologie" is a defence of women; as an *apologia* in the rhetorical sense, it offers an especially lucid example of a

¹⁵ I refer to the passage that includes lines 745-840, even though the text's marginal gloss indicates that "Eves Apologie" begins later, at line 761. Here, I follow the lead of Alastair Fowler in his anthology, *Seventeenth Century Verse* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), which excerpts the passage that begins with "Now Pontius Pilate is to judge the cause" and ends with "For thy soul's health to shed his dearest blood" (lines 745-840). That Fowler's decision seems to be the right one is affirmed by the most recent Norton (2001) and Longman (1999) anthologies, both of which excerpt the same lines. It seems reasonable to do so, since the opening line of this passage offers the first mention of Pilate and also signals an introductory segue with "Now." Beginning with this line also allows us to see the connection between the narrational "now" and the argumentative "now" that appears two stanzas later, in what the text identifies as the opening line of "Eves Apologie," "Till now your indiscretion sets us free" (line 761).

woman poet using, with considerable finesse, her ability “to see the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric* 1.2.1; Kennedy 36). The entire narrative poem, it is true, is driven by an argument that aims to affirm the moral and spiritual superiority of women and thus to deny the necessity of their subordination.¹⁶ In a uniquely protofeminist volume, though, “Eves Apologie” stands out in that it presents the *Salve*’s most forceful — and hence most overtly rhetorical — challenge to Christian orthodoxy; as Achsah Guibbory says, the apology’s vehemently revisionist exegesis argues that both the speaker and the poet “have not only interpretive power but the right and responsibility to speak publicly” (199).¹⁷

¹⁶ Such a reading was suggested by Lewalski in her 1985 article, where she points to the volume’s “considerable intrinsic interest as a defence and celebration of good women and of Lanyer herself as woman poet” (“Of God and Good Women” 203). The *Salve*’s subsequent readers certainly agree with Lewalski, but have refined her rather modest evaluation of Lanyer’s interest to the point where she has, as Schnell puts it, become “a poster girl of sorts not just for women of the early seventeenth century but also for us” (“Feminist Criticism” 26).

¹⁷ I use the term “protofeminist” to acknowledge historical distance, even though there is much evidence to suggest that Lanyer can be read as a feminist in the twentieth-century sense. Both McGrath and Mueller argue in favour of Lanyer’s feminism, and they do so partly in response to Beilin’s insistence that Lanyer cannot be a feminist because she “assumes that men control society, art and the worldly destiny of women, including herself” (*Redeeming* 320 n. 11) and partly, as McGrath puts it, “to specify the terms according to which it has meaning for this early 17th-century poem” (“Feminist Voice” 332). Mueller explains what she means in using the term to describe both Christine de Pisan and Aemilia Lanyer: “By calling both *feminist*,” she writes, “I mean that they explicitly confront misogyny and the injustices of male domination and prerogative in their writings, working to counter these with alternative, women-centered constructions” (“Feminist Poetics” 212). Krontiris likewise argues that Lanyer is not necessarily “consistent in her feminist voice,” but that she can be called a feminist “in a historically specific sense” (118). Whatever term we might choose to describe Lanyer and however we describe her intentions, it seems

Second, because "Eves Apologie" is also more intensely focussed on gender issues than any other section of the *Salve*, it is a particularly useful place from which to demonstrate that the woman poet's understanding of rhetoric is not correspondingly gendered. "Eves Apologie" thus offers an especially salient illustration of the argument I have been making all along, that is, that just because women writers may at times be concerned with issues that are exclusive to their sex, this does not also mean that they are not participants in a purportedly male rhetorical culture. As much as Lanyer's volume presents what Marshall Grossman describes as "a specific resistance to the recollection of the past as *history*" ("The Gendering of Genre" 140), it also presents a specific resistance to our tendency to read women's writing in distinctly feminine terms. Lanyer's *apologia* strongly suggests that, no matter how "feminine" the substance, women writers engage in rhetorical argument in much the same way as their male counterparts — the "*history*" of rhetoric is "*herstory*," too.

Finally, "Eves Apologie" is a useful place to start because it exemplifies how Lanyer uses the art of rhetoric to persuasive advantage throughout the volume known as *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. As I noted above, Lanyer's text as a whole is as concerned with the larger guiding principles of rhetorical argument as it is with the mimetic possibilities of "microscopic rhetoric." This is not to say that Lanyer in any way avoids the colours of rhetoric: on the contrary, there is scarcely a stanza in her

indisputable that she was very much motivated by a desire to redeem her sex.

entire volume that doesn't use rhetorical figures. Most often, though, Lanyer uses repetition in her verse; figures such as *anaphora*, *polysyndeton*, *diacope*, and *conduplicatio* appear with notable frequency, and they far outnumber other kinds of figures.¹⁸ All of these are used in a way that seems designed to arouse the audience's emotions, convey the speaker's vehemence, and affirm the severity of the crime Christ's persecutors commit. Lanyer's use of other kinds of figures, such as the *ecphronesis* of "Oh hatefull houre! oh blest! oh cursed day! (line 472) and the *syneciosis* of the Passion's "joyfull sorrow" (line 912), all work toward the same end, generating a persuasive force that cannot, in this case, be read as exclusively masculine.

Missing from Lanyer's volume, however, are the numerous and subtle appearances of figures such as *antimetabole* and *zeugma* that play such an important role in the poetry of Pembroke and Wroth. But this distinction should not be read as evidence of Lanyer's lesser skill; rather, the rhetorical differences between her verse and that of the Sidney women have more to do with these poets' very different aims.

¹⁸ Examples of these found in *Salve Deus* proper include the *anaphora* of stanzas nine, seventeen, sixty-four, one hundred forty-six, and one hundred eighty (lines 65-68, 132-36, 505-12, 1161-68, and 1433-38); the alliteration of descriptions such as "dark daies" (line 55), "fearefull fiery flames" (line 91), "wondrous works" (line 148), and "tyrant Time" (line 187); the *polysyndeton* of "What colour, what excuse, or what amends" (line 421), "with Swords, with Staves, with Bils" (line 489), "their powres, their wits, their strengths" (line 549), and "their Lord, their Lover, and their King" (line 982); the similar *diacope* of "Not my will, but thy will" and "his Will, not thy Will" (lines 401 and 409) as well as that apparent in "Mildnesse doth what doth to Wrath belong" (line 584); the *conduplicatio* of "a Tombe, a Tombe" (line 1277); and the *brachiologia* that appear in lists such as "Speare, Sponge, Nailes" (line 262), "whipping, spurning, tearing" (line 1000), and "Husband, Father, Saviour, King" (line 1022).

Part of Lanyer's aim is, of course, to persuade her readers of the rightness of her argument on woman's behalf, a purpose that frequent and forceful repetition serves. In relation to the story of Christ's Passion, though, Lanyer's use of rhetorical figures can be read as having a purpose that is more mimetic than persuasive. Though the figures she tends to use carry more argumentative force, they are also more plain and less elaborate than those on which Pembroke and Wroth, for the most part, rely: this, I would suggest, is because Lanyer's poem aims to represent Christ's own humility as much as it strives to persuade. This poet's distinctly rhetorical style, then, can be explained by the nature of her sacred subject and by the importance of her secular argument; she chooses to use certain rhetorical techniques because her poem encompasses secular persuasion and sacred representation.

The *Salve's* centrepiece appears within the larger narrative of Christ's passion, and it expands significantly on the brief mention of Pilate's wife found in the Gospels (Matt. 27:19). In the Geneva Bible, the passage reads as follows:

Also when he [i.e., Pilate] was set downe
upon the judgement seat, his wife sent to
him, saying, Have thou nothing to do
with that juste man: for I have suffered
many things this day in a dream by reason
of him. (qtd. in Campbell 2)

Lanyer's dramatized reimagining of the Roman woman's attempt to dissuade her husband from sentencing Christ to death is, as Guibbory says, "her most original and startling addition to the narrative of the Crucifixion" (198). Significant it may be, but Pilate's wife's petition on Christ's behalf is really secondary to the defence of her biblical progenitor, the primal woman who had long been held as proof of an inherent feminine frailty and thus used to justify female subordination.¹⁹ In the apology, Pilate's wife plays the role of the orator who attempts to persuade her audience that Eve, and therefore all women, must be absolved from the taint of primary culpability for humanity's fall from grace. Pilate's wife reinforces her argument by further suggesting that Adam's fault was greater than his wife's, and she uses the example of Christ's pending Crucifixion to demonstrate that men continue to

¹⁹ I won't rehearse these arguments in detail here, but it is well known that theologians from Tertullian and Augustine onward habitually drew on Eve's story to assert woman's inferiority and the necessity of her subjection: thorough accounts of Eve's role in literary, social, and theological history include Elaine Pagels's *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* and John Philips's *Eve: The History of an Idea*. In the early modern period, Ruth Kelso points out, many believed that "The nature of woman had to be crooked for she was made from Adam's expendable rib, which, unfortunately for her, was crooked," and Eve's example was invoked by "renaissance philosophers, churchmen, courtiers, poets, and scribblers of every sort" (11). It is true that there is much evidence to suggest that not all early modern English people believed in woman's moral and social inferiority and that, as Diane Purkiss argues, the arguments of the long-standing *querelle des femmes* were often posited as part of a carnivalesque game of rhetorical jesting, but it is also likely that Eve's story held more oppressive power for women who, like Lanyer, habituated courtly circles. Woods, for one, alludes to such a conclusion when she observes that "Whatever the actual relations of the sexes in the broad sweep of English society, at court and among the would-be wits the battle was acute," partly because of James's evident homosexuality and the resulting emergence of a "relentlessly homosocial" courtly milieu (*Lanyer* 36).

commit crimes far more grievous than Eve's original sin. In fact, both "Eves Apologie" and the *Salve* as a whole insist that women have always proven more virtuous than men: in the apology itself, it is this premise that leads Pilate's wife to the conclusion that women deserve liberty, equality, and freedom from male tyranny.

Rhetoric is the poet's and her speaker's persuasive instrument. That this is the case is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in the apology's demonstrable reliance on what rhetorician Richard Lanham calls the "artificial proofs" (166) of persuasion, that is, the Aristotelian triplet of ethos, pathos, and logos.²⁰ It is, of course, unlikely that Lanyer knew Aristotle directly, but his influence is nevertheless everywhere discernible in early modern discussions of rhetoric.²¹ In his *Discoveries*, for instance,

²⁰ Lanham is quite clear in explaining this concept, but his use of the term "artificial" might be somewhat confusing or misleading. The term is not meant to connote an intent to deceive, nor is it meant to suggest a kind of falsified evidence. What Lanham means by "artificial" becomes more clear when he explains that such proofs differ from "inartificial" proof in that the latter consists of what we now think of as "evidence," that is, the kind of proof found in "sworn testimony, documents, scientific analyses, laws" (*Handlist* 166). Aristotle describes artificial proof (what Kennedy translates as "entechnic") as the kind of proof that is found "in the character [*ēthos*] of the speaker," in the way that such proof works "in disposing the listener is some way" (i.e., *pathos*), and in the way that the speaker uses proof "in the argument [*logos*] itself" (1.2.2, Kennedy 37).

²¹ The first attainable English version of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was Thomas Hobbes's, and it wasn't published until 1637. Woods has suggested that Lanyer "could apparently read Latin and possibly some Greek" (*Lanyer* 14), and she draws this inference from Lanyer's reference to "Esop" (line 27) in her poem "To all vertuous Ladies": Aesop's work, Woods points out, "was recommended as an easy way into Greek for young children" (167 n. 32). Lanyer may have studied some Greek as Woods suggests, but it still seems unlikely that she knew Greek well enough to become familiar with earlier versions, mostly Greek, of Aristotle's work (See Kennedy's "The History of the Text After Aristotle," *On Rhetoric* 305-9 for an

Jonson certainly describes ethos, pathos, and logos in his account of *discretio*, which he defines as the ability to “discern what fits yourself; him to whom you write; and that which you handle” (442). The terms themselves may not be present in contemporary English rhetorics (or at least not distinctly defined), but this doesn’t mean that the concepts aren’t as well — that their classical signifiers had disappeared from rhetorical theory doesn’t necessarily erase their presence.²² Jonson recognizes the importance of ethos, pathos, and logos as much as Aristotle does: the only difference seems to be that the concepts had been so thoroughly assimilated into rhetorical practice that they no longer needed to be named.

Aristotle’s enduring influence is further confirmed by Lanyer’s and, as I will later show, Wilson’s thorough understanding of the primacy of rhetoric’s artificial proofs. Lanyer may not have known Aristotle, but I do believe that she was familiar with some contemporary rhetorical handbooks, Wilson’s especially. Even so, I would also add that neither she nor any other early modern writer necessarily needed to have read about rhetoric, even informally, to be familiar with its conventions. As I explained in Chapter One, it is more than possible that many people picked up the habits of their rhetorical culture without formal or informal study, or even without

account of the *Rhetoric*’s translation history).

²² Renaissance rhetoricians don’t often use the terms ethos, pathos, and logos, and when they do, they do not make precisely the same distinction between ethos and pathos as their ancient antecedents; as Lanham says, “Pathos (or Pathopoeia) was likely to refer to any emotional appeal, ethos (Ethopoeia) simply to a description of character” (*Handlist* 111).

being consciously aware they were doing so. It is, as well, more than possible that rhetorical theorists haven't always invented their own guidelines for successful persuasion, but are often simply theorizing about or articulating what has proven, over and over again, to be most successful in practice. As Brian Vickers says, "the eloquence of rhetoric is merely a systematization of natural eloquence" (296), and many classical rhetoricians, Cicero included, "shared the belief that rhetoric had essentially codified real life" (*Defence* 296-99). This is true for early modern rhetoricians as well: Wilson, for instance, makes this point very clearly when he says that "eloquence itself came not up first by the art, but the art rather was gathered upon eloquence" (48). It is not impossible, either, that Lanyer's understanding of rhetoric's artificial proofs can be explained by her own "natural eloquence."

Though it may not be obvious to us how those artificial proofs function as "evidence," they are nevertheless crucial to any attempt at persuasion — be it ancient, early modern, or twenty-first century. Lanyer's awareness of their importance is most readily apparent in the way the apology works to establish its speaker's ethos. In fact, Lanyer seems to have chosen a biblical figure whose established ethos already stands a good chance of winning her reading audience's sympathy. A contemporary reader of the *Salve* would almost certainly be Christian and, as such, would already be convinced that Pilate's wife speaks the truth — at least about Christ's virtue and the injustice of his death sentence. Lanyer's task is not, however, as easy as it may seem,

given that the characterization of Pilate's wife, in English and other cultures, has been historically inconsistent.

W. Gardner Campbell points to the two antithetical representations of the woman who came to be known as "Procula." There is the Procula "whose intervention on Christ's behalf testified to her virtue and Christ's innocence" and the one "who very nearly undoes the necessary work of redemption," and these good and bad versions of Pilate's wife, according to Campbell "do not coexist, not even uneasily" (7). Though it is clear that Lanyer means to represent only the "good Procula,"²³ her audience would, it seems certain, also have some preconceived notions about her interference in affairs of state, which could easily be read by her contemporaries as shrewish meddling that comes very close to undoing redemption. Lanyer's audience may have been predisposed to believe Christ's innocence and the injustice of his Crucifixion, but both the poet and her speaker know that to assert their worthiness to speak and to be heeded is not enough.²⁴

²³ That this was Lanyer's intention is further suggested by the fact that, as Roberts points out, she not only doesn't present the dream of Pilate's wife as demonic, as the cycle plays invariably did, but doesn't mention a dream at all (300).

²⁴ In his article on this biblical character, Campbell points to the "rich tradition" that grew out of the short passage of Scripture in which she appears and notes that it was a tradition "still vital and varied in Lanyer's England" (5). Apocryphal writings, Campbell explains, named Pilate's wife, and she and her husband are both regarded as saints in the Coptic Church. Both Pilate and his wife, Campbell also notes, make regular appearances in medieval English drama (6): according to Josephine A. Roberts, the cycle plays "had continued to be performed annually until the late 1560s" ("Diabolic Dreamscape" 300) and would have been at least vaguely familiar to Lanyer's audience.

Perhaps more than most orators, then, Pilate's wife must begin by establishing her good character in order to make herself seem credible. In typically oratorical fashion, Pilate's wife's speech opens with an appeal to her audience, in this case her husband, to "heare the words of thy most worthy wife" (line 751). Though she begins by pointing out to her husband (and her audience) that she is the "worthy" (and good) Procula, the poet's and her speaker's task entails more than simple assertion. Just as Pilate's wife needs to remind her husband that she is worthy of being heard, Lanyer needs to demonstrate her potentially "bad" speaker's worth to a possibly hostile audience. But this is to some extent necessary for any speaker; as Lanham points out, ethos works not simply to affirm but also to establish "the persuader's good character and hence credibility" (*Handlist* 166). Aristotle describes ethos more specifically as the kind of persuasion effected through the rhetorical representation of the speaker's character: ethos, he says, is found "whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence," and its persuasion "should result from the speech, not from a previous opinion that the speaker is a certain kind of person" (1.2.4, Kennedy 38).

Not relying on assertion alone, Pilate's wife demonstrates her worthiness as she goes on "to beg her Saviours life" (line 752). In pleading on behalf of an innocent victim, one who is also humanity's Saviour, Pilate's wife further confirms her worth by displaying the Christian virtue of charity. Appearing to seek rather than potentially undo redemption, she makes any possible self-interest she might have

beside the point. It is, of course, arguable that many apparently virtuous acts can be read as self-interested to the extent that they are undertaken with the hope of personal salvation, and that Pilate's wife's attempt to save Christ might very well undo everyone's hope of salvation, but it is nevertheless important that her demonstrated concern is for someone else. Pilate's wife further deflects suspicion of self-interest as she goes on to plead not on behalf of some pragmatic cause but on behalf of the abstract ideal of "true Justice" (line 754). Lanyer's speaker thus establishes an ethos that, at least in her opening lines, seems free of self-interest as it evinces an admirable understanding of Christian virtue and expresses her interest in upholding abstract ideals.

Pilate's wife's evident lack of self-interest is further suggested by her expressed concern for her represented audience's moral well-being. By not condemning Christ, she tells her husband, he will "Let barb'rous crueltie farre depart from thee" (line 753). Self-interest seems far from Pilate's wife's aim as she appeals on behalf of abstract ideal not for her own, but for Christ's and for her husband's benefit. Aristotle says that "we believe fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly" (1.2.4, Kennedy 38), and Pilate's wife seems very fair-minded in the equal concern she expresses for her husband's spiritual and Christ's physical welfare. The opening words of Pilate's wife demonstrate the virtues Lanyer later describes as "Mercie, Charitie, and Faith" (line 1295), and she exhibits a fair-mindedness that makes her worthy of credence. Perhaps Walter Nash describes ethos most aptly when he says that it is the "stance of sincere

and confident authority" (207), and it seems indisputable that Pilate's wife speaks with a great deal of "sincere and confident authority."

Before moving into her defence of Eve, which is her actual and arguably self-interested agenda, Pilate's wife is careful not to damage any credibility she may have established with her audience. Not only does she remind her listeners that the occasion for her speech is the defence of a man, she also establishes her non-threatening intent when she aligns her sympathy for Christ with women's attitude toward men in general. Pilate's wife does so with a proclamation on her behalf and an injunction to all her sex: "Let not us Women," she proclaims, "glory in Mens fall, / Who had power given to over-rule us all" (lines 759-60). Before launching her argument on behalf of feminine liberty and equality, Pilate's wife is careful to acknowledge the divinely sanctioned authority of the opposite sex and to make it clear that she does not (and all other women should not) aim to triumph over men. These lines thus offer what at least appears to be a rather innocuous segue into her appeal on behalf of her biblical progenitor, herself, and her sex.

Having established her worthiness and her non-threatening aim, Pilate's wife can now safely move into her defence of women, a defence that takes up much more of her speech than the brief stanza (or less than a stanza) allotted to her opening pleas on Christ's behalf. Like any good rhetor, though, Lanyer does not rely on her speaker's already established character, but expands on the figure of the biblical Pilate's wife to create a dramatic ethos within the apology itself. Because Pilate's wife

also speaks in Christ's defence, the apology begins by aligning women and Christ in a way that might make it difficult for a listener to answer in the negative her later rhetorical question, "why should you disdain / Our beeing your equals, free from tyranny?" (lines 829-30). From the beginning of "Eves Apologie," the figure of Pilate's wife demonstrates her understanding of the importance of ethos: both the speaker and the poet who created her know that it is crucial to earn the audience's sympathy if it is to be persuaded by her argument. Since Lanyer's speaker must establish her ethos both to her dramatized historical and to her (perhaps skeptical) reading audience, hers is a rather complex task.

A sympathetic ethos is essential to the success of pathos, the second type of artificial proof that helps to effect the persuasiveness of "Eves Apologie." Aristotle defines the latter as the kind of persuasion that comes "through the hearers when they are led to feel emotion [*pathos*] by the speech" (1.2.5, Kennedy 38), while Lanham similarly describes pathos as the act of "Putting the audience in an appropriate mood, by playing on its feelings." Though both of these rhetoricians describe pathos as the kind of proof that moves an audience, it is also true that, Lanham explains, "both the emotions a speaker feels *himself* and those he seeks to evoke in others have some claim to the term" (*Handlist* 166 and 111). Ethos and pathos are, as Lanham's words suggest, to some extent interdependent. But because Pilate's wife's speech is an attempt to win over audiences both within and without the situation it dramatizes,

the reciprocity of ethos and pathos to which Lanham alludes becomes especially significant in “Eves Apologie.”

That Pilate’s wife needs to persuade two audiences perhaps makes her task a more difficult one; at the same time, though, it also seems that Lanyer has chosen an especially promising dramatic situation from which to launch her bid for female equality. If pathos is a crucial part of effective persuasion, then the eve of Christ’s Crucifixion is an especially fitting place from which to make one’s argument — the speech’s *mise-en-scène* is likely to put any Christian reader in an appropriately sympathetic mood even as it enables a convincing and sympathetic ethos. Lanyer’s choice of subject also suggests that she understands that ethos and pathos are never entirely separable, but knows that they work in tandem to put the audience in the right frame of mind to be persuaded by what the speaker has to say.

Throughout her speech, Lanyer’s speaker works to sustain, and perhaps also amplify, the pathos already established by the apology’s context. Pilate’s wife goes on to appeal to her listeners’ emotions by repeatedly using words that seem likely to dispose the audience favourably toward the speaker even as they also express her own sorrow and compassion. Using sympathetically modified nouns throughout her lament of woman’s plight, Pilate’s wife affirms the injustice of their persecution by obliquely aligning their suffering with Christ’s: descriptions such as “poore soule” (line 773), “harmelesse Heart” (line 774), “poore *Eve*” (line 784), “poore women” (line 794), and “poore soules” (line 833) refer both to Eve in particular and to women in

general. Not only do these sympathetically modified nouns appear with notable frequency over the course of sixty lines, three of them — “poore soule” (line 773), “poore women” (line 794), and “poore soules” (line 833) — are further highlighted by parenthetical enclosure. Parentheses not only draw attention to these words, they also do so in a way that typographically mimics Eve’s and all women’s lamentable containment. Together with the poet’s suggestive typographical choices, the words of Pilate’s wife work both to arouse pathos and to sustain the speaker’s ethos. It is the speaker’s own ethos, her readily apparent sympathy and sorrow, that encourages her audience to share her mood, a mood that would also predispose her listeners to being persuaded by what she has to say.

As the descriptions quoted above suggest, the ethos of “Eves Apologie” is enabled by even as it enables the speech’s pathos: together, these artificial proofs make the apology a fitting example of the kind of verse Puttenham calls “Poeticall lamentations.” Lanyer’s is a twofold lament that mourns both Christ’s and woman’s earthly fate; thus both she and her speaker function in a way similar to Puttenham’s description of the lamenting poet. The poet who composes “lamentations,” Puttenham tells us, is not merely expressing sorrow but is also *acting* in an important way: besides writing his poetry the lamenting poet’s role is “to play also the Phisitian.” The lamenting poet, he goes on to explain, performs a healing role “not onely by applying a medicine to the ordinary sicknes of mankind, but by making the very greef it selfe (in part) cure of the disease” (47). Lanyer’s poetic and persuasive aim

is, as Puttenham believes it should be, akin to the physician's: her apology aims not merely to express Pilate's wife's sorrow, but also to correct through the persuasion of shared grief — the pathos that is enabled by Christ's (and woman's) lamentable plight — what she believes to be the disease of gender inequality and female oppression. According to Puttenham, the poet's function in offering a poetic lament is "making one dolour to expell another," and the proffered poem thus makes "one short sorrowing the remedie of a long and grieuous sorrow" (48). The long and grievous sorrow that the short sorrowing of Pilate's wife over Christ's pending death aims to expel is, of course, the centuries of suffering inflicted on all women because of the first woman's failure to hold fast to the word of God.

To explain more clearly how the pathos of "Eves Apologie" works toward its end, I would like to turn briefly to another of Aristotle's works. Though perhaps conceived somewhat differently, pathos is as important in Aristotle's discussion of dramatic art as it is in his discussion of rhetoric and, since Pilate's wife is the only character who has her own voice within the *Salve's* narrative, it seems fitting to consider "Eves Apologie" in relation to the *Poetics*. According to George Whalley's translation, Aristotle defines pathos as "a murderous or cruel transaction, such as killings — [taken as] real — and atrocious pain and woundings and all that sort of thing" (91). Whalley elaborates on what Aristotle means in his commentary on the text. The most accurate way to read pathos, he suggests, is that it "primarily means something 'suffered,' something that happens to a person — the complement to

something done.” At the same time, Whalley goes on, “Aristotle says that a pathos is a *praxis*, an ‘act’,” and thus “*pathos-as-praxis* seems to imply that the crucial event is to be seen both as suffered and as inflicted” (90).

“Eves Apologie” offers an especially useful illustration of the Aristotelian concept of “*pathos-as-praxis*.” Pilate’s wife’s apparent suffering — her ethos — is an act that works to generate the audience’s pathos, another act that will hopefully result in Pilate’s restraint and the granting of freedom and equality to women. The artificial proofs of ethos and pathos within the apology work also to emphasize the correspondence between women and Christ. Though the *Salve* as a whole does, as McGrath claims, argue that women “may become arbiters of their own fates, directors of the fates of others, teachers, poets, and models of power and virtue,” despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that they are as “meek, humble, chaste, submissive, and obedient” as Christ himself (“Feminist Voice” 344), this argument is especially crucial to the persuasiveness of “Eves Apologie.” That this is the case becomes especially clear if we read the apology’s pathos in Aristotelian terms.

One might, however, respond that the context of Lanyer’s argument makes its pathos ultimately irrelevant. The pathos not only of the apology but of the *Salve* as a whole is, it seems, diminished if not entirely negated in light of Christ’s forthcoming Resurrection and the promised salvation it brings: every Christian reader knows that the story Lanyer tells will culminate in a happy ending. This does not, however, mean that Christ’s story is not a tragic one. Tragedy, according to Aristotle, can see

“a change occur from bad fortune to good, or from good to bad” and, as Whalley points out, this ancient theorist recognizes and shows no preference for either “the tragedy that ends catastrophically” or “the tragedy that ends in prosperity” (78-79). The Crucifixion, it seems safe to say, is the tragedy with the ultimate of prosperous endings, and it is prosperous only because of the pathos — effected by Christ’s suffering — that has come before. Lanyer’s aim is to plead successfully for female equality, and what is important here is that the apology’s failure to persuade Christ’s earthly judge neither minimizes the importance of pathos to her argument’s potential effectiveness, nor does Christ’s ultimate Crucifixion determine that the apology’s primary argument in defence of women will also fail. On the contrary, her aim seems to be to show that suffering and tragedy can bring about a prosperous ending, and that this is as true for women’s pathos as it is for Christ’s. That Lanyer uses Pilate’s wife’s appeal as the means of pleading her most forthright case on women’s behalf illustrates this writer’s acute sensitivity to the importance of ethos and pathos in any successful act of persuasion and, as well, her understanding that pathos can have far-reaching and profound effects.

Some of Lanyer’s critics have recognized, by implication at least, that pathos is crucial to the efficacy of the *Salve*’s argument. Hutson has been most direct, though, in pointing out that Lanyer’s “narrative of the Passion acquires the status of a rhetorical ‘proof’” (160) through its depiction of “female recognition of Christ”: I would add to Hutson’s observation that the way this “recognition of Christ” works as

rhetorical proof is more readily apparent if we also read women's experience as one of "*pathos-as-praxis*." In Lanyer's view, the suffering of her sex is an act of pathos that is not so different from Christ's. The pathos of all women was brought about by the first woman's fall and, like Christ's suffering, it is also a *praxis*. According to Lanyer, the act of female suffering should likewise bring about a happy ending; in this case, that prosperous ending would be the recognition of women as men's equals and thus freeing them "from tyranny" (line 830).

In his preface to Whalley's translation of the *Poetics*, John Baxter asks two important questions we all should ask about the concept of *pathos-as-praxis*. First, Baxter suggests, we need to consider what it means "if a *pathos* is not simply a consequence of a *praxis* (arriving at the end), but is in some way a constituent of it from the first" (xxvi). In relation to Christ's Passion, it seems clear that the Saviour's pathos is not simply the consequence of his actions, but is inextricably bound up with the *praxis* that brings about the Crucifixion: in other words, that Christ is meeker and milder than the men who persecute him means that his very nature is his pathos. Christ's suffering, then, is both constitutive of the action that leads to his Crucifixion even as it is also the *praxis* that generates the pathos of his story's climax. The relevance to the point I am trying to make about *pathos-as-praxis* in Lanyer's defence of women becomes more clear, I think, as Baxter goes on to ask his next question: "what if the major consequences, and perhaps also the most important punishments, centre on the recognitions of that fact?" (xxvi). The men to whom the apology pleads

need to recognize that the weakness attributed to women, like Christ's meek and mild nature, is at once the action that brought about their suffering — a necessary constituent of the *praxis* that resulted in the tragedy of the Fall — and the condition of their present and ongoing suffering. If the audience to whom Pilate's wife and the poet speak would only recognize that the pathos of feminine inequality is inextricably bound up with notions of women's comparative weakness, then they would also understand that the tragedy of women's oppression is not so different from Christ's suffering: this recognition, the apology's argument suggests, would bring about an equally happy ending for women. In "Eves Apologie," rhetorical and dramatic pathos equally aim to effect as much sympathy for women as the *Salve* brings to its reimagining of the meek and mild Saviour's unjust persecution, and the sympathy and suffering enabled by its pathos is not an end in itself, but the means to an end.

All the same, we cannot talk about the persuasiveness of "Eves Apologie" without also acknowledging that there is a tremendous dramatic irony in the fact that, as both we and Lanyer know, Pilate's wife's bid to save Christ fails, and that there is a further irony in the fact that, as we know and the poet more than likely suspects, Lanyer's bid for women's liberty and equality doesn't succeed either. Given that neither the argument posited in Christ's behalf nor the argument offered in woman's defence achieves the intended outcome, we might also argue that the apology's use of pathos and ethos is ineffectual and thus ultimately irrelevant. Yet it is only historical distance that allows us to see that Lanyer succeeds in convincing her imagined

audience no more than Pilate's wife succeeds in convincing hers. Lanyer may have suspected but could not have known that her defence of women would not, at least not directly, bring about their liberty and equality.²⁵

Moreover, Pilate's wife's attempt to save Christ from certain death fails not because Lanyer's speaker is inept, but because it must fail: the outcome of the tale *Salve Deus* tells is already determined. Given that both we and the writer already know how her story ends, it may seem that the success of Pilate's wife's attempt to persuade her husband is, in effect, a non-issue. But because we already know the ending to Christ's story, Lanyer's choice is also a strategic one. By voicing her defence of women within an appeal whose failure is predetermined, Lanyer draws her reader's attention toward the means — that is, toward the argument she makes on women's behalf — and away from the known end of Pilate's wife's failure to persuade

²⁵ That Lanyer's volume achieved nothing is further suggested by the possibility that her work was not read by her contemporaries. Herz points to this possibility when she notes that there is "no evidence that anyone ever read this little book . . . despite the inscription of those noble readers" in Lanyer's multiple dedications that also include "all virtuous ladies in general, as well as a less specifically gendered virtuous reader, as well as even the doubtful readers incorporated into the text at its close" (129). Grossman takes Herz's observation further when he notes that both "The very small number of surviving copies of the *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and the lack of contemporary reference to it or to any other literary works by Lanyer argue against her having participated in any great way in the construction of English literature." This may very well be true, but whether Lanyer's work was read or not isn't necessarily all that relevant. What is interesting about her text, as Grossman goes on to explain, is that it shows that "it was possible for her to address a particular group of aristocratic women in this way" and that although the *Salve* may not have been "a literary historical event," it is nevertheless important as "a historical document" ("The Gendering of Genre" 128-29).

on Christ's behalf. In effect, the context of "Eves Apologie" diverts the reader's attention away from anticipating a forthcoming action that is already understood, and thus encourages the reader to focus more closely on the speaker's argument. The outcome of the apology's dramatized situation, then, is not as important as the way Lanyer uses it to draw attention to her actual agenda.

The failure of Pilate's wife's appeal for judicial mercy is more than just a foregone conclusion, however. Any Christian reader knows that human redemption and salvation are only possible because of Christ's sacrifice. And because Christ's earthly sacrifice is also a necessary outcome, the possibility of success is much more than simply a non-issue. Pilate's wife cannot succeed in persuading her husband to spare Christ not only because the story's outcome is already determined, but also because her success would be the most undesirable of ends. The oxymoronic "joyfull sorrow" (line 912) the Crucifixion represents and the *Salve* reimagines is, I would suggest, the quintessential illustration of the Aristotelian concept of *pathos-as-praxis* for any Christian reader. As Lanyer affirms later in the *Salve*, the Saviour's "death killd Death, and tooke away his sting" (line 1024): Christ's suffering is the ultimate of acts because its pathos holds the promise of another act, that is, the granting of eternal life to all of humanity.

Perhaps more than pathos, Lanyer relies on the artificial proof of logos in her attempt to exculpate Eve and all of her daughters from primary culpability for human

sin. What Woods calls Lanyer's "feminist wit" ("Aemilia Lanyer" 155), Aristotle would define as the sort of evidence that constitutes the third species of artificial proof. According to Aristotle, *logos* is the kind of persuasion that "occurs through the arguments [*logoi*] when we show the truth or the apparent truth from whatever is persuasive in each case" (1.2.6, Kennedy 39). Literary critics have certainly not missed the apparent rationality and the rhetorical momentum of "Eves Apologie." Mueller, for instance, notes that Lanyer's speaker follows "typical period procedure for tracing the cause or rationale of current practices" ("Feminist Poetics" 229). What Mueller identifies in Lanyer's argument as "typical period procedure" corresponds with Aristotle's view of the rhetorical proof of *logos* which, he says, can prove an actual truth or demonstrate an apparent truth. To refine and elaborate on this distinction, Aristotle sees the proof of *logos* as including both indisputable empirical "fact" (actual truth) and recognizably interpretive "proof" (apparent truth). The way Aristotle sees it, one kind of *logos* does not outweigh the other, but both are equally valid and equally important forms of proof in any rhetor's argument.²⁶

²⁶ Lanham perhaps expresses this distinction (and similarity) more clearly when he defines *logos* as "Proving, or seeming to prove, the case." Like Aristotle, Lanham suggests that *logos* can either prove a truth with absolute certainty or prove something to be true for the most part, and he also argues that "Proving, or seeming to prove" are equally reasonable means of persuading: "The plainest term" for *logos*, Lanham proposes, "is rational argument" (*Handlist* 166). In both of these rhetoricians' formulations, absolute (or empirical) proof and seeming (or interpretive) proof are equally rational and acceptable means of discovering truth.

As a rewriting of Adam and Eve's story within Pilate's wife's narrative, the apology does represent what Lewalski calls Lanyer's "most daring exegetical move" ("Seizing Discourses" 53). It is most obvious that the logos of "Eves Apologie" is primarily interpretive, but the argument of the *Salve* as a whole also depends heavily on such proof; as Pearson says, a central purpose of Lanyer's volume is "to celebrate and legitimize women's roles as both writers and readers" (45). Certainly Lanyer emphasizes the importance of right reading in "To the Vertuous Reader," which concludes by asking its readers to "cherish, nourish, and increase the least sparke of virtue where they find it, by their favourable and best interpretations, [rather] than quench it by wrong constructions" (lines 59-61). In the *Salve* proper, Lanyer demonstrates what she implies here, that is, that women are better equipped than men to discover interpretive truth: while the other men who play a role in Christ's story "tell his Words, though farre from his intent, / And what his Speeches were, not what he meant" (lines 655-56), the "Poore women" who surround the Saviour clearly see "how much they did transgresse" (line 995).²⁷ The Gospels provide not only most of the substance of Lanyer's volume but also much of the evidence that confirms women's ability to, as Woods says, "read aright" ("Women at the Margins" 110). In "Eves Apologie," it is the Hebrew Bible that provides most of the evidence for Lanyer's case: as Mueller points out, the apology doesn't simply recount Eve's story

²⁷ As Hutson also points out, "Lanyer figures the climax of the narrative as a drama of interpretation, in which women elicit radiance and meaning from the event which had remained mute and indecipherable to masculine exegesis" (170).

as it has been conventionally read but “reflects analytically . . . on the Fall as narrated in Genesis” (“Feminist Poetics” 229), and it does so in a way that emphasizes woman’s ability to comprehend proof of the interpretive kind.

The marginal gloss that denotes the opening of “Eves Apologie” is found next to Pilate’s wife’s assertion that “Till now your indiscretion sets us free, / And makes our former fault much lesse appeare” (lines 761-62), and the importance of the Fall to her argument is thus made clear from her apology’s beginning. Yet the upcoming Crucifixion provides what is perhaps the most crucial premise of Pilate’s wife’s argument. That premise, that men commit far greater crimes than women, is asserted throughout the apology. Pilate’s wife goes on to contrast Eve’s disobedience with Pilate’s willful act of murder: “Her sinne was small, to what you doe commit” (line 818), Pilate’s wife insists, and goes on to aver that “If one weake woman simply did offend, / This sinne of yours, hath no excuse, nor end” (lines 831-32).²⁸ Pilate’s wife

²⁸ Barbara Bowen observes that the second of these lines is quoted from Shakespeare’s *The Rape of Lucrece*. Tarquin’s rape of Lucrece is cited by Lanyer as one example of the many heinous crimes men have committed against women (*Salve Deus* lines 211-12). But Tarquin, Bowen notes, speaks the same words as Pilate’s wife when he hesitates in following through with his plan to commit the rape “when he recalls his relation to Lucrece’s husband: ‘But as he is my kinsman, my dear friend, / The shame and fault finds no excuse nor end’ (237-38).” Bowen reads Lanyer’s borrowing as a hint “that the crucifixion might be understood as a rape,” and goes on to propose “That Lanyer dares to align the crucifixion with rape . . . suggests the radicalism of imagination that underlies this often conventional poem” (278-79). Pearson makes a different connection that hints at “echoes of *The Rape of Lucrece*” (48), asking us to “compare, e.g., ‘that he [i.e., Christ] might be the Booke / Whereon thine eyes continually may look’ . . . with ‘princes are the glass, the school, the book / Where subjects’ eyes do learn, do read, do look’ (Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*, lines 615-16)” (53 n. 6).

argues that the sin of the first woman pales in comparison with the sin her husband is about to commit, and she justifies this claim by turning a crucial premise of Christian misogyny, that woman is weaker than man, against itself.

Though this second premise on which Pilate's wife predicates her argument might rankle many latter-day feminists, we need to remember that Lanyer and her speaker must, as Alike Barnstone points out, argue "within the confines of Christian faith" if her apology is to be taken at all seriously (151). That Lanyer is able to do so and that she capably uses the notion of female weakness to argue in Eve's defence and refute her greater culpability says much, I think, about her rhetorical expertise. The ability to argue on the opposite side of a given question was, as we know, a cultivated and much-admired skill of the early modern rhetor, and Pilate's wife's defence of Eve relies on the very premise used by many antifeminist exegetes to prove their arguments in favour of female subordination. If woman was created weaker than her male counterpart and was meant to obey, she argues, then it logically follows that Eve, in harkening to the serpent's voice, behaved just as she should: "Her weakenesse," Pilate's wife points out, "did the Serpents words obey" (line 815). Adam's greater "Strength," on the other hand, makes him not Eve's superior but her moral inferior: "Being Lord of all," she maintains, "the greater was his shame" (lines 779-80).

Ironically, Pilate's wife also uses the assumption that men possess greater knowledge than women to challenge antifeminist readings of the Genesis story; as

Woods describes it, the apology is a “rhetorical tour de force” that demonstrates women’s ability to “read aright” in spite (or perhaps because) of their acknowledged weakness (“Women at the Margins” 110). Eve, Pilate’s wife argues, sinned only because she was “simply good” (line 765). Again, Lanyer’s apology transforms purported weakness into a virtue: because Eve was of “undiscerning Ignorance” (line 769), and was presumably created that way, she could not perceive “guile, or craft” (line 770). Adam, however, was not a victim of the serpent’s manipulations and should have known better, since “No subtill Serpents falshood did betray him” (line 799). Rather than falling out of simple ignorance, Adam sins knowingly and deliberately. Unlike Eve, Adam “from Gods mouth receiv’d that strait command, / The breach whereof he knew was present death” (lines 787-88).

The same argument holds for the sin Pilate is about to commit. Eve’s sin is committed out of weakness and ignorance, but Pilate’s offence — like his biblical progenitor’s — is a knowing one that cannot be excused. Arguably, too, the Pilate who appears in the Gospels is unpersuaded because he doesn’t appreciate the value of interpretive truth, that is, that he fails to see that Pilate’s wife’s reading of her dream is the right one not only because he doesn’t “read aright” but also because he doesn’t adequately respect the kind of mimetic evidence the dream represents. “Eves Apologie” does not mention the dream, but Pilate’s wife does advise him to “Open thine eies, that thou the truth mai’st see” (line 755). Pilate’s wife tells her husband that he can arrive at this truth interpretively: if he only would “view his holy Life,

his good desert" (line 758), he would "Condemne not him that must thy Saviour be" (line 757). Pilate does not sin in hapless ignorance but, together with all of his sex, "in malice Gods deare Sonne betray" (line 816). Again, Pilate's wife makes a point that seems logically indisputable; there is a tremendous difference between unknowingly committing a sin out of weakness and deliberately committing a heinous offence out of malice. The basis of that knowledge, Christ's "holy Life" and "good desert," might not count as absolute proof, but this kind of interpretive evidence would surely go a long way in any court of law in "seeming to prove" his innocence. In this and in other ways, the apology strongly suggests that interpretive understanding, the kind that proves Eve's lesser culpability, should be taken as seriously as other types of knowledge.

The orthodox exegete might respond to such an argument by insisting that Eve is more guilty than Adam because she tempted him, but Adam tempted no one. Lanyer, however, manages to muster a counter-argument for this anticipated objection as well. According to Pilate's wife, Eve offered "what shee held most deare" (line 764) to her husband out of "too much love" (line 801). Eve offered the fruit to her husband not out of malice but because she wanted to share the gift of knowledge with him. In Lanyer's formulation, the knowledge so insistently claimed by men is in fact the gift of the first woman, "Yet Men," Pilate's wife laments, "will boast of Knowledge, which he tooke / From *Eves* faire hand, as from a learned Booke" (lines 807-8). The apology also insists that men should be grateful to women not just for

knowledge, but for their very existence. Making an obvious and indisputable point, Pilate's wife reminds her husband that "You came not in the world without our paine" (line 827). This woman orator's use of the first-person plural "our" indicates that she speaks to persuade for the benefit of all women and speaks to, we might safely assume, all men. Pilate's wife recognizes that gratitude for their birth might be too much to ask, but that men should at least "Make that a barre against your crueltie" and not "disdaine / Our beeing your equals, free from tyranny" (lines 828-30). Perhaps most noteworthy here is that in bringing up this point, Lanyer relies not on artificial but "inartificial" proof.

In his translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Kennedy uses what is perhaps a more accurate (if less accessible) term when he chooses "entechnic" to describe the kind of proof Lanham dubs "artificial." According to Kennedy's translation, entechnic proof differs from "atechnic" or "non artistic" proofs (what Lanham calls "inartificial") in that the latter are "those that are not provided by 'us' [i.e., the potential speaker]" (1.2.2, Kennedy 37). For the most part, Pilate's wife's largely interpretive argument relies on the entechnic proof of logos to make its case, which, says Aristotle, is the species of proof that works "by showing or seeming to show something" (1.2.2, Kennedy 37). Here, however, Pilate's wife invokes inartificial, atechnic proof to make her point. As Grossman suggests, it seems reasonable to "acknowledge that maternity is a position that can be established on empirical grounds." I would add to Grossman's claim that, since maternity "is written visibly on the mother's body and

witnessed visually at birth" ("The Gendering of Genre" 134), it is also empirically undeniable that all men — the "Untimely ripp'd" Macduff included — come into the world only through women's "paine."

Though neither the poet nor her speaker can offer much in the way of this sort of hard, empirical, and inartificial evidence to prove her case, the apology does present a great deal of convincing entechnic evidence in support of its argument. The bid for women's "Libertie" (line 825) is the culmination and the purpose of the apology's argument, but in order to make her case for women, it is necessary for Lanyer to refute the assertions of Christian orthodoxy. But the apology manages to make a convincing argument partly because it also requires refutation for, as Aristotle says, "what makes a refutation is more clearly syllogistic; for inconsistencies are clearer when placed side-by-side" (3.17.13, Kennedy 276). Because it places the inconsistencies of scriptural misogyny side-by-side in the process of refuting its arguments, the logic behind the logos of Lanyer's apology is brought to the forefront. The apology's argument is thus clearer and more accessible; as a result, it seems more certainly to prove the faultiness of much scriptural exegesis and, concomitantly, the injustice of gender inequality, an injustice that can only be redressed by granting women their rightful liberty and equality.

As the poet herself asks (rhetorically, it seems) in her dedication to Queen Anne,

. . . judge if it agree not with the Text:

And if it doe, why are poore Women blam'd,

Or by more faultie Men so much defam'd? (lines 75-77)

"Eves Apologie" offers a persuasive argument on women's behalf not only through its logos but also, as I have explained above, through its ethos and its pathos. The poet's and Pilate's wife's apology in defence of their sex seems both logical and convincing, and its argument manages to discredit some of the central premises of Christian patriarchy: throughout, "Eves Apologie" evinces Lanyer's humanist awareness that, as Hutson puts it, "knowledge was only what was 'probable,' what might be 'proved' in the quasi-forensic and epideictic disclosure of a topic through comparison, simile or analogy" (160). The apology evinces its writer's ability to, as Jonson puts it, "discern what fits yourself; him to whom you write; and that which you handle" (442): "Eves Apologie" everywhere demonstrates its author's recognition of the importance of ethos, pathos, and logos to any attempt at persuasion, and it cleverly musters inartificial as well as artificial proofs to make its case.

II. Disciplines and Species

The apology's heavy reliance on reasoned argument and its comparatively unornamented style suggest that Lanyer's work has as much in common with logic as it does with rhetoric; as Wilson says, "The places of logic give good occasion [for the rhetor] to find out plentiful matter" (49). I have rehearsed the rationale of Pilate's

wife's case in the preceding section but I will briefly summarize it here. If Eve was created weaker, as many orthodox exegetes might argue, then it logically follows that Adam's transgression is greater. If Adam ate the forbidden fruit not because he was tempted by the serpent but by a weaker woman, then it follows that his sin is greater. If it is true that Adam fell aware of God's prohibition and the consequences of disobedience, while Pilate sins in spite of his wife's warning, then it also follows that men of both the biblical past and the narrative present commit sins that, because they are committed with fuller knowledge, far exceed the severity of Eve's original sin. Thus, as Woods points out, Lanyer's "principal technique is to use logic to turn traditional biases around" ("Aemilia Lanyer" 162), and the logos of "Eves Apologie," I would add, especially relies on proofs that may not be stated in technically syllogistic form but do use syllogistic reasoning.²⁹ It is true that "Eves Apologie" uses the

²⁹ Lanyer's fondness for syllogistic formulations is perhaps most evident in the climax of her dedicatory poem "To the Ladie *Katherine* Countesse of Suffolke":

If zeale, if grace, if love, if pietie,
 If constancie, if faith, if faire obedience,
 If valour, patience, or sobrietie;
 If chast behaviour, meekenesse, continence,
 If justice, mercie, bountie, charitie,
 Who can compare with his Divinitie? (lines 91-96)

Technically, this may not seem the equivalent of a syllogism because it ends with what appears to be a question. But this lengthy "question" is, of course, asked about Christ and it can thus only be rhetorical. That Christ's divinity is beyond comparison is not open to question: like all rhetorical questions, this one is not meant to be read as looking for one of perhaps several possible answers, but is meant to be read as a statement in interrogative form. Unlike much of "Eves Apologie," this passage is also bristling with the rhetorical figures *anaphora*, *brachiologia*, and *asyndeton* — all of these

conventions of rhetoric to great effect, yet it is equally true that it relies heavily on logical reasoning — on numerous implied “if” and “therefore” formulations — to make its case.

Syllogistic the apology’s proofs may seem, but it is also true that the interpretive evidence offered in “Eves Apologie” is of the kind usually thought of as representing the rhetorical enthymeme rather than the logical equation. Differing signifiers aside, though, it seems that there is ultimately little difference between the two. Aristotle makes this point when he notes that the enthymeme is not only the strongest form of rhetorical proof, it is also “a sort of syllogism” and thus “a function of dialectic” — no matter which term we choose, Aristotle nevertheless believes that the enthymeme, “belongs to the same capacity” as the syllogism “both to see the true and [to see] what resembles the true” (1.1.11, Kennedy 33).³⁰ Given the apology’s heavy reliance on reasoning that is enthymematic and syllogistic, it offers an especially lucid poetic example of the connection between logic and rhetoric Aristotle also identifies: “Rhetoric is partly,” he maintains, “dialectic, and resembles it” (1.2.7, Kennedy 39).

figures of repetition work to reinforce the absolute rightness of the syllogism’s final answer.

³⁰ The primary difference is that the enthymeme can leave one of its premises unstated. But because the enthymeme’s premises, whether spoken or not, are recognizably true, while the syllogism’s premises are believed to be absolutely true (i.e., empirically demonstrable), the former is usually associated with rhetoric and the latter with logic.

The interconnection of logic and rhetoric, or rhetoric and dialectic, that Aristotle describes becomes even more apparent when "Eves Apologie" is considered in relation to Wilson's discussion of rhetoric and logic. In his discussion of logical and rhetorical argument, Wilson categorizes "definite" questions as those most suited to the orator and "infinite" questions as "more proper unto the logician." According to Wilson, definite questions "concerneth some one person," while infinite questions are posited "without respect of person, time, or place." Different they may be, but the definite and infinite are not entirely separable: "whosoever will talk of particular matter must remember," Wilson says, "that within the same also is comprehended a general" (45-46). Logic and rhetoric, then, are as closely related as the types of questions usually associated with them, and "Eves Apologie" confirms their interconnection in an especially salient way.

Most obviously, the apology talks of the particular matter of the biblical Eve. The apology's exploration of this "definite" question leads Lanyer's speaker to the answer that Adam is more to blame for the Fall than his weaker wife: at the same time, the apology's defence of this "some one person" is also a defence of women as a whole. Within the particular matter of Eve's lesser culpability is also "comprehended a general," that is, a universal claim on behalf of all women's virtue and hence their liberty and equality. That Pilate's wife's argument comprehends both the particular and the general, the definite and the infinite, becomes even more clear in light of its dramatic context. Christ's Passion, in fact, offers what is perhaps the clearest example

of a particular question's simultaneous embodiment of the universal. The question of whether Christ should be crucified does concern "some one person," and it is thus of the definite kind: but Christ's Crucifixion is, for the Christian, the most infinite question of all, universally concerning all of humanity. By positing the argument of "Eves Apologie" from within a story whose meaning is both particular — not only to Christ but to every Christian individual — and universal in that it offers salvation to all, Lanyer reinforces her belief that the particular story of Eve's fall is of crucial importance to all women. Through both its larger narrative and the oration spoken from within that narrative, "Eves Apologie" underscores the interpenetration of the particular and the universal through the stories of both Passion and Fall. By doing so, the apology also affirms the interdependence of rhetoric and logic, the reciprocal importance of the concrete and the abstract in attempting to prove any argument.

Yet we might also argue that "Eves Apologie," especially in terms of its *logos*, more closely represents a logically oriented Ramist version of rhetoric than it does the inseparable rhetoric-*cum*-dialectic Aristotle and Wilson describe. This seems true not only in the way its author relies on numerous logically formulated proofs to make its argument, but also in its style: the apology does seem relatively unadorned, in comparison not only with Pembroke's and Wroth's verse, but also with the poetry of many of their male contemporaries and, especially, their antecedents. Of all of the *Salve*, "Eves Apologie" in particular seems deliberately to avoid the *copia* valued by earlier rhetors and poets, and thus also seems to evince what Gary Waller describes as

the Ramist suspicion of “the self-indulgence of the humanist exaltation of language” (*English Poetry* 49). Lanyer’s verse is, as she claims, largely composed of “plainest Words,” and it is clear that she means for logical argument, not artful ornament, to stand out in her apology. But this is not to say that Lanyer doesn’t use rhetorical ornament elsewhere in the *Salve*: perhaps because it is a dramatized oration, Lanyer’s use of some of the more local techniques of rhetoric is not as prevalent in “Eves Apologie” as in other sections of her volume. With the exception of the subtle appearance of a few rhetorical figures, such as alliteration (e.g., lines 767, 774, 798, and 814), *parison* (line 779), and *conduplicatio* (lines 818-19; lines 822-23), Lanyer’s defence of Eve and her progeny draws more heavily on some of the larger guiding principles of rhetorical persuasion than it does on “microscopic rhetoric.” As a result, the apology seems more persuasively rhetorical than artfully poetic.

In comparison with the verse of the Sidney women, the overtly rhetorical momentum of “Eves Apologie” seems more than a little ironic. Given that Pembroke and Wroth rely on a more encompassing array of rhetorical figures, it is rather odd that Lanyer’s verse should appear to be more in line with what we tend to think of as rhetoric: that this is the case is certainly demonstrated by her modern readers’ willingness to recognize the highly rhetorical nature of her work. It is equally ironic that Lanyer’s verse in general and the apology in particular seem far less ornamented than the verse of her Sidnean contemporaries, even though she very much relies on the tools of rhetoric. At the same time, Pembroke and Wroth’s extensive use of

rhetorical figures may make their verse seem more ornate, but the way they use a diverse array of those figures also demonstrates that the tools of what Coogan calls “microscopic rhetoric” are, as Vickers puts it, “neither trivial nor decorative” (*Defence* 283). Though there are some distinct rhetorical differences among these three women writers, their examples equally suggest that the Ramist suspicion of rhetoric is misplaced in reading superfluous ornament as one of the defining features of rhetorical style. Neither Lanyer’s reliance on rhetoric’s artificial proofs nor the Sidney women’s extensive use of rhetorical figures can be fairly read as confirming the rhetor’s privileging of style over substance.

We might, however, argue that Lanyer’s apology itself marks an instance of rhetorical ornament in that it is extraneous to the *Salve*’s narrative of Christ’s passion; as Berry mentions in his article, an important rhetorical aspect of “Eves Apologie” is its role as digression. “Eves Apologie,” it is true, is not a defence of Christ so much as it is a defence of all women through the figures of Christ and Eve. Indeed, it is at times difficult to tell whether the poet or Pilate’s wife is speaking; as Guibbory notes, the apology imparts “a certain indeterminacy of voice [that] has led some critics to suggest this is Lanyer’s speech rather than that of Pilate’s wife” (199).³¹ The best answer seems to be that the voice of Lanyer’s digression belongs to both, and to the

³¹ Guibbory refers specifically to Lewalski’s “Re-writing Patriarchy and Patronage” and Hutson’s “Why the Lady’s Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun.” Powell has more recently argued that “because the defence of Eve is inserted into the middle of both Lanyer’s and Pilate’s wife’s interruptions of Pilate’s interrogation of Christ, it is difficult to ascertain with total certainty who is speaking the defence of Eve” (9-10).

biblical Eve. In fact, it seems safe to say that “Eves Apologie” is meant to be read as a multivocal plea for equality, one that is simultaneously expressed by the poet, by Pilate’s wife, by Eve, and — by extension— all women. What might seem to be a digression in the midst of a narrative of Christ’s Passion ceases to be so if we remind ourselves that the *Salve*, as Lewalski and others confirm, is meant to be read as a “Book of Good Women,” and that those good women include the ones who make up the apology’s multiple voices.

Moreover, early modern as well as ancient rhetoricians did not see *digressio* as unnecessary ornament, but recognized its possible usefulness to a rhetor’s argument. Puttenham calls this figure “*Parecnasis*, or the Stragler,” and describes it analogously as “the souldier that marches out of his array,” and not to the detriment of the battle. On the contrary, “it is wisdom,” he says, “for a perswader to tarry and make his aboad as long as he may conueniently . . . vpon his chiefe proofes or points of the cause tending to his aduantage.” If digression means to tarry and to make an abode somewhere outside of the metaphorical battle, or in this case outside of the larger narrative of the *Salve*, then “Eves Apologie” may itself seem to mark an example of Erasmian *copia*. At the same time, Puttenham’s description suggests that digression is not merely ornament so long as the poet is wise enough “to depart againe when time serues, and goe to a new matter seruing the purpose aswell” (233). The key words here are “seruing the purpose aswell”: Puttenham indicates that digression does serve a purpose and that it fails to do so only when a writer doesn’t comprehend when the

introduction of “new matter” becomes necessary. Arguably, taking up less than a hundred lines of a poem that contains nearly two thousand isn’t really excessive. More than that, though, because the apology is the heart of the *Salve*’s argument and is articulated through a character who also speaks in the original story, it isn’t really a digression at all: Lanyer’s apology may embellish but does not entirely contrive the “artificial proof” that makes up Pilate’s wife’s speech.

We must not be misled by the term “artificial” as it is used to describe the proofs of ethos, pathos, and logos offered in the poem’s *digressio*. According to Aristotle, inartificial (atechnic) and artificial (entechnic) proofs ultimately differ in that “one must *use* the former and *invent* the latter” (1.2.2, Kennedy 37). The way Kennedy’s translation of Aristotle explains it, artificial proof is a kind of invention. But Lanham doesn’t make such a distinction between these two means of persuasion when he categorizes both inartificial and artificial proofs under the heading “Invention” (*Handlist* 166). Though we must, as Aristotle says, “invent” artificial proofs, to invent is not the same as to lie; as types of proof, ethos, pathos, and logos are as true — even if only abstractly true — as other kinds of inartificial or atechnic *pisteis*. Whether artificial or inartificial, entechnic or atechnic, neither species of proof is meant to be read as fiction, but as invention in the rhetorical sense. Invention is what Wilson describes as “The finding out of apt matter” and “a searching out of things true or things likely” (49): it is that which gives weight and substance to an argument even as it enables a writer to find, or even to found, his or her argument.

Because the argument of the apology uses entechnic or artificial proofs as well as atechnic or inartificial proof, this also means that it presents an especially clear example of rhetorical invention, both in the sense of using what is already known to be true (that women give birth to men) and what can be shown to be true (all of the reasons that prove women to be deserving of equality with men).

Invention is not only a central part of successful rhetoric, it also plays an important role in writing effective poetry. Gascoigne, as I noted in Chapter One, describes *energeia* as “depth of device in the invention.” Finding this “depth of device” is crucial to poetic production; when a fitting invention is found, Gascoigne says, “pleasant words will follow well enough and fast enough” (*Certayn Notes* 163). There seems little doubt that Lanyer’s imaginative elaboration of Pilate’s wife’s speech as it is found in Matthew is a good example of a suitably deep invention; as Campbell points out, Lanyer’s is “a dramatic and complex argument” that is also “both imaginatively striking and theologically unusual” (1). The invention of “Eves Apologie” is, like Wroth’s corona and maze, a twofold one. Fuelled primarily by the stories of two biblical women, Eve and Pilate’s wife, and situated within the narrative of Christ’s passion, it not only draws on two distinctly different stories to make the single invention that is “Eves Apologie,” but it also allows Lanyer to include the dramatic within the narrative. Lanyer’s device is especially deep in that, because it brings together stories and genres, it enables her to make an especially strong case in support of her revisionist argument.

It is because of the depth of its invention that "Eves Apologie" manages to defend women through the figure of Eve, point to men's grave faults through the figure of Pilate, and argue convincingly that its speaker does so not out of malice. Because Lanyer has composed her apology in this way, it also allows her to voice, and to challenge, a multiplicity of discourses through the figure of Pilate's wife; as Campbell says, "The voice of Pilate's wife opens a crucial space within Lanyer's poem for Eve's defence of womankind" (2). The opening of that crucial space, Campbell goes on to explain, means that Lanyer is able to speak from within the very discourses whose conclusions she aims to refute, that is, the "multiple discourses that are present *within the Christian tradition itself*" (2). Lanyer's invention is thus both deep and potentially effective: it is surely much more difficult to object to an argument predicated on the very same premises as those espoused by the rhetors who might attempt to disprove it. Not only in its invention but also in the way it uses that invention, "Eves Apologie" attests to Lanyer's high degree of expertise in constructing a rational, persuasive, and tenacious argument: the apology's invention provides a wealth of artificial proofs that seem difficult for any sensible reader to discount altogether.

I would like to make one more point about "Eves Apologie." The issue I bring up here is an important one, and it has to do with the kind of rhetoric Lanyer's volume represents. Whether they actually use the term or not, most of Lanyer's

modern readers characterize her “poetry of praise” as an example of epideictic verse.³² The *Salve*, it is true, is very much about praising women and blaming men, yet it is telling that critics consistently emphasize this aspect of her poetry when her verse aims to do so much more. The tendency to read Lanyer’s poetry as wholly or primarily epideictic, I would suggest, is very much informed by the tendency also to read her work in terms of class even as the critical emphasis on epideictic leads her readers to pay what is arguably an unwarranted amount of attention to class issues. It seems fair to say as well that this tendency to overlook the many ways her work resists such generic classification can be explained by our own gender biases. McBride certainly alludes to this possibility when she observes that

Poets such as Edmund Spenser and Ben Jonson are understood to be writing in — and modifying and challenging — the epideictic tradition, but discussion of Lanyer’s patronage poems initially devolved into a skeptical critique of her presumption upon tenuous or nonexistent aristocratic connections balanced by a kind of grudging Johnsonian compliment, “it’s not that

³² Beilin seems to have established this tendency when she characterized Lanyer’s writing in her chapter title as “The Feminization of Praise” and dubbed her “the first woman seriously and systematically to write epideictic poetry” (*Redeeming* 177). Grossman has more recently used the rhetorical term in describing the *Salve* as “a small volume of religious, epideictic verse” (“Introduction” 1).

Lanyer wrote well, but that she wrote at all." ("Sacred
Celebration" 60)

Readings of Lanyer's verse as poetry of praise, as McBride's observations suggest, underestimate her revisionist sophistication: McBride's comments also suggest that readings of Lanyer's verse as epideictic are very much informed by gender, especially when her rhetoric of praise and blame is compared with discussions of epideictic in the work of her male counterparts.

Certainly, this tendency to categorize Lanyer's work generically as the poetry of praise has much to do with the fact that, as Lanham notes, more recent rhetoricians have suggested that "epideictic oratory 'seemed to have more connection with literature than with argumentation'" (*Handlist* 164).³³ Though it is arguable that rhetorical genres are no more absolute than literary genres, epideictic has come to mean "literary."³⁴ It is undeniably true that the epideictic mode is often primary in

³³ While judicial and deliberative rhetoric "were appropriated by philosophy," Lanham points out, "epideictic became a part of literary prose" (*Handlist* 164). Lanham is here quoting and paraphrasing from Chaim Perelman's and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca's *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver. Notre Dame IN: U of Notre Dame P, 1969).

³⁴ A. Leigh Deneef points out that criticism of the Italian Renaissance confirms the close correspondence between poetry and rhetoric, especially of the epideictic kind. "From such minor figures as A.G. Parrasio, G.C. Delminio, G.A. Viperano, F. Benci, and A. Riccoboni," Deneef notes, "to the more important figures of T. Correa, F. Robertello, J. Mazzoni, T. Tasso, B. Daniello, J.C. Scaliger, and F. Patrizi, the genres and functions of poetry were discussed not simply in rhetorical terms, but mainly in terms of one type of rhetoric — epideictic." Deneef goes on to include Wilson and Puttenham among the English rhetoricians who "systematized and codified epideictic theory" (206). I will only respond here that because these critics

early modern literature. At the same time, we need also to consider that the object of the epideictic rhetor is, as J.R. Brink and L.M. Paillet suggest, "less to persuade an already appreciative audience than to do justice to the occasion" (84): if we agree that this is the case, then it seems clear that there is something more than epideictic at work in Lanyer's volume. It doesn't seem unreasonable to suggest that Lanyer's feminine audience might already appreciate what she has to say, that her work is very much intended to affirm woman's worth, and that she thus aims simply to do justice to her occasion. But, given the *Salve's* much-lauded function as protofeminist or feminist *argument*, it is also strikingly odd that critics tend to describe its rhetoric in terms of a mode that, according to Brink and Paillet, aims "less to persuade" than to affirm.

Rather than expressing what is true about literary rhetoric, the tendency to associate the epideictic with the literary implies that literary works aim primarily to praise or blame, when this is often far from the case. Just as the apology represents more than one literary genre, so it functions within more than one of the three branches of rhetoric: few critics would, I think, dispute the claim that "Eves Apologie" is both narrative and drama, poem and argument. That early modern rhetoricians as well as poets were aware of the overlapping nature of rhetorical genres Wilson certainly makes clear. In his preamble to a rather lengthy and detailed account

believed literature to be primarily epideictic (though this remains debatable for Wilson and Puttenham), this doesn't mean that they were right: certainly, both Wilson's comments and Lanyer's use of rhetoric suggest something quite different.

of what he calls rhetoric's "Three Kinds of Causes," Wilson draws his readers' attention to "this one thing" that, he insists, "is to be learned." This most crucial of all points, he says, is "that in every one of these three causes — these three several ends — may every of them be contained in any one of them." For Wilson, the "causes" of rhetoric are never wholly distinct. But, in separating the three causes within his own discussion, Wilson seems at the same time to be following divisive conventions rather than upholding what he professes to be true: he certainly suggests as much when he goes on to explain that "because these three causes are commonly and for the most part severally parted, I will speak of them one after another, as they are set forth by wise men's judgments" (54). In other words, Wilson believes that rhetorical genres can be described in terms of a given work's most salient features, but he also recognizes that the prominence of one genre or another does not occlude the others. Thus critics who categorize literary art as epideictic leave unquestioned a convention that is unsupported by what early modern writers themselves believed about the nature of rhetorical genres.³⁵

³⁵ It is arguable that Puttenham's treatise, which specifically links the rhetorical and the literary, strongly suggests that poetry at least is epideictic. In "Of Poets and Poesie," the first book of his *Arte*, Puttenham devotes much attention to describing the epideictic nature of poetry when he offers such accounts as how "the gods of the Gentiles were prayesd and honored" in verse (27-30), "In what forme of Poesie vice and the common abuses of mans life was reprehended" (30-31), "In what forme of Poesie the great Princes and dominators of the world were honored" (35-36), and describes the ceremonial role of poetry in weddings, funerals, and nativities. At the same time, though, Puttenham also argues that "Poets were the first priests, the first prophets, the first Legislators and polititians" (6) as well as "the first Philosophers, the first Astronomers and Historiographers and Oratours and Musitiens of the world" (8). For

For brevity's sake, I will here leave Wilson's exhaustive descriptions of the "causes" of rhetoric and turn to Aristotle's much more concise definition of deliberative, judicial, and epideictic rhetoric. Rhetoric's three "genera" Aristotle describes as follows:

Deliberative advice is either protreptic ["exhortation"] or apotreptic ["dissuasion"] . . . In the law court there is either accusation [*katēgoria*] or defence [*apologia*] . . . In epideictic, there is either praise [*epainos*] or blame [*psogos*]. (1.3.3, Kennedy 48)

It is difficult to read "Eves Apologie" as fitting only one of the species of rhetoric Aristotle describes. Rather than clearly representing one, Lanyer's apology presents features of all three rhetorical genera. There is no doubt that "Eves Apologie" is deliberative in that it exhorts its male audience to grant women liberty and equality, that its function as an *apologia* offered in women's defence makes it also an example of judicial rhetoric, and that it is also, it is true, a very good example of epideictic rhetoric that praises women's virtue and blames men for greater sins.

"Eves Apologie" can also be seen as a generic composite in that its defence is made on behalf of the women of the past and the early modern present; as Beilin says about the *Salve* as a whole, "from Genesis to Gethsemane to the present, her generous

Puttenham, the rhetorical cause of poetry is evidently found not only in the desire to praise or blame.

imagination successfully unites the most sacred moments of Scripture with figures of contemporary life" (*Redeeming* 180). I would add that the representation of Scripture's "sacred moments" in "Eves Apologie" unites women of the past, present, and also of the future. Aristotle defines the temporal significance of each of the three "genera" of rhetoric. Deliberative rhetoric, he says, concerns the future, and this is true of the apology's bid for women's future equality. Judicial rhetoric concerns the past, for the speaker "prosecutes or defends concerning what has been done": in the apology, Pilate's wife launches an unequivocal defence of the woman who represents the remotest of pasts. Finally, epideictic rhetoric emphasizes the present; as I have argued above, the apology's conflation of the poet's voice with that of Eve and of Pilate's wife makes its argument also in praise of the women of Lanyer's early modern present. Though each of these three rhetorical species may have a particular temporal focus, that focus isn't entirely separable either. In Aristotle words, "all speakers praise or blame in regard to existing qualities, but they often also make use of other things, both reminding [the audience] of the past and projecting the course of the future" (1.3.4, Kennedy 48).

According to Aristotle, there is yet a distinct generic difference in that the aim or end of these three rhetorical genres differs. Deliberative rhetoric, he says, is concerned with either the "advantageous" (as in exhortation) and the "harmful" (as in dissuasion), while judicial rhetoric focusses on the "just" (as in accusation) and the "unjust" (as in defence), and epideictic's aim is the "honorable" (as in praise) and the

“shameful” (as in blame) (1.3.5, Kennedy 48-49). Again, I can only say that “Eves Apologie” confirms that the three genres are not entirely separable: Lanyer’s and Pilate’s wife’s defence of their sex aims to exhort men to free women and to dissuade them from committing more harmful acts against either Christ or women; it thus urges them to do what is just and to abandon what is unjust even as it aims to prove that women behave honourably and men shamefully.

Certainly in its dramatic presentation, and perhaps also in the intensity and directness of its argument, “Eves Apologie” is unique within Lanyer’s volume. It is not, however, a rhetorical anomaly. This point will, I think, remain clear as I go on to discuss Lanyer’s volume more generally — but it will remain clear only as long as we resist the all-too-common pitfall of thinking of rhetoric as a concept nearly synonymous with a speaker’s tone. Rather than reading the forceful and highly argumentative “Eves Apologie” as representing something distinctly different in Lanyer’s text, I read the speech of Pilate’s wife as a comprehensive illustration of some of the ways Lanyer uses the art of rhetoric to persuasive advantage throughout her corpus. Lanyer’s attention to the proofs of ethos, pathos, and logos, the “depth of device” of her invention, her demonstrable awareness of the complex and overlapping nature of rhetorical genres, and her deployment of a rhetoric that is at once plain and sophisticated attests to the extent of her rhetorical awareness. As we shall see, that awareness is apparent not only in the oration of “Eves Apologie.”

III. *Decorum and Persuasion*

To give some sense of the ways that the *Salve* as a whole attests to its author's rhetorical expertise, I will focus on showing how it demonstrates Lanyer's sensitivity to the principles of decorum. I do so not only because decorum was a central concept in classical and early modern rhetorical theory but also because decorum was closely associated with the artificial proofs Lanyer skilfully deploys in making Pilate's wife's argument. In noting that this guiding rhetorical principle was observed "in respect to the person who speaks, to whom he speaks, of whom or what" (192), Rosamond Tuve might very well be paraphrasing Jonson's definition of *discretio* as the ability to "discern what fits yourself; him to whom you write; and that which you handle" (*Discoveries* 442). Decorum was, in fact, so central a rhetorical concept that it functioned in early modern poetry as, Tuve demonstrates, "the basic criterion in terms of which all the others were understood" (192). As I showed in my discussion of Pembroke's *Psalmes*, decorum is as much a concern of at least some women writers as it is of their male counterparts, poets and rhetoricians alike. In Lanyer's case, her understanding of how to use artificial proofs extends also to her demonstrable awareness that the exercise of decorum was crucial to the persuasive success of rhetorical evidence.

I am not, of course, the first critic to recognize the importance of decorum in the work of women writers, and Lanyer's modern readers certainly haven't

overlooked decorum's significance in her volume.³⁶ But those critics who do discuss Lanyer's salient concern for propriety tend merely to allude to the concept of decorum without either using the term or discussing its rhetorical and persuasive function. Certainly, Lanyer's critics implicitly acknowledge decorum's presence when they note that the *Salve's* dedicatory poems and prose pieces are arranged in an order conventionally deferential to the social hierarchy their respective addressees represent.³⁷ Lanyer's decorous sensitivity is also readily apparent in the humble and

³⁶ As they do in their discussions of Lanyer's "rhetoric" in general, however, her readers tend to describe the concept indirectly and not in rhetorical terms; in the case of decorum, this indirect recognition is most apparent in discussions of the ways this poet addresses her potential patrons. Woods's recent book, however, presents an exception to this general rule. Unlike Lanyer's other readers, she specifically acknowledges Lanyer's observance of this particular rhetorical virtue: like Spenser and many of her other predecessors and contemporaries, she notes, this woman poet is "able to compound the biblical with the classical and historical without loss of decorum" (*Lanyer* 43). Though Woods doesn't really explain how Lanyer achieves this end, I do agree with what she says about the *Salve's* careful — and successful — adherence to the principles of decorum.

³⁷ The dedications begin, of course, with the poem written in honour of Queen Anne, the next poem addresses her and James's daughter, the princess Elizabeth, while the following poem is written "To all vertuous Ladies in generall": the remainder of the dedications are ordered "as rank dictates" (Lewalski, *Writing Women* 220). Lanyer's dedications end with the prose epistle "To the Vertuous Reader," which, it seems safe to assume, is addressed to all readers of any and every class. Though most of her readers recognize the decorousness of Lanyer's ordering, Barroll suggests that Lanyer committed a "*faux pas*" in her "original hierarchy of dedicatees" by addressing the Countess of Pembroke before the Countess of Bedford (42). Yet Barroll argues that Lanyer's "error" was primarily a strategic one, given that Lucy Harrington Russell was "extremely influential" (40) in courtly circles at the time of her volume's publication. By this time, as we know, the dowager Pembroke no longer possessed the influence she once had: a "strategic error" Lanyer's ordering might be, but it does not violate proper decorum — both women are countesses, after all.

self-effacing manner in which she presents herself and her work to her anticipated audience. Throughout her volume, the poet makes many claims similar to the one she posits in her opening dedication to the queen: the humility expressed in the speaker's hope that the queen will see fit to grace "these rude unpollisht lines of mine" (line 35) is far from atypical in Lanyer's verse. Critics have not, as a result, overlooked the care she takes to keep her place and thus to acknowledge the social superiority of most of her dedicatees.³⁸

It is true that the practice of decorum includes speaking in a way that suits the speaker, and it thus seems not at all unusual that this particular speaker addresses her anticipated audience of queen, princess, and countesses from a suitably humble position. Lanyer's decorous ethos, then, might very well be read as marking her observance of accepted (and perhaps self-serving) social practices rather than an understanding of rhetorical convention. Yet to associate Lanyer's expressed humility, whether genuine or not, only with her desire to win the support of her social

³⁸ The proper exercise of decorum would, of course, have been especially important to achieving Lanyer's anticipated goal. Though the volume's bid for patronage appears to have been unsuccessful, her failure would have been guaranteed were Lanyer to exceed the bounds of decorum. Lewalski alludes to the importance of decorum to Lanyer's project when she observes that the volume's dedications "would fail of their purpose if they were to falsify too outrageously the terms of a relationship" (*Writing Women* 220). Lewalski is quite right to make this claim, but she again misses the rhetorical point and doesn't talk about decorum. This critic is not, however, alone. On the contrary, most readers who attempt to explain Lanyer's deferential approach usually describe it as Lewalski does, that is, as evidence of the *humilitas* topos at work rather than an expression of the poet's "genuine angst" (*Writing Women* 221).

superiors doesn't capture the whole picture. It is true, as Woods says, that "No matter how humble the prefatory address, how serviceable the vision to those in power, or how entertaining the tale, the risk of offence was always at hand" when admonishing those of a higher social class ("Women at the Margins" 101). But it is equally true that, to borrow Nash's astute formulation, "stylistic propriety or decorum, the relevance of the manner to the matter," also functioned "almost as a voucher of the author's sincerity" (10). Lanyer's practice of poetic decorum is integral not only to her attempt to persuade these women to sponsor her work (or, at the very least, to be sure that she doesn't offend them), it is also crucial to establishing the authenticity — and thus to effecting the persuasiveness — of the arguments her poems make.³⁹

Having discussed Aristotle's and Puttenham's explanations of decorum in Chapter Two, I will here refer to what Wilson says about decorum, but I do so not only because I have largely neglected this aspect of his discussion in previous chapters. Given his earlier tenure in the Bertie household, it seems likely that Wilson's *Art of*

³⁹ Woods posits a similar argument when she observes that "By acknowledging social distance, the poet bridges it, and by acknowledging humility, the poet receives the grace of excellence," which "is precisely what Lanyer does in her dedicatory verses" ("Introduction" xxxiii). What Woods suggests without making explicit is that Lanyer's evident humility evinces not just her understanding of social propriety, her careful practice of decorum also attests to her awareness of decorum as a means of rhetorical persuasion. Walker perhaps comes closer to making this point when she notes that "the series of encomiums to the countess that frame the narrative of the *Passion* are not sycophantic digressions," but "are integral to the construction of a knowing female subject" (119).

Rhetoric, out of all the Renaissance handbooks, most directly influenced Lanyer's own rhetorical practices. This inference is not, however, based only on possible biographical coincidence. That Lanyer knew Wilson's work becomes even more likely a claim in light of evidence suggesting that his about decorum most closely correspond with what appear to be Lanyer's own. With his expressed distaste for the "inkhorn term" (189), Wilson doesn't use the Latin word, but he does describe decorum's equivalent in his account of the "Four Parts Belonging to Elocution." Throughout his description of elocution — or style — Wilson emphasizes the importance of decorum to the successful rhetor, that crucial aspect of rhetorical persuasion Nash fittingly describes as "important above all else" (10).

According to Wilson, the four parts of style are "Plainness," "Aptness", "Composition," and "Exornation" (188). Most students of early modern rhetoric usually associate the last of these four parts, the one Wilson also describes as "comeliness," with the concept of decorum. I would like to suggest that not only the last but all four parts of elocution have much to do with decorum. Gascoigne certainly suggests as much in his "Woodmanship," where he describes his own rhetorical education:

In Aristotle somewhat did I learn,
 To guide my manners all by comeliness,
 And Tully taught me somewhat to discern,

Between sweet speech and barbarous rudeness.⁴⁰ (lines 101-4)

What is most interesting about this passage is the connection Gascoigne makes between Aristotle and “comeliness,” which is, in turn, associated with stylistically appropriate “sweet speech” and dissociated from indecorous “barbarous rudeness.” As I will go on to show, Lanyer’s example confirms what Gascoigne’s poem suggests. Throughout the *Salve*, Lanyer clearly indicates that all of the aspects of style Wilson describes are bound up with the overriding necessity of appropriate speech, the stylistic virtue of “comeliness” that becomes especially significant when a woman writer does “that which is seldome seene” in “writing of divinest things” (“To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie” lines 3-4). More than illustrating what might be described as Lanyer’s socially conscious adherence to the principles of decorum, though, her verse’s apparent correspondence with all of Wilson’s guidelines for style also demonstrates that the four parts of elocution, as this early modern rhetorician describes them, are closely associated with the artificial proofs of ethos, pathos, and logos that are so crucial a part of this poet’s rhetoric.

This claim seems especially plausible when Wilson’s notions of decorum and their relation to rhetoric’s artificial proofs are considered in tandem with the *Salve*’s notable plainness. It is important here to point out that plain is not — neither in the poet’s nor the rhetorician’s view — equated with artless. Lanyer, in fact, suggests

⁴⁰ From Emrys Jones’s edition of *Sixteenth Century Verse* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), 196-200.

quite the contrary when she tells us that she must “strive” to show “in plainest Words . . . / The Matter which I seeke to undergoe” (*Salve Deus* lines 311-12). Lanyer seems to believe that her own speech is plain, and it is also true that there are very few, if any, passages in the entire volume whose literal meaning is at all difficult to grasp. But, according to this poet’s description, plainness cannot be artless because it is a style the writer must work to achieve: contrary to what Ramists and other defamers of rhetoric might think, Lanyer’s striving for plainness indicates her belief that clarity and accessibility, not obscurity and mystification, are the genuine products of art. In Wilson’s view as well, plainness of style is a rhetorical virtue and is thus attainable only through the practice of art. More than disagreeing with “them that think rhetoric to stand wholly upon dark words” (189), his own markedly plain style further confirms that early modern rhetoricians did not believe superfluous ornament to be proper to the responsible rhetor. Wilson’s writings maintain and Lanyer’s words imply that one should speak in order to be understood: both the rhetorician’s aversion to “dark words” and the poet’s striving for “plainest Words” make it clear that they equally believe that the purpose of rhetoric is not to confound but to enlighten (and, of course, to persuade) one’s audience.

Because Wilson associates plainness with clarity and an implied consideration for one’s audience, that is, “him to whom you write” (Jonson, *Discoveries* 442), it is an ideal that is inevitably and inextricably bound up with notions of decorum and of pathos; because Lanyer associates plainness with her “matter” and with her own self-

presentation, it seems that this stylistic virtue is also interconnected, both conceptually and practically, with ethos and with logos. The interconnection — and interdependence — of style and artificial proof Wilson underscores as he goes on to describe the next two parts of elocution, aptness and composition. Aptness, he explains, is found in the fitting agreement of words and matter: apt words, Wilson says, “properly agree unto that thing which they signify, and plainly express the nature of the same” (191). In signifying a “thing,” aptness is an aspect of logos that is also, in that it needs to “plainly express” to its audience, connected with pathos: the words the speaker uses must suit the subject being discussed, but they must also be readily understood by those who hear or read them. Composition, the third part of elocution, Wilson describes as the joining together of words “in apt order, that the ear may delight in hearing the harmony” (194). Like aptness, composition applies equally to the artificial proofs of logos and pathos in that “apt order” (like “aptness”) would suit the subject being described but would also aim to appeal to the audience with harmonious delight.

Given the connections he makes, there seems little room to argue that Lanyer’s verse doesn’t correspond with Wilson’s separate yet overlapping descriptions of plainness, aptness, and composition. Schoenfeldt makes this connection between style and artificial proof clear when he notes that Lanyer “discovers in a lexicon of ‘plainest Words’ the linguistic equivalent of her own and her Savior’s poverty” (“Religious Devotion” 212-13). This critic’s words not only imply that ethos, pathos,

and logos are inseparable from style, but they further confirm Lanyer's style to be definitively Christian, perhaps even Protestant.⁴¹ The "linguistic equivalent of her own and her Savior's poverty" is found in *sermo humilis*, the style that is determined both by the poem's content and is also, it seems, helped along by the advice Wilson offers in a handbook that everywhere, Mueller suggests, attests to his "insistent anti-Catholicism" (*Native Tongue* 347-48).

The plainness of Lanyer's verse also has much to do with her aim, an earthly intent that is never entirely separable from her own or the poem's Christianity. Using St. Ambrose's writings for his example, Augustine identifies what he calls "the subdued manner of speaking." As Augustine describes it, the subdued style is a plain style in that it does not rely on "verbal ornaments," and it is a style that is shaped by an overriding concern "with teaching and offering proof" (154-55). The Christian

⁴¹ There has been some discussion about whether the style of Lanyer's verse is Protestant or if it more clearly attests to what might have been her residual Catholicism. It is possible, as well, that Lanyer had Jewish origins, although the evidence, her most recent biographer points out, "is highly speculative" (Woods, *Lanyer* 5). As to whether her verse is distinctively Protestant or Catholic, the most prudent answer seems to be that it is both. Woods, in fact, offers a fairly inclusive description of Lanyer's rhetorical style when she notes that "Catholic language tends to be tropic, with symbols and extended metaphors, while Protestant language tends to be schematic, its artistry in analytical devices such as parallelism and contrast, and its passion in repetition" (129). It is true that figures associated with the latter description are predominant in Lanyer's work, her volume is not without its "symbols and extended metaphors," but it also seems that, as Peter Auksi points out, "plainness was not the badge of reformation alone," and Catholic apologists "used the topos of naked truth too" (269). Protestant and Catholic modes of expression may be definable in broad terms, but those terms are not necessarily rigid; thus, Woods seems quite right to suggest that it is not easy to read Lanyer's poetics "simply in Protestant or Catholic terms" (151).

style Augustine describes seems as apt an account of Lanyer's work as Auerbach's notions of *sermo humilis*. Given the argumentative momentum of Lanyer's entire volume, that she writes in "plainest Words" is likely also informed by an equally important aim to teach and to offer proof, to persuade her audience with the sacred (and secular) argument she makes.

Lanyer also directly expresses her concern with ensuring that her word choices do, as Wilson advises, "properly agree" with what they signify and that they "plainly express the nature of the same" (191). One notable example is found in her dedication "To the Ladie *Katherine* Countesse of Suffolke," where she explicitly rejects the secular language of Petrarchism as a fitting means of describing the crucified Christ:

No Dove, no Swan, nor Iv'rie could compare
 With this faire corps, when 'twas by death imbrac'd;
 No rose, nor no vermillion halfe so faire
 As was that pretious blood that interlac'd
 His body, which bright Angels did attend,
 Waiting on him that must to Heaven ascend. (lines 79-84)

That Lanyer believes the language of love poetry to be unsuited to her project of "divinest things" she makes clear again in *Salve Deus* proper. In this later instance, she speaks specifically of women when she rejects "those matchlesse colours Red and White" (line 193) as attracting only "dangers and disgrace" (line 196). Whether she describes Christ or the devoted women who are his closest earthly counterparts, such

imagery is wholly unsuited to this poet's expressions of devotion: on the contrary, she says, "A mind enrich'd with Virtue, shines more bright" (line 197) than "perfit features in a fading face" (line 193). The rejection of Petrarchan conventions applies both to this poet's representations of Christ and to the "Virtue" of the feminine audience she addresses: adhering to the principles of poetic decorum, Lanyer rejects the "Red and White" of secular poetry because it suits neither the *logos* nor the *pathos* of her argument.⁴²

That Lanyer, in her explicit rejection of Petrarchan conventions, subscribes to the rhetorical dictates of decorum seems clear. Her awareness of rhetorical practice in this particular passage is, however, further evinced by her use of the rhetorical trope usually known as *paralepsis* (or *occupatio*). Peacham defines *paralepsis* as "when the Orator faineth and maketh as though he would say nothing in some matter, when notwithstanding he speaketh most of all, or when he saith some thing: in saying he will not say it" (130-31): Lanyer, in her insistence that she rejects Petrarchan imagery as unsuited to her subject nevertheless invokes a great deal of it in saying so.

Puttenham offers what is, in this instance, a more interesting description of the trope he dubs "the Passager": "it is," he says, "when we will not seeme to know a thing, and

⁴² Lanyer famously belies this assertion in *Salve Deus* proper, where she offers a highly Petrarchanized blazon of the resurrected Christ (lines 1305-20). I discuss this passage in detail in this chapter's final section, where I attempt to offer an explanation of its significance by comparing Lanyer's apparently contradictory use of this kind of poetic imagery with George Herbert's similar ambivalence about the role that secular poetic conventions should or should not play in devotional expression.

yet we know it well enough, and may be likened to the maner of women, who as the com[m]on saying is, will say nay and take it" (232). This particular woman, by saying something in saying she will not say it, affirms the usefulness of Petrarchan ornament even to an argument that appears to reject it — but because it is useful to her argument, it ceases to be simply ornament.

My discussion of decorum in Lanyer's poetry has thus far neglected the artificial proof of ethos, largely because this particular species of proof is most clearly addressed in Wilson's description of the last of elocution's four parts, "exornation." Before going on to consider Lanyer's verse in relation to Wilson's discussion of this aspect of rhetorical practice, however, I would like to review first some other possible explanations for Lanyer's stylistic choices. Given that Lanyer most likely wrote her volume during the latter years of the seventeenth century's first decade, a time when most writers were responding in some way to relatively recent changes in the practice and theory of rhetoric, it seems important also to consider other influences that might account for Lanyer's comparatively plain style and her demonstrable awareness of the importance of decorum to the artificial proofs of pathos and logos.

One explanation might be that Lanyer's verse reflects the emerging belief that plain language was more aptly suited to devotional expression. Lanyer does allude to the ineffability of her topic in "To the Ladie *Margaret* Countesse Dowager of Cumberland" when she tells the countess that Christ's "infinite value is not to be comprehended within the weake imagination or wit of man" (lines 7-9). The language

of conventional poetry, it seems, is as inadequate as it is inappropriate to her subject. We might here speculate that Lanyer's recognition of human limitations also suggests a belief that plain words are most suited to expressing something that can only ever approximate divine truth to the extent that our "weake imagination or wit" can grasp. We might also surmise, as Woods does, that Lanyer's verse evinces the familiar Renaissance belief that "the humble prayer of the creature invites the vivifying love of the Creator," an idea linked to "The Pauline notion that human weakness enables and makes visible God's strength" ("Vocation and Authority" 84-85). In other words, we might argue that Lanyer's verse demonstrates her understanding that linguistic modesty is a necessary decorous practice because it makes visible, through an understood but ultimately inexpressible contrast, the love and strength of the Creator.

This explanation is surely to some extent true. At the same time, this sort of claim we might make to account for the apparent plainness of Lanyer's style is also unsettled when we note that this particular dedication, "To the Ladie *Margaret*," uses a great deal of sumptuous imagery. Even if it uses such imagery to support the poet's prosaic claim that she has no such riches to offer, it is nevertheless suggestive that Lanyer repeatedly describes riches such as pearls, gold, diamonds and other "treasures, Arramaticall Gums, incense, and sweet odours" (line 5) throughout a dedication that begins by quoting Saint Peter's "*Silver nor gold have I none*" (line 2). That Lanyer repeatedly invokes imagery of earthly riches to argue that her "unworthy hand" has no poetic bounty to offer seems to unsettle claims we might make on behalf of this

writer's consciously pious adherence to a plain style. Yet this example is another instance of *paralepsis*, and it is one that is equally useful to her argument. And, as an open advocate of the plain style who nevertheless draws on ornamental conventions, Lanyer's verse presents another example of what Graham describes as a rhetorical-antirhetorical paradox, a paradox he identifies in Wyatt's work as "a deep love for a fixed truth known through a particular use of language" (36).

What this dedication, and the example of *paralepsis* I noted earlier, suggest more than an unselfconscious lapse of rhetorical piety is a conscious and deliberate anti-Petrarchism akin to that seen in other contemporary works, perhaps most famously in Shakespeare's "My Mistress's Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun." Despite her disclaimer, Lanyer here seems very capable of using conventionally Petrarchan imagery in an aesthetically pleasing and argumentatively useful way, even as she professes to reject the value of such imagery. Lanyer's anti-Petrarchism is thus also linked with *sermo humilis*, which Auerbach describes as a stylistic mixture that may include a "the sublime, lofty style" that "does not exclude rhetorical ornament but has no need of it" (*Literary Language* 33). That Lanyer's writing bears the marks of contemporary anti-Petrarchism and of Auerbach's *sermo humilis* renders less tenable the oft-expressed belief that Lanyer's stance of authorial humility, as many critics have argued, says more about her awareness of class difference than it does about the extent of her poetic confidence or ability.

Another possible explanation for the comparative plainness of Lanyer's verse is that her work was more profoundly influenced by Ramism than Pembroke's or Wroth's and that she also, as a result, subscribed more closely to its rejection of rhetorical ornament. It is true that Lanyer's verse offers a less encompassing array of the colours of "microscopic rhetoric" than that of her Sidnean counterparts, but it is also true that both Wilson's treatise and Lanyer's verse equally suggest that neither the rhetorician nor the rhetor believed plain speech to be incompatible with traditional rhetorical practice. Like Pembroke's and Wroth's, Lanyer's poetry further indicates that she did not subscribe to the Ramist belief that there could be a linear connection between thought and language. It certainly seems significant that *Salve Deus* proper opens by suggesting as much:

Sith *Cynthia* is ascended to that rest
 Of endlesse joy and true Eternitie,
 That glorious place that cannot be exprest
 By any wight clad in mortalitie. (lines 1-4)

The difficulty of expression Lanyer describes here is, of course, a difficulty of the ineffable kind, which in itself might explain the problem her topic presents to "any wight clad in mortalitie." Even so, Lanyer gives no indication that it is impossible for a mortal wight to have the thought "Of endlesse joy and true Eternitie," but says merely that it "cannot be exprest": that she can assert their ineffability alone suggests that endless joy and eternity do exist conceptually — the problem, it appears, lies not

in the mortal wight's conceiving of this kind of "sensed, immutable truth," as Sloan calls it (*Humanist Rhetoric* 18), but in translating such thoughts into words.

The difficulty of achieving a perfect correspondence between thought and its verbal expression is articulated as well in Lanyer's prose dedication to the Countess of Cumberland. In it, she clearly indicates that meaning lies not so much in words themselves but in their action, that is, in the way they effect thought. "[G]ood Madame," Lanyer addresses her dedicatee, "to the most perfect eyes of your understanding, I deliver the inestimable treasure of all elected soules": this "inestimable treasure" is, she goes on to tell the countess, "also, the mirrour of your most worthy minde" (lines 28-31). For Lanyer, true meaning is found within the reader rather than within the product offered by the writer, even though that product may provide the impetus to understanding. Lanyer suggests as much when she tells the countess that her writing is a kind of catalyst "to bee perused at convenient times" (lines 29-30), yet also insists that thought comprehends more fully and more accurately than words, or at least this poet's words, can express.

Though it would be foolish wholly to discount the credibility of either answer to the question of Lanyer's style I have rehearsed above, such explanations might become less convincing when considered in light of her poetic dedication to the Countess of Pembroke. The proposition that Lanyer uses a lesser array of rhetorical figures than her poetic antecedent because she more firmly subscribes to the Ramist belief that rhetorical figures are superfluous ornament seems difficult to justify if we

acknowledge the sincerity of Lanyer's expressed admiration for the *Psalmes* and Pembroke's extensive and capable use of many of the "colours" of rhetoric throughout. As I argued in Chapter Two, the tropes and figures of rhetoric serve a purpose far beyond that of mere ornament in Pembroke's poetry and, as Pembroke's, Wroth's, and Lanyer's work attests, rhetoric is not incompatible with the plain style. Not only does Lanyer extensively use rhetorical figures, if a lesser variety of them, in her own verse, she also seems well aware of the poetic and expressive value of Pembroke's "microscopic rhetoric."

This certainly appears to be the case when she writes that the "holy Sonnets" (line 121) of her poetic antecedent fill "the eies, the hearts, the tongues, the eares" (line 160), a description that not only expresses the fulfilling plentitude of Pembroke's verse, but one that does so using the rhetorical figure *asyndeton*. Lanyer's use of what Puttenham calls "the Loose langage" stands out in a poem that doesn't use the figures of rhetoric in the same way as her predecessor does in the *Psalmes* but does use a rhetorical figure to express its speaker's appreciation for verse that can fill eyes, hearts, tongues, and ears. Tellingly, Lanyer uses a similar figure, *brachiologia* or "the Cutted comma," when she describes Pembroke's "virtue, wisdom, learning, dignity" (lines 152), and again uses *asyndeton*, a figure Peacham says "serueth most fitly to utter things of like nature" (52) when itemizing Pembroke's virtues as "Her love, her zeale, her faith, and pietie" (line 162). Lanyer describes both the psalmist and her verse in a way that emphasizes the wealth of both poetic and human riches the woman and her

work represent. What the hardline Ramist might read as unnecessary ornament, Lanyer recognizes to be an integral part of effective poetic expression; Lanyer may use a plainer style because she believes it more suited to devotional verse, but to suggest that she rejects the colours of rhetoric doesn't obtain when considered in light of her unequivocal admiration for, and apparent imitation of, the plentitude of Pembroke's *Psalmes*.

Lanyer's resistance to Ramist principles becomes more clear when we consider that Ramist rhetoric, as I explained in Chapter One, claimed that invention, arrangement, and memory were the proper province of logic while style and delivery belonged to rhetoric. As a pre-Ramist rhetorician, Wilson of course believes that all five of these parts belong to rhetoric, a belief that is perhaps nowhere more clear than in his discussion of the four parts of elocution. Wilson's discussion of style also addresses issues that are conventionally associated with invention or arrangement. That he links style with invention is certainly implied by his description of aptness: aptness, he says, is present when a rhetor's stylistic choices "properly agree unto that thing which they signify" and will thus, it seems safe to assume, help the rhetor "plainly express the nature of the same" (191). Wilson also highlights the close connection of style and arrangement in his description of composition, which is, he says, the placement of things "in apt order, that the ear may delight in hearing the harmony" (194). That Lanyer didn't subscribe to the divisive principles of Ramism seems further verified by her demonstrable adherence to Wilson's guidelines. As I

have explained above, Lanyer's verse indicates that she believed style to be inseparable from the inventions of pathos and logos: for this poet, rhetoric is a cohesive whole that is not separable into disciplinary parts. That Lanyer conceived of rhetoric in this way is further suggested by a decorousness that serves a function beyond mere propriety: in fact, Lanyer's volume in many ways confirms what Tuve says about decorum in general, that it is "the basic criterion in terms of which all the others were understood" (192).

Having addressed some possible alternative explanations for Lanyer's "plainest Words," I return to Wilson's discussion of style: I do so to suggest that Lanyer's awareness of decorum's persuasive importance is further suggested by her demonstrable observation of Wilson's guidelines to using exornation, the last of elocution's four parts. As much as the other parts of style Wilson describes seem most closely connected with the artificial proofs of pathos and logos, exornation seems very much related to ethos. The rhetorical virtue of using words in a way that suits the speaker seems integrally bound up with Wilson's insistence that exornation comes only after "we have learned apt words and usual phrases to set forth our meaning and can orderly place them without offense to the ear." Only after we have done so, he maintains, "we may boldly commend and beautify our talk with divers goodly colors and delightful translations, that our speech may seem as bright and precious as a rich stone is fair and orient" (194). I would argue that Lanyer follows Wilson's advice on exornation as much as she appears to subscribe to his guidelines

for plainness, aptness, and composition: there is a distinct difference, however, in that Lanyer practices the first three principles of elocution but chooses, for the most part, to avoid rather than use the last. It may be tempting to read Lanyer's verse as exemplifying Wilson's exornation to the extent that her volume is, it is true, replete with rhetorical figures. But, as I have explained above, these are mostly figures of repetition: Lanyer's volume uses many but not the "divers goodly colors" Wilson's description of exornation includes. This doesn't mean that Wilson's influence is not discernible in this case. On the contrary, that she also seems to believe that she is yet unprepared to "boldly commend and beautify" her own talk and avoids doing so indicates that Lanyer does, in fact, closely follow his advice on exornation.

In other words, I am proposing an alternative or additional explanation for Lanyer's use of a style that is noticeably plainer than either Pembroke's "calculatedly simple" *Psalmes* (Waller, *Mary Sidney* 228) or Wroth's "spare" and "plain" crown sonnets (Beilin, "Constancy" 236). Lanyer indicates that the plain style is a worthy and even necessary artistic goal, and that it is one that she must "strive" to achieve (*Salve Deus* 311). Given the acknowledged, and sometimes represented, difficulty of her task, it is possible that Lanyer writes the way she does because she believes, with Wilson, that it would be indecorous to attempt to "exornate" before she is ready. Wilson's caution implies a suspicion of ornament without meaningful purpose, and it openly suggests that such an offense is more likely to be committed by an overreaching rhetor: "exornation" may sometimes be suited to certain subjects, but it

would be distinctly unsuitable if attempted by the less experienced. It is certainly true that, as Aukxi says, "The naked, unaided, unadorned, and bare quality of truth runs through Christian aesthetic theory like a first principle" (15), but it is also true that, as Auerbach claims, "supreme skill can very well serve the deepest and most sincere feeling" (*Literary Language* 58). Wilson certainly suggests that exornation is a "supreme skill," and Lanyer may very well aspire to use such skill to impart her own "deepest and most sincere feeling." She may, however, be equally aware that exornation might be premature in her case, and would result in the kind of rhetorical excess that would prove indecorous to herself, and thus to her sacred subject.

This poet certainly emphasizes what she professes to be her own artistic limitations in her opening poem, where she describes her "defective" verse (line 5), "rude unpollisht lines" (line 35), her poetry's "poore apparell" and "meane attire" (lines 63-65), her own "untun'd voyce" (line 103), "slender skill" (line 131), and "weake distempred braine and feeble spirits" (line 139). Here, Lanyer asserts quite clearly her own lack of poetic mastery. But we might argue, as many critics have, that these multiple references are perhaps not as sincere as they are cautious — all of these descriptions are, after all, found in the dedication "To the Queenes most Excellent Majestie." These gestures do, as Kim Walker remarks, constitute a "conventional disclaimer" (117), and it may very well be that the poet in quest of patronage is merely posturing, strategically humbling herself before the ultimate of the many social superiors to whom her volume is dedicated.

Yet these kinds of self-effacing and self-deprecating descriptions of the poet and her work are not exclusive to this poem, but are a distinctive and ever-present feature of the volume Lanyer repeatedly refers to as a "little Booke" ("To all vertuous Ladies in general" line 72, "To the Ladie *Arabella*" line 9, "To the Ladie *Katherine* Countesse of Suffolke" line 50, "To the Vertuous Reader" line 9). The "unworthy hand" described in the prose dedication "To the Ladie *Margaret*" can only bring forth what she calls in her dedication to virtuous readers of any and every class her "imperfect indeavours" ("To the Vertuous Reader" line 57). It seems undeniably true that Lanyer, as critics have often pointed out, in many ways asserts a poetic authority of her own: such an assertion does not, however, necessarily also mean that any or all of her expressions of poetic insecurity or pious humility are wholly contrived. Given that Lanyer's intended audience consists of all readers of virtue and not only the royal and aristocratic women from whom she purportedly seeks support, her poetic humility — a humility that is expressed throughout her volume — may very well be as sincere as it is theologically, socially, and professionally interested.

That Lanyer was familiar with and drew on rhetorical conventions should be clear by now. With this point in mind, it seems reasonable to infer that Lanyer may well have been aware of Wilson's definition of "comeliness" and its importance to the successful rhetor. In his description of "exornation," Wilson strongly suggests that fitting humility is a crucial aspect of responsible and successful rhetorical practice. Not only in terms of how Lanyer successfully compounds the biblical, classical, and

historical, as Woods proposes, but also in what is arguably this poet's careful adherence to Wilson's principles of plainness, aptness, composition, and exornation, Lanyer's awareness of the importance of poetic decorum can be seen as equal to the understanding of her male counterparts.

More than illustrating a fine rhetorical sensibility, though, Lanyer's adherence to the principles of decorum evinces her larger cultural awareness. As Lanham explains, its practice is much more than simply a textbook theory of appropriateness in persuasion; decorum, he notes, is "not only a rhetorical criterion but a general test of basic acculturation" (*Handlist* 46). That Lanyer was well-immersed in the culture of her day is further apparent in that she refuses, as much as Auerbach claims Shakespeare does in *1 Henry IV*, to give in to the contemporary trend "toward a strict separation between the sublime and the realm of everyday realities" (*Mimesis* 312). As much as the successful practice of decorum bears witness to any early modern writer's understanding of at least some of the principles of rhetorical theory, and as much as the practice of *sermo humilis* attests to the devout writer's understanding of a specifically Christian decorum, so they also affirm the extent of one's acculturation — to society in general and to rhetorical culture in particular.

This is not to say that Lanyer's demonstrable awareness of decorum's importance means that she always follows its principles in practice. Especially in her volume's central poem, there are moments where Lanyer's speaker comes close to

violating its observance altogether. The first of these moments occurs, of course, near the end of the *Salve's* opening preamble to the Countess of Cumberland. Lanyer's address to the countess begins rather conventionally: it includes an apology for the poet's "wanting skill" (line 14), her asking "pardon" for not writing of the countess's estate, "that delightful place" (lines 17-18), as she had apparently been requested to, a description of the addressee's "Mind so perfect by thy Maker fram'd" (line 42), and a gentle reminder that Christ will reward "Thy patience, faith, long suffering, and thy love" (line 71).⁴³ The speaker's decorous tone quickly grows angry and vengeful, however, as she goes on to describe Judgement Day and the "woe" that will come to "them that double-hearted bee" (line 105), a description that is followed by a rant against the "Deceitfull" (line 112), "the ungodly" (line 113), the tellers of "poysned lies" (line 118), and "wicked monsters" (line 139) that goes on, seemingly inappropriately, for another forty-five or so lines.

⁴³ Lanyer likely refers here to the legal battle Margaret Clifford waged on behalf of her daughter, Anne Clifford, to reclaim what she believed to be her rightful heritage. This "protracted and notorious legal struggle" contesting the will of Anne's father, as Lewalski points out, meant that these women also set themselves "against the entire Jacobean patriarchy" ("Re-writing Patriarchy" 87). According to extant documents, Anne always referred to herself as "sole Daughter and Heir to my illustrious Father," and she finally took possession in 1649 of the lands at Appleby that had been (wrongly) left to her father's brother (Lewalski, "Re-Writing Patriarchy" 90). Lanyer's dedications include "To the Ladie *Anne*, Countesse of Dorset" written to the younger Clifford after her first marriage. In it, Lewalski notes elsewhere, the poet "presents her as the worthy heir to her mother's excellencies and virtues," thus "contrasting a female succession grounded upon virtue and holiness with the male succession through aristocratic titles" ("Of God and Good Women" 211).

Suddenly, though, the ranter seems to snap out of her indecorous reverie, asking for “Pardon (good Madame) though I have digrest / From what I doe intend to write of thee” (lines 145-46). By doing so, the speaker signals her own recognition that she has committed an offence, apologizing as she comes to her senses and promising to resume speaking of her subject and to her audience in an appropriately decorous manner; she then returns to the style and substance with which she began, reaffirming the “speciall care” against “wicked worldlings” Christ takes of the blessed (lines 149-50). Though all of this does indicate the speaker’s awareness of good manners, this poet also knows that decorum is more than just the sheepish observance of arbitrarily imposed standards of politeness. Lanyer seems to know that decorum is not simply a social convention, but is as crucial to the success of any rhetor’s argument as the artificial proof of ethos, pathos, and logos.

In this case, however, it is not the speaker’s observance of but her noticeable lapse from the conventions of decorum that serves her argument; as Lanham points out, “We know decorum is present when we don’t notice it, and vice versa” (*Handlist* 45). Lanham’s observation seems especially relevant here, where the jarring effect of Lanyer’s rant against slander is intensified by a request for pardon that seems equally disruptive. That effect, I would add, is further heightened by the poem’s marginal glosses, the first two of which are subtitles that, seemingly unnecessarily, name her addressee: the first titular gloss, “The Ladie Margaret Countesse of Cumberland” appears next to the poem’s second stanza that begins “To thee great Countesse now I

will applie / My Pen" (lines 9-10), while the second, "To the Countesse of Cumberland," is found next to the line where the speaker appears to come back to her senses and asks "Pardon" for her indecorous digression (line 145).⁴⁴ Lanyer thus seems to be using marginal notations as well as shifts in tone to prompt her reader to notice decorum's return and, by so doing, makes equally certain that her reader doesn't miss noting its intervening absence. Like the speaker's begging of pardon, the addition of these glosses, especially the second, seem deliberately calculated to draw our attention to her indecorous lapse.

These marginal glosses are perhaps strategic in another way as well. Margaret Clifford seems to be this poet's sole addressee, yet the appearance of a second marginal gloss identifying her as such implies, however obliquely, that there is another, different addressee in between. Certainly, Lanyer's discussion of Christ as the champion of "Orphans" (line 47) and "wofull widdows" (line 48) is directed at the countess (and perhaps also her daughter), but the subtitles are arranged in a way that further signals this speaker's awareness that, somewhere in between the two, her speech exceeds the proper bounds of decorum. In other words, though the first title

⁴⁴ It is possible that these glosses may have been added by Lanyer's printer. I would argue, however, that they are most likely the poet's work. Given the attention she gives to addressing her dedicatees, both in the prefatory poems and in the *Salve* proper, it seems fitting that Lanyer would make a point of drawing her anticipated reader's attention to the places where she is specifically addressed within her account of Christ's Passion. Since Lanyer also seems to have played an active role in seeing her volume published, it also seems more than likely that she authorized the addition of these glosses even if the printer was primarily responsible for their inclusion.

clearly identifies an addressee that is assumed until a different subtitle appears, the inclusion of a second subtitle naming the Countess of Cumberland leaves open the possibility that the speaker stopped addressing the countess when her speech became unsuited to doing so, while the first title simultaneously (and paradoxically) confirms that the countess is the intended audience throughout. Strategically as well, that the poet draws attention to her lapse by denoting and asking pardon of the Countess means that she is able also to speak on the wronged Clifford women's behalf without implying their participation in her rant's unseemly behaviour. In a sense, this speaker gets to have it both ways: her rant is at once decorous and indecorous. Far from confirming Lanyer's ignorance of decorum's importance, this ambiguity (and perhaps ambivalence) suggests quite the contrary.

Lanyer's digression also indicates her awareness that decorum is always connected with rhetoric's artificial proofs. Though the speaker's tone seems unsuited to the audience to whom it is addressed — something the speaker herself implicitly and explicitly recognizes — its style is nevertheless suited to the passage's logos, the offences of which the speaker speaks, to the passage's pathos, at least to the extent that her intended audience includes the slanderers her speech attacks, and, most obviously, to the ethos of a speaker who is outraged by earthly injustices. The speaker's polemical attack on slanderers is an argument substantively, stylistically, and paratextually: it brings style and substance together in a way that enhances the force of the argument it makes. At the same time, though, the speaker's apparent

indecorousness is a violation that is highly rhetorical in form, and it is one that the poet herself seems deliberately to draw attention to. Ironically, by using art, the poet appears to distance herself from the practice of art and, by so doing, implies a closer alignment with nature. The passage's obvious vehemence and expressed thirst for vengeance do seem very well suited to this wronged speaker, who may be rhetorically in charge but nevertheless seems emotionally out of control.

Appearing, at least, to disregard the conventions of Renaissance rhetoric's primary guiding principle, this poet seems deliberately to throw decorous caution to the wind in what might be read as a concerted attempt to assert her closer proximity to nature than to art. This is an attempt the *Salve's* poet seems to make throughout her volume. In the collection's opening dedication, for example, the speaker compares herself to men and tells the queen that "they are Scholers, and by Art do write, / So Nature yeelds my Soule a sad delight" (lines 149-50). As Beilin points out, "Naming the source of her creativity as Nature, Lanyer seeks to circumvent the 'Art,' the conventions and rhetoric with which men commonly represent women" (*Redeeming* 185): Lanyer's speaker does, as Beilin remarks, make the distinction between art and nature very clear, and she makes it in indisputably gendered terms. Yet for this poet, art and nature are not as distinct as her speaker suggests in the passage quoted above, nor as distinct as her indecorous rant in the *Salve* proper may suggest. Those lines are, in fact, quickly followed by another implied "but" in the next line and throughout the stanza it begins: "And since all Arts at first from Nature

came" (line 151), the speaker asks, "Why should not She now grace my barren Muse, / And in a Woman all defects excuse?" (lines 155-56). That "but" confirms the affinity of art and nature: in this formulation, the two are ontologically inseparable. There is much in Lanyer's volume that hints at her preference for the natural over the artful, but there is just as much to suggest that, for the poet and the rhetor, the two are mutually constitutive — or interanimating — and not at all separable; as Mueller suggests, Lanyer's verse in many ways focusses on "the working out of culture/nature and reason/passion dichotomies" ("Feminist Poetics" 228).

By drawing attention to her own lapse of decorum in the opening stanzas of the *Salve*, this speaker also confirms her simultaneous understanding of the importance of art. Lanyer's distinct lapses from decorum that seem deliberately intended to contrast with her strict observance of it elsewhere underscore her concern with working out a kind of balance of culture and nature, passion and reason. The ideal, the poet maintains in her dedication to the Countess of Pembroke, is not a separation of art (or culture) and nature but a harmonious balance of the two.

According to this poet, the two meet but do not find perfect harmony at "That sacred Spring where Art and Nature striv'd" (line 81): the ideal union of art and nature is found not at the spring of poetic mythology, where they have long "striv'd," but this poet's dream, where "in equall sov'raintie" they coexist, "Equall in state, equall in dignitie" (lines 93-94). It remains debatable whether Lanyer achieves that ideal, or whether she even believes it to be attainable in the actual world that exists outside of

her dream, but the question of her success does not negate the significance of the attempt she makes.

Later in the *Salve*, we again notice the absence of decorum when the speaker regains her senses after waxing Petrarchan in her description of the resurrected Christ, a passage I will discuss in greater detail later. For now, I would like only to point out that the poet's lamenting request, "Ah! give me leave (good Lady) now to leave / This taske of Beauty which I tooke in hand" (lines 1321-22) is accompanied by yet another marginal gloss that reads "To my Ladie of Cumberland." As with the earlier examples, this gloss seems intended to draw attention to this later lapse in poetic decorum; at the same time, the context of this reappearance is suggestively different from the earlier examples. Because the speaker asks leave to depart from a distinctly Petrarchanized and rapturous "taske of Beauty" and not a vehemently worldly rant, she here attempts to leave off what is, in this case, obviously artful and poetically conventional excess. In other words, this speaker is able to leave the practice of one aspect of art only through the exercise of another, that is, through a return to decorum. Decorum is very much an art that, paradoxically, enables Lanyer's speaker to transcend at least the appearance of poetic artfulness. For Lanyer, decorum is not only the art that hides art, it is also the art that denies art.

IV. *The Art that Denies Art*

It is in their similar denial of poetic art and their necessary practice of it, I would like to suggest, that Lanyer's correspondence with the poet who is perhaps also her nearest male counterpart, George Herbert, is most clear.⁴⁵ Mueller certainly points to this possibility as well as to the importance of decorum in devotional verse when she notes that Lanyer wrote at a time when "calls were sounding for a redirection of poetic energies from secular love to sacred subjects" and cites two sonnets written by the sixteen-year old Herbert as "Probably the best known of these" ("Feminist Poetics" 215).⁴⁶ Other critics have noted additional correspondences between her verse and Herbert's. Catherine Keohane, for example, compares a

⁴⁵ Since they both have some claim to having written the first country-house poem in English, Lanyer's work is often, for good reason, compared with Jonson's. (See, for example Lewalski's "Seizing Discourses and Reinventing Genres," Woods's chapter on the two poets in her book on Lanyer, and Coiro's essay on gender and class in Lanyer's and Jonson's poetry.) Lanyer's work has also been fruitfully compared with Donne's religious verse. Woods includes a section on Lanyer and Donne in her book (141-52), while Schoenfeldt's article identifies a number of biographical, literary, and political similarities between the two poets, and suggests that Lanyer and Donne pursue "analogies between human and divine love with a zest unmatched by most previous or subsequent writers" ("Religious Devotion" 209). Herbert's verse might, on the other hand, be usefully compared with Pembroke's as well. Lewalski, for one, notes that *The Temple* is profoundly indebted to the Book of Psalms (*Protestant Poetics* 51), while Coburn Freer makes the connection between these two devotional poets more explicit when he includes a lengthy discussion of the Sidney-Pembroke psalter in his study of Herbert's poetry.

⁴⁶ These sonnets, "My God, where is that ancient heat towards thee" and "Sure Lord, there is enough in thee," were written as a 1610 New Year's gift for Herbert's devout mother (Mueller, "Feminist Poetics" 215). Herbert writes his sacred verse in what was then a highly secular form; his poems are thus also one of the most salient examples of the poetic movement Mueller describes.

passage from *Salve Deus* with Herbert's "The Cross," identifying the two poets' similar concern with the "contraries" of the Crucifixion in order "to illuminate" what she reads as Lanyer's "innovations" (360): unlike Herbert, whose poem ends with what appears to be a solution, Keohane argues, Lanyer does not aim "to resolve the imbalance" marked by the paradox of "Joy and Griefe both at one instant fram'd" (*Salve Deus* line 1218), but emphasizes instead the comfort Christ's love can bring. In a more recent article, Su Fang Ng opens by invoking Herbert's "supplication for divine patronage" in his poem "Submission" to counter the objections of critics who read the "religious core" of Lanyer's *Salve Deus* as "at best peripheral to her true subject of the 'commendable qualities of women' and at worst merely self-serving 'art for lucre's sake'" (433).⁴⁷ Though Mueller, Keohane, and Ng all point to some interesting connections between Lanyer's and Herbert's work, Woods's comparison of the two is the most extensive. The final chapter of her recent book, in fact, includes a section of several pages that focusses on identifying some parallels between Lanyer's poetry and that of Herbert and Milton (*Lanyer* 152-62), and she undertakes

⁴⁷ These quotations Ng identifies as respectively coming from page 97 of Betty Travitsky's introduction to Lanyer in her anthology of early modern women writers, *The Paradise of Women*, and from page 388 of a 1936 University of Virginia Ph.D. dissertation by Charlotte Kohler entitled "Elizabethan Woman of Letters, the extent of her literary activities" (449 n. 1).

this comparison with the aim of showing Lanyer's poetry can provide "a new and useful perspective on theirs" (153).⁴⁸

Critics certainly haven't missed some of the similarities of Lanyer's verse and Herbert's, some obvious and some not so obvious. Other critics implicitly suggest some other parallels between their work. Beilin, for example, doesn't explicitly make the connection between the two poets, but she does note that the *Salve*, by presenting a series of dedicatory pieces that are followed by *Salve Deus* proper and concluded by what is perhaps the first country house poem in English, "achieves an effect similar to that of a monumental triptych: the large central panel conveys the crucial doctrine by revelation of a divine event; each side panel relates that divine image to the human landscape and to particular lives" (*Redeeming Eve* 206), while Coiro similarly describes the volume's arrangement as "Lanyer's triptych of praise, passion, and country-house poem" (365).⁴⁹ As the observations of these critics imply without making explicit, the

⁴⁸ Woods suggests it is possible that Lanyer and Herbert knew each other. George Herbert was a distant cousin of Philip Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke's son, who wed Anne Clifford, the Countess of Cumberland's daughter, in 1630: this was the second marriage for both. Margaret Clifford is, of course the primary dedicatee of Lanyer's volume, and her collection's final poem refers to the Clifford women's struggle to regain what they believed to be Anne's rightful inheritance. George Herbert was installed as rector of Bemerton and Wilton parishes through the benevolence of the Earls of Pembroke, first William (Wroth's lover) and then Philip. It is also possible that Herbert read Lanyer's book and that she may have read *The Temple* when it was published after Herbert's death in 1633. All of this is speculation, since, as Woods points out, there is no record of their having met nor of their having read each other's work (*Lanyer* 152).

⁴⁹ It might be more than coincidence that Anne Clifford commissioned a now well-known triptych in 1646 or 1647, which hangs in Appleby castle and is reproduced

correspondence between Lanyer's work and Herbert's is perhaps most obvious when the *Salve's* tripartite arrangement is compared with *The Temple's*. Herbert's volume of devotional poetry is, like Lanyer's, arranged in three distinct sections: the first, "The Church Porch" can be read as analogous to Lanyer's prefatory dedications in that they both offer an introduction to their volumes' central devotional works, the second, "The Church," resembles *Salve Deus* proper in terms of relative length and devotional importance, and the final section, "The Church Militant," can be read as corresponding to Lanyer's "The Description of Cooke-ham" not only in their shared use of heroic couplets, but also in the similar way in which they close their respective volumes with a kind of history — of the Church in Herbert's case and of the Countess's history with Cookeham in Lanyer's.

There are many other parallels, both general and particular, that might and have been drawn between Lanyer's work and Herbert's. I would, however, like to offer a new, additional perspective on their similarities and suggest that it is in their

in the recently published edition of her *Diary* edited by Katherine O. Acheson (New York: Garland, 1995). As Herz describes it, the triptych's center panel depicts Anne's mother, the Countess of Cumberland, with three books behind her and an edition of the Psalms (not Pembroke's) in her hand (for some reason, Herz doesn't mention that Anne's father and her two deceased brothers are also depicted), while the left panel shows Anne at age fifteen and the right at fifty-six, her age when the triptych was painted. The side panels, Herz points out, "reveal forty-seven books, a veritable survey course of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers, including Spenser, Daniel, Donne . . . Herbert, King, Greville, Wotton, Montaigne, Cervantes," as well as the work of some patristic and medieval writers — but no Lanyer or any other woman writer (131). The *Salve* might, however, be obliquely present in the triptych's visual approximation of the tripartite structure Lanyer uses in her poetic tribute to Clifford, Clifford's mother, and all virtuous women.

mutual recognition that the practice of art is at once inadequate and necessary to devotional expression that Lanyer and Herbert, as poets and as rhetors, most closely correspond. Both poets know, as Peacham does, that the nature of the divine can only be expressed with the help of art: "So infinite and incomprehensible is the nature of Almighty God, and mans capacitie of so small a compasse," Peacham writes, "that no one attribut of God can be conceived by mans weake understanding without the helpe of earthly images and naturall propertie well known to man, and therefore as much as mans eye cannot behold invisible vertues, nor his understanding able to apprehend the incomprehensible wisdom" (12). As much as Lanyer and Herbert may profess to value "Nature" over "Art" as the most fitting means of devotional expression, they also confirm, as Peacham does, that art is necessary to communicating in a comprehensible yet always imperfect way the nature of the divine. Despite their claims to the contrary, both of these poets strive not to transcend art but to attain an ideal union of art and nature: at the same time, though, Lanyer and Herbert's verse suggests that they also share the equally important recognition that this ideal is as elusive as their striving for it is necessary.

Like his female contemporary, Herbert explicitly rejects established poetic conventions — or what Lanyer calls the "Art" by which "Scholars" write — as indecorously unsuited to devotional verse. Herbert makes his rejection of art especially clear in his well-known "Jordan" poems. "Jordan (1)," for example, opens with questions that can only be rhetorical, "Who says that fictions only and false hair

/ Become a verse? Is there in truth no beauty?" (lines 1-2), and it does so in order to refute the value of the kinds of poetic fictions he associates with "false hair." Fittingly enough, the poem's final stanza begins by valorizing nature over art: it opens with the anti-Petrarchan assertion that "Shepherds are honest people" (line 11) and concludes with the equally assertive statement that this poet envies "no man's nightingale or spring" (line 13). Elaborate and familiar poetic metaphors, such as nightingales, or conventional inspirational tropes, such as springs of the kind that Lanyer also rejects, are not the fitting tools of a poet who, he claims, has a great deal more admiration for those "Who plainly say, *My God, My King*" (line 15).

"Jordan (2)" concludes by again affirming the value of the authentic self and thus of the plain style: "*There is in love a sweetness ready penned,*" the speaker has learned, "*Copy out only that, and save expense*" (lines 17-18). The speaker has learned the value of plainness and authenticity only after succumbing to the pitfalls of art. When he first began to write lines "of heav'nly joys," he says, "I sought out quaint words, and trim invention" (lines 1-3). The poet, however, soon learned that "lustre" (line 2) not only obscures one's meaning by "Curling with metaphors a plain intention" and "Decking the sense" (lines 5-6), but that linguistic excess also impedes its user, now distracted by "thousands of notions" running in his brain (line 7), from comprehending the truth he strives to express. In these poems and in others, Herbert repeatedly asserts the value of the plain style not only to devotional expression but also to religious comprehension.

In "The Quiddity," Herbert directly questions the appropriateness of artful contrivance in devotional verse, and he also seems to refer specifically to Donne's (and perhaps also to Wroth's) poetic practices. It is, in fact, difficult not to think of Donne's and Wroth's crowns of sonnets with the speaker's opening insistence, "My God, a verse is not a crown" (line 1). As vehement as this rejection might be, and as much as Herbert explicitly rejects poetic artfulness throughout his verse, his expressed belief is simultaneously unsettled by the poem's implied interest in "quiddity." According to the *OED*, this word has two seemingly opposing definitions: first, quiddity can denote "The real nature or essence of a thing," a meaning identified as first appearing in J. Sanford's sixteenth-century translation of Agrippa, and second, the word can also denote "A subtlety or captious nicety in argument; a quirk, quibble," as it does in a 1539 work by Taverner.

Though a verse, "The Quiddity" insists, "is no office, art, or news" (line 9), the poem's very title associates it with both nature and art, with true essence and with the niceties of argument. What might appear to be the poet's unambiguous rejection of Donnean poetic practice is, in fact, challenged by quiddity's dual, and seemingly paradoxical, meaning. Yet its meaning becomes less paradoxical when read in context: because it holds both of these meanings, "quiddity" can also be read as a word that connotes a bridge between logic (what is empirically provable) and rhetoric (what is arguably true). The same holds true for Herbert's poetic corpus as a whole: though it explicitly rejects the kind of art found in elaborate poetic forms like the corona, it

simultaneously acknowledges the necessity of art in enabling even the plainest of poetic expression. Peacham's words affirm and Herbert's verse suggests that images drawn from nature may help us to comprehend the divine, but art is necessary to bring the two together in a comprehensible way: only by using the "quiddity" that refers to the niceties of argument are we able to communicate the kind of "quiddity" that means the true essence of a thing that is, in this case, divine.

Like Lanyer's, Herbert's verse seems often to contradict what he professes about the nature and the purpose of devotional verse. One notable instance relates to his explicit rejection of complex and regimented poetic forms he articulates in the opening line of "The Quiddity." His insistence that "a verse is not a crown" is blatantly and directly contradicted by at least two of his poems, "A Wreath" and "Sin's Round." In the first, the poem opens by offering "A wreathed garland of deserved praise" (line 1) which, once the speaker comes to know and to practice God's ways, will become "a crown of praise" (line 12). The way to transform a wreath into a crown, the poem argues, is through learning that life's path to God is "Straight as a line" (line 6), that death lies in "crooked winding ways" (line 4), and that salvation is found through the "simplicity" that is "far above deceit" (lines 7-9). Plainness and simplicity, not art and deceit, are the way to "know thy ways" (line 10), the poem insists. At the same time, the implied form of the poem — a metaphorical wreath that may possibly become a crown — suggests that the speaker has not yet achieved the artless simplicity that he associates with divinity and, by extension, with devotion.

Herbert's poem does not, like Wroth's and Donne's crowns of sonnets, make a formal circle. But the poem's use of rhetorical repetition does replicate the "crooked winding ways" of its speaker even as it invokes the circular images of wreath and crown: read in this way, Herbert's poem is not much different from Wroth's deliberately artful and far from simple "crowne of Sonetts." The poem's first two lines, "deserved praise, / Of praise deserved" is an instance of the rhetorical figure *antimetabole*, the figure that (like a wreath or crown) suggests circularity. Herbert's use of this inherently circular figure differs dramatically from Wroth's (and from Pembroke's), though, in that it is carried over two lines. Yet it is precisely in this difference that the poem's closest similarity to Wroth's twofold invention of corona and labyrinth lies. Like Wroth's labyrinthine crown, the *antimetabole* of Herbert's poem suggests interruption even as the figure alludes to continuity: Herbert uses this figure in a way that mimics the changefulness of "crooked winding ways" even as its inherent circularity suggests constancy.

Herbert's poem bristles with rhetorical figures of repetition that produce the simultaneous effect of continuity and change. Every line of the poem, in fact, uses a figure that extends into the next. These figures are found in the *isocolon* of "wherein I live, / Wherein I die" (lines 4-5), in the *anadiplosis* of "life is straight, / Straight as a line," in the *conduplicatio* of "to thee, / To thee" (lines 6-7), the *diacope* of "far above deceit, / Than deceit" and "above simplicity. / Give me simplicity," as well as in the repetition of "live" and "know" in the first three lines of the poem's final quatrain.

Just because Herbert expressly rejects poetic artfulness in poems such as "The Quiddity" doesn't mean that he believes that it is possible wholly to transcend art: just as the word itself means both true essence and rhetorical finesse, so the poet must rely on the art of rhetoric in order to express something approximating true essence. It might not be a stretch to say as well that Herbert's "The Wreath" is even more artful than Wroth's highly contrived and unapologetic "crowne of Sonetts": Herbert does, after all, not rely on an established poetic form invented by another but devises his own means of achieving an effect akin to that of Wroth's more conventional corona.⁵⁰

Herbert uses a similar, and more obvious, technique in "Sin's Round," where the poem explicitly invokes circular imagery in its opening lines, "Sorry I am, my God, sorry I am, / That my offences course it in a ring" (lines 1-2). Circularity is, of course, further suggested by the repetition of "Sorry I am" in the first line. But circularity is also indicated in the poem's form, which is much more suggestive of a poetic corona than "The Wreath": "Sin's Round" is, in fact, a kind of corona writ small. In this poem, the final line of each stanza becomes the first line of the next, much as the final line of each sonnet within a corona is also the first line of the

⁵⁰ Near the end of his *Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry*, Vickers offers rhetorical analyses of some sample English poems, including Herbert's "The Wreath." Vickers identifies a number of the same rhetorical figures as I do, and he also points to a number of corresponding shifts in emphases. Vickers, however, focuses on how the poem uses these figures in a way that "contributes to the over-all circular structure" (165), but he doesn't consider how the poem's rhetorical form also mimics the speaker's "crooked winding ways" (line 4).

following poem; as Schoenfeldt points out, "the speaker confesses his 'sin of self-love'" even as the poem's form "completes the closed circuit of shame and desire he describes" ("Sexuality and Spirituality" 277-78). Like a corona, the poem's ending, "Sorry I am, my God, sorry I am" (line 18), brings us back to where we began: in this case, the poem's form is meant to depict the endless circle of sin in which this speaker seems hopelessly trapped, much as Wroth's corona brings her speaker back to the beginning of the strange labyrinth wondering where to turn.

My discussion of Herbert thus far may seem better suited for inclusion in my earlier chapter on Wroth, and it is true that there is much about Herbert's poetry to suggest an illuminating comparison with Wroth's work in general and with her "crowne of Sonnets" in particular. The point I am making here, though, has not so much to do with the ways that Herbert uses the colours of rhetoric to juxtapose and to contrast crookedness and simplicity, as Wroth does so memorably in her corona, but to show how his verse strives for a correspondence of art and nature that is akin to the ideal Lanyer extols in her dedication to Pembroke, even as he too explicitly rejects artfulness. Herbert's expressed belief that a verse cannot or should not be a crown and his advocacy of a plain style as the only mode of expression suited to devotion are challenged as much by these poems as Lanyer's profession of anti-Petrarchan poetic standards seems undone by her simultaneous reliance on its conventions. At the same time, however, as much as such plainness is a rhetorical paradox in that it is, as Graham argues, simultaneously antirhetorical and rhetorical,

so anti-Petrarchan verse cannot adopt its counter-position unless it is also identifiably Petrarchan. As Heather Dubrow says, "a definition of anti-Petrarchism necessarily draws on that perilous enterprise of defining Petrarchism" (6), a process that is as necessary for poets who write in the mode as much as it is for the critics who discuss it.

In many ways, Herbert's poetry reveals that he shares with Lanyer the belief that Christ's worth, as the latter points out in the closing line of "To the Ladie *Anne*, Countesse of Dorset," "is more than can be shewed by Art" (line 144). Like Herbert, Lanyer also explicitly rejects conventional poetic imagery as suitable for devotional expression. Yet, as much as she may profess to reject art, Lanyer's verse also confirms, as Guibbory suggests, the conventional belief that "the language of human, erotic love is the only language we have for apprehending divine, spiritual love" (203). That Lanyer recognizes the necessity of art to devotional expression is evident in the way she relies on even as she expressly rejects Petrarchan imagery. In the *Salve* proper, Lanyer often uses such imagery: Peter's "hot Love," Christ knows, will "proove more cold than Ice" (line 348) when he thrice denies him, Pilate suffers pangs akin to those of a Petrarchan lover when the threats of the people prove to be the "deepest wounding dart" (line 917), and the men who persecute Christ, the speaker maintains, have "hearts more hard than flint, or marble stone" (line 1002). Since all of these descriptions refer to guilty men, it is obvious that Lanyer's usage marks her anti-Petrarchism in that she deploys some of its conventional imagery to describe hateful

men and not the scornful stony mistresses who usually possess hearts of ice. Much as her observance of decorum confirms the importance of art to her work even as she explicitly rejects it, so Lanyer's Petrarchan imagery demonstrates that only art can successfully counter art: by appropriating the imagery of masculine love poetry in order to use it against itself, Lanyer acknowledges its usefulness even as her appropriation rejects its usual association with women.

Lanyer's verse takes a very different turn, however, when she describes the resurrected Christ:

This is that Bridegroom that appeares so faire,
 So sweet, so lovely in his Spouses sight,
 That unto Snowe we may his face compare,
 His cheekes like skarlet, and his eyes so bright
 As purest Doves that in the rivers are,
 Washed with milke, to give the more delight;
 His head is likened to the finest gold,
 His curled lockes so beauteous to behold;

Blacke as a Raven in her blackest hew;
 His lips like skarlet threeds, yet much more sweet
 Than is the sweetest hony dropping dew,
 Or hony combes, where all the Bees doe meet;

Yea, he is constant, and his words are true,
 His cheekes are beds of spices, flowers sweet;
 His lips, like Lillies, dropping downe pure mirrhe,
 Whose love, before all worlds we doe preferre. (lines 1305-20)

I have quoted this passage at length because it marks such a distinct difference in style from the rest of the *Salve* and because it directly contradicts Lanyer's explicit rejection of things Petrarchan, the "Dove," "Swan," "Iv'rie," and "rose" she dismisses as inadequate to her project ("To the Ladie *Katherine*" lines 78-80).⁵¹ In her description of Christ, one that Patricia Phillippy describes as a "highly artful image of the resurrected Savior" (100), Lanyer seems to contradict everything she professes about her own poetic alignment with nature and her rejection of art as inadequate to expressing the divinity of her subject: in fact, it seems safe to say that she not only relies on the conventions of poetic artfulness, but that she pulls out practically every Petrarchan trick in the blazoning book.

⁵¹ Schoenfeldt notes that this description "is not so much sacred parody, by which the poet turns the language of erotic love to sacred uses, as it is a reminder of the sacred origins of erotic convention in the Song of Songs" ("Religious Devotion" 216). Schoenfeldt is not the only one of Lanyer's readers to identify the influence of Canticles in her work: in her comparatively early discussion of the *Salve*, Beilin observes that the Song of Songs, as well as the parable of the wise virgins not only "provided images central to Lanyer's attempts to place women at the heart of Christianity," but that she also "developed their potential with new intensity and completeness" (*Redeeming* 179). Subsequent discussions of biblical imagery in Lanyer's work include those found in McBride's "Sacred Celebration" and Wall's "Our Bodies / Our Texts."

Earlier the *Salve's* poet claimed that it is "A Matter farre beyond my barren skill, / To shew with any Life this map of Death" (lines 313-14), but she certainly manages to bring the resurrected Christ to life. That she does so by offering an intensely visual and highly metaphorical blazon seems to counter not only the claims she makes in her dedicatory poem, but also those she reiterates in the *Salve* proper when she insists that the poem's author can only truly behold the Passion story "with the eye of Faith" (line 318), and later tells the Countess that she must likewise comprehend what exceeds this poet's skill to write with her own "eie of Faith" (line 1169). Earlier, though, the poet does tell her readers that "Heere they may see a Lover much more true / Than ever was since first the world began" ("To the Ladie *Katherine*" lines 52-53) and, despite her numerous professions to the contrary, she ultimately makes good on that promise. Many poets, as Rambuss says, "activate the corporeal as an expressive mechanism of devotion" (17), and Lanyer, like her poetic counterparts, depicts the divinest of lovers in what might seem to be the most secular of terms.

The style of Lanyer's rapt description of Christ as bridegroom is not out of keeping with many contemporary expressions of devotion, nor does it counter the expressive doctrine of *sermo humilis*. What might seem to be an inappropriate excess of Petrarchan hyperbole in a poem that is, for the most part, written in a markedly plain style, is not extraneous but necessary to its meaning. To put the matter more clearly, I turn briefly to C.Q. Drummond's discussion of Raleigh's "The passionate

mans Pilgrimage.” Anyone who has read the poem will surely remember its lavish description of heaven and the sharp contrast it makes with the earthly reality of Raleigh’s anticipated execution, described in the poem’s closing stanza:

Seeing my flesh must die so soone,
 And want a head to dine next noone,
 Just at the stroke when my vaines start and spred
 Set on my soule an everlasting head. (qtd. in Drummond 35)

Unlike his imaginings of the heaven he will soon greet, Raleigh describes this forthcoming event in notably plain terms, free of the metaphorical tropes that appear everywhere in the poem’s preceding five stanzas. The reason for this difference, as Drummond points out, is that “In this last part of the poem, Raleigh does not attempt to describe a wholly theoretic realm” (35). Lanyer’s representation of Christ resurrected is as “wholly theoretic” as Raleigh’s account of heaven: just as “Raleigh knows nothing of heaven” (Drummond 35), so Lanyer knows nothing of this love that “before all worlds we doe preferre” (line 1320). Like Raleigh as well, Lanyer understood the difference between the two styles Drummond refers to as “golden” (shorthand for a style also called “Petrarchan, sugared, ornate, courtly, sweet, pleasant, eloquent”) and “moral” (shorthand for the style also described as “drab, flat, native . . . didactic, plain”) (23), and she equally understands how to use them both. Though Drummond himself doesn’t make this point, Raleigh’s poem, as much as Lanyer’s, exemplifies the Christian mixed style known as *sermo humilis*.

As much as she also rejects “those matchlesse colours Red and White” (line 193) in *Salve Deus* proper, like Herbert ascribing of “Pure red and white” (“Dullness” line 12) to Christ, Lanyer attempts to rehabilitate and recoup such imagery for devotional purposes: this is true not only in the well-known blazon quoted above, but also in her later assertion that the Countess to whom she writes can in her volume find

. . . a view of those,

Whose worthy steps you doe desire to tread,

Deckt in those colours which our Saviour chose;

The purest colours both of White and Red. (lines 1825-28)

Lanyer does claim that the Passion is too much for her meagre skill (or anyone’s skill) to tell because it is a story “that whole Worlds with Bookes would fill” (line 315), a disclaimer that also signals the poet’s apparent belief that the achievement of *energeia*, Aristotle’s “bringing-before-the-eyes,” is beyond her mimetic ability. At the same time, the heavily Petrarchanized description of the resurrected Christ decked out in “White and Red” she refers to in the passage quoted above is, it seems safe to say, the most vivid example of bringing-before-the-eyes in her entire volume.

It is true that the poem’s speaker (again) checks herself and quickly retreats: she knows she treads on dangerously idolatrous ground and “may deceave / My selfe, before I can attaine the land” (lines 1323-24). Yet the poet doesn’t seem to regret nor does she apologize for her lavish use of art. It is “no coincidence,” as Wall points out,

that Lanyer “also draws on and revises the rhetoric of embodiment in her presentation of her work” (*Imprint* 323): like Pembroke before her, Lanyer uses highly physical imagery in her attempt to capture something of divinity. Rather than affirming the inadequacy of such imagery to her project of “divinest things,” Lanyer seems to indicate that intensely physical imagery, or “the rhetoric of embodiment,” is what enables herself and her audience to comprehend Christ’s true nature by also comprehending, in physical terms, the Christian mystery of the incarnation — or what her speaker calls “his perfect picture” that will remain “Deepely engraved” in the “holy shrine” of the countess’s heart (lines 1325-28). As much for Lanyer as for Herbert, it is the quiddity of argumentative nicety, what might otherwise appear to be superfluous ornament, that allows at least something of the quiddity of true essence to be conveyed and to be comprehended, to be deeply engraved in one’s heart.

It seems likely as well that Lanyer’s Petrarchan blazon is meant also to be read as a self-reflexive affirmation of poetic value and, by extension, of her own poetic worth. There is no mistaking the allusion to Lanyer’s own work in the lines that proclaim Christ’s lips sweeter “Than is the sweetest hony dropping dew, / Or hony combes, where all the Bees doe meet” (lines 1315-16). Especially when read in relation to what the speaker says about “hony” and “sugar” in the dedication to Pembroke, it seems that something closer to nature is, in Lanyer’s view, more adequate to representing Christ as Saviour than something more artfully refined; as she clearly tells us in the earlier poem, honey may not be sugar but it “is both wholesome, and

delights the taste" (line 197). Refined sugar may be too artful a metaphor for Christ's lips or for poetic devotion, but it is also clear that neither divine nor poetic nature can be adequately expressed without the refinement of art: as Lanyer also suggests in her dedication to Pembroke, the ideal is not for one to strive against the other, but for art and nature to coexist in "equall sov'raintie" (line 93).

Lanyer's speaker knows as well as Herbert's that "*There is in love a sweetness,*" but she also knows that the thought of love is not "*ready penned*" ("Jordan (2)" line 17) — Lanyer understands, with Herbert, that the transcription of devotion always to some extent depends on the expense of art. Though Herbert may believe that "false hair" is not all that commends a verse, he is unable to avoid expressing in conventionally poetic language what would, it seems safe to say, be otherwise ineffable. For Lanyer, this awareness, I think, becomes especially apparent as the *Salve's* narrative draws to a close, where the "sweetness" the poet describes in her dedication to Pembroke makes a stunning reappearance. Beginning with the metaphorical "Sweet holy rivers" and "pure celestiall springs" (line 1729) of salvation freely offered, or the "Swift sugred currents" (line 1731) made accessible through Christ's willing sacrifice, words that denote sweetness appear with marked frequency over the next nine stanzas. Sweetness is, as well, denoted in a myriad of possible linguistic forms: salvation's sweet meaning is adverbial, adjectival, nominal, and verbal. The sweetness of the Saviour's love evidently comes in many and all forms. Thus the expression of that love must be both as low and as high as the doctrine of

sermo humilis demands: because “the divine style,” as Auerbach reminds us, “is sweet and plain” (66), its adequate expression requires all of the means at our disposal.

The salvation offered by Christ later becomes metaphorically more nourishing than those sweet rivers and springs alone suggest. In the succeeding stanza, “This hony dropping dew of holy love” becomes “Sweet milke” (lines 1737-38) in a metaphor that underscores Christ’s analogous affinity to women; a few lines later, Christ’s “sweetnesse” is emphasized with its repetition in two adjoining lines (1742 and 1743), marking an instance of *conduplicatio*. Repetition of “sweetnesse” includes its identical appearance in the rhetorical figure *polyptoton* found in the “sweetnesse sweet’ned” of two separate stanzas (lines 1745 and 1769), in the apparent *syneciosis* of “Majestie and Sweetnesse” (line 1753), and in the appearance again of *conduplicatio* in the “sweetnesse” (line 1792), and “great sweetnesse” (line 1793) of the closing and opening lines of two adjacent stanzas. The metaphor also appears in the adjectival “sweet JESUS” (line 1766), “sweet quietnesse” (line 1771), “Sweet foode of life” (line 1787), and in the nominal “sweet” (line 1789): its final appearance is in “the delicious sweetnes of his grace” (line 1802) tasted by Christ’s apostles. What all of these figurative uses of “sweetness” emphasize, especially when read in light of Lanyer’s own description of her verse as metaphorical “hony,” is that the comprehension of divine love is attainable only with the help of art — be it poetic or rhetorical.

It is telling as well that Lanyer, like Herbert, also offers up a poetic crown of her own. As she tells the Countess of Cumberland near the end of *Salve Deus*,

And knowe, when first into this world I came,
 This charge was giv'n me by th'Eternall powres,
 Th'everlasting Trophie of thy fame,
 To build and decke it with the sweetest flowres
 That virtue yeelds; Then Madame, doe not blame
 Me, when I shew the World but what is yours,
 And decke you with that crowne which is your due,
 That of Heav'ns beauty Earth may take a view. (lines 1457-64)

Here, Lanyer indicates that she has made good on the promise offered to Anne Clifford in the earlier dedication "To the Ladie *Anne*, Countesse of Dorcet", where she asks the Countess of Cumberland's daughter, "the Heire apparant of this Crowne" (line 65), to "weare this Diadem I present to thee" (line 63). The coronal metaphor is perhaps the most suggestive of poetic art, since it is associated not only with highly contrived poetic forms but also with the crown of the poet laureate.

Lanyer's "hony" may not, as she herself claims, be as refined as some other poets' "sugar," but this does not mean that it is not sweet. Like Herbert, Lanyer may seem to reject the primacy of art in devotional verse, but she cannot finally deny its importance: she knows as well as Herbert that sweetness of the devotional kind cannot be merely copied out. Though it seems arguable that Herbert's and Lanyer's verse equally challenges some of the claims they themselves make about the insufficiency and inappropriateness of art to their devotional projects, this is not to say

that either of these poets is unaware of what he or she is doing. The point I am making about both Lanyer and Herbert is essentially the same, that is, that no matter how much they might appear (or even want) to reject the primacy of art in poetic devotion, they equally affirm — and understand — that artful rhetorical and poetic practice are necessary to devotional expression. Art, it seems, is as necessary to denying art as it is to hiding it.

I wholly agree with Ng's assertion that, when Lanyer's devotional verse is compared with that of a male poet such as Herbert, it becomes clear that the sincerity of her religious devotion "has been too easily dismissed by some critics as at best peripheral to her true subject," whether that subject is identified as her feminist agenda and/or her self-serving attempt to win social or financial compensation for her efforts (433). At the same time, it also seems that Lanyer's approach can be read as the inverse of Pembroke's and Wroth's. While both of the Sidney women use secular love and secular imagery as a means of expressing the sacred, Lanyer appears to use the sacred in order to argue on behalf of a secular cause: Coiro might, in fact, be right to suggest that Lanyer shares more in common with poets like Jonson than she does with Pembroke and Wroth (359). When Lanyer's verse is compared with that of her Sidnean counterparts, it seems that the *Salve's* critics are not entirely unjustified in arguing that its expressions of religious devotion serve primarily to enable another, secular agenda.

I would, however, suggest that not only these but also Lewalski's less suspicious evaluation are somewhat off the mark: she, too, arguably underestimates Lanyer's authenticity when she notes that the author of the *Salve* appears to be "sincerely, if not very profoundly, religious." Lewalski does, however, hit the early modern nail on the head when she goes on to point out that this woman of her day "interprets her experience of life in religious categories" ("Of God and Good Women" 207). It may be true that Lanyer uses the sacred to express a secular cause, but it is also true that she uses the language of secular argument to represent the most sacred of all things. What Lanyer's dedication to Pembroke also makes clear, as Mary V. Silcox points out, is that she believes her predecessor worthy to be esteemed above her brother because "her poetry enlightens others spiritually" ("Lanyer and Virtue" 296). As in Wroth's and Pembroke's verse, the dichotomy of "sacred vs. secular" that Thomas Roche calls "hideous" (154) doesn't obtain in Lanyer's *Salve* any more than it does in Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts" or in Pembroke's *Psalmes*: the apparent primacy of one does not obliterate or supersede the other. On this point, I can only agree with Schoenfeldt's assertion that "Lanyer's religious subject is not merely window-dressing for protofeminist polemic but essential to her understanding of the central place of women in the world" ("Religious Devotion" 212). As Lewalski's words also suggest and Lanyer's example most clearly illustrates, Renaissance habits of thought are at once sacred and secular, and one can never be wholly divorced from the other.

I will again stress that early modern habits of thought were as rhetorical as they were religious, and argue that Lanyer's verse offers yet another clear example that women shared with men these predominant habits of thought. Not to recognize this point is, I think, to do early modern women a grave disservice. Though it seems quite true that some lingering notions we have about gender keep us from appreciating the extent to which early modern women participated in and helped to shape their world, I will also readily acknowledge that our exclusion of women from full participation is to some extent inevitable. As Grossman points out, our attempts to understand and appreciate the writing of early modern women are "complicated by the fact that the protocols with which we read the principal genres of early modern literature turn out — now that we consider the fact — to be gendered" (1-2). Like Pembroke's and Wroth's, though, Lanyer's example suggests that our reading protocols haven't been revised enough: like that of most of her contemporaries, Lanyer's work remains relegated to a literary circle that is too often read as distinctively and exclusively feminine.

In his introduction to a recently published collection of essays on Lanyer, most of which are discussed above, Grossman also suggests that each contribution in the volume "represents, first and foremost, an attempt to read Lanyer as a poet whose work is capable of sustaining the sort of open-minded close attention to language, rhetoric, and thought with which we are accustomed to approach the works of, say, Donne or Jonson" (6). It is true that criticism of early modern women's writing has

become less ghettoizing in the strategies and approaches it uses to interpret their work as both literary art and cultural documents, yet it is equally clear that we need to go further than we have in order to free ourselves from our own constraining habits of thought. Though this poet's aim may be to celebrate and defend women, her use of rhetoric cannot be correspondingly circumscribed within what Lewalski calls Lanyer's "community of good women" (*Writing Women* 213). That its author is a woman may be readily apparent in the substance of the *Salve*, but — like Pembroke's *Psalmes* and Wroth's "crowne of Sonetts" — her volume doesn't support Germaine Greer's belief that women writers of Lanyer's day were all "untrained, ill-equipped, isolated and vulnerable" ("Introduction" 1): indeed, the extent to which Greer's claim misses the mark becomes especially clear when their work is read in rhetorical terms.

Conclusion

There are some notable poetic and biographical differences among the three writers I have considered in this study, who also share some important similarities. Perhaps the most significant of the latter is that the verse of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer equally confirms their rhetorical expertise. Even as their work attests to their active participation in literary and rhetorical culture, it also reveals them to be subtle and attentive thinkers. That this is the case is perhaps nowhere more evident than in their shared ability to think and to write in what might, in less capable hands, seem to be hopelessly muddled ways. It has been said that only a sophisticated mind can hold contradictory things in place at the same time: that these women are able to do so, again and again, attests to the extent of their development. Often, it is their successful negotiation of contraries that makes their poetic arguments convincing and comprehensible, and their rhetorical abilities have much to do with the measure of their success. In particular, their representations of devotion and of divinity (whether

Hebrew, pagan, Christian, or a combination thereof) are understood and expressed in seemingly paradoxical terms. It is precisely those binary oppositions that, sometimes together and sometimes separately, make their poetry as interesting and as vital as it is: as I have explained throughout, those binaries include the abstract and the concrete, the ineffable and expressible, the sacred and the secular, art and nature — and, of course, logic and rhetoric.

Thus Lynette Hunter, in her recent essay “Feminist Thoughts on Rhetoric,” seems quite right to propose that the history of rhetoric offers us possible models for overcoming the theoretical deadlock between absolutists who, like Parsons, claim that language is adequate to representation and relativists who oppose this claim. The history of rhetoric, Hunter goes on to argue, presents repeated attempts at articulating at once feeling and truth: “feelings,” she observes, “are often unauthorized modes of knowing,” and, conversely, “the rational is [often] an authorized feeling.” Thus, she proposes, “aesthetics and epistemology are closely intertwined” (237). Many writers of the early modern period, these women included, offer a lucid illustration of Hunter’s claim. For these poets, the aesthetics of their verse (which are in large measure enabled by the tools of rhetoric) are closely intertwined with their epistemology of devotion (the inner “knowing” of their convictions). Contrary to what the Ramists believed, the expression of this rational yet empirically unprovable “feeling” can never entirely free itself from rhetoric or, concomitantly, from the evidence offered by worldly experience. In the early modern mind, C.S. Lewis once said, “High abstractions and

rarified artifices jostled the earthiest particulars" (62), and his claim is as true for the women of my study as it is for the men about whom he writes. Nor is the expression of the kinds of abstractions to which Lewis refers the kind of straightforward linear process Parsons describes and Ramism advocates. Writers such as Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer cannot be firmly placed in either the absolutist or the relativist camp; rather, their position on the relationship of thought and language lies somewhere in between this binary opposition, and their place in this middle ground has, I think, more to do with the nature of their verse than it does with their gender.

This does not mean, however, that gender is not relevant in a discussion of these poets and their work. I will readily acknowledge that, on the contrary, gender can tell us as much about the verse of these women as it does about their lives. At the same time, it is also true that, as Barbara Lewalski suggests, "Jacobean women did not see themselves as a cohesive group defined by gender" (*Writing Women* 3). Reading women writers primarily as women tends to occlude the kinds of differences to which Lewalski's words allude: as a result, other potentially illuminating approaches to their work may get left behind. I object not to reading the work of these — or any other poets — in gendered terms, but to allowing our own beliefs about gender to make assumptions about the nature of their verse that, in turn, may limit our interpretive potential as much as they curtail the broader literary and cultural significance of some women's writing. The problem is not with reading through the lens of gender, an analytical approach that has done much to establish a place for many women writers in

the literary landscape, but with allowing a particular approach to dominate critical readings long after their work has been widely recognized to be worthy of study.

Gender is one way of reading literature, but if we truly would like to see poets such as Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer become fully sealed members of the literary canon, we need to add much more to the interpretive mix. In *Writing Women in Jacobean England*, Lewalski points out that the “newly important women’s texts” about which she writes “are often too narrowly contextualized — studied chiefly in relation to other women’s texts, or to modern feminist theory, or to some aspects of the period’s patriarchal ideology.” Yet the texts of these writers, she points out, have not yet “received much attention from traditional scholars of Renaissance literature,” and thus they “urgently need to be read with the full scholarly apparatus of textual analysis, historical synthesis, and literary interpretation in play” (1-2). Lewalski published these words in 1993, and there has been an impressive amount of scholarship produced on Jacobean women writers since they were written. As much as this scholarship has done to enhance our understanding and appreciation of early modern women’s writing, though, it is arguable that the work of these and other early modern women writers remains “too narrowly contextualized.”

I have here made a modest attempt to broaden the context in which some early modern women’s poetry is read. In doing so, I have tried to bring a fuller, but far from complete, scholarly apparatus to these texts. In reading the verse of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer in rhetorical terms, I have aimed to bring into play an alternative

(and perhaps traditional) approach to the textual analysis, historical synthesis, and literary interpretation of some early modern women's writing. Though my work aims to add something to the critical void Lewalski identifies, it is clear that there remains much to be done — not just for these writers, but for all women writers. I hope, however, that this study has revealed some of what we might gain by reading women's writing in hitherto unconventional ways: in the case of women writers, this sometimes means drawing on traditional approaches that have not been conventionally used in reading women's poetry. But *Pembroke*, *Wroth*, and *Lanyer* are only a starting point.

I hope my study of women's poetry and rhetoric has also suggested that women writers who came before and after these three equally deserve to be read in the broader context Lewalski advocates. Researching a prequel to this study is, for me at least, an exciting proposition. It is, however, unfortunate that examples of English women's poetry written before 1590 are comparatively few and far between. Even so, we might benefit from considering rhetoric in the work of a writer such as Anne Lock, whose sonnets based on Psalm 51 are becoming better known through the efforts of her recent editor, Susan Felch. Lock was a Marian exile whose writings, Felch points out, "were unified by a common religious theme: the recognition of sin, repentance, and restoration through God's grace" (127). As with *Pembroke's* and *Lanyer's*, Lock's verse may be explicitly devotional, but this does not mean it is exclusively so: Felch explains that "Lock knew enough medicine to employ precise technical terms in the

dedicatory epistle” of her volume, and she apparently knew “enough rhetoric to structure that epistle around traditional figures and tropes” (129). According to her editor, Lock knew at least some rhetoric and, since her poems were written sometime before they were published in 1560, she also wrote prior to the rise of Ramist rhetorical theory. Thus for reasons of both similarity and difference, her psalms-as-sonnets would offer an interesting comparison with Pembroke’s and Wroth’s verse: the work of these later writers shares some generic features with Lock’s, but their verse was also composed well after Ramism made itself known — and felt — in England.

Our understanding of the literary, historical, and cultural significance of women’s secular verse in the sixteenth century might also be much enhanced by rhetorical analysis. I am thinking here specifically of the poems written by Isabella Whitney, who published two collections of writings, *The Copy of a Letter* in 1567 and *A sweet Nosegay* in 1573 (Travitsky 78). That the title of the latter collection, as Betty Travitsky points out, “suggests a familiarity with Gascoigne’s *Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*” (80), together with Gascoigne’s comparatively early discussion of poetry as rhetoric, suggests that such an analysis could prove fruitful. One might also consider how Whitney uses rhetoric in handling the sacred and secular themes that her verse, at least to some extent, replicates. As Travitsky points out, the sacred (as it does in the writings of many early modern women) seems to serve as a means of endorsing Whitney’s secular voice: “Despite the reference to God in the opening and closing

lines" of her poetic "Wyll and Testament," Travitsky points out, "its tone is Bohemian rather than pious" (82).

There is one other example of a sixteenth-century woman who wrote verse that I would like to mention here. Given its author's unique status and education, the handful of poems written by Elizabeth I might offer an interesting point of comparison and contrast with those by Lock and Whitney. Since Elizabeth, as Janel Mueller puts it, also "proved the most eminent female recipient of an early Protestant humanist upbringing in England" ("Elizabeth I" 119), her work invites rhetorical analysis. That, as Mueller remarks, Elizabeth "had closely associated spiritual exercise and linguistic exercise ever since her girlhood" ("Elizabeth I" 123), also suggests an interesting comparison with Pembroke's or Lanyer's for religious as well as rhetorical reasons, while Elizabeth's central role in the court suggests an interesting comparison of her writing with that of the aristocratic Pembroke and Wroth.

As well as revealing much about women's poetry and rhetoric in the literary culture of pre-Ramist England, a comparative rhetorical analysis of the three sixteenth-century women poets I mention here might also help us better to understand the nature and the significance of the women writers who succeeded them: whatever we might discover about rhetoric in the poetry of their antecedents, both male and female, would surely also tell us much about Pembroke's, Wroth's, and Lanyer's place in rhetorical — and feminist — history. That place would, of course, become more clear if their work were more extensively compared with that of their near-contemporaries:

many other women writers of their day deserve further critical investigation, for, as Lewalski notes, "it is in the repressive Jacobean milieu that we first hear Englishwomen's own voices in some numbers" (*Writing Women* 3). Other women writers whose work might be better appreciated and understood if it were read in rhetorical terms include some who are already fairly well known. The verse of writers such as Rachel Speght, Diana Primrose, and Alice Sutcliffe is as worthy of our attention as that I consider here. All of these writers, like many women of their day, wrote poetry that is religious in nature and is thus very much informed by their distinctly religious habits of thought. Given the social, cultural, and literary milieu in which they wrote, and the evidence offered by the poets of this study, it seems likely that the habits of thought of these women writers were also rhetorical. Reading the work of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer within a broader feminine context that includes other Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline writers would significantly contribute to our understanding of the early modern woman poet's place in rhetorical and literary history, while a broader contemporary context would also tell us more about the three writers who are the focus of this study.

The significance (and the possible influence) of Pembroke's, Wroth's, and Lanyer's verse might become more apparent if we took a rhetorical approach to reading the poetry of some of the women writers who succeed them. The nine women of Lewalski's study, she makes clear, "were actively involved in cultural production in Jacobean England" (2), and it follows that women of Interregnum England were as

active as — or even more active than — their antecedents. Certainly, the rise of Puritanism that gained momentum as the seventeenth century unfolded granted women certain kinds of freedoms they had previously lacked. There was, as Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have shown, a growing tolerance for women's public speech as the first half of the seventeenth century progressed. During the years leading up to the Interregnum, many English women became active campaigners: "From their sense of shared oppression," Mendelson and Crawford note, "women undertook political action" (254). From women's growing involvement in political action and the public speaking it sometimes entailed, it seems reasonable to infer that there might also have been a proportionately increasing awareness of women's rhetorical capabilities.

Thomas Randolph certainly suggests as much in his 1640 poem, "In Praise of Women in General." Written in the politically tumultuous decade that saw the beginning of the Long Parliament and would come to witness the execution of the English monarch, Randolph's poem hints at the increasing threat of women to male hegemony. More germane to my purposes, it also directly links women and rhetoric:

Boast we of knowledge? You have more than we:

You were the first ventured to pluck the tree.

And, that more rhetoric in your tongues doth lie

Let him dispute against that dares deny

Your least commands; and not persuaded be

With Sampson's strength and David's piety,

To be your willing captives. (lines 35-41)¹

Randolph's words are interesting for two reasons. First, Randolph is stating an argument; the poem is itself an example of the rhetoric that is its topic, and it thus confirms the enduring alliance of poetry and rhetoric. Second, though the praise he offers is surely backhanded, Randolph explicitly says that women were, at least by 1640, recognized to be able rhetors. It follows, then, that many in Randolph's age also believed that women were able to participate in a literary culture that was both poetic and rhetorical.

It is true that what John Donne calls "masculine persuasive force" ("Elegy 16," line 4) Randolph describes in equally gendered terms as "Sampson's strength and David's piety," and it is also true that Randolph's poem can be read as part of a long tradition of misogynistic compliments that were meant not to celebrate women but to affirm, once again, their innumerable flaws. Randolph may, in fact, be taking away much more than he appears to give. Even so, it is telling that this poet doesn't claim persuasive force on behalf of his sex alone. On the contrary, Randolph recognizes that some early modern women did play active and visible roles in their era's rhetorical culture. Given the symbiotic relationship of poetry and rhetoric in the early modern period, it also seems plausible that women who wrote poetry a generation before

¹ From *Seventeenth-Century Verse*, ed. Alistair Fowler (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991). Thanks to Rory Leitch for pointing the poem out.

Randolph — women such as Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer — might have provided some of the evidence for his argument. Certainly, women writers who came after Randolph repeatedly prove themselves to be of “Sampson’s strength and David’s piety.”

“Piety,” as Mendelson and Crawford point out, “could be a double-edged sword. While some women became domestic saints, others were impelled by conscience to the opposite extreme, the courage to defy their husbands” (138). But, as Lanyer’s verse confirms, piety gave some women the courage to defy not only their husbands but also the social, cultural, and political status quo. As much as their poetry may attest to at least some women’s active participation in a clearly male-dominated literary and rhetorical culture, so it also suggests that devotional expression offered them a means of articulating and asserting feminine experience. “If we think of female culture in terms of beliefs and activities that linked women as a group, shaping their lives in distinctive patterns which set them apart from men,” as Mendelson and Crawford also point out, “then religious devotion was one of its most significant expressions in the early modern period” (225). In discussing piety, female culture, and defiance in Interregnum women’s writing, the verse of the pseudonymous “Eliza” comes most readily to mind. Eliza is, however, far from alone: her contemporaries include devotional poets like An Collins, Elizabeth Major, and Anne Bradstreet, as well as writers of secular verse such as Katherine Philips and Margaret Cavendish.

A rhetorical study of mid- to late-seventeenth-century women's verse might prove especially interesting for two reasons. First, the seventeenth century saw some notable changes in poetry in general and devotional verse in particular. James Biester, for one, identifies such a change in his study of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century poetry and rhetoric: "when lyric wonder went out of fashion," he says, "it went way out: by the early 1650s it was nearly dead in poetic practice, and its critics, who had begun to dance on its grave even before it was fully buried, kept dancing through the middle of the next century to keep it down" (155). Second, rhetoric seems to have gone out of fashion almost as quickly as "lyric wonder." As Thomas O. Sloan points out, seventeenth-century English prose may have flourished, "but rhetorical theories were thin and relatively impoverished," and traditional rhetoric "could not survive certain seventeenth-century intellectual movements." What happened, though, Sloan argues, is that the meditative tradition took over where rhetoric left off: "In effect," he says, "meditation *became* rhetoric, for meditation alone insisted upon a doctrine that was missing from other types of discursive theory and that was absolutely indispensable to rhetoric: the maintenance of a close union between verbal expression and the passions" ("Rhetoric and Meditation" 45). Because Ramist rhetoric emphasized logic, it did not allow for "man's passionate nature" while meditation did (Sloan, "Rhetoric and Meditation" 46). Meditation appears to have filled the hole Ramism punctured in discursive theory, yet it was really just a modified version of traditional rhetoric that, though called by another name, proved just as sweet.

It appears, as well, that some later women poets grappled with issues very similar to those seen in the verse of Pembroke, Wroth, and Lanyer. Richard Rambuss implies as much when he notes that "The anonymous author of *Eliza's Babes: or the Virgins-Offering* (1652), while likewise putting herself forward as Christ's 'blest Spouse,' elaborates another devotional convention of the time in christianizing the tropes of secular love poetry" (78). In Eliza's verse, the meeting of the sacred and the secular is the converse of Wroth's tendency to secularize some of the tropes of Christianity. "In a sense," Biester writes, "the [later] devotional lyric reappropriates the methods and material Donne had snatched when he went over the top with the Petrarchan doctrine of sublimation through love" (147): this is, I think, as true of Eliza's expressions of devotion as it is of the work of poets such as Marvell, Crashaw, and Vaughan.

In the opening line of Eliza's "The Dart," for instance, it is difficult to tell that hers is a poem of religious devotion:

Shoot from above
 Thou God of Love,
 And with heav'ns dart
 Wound my blest heart. (lines 1-4)

Instead of representing Cupid in the metaphorical garb of Christ as Wroth does, this poem's "god of love," Rambuss points out, "turns out to be Christ in the guise of Cupid" (78): though this God's identity becomes more clear as the poem progresses,

the only hints we have so far are the highly ambiguous ones found in the words “heav’ns” and “blest.” The Christianizing of Petrarchan tropes is, of course, nothing new — earlier poets such as Greville, Donne, and Herbert are all well known for doing so. But Eliza writes in a context very different from these men. For this reason, her verse also warrants close comparison with that of her contemporaries and with that of her antecedents: the former might reveal much about the literary and rhetorical context in which she wrote, while the latter would offer some suggestion of how the relationship between rhetoric and poetry may have changed.

One change worth exploring in relation to Eliza’s verse is the one Sloan identifies as the seventeenth-century shift toward a more meditative rhetoric. The major difference meditation made is apparent not in the way rhetoric is used, he says, but in the way it is directed: “the meditative stance,” Sloan points out, comes with implications that “reveal a striking shift in rhetorical theory — from that ‘looking outward’ of the classical tradition to a new ‘inward dialogue’” (“Rhetoric and Meditation” 51). Poetic changes, then, appear to have included a shift away from inspiring wonder in one’s audience and toward a less awe-inspiring interiority that nevertheless appealed to the passions. Reading how women’s verse might have been influenced by these changes, and reading it in comparison with that of their male contemporaries, might also cast some light on how such changes reflect even as they enable the increasing, and not always comfortable, distinction between the public and the private.

Eliza's poems, Ronald Huebert notes, are "in large measure poems that valorize a private relationship between the soul and God" (52); at the same time, though, "privacy is not enough for Eliza" (53). Huebert goes on to show how her poem, "To a Friend for her Naked Breasts," indicates that public display "signifies the absence of deceit" (54) as much as it can be read as an inappropriately sexual display: thus the poem, he concludes, "is concerned in its every nuance with the dialectic between hiding and showing, concealing and exposing, covering up and undressing" (55). I would add to Huebert's adroit reading of this poem in particular and Eliza's work in general that her verse in equally large measure illustrates the influence of the meditative tradition without wholly discounting the value of public rhetoric.

It would prove as interesting, I think, to consider this particular dialectic in the poetry of Eliza and her counterparts as it has been to explore the binaries that make Pembroke's, Wroth's, and Lanyer's poetry so intriguing. The dialectic of public and private and its relationship to the rhetorical and meditative traditions would be especially valuable in terms of feminist history, given that women of the latter half of the seventeenth century lived in a time when the ground was broken for the powerful ideology of separate spheres that would come into full bloom in the nineteenth century. Eliza insists "To a friend at Court" that

Retired here content I live,

My own thoughts to me pleasure give.

While thine owne actions anger thee,

Sweet quiet thought contenteth me.

This blessing sweet retirednesse brings,

We envy none, but pity Kings. (lines 1-6)

Eliza may here valorize meditation by expressing the pleasure she takes in her own thoughts, but she elsewhere alludes to her dissatisfaction with “retirednesse” and her absence from the court.

Not only is Eliza’s verse implicitly public in its readily apparent familiarity with and use of rhetorical tropes and conventions, some of her poetry also reveals an explicitly public intent. In another poem, the ostensibly Puritan Eliza writes “To the King”: since the piece is clearly and deliberately dated at 1644, the king she addresses can only be Charles. Here, Eliza makes an overtly rhetorical attempt to persuade him to avoid war: “Be not too rigid,” she instructs her monarch, “dear King yeeld” (line 10). Though it may be true that “Many of the defeated royalists,” as Elaine Hobby argues, “had to find some way of making failure and withdrawal from the world palatable,” this seventeenth-century poet resists even as she appears to endorse a nascent ideology of separate spheres. Eliza may, as Hobby also suggests, explore “the specifically female advantages of abandoning the world” (55), but her poetry nevertheless enacts the dialectic of public and private Huebert identifies. It is this dialectic, together with the dual influence of the seemingly contradictory meditative and rhetorical traditions that will prove, I think, to be the sequel to the study I have undertaken here.

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