

**‘The Art of *Salvation* is but the Art of *Memory*’:
Soul-Agency, Remembrance and Expression in Donne
and Shakespeare**

**Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the
Department of English
University of Lancaster**

January, 2007

Kathleen Mary O’Leary, M. A.

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Abstract

This thesis examines how the dislocation of old beliefs in post-Reformation England affected perceptions of the soul in the work of Donne and Shakespeare. The introduction, using Augustinian discourses on the tri-partite soul, explores how the soul is imagined in post-Reformation England. Current debates on interiority, the climate of anxiety that surrounds religious upheaval, historical readings of the composition of the soul and the problems of its actual representation on the page and stage are discussed. The patterning of Augustine’s tri-partite model of Reason, Will and Memory is examined, and the regenerative power of concordant Memory that can bind together a harmonic trinity is offered as a solution to the fractured soul.

The first part of the thesis concentrates on writings that represent Donne's anxieties over the fate of the soul as he contemplates conversion from Catholicism to the new religious order. Chapter One is an enquiry into his unpublished works from 1601 to 1611 and examines the idea of the wandering soul, from *The Progresse of the Soule*, to the *Divine Poems* and finally to the redeemed soul seen in the form of Elizabeth Drury in the *Anniversaries*. In this chapter, I argue that Donne is searching for an alternative Marian aesthetic as he leaves behind his Catholic past, a new image of divine intercession for the Protestant world that might offer him comfort and a route to salvation.

Chapter Two explores his very public sermons after he enters the ministry until his death. Here, a pattern of redemption is argued through the salvic properties of the living Word of the sermon that is relayed through the performative power of the preacher. The preacher's working space and the power of the Word to viscerally transform the congregation are central here to the soul's salvation.

The second part examines how Shakespeare explores the 'journey' of the soul through a selection of his plays, but where the limits of genre impose restrictions on Shakespeare's development of an image of redemption. Chapter Three examines the wandering soul in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. Through the trope of marriage, the fate of the souls of Jessica and Othello are explored as they find themselves marginalized in an inhospitable Venice, while their pasts have been forgotten in the attempt to convert to Christianity. Chapter Four explores the use of the female character as an image of Memory that can generate hope, reading Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* and Cordelia in *King*

Lear as “soul agents”, whose beneficence can bring about redemptive change. However, the thesis argues that the genre of tragedy examined here limits the soul agent.

Chapter Five argues for an alternative genre that opens up the possibilities for the successful portrayal of the soul agent. In the romance plays, the representation of the soul can be seen working successfully to a redemptive conclusion. Romance dramas foreground their slippages in plot and take us into dreamscapes at the centre of which is an essential female influence. Marina in *Pericles*, Perdita in *The Winter’s Tale*, Innogen in *Cymbeline* and Ariel/Miranda in *The Tempest* provide a link with Donne’s presentation of the soul as female in the *Anniversaries*.

Both Donne and Shakespeare suggest the idea of the female in literature as a redemptive figure, away from earlier discourses on the soul that finds itself at the mercy of epistemological wrangling. Donne and Shakespeare re-instate that sacredness and place it within art as an image of Memory, a vital component of Augustine’s tri-partite soul, but also as an active and vibrant image of possibility.

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To David, *kairos* and *chronos*

Introduction

Spiritual Fragmentation and Struggle

Oh my blacke Soule! Now art thou summoned
 By sicknesse, deaths herald, and champion;
 Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
 Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee is fled,
 Or like a thiefe, which till deaths doome be read,
 Wisheth himselfe delivered from prison.

(John Donne: *Holy Sonnets* II, 1609)¹

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
 []² these rebel powers that thee array,
 Why dost thou pine within, and suffer dearth,
 Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?

(Shakespeare: *Sonnet* 146, c. late 1590-early 1600)³

In these sonnets, both Donne and Shakespeare lament the fate of the soul. It is sick, it pines, it is sinful, it has done wrong, it does not know which way to turn for respite. The tone employed by both writers is one of dismay that the soul should be in such a pitiable state, their opening exclamatory ‘Oh’ and ‘Poor’ suggestive of the consternation that

¹ Helen Gardner gives a clear and detailed account of the composition of the sonnets, called *Divine Meditations*, in the 1633 and 1635 editions of Donne’s work in *John Donne: The Divine Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. xxxvii-xliii. All references to these poems are from this edition.

² These two syllables are missing in the Quarto, where they are replaced by a repetition of ‘my sinful earth’, which does not scan. Martin Seymour-Smith has offered ‘Gull’d by’ *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (London: Heinemann, 1982), p. 113, but has also commented on ‘Fool’d by’ that was popularised by Malone in 1780 (p. 188); Helen Vendler *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (London & Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), has argued for ‘Feeding’ (p. 610), whilst in the Norton Shakespeare (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), the footnotes indicate that guesses have included ‘Starved by’ and ‘Foiled by’ (p. 1973). The 1964 Signet classic edition of the *Sonnets*, edited by William Burto (London: The New English Library Limited), includes ‘Thrall to’, ‘Rebuke’ and ‘Leagued with’ as alternatives (p. 186). Vendler’s choice is particularly interesting as the use of the present participle places the soul in an active position, nurturing the body’s appetites, that not only puts into question its divine connection but also argues for the soul’s collusion in its own damnation. ‘Feeding’ would also balance rhythmically and syllabically with ‘Painting’ in the complementary line 4 and would also form part of the conceit of consuming that runs through the whole sonnet.

³ All references to Shakespeare’s works are taken from *Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997).

follows. And the speakers of both sonnets indicate that it is not only their souls that are in such turmoil: ‘*my blacke Soule*’, ‘the centre of *my* sinful earth’, but also that the souls in question have responsibility for their fates, the use of the second person ‘*thou*’ denoting the soul’s active and almost independent state from the speaker, ‘*Thou art like a pilgrim [...] like a thief*’, ‘*Painting thy outward walls*’. The juxtaposition of the oppositional ‘*pilgrim*’ and ‘*thief*’ is suggestive of searching whilst at the same time alluding to outlawed displacement from the sacred; the ‘*costly*’ outward show indicative of a worrying inward dearth. Taken with the responsibility that is indicated in the possessive pronouns, the diction points to an inversion of the spiritual patterning that is expected of the soul, for here we have a fall from grace, and also a shame derived from a lack of accountability that is attached to such a fall. Both poems, then, address a disordered soul, which is desperate, disobedient, adrift and, most importantly, dislocated from the divine connection that would lead to its salvation. The soul in turmoil was an image not uncommon to pre-Reformation thought, though often accompanied by a clear alternative path to heaven, but it is now stigmatised as wilful reprobate in serious danger of damnation. Why do these writers portray the soul in such a way? And how does the choice of sonnet form allow both Donne and Shakespeare to present these anxieties?

The sonnets portray the relationship of the soul to the divine as that of the forlorn lover removed from the object of adoration, similar to that found in the Petrarchan tradition. Here, both sonnets adapt the courtly love motif in the image of the soul that has been separated from its beloved, in this case the divine: in Shakespeare it is pining; in Donne it is exiled from the divine. The parallel at first seems unusual, though Petrarch’s

transformation of the real life Laura into ‘an earthly love drawing the soul towards good, or towards God’, sets up the idea of the route the soul must take if it is to achieve redemption, and also of the frustration and despair of the soul if it does not heed that route or is prevented from following it.⁴ The idealisation of woman into ‘a type of heavenly virtue, losing all her earthly dross and becoming [...] a pure heavenly body’, and her connection with the soul, is a recurring trope in Donne and Shakespeare’s later work, as chapters of this thesis will discuss.⁵

Donne and Shakespeare’s sonnets show the soul’s distance from God and initially imply that this relationship might in fact be irreparable; that what was once a glorious union is now damaged by the soul’s wayward behaviour. Both writers employ the Petrarchan division of a sonnet to show the miserable, passive state of the soul locked within worldly concerns in the octet. The volta between lines eight and nine, ‘is this thy body’s end? / Then, soul, live’ (Donne), ‘still he might be imprisoned; / Yet grace, if thou repent’ (Shakespeare), signal a change of tone from agony to the prospect of divine bliss, or despair to hope, which the corresponding sestet resolves.

For Donne, the soul’s despondency can be redeemed through ‘blushing’ (l. 12) submergence in Christ’s grace: ‘Or wash thee in Christ’s blood, which hath this might / That being red, it dyes red soules to white’ (ll. 13-14). Donne mingles Christ’s divinity with the human in the image of washing in his blood. For Shakespeare, the agonising questions that the octet poses about the wilting soul is resolved in the bold ninth line

⁴ Gary Waller, *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century* (London & New York: Longman, 1986), p. 78.

⁵ John Garrett, *British Poetry Since the Sixteenth Century* (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1986), p. 39.

‘Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant’s loss’, that marks the beginning of a sestet that commands the soul to be actively engaged in its own salvation by looking to the spiritual rather than ‘feeding’ the body. In this sonnet, the soul is the master, whose identity will be revived when it takes command of a situation it has allowed to fall into disrepair. As such, it is a soul that has responsibility for its own fate.

Why do these writers explore the soul in such a wretched state and is this struggle seen in their other work? Both Donne and Shakespeare are part of a wider religious controversy and sense of spiritual fragmentation and struggle that is coming from the upheavals of the Reformation. Though writing more than half a century after the initial reforms, their presentations of the soul show that the experience of the Reformation has complicated the experience of separation from the divine and that both writers employ images of struggle, conflict and rootlessness to broadly define this relationship. This thesis will use the work of Donne and Shakespeare to explore the idea that during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries many representations of the soul show it as a site of struggle, displaced by the upheavals of the Reformation from its received image as the connection to God and salvation. In Donne it is to be seen mainly in his poetry and sermons, where his own shift from Catholicism to Protestantism is used to project an image of a soul struggling to find salvation whilst undergoing this transition. In Shakespeare, though we are less certain of any personal projections of faith in his work, this struggle is explored primarily in his plays, though the quotation from the sonnet demonstrates that this examination extends to his other works. Whilst it can be argued that other writers of the time also explore the conflict that surrounds the fate of the soul, my choice of these

writers lies in the fact that they find answers to this conflict. My thesis will examine how they use the poem, the sermon and the play to depict a shift from strife to harmony.

This introduction will concentrate on the growing sense of spiritual fragmentation that the two sonnets indicate. Secondly, because notions of interiority in the early modern period are widely discussed in contemporary debates, any discussion on the soul will need to be contextualised within current thinking. Thirdly, the introduction will outline theories about the composition of the soul and broadly consider the socio-religious climate of post-Reformation England. And finally, because the soul is a non-substantial entity, unravelling the problems that accompany the presentation of the soul in poetry, sermons and drama will be central to our understanding of how the early modern individual not only perceives the divine but also what effects the different media have on that perception.

Though I have argued that both Donne and Shakespeare explore spiritual fragmentation using the Petrarchan device of estranged love in the two sonnets, each writer's diction reveals deeper levels to the debate and marks subtle differences between the two writers' attitudes to the beleaguered soul. In the opening quotation Donne's use of 'sickness', 'pilgrim', 'treason', 'thief', 'prison', suggests the soul, once a 'pilgrim' who made his way to God, has now embraced evil with the resultant 'sickness'. The use of 'treason', a dangerous word in such unstable times, indicates the seriousness of what the soul has done in turning away from God. It is placed at the beginning of a line, signifying importance, but it is also part of an enjambment that forces a caesura after the word,

compelling us to pause and reflect on the implications of its meaning. ‘Thiefe’ implies it has actively turned away from goodness, and is therefore culpable, but it also raises the question of what has been stolen. Given the image of the wayward pilgrim in line three, Donne’s soul has stolen religious truth, which is represented in the pilgrim’s journey to God, and with that theft, the promise of salvation. But there is also a sense in these lines that the soul is struggling against what it has done: it is ‘summoned / By sicknesse’; it ‘durst not turne to whence hee is fled’, as though longing to do so. The use of the similes ‘like a thief’ and ‘like a pilgrim’ allow for a later verb use ‘hath done’ and ‘wisheth himself’ that implies a once active soul that is now unable to move toward God, but tortured, can remember Him. The soul, now, is passive and imprisoned, but also wandering directionless because of its misdemeanours, though still able to remember God’s goodness, an image akin to Marlowe’s portrayal of Mephistopheles’s vision of the pain of separation from God:

Think’st thou that I, who saw the face of God,
 And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
 Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
 In being deprived of everlasting bliss?⁶

These interconnected ideas of incarceration, remembrance and rootlessness, as we shall see, are characteristic of early modern explorations of the soul.

Shakespeare’s examination of the soul in Sonnet 146 depends in part on how the second line is read. On one level, Shakespeare shows a soul that has been overwhelmed by an

⁶ Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus* (B-Text), ed. by David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), I.iii.75-78.

indulgent body whilst it pines within. There is also the idea of treachery on the part of the body, if we are to accept the interpolation 'Fool'd by' or 'Foiled by' in the text, leaving the soul as a site of sin. The 'rebel powers' of the body suggests disobedience to the soul and thus to the divine. The pronouns 'thee' and 'thy' imply that the body belongs to the soul, or that the soul 'wears' the body, which is now rebelling. This places the soul as the significant centre of the foundation of human identity that is being undermined by the 'lesser' body. On another level, however, Helen Vendler's suggestion of 'Feeding' (l. 2), puts the wisdom of the soul into question, making it indeed the centre of the 'sinful earth', the series of questions that follow suggesting the blame lies squarely with the soul's over-attention to the body and advising the soul later in the sonnet to seek inwardly for salvation: 'Within be fed, without be rich no more' (l. 12). The use of the present participles 'feeding' and 'painting' are also suggestive of a continuous present whereby the soul is trapped in a constant bind of nurturing the appetites of the body at the expense of itself, which cannot end until the more active future tense is adopted in the sestet 'So shalt thou feed on death' (l. 13).

This inversion of roles reveals to us the workings of the body/soul dichotomy. The sonnet strongly suggests that it is the soul that is master to the body, but that this relationship has been violated. The sestet tells us of the 'proper' relationship that must be restored in order for the soul to attain salvation. Shakespeare's imagery of capital investment and return for the soul/body relationship is surprising because it is so worldly for such a spiritual matter, though it clearly emphasizes the puritan idea of the covenant made between God and an individual, that man is indebted to the divine. The body is a house that the soul

lives in and has made an investment here, but is spending too much on outward show:

‘Why so large cost, having so short a lease, / Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?’

(ll. 5-6).

Shakespeare’s imagining of the soul as part of a fiscal system was a popular trope when discussing the soul/body economy. Robert Underwood’s 1605 *A New Anatomie Wherein the body of man is very fit and aptly two ways compared: 1. To a household. 2. To a cittie.*, for example, imagines the more important soul as the owner of the house or city, where the body’s composite parts must work together as a machine, to keep both body and soul working:

This *Body* then (I say) is like;
an *House*, in each degree.
The *Soule*, the owner of the *House*
I do account to bee.⁷

Underwood’s image of the body as an economic household, with the soul as keeper, is also used in describing the Church and the people, in, for instance, Thomas Bilson’s 1593 *The perpetual government of Christe’s Church* which speaks of the ‘household of faith’.⁸ Such accountancy is typical of Protestant spiritual self-examination and meditation and is found also in Donne’s 1623 *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* after his conversion

⁷ Robert Underwood, *A New Anatomie Wherein the body of man is very fit and aptly two ways compared: 1. To a household. 2. To a cittie* (London, 1605), p. 26.

⁸ Thomas Bilson, *The perpetual government of Christ’s Church* (London: 1593), p. 372.

from Catholicism, where his soul, residing in the sick body, is accountable to God, and hearing the bell tolling puts him in mind of his spiritual liabilities.⁹

We have here, then, two different views of the fragmented soul, where Donne highlights the shame that surrounds the wayward soul, summed up in the word ‘treason’, and Shakespeare focuses on the weakness of the soul when faced with the power of the voracious body, the former suggestive of ultimate personal culpability, the latter of doomed inevitability.

Though Donne and Shakespeare reveal marked differences to their treatment of the fragmented soul, both, of course, employ metaphor in order to linguistically visualise that which is non-corporeal. This need for metaphor to describe the soul, also employed by Donne in more religious texts, is a problem that preoccupies preachers, poets and dramatists no less than theologians, for the choice of image becomes central to our understanding of how the soul is perceived and instructs us as to what it can do.

Shakespeare’s sonnet, for example, is didactic for it educates the soul in finding the path back to God, whilst its fiscal metaphors also set up the idea of owing and borrowing from God and, in that context, how the soul must keep its ‘house’ in order. The soul has responsibilities which it has neglected by allowing the Will of the body to take control,

⁹ John Donne, *Selections from Divine Poems, Sermons, Devotions, and Prayers* ed. by John Booty (New York & Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1990), Devotions XVII, p. 272. Also, Stuart Sherman, when examining Pepys’ diaries, suggests that such spiritual bookkeeping, a kind of daily meditation, forms part of the development of journals, memoranda and ledgers that emerge in the seventeenth century that can not only set out secular affairs but also document an individual’s spiritual credit and thus the soul’s position in relation to God. See *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 59.

and this Will is seen in the opening octet: ‘rebel’, ‘excess’, ‘costly’. In some Protestant thought, the Will can be controlled by an infusion of grace, coming from understanding, which can restore it through an active participation in good works.¹⁰ The sestet promotes the idea that the soul must use Reason, or understanding, if it is to gain control of the body once more and, in so doing, will defeat death itself. Unlike Donne’s soul, then, which wishes for release from its incarceration, this soul is commanded to be active, to overpower Will through the might of Reason. Furthermore, by Shakespeare’s manipulation of the Petrarchan courtly love tradition, apparently within a sequence addressed to the Dark Lady, there is also the hope that all will be well and that love will be central to redemption. There is a strong sense here that Shakespeare’s view of the route to salvation is through active work that keeps excess appetite at bay and these ideas of Will and Reason, active and passive souls, are typical of the struggles found in his other texts. We have, then, depictions of the soul that argue for fragmentation and culpability in the dislocation from God. The use of metaphors such as the treasonous pilgrim, the thief and the immoderate keeper of the house, foreground the seriousness of this dislocation as they connect to cultural anxieties of disorder and anarchy. What the sonnets also do, however, is engage in ideas of personal responsibility that are found in the sense of introspection that this particular poetic form appears to convey. This next section will explore the notion of such subjectivity.

¹⁰ John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning and Education, 1560-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 23.

Introspection and Interiority

Donne and Shakespeare's use of the sonnet form allows spiritual debate about the soul to concentrate, in the Petrarchan tradition, on themes of love, despair and isolation from the object of adoration, which for them is God. However, the sonnet tradition also can create an impression of anxiety-ridden introspection and this, along with the debate about salvation, concentrates the idea of the struggle of the desolate soul. It also creates, to modern readers at least, a sense of interiority, a consciousness of the inward 'self' and this sense of interiority, the exploration of what appears to be inside of us, must be central to any debate on something as seemingly non-corporeal as the soul. The sonnet's compressed and intense form, with the soul under scrutiny from the 'speaker', reads almost like a soliloquy, creating a sense of the inner 'self' under duress, whilst simultaneously facilitating a means of talking about that 'self'. The impression of an interior self-consciousness that is readily suggested by the soliloquy, or in this case the intimate sonnet form, is a subject of much debate and scrutiny in early modern studies.

It is necessary, however, to examine how debates about the soul connect with explorations of interiority in the early modern period. For example, does an individual's sense of his or her soul in medieval times differ from those in the sixteenth century and, if so, is this linked to a growing sense of subjective autonomy? The growing conflation between mind and soul that becomes prevalent during the early modern period argues that the conception of the soul is becoming part of an emerging sense of interiority that will form part of a mentally developed sense of subjectivity. In *Hamlet* (1601), for example, there are numerous references to the soul's link to an inner space: 'My tongue

and soul in this be hypocrites' (III.ii.367) states Hamlet as he begins his masquerade, suggesting that his outward speech belies his interior soul. His next lines develop this idea of interiority further as he establishes the interior soul as a mark of integrity whilst indicating that his outward words are hypocritical and superficial 'How in my words soever she be shent, / To give them seals never, my soul, consent!' (II.ii.368-69). The Ghost of Hamlet's father, too, suggests a sense of inwardness when he warns 'Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive / Against thy mother aught' (I.v.85-86); and Gertrude indicates a soul within, possibly located in the brain, the most popular location for the mind, in her words 'Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul' (III.iv.79).

A central irony that surrounds any discussion of the soul, however, is that its very debate renders it public and also that such debate on the soul can be read only through the linguistic discourse that it generates. Hamlet's protestations form part of theatrical artifice presented through language to a large audience and the two sonnets under discussion here both self-consciously signal that the soul is not a private space but is the subject of a sonnet, a literary form that, on the one hand proclaims its secrecy only as an invitation to exposure and, ultimately, display. Patricia Fumerton has highlighted the *art* of secrecy, revealed in the purported 'theft' and publication of works that 'ought' to have remained private. This allows the writer to publicly bemoan his inward exposure, which is, in fact, is a ploy to indicate an interiority that is just as much an artifice as the alleged theft of the poem itself, an idea that would cast doubt on the validity of sacred interiority that is suggested in the sonnets under analysis here.¹¹ Fumerton's conclusion indicates the

¹¹ Patricia Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics: Renaissance Literature and the Practice of Social Ornament* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press: 1991), pp. 85-90.

paradox inherent in displaying interiority that can only be part of outward show, for its very exposure renders it no longer private: ‘in Elizabethan society [...] the private could be sensed only through the public (the ornamental, the conventional, the political)’.¹²

These observations, of course, must be taken into account when considering Donne’s and Shakespeare’s motives for presenting the soul in such a way, as an open display might indicate a desire to articulate a communal anxiety rather than a personal one. Stephen Greenblatt cautions that Hamlet’s soliloquies are ‘words that claim not access to the inner life, but existence as the inner life’.¹³ He rejects the imposition of psychoanalytic readings of interiority on to notions of inwardness but suggests that ‘the characteristics of these words – as opposed to modern attempts to record the discourse of interiority – is their public character, the apparent impersonality of their rhetorical structure, their performative mode’.¹⁴ For Greenblatt, the soliloquy does not give a private viewing of Hamlet’s inner being, but rather establishes a set of cultural co-ordinates, an ‘expression of the codes by which behaviour is shaped’.¹⁵ The presentation of the struggle of the soul in Donne and Shakespeare’s sonnets, then, provides us rather with a communal language that informs such discourses about the sacred in early modern culture, which forms part of the developing notion of interiority.

In drama as well as the sonnet form inwardness is, in its very essence, extremely public and debates about sacred interiority, therefore, must always be recognised in this context.

¹² Ibid., p. 109.

¹³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 87.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

Critics of drama such as Francis Barker, Catherine Belsey and Katherine Eisaman Maus argue that the idea of interiority is a modern interpretation that is placed on quite a different set of cultural co-ordinates.¹⁶ Barker's discussion of Hamlet's endeavours to find a language to articulate 'that within which passeth show' culminates, like Fumerton's, in his suggestion that interiority is in fact un-representable. Moreover, he argues that such a concept is 'anachronistic' and is only just beginning to emerge in the seventeenth century, a product of modern thought which imposes a model of interiority on a time that would not recognise such a perception.¹⁷ Both Katherine Eisaman Maus and Richard Hillman also examine the problem of the representation of inner life with the development of the construction of what appears to be the psychologically rounded character, which, to more recent thinking, would include the idea of the soul as part of that inward construct.¹⁸ Hillman suggests that 'the very notion of a human subject [is] [...] a product of modern ideologies'.¹⁹ Maus advises that 'we risk misconstruing the Renaissance *mentality* if our criticism fails to take into account the immense cultural changes of the last four centuries'.²⁰ As a consequence, such representations of the soul that are to be examined in this thesis can be recognised as one element of the wider struggle to articulate a growing sense of interiority that was only just developing in the early modern period.

¹⁶ Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London & New York: Methuen, 1984), p. 31.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁸ Katharine Eisaman Maus, 'Proof and Consequences: Inwardness and Its Exposure in the English Renaissance', in *Materialist Shakespeare*, ed. by Ivo Kamps (London & New York: Verso, 1995), pp. 157-80. Richard Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early modern English Drama: Subjectivity, Discourse and the Stage* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), pp. 1-34.

¹⁹ Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early modern English Drama*, p. 15.

²⁰ Maus, 'Proof and Consequences: Inwardness and Its Exposure in the English Renaissance', p. 159.

Spiritual struggle, therefore, must be recognised in its cultural setting. For Donne and Shakespeare, discussion about personal, spiritual despair of the sonnet speaker must always be viewed cautiously and seen as part of a broader set of co-ordinates of cultural communication rather than merely individual angst. Moreover, the concept of religious interiority, so often associated with the Protestant inspection of self-reflection, as in the spiritual progress of an individual towards salvation, is a notion also found in Pre-Reformation times. This, too, is problematical as in medieval times it involved identification with an outward manifestation, usually an icon, with which the individual creates a bond. Richard Hillman argues the idea of aphanisis – a fading in and out of perception - where the desire to identify with the sacred object is continually subverted because it is merely a presentation of the sacred, not the thing itself, nonetheless creates in the individual a *sense* of the divine within, and this idea will be explored further in my reading of the soul in *King Lear*.²¹

There is, also, the dramatic context to be taken into account when considering notions of interiority, for this thesis will be considering the exploration of the divine in Shakespeare's drama. To some extent the dramatic context in itself argues against interiority because the stage conventions of Shakespeare's day continually signal that we are watching a play. Still steeped in the allegorical traditions of the past, as Catherine Belsey has suggested in *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama*, audiences are conditioned to 'read' texts as emblematic and didactic, and, I would argue, are still being asked to do so in some of the texts to be examined here.

²¹ Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early modern English Drama*, pp. 19-22.

Though we cannot be certain about the existence of inward consciousness in the speakers of these two sonnets, what can be suggested, and Fumerton argues as much, is that inner truth is in actual fact understood through a writer's use of rhetorical language, 'the artifice of all-embracing *rhetoric*'.²² Hillman, too, indicates that subjectivity is ultimately language based and this helps in the construction of such an abstraction as the soul.²³ The sonnet, a neatly packaged format, an ornament, as Fumerton would suggest, is composed of language – the only means of displaying that which is within. Any discourse on the soul, then, becomes dependent on the language used to present it, and the gap between the soul and language, between the signifier and the sign, if we are to accept the soul as part of the discourse on inwardness, is where modern discussion on interiority rests.²⁴ Like the soul enclosed within the body, the media of its representations, the poem, or indeed a sermon or a play, which relies on the metaphor that is language, and the preacher or actor who must speak it, must therefore become central to further discussion of the soul.

Before moving on to examine such forms of representation generically, however, it is important to look at how they are both products and producers of a particular socio-religious discourse in post-Reformation England. In Donne and Shakespeare's sonnets the metaphors of a treacherous 'pilgrim' who has turned away from its mission, or the house owner that paints its 'outward walls' in defiance of its spiritual welfare, present the soul as having lost its way. Although both Donne and Shakespeare state in the sestets that

²² Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, p. 90.

²³ Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early modern English Drama*, p. 5.

²⁴ See Richard Hillman's discussion of Edward Burns, 'Character: Acting and Being on the Pre-Modern Stage', in *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early modern English Drama*, pp. 14-15.

the route back to God is the only means of redemption, through acknowledgement of Christ's suffering in Donne's case, or through actively turning from the body in Shakespeare's, they do not say exactly *how* the soul might find that route, particularly in the religiously uncertain climate of post-Reformation England. Shakespeare, for example, offers us a model where Reason should overcome Will as a means to salvation, but we are not shown how this can be put into effect. The sonnets set up for us questions that the rest of the introduction will examine. Why has the soul become subservient to the body, or like a wayward pilgrim, to the point where it can no longer function as a sacred link to God and how can it find the path back to salvation? And what is in the composition of the soul that allows such a debasement to happen? To answer these questions, the next section will situate Donne and Shakespeare's exploration of the fragmented soul in its cultural and religious context and examine the post-Reformation impact on communal and individual perceptions of the sacred.

Religious and Social Upheaval

The prime cause of the soul's dislocation from the divine, I would argue, is the spiritual crisis that ensued from the changes in the sixteenth century by the Reformation. As a site of conflict itself, the reforms of this period and their ensuing effects on the religious landscape of England provide not only an analogy of the individual's spiritual struggle, an external image of the strife within, but also a causative factor of this strife. Nor were Donne and Shakespeare left unaffected by these changes but can in fact be seen clearly as part of this controversy. Donne's Catholic upbringing brought anxiety and guilt as he made the agonising move to the Protestant religion, a move that undoubtedly informed

the mood of the opening sonnet. The use of the term ‘pilgrim’ who has now done ‘Treason’ reinforces the bond between religion and the political state, so pointedly understood in the ‘bloody question’ posed by Elizabeth’s ministers in the event of invasion by a Catholic force that challenged individual allegiance. As Richard Wilson indicates, in ‘Burghley’s theatre of allegiance’, Catholic subjects had to be seen in a ‘public protestation of their ‘faithful and loving’ hearts’.²⁵ For Donne, the trope of the treasonous pilgrim suggests that his shift into this new religion has blighted and demeaned a precious part of him, that he has committed the most grievous offence against God. ‘Durst not turn’ implies shame and reinforces the gravity of his actions, debased in political/religious post-Reformation wrangling. Donne’s background, moreover, was steeped in martyrdom. His grandfather, John Heywood, escaped abroad in 1564 in order that he might not be forced to accept the new religion; in 1574, a great-uncle, Thomas Heywood, was martyred for his faith. Two uncles became Jesuits, one of whom, Jasper, was imprisoned in 1582. He would have been asked the ‘bloody question’ and consequently was condemned to death; and it is thought that the young Donne visited his relative in the Tower.²⁶ In addition, Donne’s maternal grandmother was Sir Thomas More’s niece, making him part of one of the most devout Catholic households in England.²⁷

Shakespeare’s family, too, was affected by the changes and some have argued that they, and Shakespeare himself, formed part of the Counter-Reformation movement. His father,

²⁵ Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare: Studies in theatre, religion and resistance* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 21.

²⁶ John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, 2nd edn (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1990), p. 6.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p.1.

John, was most likely a recusant and the county of his birth, Warwickshire, is thought to have been a Catholic stronghold, even a breeding ground for the Jesuit movement.²⁸ Like Donne, Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, came from a staunch Catholic family and it is thought that one of Shakespeare's cousins on his mother's side, John Somerville, had been directly involved in a plot to assassinate Elizabeth.²⁹ Both writers, then, have direct experience of the anxieties, reforms and changes that can bring about the spiritual crisis that informs their work. Though writing some sixty or so years after the Reformation began, they are both living in turbulent times, an unstable environment exacerbated by the growing Counter-Reformation movement, the unnerving threat that the Armada had posed, Elizabeth's old age and the problem of succession.

Indeed, the *fin de siècle* that both writers lived through reveals a religious landscape which foregrounds the complexities of religious reform. Central to early modern English life, one's religious beliefs defined oneself, and the Reformation offered not only an alternative way of reading scriptural laws and practices that had become firmly established under old Catholic rule which had been in place for centuries, it opened up opportunities for a diverse range of new sub-sects that emerged as a consequence of the split with Rome. An harmonious Protestant alternative was not the direct result of the dissolution of Roman Catholicism; rather, there emerged a variety of religious groups that formed under the banner of the new religion, along with nonconformist sects and, of course, the regeneration of a new form of Catholicism. This latter emerged after the

²⁸ Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare*, pp. 49-50.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 105.

Council of Trent, which met between 1545-1563, arguably the driving force of the Counter-Reformation towards the end of the sixteenth century.

As Patrick Collinson has noted, rather than a force for common unity, the changes that the Reformation instigated initially created ‘separation and confusion’.³⁰ And Peter Lake has argued that new and hybrid states were created through the compounded result of such strife and from the fracturing of old beliefs on which were imposed new rules and values that created variable mixtures of anxiety and tension. The fissures that were opened, he suggests, also allowed ‘sub-Christian’, or pagan, voices to be brought to the fore, arguing that the ructions of theological division were symptomatic of divine struggle between good and evil, and, I would add, consequently indicative of the uncertainty of salvation, the ‘variegated Christian and sub-Christian *bric-a-brac* [which] was to be found all over the social, conceptual, and representational landscape of the period’.³¹

Here, then, is a country undergoing a breakdown of established beliefs that have been scattered and intermingled with the new religion, both in the concrete world and in individual and communal perceptions. Lake goes on to propose that this mingling of beliefs indicates that the Reformation was not a fresh start but rather a metamorphosis of one type of reverence into many disparate and competing forms, again suggestive of spiritual bewilderment. It was a ‘creative bricolage, mixing and matching, as a variety of

³⁰ Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. 32.

³¹ Peter Lake, ‘Religious Identities in Shakespeare’s England’, in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 57-84 (p. 79).

cases or pitches were made for popular support in terms of many of the central religious attitudes and values'.³²

Given this degree of change and upheaval in a comparatively short time, this 'bricolage' as Lake puts it, the conceptualisation of doctrinal differences over serious issues such as Purgatory and methods of gaining salvation, for instance, became points of argument and concern, which had never been so strident before the religious shake-up. Doctrinal polemic on the afterlife was a critical concern for pre-Reformation Catholicism but now there were more theological positions from which to argue, and the salvation and damnation of the soul, its function in relation to the body and to God, became a site of competing struggle and debate. How, for instance, can salvation for the soul be assured when each theological position argues differently on issues of sin? The Calvinists promoted the blessedness of the elect, but who exactly are they? Mainstream Protestantism had abolished Purgatory, so what chance has a stained soul of attaining Heaven? And what happens to the soul of an individual who has reluctantly shifted from his preferred beliefs? The contrast between theological positions, and the transition from one set of beliefs to another are the central issues here, and like Donne's treasonous pilgrim, the after-effects of such moves do not always produce spiritual concord or social harmony, but in fact can create the uncertainty, guilt and despair that pervade the sonnets by both Donne and Shakespeare. Norman Jones has cited the theological split that is indicative of a soul in turmoil and has noted the complex secondary effects of doctrinal division, disagreement and strife:

³² Ibid., p. 79.

For most people alive at the time it [the Reformation] had its glorious moments, but it was also a time of great discomfort. Religious tension was a fact of daily life. Theological disagreements turned constantly into political and social tensions, splitting families and communities [...] Religious disagreement and economic disputes became intertwined, since they are all part of the same moral universe.³³

Such struggle and discord, as Jones cites, promotes dislocation, and a sense of loss and fragmentation of community and social coherence: the ‘religious tension’ of daily life.

Arthur Dent’s 1601 *The Plaine Mans Path-way to Heaven* sets up the idea not only of the world in turmoil, as Jones has suggested, but how such strife creates a natural site for the wandering, dislocated soul that can find no safe haven:

The worlde is a sea of glasse: a pageant of fond delight, a Theatre of vanitie, a labyrinth of error, a gulfe of grieffe, a stie of filthinesse, a vale of misery, a spectacle of woe, a river of teares, a stage of deceit, a cage ful of Divels, a denne of Scorpions, a wildernesse of Wolves, a cabbin of Beares, a whirlwind of passions, a fained Comedie, a delectable phrenzie: where is false delight, assured grieffe: certain sorrow, uncertain pleasure: lasting woe, fickle wealth, long heavinesse, short joy.³⁴

Dent’s depiction is one of perpetual chaos, like a medieval image of the complex tortures of Hell fuelled by false pleasures and temptations, the ‘sea of glasse’ indicative of its emptiness. It conveys excess and a kaleidoscopic source of spectacle without substance. The spiritual cannot take hold in such a ‘labyrinth of error’. Claire McEachern has asserted that the complex nature of religious identity at this time must be understood as

³³ Norman Jones, ‘Shakespeare’s England’, in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, pp. 25-42 (p. 41).

³⁴ Arthur Dent, *The Plaine Mans Path Way to Heaven* (London, 1601), p. 92.

intermingled with socio-political demographic concerns, all of which can cause the kind of communal upheaval that informs Dent's account.³⁵

The debate over salvation stretched beyond religious identity to religious genealogy, which also came into question, particularly towards the end of Elizabeth's reign and ultimately implied redemptive precedent. The move from one set of doctrinal values to another set into motion arguments concerning a religion's ancestral 'pedigree' as highlighted in Donna B. Hamilton's discussion of Richard Verstegan's 1605 work *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*, which attempts to provide a 'comprehensive reiteration of the key positions on English religious-political policy that the English Catholic leadership had disseminated during the 1580s and 1590s'.³⁶ Hamilton analyses the attempts by Verstegan to establish that Protestant rule by the Tudors was in fact 'based on myth, lies and pretension' and suggests that his work was styled in the manner of a corrective that was there to undermine pro-Protestant propagandists such as Jean Bodin, John Foxe and Thomas Cooper.³⁷ Competing theories of lineage put into question not only a particular religion's 'right' to claim doctrinal ascendancy, but also negated another's spiritual right to redemption, seen most blatantly in the conflation of Papist and Antichrist in the more caustic anti-Catholic tracts.

³⁵ See *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, ed. by Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 5-7.

³⁶ Donna B. Hamilton, 'Richard Verstegan and Catholic resistance: the encoding of antiquarianism and love', in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, ed. by Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay and Richard Wilson (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 87-104 (p. 88).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88. Others besides these joined in the debate, such as Edward Coke's pro-Protestant *The Fifth Part of the Reports* (1605) and earlier, Robert Parsons, who claimed the Infanta of Philip II had greater claim to the throne than James in his *The Conference about the Next Succession* in 1595. Even James himself was moved to declare his monarchical rights and direct lineage from Henry VII in his 1598 *Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, (London, 1598), p. 90.

Such spiritual accountability is also reflected in the way in which language is used to depict political strife. The religious and the consequent political divisions that the Reformation instigated are shown in a number of texts that use the body/soul dichotomy as a metaphor for either concord or strife. Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue Between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*, c.1535, mirrors St. Paul's image in the first letter to the Corinthians (12: 13) of mankind as one body of many members working through diversification, interdependence and co-operation. However, Starkey's image moves away from Paul's spiritual, co-operative body, a *corpus ecclesiasticum*, to a more pernicious view of a wayward body, the *corpus politicum*, and with it a suggestion of the strife to come.³⁸

as in every man there is a body and also a soul, in whose flourishing and prosperous state both togidder standeth the weal and felicity of man, so likewise there is every commonality, city and country, as it were, a politic body, and another thing also, resembling the soul of man, in whose flourishing both togidder resteth also by common weal [...] For like as the body in every man receiveth his life by the virtue of the soul, and is governed thereby, so doth the multitude of the people in every country receive, as it were, civil life by laws well administered by good officers and wise rulers, by whom they be governed and kept in politic order.³⁹

The wisdom of good rulers to implement true laws are the soul of the country here, and its administration by the monarch is the life force of that system, the 'politic order' that will uphold the 'felicity of man', like the soul to the body. Civil strife, consequently, becomes an indication of moral sickness, again a reminder of the importance of social

³⁸ Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 32-36.

³⁹ Thomas Starkey, *A Dialogue Between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset*, ed. by Kathleen M. Burton (London: Chatto & Windus, 1948), p. 55.

unity and the fear of its opposite as significant of collective and individual spiritual despair.

The importance of the monarch as the spiritual life force of the nation that can ensure its stability, is seen in the young Princess Elizabeth's 1544 translation of Queen Marguerite of Navarre's *The Glass of the Sinful Soul*. It reveals the self-conceptualisation of the future Queen's image of herself as mother of the nation, a secular Virgin Mary and daughter of God, whose soul has 'conceived' and brought forth Christ in the form of her new understanding of love 'O what grace is this, that so suddenly Thou vouchsafest to draw my soul in such highness that she feeleth herself the ruler of my body'.⁴⁰

Elizabeth's translation not only emphasises the soul as the progenitor of her role as head of a nation but also confirms divine acknowledgement of that position and one presumes, furthermore, that her work, which enjoyed several editions, would no doubt have an influence on its readers.

This section has shown the complex consequences of the Reformation on the subsidiary effects of theological change in the social and political spheres, which brings us back to Donne and Shakespeare's images of a soul that has lost much through its over-engagement with worldly concerns, forgetting its central divinity. Shakespeare's soul as centre of the sinful earth reminds us not only of the wayward body that the soul has foolishly allowed to take control but also the political body of England that is in confusion and theologically adrift. But if the Reformation is the prime cause of the

⁴⁰ Elizabeth I, *The Glass of the Sinful Soul*, ed. by Marc Shell (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), p. 118.

dislocation of the soul, how does the nature of the soul itself make it vulnerable to perversion, like the treasonous pilgrim that is ashamed, or the pining soul that is feeding the body's desires? Why is the soul likened to Reason that can no longer cure the sick patient – the body – whose appetites, or Will, have taken hold? This next section will explore the debates on the composition of the soul around the time of Shakespeare and Donne, as well as readings of the soul from antiquity, showing conflicting interpretations of its component parts and its links to the divine and to the body.

The Fractured Soul

The image of the soul that is dislocated or fragmented goes back to antiquity and one could say that the reforms of the early modern period foreground these fragmentations. Writers of the ancient world describe the soul as being in its very nature split, each section often at odds with another. Plato, in *The Republic*, for example, states that the soul has three entities: the rational, which is to be found in the head; the spirit in the heart; and the appetites (the will) in the stomach.⁴¹ In the *Phaedrus*, Plato uses the image of the Charioteer, representing the rational faculty of the soul, who must seek to control two horses, one of which – the black horse – represents unbridled appetite that will bring down the chariot if left unchecked, suggesting instability and a constant need for restraint:

The charioteer and the white horse tend naturally to pull in the opposite direction from the black horse, which will weigh them down in their ascent to the Forms (for this is a winged chariot) unless it receives proper training. Yet there is a unity

⁴¹ Plato, *The Republic of Plato*, trans. by Francis MacDonald Cornford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), Book IX, Ch. Xxxiii, pp. 579-82.

to the parts also, for the entire soul, before its fall to earth, was feathered, and it is the nature of the feathers to be nourished by truth.⁴²

There is also here the image of the feathered soul, an indication of lightness and upward flight to the Forms, an idea that will feed into later Christian thought as the soul ascending to Heaven. Aristotle divided the soul into two parts, the rational and irrational, with the latter split into the vegetative and sensitive parts, plants containing only the first and animals having both. Man possesses all three but it is the rational faculty that awards him immortality.⁴³ The split nature of the soul, therefore, sets it up as a site of struggle, where reason competes with the irrational with an implicit sense of collapse should unreasonable forces overwhelm.

The influence of these early philosophers can be seen in works written or translated at the time of Donne and Shakespeare, though by this time some ideas had been filtered through Christian thinking. The 1603 translation of Plutarch's *Philosophie* takes up Plato's Charioteer image and notes the emphasis on the soul that aspires to the heavenly through the rational faculty. It uses the image of the feathered wing as the soul's means to divinity (an image that Shakespeare often employs when describing the soul as discussed later):

the soule being within the body, hath many faculties & powers, whereof that which is the discourse of reason and understanding, doth participate with the deitie, which hee [Plato] not unproperly and impertinently tearmeth a wing,

⁴² G. R. F. Ferrari, 'Platonic Love', in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 248-76 (p. 264).

⁴³ For a more detailed reading of pre-Christian accounts of the soul see Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), pp. 31-33.

because it lifteth up the soule from things base and mortall, unto the consideration of heavenly and celestiall matters.⁴⁴

The 1598 translation from Old French of Aristotle's *Politiques, or Discourses of government*, whilst admitting in the title that the work is a mixture of 'expositions taken out of the best authours', alludes to the soul having composite parts and that only man 'partaketh of reason'.⁴⁵ Spenser's sustained allegory *The Faerie Queene*, published between 1589 and 1595, alludes to the tri-partite nature of the soul in Book II, in the house of Alma, where the soul is revealed as three entities, Phantasy, Memory and Imagination.⁴⁶ Sir John Davies's *Nosce Teipsum* of 1599 also refers to the tri-partite soul, seen through early Christian perspective that encompasses the idea of the Holy Trinity, 'Yet these three powers are not three *Soules*, but one; [...] / A shadow of the blessed Trinity'.⁴⁷ And Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* refers to the tri-partite nature of the soul with reference to Plato, Aristotle, the Roman ancients and the Neo-Platonists.⁴⁸ Donne himself went to Cambridge where he would have read the ancient writers. Certainly Thomas Aquinas would have been studied, through whom antiquity would have been 'modified to appear compatible with the medieval tradition of Christianity'.⁴⁹ In his later Sermons, he cites the influence of pre-Christian thought:

⁴⁴ Plutarch, *The Philosophie commanlie called, the morals written by the learned philosopher, Plutarch of Chaeronea* (London, 1603), p. 1021.

⁴⁵ Aristotle, *Aristotles politiques, or Discourses of government* (London, 1598), p. 30.

⁴⁶ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by J. W. Hales (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1962), Bk. II, ix. 49-58, pp. 281-83.

⁴⁷ Sir John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum*, (London, 1599), p. 53.

⁴⁸ Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy: The First Partition*, ed. by Holbrook Jackson (New York: New York Review Books Press, 2001), pp. 154-69.

⁴⁹ C. M. Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1958), p. 41.

First, in a naturall man wee conceive there is a soule of vegetation and of growth; and secondly, a soule of motion and of sense; and then thirdly, a soule of reason and understanding, an immortall soule [...] But the last soule, the perfect and immortall soule, that is immediately infused by God.⁵⁰

The soul is thus a complex entity, rather akin to a machine that needs constant attention if it is to perform well, and, from Platonist reading, it appears to have within it contradictory qualities that compete for ascendancy. Added to this Platonist thought, is the chaotic soul, where the black horse has slipped rein from the charioteer, the black horse representing the base soul that has not achieved wisdom and thus brings the chariot down. This idea of the soul as a site of struggle and instability, and with responsibilities, leads into St. Augustine's reading of the soul. A fusion of the pre-Christian ideas already mentioned, Augustine's vision of the soul is again one of struggle but with the Christian notion of sin if the Will, or appetites, are allowed to take hold, rather like Plato's black horse. For Augustine, the soul, which he labels the rational soul, thus setting man apart from other creatures, also has three faculties, which he names as Understanding or Reason, Memory and Will. Though reminiscent of ancient Greek thinking on the soul, for Augustine, Will is 'ultimately free to override Reason'; failure to control this will lead to the Fall of mankind and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise.⁵¹ Excess appetite, or Will, is the embracing of the physical world, which in turn corrupts Reason and Memory, for 'the rational soul, however, lives disgracefully when it lives according to the

⁵⁰ *John Donne: The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. by George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 3:85.

⁵¹ Rosalie Osmond, *Mutual Accustation: Seventeenth Century Body and Soul Dialogues in Their Literary and Theological Context* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 24.

trinity of the outer man, that is, when it applies to these things which form the sense of the body from without'.⁵²

As with Shakespeare's sonnet, the soul that contemplates only outward things lives badly, causing the part of the soul that contemplates the sacred to pine. Augustine, however, takes this further by his alignment of the faculties of the soul to that of the Holy Trinity: Reason corresponding to the Father, Memory to the Son, and Will to the Holy Spirit, and it is the concordance of these three through the power of Memory that can bring salvation.

but that image of the Creator that has been implanted immortally in its own immortality must be found in the human soul, that is, the rational or intellectual soul [...] this very light reveals to you those three things in you, and in them you recognise the image of that highest Trinity itself.⁵³

How are these Classical precedents important to Shakespeare and Donne? Fresh translations were becoming available in the 1500s, which saw a revival of interest in antiquity. Augustine's work, according to Jonathan Dollimore, shaped Christian narrative for centuries. He argues that Augustine's works were to be influential throughout history, that he 'occupies no single point in history, providential or secular; rather he exists across time, constituted within and by his own historical moment, and reconstituted since'.⁵⁴ For Donne and Shakespeare, however, it is Memory, that third vital component to the stability of the soul, linked to Christ in the Trinity, which will be central to this thesis.

⁵² Saint Augustine, *On The Trinity*, trans. by Stephen McKenna, ed. by Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Bk. 11, p. 66.

⁵³Ibid., Bk. 14, pp. 142, 222.

⁵⁴Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 131.

Furthermore, Donne and Shakespeare, with their family backgrounds steeped in the old religion, would have been aware of the importance of memory of the Classical past as a route to understanding the present. It is Memory, then, in Augustine's tri-partite model that for both these writers becomes central to their reading of the soul.

I would like to argue that the importance of Augustinian Memory to Donne and Shakespeare is linked with Augustine's concept of time. In Books 10 and 11 of *Confessions* Augustine discusses the concept of past, present and future. He indicates that as the past and future do not exist there cannot be three moments of time – past, present and future – but that one, true time only exists which is the present moment. The past and the future are determined by Memory, of what has happened, which affects by 'Expectation' what will come 'neither *tymes past*, nor *tymes future*, have any being; Nor is it properly sayd, that there are, three *Tymes*'.⁵⁵ Augustine indicates that past and future exist only in the mind, which uses Memory to consider these two periods in conjunction with the present 'in the *mind*, which acteth thus, three things are done. For it *expects*, it *attends*, and it *remembers*; that so the things which it *expects*, by that to which it *attends*, may passe into that, which it *remembers*'.⁵⁶ This present moment and the recall of goodness can be linked to the divine, the 'unchangeably *eternall*', the '*truely eternall creatour of minds*'.⁵⁷

Frank Kermode suggests that there are two types of time, which Augustine has distinguished as our perception of linear time as opposed to a divine present:

⁵⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by Sir Tobie Matthew (London, 1620), Bk. 11, p. 616.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Bk. 11, p. 636.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Bk. 11, p. 642.

chronos is ‘passing time’ or ‘waiting time’ – that which, according to Revelation, ‘shall be no more’ – and *kairos* is the season, a point in time filled with significance, charged with meaning derived from its relation to the end [...]. The divine plot is the pattern of the *kairoi* in relation to the End [...]. It is the New Testament that lays the foundation for [...] the modern distinction between times: the coming of God’s time (*kairos*), the fulfilling of the time (*kairos* – Mark I:15), the signs of the times (Matt. XVI. 2,3) as against passing time, *chronos*. The notion of fulfilment is essential; the *kairos* transforms the past, validates Old Testament types and prophecies, establishes concord with origins as well as ends.⁵⁸

Kermode’s indication of fulfilment that comes at the birth of Christ that signals new beginnings and which validates the past, will be a central argument, particularly in Shakespeare’s later plays. These two concepts of Memory and Time, therefore, will be essential to Donne and Shakespeare’s reading of the soul’s salvation.

The centrality of Christ as the prime route of the soul’s salvation in Augustinian theology can also be seen to be at the heart of much Reformation thought, which I will argue has affected these two writers. Lothar Graf Zu Dohna notes the importance of Johann Von Staupitz’s reading of Augustine into sixteenth century theological discourse, though here the importance of Christ, the memorial part of the tri-partite soul, is as an active promoter of goodness.⁵⁹ Christ as mediator in the process of salvation was also central to Peter Martyr Vermigli, a former Catholic Prior whose work sought to bring Augustinian theology into post-Reformation thinking and who was admired by Martin Bucer. For

⁵⁸ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 47-48.

⁵⁹ Lothar Graf Zu Dohna, ‘Staupitz and Luther’, in *Via Augustini: Augustine in the Later Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation: Essays in Honour of Damasus Trapp, O. S. A.*, ed. by Heiko A. Oberman and Frank A. James III in cooperation with Eric Leland Saak (Leiden, New York, Kobenhavn, Koln: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp.116-29 (pp. 118-19).

Vermigli, unlike his contemporary, Calvin, Christ is not the author of predestined salvation, for that lies with the ‘Trinitarian Godhead’, but rather Christ, in the form of Christ on earth rather than Christ in the Trinity, acts as ‘the mediator to accomplish redemption’.⁶⁰ The word made flesh that is Christ also links here with active good in the world and the connecting link to the divine that He represents. This Christocentric theology of active good will be central to further readings of Donne and Shakespeare’s work in the ensuing chapters.

Though most contemporary readings of the soul used the tri-partite model to describe its functions, there are many contradictory readings of the split, and it is worth commenting on the various readings of this fracture. A particular conceit was the wandering soul, or pilgrim of Donne’s sonnet, that has lost its path to God. This trope underpins the discussion of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* in Chapter Three, and Donne’s 1601 poem *The Progresse of the Soule* in Chapter One. A prime feature of the wandering soul is its passivity. It wanders aimlessly, paradoxically trapped in its own inertness, creating an image not only of lethargy but also uncertainty regarding its salvation. The conflation of wandering and imprisonment is found in Donne’s opening sonnet and can be seen also in *The Extasie*, ‘a great Prince in prison lies’ (l. 68), an image directly from Platonist thought. The clergyman Thomas Walkington’s 1607 *The optick glasse of humors* states, after Plato’s *Phaedrus*, that ‘our bodies were the prisons and bridewels of our soules’, which dwells in ‘this vile mansion of our body’.⁶¹ The imprisoned soul can also be found in Shakespeare: Othello, for example, speaks of his ‘enfettered’ soul (II.iii.319).

⁶⁰ Frank A. James III, ‘Gregory of Rimini and Peter Martyr Vermigli’, in *Via Augustini*, pp. 157-88, (p. 171).

⁶¹ Thomas Walkington, *The optick glasse of humors* (London, 1607), p. 11.

However, the image of the imprisoned soul is more often likened to a bird trapped in lime, a Platonist image that conjures up not only the delicacy of the soul but also its passivity as it can no longer ‘fly’ but is weighed down by material matter. Claudius’s soul, for instance, is ‘full of discord and dismay’ (*Hamlet* IV.ii.40), a ‘limed soul [...] struggling to be free’ (III.iii.68) that suggests the ethereal bird that is weighed down and trapped by base material. In *2Henry VI*, the Duchess of Gloucester tells her husband how the ‘impious Beaufort that false priest, / Have all limed bushes to betray thy wings’ (II.iv.54-55). The Cardinal repeats the image in his ravings when imagining the murdered Gloucester’s ‘frighted’ hair: ‘look, look: it stands upright / Like lime twigs set to catch my winged soul’ (III.iii.15-16). These images of the wandering and trapped soul will be a feature of Donne’s poems that lead up to the *Anniversaries*, examined in the next chapter and Shakespeare’s plays leading up to the Romance dramas.

The imprisoned soul trapped within the confines of the material world, struggling inside the body, creates a tension that sets up ideas about the actual connection of soul to body. How can something, which is deemed insubstantial, have a connection with something physical? The soul’s connection to the body has been discussed in numerous religious, philosophical and quasi-medical tracts, from a variety of writers of different religious persuasions and occupations, which reveal contrasting descriptions of the nature and physiological position of the soul. One of the main arguments rested on the conundrum that if the soul were connected to the body then surely it would be mortal, and if so, how can it then be divine? Two late fifteenth century Italian theorists, Lambertus de Monte and Alessandro Achillini, take the Thomistic-Aristotelian view of the soul as connected

to the body, with the rational part God-given and therefore immortal. Conversely, the early sixteenth-century thinker, Pietro PompaZZini, reads Aristotelian theory as suggesting the soul as material and inseparable from the body and adopts the view in his 1516 *De immortalitē animae* ‘that we know the immortality of the soul *only by faith*’.⁶² Phillip Melancthon, an associate of Luther, claimed that the pluralistic soul of antiquity, which comprised the vegetative, sensitive and rational, had the former two as an organic part of the body, the latter only being ‘Spirit’, purely separate from the body and thus immaterial and immortal, which he calls the human mind.⁶³ This vital connection of soul to body, through sinews and bloodstream, will be explored further in my chapter on Donne’s sermons.

The image of the fragmented soul also set up debates about its component parts, in particular Reason’s relationship with Will as in Shakespeare’s sonnet. John Morgan indicates the complex nature of Reason in puritan thinking:

Reason could teach its followers only the rational. As far as salvation was concerned, it could require only a civil, good life, the peaceful carrying out of the duties of earthly existence. But this [...] led only to good reputation among men.⁶⁴

There is a limit here to the powers of Reason as it can gain you social standing but, without grace, was insufficient to ensure salvation. Faith, ‘the infusion of the Spirit which came with entry into the covenant of grace’, could alter reason into ‘regenerate reason’,

⁶² Emily Michael, ‘Renaissance Theories of Body, Soul and Mind’, in *Psyche and Soma: Physicians and Metaphysicians on the Mind-Body Problem from Antiquity to the Enlightenment*, ed. by John P. Wright and Paul Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 149-55 (p. 153).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64.

⁶⁴ John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning and Education, 1560-1640*, p. 55.

defined by puritans such as John Preston, which could take ‘proper control over erratic and perverted will’, but which remained subordinate to the power of Faith.⁶⁵ William Vaughan’s *Approved direction for health, both natural and artificiall* (1612), for example, indicates that without ‘proper’ reason, or regenerate reason, the soul will become diminished.⁶⁶ Such ideas about loss of Reason to the overwhelming power of Will, will be discussed in relation to salvation in *Othello* and *King Lear* in Chapters Three and Four.

There were writers, however, whose image of the soul’s connection to the body was of an active but negative struggle. A popular medieval dialogue which was revived in the seventeenth century by the clergyman and religious controversialist William Crashaw, was *The Complaint or dialogue betwixt the Soule and the Body of a damned man: each laying fault upon the other* (1616), a translation of the medieval *Visio Philiberti*, or *Saint Bernard’s Vision*. This text gives the soul a ‘voice’ to assert its religious position, a technique also found in allegorical drama. The soul becomes a character in the dramatic dialogue, yet invariably it finds itself defeated by the ‘body’, which pours forth blame as both argue over the ultimate responsibility for salvation or damnation. The soul becomes entangled in the Calvinistic practice of intense self-examination and has been given a ‘mind’ to be aware of its own damnation, thnetopsychism, helpless in the face of an indulgent body.⁶⁷ This dualistic struggle hearkens back to Plato’s *Phaedrus* and

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 56.

⁶⁶ William Vaughan, *Approved direction for health, both natural and artificiall* (London, 1612), p. 101.

⁶⁷ Kathryn R. Kremen, *The Imagination of the Resurrection: The Poetic Continuity of a Religious Motif in Donne, Blake and Yeats* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses Inc., 1972), p. 71.

characterises Neo-Platonist thought of the early modern period, where the soul attempts ascendancy over the body lest it be contaminated by it.⁶⁸

Crashaw's decision to translate this medieval text is worth comment. In his Epistle Dedicatory he acknowledges the Catholic heritage in the text but clearly states that 'though it was made in the Mist of Popery' it contains no 'Popish' elements 'nor scarce smels of any superstition, whereas it is stuff with godly truthes, and wholesome instructions'.⁶⁹ The text follows the medieval original and offers no change of emphasis, though he acknowledges the need for moral guidance at such an uncertain and rebellious time, and its ensuing editions in 1622 and 1632 prove its popularity.⁷⁰ Here, the soul 'speaks' and questions God's foreknowledge of its damnation:

Why with his creatures,
Did God me enroule,
Whom he foreknew
Should perish for this sinne?⁷¹

There is a sense of bewilderment here from a questioning soul that has an active and curious 'mind'. The body defends its position as a weak vessel and argues that the soul, which the body calls its mistress, should have controlled its excesses through the government of Reason overwhelmed by Will:

⁶⁸ Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 17.

⁶⁹ William Crashaw, *The Complaint or dialogue betwixt the Soule and the Body of a damned man: each laying fault upon the other* (London: 1616), Epistle Dedicatory, A4v.

⁷⁰ For a more detailed account of Crashaw's translation see Rosalie Osmond, *Mutual Accusation: Seventeenth-Century Body and Soul Dialogues in their Literary and Theological Context*, pp. 84-114.

⁷¹ Crashaw, *The Complaint or dialogue betwixt the Soule and the Body of a damned man*, B12r.

If thou my
 Mistresse ought to bee,
 And reason had,
 By which thy Office was
 Us both to governe:
 Why didst thou suffer mee
 Without restraint
 In wicked race to passe? ⁷²

At the heart of this text is the psychomachia, and it is perhaps not unremarkable that this fight for the soul that hearkens back to pre-Reformation times should find its revival in such a contentious and seditious period, or that the personification of such abstractions that put over a forceful and didactic message should still have a place in a climate where more complex characters were being crafted on the stage and on the page. It is a tradition that carries through to Shakespeare's *Othello*, as Chapter Three explores.

Struggle between Will and Reason is the key that may be applied to these texts. The lawyer and politician Robert Mason describes in *Reason's academie* (1605), a title that suggests that Reason is running the academy, how so many individuals are reduced by the abnegation of their acknowledgement of the divine. Mason emphasises how the appetites, when allowed to take control, render the individual deranged and incoherent, characteristics that will be explored further in my examination of Lear:

Now, for that I so generally finde, that reasonable and immortall part, to bee so universally carried away, seduced, and over-ruled by the mere sensitive powers, entertaining the evil and forbidding things, and refusing the good, allowable and lawful.⁷³

⁷² Ibid., B2r-B3r.

⁷³ Robert Mason, *Reason's academie* (London, 1605), pp. 30-31.

The subordination of Reason to Will can be seen in other texts of the time. Edward Popham, for instance, has also commented on the soule's 'lawless appetites'.⁷⁴ The religious controversialist Thomas Rogers's *St Augustine's Manual* (1600) speaks of the soul's 'carnal desires, earthly lust'.⁷⁵ Linked to this is the idea of the displaced, shameful soul that is removed from God's favour. This has already been implied in Crashaw, where the soul is 'fouler than a toad', but there are others.⁷⁶ In Donne's *To the Countesse of Huntington*, for example, the soul is 'too earthly to ascend' (l. 104), and has on it a 'staine' (l. 107).⁷⁷ In *A Looking-Glasse for the Soule* (1619) Edward Popham cites John Chrysostom's image of the diseased soul plagued by a surfeit of sin, where the 'Soule should have the sovereignty and the body follow the sway of her directions; but servile senses and lawless appetites, rule her as superior, and so make her as a Vassall, or servile in her own dominions'.⁷⁸ And the historian and lawyer John Hayward indicates in *The first part of the sanctuary of a troubled soule* (1607) how the soul diseased through sin is the result of the 'preposterous care for the body', which is also reminiscent of Shakespeare's sonnet.⁷⁹ Like Shakespeare's 'rebel powers' and Augustine's 'outer man', the appetites dominate, leaving Reason and Memory as passive extras that cannot find a means to overcome the strong force of the Will.

There is a desire for strength to take hold of the forces at work on the soul, rather like Morgan's discussion of the Thomist model of 'regenerate reason', which allows for a

⁷⁴ Edward Popham, *A Looking-glasse for the Soule* (London, 1619), p. 29.

⁷⁵ Thomas Rogers, *St. Augustine's Manual* (London, 1600), p. 16.

⁷⁶ Crashaw, *The Complaint or dialogue betwixt the Soule and Body of a damned man*, A7r.

⁷⁷ John Donne, *Poetical Works* ed. by Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 197.

⁷⁸ Popham, *A Looking-glasse for the Soule*, pp. 28-29.

⁷⁹ Sir John Hayward, *The first part of the sanctuary of a troubled soule* (London, 1607), p. 4.

reading of Reason that can take on the might of unbridled Will. Citing the mystic Francis Rous as his guide, however, Morgan acknowledges that Reason's potential as the route to salvation is limited, but that it is an aid to salvation rather than the prime route:

while reason might see the shadows, it could not perceive the Forms [...] but rather it would be an 'aid' in the achievement and propagation of belief.⁸⁰

There is, however, another reading of the soul. This shows a more active and positive image, which can help, in Platonist terms, 'perceive the Forms': the soul as educator. The notion of the soul as educative is also linked to the increase in learning that accompanied post-Reformation activity in a bid to dispel earlier notions of blind faith. Donne, Miles Mosse and Lancelot Andrewes, for example, preached to great effect to their populace, the art of the sermon being simultaneously educative and stirring, which for Donne led straight through the body to the soul itself, as will be seen in more detail in Chapter Two. For Shakespeare, the theatre, like the pulpit, can provide an educative space, Shakespeare arguably taking advantage of the rise of the learned preacher and dynamics of congregation/audience, which is becoming accustomed to this new religious medium.

The idea of the soul as teacher was fairly widespread and was linked to the idea that the soul could show us the way to the divine. Sir John Davies, pro-monarchist poet, in his *Nosce Teipsum* of 1599, speaks of the soul as the route to Reason and wisdom, 'And many *understandings, knowledge* bring; And by much *knowledge, wisdom* we obtaine'.⁸¹ Stephan Batman's 1582 version of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De*

⁸⁰ Morgan, *Godly Learning*, p. 50.

⁸¹ Sir John Davies, *Nosce Teipsum* (London, 1599), p. 50.

proprietibus rerum work also acknowledges the importance of the soul as teacher in the section ‘De Anima Rationali’.⁸²

This soul as an educative force places it in an active and responsible position and also links it to Counter-Reformation ideas of salvation being attained through active good works rather than the inherent passivity that can accompany ideas of divine grace.

However, exactly how the soul might be a source of wisdom was not always clear as the favoured tri-partite model had within its very nature instability and often it was Will, or appetites, that overpowered the other two. This notion of the soul as teacher to allow man to comprehend higher things, therefore, could be blighted by man’s temptation to ignore such treasures. The limits of Reason imposed by the Fall exacerbated this idea as man’s rational soul was thought to be limited in its perspective, functioning in the earthly sphere but cut off from the heavenly. The struggle between the contemplation of the divine and the pleasures of the world can lead to the diseased soul being cast into damnation, rather like Shakespeare’s pining soul that is at the mercy of the body’s Will.

How, then, can the soul function as an educative force given the overwhelming power of Will in the tri-partite model? For Donne and Shakespeare, the prime route to wisdom is through the power of Memory, the third component of Augustine’s tri-partite model, and it is so often left out of the equation when Will battles against Reason. For remembrance of goodness can point the way forward, to educate us in how we should actively live. In order to bridge the gap created by the Fall, Memory has to recall the goodness that has

⁸² Bartholomaeus, Anglicus, *Batman uppon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum* (London, 1582), p. 16.

been lost and this can be done only through faith. Augustine states that from faith comes the knowledge that can lead us to salvation, ‘for a certain faith is in some way the beginning of knowledge, but a certain knowledge will only be perfected after this life when we shall see face to face (Corinthians 13: 12)’.⁸³

Memory, then, is the tool for the soul that will enable a move from the strife to harmony that Shakespeare’s sonnet advocates but does not show us how. It can locate and bring stability to the wandering soul that, like Donne’s pilgrim, has lost its way and it can release the imprisoned soul from its negative connection with its organic ‘home’. I will show in this thesis that Memory, in a personified form, can be educative, pacifying the battle between Will and Reason, and that this can be achieved through a move to a space that can bring divine and worldly time together.

This section has detailed the composition of the soul that links the tri-partite model to antiquity and, most importantly for this thesis, to Augustine and how his influence informs early modern ideas of the soul. This next section foregrounds the problems that Donne and Shakespeare face when portraying this fragmented soul on the page and in the theatre.

The Problem of Representation

How do Donne and Shakespeare explore the fragmented soul and imagine its route to harmony through Memory in their works? One problem of representing the soul is that this very worldly representation foregrounds its remove from the divine, that just by

⁸³ Augustine, *On The Trinity*, p. 24.

being represented the soul is always seen through a concrete object and, as the debates on interiority have shown, it is always rendered public. The importance of Memory, therefore, is all the more crucial in literary and dramatic representations as it provides a link between the need for tangible depiction and a remembrance of that which is divine.

One of the problems already cited is how to creatively present something insubstantial. The soul has to be presented metaphorically, like Donne's use of the pilgrim and thief, and Shakespeare's employment of the house with the soul trapped inside. Whilst there are numerous tracts that discuss the nature of the soul, the visual depiction of an insubstantial entity can give us clues as to how an early modern mind perceived such a subject.

Drawings and paintings from the medieval and early modern period show the need for concrete images by generally presenting the soul in the embodiment of a person, either male or female, which is either happily ascending to Heaven or miserably descending to Hell, depending on the subject matter of the image. From early medieval times onwards the tableau of the deathbed scene, or *ars moriendi*, showed a sick individual at death's door whilst good and evil spirits tussle to enlist the soul, often depicted as a smaller version of the dying individual, to its final destination.⁸⁴

The personification of this can be seen in Hieronymus Bosch's late fifteenth century paintings, for example, where the soul is a facsimile of the person's body when alive, though to some extent physically depleted. His triptych *Paradise* depicts a metamorphosis, where the soul of an individual starts off as body then, as the soul

⁸⁴ Bettie Anne Doebler, 'Othello's Angels: The Ars Moriendi', *English Literary History*, 34 (1967), 156-72 (p. 159).

ascends to Heaven, the body morphs into a delicate insect-like creature with wings, as though cleansed of heavy corporeality. It suggests the ethereal – light and otherworldly – diametrically opposed to the body-bound images of Hell that forms part of the triptych. Here, the body looks diseased, reptilian creatures abound and there are numerous depictions of bodily torture, particularly of being consumed.⁸⁵ A similar view of the soul in Hell is seen in Crashaw’s early seventeenth century translation of the *Visio Philiberti*, mentioned earlier, which has an image of the soul at the mercy of devils at the top of one of the pages. In this picture the soul is depicted as a naked grown male adult, eyes downcast, crying and in prayer; ‘he’ is also shackled and tied up.⁸⁶ These images depend strongly on the viewers’ understanding not only the power that sin has on the body, but also how this body can entrap the soul and bring it to damnation and is reminiscent of Shakespeare’s soul trapped within a body that has taken control.

Access to works of art, or indeed to texts such as the *Visio Philiberti*, would not, however, be common to many people. Their understanding of the soul would probably come from more immediate sources such as those seen regularly in their local church. The fifteenth century church of St. Mary in Beverley, for example, has an image of a soul – child-like – carefully being carried to Heaven ‘in a napkin by two angels’.⁸⁷ Last Judgement settings also provide images of the soul. In Wenhaston Doom Church, Suffolk, an early sixteenth century painting of St. Michael presiding over the weighing of

⁸⁵ For more studies see *Hieronymus Bosch*, ed. Walter Bosing (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1973).

⁸⁶ Osmond, *Mutual Accusation*, p. 196. See also Doebler ‘Othello’s Angels: The *Ars Moriendi*’, p. 159, n.7, on the *The Ars Moriendi* of c.1450, where the stained glass of the church at Malvern depicts a man on his deathbed ‘with demons trying to seize his soul as it issued forth from his mouth in the shape of a child, while the Good Angel tried to protect it’.

⁸⁷ C. J. P. Cave, *Roof Bosses in Medieval Churches: An Aspect of Gothic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), p. 182.

souls has an image of a tiny adult of no specific gender weighing more than a group of devils placed in the other scales, whilst ‘The Hell Mouth’ in the late fifteenth, early sixteenth century church in Fairford, Gloucester, again shows tiny non-gendered adults but here they are being carried by ape-like creatures into Hell; and in the fifteenth century church in Pickering, Yorkshire, the same scene shows adults of both genders, this time appearing larger and therefore more life-like, queuing to enter into damnation.⁸⁸ It is as though the child-like, and one presumes pure, image is fitting for Heaven whilst the image of the sinning, fleshy adult fits the descent into Hell.

One early ‘live’ depiction of the struggle between the soul’s journey to either Heaven and Hell is in the late fifteenth century, pre-Reformation play *The Castle of Perseverance*. The soul is a character that spends most of the play enclosed under the bed of Mankind and makes an appearance only at Mankind’s death when the soul is taken up to a scaffold to be judged.

Mankyndeis bed schal be undyr the castel and ther schal the Sowle lye undyr the bed tyl he scgal ryse and pleye.⁸⁹

Here the soul is a character on stage, made flesh in the body of an actor, which is on trial and must await judgement. As the character remains under the bed for the most part of the play, one actor would probably take that role, emphasising its central importance, as medieval drama usually favoured doubling up according to oppositional patterning. It would seem a logical leap from the images depicted on Church walls of souls as people to

⁸⁸ Colin Platt, *The Parish Churches of Medieval England* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1981), pp. 125, 126, 122.

⁸⁹ *Four Morality Plays* ed. by Peter Happé (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 78.

have on stage the soul as a living being, capable of right or wrong. This early idea of the dispersed entity of an individual presented on stage, however, allows the soul not only to speak and act, thus making it an active part of man, but also allows it to be a force for good over man's other facets.

David Bevington has explored at great length another late fifteenth century drama, *Wisdom Who is Christ*. This follows the psychomachiac tradition, which examines the struggle between the forces of good and evil for the soul:

Mind, Will and Understanding, the attributes of Anima the soul, are instructed by heavenly Wisdom in the true path of salvation, and are warned of their three great enemies, World, Flesh and Devil [...] Finally they are called to account by Wisdom, and they and Anima are chastised and cleansed.⁹⁰

What is interesting about Bevington's research, however, is the idea that actors playing Mind, Will and Understanding would then double up as their 'spiritual opposites'.⁹¹ 'Mind becomes Pride or Maintenance (support of wrong), Understanding becomes Covetousness or Perjury, and Will becomes Lechery'.⁹² This doubling up of actors, whilst practically more manageable in a travelling troupe, allows the audience to see the symmetrical struggle of the composite parts of the soul and their ability to rise or fall into perfidy as an actor changes from one opposite to another. More interestingly, of course, it also points towards the more complex patterning of character that is to emerge in the sixteenth century, with the idea that multiple characteristics can be fused into what will

⁹⁰ David M. Bevington, *From 'Mankind' to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 125.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

emerge as the dramatis personae of Shakespeare's stage. This patterning will be important in the examination of Augustine's conceit of Reason, Will and Memory when examining Shakespeare's texts, for characters here will personify conflicting spiritual opposites that struggle for ascendancy.

All the above examples of representations of the soul are fundamentally didactic, designed to inform the audience of the perils of damnation, yet also showing how the audience or readership can be educated in a variety of ways, be it through drama or visual religious art. However, Donne and Shakespeare face different problems interpreting the soul to a religiously unsettled sixteenth and seventeenth-century public, though I believe both writers rely on the communal consciousness of pre-Reformation imagery. The style of the *Divine Poems*, written in the first decade of the seventeenth century, seems intensely private and has Donne wrestling with his own tortured soul at the same time that he was contemplating a move from Catholicism to the Protestant faith. The introspective tone of the works suggests that Donne is teaching himself how to regain salvation, though the submissive nature to the divine in these works can also be seen. George Parfitt suggests that, although Donne had no direct audience or patron, these poems were meant for his new patron, 'God', and for James as head of the Church, as Donne prepares for the difficult journey into the new order.⁹³

This poetry culminates in the publication of the *Anniversaries*, where Donne's presentation of the soul takes on not only a particular form, to be discussed in the next chapter, but also becomes an object of communal rejoicing in its very self-conscious

⁹³ George Parfitt, *John Donne: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), p. 93.

public airing. His sermons, written after his conversion to Protestantism, are didactic, though we need to ask who exactly is Donne's central audience, for the sermons often convey the sense that Donne, once again, is very much present in his work and seems primarily to be the subject and the audience of his own contemplations. Like the sonnets' argument rehearsed earlier in this introduction, I would argue that they are a deliberately constructed public exhibition of interiority. This is not to deny them sincerity, but they constitute exactly the paradox that Patricia Fumerton explores, that interiority can be alluded to only through public forms of expression.

The delivery of the sermons also foregrounds a change after the Reformation: the proximity of preacher to congregation was closer than priest to worshippers in the Catholic church and the emphasis was less on the visual but focussed on the power of the word. Bryan Crockett has noted how Martin Bucer's plans for the reconstruction of the English churches after the Reformation emphasised the need for the centrality of the preacher and his sermon, and the links between his designs for a circular style place of worship, although not implemented, have strong connections with the theatres that were being constructed at the end of the sixteenth century, which in themselves were influenced by the arena theatres of Greece and Rome. It would seem that Donne was conscious of this 'theatrical' space and the rhetorical flourishes that the sermon afforded him were put to good use.

the worshipper in Bucer's church would watch and listen as the preacher performed. Paradoxically, then, the Reformation insistence on the centrality of the spoken word reintroduced an element of theatre into the liturgy – albeit theatre of

a different order from the theatricality of which the medieval liturgy stood accused.⁹⁴

Unlike Donne, Shakespeare is very much absent in his work but we, as audience, have the shared experience of the theatre, a popular form in Shakespeare's day. For instance, by the time James acceded to the throne in 1603, the public playhouses in London were firmly established.⁹⁵ As the population of London was less than 250,000, it is reasonable to presume that a high proportion of London's population was in close contact with this highly creative, social and often politically seditious world.⁹⁶ Furthermore, as Steven Mullaney has observed, the position of the theatres outside the jurisdiction of the city provides us with an image of the theatre as an ambiguous cultural space, freed from the social and political confines that would define an individual's life within the city.⁹⁷ Scripts, though, were still under control of the Master of the Revels whose role it was to review plays in order that they were suitable for performance before the sovereign and to make sure that politically contentious material was suitably hidden or removed from a script.⁹⁸ For Shakespeare and other writers, nonetheless, this offers an opportunity to create a visual and auditory world that can facilitate an individual's perception of himself and the world he inhabits. As Steven Mullaney argues, the theories 'stand not outside history, but at a slight remove from the historical conditions that make them possible –

⁹⁴ Bryan Crockett, *The Play of Paradox: Stage and Sermon in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 6.

⁹⁵ *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama* ed. by A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 6-7.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹⁷ Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 56.

⁹⁸ Richard Dutton, 'Licensing and Censorship', in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 377-94 (pp. 380-83).

able to transcend, criticise, and even comment upon those conditions by virtue of a certain marginality'.⁹⁹

The power of such social and political commentary, however, depends on the audience. Andrew Gurr has argued that playgoers at such theatres as the Blackfriars, where the King's Men played after about 1608, as well as at The Globe, comprised a great number of those of high social standing who were probably well educated and that variable admission prices at the beginning of the century, which would exclude many of the poor, may have had an effect on theatregoers generally and women from all classes, too, are part of this audience.¹⁰⁰ The implications of this kind of audience, that would no doubt comment on and critique the plays they have seen, will be important when considering how Shakespeare presents us with images of redemption and salvation in an England that is still religiously unsettled.

The act of engagement with live performance in Shakespeare's plays, however, differs from the didactic theatre found in such plays as *The Castle of Perseverance* or *Wisdom Who is Christ*. Members of Shakespeare's audience are asked, creatively and imaginatively, to enter a variety of different worlds. It is important to note that writers' works at this time would be subject to change, not simply through the author's redrafts in rehearsals, but also through actor's interpretations (or misinterpretations), the proliferation of bad quartos and the publisher's edition. Robert Weimann has argued that 'the Elizabethan theatre offered a location where authority could not be of an exclusively

⁹⁹ Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁰ For more detailed information on what type of person attended the theatres see Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 55-72.

literary provenance'.¹⁰¹ Performance in particular holds much interpretative authority, though actors, according to David Scott Kastan, were often seen, along with publishing houses, as 'corrupters of the texts entrusted to them'.¹⁰² Stephen Orgel suggests, however, that the writers in the Elizabethan theatre would be aware of the appropriation of a text by various sources and did in fact construct their work to accommodate the assorted changes that the prompt copy would undergo as it moved from page to stage.¹⁰³ The text, then, is just one part of the creative process, that is, literally, fleshed out by the actors. Given the fluidity of Shakespeare's texts - the minimal set, use of a variety of locations, direction that is indicative in the line, acknowledgment of past genres, ambiguous endings, for example, the flexibility that is incorporated into the *mise-en-scène* becomes in fact part of the meaning of the text, thus limiting the damage that outside interference might cause were there too much rigidity over a 'fixed' interpretation. Shakespeare, too, was an actor, which certainly might suggest some kind of initial authorial control, yet his work predominantly belongs in the public domain, and like the soul, remains hidden behind the 'body' of the theatrical experience.

How, then, might Shakespeare's presentation of the soul be seen in his plays, given not only his invisible presence but also the instability of texts that are subject to overlaying and 'contamination'? What visual or linguistic signals or codes would a post-Reformation audience pick up that would allow them to 'read' the dramatic experience as part of a discourse on the struggling and bewildered soul that has lost its bearings and

¹⁰¹ Robert Weimann, *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice: Playing and Writing in Shakespeare's Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 30.

¹⁰² David Scott Kastan, 'The Mechanics of Culture: Editing Shakespeare Today,' *Shakespeare Studies*, 24 (1996), 30-37 (p. 32).

¹⁰³ Stephen Orgel, 'What is an Editor?', *Shakespeare Studies*, 24 (1996), 23-29 (p. 23).

must find its path back to salvation? And how might Shakespeare present Augustinian Memory, that vital dimension of the soul, linked to a notion of ‘divine’ time, that can enable such salvation, which must resonate with an audience whose cultural memory was progressively being subsumed into ‘an increasing multiplicity of social functions [which was part of] the political economy of circulating pleasure’ that was found at the beginning of the seventeenth century?¹⁰⁴

Richard Hillman’s introductory discussion of the vexed question of the notion of interiority foregrounds the difficulties in interpreting how an early modern audience might in fact ‘read’ a text or a character, from an essential humanist perspective of, say, Jacob Burckhardt, that argues for a Renaissance that discovered the inward self, to the scepticism of Katherine Eisaman Maus that challenges such discourses of self-conception.¹⁰⁵ These difficulties must also be addressed when examining how the divine can be seen within drama in an era that seemingly has shifted from the symbolic representations found in Medieval dramatic performance, to the considered notion of mimetic presentation of character that Burckhardian theory would suggest the early modern period explores. Catherine Belsey, however, has demonstrated, in her work on the soliloquy, that the two not only co-exist but are also part of the same emerging dramatic pattern which ‘shows evidence of its own genealogy, rendering precarious precisely the unified subjectivity which it is its project to represent. The repressed

¹⁰⁴ Weimann, *Author’s Pen and Actor’s Voice*, p. 236.

¹⁰⁵ Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early modern English Drama*, pp. 2, 16.

discontinuities of the allegorical tradition return to haunt the single voice which speaks'.¹⁰⁶

What is also of importance is the warning from the Diocesan Council of 1576 that such depictions of the divine should cease to be 'counterfeyted or represented'.¹⁰⁷ Though referring to depictions of God alone, such a ruling would inevitably affect representations of sacredness per se, as Hillman has noted:

It is hardly surprising that, with the advent of iconoclastic Protestantism, such impersonation became attached to the doctrinal, political, and social subversiveness now attributed to the traditional religious drama.¹⁰⁸

This move from an 'incarnational aesthetic' is also noted by Anthony Dawson who suggests that 'the Reformation was in part a reaction against such ways of thinking, inculcating a distrust of externals and a corresponding turn away from physical signs toward inner conviction'.¹⁰⁹

Shakespeare's theatre, then, becomes a site not only for discussion of the dramatic presentation of 'that within which passeth show' (I.ii.85) – the soul inside the body – but also of the visual and verbal dexterity required to present the forbidden in an era of socio-religious unrest that signals unease at what might be construed as pre-Reformation idolatry. The section on Shakespeare in this thesis will explore the emergence of how the

¹⁰⁶ Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London & New York: Routledge, 1985), p. 44.

¹⁰⁷ Eileen Gardiner, *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: a sourcebook* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1993), p. 78.

¹⁰⁸ Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Medieval and Early modern English Drama*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ Anthony B. Dawson and Paul Yachnin, *The Culture of Playgoing in Shakespeare's England: A Collaborative Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 21.

divine can be represented on stage, and in particular how Augustinian Memory can be encoded within the body of a text so that it is readable to an audience that is already experiencing great dramatic and theatrical changes on the early modern stage. It is my view that, taking Catherine Belsey's idea of the co-existence of an old and new emerging form of characterisation, Shakespeare uses this moment of dramatic shift and the tension that it creates between the past and the present to locate the concept of Memory. He also uses this historical moment to present to his audience another concept of time that can lie outside of a linear model. Richard Hillman's appropriation of Lacanian aphanisis, or fading, will be of value here, where the perception of a character and place can seem at once both attainable and alienating, particularly in the examination of Cordelia in Chapter Four as an 'emblem of the ideal and as a reminder of its unattainability'.¹¹⁰

Taking account of the socio-cultural factors and the issues of representation outlined in the foregoing sections, this thesis will explore how Donne and Shakespeare examine the state of the beleaguered, split soul and how salvation can be found in the idea of the active soul-as-educator through remembrance. Donne's move from Catholicism to Protestantism will be viewed in his move from poetry to prose and this significant change will be analysed in the next two chapters. They will show how the publication of the *Anniversaries* after the anguished *Divine Poems* marks out this transition as he finds an image of redemption, which helps move Donne into the public and active world of the preacher. The concluding three chapters will examine how Shakespeare's representations of the struggling soul are different from Donne's, due mainly to the genres in which they choose to write. Shakespeare's use of the theatre allows him no formal religious arena,

¹¹⁰ Hillman, *Self-Speaking in Early modern English Drama*, pp. 19-22.

like Donne's pulpit, in which to present the soul. It must be presented through allusion or through the body of the actor, though this itself must be explored both through the continuing argument of the development of the conscious self and the Medieval allegorical theatre that informs early modern drama, which Shakespeare employs to translate an image of the soul into a dramatic personae that can be 'read' by the audience. A selection of characters from a variety of his texts will be discussed in the second part of the thesis. The limits of presentation that genre can provide will be important to enable the examination of the development of Shakespeare's creation of a theatrical type, able to be understood as an agent of salvation but within the confines of tragic-comedy, tragedy or romance. These particular genres, therefore, will be central to understanding how images of the soul can be interpreted and Shakespeare's employment and subversion of these modes will form part of this investigation.

The recognition of a means to salvation found in both Donne and Shakespeare's work can be seen through the use of a particular type of imagery that both writers use, which will become increasingly significant to both as their works develop and, as we shall see, can be linked to Memory and Time. This imagery is based on alchemy. The search for the magical formula that can turn base metals into gold was still fascinating scholars in Donne and Shakespeare's day. Reference back to the works of the semi-mythical Hermes Trismegistus through Bacon and Paracelsus was still evidenced in George Ripley, Michael Sendivoguis and later Robert Fludd. John Gower's fourteenth century *Confessio Amantis*, on which *Pericles* is based, for example, has one of its sections devoted to alchemy. Gower's alchemical knowledge, according to the seventeenth-century chemist

Elias Ashmole, places him ‘in the *Register of our Hermetique Philosophers*’.¹¹¹ And Shakespeare’s opening lines of *Pericles* suggests the regeneration of Gower, ‘From ashes ancient Gower is come’, (l. 2) in a kind of alchemical re-birth.

Though satirised by some writers, such as Chaucer in *The Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale* (c.1385) and later in Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist* (1612), alchemy as a metaphor for producing something good out of ordinary materials, is to be found in Donne and Herbert’s poetry and, I would suggest, underlies the dramatic structure of Shakespeare’s texts. As Stanton J. Linden has observed of the poetry of Donne and Herbert, their writing is a kind of ‘spiritual alchemy’ that suggests ‘spiritual growth, purification, regeneration’.¹¹² According to Frances Yates ‘science’ in the early modern period was seen as ‘reviving, or returning to, earlier and better times’ and that time ‘as a cyclic movement, from pure golden ages through successive worse ages of bronze and iron, encouraged the thought that the search for truth was of necessity a search for the early and the ancient, the purity of which had been lost and corrupted’.¹¹³ Such a golden time is seen at the close of *The Tempest* when Gonzalo wishes for the joy they all experience to be set down in gold (V.i.211). Gold is also a linguistic device used in the *Anniversaries* to suggest divine perfection and I would argue that the ‘gold’ here is the wisdom that has been achieved through trial and tribulation. E. J. Holmyard indicates that this move from the material to the spiritual world ‘gradually developed into a devotional system where the mundane transmutation of metals became merely symbolic of the transformation of

¹¹¹ Stanton J. Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks: Alchemy in English Literature from Chaucer to the Restoration* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), p. 59.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹¹³ Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (St. Albans: Paladin, 1975), pp. 11-12.

the sinful man into a perfect being through prayer and submission to the will of God' and that alchemical language can be employed 'for the sole purpose of expressing theological, philosophical, or mystical beliefs and aspirations', ideas that can certainly be applied to the texts examined here.¹¹⁴

Stanton J. Linden cites Thomas Tymme's 1605 dedication to Joseph Quervetanus's *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermetical Physicke* where Tymme suggests that Alchemy might move beyond the material meddling with substances to the 'secret operations of all aspects of creation' defining it as an agent for the perception of the divine.¹¹⁵

For *Halchymie* tradeth not alone with transmutation of metals (as ignorant vulgars thinke: which error hath made them distaste that noble Science) but shee hath also a chirurgical hand in the anatomising of every mesenteriall veine of whole nature: Gods created handmaid, to conceive and bring forth his Creatures [...] the Art of *Halchymie*, [...] as in a glasse, discern the holy and most glorious Trinitie, in the Unities of one *Hupostasis* Divine. For the invisible things of God (saith the Apostle) that is, his eternal power and Godhead, are seene by the creation of the world, being considered in his works.¹¹⁶

Here Tymme indicates how alchemy can bring together all nature at one moment in divinity in the creation of the world. It is an image of the divine and the worldly conjoined, an idea that will recur through this thesis.

These next chapters will examine firstly, the split soul in the light of the socio-religious culture of post-Reformation England. Secondly, they will explore how both writers

¹¹⁴ E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 16.

¹¹⁵ Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks*, p. 8.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Tymme, Dedication to Sir Charles Blunt, Earle of Devonshire, Lord Mountjoy, of Joseph Quersitanus, *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermetical Physicke, for the preservation of health* (London, 1605), A4r-B1v.

present Augustinian Memory as the route to the salvation of the struggling soul. Thirdly, they will examine how both writers use linear and circular - or 'divine' time – to present Augustinian Memory. Finally, the use of alchemical symbolism will be explored as a means of discussing salvation through transformation.

Chapter One will study the period of Donne's life between 1601 and 1610/11, which saw a move from spiritual dejection to hope in the presentation of the redeemed soul in the *Anniversaries*. Chapter Two will concentrate on Donne's subsequent move to the Protestant world of the preacher and how his public position informed his view of salvation. Chapter Three will explore two of Shakespeare's plays, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, which focus on the wandering soul that seeks to find repose. Chapter Four will concentrate on Shakespeare's presentation of the memorial influences of the soul in the tragedies *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*. The final chapter is an examination of Shakespeare's use of the romance genre, which I will argue, culminates in a series of plays where the soul can be successfully presented, where Augustinian Memory can be seen to bring regeneration and harmony in dramas where linear and circular time come together.

In this next chapter, then, Donne's move from dejection to spiritual fulfilment will be examined. It will trace a journey that can be likened to alchemical change, as Donne explores what Holmyard suggests is the symbolic transformation of a troubled soul to one redeemed by the golden time depicted by Donne in 'The Second Anniversarie'. Journey

itself, as an image of the processes of alchemy, will be central to the progress of Donne's soul as he makes his spiritual shift from Catholicism to the new religious order.

Chapter One

The Progress of the Soul: Donne's search for a Marian Aesthetic

If at last, I must confesse, that I dyed ten years ago [...] yet it wil please me a little to have had a long funerall, and to have kept myself so long above ground without putrefaction.¹¹⁷

Writing from France to his friend Sir Henry Wotton in early 1612, Donne commented on his metaphorical death some ten years earlier explored in *The Progresse of the Soule*. His 'resurrection' he dates at around 1610-1611 with the composition of the *Anniversaries*. Both these dates refer to happenings in his personal life as well, 1601 being a time when marriage and money were disadvantageously pressing upon him, along with the trauma caused by his wavering religious convictions, and 1610-1611 a more felicitous time when these problems were in the process of resolution. This particular remark, however, shows two things: firstly, the comment is retrospective and is written at or after the composition of the *Anniversaries*, a time of relative satisfaction for Donne as the quotation presents the reader with a sense of closure: the death and re-birth are complete. Secondly, his description of the funeral and the absence of putrefaction does intimate that Donne has not been languishing in the grave in the interim period but has been 'above ground' and occupied. What has Donne been doing in this period between death and resurrection and why does he employ such startling language to convey these intervening, 'busy' years? His long funeral and avoidance of putrefaction evokes an alchemical image that suggests the intervening years have not caused 'decay' but have been a kind of suspended

¹¹⁷ John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, ed. by Charles Edmund Merrill Jr. (New York: 1910), p. 105.

Richard E. Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul: The Interior Career of John Donne* (London: The Bodley Head, 1969), p. 204.

animation between death and new life - although this suspension does not necessarily imply inaction. It also conjures an image of Purgatory, no longer recognised by the Protestant church but a state that indicates cleansing and preparation for new life. Donne indicates that these years have not left him stale but have been part of the process towards the creation of the new self.

This chapter will explore the work of Donne in this period, which, I will argue, examines the journey of a wandering soul in 1601 to salvation through the intercession of Augustinian Memory in the *Anniversaries*. The years between these two moments, between the metaphorical death and new life, are filled with poetry that explores Donne's pain and sense of spiritual bewilderment. This coincides with his move from Catholicism to the new religious order. Donne's choice of imagery to explore this move from metaphorical death to life is replete with ideas of struggle, loss of God and eternity, and the fear of living in a world that has no spiritual dimension, where only linear time is present and the inevitability of decay is prevalent, 'my low devout melancholie' (*La Corona* Sonnet 1, l. 2), 'Despaire behind, and death before doth cast / Such terrour' (*Divine Meditations* Sonnet 1, [1635 edn] ll. 6-7).¹¹⁸ This spiritual malaise reaches its apotheosis in *The First Anniversarie*, and it is here that Donne finds his means of redemption that will lift him beyond this world into kairotic, or divine, time, a world, mentioned in the introduction, that can take an individual away from the diurnal to the eternal. For Donne, in *The Second Anniversarie*, the exultation of his soul occurs at that

¹¹⁸ John Donne, 'Holy Sonnets: Divine Meditations', in *John Donne, The Divine Poems*, ed. by Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 12.

important moment ‘of intemporal significance’ that defines the impact of the divine on the worldly.¹¹⁹

What exactly is Donne exploring in these intervening years until the publication of the *Anniversaries*? An examination of the 1601 *The Progresse of the Soule* reveals how sin has triumphed over the world because of the Fall. Women’s roles in the Fall are central to this poem for Eve is referred to as the great sinner whose actions result in the downfall of mankind and the resultant loss of redemption for the soul. Cain’s wife and sister, Themech, is cited as another mother of all ills who has taught the world its base desires ‘cursed Cains race invented be’ (l. 516).¹²⁰

This chapter argues that Donne’s emphasis on the degenerate line of Eve that *The Progresse of the Soule* explores becomes central to his feelings of dejection that permeate the ensuing poems until *The Second Anniversarie*. The position of Eve as the mother of sin has always been at the heart of much Christian thought and her diametric opposite is embodied in the Virgin Mary. Mary is, as part of the litany of saints, included in Lutheran condemnation of such veneration as idolatry.¹²¹ Protestant reform, therefore, discouraged devotion to Mary, though her influence, particularly on women, was still to be seen in Donne’s day: ‘Protestant reformers were deeply troubled by Catholic veneration of the

¹¹⁹ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 47.

¹²⁰ Taken from John Donne, *The Complete English Poems* ed. by C. A. Patrides 2nd ed. (London: Everyman, 2001). All further references to the poem will be to this edition.

¹²¹ P. M. Oliver, *Donne’s Religious Writing: A Discourse of Feigned Devotion* (London & New York: Longman, 1997), p. 86.

Virgin, particularly given the widespread popular belief in her power over Christ'.¹²² I would argue that this discouragement of Marian worship that the Reformation provoked, plus the obvious desire to continue such veneration, reveals a need for Donne, in the poems after *The Progresse of the Soule*, to attempt to re-work a Catholic legacy into what will become a new-forged Protestant form, 'synthesising diametrically opposed doctrines'.¹²³ Much of Donne's work shows the struggle to accommodate aspects of past and present, possibly to assuage recurrent feelings of guilt or doubt that his conversion caused and the synthesis of a Marian tradition is an example of this. Further, I would suggest that his pursuit of an 'Anglican Mary' is directly linked to the salvation of the soul and to the primacy of Memory in Augustine's tri-partite model.

The Triumph of Eve

The idea of the journeying soul is clearly explored in Donne's *The Progresse of the Soule* of 1601. It reveals Donne's anxiety about his sense of rootlessness, of his soul unfixed and wandering away from God and anticipates the image that opened this thesis, of the pilgrim who has lost his way in *Divine Meditations*. This sense of aimlessness stems directly from the soul's exile from Eden after the Fall where the soul's memory of its point of origin becomes contaminated by its journey through evil.

When Donne was writing *The Progresse of the Soule* it appears he was suffering from some kind of depression or melancholy that may have contributed to the poem's rather

¹²² Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 36.

¹²³ Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writing*, p. 86.

bleak conclusions. Donne had lost a sense of direction in both his personal and religious life. His marriage to Ann More suffered through financial problems and his decision to shift from Catholicism to the new Protestant faith was a source of great anxiety.¹²⁴

Richard E. Hughes indicates that the poem is a 'satirical recital of the destructive consequences of schism', which makes *The Progresse of the Soule* a potent indicator of the turmoil that arises from theological reform.¹²⁵ Frank Kermode suggests that Donne found 'choosing' a religion by which to live painful as old Catholicism and new Protestantism were both found wanting.¹²⁶ The sense of loss that surrounds *The Progresse of the Soule* reflects these feelings of purposelessness and Donne puts at the centre of the poem the dejected soul that is cast out through Eve's transgression, 'For that offence, for which all mankinde weepes, / And wee (for treason taints the blood) thence die and sweat' (*The Progresse of the Soule* ll. 85, 90).

The Progresse of the Soule is a difficult poem, often overlooked on first reading as heavy-handed and of little poetic value. It has received various critical responses. De Quincy approved its 'massy diamonds'; Marvell thought it a witty fable.¹²⁷ Though its first line is reminiscent of the optimism that heralds epic poetry 'I sing the progresse of a deathlesse soule', it is unfinished. Jonson thought that, were it complete, the soul would find its resting place in Calvin whereas Grierson suggests it finds its home in the body of the Queen, the head of the Protestant Church.¹²⁸ Donne's *Epistle, or Infinitati Sacrum*, explains that it is an exercise in metempsychosis, in the manner of Pythagoras. As we

¹²⁴ C. M. Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 32.

¹²⁵ Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul: The Interior Career of John Donne*, p. 66.

¹²⁶ Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971) p. 137.

¹²⁷ Donne, *The Complete English Poems*, p. 314.

¹²⁸ Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul: The Interior Career of John Donne*, p. 71.

read the poem, however, it becomes clear that Donne is exploring much more than the transference of the soul; he is imbuing that soul with a kind of genetic memory ‘her memory hath ever been her owne’ whereby it carries its past into the next host.¹²⁹ This soul’s Memory, though, becomes directed by a kind of degenerate Will that moves it through bodies with no remembrance of its divine origin.

keeping some quality
Of every past shape, she knew treachery,
Rapine, deceit, and lust (ll. 506-8)

The soul here, through the Fall, carries with it only negative Memory and is part of the process of passing on sin. Augustine’s idea of concordant Memory that forms part of the tri-partite model of the soul is absent here and ‘rapine’, ‘deceit’ and ‘lust’ indicative of the overwhelming might of transgressive Will that pervades the world. The soul is visiting *amoral* bodies, animals that cannot carry Reason which give the itinerant soul its remembrance of God. After the apple has been plucked from the tree of knowledge, the soul, existing indifferently inside the tree, is forced to move out into the world, expelled like Adam and Eve. This soul presides over all beginnings, finding herself in various embryonic organisms, experiencing growth from within. There is no indication here of the Platonist understanding of this soul being the source of knowledge, nor of its Memory bringing with it any Augustinian concord. Rather, the soul, once expelled from God, is locked into the corporeal world, ostracised from the divine. This fateful journey is made clear in the opening stanza with an interesting trope using the word ‘whom’ as homonymous with ‘womb’, a reminder of Eve’s complicit action:

¹²⁹ Donne, *The Complete English Poems*, p. 314.

Whom Fate, which God made, but doth not controule,
Placed in most shapes; (ll. 2-3)

God's control, then, ended in Paradise and the soul, flung out like Adam and Eve, must find its own way. Donne's poem becomes a terrifying voyage of random encounters with creatures and plants whose existence tends towards self-sufficiency. It seems a nihilistic void where the soul is tossed from one source to another, like the scattered bric-a-brac of England's religious landscape, as Peter Lake has suggested, or as Donne's pilgrim who has lost his way.¹³⁰ The diction used to describe the soul's encounters implies impermanence: *inne, roome, tenant, guest, steward*, and though it 'launch at paradise' (l. 57) the journey back to God will be perilous. In the opening to his work, Donne points out the arbitrariness of the soul's wanderings and its democratisation of living creatures 'therefore you must not grudge to finde the same soule in an Emperour, in a Post-horse, and in a Mucheron'.¹³¹ The arbitrariness of the soul's voyage, with the soul having no control over its destination, is a kind of limbo as it finds no resting place and the final words to the *Epistle* offer little hope as Donne casts himself as the recipient in this long line; 'shee is hee whose life you shall finde at the end of this booke'.¹³²

Donne's soul is the *primum mobile* of existence but seems to have no control over its wanderings. It has arguably, given Donne's original religious position, drifted into a heretical line – its beginnings in Eve, thence to Themech, Calvin, Elizabeth. It is as if

¹³⁰ Peter Lake, 'Religious Identities in Shakespeare's England', in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 57-84 (p. 79).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 314.

Donne is questioning the ability of the soul, and by this he means his own, to maintain an attachment to one religious line. There is also despair at what appears to be divine, ‘indifference to the dignity of its habitation’, as many of its non-human hosts are thought to have no soul.¹³³ Richard E. Hughes has suggested that in *The Progresse of the Soule*, Donne is ‘intent on the total negativeness of a situation’ that forces him to ‘look beyond the world for positive meaning’.¹³⁴ Ben Jonson remarked that the poem’s conceit was:

that [Donne] sought the soule of that apple which Eve pulled and thereafter made it the soule of a bitch, then of a shee wolf, and so of a woman his general purpose was to have brought in all the bodies of the Hereticks from the soul of Cain, and at last left it in the body of Calvin.¹³⁵

The feminisation of the soul here argues that sin is carried through the female line. The line of Eve is seen as triumphant in its ability to bring the world to such decay through the might of unbridled desire, which has resulted in straying away from the true path:

Man all at once was there by woman slaine,
And one by one we’re here slaine o’er againe
By them. The mother poison’d the well-head,
The daughters here corrupt us [...] we are lead
Astray, from turning, to whence we are fled. (ll. 91-97)

The last line here anticipates the quotation from the *Holy Sonnets* that began this thesis, which conjures up the image of the pilgrim that has lost his way, but here Donne places the responsibility firmly with Eve, whose ‘sin had now brought in infirmities’ (l. 164).

¹³³ Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, p. 56.

¹³⁴ Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul*, p. 77.

¹³⁵ Donne, *The Complete English Poems*, p. 313.

Donne's gendering of the soul will be traced further through the poems examined in this chapter, for his exploration of salvation can be read through his use of the female.

The reference to Cain's brother Seth in the poem develops Donne's theme of the lost and wandering soul that has strayed after the Fall. Richard E. Hughes notes that for Augustine, Seth was an important historical figure, a symbol of redemption against the forces of his brother, Cain, the founder of earthly cities. Seth's line extends through Noah, an indication of new beginnings, to Abraham and thence, according to Augustine, to Christ himself.¹³⁶ Donne completes his work with Cain's race occupying an earthly realm whilst 'blest Seth vext us with Astronomie' (ll. 517), an indication of new beginnings in a celestial world. This theme of celestial redemption that will take us out of Cain's worldliness will be pursued in the *Anniversaries*.

The dating of *The Progresse of the Soule* and its significance to the idea of redemption is also significant to Donne's journey to find salvation. Wyman Herendeen notes the dating of *The Progresse of the Soule* as 16th August, 1601 and remarks that this is the second day of the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹³⁷ The feast of the Assumption is known as a 'principle double' whereby the feast last for two days, the 15th and 16th on which take place vigils, processions and prayers.¹³⁸ It is considered an extremely important part of the liturgical calendar as it is the assumption of the soul *and*

¹³⁶ Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul*, p. 73.

¹³⁷ Wyman Herendeen, 'The Progresse of the Soule as Palinode', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 7 (2001) <http://www.shu.ac.uk/emls/si-07/herendeen.htm> [accessed 9 August, 2006] (para. 1 of 15)

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 1 of 15.

body of Mary into heaven, the body remaining pure, uncontaminated and thus, immortal.

Herendeen continues that it is a feast:

uniquely joyous, lacking the mixture of joy and sorrow that accompanies Christocentric feasts, with their awareness of the division between body and soul that defines the fallen human condition.¹³⁹

Mary represents the paradox of purity and fertility. She is the mother without loss of her virginity, the ‘tabernacle or ‘shrine’ of Christ, a suggestion by Herendeen that she becomes the object of Christ’s worship.¹⁴⁰ The reverence of Mary on this feast day celebrates her divinity and her corporeality as the body is raised up to heaven. She, therefore, enters our imagination not as an essence of divinity but as a tangible mixture of soul and body. Mary’s body achieves the tenderness of the flesh combined with spiritual redemption. When we can no longer see her in heaven, the idea of her remains vivid, an idea that Donne will pursue in the *Anniversaries*. Herendeen continues his argument by revealing that the feast was sometimes used to celebrate Mary’s parents, Ann and Joachim, and he suggests that this is part of ‘a redemptive process that would remove mankind from the pilgrimage of history’.¹⁴¹ He notes that the mortal parents, fallen because of original sin, give life to an immortal who takes mankind out of Augustine’s legacy of sin. If there is significance to the dating of *The Progresse of the Soule* then this does strongly suggest an idea of redemption hidden beneath the bleak exterior of the poem yet it is a redemption that remains obscured by Donne’s insistence that the soul is doomed to inhabit only the amoral or immoral body. If the work is unfinished, however, and he wishes to ‘launch at Paradise’ (l. 57), then perhaps the possibility of salvation has

¹³⁹ Ibid., para. 1 of 15.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., para. 2 of 15.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., para. 2 of 15.

been interrupted and that this interruption forms part of Donne's melancholy, his 'death' before his 'resurrection' some ten years later with the publication of the *Anniversaries*.

The possibility of salvation, therefore, remains hidden beneath the gloom that pervades the text. Herendeen provides further explanation of the significance of the dating, which lends itself to a bleaker reading. August 16th is also the feast day of St. Roch, or St. Rock, a fourteenth-century healer from the Languedoc who nursed plague victims in Northern Italy. One account has it that he caught the plague himself and was succoured by a dog. On his return home his family did not recognise him because of the ravages of the plague, they imprisoned him and there he died.¹⁴² Herendeen adds that he was born with stigmata and was thus an image of the frailty of the flesh.¹⁴³ The juxtaposition of the diseased body of Saint Roche and the untainted Virgin is indeed striking and brings together images of the fallen and the redeemed. If we remind ourselves of Donne's metaphorical death in the year of *The Progresse of the Soule*, then his desire to 'saile towards home' (l. 57) is explored in the poem but it remains either unfinished or impossible.

The prioritisation of the flesh over the divine, as suggested in the idea that the power of the Virgin is suppressed in this poem, can be seen in the ape's copulation with a human and from there the soul migrates to Adam's race. It is an image of bodily excess that will be passed down from the line of Eve. To compound this further, Donne leaves the soul in Cain's wife, a clear suggestion, if this is the end of his work, of a fallen race. Certainly,

¹⁴² *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, ed. by Donald Attwater and Catherine Rachel John, 3rd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin: 1995), pp. 309-10.

¹⁴³ Herendeen, 'The Progresse of the Soule as Palinode', para. 2 of 15.

The Progresse of the Soule offers a somewhat mechanistic view of existence, a humanity devoid of spirituality, humanoid rather than humane, descended from apes, fish and plants. It is a world where time is linear and where the concept of life is firmly in the concrete world of the flesh. John Carey suggests that the poem reflects Donne's current interest in anatomy with its almost microscopic images of blood, bone and sinews, the soul on an extraordinary voyage through a variety of organisms, 'photographing' and experiencing each, offering the reader interior views of existence, where growth is seen not from without but from an intensely subjective, visceral standpoint.¹⁴⁴ The poem, then, shows us a fallen world that reminds us of the image of the diseased body that is recalled on the feast of St. Roche. Such prioritisation of the flesh – the triumph of Eve – denies the image of the Assumption of the Virgin, where flesh and spirit are intertwined to create an image of the divine.

Donne's denial of an image of the Virgin on such a significant date is noteworthy. The importance of Mary in Protestant culture was greatly diminished as she was seen as part of the hierarchy of idols worshipped by the Catholic Church. As Donna Spivey Ellington has noted 'the "excesses" of late medieval Marian piety was certainly one of the reasons for a more careful treatment of Mary's role', the focus on her dignified, if passive, role as mother of Christ being the most popular of devotions.¹⁴⁵ Marian traditions of worship, such as divine intercession, therefore, would be in danger of becoming forgotten and Donne's elision of her and the fixation on Eve signifies this loss to be damaging. Direct invocation to Mary would also signal clearly Donne's religious leanings at a time of

¹⁴⁴ John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, 2nd edn (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), pp. 134-45.

¹⁴⁵ Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), pp. 156-57.

spiritual controversy. But her omission and the decaying world that is portrayed does foreground her central importance to Christian thought in that her son redeemed the world. Her absence can be seen as an emblem of her role in the salvation of man, for in *The Progresse of the Soule*, a world without Marian intervention, the body and not the spirit dominates. Memory is contaminated, uncontrolled Will is in the ascendant and Reason is not yet 'born', though there is a fleeting glimpse of it emerging in the penultimate stanza, 'the well of sense' (l. 501). The closing lines make reference to an alchemical image in the mingling of Adam and Eve's blood 'Chimiques equall fires' (l. 494) that brings forth not the magic elixir but an image of degenerate Memory, with 'ills enow / To be a woman' (ll. 508-9).

Dejection and Doubt

1601, therefore, marks the beginnings of Donne's 'death' that *The Progresse of the Soule* examines. The ensuing years that lead up to the *Anniversaries*, however, find him exploring this dejection through a considerable number of poems. Richard E. Hughes suggests that the poems of 1602-1605 include 'The Extasie', 'Negative Love', 'The Undertaking', 'Image and Dream', and 'A Feaver'. All these poems, he argues, concern themselves with 'hesitancy and transition' and set themselves apart from his earlier love poetry, and 1605 sees four valedictions, 'each examining the theme of separation and dismemberment (emblems of the crisis faced in *The Progresse of the Soule*)'.¹⁴⁶ Possibly written at the same time are poems such as 'Aire and Angels', 'Love's Growth', 'Love's Infiniteness' and 'A Lecture upon the Shadow' that contemplate the nature of love; and

¹⁴⁶ Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul*, pp. 80-1.

‘The Good-morrow’, ‘The Anniversarie’, ‘The Sunne Rising’, ‘The Canonisation’, ‘The Relique’ and ‘The Funerall’ revealing the limits of that earthly love. ‘The Anniversarie’ can also be seen as an interim poem as its concerns with kairotic time ‘But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day’ (l. 10) and the transcendence of souls ‘soules from their graves remove’ (l. 20), anticipate the *Anniversaries*. Whilst this is not a comprehensive list, Hughes makes the point that in these groups of poems, if their dating is to be accepted, Donne ‘grapples with various phases of disunity’ and that this disunity reveals itself most clearly in ‘The Exstasie’, where diurnal time stands still.¹⁴⁷

In this poem, he notes, the time-shifts, apparent in Donne’s change of tenses, begin to overlap and become concurrent as though time were halted and both life and death stopped. The poem does in fact suggest the suspended animation of the lovers:

Our soules, (which to advance their state,
Were gone out,) hung ‘twixt her, and mee.
And whil’st our soules negotiate there,
Wee like sepulchral statues lay, (ll. 15-18).

These souls will ‘mixe’(l. 35) and become one and in doing so become enriched. The poem also deals with the need for love, through the senses, to animate the soul lest it be rendered ‘a great Prince in prison’ (l. 68). Yet, as Hughes indicates, chronological time appears to have stopped in this poem as past (ll. 1-28) and present (ll. 29-48) conflate, ‘Wee see, we saw not what did move’ (l. 32), until a continuous present emerges in the final section, suggesting desired and perpetual union, an image of Augustinian kairotic time. This is visually illustrated with the lovers hands ‘firmley cimented / With a fast

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., , p. 81.

balme' (ll. 5-6), which are juxtaposed with the souls moving away from the body in order to mingle, producing images of solid unification and fluid detachment, delicately joined and reconciled by the vital spirits through the blood, conceits that Donne will use to striking effect in the *Divine Poems* of 1607-1610.

The notion of divine time shown through attachment, separation and reconciliation are found elsewhere in the poems of these years and can also be seen contextually as a gloom exacerbated by the spiritual disorder that must have ensued from the Gunpowder plot debacle. I believe these ideas trace a journey from Donne's connection with his past, his separation from it and the dejection that follows, and an eventual reconciliation in a more spiritual space that Donne himself has not yet achieved. This links to the idea that Donne is attempting to join together two opposing doctrines in his creation of a new 'Mary'; she will also become a symbol of regenerate Memory that will bring together two religious positions at the same point. It is an idea seen in the image of East and West, both simultaneously at the furthest possible distance from each other whilst in fact being the same point, found most memorably in 'Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward'. Here Donne indicates his journey that has a longing to remember the past 'that I am carried towards the West / This day, when my Soules forme bends towards the East' (ll. 9-10). He is disheartened that he 'durst' not look upon the image of the crucifixion that has Mary as a prominent figure in the salvation of the world:

durst I

Upon his miserable mother cast mine eye,
Who was God's partner here, and furnish'd thus
Halfe of that Sacrifice, which ransom'd us? (ll. 29-32)

John Carey suggests that the interplay between division and unification are significant themes in Donne's poetry:

The principle of joined opposites [...] permeates Donne's poetry. He works by joining. But before he could be obsessed by joints he had to be obsessed by division. The mind which strives to unite east and west must be unusually conscious of their separation [...] Donne's vision was conjunctive only because it was disjunctive [...] He created the fragmentation which he strove to overcome.¹⁴⁸

The dilemma of division appears most clearly in 'Satire III', probably written in the 1590s, a poem where the speaker takes stock of his Catholic past and when 'the beliefs of youth, unquestioningly assimilated and bound up with our closest personal attachments, come into conflict with the scepticism of mature intellect'.¹⁴⁹ 'Seeke true religion' (l. 43) is the central command of this satire, though the next phrase, 'O where?' sets up Donne's problem and indeed marks the beginning of the journey to the *Anniversaries*. We cannot be sure whose voice is speaking in the poem. The notion of an imagined persona as the 'voice' of the poem was a favoured technique of satirical poets and was often clearly advertised, in, for example, George Gascoigne's *The Steel Glass* (c.1587). However, the insistence of such radical opposition to established religious dogma and a lack of self-conscious, poetic style does suggest that even if Donne were playing with a developed subject as the speaker, this does not argue against the case that it is also his own voice. John Carey, for example, takes Donne as the subject.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Carey, *John Donne, Life, Mind and Art*, p. 252.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14. C. A. Patrides suggests it may have been written as late as 1620, however. John Donne, *Complete English Poems*, p. 149.

¹⁵⁰ Carey, *John Donne*, p. 12.

In the third satire, the importance of conscience, the serious meditation on spirituality and the nature of devotion emphasise Donne's moralistic assertions over established dogma that will be dramatically developed in the *Divine Meditations*:

and shall thy fathers spirit
 Meete blinde Philosophers in heaven, whose merit
 Of strict life be imputed faith [...]
 Seeke true religion. O where? Mirreus
 Thinking her unhous'd here, and fled from us,
 Seekes her at Rome; there, because hee doth know
 That shee was there a thousand yeares agoe,
 He loves her ragges so, as wee here obey
 The statecloth where the Prince sate yesterday. (ll.11-48)

Here the authority of the individual's search for a spiritual truth that can be understood rather than imposed from without is paramount and this enquiry into knowledge, as Helen Gardner suggests, 'is the primary duty of a moral being'.¹⁵¹ The feminisation of truth and religion here is noteworthy as it links to the centrality of the Marian principle, the one figure that exemplifies a connection to the divine. It is seen also in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, published between 1589 and 1595, in the character of Una, described as 'Forsaken Truth', in opposition to the split-subject of Duessa.¹⁵² The insistence, repetition and prominence of the active, main verb, 'Seeke', indicates this journey into understanding.

Donne interestingly introduces three seekers of true religion - whose literary significance is not established - the Catholic Mirreus, the Calvinist Crants and the Anglican Graius,

¹⁵¹ Helen Gardner, ed., *John Donne: The Divine Poems*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. xviii

¹⁵² Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1962), Bk. 1, Canto III, p. 43.

and juxtaposes them with the atheistic Phrygius and the apathetic Gracchus. Donne emphasises that each viewpoint has its drawbacks as they are all based on allegiance without personal insight but rely on the kind of infatuation accorded a mistress ‘and this blind- / nesse too much light breeds’ (ll. 68-69), thereby suggesting that no religion or indifference to one is the worst outcome but that the search for one’s own religion, be it from within any denomination, is preferable, ‘Of force must one, and forc’d but one allow; / And the right’ (ll.70-71). Donne makes no attempt to indicate which religion is the right one but interestingly he does not denounce the Catholicism he is leaving, only the trappings ‘ragges’ (l. 47), whilst shrouding Calvinism with an unattractiveness, ‘sullen, young, / Contemptuous, yet unhandsome’ (ll. 51-52), and Anglicanism as lacking vision:

Lawes

Still new like fashions, bid him thinke that shee
Which dwels with us, is onely perfect, hee
Imbraceth her (ll. 56-59).

Donne’s critique here implies the need for a self-created space accommodating past and present, as Donne forges his own spiritual path.

Seeking one’s own truth, however, whilst laudable, is also fraught with dangers in a climate that sets store on allegiance to the mainstream religious and state doctrine. Any attempts to re-introduce Marian culture would be greatly discouraged. Conformity as social control and the outright resistance to pluralism is of importance to the State if it is to impose religious authority on its subjects: ‘Under such regimes, freedom of conscience

is not merely unacceptable: it is almost inconceivable'.¹⁵³ The final third of this dangerous poem, then, raises doubts about state dogma on religious matters and in turn the monarch's ability to ensure salvation for his or her subject's souls, which is indeed a comment on the authority figure per se. It is reminiscent of Southwell's *An Humble Supplication to Her Majesty* (written probably as early as 1591, though dated 1595 and published 1600), a response to Elizabeth's command that recusants be more closely watched and that there be an increased stigmatisation of priests. In 1603, the Puritan William Perkins states directly that Mary should not be seen as 'a Ladie, a Goddesse, a queene, whome Christ her sonne obeyeth in heauen, a mediatresse'.¹⁵⁴ In the last part of Donne's piece, he indicates that spiritual truth is not gained by an imposition from without but comes from a deeply personal and laboured experience. The dazzling sun that makes this journey difficult is reminiscent of the Platonist idea of true knowledge that is available to those who turn away from the shadows - concrete authority - that we take as real. Donne's feminised truth follows the Platonist and Augustinian idea of wisdom, located for Augustine in the memorial part of the soul.

On a huge hill,
Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must and about must goe;
And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so; (ll. 79-82)

The diction here is heavy, 'cragged', 'huge', 'steep', 'resists', the punctuation frequent and metrically disjointed, indicating the difficulty of the task in hand. A caesura after 'stands' (some versions have a semi-colon here) suggests the solid edifice that is Truth juxtaposed with the fluid journey of the individual to reach her, implied in the repetition

¹⁵³ Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writings*, p. 62.

¹⁵⁴ William Perkins, *A Reformed Catholicke* (London, 1603), p. 743.

of 'about must'. There is an arbitrary and ephemeral sense of success at the end of this phrase as the rhythm accelerates on 'suddennes' and 'winne so', the feminine ending virtually making the last syllable disappear. As with so much of Donne, the style is at first rather tortuous and over-packaged but reveals, after much effort on the reader's part, the poet's own efforts to display the complexities and the density of meanings in his imaginative sensibility and as such the moral difficulties that engage him, the experience of his internal struggle becoming defined in the racked linguistic counterpart.

Donne's troubled search for the route to salvation in 'Satire III' and his ideal of non-dogmatic, self-determined authority becomes more constrained in the early 1600s in the *Divine Poems* where perhaps a more conventional struggle between old and new faith becomes apparent in *La Corona* and 'A Litanie', both probably completed around 1607-1608, though the latter may have been as late as 1609-1610. Helen Gardner has suggested that in these bleak years 'the religion he had learnt as a child, whose central teaching he had not repudiated, however much he may have ignored it, reasserted its claim upon his conscience'.¹⁵⁵ The Donne who had written the bleak *Progresse of the Soule* is different from the passionate youth of 'Satire III'. In the 1601 poem hope is replaced by dejection and the exuberance that promotes the edict 'Seeke true Religion', has become the laboured and uncertain search for salvation that the *Divine Poems* explore. The Marian vision that must largely remain hidden in Donne's work is here quietly celebrated in *La Corona* and 'A Litanie', where the Virgin's power as mediatrix between humanity and God is explored.

¹⁵⁵ Gardner, *John Donne: The Divine Poems*, p. xxi.

Although Donne's treatment of redemption in the *Divine Poems* seems wholly original, the meditative contemplation of salvation in poetry, and in particular the sonnet, which Donne employs in both *La Corona* and *Divine Meditations*, was part of a tradition that reached its apotheosis in the 1590s. Such writers as Sidney and, of course, Shakespeare, meticulously craft the sonnet form but the devotional sonnet is developed most notably by the Catholic sonneteers, William Alabaster (1567-1640), Henry Constable (1562-1613), and Robert Southwell (1561-1595) whose presentation of Mary would, of course, be more straightforward than for Donne. The Marian influences in Robert Southwell's work, for example, show the ease with which Catholic sonneteers might invoke the Virgin, placing her firmly in the redemptive tradition. His poem 'The death of our Ladie' highlights her importance in the salvation of mankind 'By maryes death mankind an orphan is' (l. 4).¹⁵⁶ In *The Sequence on the Virgin Mary and Christ* in 'The Virgine Maries Conception' he refers to her as 'our second *Eve*' (l. 1) and in 'The Virgins Salutation' he notes 'Spell *Eva* backe and *Ave* shall you finde, / The first began, the last reverst our harmes' (ll. 1-2).¹⁵⁷ For Donne, such direct devotion is impossible, his reliance on the double synecdoche of *La Corona*, for example, substituting the Rosary that in turn signifies Mary.

Donne, however, was drawing on both Catholic and Protestant traditions. There were Protestant sonneteers such as Henry Lok (?1553-?1608) and Barnabe Barnes(?1569-1609) and Donne was thought to have been particularly impressed by the Catholic

¹⁵⁶ *The Poems of Robert Southwell, S. J.*, ed. by James H. Mc Donald and Nancy Pollard Brown, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 11.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Alabaster and the Protestant Lok's works.¹⁵⁸ Donne's impassioned language that, unlike Southwell's, signifies his lack of a Marian redemptive figure of veneration, for instance, can also be found in the despondency that Lok observes in the individual who feels himself spiritually bewildered. Henry Lok's *Sundry Christian Passions* (1593), for example, comprises around two hundred sonnets of devotion displaying the soul of the speaker to be abject and at the mercy of satanic forces.¹⁵⁹

Donne's meditative style, however, reveals more complex views of salvation and of the new religious movement of which he was part and it is a style that sets him apart from his Catholic and Protestant counterparts. It admits both dejection and devotion, revealing Donne's extraordinary tonal range, from violence, to obsessive love, to pained ecstasy as he explores his extreme and paradoxical relationship with God and the possibility, and often improbability, of his redemption. There is a need for pain and a longing for martyrdom, particularly in the *Divine Meditations*.¹⁶⁰ It is arguable that this ambivalence of spiritual dejection and the need for suffering is a product of Donne's age that has loosened its ties with the divine and fallen into a world that has forgotten its spiritual purpose 'blacke memorie' (*Divine Meditations* V, 1.12). John Stubbs has argued that these poems 'are the journal of a soul that finds itself alone, even among 'numberless infinities'; a Protestant soul, in other words, stripped of the support of the old Roman Church'.¹⁶¹ Such a sense of dejection exacerbates the disunity between the world's time and the eternal that seems no longer promised, the kairotic and the chronological at odds

¹⁵⁸ Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writing*, p. 144.

¹⁵⁹ Henry Lok, *Sundry Christian Passions* (London, 1593)

¹⁶⁰ Carey, *John Donne*, pp. 34-35.

¹⁶¹ John Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 265.

with each other. Jonathan Dollimore suggests that Donne was ‘preoccupied not just with the fragmentation of the self and the decentring of man but also with the inherent instability of matter and the world’s never absent potential to collapse back into nothingness’.¹⁶² Certainly, the *Divine Meditations* reveal Donne’s obsession with physical pain and indicates an adherence to the scourged body, which has become the line of communication between him and God. He demands frequently that God create him afresh and indeed that the crucifixion includes himself as Christ, ‘Buffet, and scoff, scourge, and crucifie mee’ (*Divine Meditations* VII, l. 2). Simultaneously, he implores that God make him suffer, to batter him into new life, an *autonomasia* that might bring about a negation of the old Donne and a forging of a new that would result in an autonomous relationship with God, removed from the imposed dogmas that surrounded him. This identification with Christ will be significant to Donne’s re-configuration of a female object of devotion, for Donne’s ‘Passion’ allows a cultural shift that can accommodate a new Virgin icon.

The masochistic impulses that indicate Donne’s desire for his soul to be cleansed through pain inform the poems to be analysed here. In particular, the *Divine Meditations* form part of the devotional tradition largely exemplified by the sixteenth century mystics Saint Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross. Saint Teresa remarked in her work of the experiences of ecstasies linked with images and feelings of acute pain, being ‘frequently rapt in ecstasy [...] the remarkable mystical piercing of her heart by a spear of divine

¹⁶² Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (New York, London; Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 180.

love'.¹⁶³ Kaja Silverman indicates that the tortured body of Christ is at the core of such fantasy:

the external audience is a structural necessity, although it may be either earthly or heavenly [...] the body is centrally on display [...] [and] behind these 'scenes' or 'exhibits' is the master tableau or group fantasy – Christ nailed to the cross, head wreathed in thorns and blood dripping from his impaled sides. What is being beaten here is not so much the body as the 'flesh', and beyond that sin itself, and the whole fallen world.¹⁶⁴

The theatricality of pain that Silverman highlights here can be directly linked to Donne's sense of the dramatic that becomes part of the process towards redemption. Frequently in the *Divine Meditations* the visual self- presentation of Donne as a vilified Christ, aware of himself on the cross, is central to his quest for salvation.

Silverman indicates that the beating of flesh and the desire to imitate Christ is the act of the rebel who wishes to 'remake the world [...] to forge a different cultural order'.¹⁶⁵ This is a particularly interesting claim if connected to Donne who does appear to be attempting to re-create a religious space where, I believe, there will be a re-configured image of the Virgin Mary, a figure who will offer the Protestant world redemption, and which, for Donne, will relieve him of his pained desires.

Both *La Corona* and 'A Litanie' are examples of the devotional poem that Donne uses and transmutes to serve his own purpose. This appropriation of the genre allows Donne to subtly formulate his particular attention to Marian devotion within the new doctrinal dogma. Although ultimately frustrated by such ties, which I will suggest prompts Donne

¹⁶³ Attwater, *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*, p. 332.

¹⁶⁴ Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 197.

¹⁶⁵ Silverman, *Male Subjectivity*, p. 198.

into pursuing an alternative to the Catholic veneration of Mary, in these two poems he finds a space that reminds us of the eternal connection between Christ and his mother and it is a remembrance that will connect with Augustinian Memory in the *Anniversaries*. Donne also makes use of the fact that the devotional poem was both popular and varied at the time that he was writing and obviously reflects the importance of meditative literature as a means to the contemplative life. Though Donne takes this literary form and in effect subverts it, it is interesting to note the widespread publication of these texts.

The discipline of caring for one's spiritual life through devotional prayer and to contemplate and take heed of the welfare of one's soul in order to avoid the pains of Hell, or Purgatory if the text were directed at a Catholic audience, was quite apparent in other works at the time Donne was writing, regardless of religious affinity. In 1606, the Puritan John Brinsley published *The True Watch*. Its contents included such chapters as 'The necessity of the present and constant practice of the examination of ourselves', and 'The Assurance of God's favour chiefly to be sought for'.¹⁶⁶ *The True Watch* enjoyed at least eleven publications between 1606 and 1626. Whilst it is impossible to conclude whether Donne was influenced by a dominantly Catholic or Protestant poetic, it is useful to note that there were also many Catholic texts on the meditative life still published and popular at this time and indeed read by both persuasions, for whom the devotional life and spiritual accountability was important. It is also believed that their content needed the minimum of amendment in order to satisfy a Protestant readership, as the consideration of a good life was significant to all.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ John Brinsley, *The True Watch* (London, 1606), p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writing*, p. 140.

Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* is probably the most important Catholic tract on the importance of self-analysis and concern for the state of the soul, as was Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*, a work re-issued numerous times in the 1500s; from 1567 to 1614 there are records of at least fourteen publications. The text appealed to both Catholic and Protestant readers alike in its accounts of the preparation for death.¹⁶⁸ Kempis expounds the concept of *Imitatio Christi*, which inspires the individual 'to replicate the suffering of Christ, not in terms of the Crucifixion, but through inflicting bodily pain on oneself as a means of gaining divine patronage, or in expiation of one's sins'.¹⁶⁹ St. Francois de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life* was first issued in 1609 at a time when it is presumed that Donne began the composition of the first six of *Divine Meditations* and it is thought that this Jesuit writer influenced Donne.¹⁷⁰ As with de Sales, Donne appears to be influenced by Pauline letters on the meditative life.¹⁷¹ The Jesuit de Sales's work also highlights the need to embrace pain as a means to salvation, rather reminiscent of Kempis's *Imitatio Christi*, and this pre-occupation with pain as an inherent component of devotion is an idea evident in much of Donne's work and to be discussed here in relation to his construction of a soul torn between a past haunted with images of martyrdom and an uncertain present. De Sales notes:

Devout soules (O you worldlings) feele (no doubt) the bitternesse of these mortifications: yet such is the nature of devotion, that even in the very exercise of these austerities, of [helping others], it trans-formes them into pleasant and sweet delights. The fires, and flames, the racks, and tortures, swords, and scourges,

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 140.

¹⁶⁹ Suzanne E. Hatty & James Hatty, *The Disordered Body: Epidemic, Disease and Cultural Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 72.

¹⁷⁰ *John Donne: Selections*, ed. by John Booty, p. 32.

¹⁷¹ Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writing*, p. 139.

seemed flowers, and perfumes to the valiaunt martyrs, because they were devout.¹⁷²

La Corona is the first of the major poems in this period, dated at 1607. It is dedicated to Mrs. Magdalen Herbert and the sonnet to her recalls the importance of Mary Magdalene at Christ's resurrection. Donne's invocation to Mrs. Herbert and the Magdalene creates a veneration of the female that can only be hinted at through these poems until the *Anniversaries*. *La Corona*'s title, the crown, suggests an eternal circle having neither beginning nor end and reminds us of Augustine's divine time, or Kermode's view of a 'time filled with significance', which draws together the diurnal and eternal.¹⁷³ Its opening lines confirm a sense of eternity in 'All changing unchang'd' (l. 4). This theme is further revealed in the composition, which repeats the final line of each sonnet at the beginning of the next. It is indeed a prayer, reminiscent of the Rosary that has at its core the Virgin Mary; it is held in the hands, a circle, with Christ as the centre, the main subject of the piece, implying infinite recurrence.¹⁷⁴ There is a sense of unity and strength to the poem as it is bound within itself; it is meditative, quiet. Hughes observes it as a sacred parody of Revelation 2.1: 'I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end'.¹⁷⁵

Numerically its seven sonnets are significant, as the number is connected to a holy week - the poem begins with the Annunciation and ends with the Ascension - and, more significantly, with Augustine's seven stages of redemption. Hughes points out that, in *The City of God*, Augustine argues that redemption for humanity has seven stages and

¹⁷² Francois de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* (London, 1609), p. 33.

¹⁷³ Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, p. 47.

¹⁷⁴ Gardner indicates that the poem is a re-writing of the Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary in *John Donne: The Divine Poems*, p. xxii.

¹⁷⁵ Hughes, *The Interior Career of John Donne*, p. 181.

cites the six days God took to create the world and how they are reversed to form a cyclical patterning:

symbolically re-enacted, but in reverse, through history; and as the first six days were followed by the Sabbath, so the last six days will also be followed by the Sabbath that shall have no ending.¹⁷⁶

Helen Gardner notes the poem's links with medieval art that would often emphasise Christ's life in a series of miniatures or in the cyclical dramas, 'dictated by the desire to present with simplicity the Christian scheme of man's redemption'.¹⁷⁷ The poem takes the form of a holy life, from prayer to nativity to ascension, each sonnet an encapsulation of the devout journey that Christ made to return to God and at the same time an inevitable progression into the next sonnet by the use of linked phrases on lines one and fourteen.

Donne refers quite directly to the power of the Virgin in the second sonnet, 'Annunciation'. She is the 'faithfull Virgin' (l. 5) whose womb houses Christ and protects him from sin. The sense of the Virgin as an eternal presence is a striking image given the religious climate 'Ere by the sphere's time thou wast created, thou / Wast in his minde' (ll. 9-10); and her importance is further demonstrated in 'Thy Makers maker' (l. 12). In this sonnet there is the indication of Mary in God's mind from the beginning, an image that suggests the Virgin directly linked to kairotic time but also as an image of remembrance of Christ's entrance into the world. She is also linked to the salvation of the world in the sonnet 'Nativitie'. Donne subtly juxtaposes pronouns that make Mary and Christ almost interchangeable 'for thee, for him, hath th'Inne no roome' (l. 5). This

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁷⁷ Gardner, 'The Religious Poetry of John Donne', in *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Helen Gardner, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 123-36 (p. 123).

connection is furthered in ‘she partakes thy woe’ (l. 14), which directly connects us with the next sonnet ‘Temple’. Both ‘Annunciation’ and ‘Nativity’ herald Christ’s entrance into the world and signal his importance but Donne also weaves into his text the vital presence of the Virgin, not just as mother but as part of an eternal and redemptive process.

La Corona’s devotional tone exemplifies clearly Donne’s exploration of the need for spiritual preparation as a means to salvation that is part of the Catholic tradition of prayer that enables a dignified journey towards God. Being in a state of grace and prepared for death to come at any time was understandably a prime concern for the devout and was particularly important to the Ignatian tradition seen, for example, in Francois de Sales’s *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609).¹⁷⁸ The popular *Imitation of Christ* by Kempis also expounds the importance of a good death.

You should order your every deed and thought, as though today were the day of your death. Had you a good conscience, death would hold no terrors for you; even so, it were better to avoid sin than escape death. If you are not ready to die today, will tomorrow find you better prepared? Tomorrow is uncertain; how can you be sure of tomorrow?¹⁷⁹

These preparations for, and meditations on, death form the basis of Donne’s *Divine Poems* but are not, as one might imagine, simply a retrospective of the Catholic theological tradition of meditative prayer, although *La Corona* comes close, particularly with its allusions to the Virgin. They are an amalgam of Catholic contemplation and the

¹⁷⁸ Oliver, *Donne’s Religious Writing*, p. 140.

¹⁷⁹ Thomas A Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. by Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952), p. 56.

struggle to separate from this religious past, the difficulty of which is arguably symbolised in the never-ending cycle of prayer that forms the structure of *La Corona* and the beginning and final lines that implore salvation, ‘*Deigne at my hands this crowne of prayer and praise*’.

In *La Corona* the devotion and supplication that informs the cyclical structure is underpinned by the pain of the speaker of the poem, which marks out the poem as a struggle of faith. The opening and closing lines evoke the crown, not just the image of the Rosary but also the crown of thorns and as such the desire to eliminate that pain that is ‘Weav’d in my low devout melancholie’ (l. 2). The lack of an aggressive stance against such heavy dolour, that will manifest itself in *Divine Meditations*, renders the voice that of the supplicant imploring release,

For, at our end begins our endlesse rest,
The first last end, now zealously possest,
With a strong, sober thirst, my soule attends.
‘Tis time that heart and voice be lifted high,
Salvation to all that will is nigh. (I, ll.10-14)

After this opening invocation the speaker withdraws from the poem to concentrate on Christ and his mother and it forms part of the rhythmic structure of the piece – to plead, then invoke allegiance with and to share with Christ’s sufferings before returning to the suppliant refrain at the end of the poem. In this opening sonnet the prayer of praise to Christ is weaved in melancholy which announces that Donne’s plea for the hope for salvation is mingled with his accepted ‘devout’ pain that is again invoked in his desire to receive glory through the agony associated with the ‘thorny crowne’(l. 7). In the second

sonnet, 'Annunciation', after Donne has employed the linked sequence that weaves together each sonnet and indeed the whole poem, personal intrusion from the speaker in the form of supplication is removed in order to evoke Christ's life and the physical suffering he must endure. Here Donne moves from supplication to identification as the soul travels the journey to the crucifixion with Christ, from birth, 'Seest thou, my Soule, with thy faiths eyes, how he / Which fills all place, yet none holds him, doth lye?' (ll. 9-10, 'Nativitie'), to the moment of death, 'Now thou art lifted up, draw mee to thee' (l. 12, 'Crucifixion'), to the resurrection, 'And life, by this death abled, shall controule / Death' (ll. 5-6, 'Resurrection').

Yet in this resurrection which has 'batter'd heaven for mee' ('Ascention', l. 9), there is a sense of doubt, which torments Donne and induces him to plead for salvation even after Christ's death seems to have promised it. 'Batter'd' indicates that Christ, too, has struggled to get back to God through dreadful suffering. He is both aggressive 'Ramme' (l. 9), and meek 'lamb' (l. 10), and this Christ is full of 'just wrath' (l. 12), contradictory emotions that more probably apply to the speaker of the poem whose final line begins the poem once more and the cycle of torment begins again. In *La Corona*, Donne offers the reader both a sense of quiet vigil which masks a growing unease that will mount in 'A Litanie' and reach its apotheosis in *Divine Meditations* where the doubts surrounding salvation are examined, as though the 'dead' Donne of Wotton's letter is playing both supplicant and penitent in the face of God's reckoning. Donne has subverted *La Corona's* Catholic sensibility into a fraught meditation to produce a sense of dislocation from his past and present religions; as John Carey indicates 'one corollary of this critical

awareness was a sense of his own isolation from the company of God's elect: he was outcast, a part of no whole'.¹⁸⁰

'A Litanie' is dated around 1608, though may have been written a couple of years later. R. C. Bald suggests that it may have been written during an attack of neuritis in the winter of 1608-1609.¹⁸¹ However, Donne wrote a letter to his friend Henry Goodyer in either 1609 or 1610 stating: 'Since my imprisonment in bed, I have made a meditation in verse which I call a Litany; the word you know imports no other than supplication'.¹⁸²

Interestingly, the letter continues with:

That by which it will deserve best acceptance is, That neither the Roman Church need call it defective, because it abhors not the particular mention of the blessed Triumphers in heaven, nor the Reformed can discreetly accuse it of attributing more than a rectified devotion ought to doe.¹⁸³

Donne here is attempting, though not without anxiety as implied in the cold phrase, 'rectified devotion', a 'synthesis of Catholicism and English Protestantism'.¹⁸⁴ This subject would not be without interest in the early 1600s, following James's decree in 1604 to bring together all denominations in the hope of a union. Added to this was the reformation of the Catholic Litany in the Book of Common Prayer in 1544 and 1549 that had ousted papist elements.¹⁸⁵ These elements consisted particularly in invocations to the Virgin Mary, Angels, Saints, Apostles and so forth that Donne boldly re-instates in his

¹⁸⁰ Carey, *John Donne, Life, Mind and Art*, p. 38.

¹⁸¹ R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 157.

¹⁸² John Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (London, 1651), p. 32.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁸⁴ Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writing*, p. 82.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

poem, although any invocation in ‘A Litanie’, excepting the Virgin Mary, is aimed directly at God rather than through others by Donne’s employment of the second person ‘thy’, ‘thine’ or ‘you’. These are always embedded within the stanzas devoted to Heaven’s hierarchy, and conclude with an almost delayed main active verb, ‘heare’, following stanzas that begin with cumulative conjunctions and adverbial or prepositional clauses: ‘Sonne of God heare us’ (XXVIII, 1.1).

Donne’s ‘devout melancholy’ that permeates *La Corona* turns to a darker sense of dejection in ‘A Litanie’. This dejection is seen in the opening alchemical image that indicates a desire to form a new self through the packaging together of old and new forms:

Come
 And re-create mee, now growne ruinous:
 My heart is by dejection, clay,
 And by selfe-murder, red.
 From this red earth, O Father, purge away
 All vicious tinctures, that new fashioned
 I may rise up from death, before I’m dead. (ll. 3-9)

This desire continues in the next stanza with Donne’s identification with the crucified Christ, an identification that had emerged in *La Corona*, ‘O be thou nail’d unto my heart, / And crucified again’ (ll. 14-15); and ‘But let it be by applying so thy paine, / Drown’d in thy blood, and in thy passion slaine’ (ll. 17-18). In stanza IV, Donne wishes ‘that the divided, tormented soul may be one as the divine Trinity is one’ in the line ‘Of these let all mee elemented bee’ (l. 35).¹⁸⁶ There is clearly here an indication of Donne’s soul under duress but also the belief that it is a process that will eventually lead to his re-

¹⁸⁶ *John Donne: Selections*, ed. by John Booty, p. 40.

fashioning. In the poem, although the main verb, 'heare', is delayed to emphasise the pre-eminence of God, the setting out of the text, with each stanza devoted to a particular cause, suggests that he pleads with all those in Heaven and begs that each might use his or her own gifts to enable his release.

The Virgin is invoked in 'A Litanie' and again with her redemptive associations, 'whose flesh redeem'd us' (l. 38) and who 'unlock'd Paradise' (l. 39) 'disseiz'd sinne' (l. 40) and whose womb was 'a strange heav'n' (l. 41) setting her against the degenerate Eve in *The Progresse of the Soule*. There is also a bold reference to her ability to intercede, placed in the present tense, 'so are her prayers' (l. 44) suggesting that there is hope for a female redemptive figure. Here Donne casts the Virgin clearly as mediatrix between humanity and God 'nor can she sue / In vaine, who hath such titles unto you' (ll. 13-14). His use of the third person 'she' sets her apart from the litany of others cited, where 'you' is preferred, and has the effect of distancing.

After this fervent longing to almost transubstantiate himself and rid himself of the 'glass lanthorne, flesh' (III, l. 26), Donne continues his poem with images of deliverance. A direct reminder of his difficult position as convert to Protestantism, whose own family were devoutly Catholic, is a reference to his family's tradition of martyrdom. Here, Donne inverts the idea to apply to the pain of apostasy, employing a pointed use of stress then caesura before 'Not', ensuring its emphasis:

a discreet patience
Of death, or of worse life: for Oh, to some

Not to be Martyrs, is a martyrdom. (ll. 89-90)

Anxiety is further emphasised in his recollection of the image of the lost, wandering soul doomed to inhabit Cain's race in *The Progresse of the Soule* in the lines, 'Thou in thy scatter'd mystique body wouldst / In Abel dye' (ll. 86-87).

Fear of the damnation of his soul becomes evident in Stanza XV where the worry over elective salvation pre-occupies Donne:

Or that thou art covetous
To them thou lovest, or that they are maim'd
From reaching this worlds sweet, who seek thee thus,
With all their might, Good Lord deliver us. (ll.132-35)

And in the final stanzas there is a sinister sense that the imploring voice may not be heard, perhaps indicating Donne's entrenched fear in Stanza XV that his soul will not be saved. It is a fear that is also evident in *La Corona* when Christ's struggle to batter his way into heaven implies that God does not receive His subjects easily. '*Deigne at my hands this crowne of prayer and praise*' begins and ends the poem that becomes a desperate plea to God. It may not be heard, however, as Donne's repetition of 'heare' in 'A Litanie' becomes almost a plea in Stanzas XXIII, XXIV, XXVII and XXVIII, where Donne asks God to unlock his ears to listen to the voice of the speaker, 'Thine ear to our sighes, teares, thoughts gives voice and word' (XXIII, l. 205). 'Voice', 'word', 'musique', 'booke', 'locke', 'ecchoes', 'eare' permeate the last stanzas raising a sense of doubt, as though the words on the page and their connotations of hearing 'shout' out to God. Although this poem follows the incantatory fashion of Litany, Donne's mixture of

old and new religious ideas in the text does in fact build up anxieties over Donne's possible salvation. There is an implied silence at the end of 'A Litanie', 'Heare us, weake ecchoes' (l. 243) as Donne's language becomes increasingly imploring and desperate. There is doubt at the close of this poem and such uncertainty continues in *Divine Meditations*.

The actual writing of *Divine Meditations* is difficult to pinpoint exactly. The dating and order of the sonnets is complex and cannot be discussed fully here but once again Helen Gardner suggests that the 1633 manuscript collection of Donne's work contained twelve sonnets including 'Batter my Heart', 'Oh my blacke Soule!' and 'Spit in my face', that were written around 1609.¹⁸⁷ There are other sonnets that will be discussed, which Gardner indicates may have been written after his ordination, but this is unclear. The Westmoreland manuscript includes three more sonnets, one of which will be included in this analysis and I would like to differ from Gardiner here by suggesting that this was written before the *Anniversaries*.

The first impression of these sonnets is of an impassioned plea to God for redemption. Many are laced with fear and alarming violent imagery. It is as though Donne needs this painful, almost negative relationship because it indicates his ultimate dependence on God and this dependence takes the form of his desire for total envelopment by Him. There is a painful irony to these sonnets: after the godless landscape of *The Progresse of the Soule* we are thrust into a world where God seems indifferent to Donne and where the poet

¹⁸⁷ Helen Gardner gives a clear and detailed account of the composition of the sonnets in the 1633 and 1635 editions of Donne's work in *John Donne: The Divine Poems*, pp. xxxvii-xliii.

undergoes excruciating lamentations as he contemplates the possibility of damnation. Donne takes on a Christ-like mortification of the flesh, as in 'A Litanie', as a means of redemption. It is as though by becoming like Christ there will be hope of salvation which is shown in the desire to wash himself in the blood of Christ to whiten his soul: 'Spit in my face you Jewes, and pierce my side' (Sonnet VII, l. 1) and 'wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might / That being red, it dyes red soules to white' (Sonnet II, ll. 13-14). There is a sense of overwhelming suffocation to the sonnets as Donne longs to 'make a heavenly Lethean flood, / And drowne in it my sinnes blacke memorie' (Sonnet V, ll. 11-12)

The intense masochism of Donne suggests both a yearning for and isolation from a redemption that is not yet his. By pleading with God to violate him, in Sonnet X, for example, and by constructing his own soul as teasingly obstinate, Donne, in a sense, puts the responsibility for his soul's redemption with God.

Batter my heart, three person'd God; for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine and seeke to mend; [...]
[...] Take mee to you, 'enthrall mee, never shall be free,
Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.

Sonnet X indicates at first a recalcitrant soul that can only be possessed by force, by rape. Donne demands that he must be taken violently by the wholeness and might of the Trinity, which will culminate in paradoxical purity for the poet through the 'forcible entrance of the deity into an otherwise impenetrable soul'.¹⁸⁸ These disturbing lines

¹⁸⁸ William Kerrigan, 'The Fearful Accommodations of John Donne', in *John Donne: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by Andrew Mousley (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999), pp. 198-216 (p. 206).

obviously evoke sexual impropriety on the part of the divine and feminine submission on the part of the poet, who begs God to deliver his soul, 'married' to God's enemy. His final line, desiring that his virginity will be restored through God ravishing him, might have echoed the miraculous 'recoveries' of hitherto fallen saints restored through God's grace, but here is subverted through the rape metaphor into something amounting to blasphemy as God is implicit in an act that would render Him imperfect. But it is the graphic descriptions that Donne employs in this sonnet that reveal this pre-occupation with the forbidden, 'o'erthrow mee'; 'bend / Your force, to breake, blow, burn and make me new; / Take mee to you, imprison mee'.

This vivid expression of force that will culminate in Donne's abduction/liberation from God's enemy is filled with deep anxiety as to where is the rightful place for his soul. At the moment it is located with the enemy, with whom Donne indicates there is a bond of marriage, but at the same time he desires to be forcibly removed from the union but in doing so he will implicate God in an injustice. Consolation, it appears, cannot be found in either course but the desire to be violently abducted is very strongly present. This impasse reveals Donne's soul in crisis and a 'sense of his own isolation from the company of God's elect', a sense that has been developing from *La Corona* and 'A Litanie' and which appears to be the trigger for his torment.¹⁸⁹ Donne's response to this is to be acutely violated, an act of torture itself, suggesting at once an unhappy combination of guilt, resentment and despair and also a need for God to take control of a situation in which he finds himself incapable of action. And yet, paradoxically, there is action here,

¹⁸⁹ Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, p. 38.

although it is of a negative sort, as Donne demands that God possess him through the imperatives found throughout the poem, which simultaneously indicate his surrender.

Although this is the political language of conspiracy and torture, the body betraying the closed world within, it also suggests strongly the physicality of this betrayal. There is the dominant positioning of active verbs and verb phrases: ‘hath established’, ‘will proceed’, ‘not be bound’, ‘employ’; and the concrete nouns often coupled with the definite article: ‘the disease’, ‘the rack’, ‘physician’, ‘examiner’, evoking both the sharpness of bodily pain but also the voyeuristic multiple positioning implicated in torture. One senses that Donne occupies both these positions against himself, in order to expose the fallen soul. This self-reflexive notion of torture, albeit through bodily disease here, is at the core of Donne, with the flayed, anatomised body crying out to God for forgiveness for such perfidy, as seen in the opening quotation of this thesis:

O my black Soule! Now thou art summoned
 By sicknesse, death's herald and champion;
 Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
 Treason, and durst not turn to whence hee is fled (Sonnet II, ll. 1-4)

This ‘treason’ can probably be linked to Donne’s own anxieties over his conversion from Catholicism, particularly after the heroics displayed by his ancestors, and may also offer an understanding of his theatrical desire to expose himself to such probing that might constitute a public penance but at the same time ‘to quiet a lingering guilt or disappointment about his escape from persecution’.¹⁹⁰ Such remorse for the abandonment of his family’s faith cries out for punishment, hence the anxious, often violent response

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 35.

from Donne towards God. The diction is imperative: 'repaire', 'draw my iron heart', 'wash', 'burn', 'die', 'drowne'. Donne craves the attention of a God who seems to ignore him before sinners; there is a terrifying sense of exile and isolation:

Oh I shall soone despaire, when I doe see
That thou lov'st mankind well, yet wilt'not chuse me,
And Satan hates mee, yet is loth to lose mee. (Sonnet I, ll. 12-14)

Yet though Donne's verse is violent and pained there are sonnets that confound these ideas and which offer some kind of hope to the dejected writer. Sonnet VI, for example, defies death itself and is written in a more measured, reasoned vein, devoid of the histrionics that surround those mentioned here. In this sonnet there is defiance 'nor yet canst thou kill mee' (l. 4) and the confidence of eternity 'wee wake eternally, / And death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die' (ll. 13-14). The tone is assured and without anxiety, the metre smooth, revealing a Donne that welcomes death as he is secure in the knowledge that he will pass into the afterlife.

More interesting is sonnet II in the Westmoreland manuscript. Three sonnets form this last section to the meditations and the second, I will argue, provides a gateway to the *Anniversaries* and can be seen as part of Donne's attempt to keep alive an image of a redemptive female. No specific reference is made to the Virgin in the meditations but this sonnet refers to a mysterious 'she'. She' is married to Christ and is directly referred to as 'thy mild Dove / Who is most trew' (ll. 12-13), a reference to the Holy Spirit who works through Christ. Here we have the female linked to wisdom and Memory and, once acknowledged, is the source of salvation 'When she is embrac'd and open to most men'

(l. 14). The sonnet opens with the imperative ‘showe’ indicating Donne’s desire to be affected by her and the sonnet asks of her influence over different religions:

now new, now outwore?
 Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
 On one, on seven, or on no hill appeare? (ll. 6-8).

In his questioning, Donne establishes her as eternal and the sonnet seems to be a response to his quest in ‘Satire III’ to ‘Seeke true religion’. Donne, here, I would argue, provides, in the image of the ‘she’ a precursor of the *Anniversaries*, an image of a female that will, in the *Anniversaries*, afford Donne a new Marian vision that can be accommodated into the Protestant world.

Donne’s poetry of this period offers a construction of the soul that is undergoing transition as it seeks to find a space somewhere within the framework of the two competing dogmas that the poems frequently conflate. Remorse, anger, imploring, self-surrender, punishment, partition are part of this complex construction that Donne creates of himself as he searches for a way of existing within the new order. The poems reveal Donne’s hesitant shift from his past to a tentative acceptance of the new Protestantism but with reservations that still allow his Catholic affiliations to have resonance in his work. *La Corona*, ‘A Litanie’ and *Divine Meditations* written after *The Progresse of the Soule* and before the *Anniversaries* each have within them a glimmer of hope in these years of dejection. This hope is the image of the Virgin, no longer legitimate currency for the Protestant world, and the mysterious ‘she’ of the final sonnets in *Divine Meditations*. After the dark mood of *The Progresse of the Soule*, where the sin of Eve permeates

humanity, the faint images of the Virgin and ‘she’ offer some comfort to Donne whose work fluctuates between doubts about his salvation and measured confidence in his afterlife. The image of the female in Eve and the Virgin Mary is a source of both damnation and salvation for Donne and, with the ‘loss’ of the Virgin to Protestant culture, he needs to re-create that image afresh and in such a way as to be acceptable to his new religion. In the *Anniversaries*, Donne finds that image and also imbues in her Augustinian Memory that, for Donne, will lead to his, and the world’s, salvation.

Salvation

Richard E. Hughes suggests that the salvation of Donne’s soul can be traced as an interior journey that reaches its apotheosis in the publication of the *Anniversaries*. He notes the importance of the poems as the end of a quest, where spiritual knowledge is achieved:

Donne’s vigil ends with the *Anniversary* poems. *An Anatomy of the World* and *Of The Progresse of the Soule* constitute the apogee of his interior life, the irreversible moment towards which everything before moves and from which everything after flows [...] all the critical stages of his own progress, the nuclei of perceptions and insights, came to fruition in the *Anniversaries*. The quest ordained in the third satire is completed in these poems: the soul’s rest and the mind’s endeavour are finally realised.¹⁹¹

However, the *Anniversaries* also have a public role that I would like to consider as an important factor in the redemptive process and which marks the beginning of a more public life for Donne as he considers a career in the Church.

¹⁹¹ Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul: The Interior Career of John Donne*, p. 196.

In 1610, on December 13th, the Feast of St. Lucy, patron saint of light, Elizabeth Drury died. She was the fourteen-year-old daughter of Sir Robert Drury, a wealthy landowner. The cause of her death is unknown but, spurred by their grief, Sir Robert and his wife Anne commissioned John Donne to write an elegy on the death of their daughter. In 1611, Donne wrote two meditations, the *Anniversaries*. *The First Anniversary* and ‘Funerall Elegie’ were written some time before November, 1611, for this is when the Drurys invited Donne to accompany them on a tour of the Continent, presumably because they were pleased about the initial work, and *The Second Anniversary* was composed probably in France in December of that year, the first anniversary of Elizabeth’s death. It is thought that Joseph Hall, who had been rector at the church on the Drury estate, wrote the ‘Harbinger to the Progres’ that forms the introduction to *The Second Anniversary*, and all the work was published by April, 1612.¹⁹²

Donne’s poem, ostensibly a eulogy to the dead, virginal Elizabeth Drury, was greeted with dismay by many of his contemporaries and of critics since, the main contention being the hyperbolic lyrics on the death of a fourteen-year-old whom he had never met and whose father was a much needed patron. The source of concern was Donne’s elevation of an unknown girl, on the threshold of womanhood, to a saint-like position responsible, through her death, for the loss of the world’s virtue and goodness. Ben Jonson commented that the work was ‘profane and full of Blasphemies that [...] if it had been written of ye Virgin Marie it had been something’, an indication of the indecorous tone of the works.¹⁹³ Louis Martz indicates the stylistic problems of the text and notes

¹⁹² John Donne, *The Anniversaries*, ed. by Frank Manley (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), p. 4.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

imagistic inconsistencies that are improper when the poem states its subject to be the untimely death of the young girl:

The imagery seems extravagant - even blasphemous - not because of what we know about the circumstances of the poem's composition, but because the imagery is not supported by the poem as a whole.¹⁹⁴

The title pages to the poems could also be said to foreground the indecorous juxtaposition of Elizabeth Drury with the salvation of the world. *The First Anniversary's* title page of 1611 and 1612 reads: 'An Anatomie of the World. Wherein, By Occasion of the vntimely death of Mistris Elizabeth Drvry the frailty and decay of this whole world is represented'. The 1612 title page of *The Second Anniversary* reads: 'Of The Progres of the Soule. Wherein: By Occasion Of The Religious Death of Mistris Elizabeth Drvry, the incommodities of the Soule *in this life and her exaltation in the next*, are Contemplated'.

Yet Jonson's comment is significant. He states that *had* it been about the Virgin Mary it would have been an acceptable poem. I would argue, it is, in some ways, about an alternative Marian vision, which demonstrably alters our perception of Donne's use of a seemingly unimportant young girl. In the *Anniversaries* Elizabeth Drury is revered as a symbol of divine grace - the soul of the world - whose 'untimely' death, in the first poem leaves the world a poorer place, indeed a wilderness, filled with despair and without the love of God. In the second poem, her 'religious death' elevates Elizabeth to a goddess-like position as she becomes an image of hope and redemption for those left behind in that world, and one presumes Donne himself here who, by writing the verse, has become

¹⁹⁴ Louis L. Martz, 'John Donne in Meditation', in *John Donne: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Helen Gardner (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 152-70 (p. 158).

united with her. From the masochistic identification with the body of Christ that some of the sonnets of the *Divine Meditations* explore, the *Anniversaries* examine Donne's move from that state to the raising of his spirit into an ethereal realm. Thomas Docherty indicates this earthly connection with the divine, which both complements and differentiates:

In this mute epithalamion there is a 'pure' union which maintains the integrity of the symbolic hymeneal boundary, as a veil which both joins and separates; joined together as airy nothings or as a media between heaven and earth, Donne and Drury become precisely the veil-like medium or hymeneal realm of angels separating one world (heaven) from another (Earth).¹⁹⁵

Richard Hughes notes the importance of the timing of Elizabeth's death and its connection with St. Lucy, an idea that lends itself to the notion of eternal and worldly time colliding at this point, of *kairos* and *chronos*, to create harmony and hope in the bleak world that Donne has hitherto constructed:

The mythic structure of a human life was demonstrated to Donne in the coincidence of Elizabeth Drury's death and St. Lucy's festival. The disconnected episodes of St. Lucy's martyrdom, Elizabeth's death, his own metaphorical death in 1601, and his own meditated resolutions arranged themselves in concentric circles around a central and illuminated focal point. In the *Anniversaries*, Donne describes a hierophony, a structured image of an eternal archetype working itself out in human affairs.¹⁹⁶

It becomes easy to see from this how the work might appear shocking and blasphemous as Elizabeth, a seemingly ordinary girl on the verge of marriage who dies on St. Lucy's Day, a day full of significations of light, epiphany and revelation, is revered as celestial.

¹⁹⁵ Thomas Docherty, *John Donne, Undone* (London & New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 230.

¹⁹⁶ Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul*, p. 207.

The poem also links Elizabeth with both virginity and motherhood and resonates with Marian iconography:

But now thou art as high in heaven flowne
 As heaven's from us; what soul besides thine owne
 Can tell thy joyes, or say he can relate
 Thy glorious Journals in that blessed state?

(ll. 13-16 'The Harbinger to the Progres')

Donne's own response to his poem - he was dismayed by its reception - is to indicate that he is writing about Elizabeth Drury not as the individual she was but as a kind of blank page on which he may create a metaphor for the world's loss so that Elizabeth becomes a synecdoche not only for mortality but more importantly as an agent of resurrection, like the Virgin, 'the Idea of a Woman, not as she was'.¹⁹⁷ As mortal rather than divine, however, Donne seeks to create a difference between the Catholic Mary and the newly 'forged' Elizabeth. The Virgin Mary achieves divinity through the immaculate conception and assumption; Donne's use of Elizabeth marks her not as divine, but as part of a long tradition of feminised wisdom that links us with a remembrance of the past and places her as the memorial part of the human soul. For Donne, then, it is Elizabeth as human, and to humanity's memorial history of the concept of wisdom, that is essential. Elizabeth becomes part of *us*, not a separate entity that must intercede for us. Unlike the Virgin Mary, Elizabeth is contained within us all. Frank Manley notes the Neo-Platonist, early modern view of wisdom as female and as part of the beginning of the creation of matter:

¹⁹⁷ Ben Jonson, *Complete Poems*, ed. by George Parfitt (New Haven: CT, 1975), p. 462.

According to Ficino she [wisdom] was the intelligence of the Angelic Mind, the incorporeal world that forms the first emanation of the cosmos, imperfect only inasmuch as it is created and exists by its participation in God [...] She is the figure of perfect contemplation, the mind free from the trammels of corporeal existence.¹⁹⁸

Manley also indicates that wisdom is linked both to the Word and to Christ himself ‘The idea is obviously linked to the Christian concept of the Logos or the Word, the second person of the Trinity, who contains the divine Ideas within himself’.¹⁹⁹ Charles M. Coffin also notes that ‘Though Christ is not named in either of the *Anniversaries*, He is definitely figured forth as Elizabeth Drury’.²⁰⁰

Significantly, ‘she’ is an active agent, although paradoxically passive as Elizabeth is dead, but her strength and guidance appear quiet and unassuming yet pervasive inside the action of the poem, the dynamic drive of both sections of the complete text. She follows the Dantesque and Petrarchan technique of idealised virtue, although she represents more than a Beatrice or a Laura; she has the weight of the misery of the world resting on her shoulders, creating a striking image of the burden of the young girl set against the world’s spiritual decay.²⁰¹ Frank Manley argues, therefore, that Elizabeth Drury undergoes a metamorphosis for Donne and comes to represent Eden itself. She becomes:

a symbol of all the beauty man and the universe lost in the fall: the order and harmony of the outer world as well as the inner beauty we ourselves, each individual, have lost. She is the only thing this last, dying age of the world had

¹⁹⁸ Manley, *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, p. 22.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁰⁰ Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, pp. 276, 258.

²⁰¹ See William Empson, *English Pastoral Poetry* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1938), p. 84, C. M. Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, p. 276.

left, the only memory of the old times in Eden. And at that same time she is the image of its mortality and evanescence.²⁰²

Here is a remembrance of when our souls were perfect. Kathryn R. Kremen corroborates this by identifying Elizabeth as the ‘anima mundi’, the soul of the world and also the soul of collective man, the ‘anima hominis’.²⁰³ She has not only given him a sort of grace, she has given him wisdom. She is the idea of a woman in a man, a female soul that has given Donne knowledge of an afterlife that was unavailable to him before.

As a presentation of the Word, Elizabeth serves another function in the poetry: certainly as an image of hope for the world but also as the unblemished muse for Donne’s creative process as Donne makes it perfectly clear that although Elizabeth has left the world a bleaker place she has attained a greater and has done so at a perfect moment, before the loss of her virginity:

Immortall Maid, who though thou would’st refuse
The name of Mother, be unto my Muse
A Father, since her chaste Ambition is,
Yearly to bring forth such a child as this. (ll. 33-36 *The Second Anniversary*)

There are clear indications here of Elizabeth as instigator of wisdom, as Donne’s creative drive, for Elizabeth becomes a more powerful force than the inspirational muse, she is the progenitor of it. It is imperative for Donne to have his vision of wisdom eternally virginal, as she becomes an image of purity, uncontaminated by the corporeality of the concrete world from which she has departed. As father to the muse, she does become a

²⁰² Manley, *John Donne: The Anniversaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), p. 14.

²⁰³ Kathryn R. Kremen, *The Imagination of the Resurrection: The Poetic Motif in Donne, Blake and Yeats* (New Jersey: Associated university Presses, 1972), p. 117.

parent but without loss of her maidenhood. The use of the word *child* in conjunction with the yearly reproduction of the poem adds to the idea of Elizabeth as conveyor of art itself as though her reality as Elizabeth Drury has been transformed, through the absence of her flesh, into Donne's own imagination. William Empson suggested that the 'only way to make the poem sensible is to accept Elizabeth Drury as the Logos'.²⁰⁴ Hughes, too, suggests the 'shee' of the poem to be a dynamic force, 'a prototype of all spiritual wholeness', that becomes the main impetus to the work.²⁰⁵ Elizabeth Drury, then, becomes a cipher through which Donne may reveal his ideas on the frailty and decay of the world and Man's subsequent hope for salvation in the form of the soul's resurrection manifested in Elizabeth's ascent to God.

In the opening section, 'To The Praise of the Dead, and the Anatomy', the world is likened to an anatomised body bereft of its main component, the soul, represented by the dead Elizabeth, now in heaven. The antitheses that strike the reader in the first lines, 'dyde/live'(l.1), 'good/evil'(l. 3), 'bee/losse/wel-borne'(ll. 9-11), provide the tension on which the poem rests as Donne sets up the paradox of life produced from the death of Elizabeth. This opening also provides an inversion of the earlier, doom-laden 1601 poem, *The Progresse of the Soule*, which ends with the indication that the soul inhabits the tainted race of Cain that will include Donne himself. Here, however, the lineage will be linked back to Elizabeth through the 'cunning Pencill' (l. 18) of Donne, suggesting a far less gloomy vision of existence where Elizabeth provides the salvation that is so lacking in *The Progresse of the Soule* and through the artistry of the poet. The sweeping

²⁰⁴ Empson, *English Pastoral Poetry*, p. 84.

²⁰⁵ Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul*, p. 208.

pentameters that occasionally move into elongated hexameters and the upbeat rhyming couplets also lend to this poem a freshness that is absent in the despondency that the irregularity of metre and hiatuses that the stanzas create in the 1601 piece.

Yet though there is expansiveness to this poetry that is lacking in *The Progresse of the Soule* and indeed Donne's *Divine Poems*, these pieces are nonetheless meditative, religious verse. Martz has shown, for example, that *The First Anniversary* may be subdivided into five meditations, eulogies and refrains/morals, resembling both Petrarchan lament and Ignatian exercise.²⁰⁶ Frank Manley, however, takes this further by suggesting that Donne's structure of the *Anniversaries* corresponds to Augustine's image of the tri-partite soul that has Reason, Will and Memory as its component parts.

Through the tradition of the decay of the world, which, as a tradition, represents the collective memory of man, he 'remembers' imaginatively the perfection of the first days of the earth and searches out the cause for the present decay. He then turns to the intellect, In the so-called *eulogies*, he probes the significance of a young girl's recent death and discovers in it an answer to what caused the decay. She is a way of comprehending the lost perfection of man's soul, the Grace of God in Paradise – not logically, but emotionally, in symbolic terms. And finally, from this combination of memory and understanding, Donne arrives at an act of will: to forget this rotten world now that she is dead.²⁰⁷

The First Anniversarie begins with images of time stopping that reduces man 'ended here her progresse time' (l. 7), 'contracted to an inch, who was a span' (l. 136). It also suggests forgetting 'thou hast lost thy sense and memory' (l. 28), 'Thou hast forgot thy name' (l. 30). Alchemical imagery, used to indicate the potential metamorphic and regenerative qualities of Elizabeth into a 'golden' time 'by a true religious Alchimy' (l.

²⁰⁶ Martz, 'John Donne in Meditation', pp. 153-54.

²⁰⁷ Manley, *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, p. 41.

182) is negated 'But that our age was Iron, and rusty too' (l. 426). Elizabeth is 'thy'ntrinsique Balme' (l. 57), which 'Can never be renew'd' (l. 58).²⁰⁸ Man, the 'Receivers' (l. 416), forgetting goodness, becomes 'lame' (l. 416) leaving Elizabeth unable to turn him into 'gold', but she has at least left some mark on him 'Who, though she could not transubstantiate / All states to gold, yet guilded every state' (ll. 417-18). And this mark is faintly seen through *The First Anniversarie* as Donne suggests a hope that is realised in the next section of the poem. There is an indication, for example, of the coming together of world and divine time in the opening lines. Though Elizabeth's world time has ended (l. 7) Donne rhymes 'time' with 'clymbe' (l. 8) suggesting a move into an ethereal realm.

Her link to the decaying world, however, is also present in these early lines for she is both 'Quire and Song' acknowledging an earthly/divine connection. The pun on choir/quire and the link between song and verse also suggests that Donne is finding an image of salvation not just in the idea of Elizabeth Drury as a symbol of deliverance but that his construction of her in the text is part of that redemption. The singing of the verse may also indicate his desire to publish this poem so that it becomes part of a communal hymn to salvation as well as a personal one. Donne notes that the world is unable to remember itself, it has lost its identity 'thou art speechlesse growne' (l. 30) but, as Frank

²⁰⁸ Balm is a preservative, according to Paracelsus, which prevents putrefaction an 'incorruptible substance made by unifying the four elements of the body of the Stone, a process which precedes the final production of the philosopher's stone'. Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 16.

Manley notes, Elizabeth Drury is ‘the opposite of the world’s disease. She is the *Word*: the soul’s ability to call upon God.’²⁰⁹

The Second Anniversary celebrates the soul’s journey, embodied in Elizabeth, into Heaven after the bleak descriptions of the world without the soul in the first poem. The poem is a heptad, divided into seven sections, is reminiscent of *La Corona*. The number is linked with images of eternity and wisdom, the stylistic precision, which Donne employs here becoming indivisible with the central meaning of Elizabeth as wisdom. Wisdom, according to Augustine, is to be found in the Trinity, and the soul is thought to be an image of that Trinity.²¹⁰ As Manley says:

All three faculties of the soul must flow together to form one total act of love, for all three were thought to be analogous to the Trinity, though three, yet one. In traditional Augustinian psychology the memory, understanding and will constitute potentially the Image of God in man [...] If through the process of the poem – the threefold act of memory understanding and will – we arrive at the right valuation of this world and the next, we will have achieved within ourselves the Image of God that was lost. Our souls will have become transformed into the mysterious symbol at the centre of the poem.²¹¹

This wisdom, I would argue, can be seen in Manley’s suggestion that the poem contemplates an understanding of the decay of the world, the remembrance of an edenic past and the decision to concentrate on the divine. These ideas are to be found in the opening lines of *The Second Anniversary* where Donne again reminds us of the ‘Lethe flood’ (l. 27) that ‘Hath drown’ us all, All have forgot the good, / Forgetting her, the

²⁰⁹ Manley, *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, p. 128.

²¹⁰ Saint Augustine, *On The Trinity*, trans. by Stephen McKenna, ed. by Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Bk. 14, pp. 142, 222.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

maine Reserve of all' (ll. 28-29). Donne then makes an active decision to 'strive for life' (l. 31) by praising Elizabeth's divinity and having her as the progenitor of his muse that will yearly remind us of her divine presence 'These Hymnes may worke on future wits [...] / The world which else would putrify with vice' (ll. 37-40).

Elizabeth Drury, then, becomes an image of Augustinian Memory as the recollection of her death each year, in the reading of the poem, reminds us of the importance of the divine over the worldly. The image of the sleepy soul being pulled up to God forms a refrain that gives the impression of soaring through the repeated cadences 'Up, Up, my drowsie soule' (l. 339), 'Up to those Patriarckes' (l. 345), 'Up to those Prophets' (l. 347), 'Up to those Martyrs' (l. 351) and so forth. The poem itself, as well as the symbol of Elizabeth, becomes infused with the dynamic force of Donne's ecstasy 'Returne not, my soule, from this extasee [...] To earthly thoughts' (ll. 321-23). As each linear year passes, the anniversary of her death places us in divine time as we on earth are reminded that we are connected to the ethereal:

And as these stars were but so many beades
 Strung on one string, speed Undistinguish'd leades
 Her through those spheares, as though the beades, a string,
 Whose quicke succession makes it still one thing:
 As doth the Pith, which, least our Bodies slacke,
 Strings fast the little bones of necke, and backe;
 So by the soule doth death string Heaven and Earth. (ll. 207-13)

Elizabeth's soul is 'Gold' (l. 241), in alchemical terms a state of perfect matter that has gathered together all other elements to produce the perfect form, which defies linear time but can condense it to an eternity: she 'Peeces a circle' (l. 508) a reminder of *La Corona*

and also of the Rosary that is devoted to Mary. Donne rejects prayers to saints that the Church probably does not even know but transfers intercession to Elizabeth, at once human and divine, like a saint, but who also represents Kermode's idea of the 'now', that moment when in linear time an individual dies and is connected with divine time to create, for Donne and those who read the poem, a moment of importance 'Thou art the Proclamation; and I am / The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came' (ll. 527-28).

In these texts, then, Donne explores the transformation from the tortured soul of the *Divine Poems* to the soul as the embodiment of wisdom, through the meditative process in the two pieces and with Elizabeth as an emblem of that wisdom. Donne also transforms the traditional process of inspiration and enlightenment through the use of the poet/muse conceit into something sacred. This sacred vision comes about after the bleak vision of the new, rationalistic world that Donne describes in *The First Anniversary*, a world that might not be dissimilar to the turbulent, changing one in which the poet finds himself. Elizabeth Harvey suggests that the *Anniversaries* are 'set pieces articulating the sense of epistemological crisis of the early seventeenth century'.²¹²

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The sunne is lost, and th'earthe, and no man's wit
Can well direct him, where to look for it. (*The First Anniversarie* ll. 205-8).

Donne's scepticism of the 'new Philosophy' in *The First Anniversary* is also evidenced in his use of the word 'anatomy' that not only suggests that we are able to see that which

²¹² Elizabeth Harvey, 'Matrix as Metaphor', in *John Donne, Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by Andrew Mousley (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), pp. 135-56 (p. 144).

hitherto had been invisible – in this instance the metaphorical dissection of the world rather than the body, though one presumes that Donne’s ‘world’ is indeed his own interiority, possibly an indication that religious upheaval and doctrinal wrangling produces spiritual malaise.

The Second Anniversary, conversely, soars and invokes hope through its constant distillation of ethereal and elemental images:

Heaven is as neare, and present to her face,
As colours are, and objects, in a roome
Where darknesse was before. (ll. 216-18)

The poetic dissection that Donne performs in *The Second Anniversary* probes more readily the microcosmic world of Donne’s imagination: ‘Thinke further on thy selfe, my soule’ (l.157), to produce an image of the completeness of body and soul that is absent in *The First Anniversary*. Here, Donne’s image of his soul in the form of the pure Elizabeth is tied harmoniously with her body and that although it has undergone death, paradoxically is living: ‘Shee, shee embrac’d a sicknesse, gave it meat, / The purest Blood, and Breath, that ere it eat’ (ll.147-48), and that for Donne, ‘the physical and the metaphysical, of which body and soul are the respective representations in human nature, are really aspects of one and the same thing’.²¹³

What Donne also explores in the *Anniversaries*, is gender. As with *Divine Meditations*, Donne consciously feminises himself: the ‘Batter my heart’ sequence clearly shows

²¹³ Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, p. 277.

Donne as the female that longs to be dominated, raped and tortured by God, signalling his unstable allegiance both to God, for whom he longs, and to what he believes to be his 'husband' and prisoner, Satan. This is juxtaposed with another 'she' who appears in the second sonnet of the Westmoreland manuscript, examined earlier, a more mysterious figure who seems to be the prototype for Elizabeth. In the *Anniversaries* there is still the identification with the female but of a significantly different nature. Here Donne takes on the bifurcated personas of Elizabeth Drury as emblem of wisdom and the Virgin Mary as signifier of purity, which are explored in Donne's descriptions of Elizabeth's virginity and youth. By appropriating these females, one ordinary the other divine, Donne sets up the central paradox of the text which is the idea of the virgin birth, in this instance Elizabeth Drury giving 'life' to the world by her death, 'Yet Death must usher, and unlocke the doore' (l. 156). Here, Elizabeth becomes emblematic of the bodily purity that is so lacking in Donne's female persona in *Divine Meditations*, whose sullied flesh positions Donne's soul as impure and fallen. Elizabeth's links to the Virgin Mary also indicate immortality of soul and body for the Virgin in Christian belief was taken, body and soul, into Heaven. By adopting these roles and inhabiting the spirituality of these females one could argue that Donne has found the redemption he sought in *Divine Poems*. In the *Anniversaries*, the body no longer resembles the wracked, pained flesh depicted in the earlier poems but an indivisible and co-operative amalgam of body and soul:

Shee, whose faire body no such prison was,
 But that a soule might well be pleas'd to passe
 An Age in her. (ll. 221-23, *The Second Anniversary*)

Donne is re-generated through Elizabeth and the art of the poem itself and it is this new self that ends what is the main body of Donne's poetic work and anticipates the great prose works that he composes in the next phase of his life, 'For they' are in Heaven on Earth, who Heavens workes do' (*The Second Anniversarie* l. 154). These ideas of the use of the female to represent an image of the soul in art will be further discussed and developed in the chapters on Shakespeare's texts, as he, too, uses a similar trope to discuss the nature and progress of the soul to enlightenment.

Yet if Donne is moving from a dejected existence in *Divine Poems* into the redemptive world of the *Anniversaries*, it is important to question this new world in which the poet finds his soul. It is clearly not the Catholic world of his younger days, nor does it appear to be firmly located within Protestant ideology as the texts are still fashioned, in part, from the old order. Rather, Donne seems to have created a twilight world outside of conventional doctrine, idealised in 'Satire III', that appears to be located in the poet's imagination rather than the concrete world of religion, which, for him, has bred disaffection. Donne has in effect 'given birth' in these poems to his new voice through the conceit of the pure Elizabeth, as though he has moved from the despondency of the *Divine Poems* into the calm landscape of *The Second Anniversary* and it is through the imaginative appropriation of the idea of Elizabeth Drury as a re-configuration of the Virgin Mary that this is achieved.

The text, in a certain sense, embodies, or gives birth to the Christian Word, making itself analogous to the Immaculate Conception of Mary, the real subject of the poem as Jonson was aware. In so far as the poet aligns himself with an

imagined embodiment of the ‘Immaculate Conception’, the text becomes an articulation of fantasized ‘immaculate conceit’.²¹⁴

The progress and story of the soul has been re-positioned since 1601. The wandering, homeless soul in *The Progresse of the Soule* and the penitential soul in *Divine Poems* become the redemptive soul of the *Anniversaries*, ‘The earlier poem [*The Progresse of the Soul*] is a bitter recital of the disunity that flows from rebellion; the latter poem is a contemplation of the serenity that follows upon sacrifice and acceptance’.²¹⁵ Moreover, Donne has significantly located the soul within art itself, in a sense removing it from epistemological wrangling and consciously placing it within the realms of poetic discourse. The text is where the soul may be located, safely outside of doctrinal ideology and the seemingly irredeemable and decaying natural world, and its title –*Anniversaries*– an indication of annual renewal and remembrance,

As oft as thy feast sees this widowed earth,
Will yearely celebrate thy second birth,
That is, thy death. For though the soule of man
Be got when man is made, ‘tis borne but than
When man doth die. Our body’s as the wombe,
And as a mid-wife death directs it home. (ll. 449-54, *The First Anniversary*)

Donne’s choice of the poetic medium for the location of the soul is important as its multi-sensual rhythmic qualities arguably position the soul within the realms of the body, a location that would appeal to Donne as it is to here that the poet always returns. By placing it inside the ‘body’ of poetry with all its reminders of the pains and pleasures of the flesh, the soul is still firmly linked to the body. The poems become emblems of the

²¹⁴ Docherty, *John Donne, Undone*, p. 231.

²¹⁵ Hughes, *The Progress of the Soul*, p. 224.

resurrection of both soul and body: an image of immortality in lines of verse and once again a reminder of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The sensuality of the liturgical rhythm is also a reminder of a Catholic past steeped in incantation and mystery and it marks a significant point of closure for Donne. After the writing of the *Anniversaries*, Donne's attention switches predominantly to prose and the Protestant focus on the power of the word and specifically the preacher's word that will be examined in the next chapter.

One can conclude with the notion that Donne's artistic and spiritual journey from 1601-1611 culminates not only in the composition of the *Anniversaries* but also in their publication that invites communal celebration. The examination of division and of unification that has been central to this chapter, of connection and dislocation from God, of prayer, cleansing and pain before Donne's sense of deliverance and epiphany in the *Anniversaries*, has revealed that this vigil of prayer has allowed him to re-configure as an image of redemption an alternative Marian aesthetic that he can take with him into the Protestant world. Elizabeth, as an image of divine remembrance who can transport us to a world outside of worldly time, to 'whole precious Gold' (*The Second Anniversarie* l. 429), is for Donne, what ultimately constitutes salvation.

Chapter Two

Salvation through the Word

In this chapter I will argue that Donne's Sermons, which cannot openly foreground such a 'Catholic' notion of the Madonna as Donne had explored in the *Anniversaries*, examine the same ideas and pattern of salvation as represented by Elizabeth Drury in the poems, though they are created in different ways in this body of work. As Dean of St. Paul's, the incorporation of a pseudo-Marian image into the Protestant world of preaching that eschews such idolatry would be unthinkable. The redemptive properties of memorial agency, however, can find their way into the Sermons, and I will argue that this agency becomes a mediatrix between the congregation and God through the power of the preacher.

The *Anniversaries* allowed Donne to benefit from the salvic properties of the text. The memorial agency that was embodied in the image of Elizabeth is also fused into Donne, for the *Anniversaries* was Donne's panegyric to his own sense of redemption. Donne takes this androgynous configuration with him into the Protestant world of the preacher and draws upon that image to present his sermons, for he translates that agency into the *spoken* word. In an act of transubstantiation that inverts an annulled Catholic sacrament, the logos becomes, as was Elizabeth in the *Anniversaries*, living text. As living text, the Sermons allow Donne to accommodate a past that is still very much part of himself and fuse it directly with the Protestant belief in the prioritisation of language.

This chapter will examine the power of the preacher's use of verbal communication by looking firstly at the importance of language in the development of a Protestant aesthetic. Linked to this will be a Barthesian notion of the elision of the authorial voice. I will argue that Donne's delivery of the sermon foregrounds the importance of the might of God's Word. Paradoxically, this combination of Word and delivery releases Donne's sermons from their authorial source, since the preacher becomes a channel for God's meaning rather than the author of it 'disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin'.²¹⁶ In the congregation, meaning is constituted by their acceptance of the Word and the sermon's function to improve spiritual awareness cannot take place without this acceptance by the listeners. Secondly, the chapter will consider the preaching place and how the positioning of preacher to congregation can affect the power of the Word. Thirdly, it will examine the visceral effects that the use of carefully selected diction, phrase and rhythmic pattern can have on the listeners and how these effects can transform not only the congregation's sense of their individual salvation but the preacher's too.

The Protestant Word and the living text of the Sermon

The Son of God is [...] *The Word*; God made us with his word, and with our word we make God so farre, as that we make up the mysticall body of Christ Jesus with our prayers, with our whole liturgie.²¹⁷

The power of the logos works differently in the Sermons from the poems we have discussed. Though the *Anniversaries* become a public commemoration of Elizabeth

²¹⁶ Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. by David Lodge (London & New York: Longman, 1992), pp. 167-72 (p. 168).

²¹⁷ John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. by George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 Vols (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 3: 259-60. All subsequent references will be from this edition.

Drury they are fixed primarily as the written word, whereas the sermon is fundamentally an aural experience. Bryan Crockett has suggested that in Protestant aesthetics the ear was more to be trusted than the eye, which had a sense of Catholic idolatry attached to it ‘sixteenth century reformers repeatedly insist that ordinary worshippers are led astray by the visually “theatrical” aspects of the traditional liturgy as well as by the visual allure of carved or painted images’.²¹⁸ Added to this, Crockett indicates how this interest led to an ‘enhanced receptivity to the nuances of oral performance’, an idea that is to be examined in later chapters when discussing the effects of the theatrical experience.²¹⁹ The power of the spoken Word on the congregation can effect a sense of wonder. The rhetorical and often theatrical turn of phrase, enhanced by a vivid image or paradoxical concept, can draw in the listener who is captured by a mixture of the linguistic, imagistic and the devotional, a ‘supra-rational rhetorical force’, all of which work upon him or her to create a sense of transcendence.²²⁰

For Donne, this spoken, transcendent sermon becomes a catalyst in the process of salvation. It is a progression from the virginal muse that helped his poetic construction of the celebratory verse, to that memorial agency as emblematic of the soul that has become complete through contact with God. The celebratory quality of the sermon, like the annual remembrance that is the *Anniversaries*, artistically represents a way of regenerating both the congregation and the preacher’s soul each time the preacher speaks. A sermon preached at Whitehall, 1618, likens the preacher to a trumpeter who is part of

²¹⁸ Bryan Crockett, ““Holy Cozenage” and the Renaissance Cult of the Ear”, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 24:1 (1993), 47-65 (p. 50).

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

the salvic process ‘the same trumpet sounds the Parle too, calls us to hearken to God in his word [...] and the same trumpet sounds a retreat too, that is, a safe reposing of our souls in the merit, in the wounds of our Saviour Christ Jesus’.²²¹ As the words are spoken, there is a sort of re-compaction, as though the act of preaching is alchemical, whereby the words once uttered and heard can have an effect on the resurrection and salvation of the soul of both preacher and hearer.

Furthermore, it could be asked that if the words have such power to enable a process that would lead to redemption, then they must possess a quality that effects change and if this is so, is that change spiritual and has it some connection with the physical body that houses the soul? In the sermons, Donne gives words physical attributes that arguably extend beyond the conceit of metaphor, that may act on the body and, in turn, the soul; the word is ‘a drop of the *dew of heaven*, a dram of the *balme of Gilead*, a portion of the bloud of thy Saviour’.²²² Donne speaks of the nurturing quality of this language, the ‘wombe and bosome of the Text’ that can serve the ‘most precious and costly dishes’.²²³ It is as though the Word is not merely being used imagistically but the act of delivery itself renders the Word ‘alive’, capable of having a visceral effect on the listener. Here, language becomes the bread and wine that the congregation ‘consumes’ in order to ensure the soul’s well being. In a sermon given on Christmas Day, 1626, Donne preaches on the individual experience of taking the bread that is our own Christmas day, where there is ‘a manifestation of Christs birth in your soules, by the Sacrament’.²²⁴ The

²²¹ Donne, *Sermons*, 2: 170.

²²² *Ibid.*, 3: 364.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 7: 302, 303.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7: 280.

‘assimilation, that that meate may become our body’ is worked through in the sermon itself, where the word and the bread begin to occupy the same space.²²⁵ Donne’s argument against the ‘contradictions’²²⁶ that Catholic transubstantiation sets up allows him to reject such a belief in favour of the Word as miracle ‘But yet though this bread be not so transubstantiated, we refuse not the words of the Fathers, in which they have expressed themselves in this Mystery [...] We offer to goe no farther, then according to his Word’.²²⁷

This act of translation from the written *Anniversaries* to the spoken Word of the preacher allows Donne to continue his desire to search for salvation through the communal rather than the private. As preacher, Donne’s relationship with his congregation is direct, immediate and fluid and it is thought that Donne was highly gifted as a speaker.²²⁸ John Stubbs indicates Donne’s charisma as a preacher made him into ‘one of the country’s most revered teachers’.²²⁹ The content of his sermons, too, is replete with striking visual images that recall the visceral effects of *Divine Meditations* and the two together, his approach to his role as preacher and the evocative diction found in the sermons, call to mind, in language highly visual and incantatory, the pictorial and rhythmic entreaty of Catholic devotion. I would argue that this overlaying of one religious doctrine with another can re-define and assuage doubts and fears that cannot always be theologically justified through the processes that accompany a new religion’s dogma. A congregation

²²⁵ Ibid.,7: 280.

²²⁶ Ibid., 7: 294.

²²⁷ Ibid., 7: 295-96.

²²⁸ P. M. Oliver, *Donne’s Religious Writing: A Discourse of Feigned Devotion* (London & New York: Longman, 1997), pp. 265-66.

²²⁹ John Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul* (London: Viking, 2006), p. 379.

may be more likely to receive that dogma when delivered with a mindful glance at their recent past. The notion that Calvinistic despair over the possibility of salvation and the consequent fear of God, for example, pervades so much of Donne's religious writings. John Stachniewski, for instance, suggests that this fear and despair is at the heart of the *Divine Meditations* but is modified by Donne when he talks of the regenerative effects of that fear.²³⁰ Donne sees it as 'a Reverance, it is not a Jealousie, a suspition of God'.²³¹ Paul Cefalu indicates that Donne in fact uses this fear as part of a metamorphosis from death to new life, or from an individual's sinful past to a resurrection into goodness.²³² I would further this by suggesting that Donne's incantatory style, seen in the rhythmic repetitions and the striking images, when speaking of this resurrection, advances the idea of metamorphosis to include the fusion of image and Word, of past and present to create a new form of religious communication:

sin is a death, and that needs a resurrection; and a resurrection is as great a work, as the very Creation it selfe. It is death *in semine*, in the roote, it produces, it brings forth death [...] Grace is the soule of the soule, and so the departing of grace, is the death, and the returning of grace is the resurrection of this sinfull soule.²³³

The central image of the birth of the soul here can be seen as part of this idea of new theological beginnings. Donne suggests that the resurrection of this soul is as great as the creation of mankind, indicating not only its fundamental importance but also its link to a pre-lapsarian state, before the Fall and thus before doctrinal wrangling. The antithetical positioning of the birth of death with the birth of goodness through grace facilitates the

²³⁰ For Stachniewski's argument see Paul Cefalu, 'Godly Fear, Sanctification, and Calvinist Theology in the Sermons and "Holy Sonnets" of John Donne', *Studies in Philology*, 100 (2003), 71-86 (p. 71).

²³¹ Donne, *Sermons*, 3: 279.

²³² Paul Cefalu, 'Godly Fear, Sanctification, and Calvinist Theology', p. 78.

²³³ Donne, *Sermons*, 6: 70-2.

visualisation of such oppositional images. This is a common rhetorical device used by Donne, which translates easily into a mental picture that appeals to the individual to make choices between good and evil.

This acknowledgement of the importance of arresting communication can be seen, for example, in Donne's sermon at Whitehall in 1618 where he focuses directly on the preacher and the Word as music that will bring us closer to God.

His minister shall be *Tuba* [...] a Trumpet, to awaken with terror. But then he shall become *Carmen musicum*, a musical and harmonious character, to settle and compose the soul again in a reposed confidence [...] So they shall be musick *in re*, in their matter, in their doctrine; and they shall be also *in modo*, in their manner of presenting that doctrine.²³⁴

There is almost a synaesthetic device used here, where hearing the Word and the music of the voice is conflated with the alarming image of the soul being awoken with a clamour then soothed. The two effects become one as the congregation's hearing and mental perceptions cannot easily be differentiated. The fact that the preacher is using his voice to convey the importance of that voice in the process of salvation also compounds the experience of the merging of content and delivery. Reminding us of Augustinian Memory, the sermon can also give to us the remembrance of the music, or Song, that is within the Scriptures, which are:

in a musical, in a metrical, in a measured composition [...] for that Song, he [God] says there, he was sure they would remember. So the Holy Ghost hath

²³⁴ Ibid., 2: 166-70.

spoken in those Instruments, whom he chose for the penning of the Scriptures, and so he would in those whom he sends for the preaching thereof.²³⁵

Here, Donne emphasises that the preacher has a direct line of descent from the prophets and disciples who wrote the Scriptures. Donne indicates that the voice within the text recalls the first preacher ‘*John Baptists* name is not A voyce, Any voyce, but The voice [...] Christ is *verbum*, The word; not A word, but The word’.²³⁶ He states that ‘this is the voice of our Text [...] a voice that carries with it a penetration, (all shall heare it) and a perswasion [...] and a power , a command [...] Arise ye dead’.²³⁷ Rosalie Osmond has described the properties of Donne’s language as being alive, the ‘incarnational of the sermon itself’, which lends itself to this idea of the living text.²³⁸ This incarnation can be seen in Donne’s invocation of the body of Christ, which reminds us of Augustine’s suggestion that the Son corresponds with the redemptive power of Memory and our beginnings ‘Christ is our Zodiake; In him we move, from the beginning to the end of our Circle’.²³⁹ In a ‘Sermon of Valediction at my going into Germany’ at Lincoln’s Inn, 1619, Donne validates the power of the Holy Spirit in activating Memory, the Will of Augustine’s tri-partite model that works through Christ to bring Understanding:

Here then the Holy Ghost takes the nearest way to bring man to God, by awaking his memory; for, the understanding, that requires long and cleer instruction, and the will requires an instructed understanding before, and is in itself the blindest and boldest faculty; but if the memory doe but fasten upon any of those things which God hath done for us, it is the nearest way to him.²⁴⁰

²³⁵ Ibid., 2: 171.

²³⁶ Ibid., 2: 172.

²³⁷ Ibid., 4: 69.

²³⁸ Rosalie Osmond, *Mutual Accusation: Seventeenth-Century Body and Soul Dialogues in Their Literary and Theological Context* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 143.

²³⁹ Donne, *Sermons*, 4: 68.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 2: 235.

In the same sermon Donne stresses the remembrance of the past and in this remembrance of God we can avoid temptation, for Memory of goodness can control the ‘blindest and boldest faculty’ that is the Will:

Remember the Creator, then, because thou canst remember nothing backward beyond him, and remember him so too, that thou mayst stick upon nothing on this side of him, That so neither *height, nor depth, nor any other creature may separate thee from God.*²⁴¹

The redemptive properties of the sermon were noted by other preachers of the time.

Robert Johnson dedicates a whole tract to the centrality of the preacher as a means to salvation in his 1621 text, *The Way to Glory, or, The preaching of the Gospell is the onely meanes of our salvation*, where he questions ‘Hath God called you to salvation by our Gospell, here in my text, and to obtaine the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ by the preaching thereof’.²⁴² Preaching, we are informed in Samuel Hieron’s 1615 text, *The Dignity of Preaching*, is considered more important than the sacraments and that there is ‘no assurance in the world to any salvation but by it’.²⁴³ William Perkins makes it clear that salvation comes from the preaching of scripture, through which the Holy Spirit is heard: the sermon is the ‘flexanima’ – the allurer of the soul, whereby man is moved towards God.²⁴⁴

Donne goes as far as declaring in one of his own sermons that:

²⁴¹ Ibid., 2: 246.

²⁴² Robert Johnson, *The Way to Glory, or, The preaching of the Gospell is the onely meanes of our salvation* (London, 1621), A4r.

²⁴³ Samuel Hieron, *The Dignity of Preaching*, (London, 1615), p. 3.

²⁴⁴ Wiilliam Perkins, *The arte of prophecying* (London, 1607), Epistle Dedicatory, B1v.

There is no salvation but by faith, nor faith but by hearing, nor hearing but by preaching; and they that thinke meanliest of the Keyes of the Church, and speake faintliest of the Absolution of the Church, will yet allow, That those Keyes lock, and unlock in Preaching; That Absolution is conferred, or withheld in Preaching, That the proposing of promises of the Gospel in preaching, is that binding and loosing on earth, which binds and looses in heaven.²⁴⁵

It is clear here that Donne believes the sermon to be indispensable, as it becomes a means to the salvation of the soul, part of a holy process that will lead to redemption. The image of the sermon as a miniature, ‘meanliest’, ‘faintliest’, that has power to gain access to the mighty, is striking, complementing the idea of the human as a means to the divine. Its strength and authority is almost overwhelming in Donne’s employment of ‘conferred’ and ‘withheld’, again giving extraordinary weight to the seemingly insubstantial word, ‘Keyes’. Its foregrounding reminds us of St. Peter, as Bishop of Rome, having the keys of the kingdom of heaven that is set against a fearsome display of force in the image of locking and unlocking. Donne, in this reminder, is signalling a fusion of Catholic doctrine within the new religion. Donne implies here that the written Word of Scripture has gained in influence through the use of the spoken Word, infusing the preacher’s role with immense moral significance ‘But to doe great works by small meanes, to bring men to heaven by Preaching in the Church, this is a miracle’.²⁴⁶

Yet the repetition of the words ‘faith’ and ‘hearing’ at the beginning of the quotation is important, as Donne reminds us of their prioritisation over the preacher, whose function is, purely, as God’s instrument. The similar repetition of ‘bind’ and ‘loose’ at the end of

²⁴⁵ Donne, *Sermons* 7: 320.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 7: 300-1.

the section instructs us that this process has no intrinsic value unless it be implemented into an individual's daily life.

The responsibility of the preacher is evident here, but as a catalyst that reveals the truth to the congregation that must also be willing to receive it.²⁴⁷ The preacher becomes a conveyor of spirituality who has the power to unlock the secrets of God, through Scripture, to those malleable enough to take part. It is a 'belief in the efficacy of religious discourse [...] that cited the Bible as the *auctor* of the divine *Logos*', that indicates the power and prioritisation of a kind of controlled doctrine, that generates faith for Donne, through the medium of preaching.²⁴⁸ Although Donne indicates that it is the Word rather than the deliverer that is important, 'consider the *office*, and not the *person*', the conveyor of meaning is in effect implicated in that meaning through emphasis, editorial and tone.²⁴⁹

Donne's insistence on the power of the Word to work on the soul, then, constitutes a kind of transubstantiation whereby the art of preaching is to touch the soul by the 'magic' Word, 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by preaching'.²⁵⁰ This recollection of the past, this embracement of a lost sacrament is still important to Donne who has shifted his religious priorities to the Protestant Church. The importance of an imprinted Memory is evident in the sermons as a means of bringing together not only past and present religious ideologies but also of transcending them, for the image of God's original mark on man is

²⁴⁷ William R. Mueller, *John Donne: Preacher* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 78.

²⁴⁸ Nancy Wright, 'The *Figura* of the Martyr in John Donne's Sermons', in *John Donne: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by Andrew Mousley (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999), pp. 182-97 (p. 182).

²⁴⁹ John Donne, *Sermons* 6: 95.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 8: 310.

imperative as a means of combating sin. In a sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn, date uncertain, Donne brings together the soul, Original sin and God's imprint as a kairotic moment. The remembrance of that imprint on the soul will help us to overcome evil and we will experience the constant eternal:

In the first minute that my soul is infus'd, the Image of God is imprinted in my soul; so forward is God in my behalf, and so early does he visit me. But yet *Originall sin* is there, as soon as that Image of God is there. [...] Powers, that dwell so far asunder, as *Heaven* and *Hell*, *God* and *Devoll*, meet in an instant in my soul, in the minute of my quickening, and the Image of *God*, and the Image of *Adam*, *Originall sin*, enter into me at once, in one, and the same act.²⁵¹

The sense of closure from the Catholic world at the end of the *Anniversaries*, where the Catholic aesthetic is embedded within the lyrical, incantatory world of poetry would seem to constitute a healthy dislocation from the past. To become Dean of St. Paul's would confirm strident affirmation of Donne's acceptance into a new religious life. This translation of memorial agency into the Word, however, offers a more complex view of Donne's religious path to 'Seeke true religion', for it brings together past and present, creating a sense of kairotic time, where not only do Catholic and Protestant aesthetics combine but also the remembrance of Augustine's tri-partite model that fuses divine and temporal time. Donne speaks frequently throughout his sermons of universal time that can lift us beyond the temporal. Preaching to the King at Whitehall in 1626, Donne contemplates the mansion of heaven and the mansions on earth, the Churches where God is found:

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2: 59.

That they are *Mansions*; which word, in the Originall, and Latin, and our Language, signifies a *Remaining*, and denotes a perpetuity, the everlastingnesse of that state. A state but of one Day, because no Night shall over-take, or determine it [...] A Day that hath no *pridie*, nor *postridie*, yesterday doth not usher it in, nor tomorrow shall not drive it out.²⁵²

This 'everlastingnesse' is shown in the Word of Scripture in these different translations that suggest the Word will always exist through time but also, paradoxically, in the use of the terms 'pridie' and 'postridie' here, that indicate neither a yesterday nor a tomorrow, a pre-death nor post-death, but a continual moment in the image of a day. When preaching at St. Paul's on Christmas Day, 1626, Donne again evokes a sense of kairotic time when Christ's time on earth is compressed to one day 'His birth and his death were but one continuall act, and his Christmas-day and his Good Friday, are but the evening and the morning of one and the same day'.²⁵³

Donne also links the idea of the Word that constitutes Memory to the blessed Trinity. For Donne, Augustine's tri-partite model as mirrored in the soul (also examined by St Bernard), has pre-eminence in his sermons, as he believes the individual components of the Trinity 'preserve moral virtues':²⁵⁴

As God, one *God* created us, so wee have a soul, *one soul*, that represents, and is some image of that one God; As the three Persons of the *Trinity* created us, so we have, in our one soul, *a threefold impression* of that image, and, as Saint *Bernard* calls it, *A trinity from the Trinity*, in those *three faculties* of the soul, the *Understanding*, the *Will*, and the *Memory*.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Ibid., 7: 138. This echoes Jesus's words in John's gospel 'In my father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so I would not have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you myself; that where I am, you may be also' (14: 2-3).

²⁵³ Ibid., 7: 279.

²⁵⁴ Jeffrey Johnson, *The Theology of John Donne* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), p. 11.

²⁵⁵ Donne, *Sermons*, 2: 72-73.

For Donne, it is Memory that establishes the transcendent connection between the individual and the divine. Johnson argues that ‘here is the faculty where Creator and creature find one another’.²⁵⁶ Donne’s sermon of April 1619 examines the importance of this remembrance for salvation: ‘remembrance of God is our regeneration, by which we are new creatures’.²⁵⁷ Memory is seen as the guide that will lead an individual towards God’s mercy through the stormy travails of life:

yet every man hath a pocket picture about him, a manuell, a bosome book, and if he will turn over but one leaf, and remember what God hath done for him even since yesterday, he shall find even by that little branch a navigable river, to sail into that great and endless Sea of God’s mercies towards him, from the beginning of his being.²⁵⁸

Donne’s practical yet personal image here of the manual, or book, emphasises the power of the Word and the congregation’s need to keep an individual as well as public watch on their souls. Donne’s use of readily understood images is seen again in the idea of the soul that nourishes and keeps alive the body, also found in this sermon ‘The memory, says St. *Bernard*, is the stomach of the soul, it receives and digests, and turns into good blood, all the benefits formerly exhibited to us in particular, and exhibited to the whole Church of God’.²⁵⁹ Donne here is suggesting that Memory is vital to the working of all other faculties, that without Memory we will die.

²⁵⁶ Johnson, *The Theology of John Donne*, p. 12.

²⁵⁷ Donne, *Sermons*, 2: 240.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2: 238.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 236.

In a sermon preached on Easter Sunday 1619, Donne again cites the theme of remembrance seen in the contemplation of God, where an individual can realise himself through his paradoxical ‘burial’ in meditation on the divine:

The contemplation of God, and heaven, is a kinde of burial, and Sepulchre, and rest of the soule; and in this death of rapture, and extasie, in this death of the Contemplation of my interest in my Saviour, I shall finde my self.²⁶⁰

A 1618 sermon preached at Lincoln’s Inn inverts the idea of Memory and assigns it also to God, proposing that His mercy is a signal of His remembrance of us:

When god gave his people the *Law*, he proposes nothing to them, but by that way, to their memory; *I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt*; Remember but that. And when we expresse Gods mercy to us, we attribute but that faculty to God, that he *remembers* us.²⁶¹

Donne also reminds his congregation of degenerate Memory and its adverse effects on an individual. In a sermon delivered at Paul’s Cross, 1616, he notes the dangers of delighting in past sins: ‘yet if thou touch upon the *memory* of that dead sin, *with delight*, thou begettst a new childe of sin’.²⁶² He continues ‘take heed of returning too diligently to a remembrance of those delightful sins which are past; for they will endanger now’.²⁶³ Degenerate Memory can be cleansed, however, through confession, seen in his sermon at St. Dunstan’s, New Year’s Day, 1624 ‘to recollect thy sinnes in thy owne *memory*, and poure them out in true *Confession*’.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 2: 210-11.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 2: 73.

²⁶² Ibid., 1: 194.

²⁶³ Ibid., 1: 194.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 6: 199.

Donne's frequent referral to, and complete belief in, the importance of the Trinity and its link to Reason, Will and Memory complements the very nature of the sermon itself as a communal device that might facilitate social unity, the pluralism and oneness echoing the paradox of the Trinity, or as Jeffrey Johnson notes: 'Donne seems to imply then that the interplay of preacher and congregation ideally imitates the creative council of the Trinity'.²⁶⁵ Johnson cites a sermon preached at Whitehall, 1618:

But when God came to the best of his creatures, to Man, Man was not only made *in verbo*, as the rest were, by speaking a word, but by a Consultation, by a Conference, by a Counsell, *faciamus hominem, let us make Man*; there is a more expresse manifestation of divers persons speaking together, of a concurrence of the Trinity; and not of saying only, but a mutuall saying; not of a Proposition only, but of a Dialogue in the making of Man: The making of matter alone was *sine verbo*, without any word at all; the making lesser creatures was *in verbo*, by saying, by speaking; the making of Man was *in sermone*, in a consultation.²⁶⁶

The creation of Man by the community of a three-in-one God and the importance of the dialogue between them is thus mirrored in the tri-partite soul, indicating not only harmony and Man's place in the divine order, but also Man's communal spirit emblematised in the congregation. It is important to note Donne's emphasis on Memory, for it is through the remembrance of God that man is connected to God. The memorial agency that was Elizabeth in the *Anniversaries* is translated into the Word in the Sermons and reconnects us with a faculty, which was arguably significant to a post-Reformation Protestant society that had undergone considerable change and was aware of a sense of cultural loss. As Eamon Duffy remarks that 'for most of the first Elizabethan adult

²⁶⁵ Johnson, *The Theology of John Donne*, p. 3.

²⁶⁶ Donne, *Sermons*, I: 289.

generation, Reformation was a stripping away of familiar and beloved observances, the destruction of a vast and resonant world of symbols'.²⁶⁷ Placing Memory at the heart of the sermon keeps the scripture vibrant and alive in the immediacy of the spoken performance and also central to communal spirituality that engages with the art of preaching. Remembrance of goodness answers our need for salvation: 'But the *memory* is so familiar, and so present, and so ready a faculty, as will always answer'.²⁶⁸

The Preacher's Space

The art of preaching as a direct aid to salvation is complemented by the time and place where the sermons are heard. The physical space that the preacher and the congregation occupy, away from the bustle of the everyday, can lend to the idea of an individual experiencing a sense of 'otherness', a feeling of being removed from the ordinary. That these sermons are heard on Sunday also complements the idea of shifting away from temporal time, allowing the imagination to modify itself away from its workday pattern into a contemplation of eternity. Removed from the rigours imposed by a strong Protestant work-ethic, Sunday can offer the congregation a spiritual space that can accommodate a Catholic past that is still within its cultural memory and the two religions, past and present, can work on the individual and collective mind to create a sense of a divine world. The importance of this accommodation can implicitly legitimise a Catholicism that would otherwise remain within secret, private masses, whilst at the same time transforming both past and present religions to produce a fresh and acceptable synthesised faith.

²⁶⁷ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 591.

²⁶⁸ Donne, *Sermons*, 2: 73.

This creation of a divine space, of mixing together past and present into the sermon, can be likened to an alchemical fusion and transformation. As a space where such metamorphosis can take place, the church becomes a kind of alembic where the preacher acts as magus, using the catalyst - the Word as memorial agent - to transform the souls of the people to produce 'gold', something spiritual and away from the commonplace. Fire, a central element in the synthesising process, is mentioned frequently by Donne 'For the fire of Gods Spirits may take hold of me, and [...] *my heart may burn within me* [...]' Therefore there is a liquifaction, a melting, a pouring out of the heart'.²⁶⁹ In a sermon preached at Greenwich in 1615, Donne speaks of the transformation that takes place through God's grace using language reminiscent of the alchemical process, 'purging', 'purifying', 'transmuting', 'gold', 'concoction':

restoring us, beyond preserving us; for he better us, he improves us, to a better condition, that we were in, at first. And this he does, first by purging and purifying us, and then by changing, and transmuting us. He purges us by his sunshine, by his temporal blessings; for, as the greatest globes of gold lye nearest the face and top of the earth, where they have received the best concoction from the heat of the sun; so certainly, in reason, they who have had Gods continual sunshine upon them [...] be the purer and more refined mettall.²⁷⁰

Underlying allusions to the chemical wedding as male and female, where both unite to produce the philosopher's stone can be seen in Donne's frequent use of the metaphors of marriage and divorce when discussing the relationship between body and soul and the quest for salvation. Such allusion would also have been recognised by Donne's listeners/readers. The references to marriage, to the gender differences, to the 'dialogues'

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 9: 176-77.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 1: 163.

that take place between them, their arguments, the infections that they must fight make them a sort of perfect ‘couple’, often with the female soul needing tender care and literally physical envelopment and protection from sin, the aggressor, by the masculinised body. In the process of putrefaction, the *nigredo*, or sin, is also a ‘body’, travelling through the ‘body’ of the soul, which must be eliminated in order for the ‘stone’, or salvation, to be produced. In a sermon delivered in 1626 at the funeral of the Lord Mayor, Sir William Cokayne, for example, Donne employs the readily significant conceit of marriage and divorce to illustrate the divine relationship between soul and body and how sin causes the rift between them. The inclusion of the language of domestic law as part of the conceit emphasises the seriousness of severance:

God made the first marriage, and man made the first divorce; God married the body and soul in the Creation, and man divorced the body and soul by death through sin, in his fall [...] As farre as man is immortall, man is a married man still, still in possession of a soule, and a body too; And man is forever immortall in both; Immortall in his soule by Preservation, and immortall in his body by Reparation in the Resurrection. For, though they be separated *a Thoro & Mensa*, from Bed and Board, they are not divorced [...] Though the soule be *in lecto florido*, in that bed which is always green, in an everlasting spring, in *Abraham’s bosome*; And the body but in that green-bed, whose covering is but a yard and a halfe of Turfe, and a Rugge of grasse, and the sheet but a winding sheet, yet they are not divorced; they shall returne to one another againe, in an inseparable re-union in the Resurrection.²⁷¹

Dust, or ash, is often seen in alchemical symbolism as the ‘incorruptible substance left in the alembic after the matter of the Stone has been subjected to the purgatorial fire. The ash can no longer be set on fire, and is, psychologically speaking, free from the turmoil of

²⁷¹ Ibid., 7: 257-58.

the passions'.²⁷² But Donne also reminds us of God's ability to resurrect the body, to reconstitute it with the soul to re-compact, rather like an alchemical reaction, seen in the raising of Lazarus, for example, but chiefly through Christ's Resurrection '*God hath quickned us, (all of us; not onely S. Paul, and his Ephesians, but all) and God hath raised us, and God hath made us to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus*'.²⁷³

Donne's pre-occupation with the image of dust recurs through the sermons, most notably in his last, 'Death's Duell'. An earlier sermon however, vividly describes how, through the Word, dust shall be re-compact to create redeemed figures, which recalls the alchemical process:

millions of Angels shall be employed about the Resurrection, to recollect their scattered dust, and recompact their ruined bodies [...] the Archangel shall re-infuse the severall soules into their bodies, and so they shall heare that voyce, *Surgite mortui, Arise ye that were dead, and they shall rise.*²⁷⁴

In 'Death's Duell', Donne also considers the idea of metamorphosis where we transform ourselves as we move toward God. The central alchemical conceit in the sermon is that we die all the time: infancy dies and is replaced by youth, youth by old age and so on, but that we rise, Phoenix-like, from each stage until, with God's grace, we find salvation 'Nor doe all these, youth out of infancy, or age out of youth arise so, as a *Phoenix* out of the *ashes* of another *Phoenix* formerly *dead*'.²⁷⁵ James R. Keller has noted that in 'Death's Duell' Donne 'reveals his fascination with alchemy as he translates death,

²⁷² Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 12.

²⁷³ Donne, *Sermons*, 7: 258.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4: 69-70.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 10: 234

resurrection, and man's relationship to the Christ sacrifice into an allegory of the fashioning of the "philosopher's stone".²⁷⁶ The hypostatic union, where flesh and spirit co-exist eternally and is signalled in Christ's resurrection, is where base metal turns into golden tincture, or man becomes divine 'to bee embalmd with *eternity*'.²⁷⁷ And it is through the salvic properties of Christ's body and blood that we may obtain this transcendence that leads us to an alchemical 'purification through suffering'.²⁷⁸

The church, or alembic, in which the sermon takes place, underwent some changes after the Reformation, so that the preacher was placed nearer the congregation and there was less emphasis on the visual. The physical presence of the preacher and his proximity to his congregation is important if he is to reach his listeners and this positioning became an important feature of the new Protestant faith. The desire to replace the image of the priest, turned away from his flock, performing what to many reformers seemed to be a kind of magic, was strong, and so the idea of the preacher close to and facing the people seemed a natural alternative. For some reformers, however, this was not enough.

As Bryan Crockett has argued, the sixteenth-century Reformation theologian Martin Bucer suggested that a church built in the round would be the perfect, democratic space for the preacher and his congregation and, of course, would fit the idea of the space as an alembic. He indicated that the circle, in both classical and Neo-Platonist thought, was a

²⁷⁶ James R. Keller, 'The Science of Salvation: Spiritual Alchemy in Donne's Final Sermon', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 23:3 (1992), 486-93 (p. 486).

²⁷⁷ Donne, *Sermons*, 10: 236.

²⁷⁸ Keller, 'The Science of Salvation', p. 490. Keller also notes that Donne's interest in the connection between Christ's passion and alchemy can also be found in his poem 'Resurrection Imperfect' where he speaks of 'He was gold when he lay down, but rose / All tincture', pp. 488-89.

symbol of perfection. Its smooth, curved edge that never ends suggests eternity, and within this ring there is a perfect space, devoid of lines, angles, levels:

From Plato to Plotinus to Ficino to the architects of the quattrocento, the commonly held view was that the circle – or, better yet, the sphere – is the geometric form that most closely associates with divine perfection.²⁷⁹

If this circle were to become an actual, physical space, then, for a human to stand in the centre of it would be to command the attention of everything within that space and the most obvious means of continuing that attention is through language. In a church built on this design, all eyes and, more importantly, ears, would attend upon the preacher. There would be no ornaments, no rituals, but the preacher with his words:

that whatsoever picture or images hath ben wont to be worshypped in holye places / shulde both they and their aulters be clene taken away / and avoided out of sight.²⁸⁰

Bucer argued that it is the meanings generated through language that connect us to God, ‘whereto shulde we make many wordes’.²⁸¹ It is not the visual display of transcendence, nor the ascendancy of one individual over another, or intercession of one individual on behalf of another, that a cruciform style of church design encourages.²⁸² Visual iconography is ‘an olde rooted custome / and the devyll agayne exercyseth and putteth forthe his craftes and disceyptes so busely’.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ See Bryan Crockett, *The Play of Paradox: Stage and Sermon in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), p. 4.

²⁸⁰ Martin Bucer, *A treatise declaring and showing that images are not to be suffered in churches* (London, 1535), A2r-A3v.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, D2r.

²⁸² Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, p. 5.

²⁸³ Martin Bucer, *A treatise declaring and showing that images are not to be suffered in churches*, C4r.

Even though Bucer's church design was not built, the preacher still occupied a position rather like that of the actor because of Protestantism's new reliance on the living Word.²⁸⁴

Indeed, the physical space of the preacher and actor can be said to have similarities despite Bucer's plans failing to be implemented. Bryan Crockett has noted that Paul's Cross, a place where Donne frequently preached, had the air of the theatre about it:

ordinary Londoners milled about in the churchyard of St. Paul's, while the gallery seats in the main structure of the Cathedral itself were reserved for members of the Court. Well-to-do citizens got seats on or near the wooden stage where the preacher stood when he descended from the pulpit for the ritualistic drama of public penance. In these services the preacher shared the stage with a public penitent who wore a white sheet and carried a taper and faggots representing the death by fire the sinners deserved.²⁸⁵

John Stubbs indicates that the size of the crowds at Paul's Cross, the 'stadium conditions', could be overwhelming and that there was 'a high level of discrimination in the audiences Donne faced', a fact that reminds us of the actor's hope to please the audience.²⁸⁶

The theatrical as a means to keeping the congregation's attention at Paul's Cross can be extended to other venues. In the run-down St. Paul's cathedral Stubbs describes a huge congregation made up of aristocrats, lawyers, gentlemen, merchants and shopkeepers as well as those from the theatres and the taverns.²⁸⁷ Many would be found either worshipping in the choir and side chapels, whilst a noisy throng would be standing or

²⁸⁴ Bucer's designs would have meant huge and costly changes but another reason that such ideas were not implemented might lie in the fact that positioning the preacher at the centre could suggest displacing God. Keeping the preacher in the pulpit to the side of the altar signifies God's spatial pre-eminence.

²⁸⁵ Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, p. 39.

²⁸⁶ Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul*, p. 325.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

walking around the passage of the nave, Paul's Walk.²⁸⁸ Stubbs notes how Donne used the light through the Rose window to bring together such a variety of types, using the sun's rays as a dramatic device to gather the crowd.²⁸⁹ By using the theme of light, Donne brings together, physically and metaphorically, diverse humanity before him.

In contrast, the congregation at Lincoln's Inn, where Donne once studied and which was a venue for dramatic performances, consisted of law students and those gentlemen or intellectuals who once studied there making up a critical yet 'volatile faction' of listeners.²⁹⁰ St. Dunstan's, an intimate church where Donne's wife Ann was buried, was also in the legal district and attracted a more settled legal audience.²⁹¹

Perhaps the most closed spaces were the palace chapels. In the chapel at Whitehall the preacher would not be able to see his most important member of his congregation for the monarch would be secreted behind a screen whilst the rest of his listeners, of the royal household, would be sideways on to him, facing each other. Unable to easily detect the response of his words, the preacher would not be the one in command, as at St. Dunstan's, for example, but could be 'interrupted by an angry royal voice'.²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 373-74.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 379-80.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 399.

²⁹² Ibid., p. 419. For more details of the use made in places of worship see Alan H. Nelson, 'Hall Screens and Elizabethan Playhouses: Counter-Evidence from Cambridge' in *The Development of Shakespeare's Theatre*, ed. by John H. Astington (New York: AMS Press, 1992), pp. 57-76 (pp. 66, 70). D. F. Rowan, 'The Players and Playing Places of Norwich' in *The Development of Shakespeare's Theatre*, ed. by John H. Astington (New York: AMS Press, 1992), pp. 77-94 (p. 80).

In a sermon preached at Whitehall, 1628, Donne indicates the theatricality of Scripture as part of the sermon ‘our text is an Ampitheater. An ampitheater consists of two Theaters: our Text hath two parts, in which, all men, all may sit, and see themselves acted’.²⁹³

Indeed, Donne penetrates through the screen to the monarch and to a congregation who need not observe him by stating that God will judge them and that the purpose of the sermon is to re-activate Memory:

Because you are all to be judged [...] which two general parts, the obligation and the Reason, flowing into many sub-divided branches, I shall, I think, do better service but to your understandings and to your memorys, and to your Affections, and Consciences.²⁹⁴

Furthermore, the fact that the sermons preached would often last up to an hour again mitigates in favour of the dramatic in order to hold the listener’s attention. Yet Catholic ‘theatricality’ largely depended on the visual: the iconography, candles, flowers, incense, vestments and so on, whereas central to the new religion is language. Though stripped of all Roman ‘decoration’, the preacher increasingly has the power of the Word to persuade and mesmerise and it is through this new combination of old and new theatricality that the alchemical transformation takes place. Indeed, the new Church did have its decorative elements, albeit austere but nonetheless overpoweringly dramatic, often including:

huge royal coats of arms in Elizabethan and early Stuart parish churches; the massive presence, in the middle of the Church, of the pulpit, with its sounding board looming over the pews beneath; the ubiquity of vernacular Scripture; the often domineering presence of the funeral monuments of the godly gentry and clergy, their austere, often kneeling images clutching prayer books and Bibles; the

²⁹³ Donne, *Sermons*, 8: 337.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8: 337.

rhythms of a Sabbath observance enforced by both local lay and ecclesiastical courts and authorities.²⁹⁵

Peter Lake's quotation builds up an image of a national religion in the idea of the 'parish churches' with their authoritative pulpits 'looming', like a stage, over the people. The 'vernacular' moves it away from Catholicism but the 'rhythms of a Sabbath observance' and funeral monuments build up a collective and repeated sense of a shared Augustinian Memory of the divine.

The donning of the robes and the centrality and elevation of the preacher's position is in keeping with the actor's place in the theatre and draws our attention to them, allowing them to work their 'magic' upon us. Yet both actor and preacher are capable of intellectual and emotional fervour that enables us, through the dramatic performance, to access the meaning of the play or sermon. Once the preacher/actor is installed in his church/theatre, then, the power that rests with his position in that building must then be upheld by the preacher's fervour in his use of language. The visual intensity of the preacher on high, that might be labelled dramatic, is complemented by theatrical linguistic delivery. Oral performance from the pulpit often engages the listener in sequential narrative, irony, cumulative tension and resolution, which needs to be coupled with modulation of pitch, timbre and body language, to which even the least sophisticated member of the congregation can be sensitive. The aural tradition excites the imaginative faculties of the audience, a substantial number of whom would be conversant with the

²⁹⁵ Peter Lake, 'Religious Identities in Shakespeare's England', in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by David Scott Kastan, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 57-84 (p. 77). See also K. Parker, *The English Sabbath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

semiotics of the stage and, one supposes, with oral devices in narrative communication.²⁹⁶

There is a problem here, however, when examining the text of a sermon as the reader can never be certain of what is essentially written for a listening public. Donne, for example, painstakingly revised his sermons, even after he had delivered them, and it is impossible to know what the original verbatim scripts were like, or indeed if parts were delivered extempore. On this basis, it could be argued that his sermons give us an illusion of a text to be listened to rather than the actual model he used.²⁹⁷ In 1614, the Suffolk Puritan, Miles Mosse, gave an indication in a dedicatory letter printed before a sermon he had just given, of how the spoken and penned sermon might differ:

I must crave pardon that all things are not here exactly set down in that order and form in which they were delivered. Writing nothing at large nor carrying with me any help of my notes into the pulpit, some things might easily be forgotten which I premeditated, some things might be added which I premeditated not; some things might miss their due place, and some things their due poise; some things might be enlarged, some things might be contracted more than I purposed.²⁹⁸

Indeed, for a preacher reading a sermon was just not done, and it seems that Donne followed a tradition of expanding on notes from his pulpit. As late as 1656, William Greenhill, in his *Sermons of Christ His Last Discovery of Himself*, argues that the written sermon, albeit a useful tool when the preacher has passed away, has not the dynamic and inculcating force that can be found in the 'live' delivery:

²⁹⁷ Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writing*, p. 238.

²⁹⁸ Miles Mosse, *Sermon of 1613* (Cambridge, 1614), Epistle Dedicatory, B2r.

Reader, although these *Sermons* were taken by the pen of a ready *Writer*, and printed as they were taken, yet look not for that Spirit, Power and Life, was in them when Preached.²⁹⁹

He further argues that the live performance of the sermon can offer sustenance to the hearer:

The Press is a dead thing to the Pulpit. A Sermon from thence is like Meat from the Fire, and Milk from the Brest; but when it is Ink and Paper, it's only cold Meat and Milk, it hath lost its lively taste, though it may nourish and become a standing Dish, to feed upon daily.³⁰⁰

Greenhill's use of the image of nurturing takes us back to the word as physical, as in the idea of the Word made flesh, having the power to exact influence on the living body that hears it and in turn the soul that is intricately entwined within it. 'Fire' and 'Brest' suggest that the source of language is immediate, alive and will ensure growth.

Donne's sermon in February 1618 has a dedication to the Countess of Montgomery at the beginning that emphasises that although the written word is a 'dead carcass' the 'soul that animates them, receives debts from them' and that spirit of them makes writing 'an equal devotion' to speaking.³⁰¹ Here is an indication of the re-creational power of the written word that, though ultimately illusory, is the nearest memorial to the live performance.

The physical presence of the preacher and the bodies of the congregation, however, are more powerful than the written text that offers a more leisurely contemplation. It is the dynamism that is created through the performative experience, where timbre of voice,

²⁹⁹ William Greenhill, *Sermons of Christ His Last Discovery of Himself* (London, 1656), B1v.

³⁰⁰ Greenhill, B1v.

³⁰¹ Donne, *Sermons*, 2: 179.

delivery, body language and physical space convey the Word of God so that the sermon becomes ‘a musical and harmonious charmer, to settle and compose the soul’.³⁰² The congregation of bodies and minds living in the body of Christ that is the Church is also central to this experience, encouraging a sense of the communal in the united public occasion of the sermon. Here, the preacher, like the priest, must engage in devices that can transform his congregation from mere listeners to believers and this process can be likened to alchemical metamorphosis. Donne, I believe, was aware of these links between old and new religious practices but there were other methods that Donne employed in the language of his sermons that conjured up redemptive Memory, which will be dealt with in the next section.

The Visceral Body

The effect that the act of preaching has on the salvation of the congregation may be linked to the rhetorical phrasing and rhythmic patterning of oral delivery as well as the space in which the preacher is situated. Donne’s use of language is particular in that he uses the word to ‘invade’ the body, employing a range of theatrical and rhetorical effects to startle and unsettle his congregation. In this section I would like to argue that Donne’s use of language, the might of the Protestant Word, is developed in such a way as to have a direct effect on the bodies of his listeners – to make them shudder, fearful, awed. I would also like to suggest that in the application of language in the Sermons, Donne re-configures the sensuous world of the Catholic past that had directly appealed to the senses, particularly sight and smell, through the use of icon, candles, incense, kneeling, crucifixes and flowers. This re-configuration can be seen in a sermon delivered before the

³⁰² Ibid., 2: 167.

King at Whitehall, 1628, where Donne's image of tears as the sweat of the soul almost encourages the congregation to become lachrymose in order to refresh and free itself from the discomfort of irresolution:

Lacrymae sudor animae moerentis, Teares are the sweat of a labouring soule, and that soule that labours as *David* did, will sweat as *David* did, in the teares of contrition; Til then, till teares breake out, and find a vent in outward declaration, wee pant and struggle in miserable convulsions, and distortions, and distractions, and earthquakes, and irresolutions of the soule.³⁰³

The force of the language in Donne's Sermons, which acts upon the senses, can also be found in other preachers work at the time. It was considered that the monolithic words from the mouth of the preacher and the insistence that the public delivery of the sermon, often with the use of graphic and belligerent language, could reach the souls of the faithful and assist salvation. Donne himself indicates that they are 'the deliverer of God's arrows'.³⁰⁴ On the surface, this absolutism of language seemingly overshadows the hitherto dominant culture that had been profoundly Catholic, 'Protestantism was word-centred, not merely iconoclastic but iconophobic'.³⁰⁵ However, the intense visualisation of the physicality of Christ's suffering was often evoked to support the power of the Word:

the words of God are as nayles, which being well driven, doe hold with power [...] an hammer to breake the rockes [...] [they] cast out foule spirits, and convict Conjurers.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Ibid., 8: 200.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 2: 68.

³⁰⁵ Lake, 'Religious Identities in Shakespeare's England', p. 77.

³⁰⁶ John Traske, *The Power of Preaching* (London, 1623), pp. 16, 23.

The rather savage imagery employed by John Trask in his 1623 treatise, *The Power of Preaching*, relays a clear idea of the force and might of the spoken Word when delivered through the preacher. It demands that we viscerally experience the effect of the words: ‘driven’, ‘hammer’ and ‘breake’ have a direct influence on our imagination that is transferred to the body, whilst also allowing us to conjure up the iconic image of Christ’s suffering. It is a power that appears to be found in other texts written on the authority of preaching at the end of the 1500s and beginning of the 1600s. *The Dignity of Preaching*, written by Samuel Hieron in 1615, suggests that ‘iron can do that which gold cannot’, whereby he emphasises the might and fire of the sermon.³⁰⁷ William Perkins’s, *The arte of prophecying*, 1607, indicates that the preacher’s words can ‘drive away wolves from the foldes’; it is an ‘engine’ that can ‘cut asunder the sinews of that great Antichrist’ and shake the foundation of heresies.³⁰⁸ Donne also makes clear that preaching, ‘batters the soul, and by that breach, the Spirit enters’.³⁰⁹ For Donne, the responsibility of the preacher towards his congregation is to draw out their sins and appease God’s wrath: ‘For thine arrowes stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore [...] these arrows which are lamented here, are all those miseries, which sinne hath cast upon us’.³¹⁰ It is central to Donne’s own route to salvation, too, for the act of preaching extends salvation to the preacher, as well as to his congregation.

There was anxiety, however, about the over-theatricality of the delivery of the sermon that might marginalize its redemptive properties. The Anglican preacher, Lancelot

³⁰⁷ Samuel Hieron, *The Dignity of Preaching* (London, 1615), p. 16.

³⁰⁸ William Perkins, *The arte of prophecying* (London, 1607), Epistle Dedicatory, B1v.

³⁰⁹ Donne, *Sermons*, 7: 396.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2: 55.

Andrewes, fearing that preaching might become merely an artificial exercise, warned that the sermon that leaves behind it only the ‘song’, and relied too heavily on verbal wit and stylistic dexterity, betrays the need for solemnity and seriousness.³¹¹ Yet the theatrical emphasis of speech and body language can indeed enhance linguistic meanings, often clarifying that which would otherwise be abstract doctrine or thought, a device recognised by Andrewes as an acceptable style of pulpit oratory. Yet it is the ability of the sermon to provide an ‘invisible’ service, in that it offered an ‘affective response from the audience’, to a congregation still aware of the importance of the devotional practices of the old religion.³¹² Preaching was to inspire the people, not simply in the advocacy of doctrine, but also to engage their imaginative and emotional responses to biblical texts thereby invoking remembrance of the divine. Andrewes, for example, would sensitively employ nature imagery to great effect, utilising a congregation’s inherent knowledge of the land in order to express the link between God, Man and Nature.³¹³

This combination of cerebral and emotive response gives considerable persuasive weight to the sermon, but not all preachers were as subtle as Andrewes as the quotation from Traske indicates. Indeed, the urgency to inculcate the listener with a particular doctrine could often result in the use of militaristic imagery that could hardly fail to capture the audience’s attention. Donne’s use of diction when describing preaching is often aggressive: ‘Preaching is God’s ordinance; with that ordinance he fights from heaven and batters down all errors’³¹⁴. Donne’s use of a favoured word, ‘batter’, here indicates the

³¹¹ Lancelot Andrewes, *Sermons*, ed. by G. M. Story (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. xxxiii.

³¹² Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, p. 33.

³¹³ Andrewes, *Sermons*, p. xxxvi.

³¹⁴ Donne, *Sermons*, 4: 192.

resistance from a congregation pre-disposed to sin that needs must be forced to goodness, returning us again to the might of the Word and its connection to the tender body, whilst at the same time advocating the importance of the preacher as conveyor of the spiritual and redemptive Word.³¹⁵ He esteems the salutary power of the sermon, along with the sacraments, again invoking imperative and strident conviction:

preaching is the thunder which clears the air and drives away the clouds of ignorance; the sacrament is the lightning which is the presence of Christ himself.³¹⁶

Here Donne reminds us of the tri-partite model where Will, the preaching, and Memory, in the form of Christ, come together to create understanding of God.

William R. Mueller notes that Donne's frequent use of body imagery to expound spiritual matters is effective because of its 'concreteness and familiarity' to a congregation.³¹⁷ In an undated Whitsunday sermon (c. 1618-21), for example, Donne foregrounds the importance of the ears as the route to salvation:

The Eares are the Aqueducts of the water of life; and if we cut off those, that is, intermit our ordinary course of hearing, this is a castration of the soul, the soul becomes an Eunuch, and we grow to a rust, to a moss, to a barrenness, without fruit, without propagation.³¹⁸

Here is the importance both of preaching and listening as a means to salvation through direct entry to the soul through the body, for if we do not use our ears to hear God's word

³¹⁵ Ibid., 6: 300-1.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 4: 105.

³¹⁷ Mueller, *John Donne: Preacher*, p. 123.

³¹⁸ Donne, *Sermons*, 5: 55.

our souls will become withered. The soul needs ‘food’ in the form of language in order to sustain it or it will become diminished. It is incomplete for it needs the word to continue its evolution. The negative references to ‘castration’ and ‘eunuch’ suggest the propagating and masculine powers of the word upon the strangely hermaphroditic soul that is female in the sense that it needs the Word to inseminate, as though language can fertilise and ensure growth, but at the same time can suffer castration if this is not effected. The voice of God, the *logos*, then, becomes a powerful, sexual symbol of impregnation, like the Incarnation, without which the soul will fade. But arguably it is more than symbol for Donne because the words can travel down through the ears and actually into the soul itself, as though it were part of the physical geography of the body, for it too ‘hath Bones as well as body’.³¹⁹ In an age where not everyone was literate, the importance of the ear becomes central to absorbing the power of the Word; hence Donne’s use of it as a conduit for nourishment, ‘the door to our heart’.³²⁰ He also states that ‘the Organ of the Gospel is the Ear, for faith comes by hearing’.³²¹

The specific audience for Donne’s sermons is not easy to pinpoint. Whilst many met to hear his sermons, Donne’s rhetorical style could be said to be self-reflexive, so that both he and his hearers become the main recipients of his words. He exercised the conceit of employing a variety of voices within his work, creating levels of complexity and ambiguity. For instance, in the *Divine Meditations*, examined in the previous chapter, the ‘Batter my heart’ sonnet invites the reader to question who is speaking, and if it is Donne then he has adopted a female persona in order that God might assault him. Though such

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 84.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1: 179.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 8: 343.

devices are not foregrounded in the sermons, Donne's style – he begins with what appears to be direct and straightforward ideas to his public – his *divisio*, whereby Donne expands upon his theme, can often have to them a tone of self-examination in his sometimes agonised rhetorical questioning. In a sermon preached to Queen Anna in 1617, he employs a favoured device of the panopticon, where God observes him, though his use of 'thee' includes his listeners too:

Dost thou not feele that he seeks thee now, in offering his love and desiring thine?
Canst thou not remember that he sought thee yesterday, that is, that some
temptations besieged thee then, and he sought thee out by his Grace, and preserved
thee and hath he not sought thee so, so early, as from the beginning of thy life?³²²

Stanley Fish has observed that this device, when used in his poetry, seemingly allows Donne to survey 'the range of psychological experience and creates for our edification and delight a succession of flawed speakers'.³²³ These flawed speakers can then become the object of divine mercy and thus redeemed. Fish places Donne at the centre of his work, as the flawed speaker, though it does not exclude his congregation, and this can be extended to the sermons 'Donne is always folded back into the dilemmas he articulates'.³²⁴ In a sermon preached to the King at Whitehall in 1625, Donne's repetitive strain on the first person pronoun, where meaning is poised between mankind and Donne himself, is an example of this:

But what had *I* for *Heaven*? *Adam* sinnd, and *I* suffer [...] And *God* was displeased with *me* before *I* was *I*; I was built up scarce 50. years ago, in my

³²² *Ibid.*, 1: 249.

³²³ Stanley Fish, 'Masculine Persuasive Force: Donne and Verbal Power', in *John Donne: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by Andrew Mousley, pp. 157-81 (p. 179).

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Mothers womb, and I was cast down, almost 6000 years agoe, in *Adams loynes*; I was *borne* in the last *Age* of the world, and *dyled* in the first.³²⁵

The rhythmic build up with the use of the word ‘I’ in clauses where the cadence rises and falls allows the listener to be entranced by such patterning and content, whilst at the same time we are aware of Donne’s personal anxiety in the repetition of the pronoun. P. M. Oliver has noted that the sermons, once written down, show ‘a carefully controlled voice’ presenting a ‘specifically constructed self in a highly ostentatious manner’.³²⁶ In a sermon on Candlemas day (probably 1626/7), Donne self-consciously speaks about his role as preacher and his direct connection to Christ’s disciples and Christ himself. His sense of self-importance is seen as he speaks affectedly ‘as this Evangelist reports it’ that ‘we must preach in the Mountaine, and preach in the plaine too; preach to the learned, and preach to the simple too; preach to the Court, and preach to the Country too’.³²⁷

Donne’s games with audience and voice are varied, revealing, I believe, awareness of many hearers, from his congregation and those specifically addressed, such as the king or queen, to himself as performer. William R. Mueller’s extensive account of Donne’s divisional style in the Sermons also suggests that the sections and sub-sections within the carefully crafted works are designed to help his listeners.³²⁸ He notes Donne’s favoured use of the metaphor of the structure of a building as comparison with his sermon, an image taken from Jesus’s words in John’s gospel, ‘The Holy Ghost seems to have delighted in the Metaphore of *Building*. I know no figurative speech so often iterated in

³²⁵ Donne, *Sermons*, 7: 78.

³²⁶ Oliver, *Donne’s Religious Writing*, p. 239.

³²⁷ Donne, *Sermons*, 7: 330-31

³²⁸ Mueller, *John Donne: Preacher*, p. 94.

the Scriptures, as the name of a *House*'.³²⁹ In another, Donne extends the metaphor to show the sub-divisions of the building, which is like the sermon itself:

So have you the designe, and frame of our building, and the severall partitions, the roomes; passe we now to a more particular survey, and furnishing of them.³³⁰

In written sermons, as Oliver notes, Donne is mindful of an audience who were not present at the live performance, but who, through his dramatic style, might envision him. Though ostentatious, Donne's lively, visceral manner of communication has at its centre the serious task of the preacher in the process of salvation, for if there 'be a discontinuing, or slackening of preaching, there is a danger of losing Christ'.³³¹

For Donne, the piercing use of language was often thought a necessary imposition on the weak-willed ways of a congregation, and knowing Donne's continual anxieties over his conversion, probably directed towards himself, too. Stanley Fish suggests that Donne engages in displacement as he re-directs his fears on to a congregation that may, like himself, have deep remembrance of their Catholic past, though I would argue that this remembrance is part of Donne's accommodation of it into Protestant aesthetic culture.³³² Certainly, this imperious, dominant tone of the Sermons suggests that awe and fear are inculcated into the congregation as Donne speaks of the 'silence of reverence, silence of subjection'.³³³ It encourages submission to the will of God through the formal and distancing power of reverence that 'no man may thinke himself to bee come to that

³²⁹ Donne, *Sermons*, 7: 302.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4: 146.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 7: 157.

³³² Fish, 'Masculine Persuasive Force: Donne and Verbal Power', p. 178.

³³³ Donne, *Sermons*, 9: 324.

familiar acquaintance with God, as that it should take away that reverentiall feare which belongs to so high and supreme a majesty'.³³⁴

Debora Kuller Shuger indicates that Donne's strident tone 'presses the absolutist qualities of divinity in order to generate terror, insecurity and guilt'.³³⁵ Shuger notes that the distancing effect between man and God that Donne's prose encourages allows the individual to become awed by the contemplation of a divine presence, similar to the adoration of kings, 'the distant fearfulness of majesty' that is linked to 'royal absolutism'.³³⁶ Donne utilises this awe to enrapture, along with the theatrical, the cerebral and the highly charged language employed to affect the congregation. Subjection, fear, terror, guilt all take a hold on the body that is viscerally connected to the soul and it is the preacher who is imbued with the power to do this 'His Ministers are an *Earth-quake*, and shake an earthly soule; They are the *sonnes of thunder*, and scatter a cloudy conscience'.

³³⁷

The paradox here between peace and absolution wrought through the soul being battered and breached, is central to Donne's insistence that the soul and body are intricately knit. This allows for his use of such physically violent language, as though the visceral impact of the words will affect us spiritually. It is as though God must extricate us manually from the depths of sin into which we have fallen, pulling us out and restoring us. We feel

³³⁴ Ibid., 2: 646-47.

³³⁵ Debora Kuller Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: The Sacred and the State in Measure for Measure* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 169.

³³⁶ Ibid., p. 169.

³³⁷ Donne, *Sermons*, 7: 396.

enveloped, even bruised by this force of language, but also redeemed through such muscular oratory.

Conversely, in a sermon of 1625, Donne adopts a powerful, if softer tone, allowing us to feel enveloped by God's care:

That soul that is dissected and anatomised to God, in a sincere confession, washed in the tears of true contrition, embalmed in the blood of reconciliation, the blood of Christ Jesus, can assign no reason, can give no just answer to that interrogatory, 'Why art thou cast down O my soul? [...] No man is so little as that he can be lost under these wings; no man so great that they cannot reach him.'³³⁸

The soul, here, can 'feel' and again it is being cared for, managed and soothed through language that evokes the power and solidity of the almighty. In a sermon in January, 1626, this sense of comfort is seen again 'The soul of man is not safer wrapt up in the Contract, and in the eternal Decree of the Resurrection'.³³⁹

The power of Donne's language to subdue, though, must be paramount, given the noise and general disarray in Stubbs's descriptions of the groups of people at Paul's Cross, or in the cathedral itself. It also raises the issue of *how* the preacher might deliver his sermon in order to bring about such a seemingly dramatic change in the congregation, for the preacher must 'shake and shiver, and throw down the refractory and rebellious soul'.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Ibid., 7: 51-71.

³³⁹ Ibid., 6: 363.

³⁴⁰ Donne, *Sermons*, 2: 164.

This use of violent imagery is not only to connect a congregation with the visceral effects of language so that it might ‘feel’ a soul’s salvation; it is also part of Donne’s pre-occupation with his own exhibitionist tendencies. The idea of Donne as the actor/conjuror displaying himself before an audience, baring his inner self through the ‘lines’ given to him by God, forms part of Donne’s interest in his personal relationship with the divine. His language and the delivery of text is obviously central to his sermons but he is also always aware of himself as performer, before the congregation and primarily before God and it is this element of the exhibitionist in Donne that reveals his role as nurturer of souls, his own and those of the congregation. Bryan Crockett has noted the connection with the performative qualities of the sermon and argues that such a conflation between church and theatre can evoke in the congregation a sense of being possessed by the divine:

the metaphysical sermon, like the drama, depends on an audience. Sermons and stage plays are very much public, communal occasions for the reception of the spoken word, Both modes achieve their effect in part by evoking a sense of wonder [...] Since at the very heart of the Christian story is the mystery of divine immolation, the paradox invites on the hearer’s part a similar relinquishment of possessive power.³⁴¹

The ‘possessive power’ here suggests a surrendering of the worldly, to the ethereal world that the performance of the sermon evokes; and it is an act that is a remembrance of Christ’s surrender of the body on the cross. Such power of the sermon to evoke ecstasy is triggered by Donne’s own exhibitionism, conflated with the act of confession as he reveals himself before God. It is also an act of penance as Donne mercilessly exposes his faults to a public who have become part of this dramatic exegesis. As a means of re-

³⁴¹ Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, pp. 58-59.

connecting with a remembrance of the past, this engagement and obsession with the confessional is strongly linked with an individual's management of transgression and atonement.³⁴²

The immanence of God's omnipotence is His all-seeing eye that surveys and controls Donne and his congregation. Donne's response is to 'perform', to surrender to the divine gaze that God might penetrate into his very being, to see into and take command of his very soul that Donne might achieve union with God and atonement for wrong. The public are part of this performance. God becomes a face that sees all and which can penetrate into the feeling body through to the soul:

there is an eye in that face, an eye in that Service, an eye in that Sermon, an eye in that Sacrament, a piercing and an operating Spirit, that looks upon that soule, and foments and cherishes that soule, who by a good use of God's former grace, is become fitter for his present.³⁴³

Here, the preacher is God's agent for reminding the people of His grace. Through everything the preacher does – delivering the sermon, the service or the sacrament – God 'looks' through him to his congregation; the 'eye' is in the preacher's actions, actions which act as a catalyst to make His people's souls 'fitter for his present'. This panopticon that Donne designs for himself and his public signals discipline, surveillance and moral regulation that emphasises an individual's conduct to God. More importantly, however,

³⁴² Mark Cousins and Athar Hussain, *Michel Foucault* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 211.

³⁴³ Donne, *Sermons*, 9: 366-67.

God also redeems and seems to physically envelop him, cherishing the soul: ‘God’s terrifying power, in turn, transmutes into tenderness’.³⁴⁴

The ‘fitter’ soul that can find salvation through this visceral embracement, and the performance skills inherent in Donne’s delivery can be seen most strikingly in his final sermon ‘Death’s Duell’:

Death’s Duell is a self-conscious performance piece, one whose rhetorical effectiveness depends in part on its relation to the biblical sub-genre of the ‘prophetic performance’ [...] In short, Donne’s sermon is not merely idiosyncratic; it owes [...] something to the *ars moriendi* tradition, and something to the audience’s familiarity with the performative paradoxes of the Renaissance stage.³⁴⁵

The *ars moriendi* tradition finds its roots in medieval religious thought. It is a preparation for death and a popular text in Donne’s day, for both Catholic and Protestant thinkers, was Thomas A Kempis’s *The Imitation of Christ*. It is a meditation on a happy death and a desire to meet God in full grace. Donne’s 1623 *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, where he believes himself to be close to death, belongs to this tradition. Here Donne keeps a kind of diary that traces his thought as he reaches his end and preparation is the key theme of the text. Each devotion comprises three sections ‘Meditation’, ‘Expostulation’ and ‘Prayer’, where Donne invokes God’s grace to help him to a good death ‘Let this prayer therefore, O my God, be as my last gasp, my expiring, my dying in thee [...] yet I may now die the death of the righteous’.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance*, p. 199.

³⁴⁵ Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, p. 143.

³⁴⁶ John Donne, Devotion 16, in *John Donne: Selections from Divine Poems, Sermons, Devotions and Prayers*, ed. by John Booty (New York & Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1990), p. 270.

‘Death’s Duell’ is the apotheosis of Donne’s use of the *ars moriendi* tradition through the employment of ekphrasis. Here he paints a verbal picture so vivid that the combination of word and image allow us to experience Donne’s own sense of stasis. His pulpit was not only a means of conveying the spiritual to worshippers; it also allowed him the means to exercise a kind of theatrical rhetoric, whereby he becomes not merely the speaker of theological ideas but also the ‘enactor’ of them. The conflation of spiritual/theatrical allows Donne to *show* the effect on his soul alongside those of his congregation. The heightened language and deliberate delivery, the dramatic garments, the elevated position of the speaker, allow both him and his audience to engage in a type of religious theatre. In the dispersed dust of ‘Death’s Duell’, we are transported into Donne’s interiority: his exultations, his doubts, his anxieties, and this is a conscious device Donne employs to show himself to the world so that we might watch and experience his spiritual torments and ecstasies. It is didactic theatre whereby Donne reminds his public, via the *ars moriendi* tradition, of the means to God’s grace and salvation.

Although Donne is appealing primarily to the sense of hearing in the Sermons, the images he conveys are so vivid that the inner eye is satisfied. In his use of ekphrasis his aural portrait of the battle between death and the flesh is so strikingly visual that the collision of the two senses provides a gap where his audience can penetrate imaginatively into truths that may in fact be hidden within them. The texture of the language, its rhythmic structure and the image put together can create a direct visceral experience ‘*Miserable riddle, when the same worme must bee my mother, and my sister, and my selfe*

[...] when my *mouth* shall be *filled* with *dust*, and the worme shall *feed*, and *feed sweetly* upon me'.³⁴⁷ John Stubbs notes that when Donne delivered 'Death's Duell', his appearance was 'as terrifying as his words' as he had become 'wizened' during months of illness and after suffering the death of his mother.³⁴⁸

Wee have a winding sheete in our Mother's wombe. Which grows with us from our conception, and we come into the world, wound up in that *winding sheet*, for wee come to *seeke a grave* [...] when the *wombe* hath discharg'd us, yet we are bound to it by *cordes* of flesh, by such a *string*, as that we cannot goe thence, nor stay there.³⁴⁹

The visceral impact of the language here creates a space where the audience is left in awe, a space of transcendent possibility through such a striking interplay of image and word that evokes birth and death in paradoxical union. The paradox stuns us and, as Bryan Crockett suggests, can create a 'sense of marvel' that allows us to challenge 'the absolute validity of rational constructs'.³⁵⁰ Given Donne's appearance when delivering this sermon, the congregation might well be aware of a life beyond the ephemeral body as Donne's physicality indicates he was on the verge of leaving it.

This communal, wondrous space offered through the combination of word and image in the depiction of death and new life, evokes the remembrance of the Passion of Christ and in turn the link between Christ and Augustinian Memory. Donne's sermons 'penetrate'

³⁴⁷ Donne, *Sermons*, 10: 238.

³⁴⁸ Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul*, p. 462.

³⁴⁹ Donne, *Sermons*, 10: 233.

³⁵⁰ Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, pp. 58-9.

the flesh making the congregation recall, both mentally and viscerally, Christ's death on the cross 'the *flesh* of *Christ* had *seene corruption* and *incineration* in the grave'.³⁵¹

Yet it is not merely the affective use of the word on the senses that makes this piece so striking; it is also his direct examination of the relationship of the soul and the body. 'Death's Duell', despite its theatrical flourishes that heighten Donne's fear of death, also explores his deeper fear - the dispersion of his dust and consequently the loss of the body that is the vital host and conductor for the connection with the soul. The space that his use of ekphrasis creates, which can evoke remembrance of Christ, is juxtaposed with the disturbing images of the body's dispersal. There is a sense that the sin-infected body that lacks Augustinian Memory can be pulled down by degenerate Will. The overly-dramatic rhetoric demands that Donne's body be alive and responsive to the language that it might remind him of his sense of life whilst death waits. This abhorrence of finality is important to Donne as the body has been the crucial medium for the Word of God and the soul to meet, and its re-compaction with the soul is vital to his sense of resurrection and redemption.

The body is the prime means of understanding the spiritual in this text and Donne relies on the congregation's individual, visceral connections as a way of connecting with the sermon. He indicates that inside the womb we live in darkness and feed on blood, making us susceptible to cruelty and damnation if we are not born, an Augustinian image of the fallen female and the womb as the creator of death 'in our mothers *wombe* wee are dead'

³⁵¹ Donne, *Sermons*, 10: 236.

and in our birth it is ‘exitus a morte’, an issue from death.³⁵² His sermon illustrates that we die all the time as we shift from one stage of our lives to another but the most terrible of deaths is after death when our body turns to dust and is dispersed ‘hee whose soule and body are separated by death, (as long as that state lasts) is properly no man’.³⁵³ In this loss of self, or the loss of the hypostaticall union, Donne uses the image of a mound of dust in the corner of a lead coffin, once a complete man who ‘thought himselfe his owne for ever’, but whose dust is at the mercy of the disintegrating coffin that will eventually mingle ‘him’ with the foul earth: a ‘most deadly and peremptory nullification of man, that we can consider’.³⁵⁴ That Donne ties up the soul so tightly with the body suggests this fear of the loss of the body is at the root of our identity after death as well as during life. If the body and soul will join on Judgement day, as Donne believes, then there is anxiety here about the ability for that body to become whole once more. If this is so, then the soul, too, becomes implicated in that failure and the full assimilation with Christ cannot take place.

Donne’s sermons rarely divorce the soul from the body in quite so unnerving a sense as in ‘Death’s Duell’. A despairing response to his Catholic mother’s recent death may have prompted in him a remembrance of a past that he had always found difficult to dismiss and thoughts of loss and damnation may have been to the forefront of his mind. The piece is, according to Stubbs, ‘a sustained barrage on life, treating everything [...] as a presage of the end, a *memento mori*’.³⁵⁵ The loss, too, of a Marian aesthetic, which I have argued

³⁵² Ibid., 10: 232, 10: 230.

³⁵³ Ibid., 10: 236.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 10: 239.

³⁵⁵ Stubbs, *Donne: The Reformed Soul*, p. 462.

Donne transcribes to his religious poetry, can also be read into Donne's fear of his body's mortality. The body of the human Mary is the route through which Christ is born, giving both Jesus, and mankind, a direct, visceral link to God the Father. The loss of such a visual figure in Protestant religious iconography removes from us the body that for Donne is so immediately tied up with salvation. Donna Spivey Ellington has suggested that, in pre-Reformation England, the body of Mary was seen as essential as it is through her body that God operates. Ellington notes the fifteenth century preacher San Bernadino of Busti's assertion that Mary had 'done more for God than God could do for himself', suggesting the importance of the physicality of Mary allows us to understand an abstract God.³⁵⁶

More positive indication of the essentiality of corporeality is evident in his earlier sermons. An Easter Sunday sermon at St. Pauls in 1626 sees a more hopeful Donne discussing the reunion of body and soul after death, for an eternity, which provides a contrast with the fear pervading 'Death's Duell', 'we shall have a sudden death of body and soul, which is a true death, and a sudden re-union of body and soule, which is a true resurrection, *in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye*'.³⁵⁷

In a sermon preached at St. Pauls in 1625, Donne notes the essentiality of the body as central to salvation. In this passage, Donne implies that our bodies give us a transcendence not given to the angels, that we are miniature gods whose combination of body and soul allows us that divinity:

³⁵⁶ Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), p. 31.

³⁵⁷ Donne, *Sermons*, 7: 97.

We shall be like the Angels, sayes Christ; In that wherein we can be like them, we shall be like them, in the exalting and refining of the faculties of our soules; But they shall never attaine to be like us in our glorified bodies [...] God hath multiplied gods here upon Earth, and imparted, communicated, not onely his power to every Magistrate, but the Divine nature to every sanctified man.³⁵⁸

Here we are also reminded of the Word made flesh in the incarnation of Christ as man.

The soul/body/memory combination that is found in the memory of Christ can be seen in a sermon preached at St. Dunstons's, 1626, the church where Donne's wife was buried.

Here, Donne reminds us of the connection between spiritual and bodily death, and uses the image of the house that informs Shakespeare's sonnet 146. The centrality, vitality and health of both 'house' and 'inmate' are noted:

If we take into consideration spiritual death, as well as bodily: for so in our houses from whence we came hither, if we left but a servant, but a child in the cradle at home, there is one dead in that house. If we have no other house but this which we carry about us, this house of day, this tabernacle of flesh, this body, yet if we consider the inmate, the sojourner within this house, the state of our corrupt and putrefied soul, there is one dead in this house too.³⁵⁹

Memorial influence through body and soul is seen again in a Lincoln's Inn sermon in spring or summer of 1618 in Donne's desire that we remind ourselves of our pure state at baptism:

Certainly, our best assurance of salvation, is but a returning to our first state [...] to the purity, which we had in our baptism [...] Cleanse thyself often therefore,

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 6: 297.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 6: 349-50.

and accustome thy soul to peace, that thou mayest still, when thou fallest into sin, have such a state in thy memory, as thou mayest have a desire to return to.³⁶⁰

Yet Donne always reminds us of the consequences for the soul should we forget God and allow it to fall into sin, which also occupies the body. Donne's emphasis on the living soul, though often pained, is a testament to its vitality, 'those scars which those fiery darts [of sin] have left in her, the deformity which every sinne imprints upon the soul'.³⁶¹

Donne's use of anatomical detail brings the soul to life whilst at the same time imagistically connecting it to the body. The sin that will pass into the soul has also its own body: a heart, liver, brain, veins, valves, sinews that carry its evil through the actual body and into the soul. Alarmingly, the 'brain' of sin can tie together all the sins of the particular individual it has infected and thus compound the 'disease' it is carrying. This creates an image of complete degeneration of Reason that can remember past sins and wilfully compounds them together, signalling a corrupt Augustinian model of a degenerate body that has descended into sin, lacking the divine, Christ-like body – the Word made flesh.

A Brain which shall send forth sinews and ligaments, to tye sins together; and pith and marrow to give a succulencie, and nourishment, even to the bones, to the strength and obduration of sin [...] And whilst we dispute whether the throne and seat of the soul be in the Heart, or Brain, or Liver, this tyrant sin will praeoccupate all, and become all'.³⁶²

This fascination with anatomical detail of bodies within bodies allows for a tremendous sense of vitality and energy; that the core of man is buzzing with life, busy and

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 1: 281.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 2: 56.

³⁶² Ibid., 1: 192.

enterprising. The soul, for Donne, is active, and is actively under attack; it must constantly be watchful, lest it fall prey to the onslaught of sin. Yet even in death, though the body and soul will dissolve, there is again a sense of vitality in their coming together: ‘There shall be a sudden dissolution of body and soul, which is death and a sudden reuniting of both, which is resurrection, in that instant.’³⁶³

The image of the mound of dust in the corner of the coffin in ‘Death’s Duell’, bereft of a soul, is horrific in the extreme and is at odds with the central conceit found in Donne’s works of the organic body and soul inextricably locked and tied with sinews, veins and so forth. Without the Word – or rather without the body that can hear the Word and transmit its power to the soul – there is an abhorrence of the putrefying corpse and an uncertainty as to whether his soul is in fact going anywhere spiritual at all. If it is not, then the rotting corpse, mingling promiscuously with the earth, is his final image of himself.

This public fear of dispersal and desperate hope for the body’s resurrection, and in turn the soul, culminates towards the end of his life when Donne engages in a most striking example of exhibitionism. Izaak Walton notes Donne’s predilection for the theatrical flourish in his description of the portrait Donne commissioned of himself, shortly before his death, wrapped in a winding sheet and emulating death.

He thus stood, with his eyes shut, and with so much of the sheet turned aside as might shew his lean, pale, and death-like face, which was purposely turned

³⁶³ Ibid., 3: 103.

towards the East, from whence he expected the second coming of his and our Saviour Jesus.³⁶⁴

There is something pitiful about this image of the living corpse turned imploringly towards the East, as though a sign for Jesus to acknowledge that his body is 'alive' after death and not to be consigned to dust. Donne's use of the normally fashionable and self-aggrandising art form of the portrait to create a morbid and rather unsettling image of an emaciated self, a memento mori, involves not only the viewer but also the artist and indeed Donne himself, both as study and studied. This moment of death, an *ars moriendi*, so often contemplated in the sermons and his choice of remembrance in portraiture, would appear to be the moment that Donne has longed for all his life but this desire for death creates a paradox for an onlooker as Donne is, of course, very much alive and it is this idea of a 'living death' that permeates so much of Donne's work.³⁶⁵

Donne's art of performance to keenly affect his public's sensibilities rests mainly in the pulpit, however, which had lasting effects on his congregation, indicating the power of his use of rhetoric infused with his belief that salvation could be achieved through its employment.³⁶⁶

howsoever God may afford salvation to some in all nations, yet he hath manifested to us no way of conveying salvation to them, but by the manifestation of Christ Jesus in his ordinance of preaching.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ Izaak Walton, *Lives of Donne and Herbert*, ed. by S. C. Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 52.

³⁶⁵ Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, p. 142.

³⁶⁶ Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writing*, pp. 265-66

³⁶⁷ Donne, *Sermons*, 5: 45.

His sermons also forge an individual path, so indicative of Donne, that places him between conflicting doctrinal positions: on the one hand, firmly wedded to the concrete authority of the logos, on the other, using this power of the Word to create an alternative to Catholic sensibility.

The visceral effect of language and performance makes the sermon more than a cerebral exercise that often accompanies reading and contemplation, but a physical one that engages the very body of the listener. If the body shivers and is awed by the preacher's words, then the soul that is entangled in its sinews might also be quaking, when sin can 'cleave everlastingly' to it.³⁶⁸ Meaning is produced through the flesh rather than the mind. What is known is that Donne's sermons were popular and there is evidence to indicate that the written sermon was also fashionable and enjoyed widespread publication.³⁶⁹ It would appear that Donne's attempts at using the power of language to physically and imagistically affect his congregation is an attempt to recreate parts of a forgotten world, to symbolise them within the semiotics of Protestantism and thus to create space and accommodation for the past. An example of such interconnection can be seen in 'Death's Duell' where Donne laments Christ's death by direct referral to the physicality of Christ's body in relation to ourselves as sinners who must prostrate and become abject before the cross, ideas that recall Catholic mortification of the flesh:

There wee leave you in that blessed dependency, to *hang* upon *him* that *hangs* upon the *Crosse*, there *bath* in his *teares*, there *suck* at his *woundes*, and *lye down*

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 1: 193.

³⁶⁹ Diana E. Henderson and James Siemon, 'Reading Vernacular Literature', in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by David Scott Kastan, 2nd edn (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000), pp. 206-24 (p. 208).

*in peace in his grave, till he vouchsafe you a resurrection, and an ascension into that Kingdome.*³⁷⁰

The soul/body connection in the sermons extends to the relationship between the power of the Word and the past, where the Word has the power to energise, to re-ignite: a kind of re-compactness ‘Preaching is *the power of God unto Salvation, and the saviour of life unto life* [...] Preaching then being *Gods Ordinance*, to beget Faith, to take away preaching were to disarm God’.³⁷¹

The Word and the physical presence of the preacher, then, is all-important. By actively experiencing the sermon, one can activate the soul, to make it real, a part of the structure and workings of the body. The muscularity of the language ‘batters’ the soul; it moulds and energises it. If the soul is intricately mingled with the body then there is the notion that it can experience the physical and emotional experiences that the body undergoes and if this is so, then the unification of the body and soul after death becomes a plausible option as they almost ‘read’ each other in order to make sense of themselves and one another. The references to marriage, to the gender differences, to the ‘dialogues’ that take place between them, their arguments, the infections that they must fight make them a sort of perfect ‘couple’, often with the female soul needing tender care and literally physical envelopment and protection from sin, the aggressor, by the masculinised body. The emphasis on the care for body and soul in this life might bring ‘the audience to an unsettling awareness of the reality of worldly corruption and bodily decomposition in order to preclude any facile sense of closure, any merely palliative resolution to the

³⁷⁰ Donne, *Sermons*, 10: 248.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4: 195.

problem of death'.³⁷² Donne's focus on redemption does in effect make an audience aware of the need to concentrate on the practicalities of self-examination.

The power of the Word to work on the soul is a kind of transubstantiation, whereby the art of preaching is to touch the soul by the magic of the Word. For Donne, the body cannot be mere mechanism as long as it serves as connecting tissue between language and soul; in fact it becomes the soul's fortress, part of an old mentality that can keep the soul 'alive'. As such, the sermons become part of both Catholic and Protestant world, functioning through the redemptive Word through public celebration and as a reminder of its prominence in the collective imagination. The sermons, when written down, become the sacred anatomical 'body' wherein is found the Word of God and the soul that it must reach through the body of the sermon itself.

Thus, the poet eager for the learning that will help to illuminate the paradox enveloping all experience discovers himself in a world witnessing the decay of an old way of thinking and the struggle of a new way to establish itself. In this new world truth seems to assume a twofold aspect, one to be comprehended by reason, the other by faith [...] Yet, persisting through the vicissitudes and mutations of science and theology is his belief that in some way these sundered parts do touch one another. For him, value accrues to the physical through its associations with the divine just as the supernatural is mediated to him through the physical.³⁷³

The use of the physical to reach the divine allows him not only to accommodate Augustinian Memory, but also permits a gendered reading to the salvation of the soul, a means by which the female may in fact become part of what was largely a masculinised Protestant aesthetic. Memory becomes feminised through the image of memorial agency

³⁷² Crockett, *The Play of Paradox*, p. 145.

³⁷³ C. M. Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy* (New York, The Humanities Press, 1958), p. 22.

in the Word and Memory also becomes an active, public performance through the practical work of the preacher and the immediacy of language, presentation and space. The preacher's world is where art and life connect to produce, in a kind of alchemy, something more wonderful for the individual and the collective, outside of diurnal time through to produce 'the more refined metall'.³⁷⁴

The culmination of Donne's work, through his poetry and in his life as a preacher, can be seen as a journey of transformations, where Donne has become a kind of magus in his own creative space. Gathering together a new Marian aesthetic in the *Anniversaries* and the feminisation of Memory in the living Word of the sermons has allowed Donne to re-create a sense of salvation that was lacking in some of his more anxious works.

Donne's use of the preaching area as a place where spiritual transformation can happen will also be considered when applied to a similar space, the theatre. I will argue that, like Donne, our understanding of the soul as Memory, journey and feminisation, can be enriched by a comparative examination of a selection of Shakespeare's plays.

Shakespeare also works under constraints, for the theatre is a male-dominated world, where boy-actors play female roles, which, in conjunction with the limits of genre, can render the female passive. Here, we will explore how Shakespeare eventually provides a space where the idea of the female, rather like Donne's use of Elizabeth in the *Anniversaries*, may actively operate as an agent of redemption.

³⁷⁴ Donne, *Sermons*, 1: 163.

Chapter Three

The Letter without the Spirit: Forgetting and False Remembrance in *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*

The idea of journey, transformation and the feminisation of Memory that has been explored in Donne's work will be examined in this next section of the thesis, where, I will argue, Shakespeare also seeks to find expression for the soul. This expression is traced from the comedies and tragedies to the Romance dramas that form the major part of his final contribution to the theatre. Although a different, less seemingly personal journey than is found in Donne, there can be seen in Shakespeare's use of certain female characters a development towards a spiritual aesthetic, which I will suggest is Shakespeare's creation of an alchemical golden time.

The dejection and doubt that pervaded Donne's poetry until the apotheosis of the *Anniversaries* can be examined in two of Shakespeare's plays, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. The depiction of the soul as rootless and without concordant remembrance in the bleak world of *The Progresse of the Soule* and the barren landscape of *The First Anniversarie*, may also be traced in these two texts that are set in a Venice, which, I will argue, has become decadent and has lost the fundamental Christian principle of the remembrance of Christ's goodness. Augustine's concept of Memory that enables salvation and which can be overwhelmed by degenerate Reason and unbridled Will, is explored in a Christian Venice that admits the outsider whilst marginalizing and destabilising him.

This faulty patterning of Reason, Will and Memory in the soul can be traced through many of Shakespeare's plays, as it is often a central component of drama that creates the conflict driving the narrative. In *The Comedy of Errors*, (c.1594), for example, the forsaken Adriana speaks of her soul as a pitiful part of herself that must be hushed and dutiful: 'A wretched soul, bruised with adversity, / We bid be quiet when we hear it cry' (II.i.34-35). Luciana tells Adriana that her husband's role is to curb her Will, he is 'the bridle of your will' (II.i.13). Here, the image of the wilful soul of Adriana bridled by the reasoned soul of Antipholus, links women's souls to the inferior Aristotelian sensitive soul, not the rational:

Man, more divine, the master of all of these,
 Lord of the wide world and wild wat'ry seas,
 Indued with intellectual sense and souls,
 Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls,
 Are masters to their females, and their lords. (II.i.20-24)³⁷⁵

To spectators, this reasoning is immediately suspect. Its justice is suspect since Antipholus of Syracuse, Adriana's husband, is far from a 'reasoned' soul. He does not exhibit understanding and good judgement, but a soul where Reason has been overwhelmed by Will – he is a man of indulgence and excess - which has force of might over all other things. Rather than a model of Reason overcoming Will, Adriana and Antipholus present to us an image of imbalance, where excess Will is seen in both characters. When this excess is present, Reason cannot take hold and the remembrance of goodness is lost.

³⁷⁵ All references to Shakespeare's works are taken from *Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997).

For Augustine, citing St. Matthew, Will unites Reason and Memory but it can also set them apart, causing disunity and friction.

And so the connected series of right wills is a sort of road, which consists as it were of certain steps, whereby to ascend to blessedness; but the entanglement of depraved and distorted wills is a bond by which he will be bound who thus acts, so as to be cast into outer darkness.³⁷⁶

Concordant Will leads to blessedness, discordant Will to depravity:

Further, as the will applies the sense to the body, so it applies the memory to the sense, and the eye of the mind of the thinker to the memory. But that which harmonises those things and unites them, itself also disjoins and separates them, that is, the will.³⁷⁷

The surfeit of Will that produces a sick soul is a trope that can be seen in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Though excess Will rules them and blights their land, Claudius and Macbeth are tormented by the memory of former good, as though this faculty of the soul is erased or set aside when the desire for power overwhelms them. Claudius entreats:

O, my offence is rank! It smells to heaven [...]
O wretched state, O bosom black as death,
O limed soul that, struggling to be free,
Art more engaged! Help, angels! (III.iii.36-69)

³⁷⁶ Augustine, *On The Trinity*, trans. by Stephen McKenna, ed. by Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Bk. XI, Ch. VI, p. 274.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Bk. XI, Ch. 8, p. 279.

‘My way of life / Is fallen into the sere’ (V.iii.23-24) laments Macbeth. Remembrance of former good here allows the diseased soul to be thrown into relief by the memory of what it had been and how its imbalance has created so much destruction.

An absence of kairotic time is also evident when good Memory is forgotten, shown by the poison poured into Hamlet’s father’s ear. It is an image of a diseased state, in turmoil, where ‘the time is out of joint’ (I.v.189) and where Hamlet’s father’s soul is left wandering, unable to access the eternal. Claudius’s court has forgotten the eternal and lives only for the present moment. According to Hamlet, Gertrude’s soul is pure appetite ‘a beast that wants discourse of reason / Would have mourned longer’ (I.ii.150-51). She admits it is tainted:

Thou turn’st mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct (III.iv.79-81)

It is an ‘ulcerous place’ (III.iv.138), a ‘sick soul’ (IV.v.17). Claudius’s soul is ‘full of discord and dismay’ (IV.i.40), a ‘limed soul’ (III.iii.68) that suggests the ethereal bird that is weighed down and trapped by base material. The idea of being pulled down is further shown when Claudius inability to contact God ‘My words fly up, my thoughts remain below’ (III.iii.97). These images of disease and consternation are set against Hamlet’s prophetic soul (I.v.41) that has reasoned the cause of his father’s death, which in turn creates his melancholic soul (III.i.163-64). Hamlet asks Horatio to use the critical faculty of Reason in his soul when observing Claudius ‘Even with the very comment of

thy soul / Observe mine uncle' (III.ii.72-73) in the hope of overcoming the excess Will that has produced stagnation.

Dislocation of time is found also in *Macbeth*, where the blasphemy that is regicide fractures the fabric of the land and the cohesion of society is torn 'By the clock 'tis day, / And yet dark strangles the travelling lamp' (II.iv.6-7). The sinning soul of Macbeth, whose appetites are akin to Claudius's, can be seen in Macbeth's response to Macduff's advances, 'My soul is too much charged / With blood of thine already' (V.x.5-6). This may be juxtaposed with the English King's ability to cure 'wretched souls' (IV.iii.142) that are diseased and who can rid Scotland of its scourge. The image of the monarch of concordance is emphasised, heightening Macbeth's misdeeds. 'Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope / The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence / The life o'th'building' (II.iii.63-65) implying a profane rupture of divine right. Richard C. McCoy suggests that 'the equation of regicide with sacrilege reflects a persistent belief in the monarch's sanctity, as it does the imputation of thaumaturgic powers to the English king'.³⁷⁸ It also prevents Macbeth from embracing the 'communion' that should be central to the banquet that honours him, a supposed 'divine' king, but conversely unstops his fretful mind. Rather than the spiritual union that should bind the thanes to their anointed king, Macbeth's 'murderous usurpation of the throne proceeds to pollute the royal sacramental system'.³⁷⁹ Macbeth represents unbridled Will, 'Boundless intemperance / In nature is a tyranny' (IV.iii.67-68), balanced against moderation that brings peace:

³⁷⁸ Richard C. McCoy, 'Shakespearean Tragedy and Religious Identity', in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works Volume I: The Tragedies*, ed. by Richard Dutton, and Jean E. Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 178-98 (p. 185).

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.185.

Justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness,
 Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
 Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude. (IV.iii.93-95)

Remembrance of past deeds emerging when Will has overturned Reason and Memory can be seen in the gathering of the ghosts in *Richard III*, interestingly on All Soul's Day when, according to Catholic doctrine, spirits were meant to walk. Earlier, he had suggested that Queen Elizabeth might allow her soul to forget the past wrongs he had done to her sons in order that her daughter might reap the benefits of marriage to him:

So in the Lethe of thy angry soul
 Thou drown the sad remembrance of those wrongs,
 Which thou supposest I have done to thee. (IV.iv.237-39)

There follows a short interplay with the phrase 'from my soul'. For Elizabeth, it is used with increasing irony as she indicates how she understands his soul to be false for his soul 'loves' Anne as much as he 'loved' her murdered brothers. Richard's phrase 'from my soul' is being used here as a trope for truth as it suggests that he swears on his soul, though its meaning is reversed by Elizabeth:

Richard: Then know that, from my soul, I love thy daughter.
 Elizabeth: My daughter's mother thinks that with her soul.
 Richard: What do you think?
 Elizabeth: That thou dost love my daughter *from* thy soul;
 So *from* thy soul's love didst thou love her brothers,
 And *from* my heart's love I thank thee for it.
 Richard: Be not so hasty to confound my meaning.
 I mean, that *with* my soul I love thy daughter,
 And do intend to make her queen of England. (IV.iv.242-50)

'From' begins to signify 'apart from', suggesting a move away from true love to murder and towards damnation. Elizabeth's repeated play on this reminds Richard of his fate. Her refusal to forget Richard's past makes her into an agent of remembrance, a character whose insistence on remembering Richard's sins will rouse the souls of those who have died at his hands in Act Five, Scene Five. Elizabeth is indeed effective as his conscience does come alive at this point in the play when the ghosts return to haunt him 'O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me? / The light turns blue' (V.v.133-34). Richard describes his disturbed soul:

shadows tonight
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers. (V.v.170-72)

This is set against Richmond's 'untroubled soul' (V.v.111) that is affiliated with God, though he, too, is visited by the 'shadows':

God and our good cause fight upon our side.
The prayers of holy saints and wronged souls,
Like high-reared bulwarks, stand before our forces. (V.v.194-96)

Like the Ghost of Hamlet's father who also walks abroad to seek vengeance and remembrance of things better, the ghosts in *Richard III* seek to clean a troubled and spoiled land and the 'foul stone' (V.v.204) that has caused such corruption.

The uprising of Memory in the soul as an indicator of past wrongs is also to be found in *King John*, where the memory of misdemeanours, particularly that of the death of the

child Arthur, plagues John's soul and causes 'sickness' through the land 'for the present time's so sick / That present medicine must be ministered, / Or overthrow incurable ensues' (V.i.14-16). It is Ascension Day, symbol of the resurrection and of Jesus's entrance into heaven, when the Bastard conjures an image of the dead child rising up to do battle and:

brave our fields
And flesh his spirit in a warlike soil,
Mocking the air with colours idly spread. (V.i.70-73)

John's closing moments are antithetical to Arthur's image of glory:

Within me is a hell, and there the poison
Is, as a fiend, confined to tyrannise
On unreprievable contemned blood. (V.vii.46-48)

The sick and sinful soul that is hellish to John is also manifested in, for example, *2 Henry VI*. Here, the consequences of the wrongs of the monarch are seen in the actions of others who also commit foul deeds. The Duchess of Gloucester must endure humiliation for consorting with devils and the equivocal prophecies she leaves behind before her exile haunt the remainder of the play. Beaufort's murder of Gloucester results in the trapping of his own soul. At the moment of his death, he sees the image of the tortured Gloucester's 'frighted' hair: 'look, look: it stands upright / Like lime twigs set to catch my winged soul' (III.iii.15-16). As a configuration of the trapped soul that longs to be free, but also of one that is being pulled down away from heaven, it is an idea that Shakespeare uses again of Claudius in *Hamlet*.

This legacy of memorial horror through monarchical upheaval also runs through the second tetralogy, where the usurpation of the divinely appointed Richard wreaks havoc: ‘this deed is chronicled in hell’ (V.v.116).

Exton, thy fierce hand
Hath with the King’s blood stained the King’s own land.
Mount, mount, my soul; thy seat is up on high,
Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward here to die. (V.v.109-12)

It is worked through in the closing lines of *2 Henry IV* where Hal indicates that the disordered rule of his father might come to a close ‘My father is gone wild into his grave’ (V.ii.122), and in *Henry V*, in Henry’s prayer before the battle of Agincourt as he remembers the soul of Richard and the masses said for him. The use of Memory here, as Henry remembers Richard’s soul, brings heavy and prolonged penitence:

Five hundred poor have I in yearly pay
Who twice a day their withered hands hold up
Toward heaven to pardon blood. And I have built
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
Still sing for Richard’s soul. More will I do,
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after ill,
Imploring pardon. (IV.i.280-87).

Such imbalance between Reason, Will and Memory, then, is an important theatrical dynamic. It can be seen as an indicator of the unstable spiritual environment of early modern England, where the soul’s salvation comes under question as a result of the shift

from old to new beliefs. As Peter Lake has argued, the Reformation caused disruption and instability that rendered the sacred vulnerable and dislocated, leaving:

a cultural terrain strewn with the wreckage of partially disrupted belief systems, sets of assumptions about how the world worked and where the holy was to be found and how it might be approached, invoked and manipulated.³⁸⁰

The sudden imposition of a predominant policy of spiritual belief, which in itself is neither fixed nor certain, can throw into turmoil hitherto accepted values. These in turn can become subdued and marginalized and the remembrance of what is good can be lost in the mêlée. The texts explore the misery and oppression that happens when the tri-partite model is unbalanced, often because of the excessive Will of an individual who represents this one aspect of the soul that is out of control. Yet the conflict and disproportion can and does become resolved within Shakespearean drama and the second part of the thesis will argue that it is through the recovery of beneficent Memory, the third part of the soul, that this balance may be restored.

The Wandering Soul

The imbalanced soul lacks the tri-partite unity and concord that Augustinian Memory should afford to Will and Reason. The absence of this causes dramatic conflict, and the migration of the soul from one fixed point to another is a feature of the two texts to be analysed in this chapter, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. Both are set in Venice, a world that belongs both to east and west, a threshold, fluid place, literally as well metaphorically. It is both land and sea, which underpins the image of the uncertain,

³⁸⁰ Peter Lake, 'Religious Identities in Shakespeare's England', in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p. 78.

wandering soul that began this thesis. Jessica and Othello both convert to Christianity from their respective religions of Judaism and Islam. However, conversion results in Jessica becoming marginalized in a Venice that prioritises its own sense of what it believes to be 'Christian' over the welfare of 'outsiders'. For Othello, the move to Christianity eventually effects great confusion before his death as his 'enfettered' soul (II.iii.319) is plunged into perdition at the end of the play by the poisoned, 'over-reasoned' soul of Iago (II.i.284-85). Both journeys into the Christian faith can be seen as images of pilgrimage, but, like Donne's pilgrim, Jessica and Othello lose their way as the Christian world fails to accommodate them.

I would like to argue that the importance of marriage in the two plays could be used as a trope for discussing the wandering souls of Jessica and Othello as they move into Christian Venice. Marriage allows their souls to initially find accommodation in this world but both their souls experience difficulty because of the exclusive nature of the Christian heaven defined in Portia's Belmont and in the misguided journey that Othello makes in following Iago's advice.

The suggestion of an uncertain Christian heaven is reflected in the fluid and unfixed depiction of Venice that is created in these two plays. The liminal space of Venice will be crucial when exploring the fate of the souls of Jessica and Othello. It is an imagined, Christianised Venice that, I would like to argue, offers similarities with Reformation England at the time of Shakespeare. The Venice of *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, is rich, commercial and economically viable; it trades with diverse lands and speculates

to increase profit. In *Othello*, there is wealth but also apprehension about the threat of invasion from an unwelcome religion that might overwhelm Venetian sensibilities. In reality, Venice was a state that was geographically and religiously in a marginal position between east and west as it did not always respond to Roman dictates; it is a city 'on Europe's margins [and] was the port of entry or opening to Africa'.³⁸¹ *Othello* is also located in Cyprus, again geographically and religiously significant, as it became a symbol of either Christian or Turkish dominance. Venice, then, becomes metonymic with fragmentation: it is neither east nor west nor wholly Christian; it is a place where cultures meet and exchange 'goods', both material and spiritual; a complex palimpsest of customs and religious beliefs.

Both plays open with references to value and exchange. *The Merchant of Venice's* opening scene is steeped in the language of commerce, 'argosies', 'spices', 'silks', 'worth', 'merchandise'; *Othello* has 'purse strings', 'price', 'debitor', 'creditor', 'cashiered'. These are linguistic images through which Jessica and Othello will be asked to negotiate their positions in a capitalistic Venice, where the price of things are paramount and where the Christian sector holds great power. Jessica brings Shylock's wealth with her, Othello his military worth. Though both enrich and empower the Christian world, neither is successfully integrated and their initial value soon diminishes. Like Shakespeare's sonnet that opens this thesis, their souls will pine within the gaudy house that is Venice, where riches have been spent on the 'outward walls' (Sonnet 146, l. 4) at the expense of the spiritual. England, too, is unsettled religiously, it too does not

³⁸¹ Patricia Parker, 'Fantasies of 'Race' and 'Gender': *Othello*', in *Shakespeare's Tragedies: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by Susan Zimmerman (Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press Ltd., 1998), pp. 167-93 (p. 180).

conform to Roman dictates and its cultural and religious identity is becoming increasingly determined by the might of commercial enterprise and it is into this kind of world that both Jessica and Othello migrate through their marriages.

Shakespeare's Venice, therefore, is an uncertain place, cosmopolitan, busy, yet strangely sterile because although the soul encounters many different types of racial, commercial and religious experiences, it fails to find true spiritual peace. This unproductive movement is seen primarily through the high level of risk that informs Venetian life, both personally and economically and which, I would suggest, is reflected in Shakespeare's treatment of Jessica's and Othello's experiences of marriage in the plays.

'This Muddy vesture of decay': Empty rhetoric and the lost Father in Portia's

Belmont

In Act Three, Scene Five, Lancelot Gobbo worries over Jessica's salvation. He indicates that the only way to escape the 'sins of the father' (III.v.1) is if she finds that Shylock is not her father. Jessica's response is that Christian marriage will save her from her father's power 'I shall be saved by my husband – he hath made me a Christian' (l. 18). Implicit in these lines is the idea of forgetting the paternal word of Jewish law that Shylock represents and embracing the New Testament order in her marriage to Lorenzo. This theme of forgetting is compounded in the scene by a reference to Leah, Jessica's mother, who Jessica jokes would also be an agent of sin for bearing a child out of wedlock: 'So the sins of the mother should be visited upon me' (l. 12) and Jessica's exchange of her

mother's ring for a monkey later in the play becomes indicative of this lack of remembrance.

Jessica's desire to move from her father's world can be likened to the pilgrim who journeys into the Christian world to seek salvation. By forgetting Judaic values she becomes the wandering soul that longs for redemption. Yet this move is tinged with uncertainty, which is epitomised in the character of Gobbo, who functions as the conscience of Jessica. This stock comic figure, a legacy from the older morality form, here acts as a guide to the state of Jessica's soul. Lancelot indicates the complexities and anxieties surrounding religious allegiance at the end of the sixteenth century compared with how a Lancelot figure might have been penned in earlier days. This function can be seen, according to Camille Slights, in Gobbo's dispute with his own conscience.³⁸²

To be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who (God bless the mark!) is a kind of devil; and to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your reverence, is the devil himself. (II.ii.17- 21)

His persistent ramblings and linguistic complexities of thought often reflect Jessica's turbulence and guilt. Indeed, these wavering thoughts are symptomatic of not only Jessica's wandering soul that cannot find a fixed point of reference, but also Lancelot's, who is aware that neither position will grant him happiness. His pun on 'a - dieu' (to

³⁸² Camille Slights, 'In Defense of Jessica: The Runaway Daughter in *The Merchant of Venice*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31:3 (1980), 357-68 (p. 361).

God), and also ‘a Jew’ in the repeated ‘adieu’, when speaking to Jessica, is followed by tears, suggesting the religious rift that both experience:

Adieu. Tears exhibit my tongue, most beautiful pagan; most sweet Jew; if a
 Christian do not play the knave and get thee, I am much deceived. But adieu.
 These foolish drops do something drown my manly spirit. Adieu. (II.iii.10-13)

His punning wails of ‘Sola! - Where, where?’ (V.i.44) as he wanders aimlessly in the opening scene of Act Five is indicative of the rootlessness of Jessica’s soul through leaving her father’s world. Both seek solace in a Christian world that they believe is redemptive, both tussle with their loyalties and both are left adrift in Act Five.

This forgetting of parental influence can also be seen in Portia’s relationship with her father. The legacy that Portia’s father has left is to ensure the well being of his daughter’s future. As Harry Berger Jr. has noted, the father in Shakespeare ‘chiefly values in his children [...] his investment in them – the shares of pleasure, shame, trouble, sacrifice, and legal tenderness he has deposited in their characters’, which causes a problem for daughters who, in early modern England and particularly in the Venice of this text, must regard themselves primarily as a commodity.³⁸³ Though Nerissa claims Portia’s father restricts her choice of suitor out of love ‘good inspirations’ (I.ii.25), Portia finds this ‘reasoning’ (I.ii.18) constricting.

³⁸³ Harry Berger Jr., ‘Marriage and Mercifixion in *The Merchant of Venice*: The Casket Scene Revisited’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 32:2 (1981), 155-62 (p. 156).

The relationship between daughter and father here is complicated by Portia's attitude to various suitors. Though Portia finds her father's instructions draconian, her character analysis of her suitors reveals her own inadequacies when it comes to understanding human nature, and her interpretation of 'choice', a word she cherishes as a byword for liberation, is to reject others on superficial grounds. Implied in this father/daughter relationship of control and freedom is a lack of understanding of good governance and filial respect that has bred such discontent. The 'paternal lock' that incarcerates Portia blights her own view of the world and makes her, in her strong hints to Bassanio to choose the lead casket and her dismissive attitudes to Morrocco and Arragon, 'half-willing to sin against her father's will'.³⁸⁴ By undermining her father's instructions, Portia abides by the letter of her father's law but not the spirit, an action that will be repeated by her later in the play, as we shall see.

I would like to argue that the uneasy relationships between fathers and daughters here are symbolic of a loss of faith, for they are in opposition to qualities that may be found in the remembrance of sound religious values, which, I believe, have been forgotten in the social and commercial world of the play. For Jessica, the move away from the Judaic world reminds us of Donne's pilgrim who has lost his way; for Portia, the forgetting of good values places her soul in a stagnant world.

This loss of sound memorial influence, seen in the rejection of the father's law, informs the mood of the Venice/Belmont world as a place of unproductive movement that cannot access the divine. It is seen in the lethargy that permeates the text from the opening line

³⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 156, 157.

of Antonio ‘In sooth, I know not why I am so sad’ and can be seen in Portia’s opening scene ‘my little body is aweary of this great world’ (I.ii.1-2) and in Jessica’s first speech ‘some taste of tediousness’ (II.iii.3). It is a melancholy that blights the trading world of Venice but also the regulated world of Belmont and is an indication of an existence that lacks substance other than the pursuit of individual desire. As Nerissa notes ‘they are as sick that surfeit with too much, as they that starve with nothing’ (I.ii.5-6).

The stagnation that permeates Belmont and Venice can be seen in Portia’s relationships with Bassanio and Antonio and in her dealings with Shylock, where the letter but not the spirit of Christian goodness and mercy are invoked. Images of, and allusions to, Christianity are found in the text when referring to Portia and Belmont, yet these are undermined by the actions of the characters there. The Petrarchan conceit of the divine lady who is courted can be seen in the references to Portia as a saint, ‘To kiss this shrine, this mortal breathing saint’ (II.vii.40) and Belmont is her shrine where suitors come to worship, a kind of heaven that invites salvation. Yet courtship proves difficult, for the friendship that is so strong between Bassanio and Antonio sets up competitiveness between Portia and Antonio for his affections.

In competing for Bassanio, the romantic plot becomes a parody of Christian sacrifice. Both Portia and Antonio invert the Christian ideal of giving all for love, for they both act according to their own interests. In the salvation of Antonio, Portia bestows upon herself power ‘In purchasing the semblance of my soul’ (III.iv.20), the conflation of the monetary and the spiritual particularly startling here. The quotation reminds us of the strength of the bond between Bassanio and Antonio, but the image of buying Antonio’s

soul alerts us to Portia's motives. Rather than saving Antonio for reasons of Christian goodness and justice, it can be suggested that she is saving him in order to keep Bassanio's love. Portia believes hers and Bassanio's souls 'do bear an equal yoke of love' (III.iv.13), yet Bassanio's 'unquiet soul' (III.ii.305) can be soothed only by Antonio's release from the bond. The rescue of Antonio's soul by Portia, therefore, is done to ensure Bassanio's continued affection.

Additionally, Antonio's decision to enter into such a bond with Shylock, a risk he feels sure is negligible as he believes the argosies will return, is based, I would suggest, on his desire to keep Bassanio indebted to him. Its dramatic display of unwavering loyalty that could end with Antonio's sacrifice, is set against Antonio's confidence that he will be able to pay the debt but, significantly, that Bassanio sees him do it:

These griefs and losses have so bated me
That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh
Tomorrow to my bloody creditor.
Well, jailer, on. Pray God Bassanio come
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not. (III.iii.32-36)

Both Portia and Antonio are determined to win Bassanio, both salute the letter of the Christian spirit of selflessness yet both neglect true, Christian sacrifice.

The idea of competition is seen in a more serious light, however, in the treatment of Shylock in the trial scene. Here, the authoritative might of Christian 'mercy' is set before Shylock to subdue and humiliate a race that it wishes to suppress and cultural dominance is evidenced when Shylock's identity, located in his faith and his livelihood, is erased.

The courtroom is where Belmont's 'Christian' values are advocated. Portia refers to a mercy that drops as 'gentle rain' (IV.i.182) – the loaded use of the puns rain/reign (control) and gentle/Gentile having pointed significance here – and which all need lest 'none of us / Should see salvation' (IV.i.196-97). Yet this is hardly meted out to Shylock at the end of a scene that demands his soul through forced conversion, thus diminishing Old Testament culture.

The Christians' superficial concern with money rather than religious faith is highlighted when Shylock recognises Portia's attempt to offer him money to silence his claim as a bribe. He rejects it with a claim to a much deeper religious bond:

An oath, an oath! I have an oath in heaven.
 Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?
 No, not for Venice. (IV.i.222-24)

Here is a moral vigour and an indication that Shylock, though marred by vengeance, is the only character in the play that has any vestige of the remembrance of concordant Memory, epitomised earlier in the image of the ring.

The trivialisation of religious faith by a superficially Christian culture is also seen in the puns when Graziano that Shylock's very soul will be cut from him 'Not on thy sole, but on thy soul, harsh Jew, / Thou mak'st my knife keen' (IV.i.122-23). Graziano cites Pythagorean metempsychosis when describing Shylock's soul, suggesting his Jewish soul is bestial, emasculating him by his non-rational soul that links him with Adriana's female world and that of the animals:

Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith,
 To hold the opinion with Pythagoras
 That souls of animals infuse themselves
 Into the trunks of men (IV.i.129-32)

These lines are ironic, however, for Graziano is espousing Pythagorean views, which would be considered heretical and the triumph of this competitiveness and hypocrisy reaches its apotheosis with the pugnacious Graziano bellowing threats of baptism as Shylock leaves the court.³⁸⁵ Such action reduces the Christian spirit of mercy and forgiveness to selfish ends, and, unable to access the divine, weariness and stagnation inform Portia's world.

To move from the stagnant world that has been depicted, true goodness must prevail and this can come with the remembrance of the values of both Judaic and Christian culture. The loss of faith that is represented in Jessica and Portia's rejection of their fathers' word is reconfigured in the failure to assimilate Judaic/Christian values to produce a tolerant, tempered society. Shylock is a kind of Old Testament father, whose strict values and beliefs have to be accommodated as part of the Christian story that should include mercy and forgiveness. This would allow Old Testament theology to be positioned alongside New Testament thinking, acting as both precedent and complement to Christian belief, but the play clearly shows the failure to include Shylock in a Judaic/Christian bond at the end of Act Four.

³⁸⁵ We do not know whether Shylock does in fact convert – he says he feels unwell and must see to business. James Shapiro thinks this is unlikely as 'coerced conversions were virtually unheard of in the various narratives circulating about Jews in sixteenth century England'. See James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 131. The ambiguity can lead to the supposition that Shylock may commit suicide.

Such an accommodation, where past and present testament work in harmony, can take us out of the temporal concerns of a commercial, munificent Belmont and Venice. The overlaying of Old on to New Testament produces a kairotic time that can access the divine through the beneficence and magnitude offered by both theologies, placing past and present together to create a palimpsest of affirmative possibilities. The intolerance of the 'other', emblematised in the figure of Shylock, but also Morocco and Arragon, who is systematically demeaned and undervalued, can find recognition and acceptance in such a climate.

The possibility of moving into *kairos* and away from the restrictions of *chronos* can be realised in the marriage between Jessica and Lorenzo, where Old and New Testament may be united. However, Jessica and Lorenzo's marriage, which should signal this bond's achievement, is not wholly successful, as we shall see.

The position of Jessica's soul into the New Testament world is tinged with uncertainty. She is welcomed but also ignored by a society whose own sense of its Christian identity is unsettled by a past that it wishes to forget and will not accommodate. She, too, desires to forget her past seen in her first appearance that reveals a disdain for a father whose house is 'hell' (II.iii.2). Yet she is full of shame. Cary Graham has indicated that:

Jessica's suggestion of tediousness and unhappiness is substantiated by the Shylock who goes to dinner in 'hate, to feed upon the prodigal Christian', who releases Launcelot to help impoverish Bassanio, who scorns music and merriment, who instructs Jessica to 'Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter

my sober house', and who leaves his daughter behind locked doors with the threat that perhaps he will return immediately.³⁸⁶

Fed on unconsumed vengeance, Shylock, too, has forgotten the tolerance and goodness that would allow a kinder handling of an unhappy child and the concord that would accompany the remembrance of a Judaic God is lost. This drives Jessica into the Christian world where she believes she will, like Portia, be, as John P. Sisk has argued, 'released by love from all false and evil bonds to a fulfilment of life'.³⁸⁷

Yet in order to make this shift, she forgets her past. Her flight from her father's house has included theft of the casket, deception and the careless abandonment of thrift that reportedly culminates in the thoughtless exchange of her mother's ring for a monkey. Inside the casket is not merely gold but in effect, Memory, a chief component of the soul, in the form of the ring. Yearning for the new world that is Belmont has put into effect a brutal truncation of her past and also a looting and squandering of that which is precious. The ring is deeply cherished by her father, whose tenderness towards the memory of Leah is considerable 'I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys' (III.i.101-2). That Judaic law avows that it is the mother's line through which the cultural and religious mores are passed, increases this image of severance with her upbringing; and Lorenzo and Jessica's aimless wandering through Genoa and Venice emblemise the drifting soul of Jessica as she attempts to loosen ties with her Jewish past that is so profoundly bound up in memory and tradition. Her

³⁸⁶ Cary B. Graham, 'Standards of Value in *The Merchant of Venice*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 4:2 (1953), 145-51 (p. 150).

³⁸⁷ John P. Sisk, 'Bondage and Release in *The Merchant of Venice*', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 20:2 (1969), 217-23 (p. 218).

decision to sever these ties with her past is obviously not a choice lightly made but is infused with guilt and pain, a 'heinous sin' (II.iii.15).

In order to enter the Christian world, Jessica must also forget her gender when she elopes in disguise, 'I should be obscur'd' (II.vi.44), where she will be placed in Lorenzo's constant soul. His speech is replete with references to judgement, wisdom and truth, all of which have doubtful undertones given the situation:

For she is wise, if I can judge of her;
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true;
And true she is, as she hath proved herself;
And therefore like herself, wise, fair and true,
Shall she be placed in my constant soul. (II.vi.53-57)

Lorenzo's judgement is under scrutiny here. If his eyes 'be true' then he sees a boy and not Jessica and this half-person is to be placed in his constant soul. Jessica is depicted as not fully formed, in need of Western religious doctrine, seen in Lorenzo's belief in his own dominant, Christian 'constant soul'. He is also late for the appointed elopement 'And it is marvel he outdwells his hour, / For lovers ever run before the clock' (II.vi.4-5), that puts under suspicion this constancy. Significantly, it is the casket that Lorenzo first holds rather than his prospective wife, dramatically symbolising that it is the wealth that Jessica brings that holds Lorenzo's attention.³⁸⁸ Furthermore, Lorenzo himself is not fully inside the Christian world at this moment. The festival is a liminal space, suggestive of pagan festival, on the fringe of Christianity but not quite fully integrated into it and very

³⁸⁸ For a detailed reading of the use of reciprocity and exchange see Jyotsna G. Singh, 'Gendered "Gifts" in Shakespeare's Belmont: The Economies of Exchange in Early Modern England', in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Dymphna Callaghan (Blackwell: Oxford, 2001), pp. 144-62.

much like Venice itself as a cultural crucible. Here, we are reminded again that Shakespeare's location for this play is a threshold world as Venice is both geographically and metaphorically on the edge of Christian boundaries, always in touch with the east and the exotic and also often outside the jurisdiction of papal authority. The clear cut boundaries between the 'heaven' that is Belmont and the 'hell' that is Shylock's house become blurred in this scene as the Christian revellers occupation of a marginal space in which to receive Jessica becomes indicative of uncertainty and instability, of the space between Old and New Testament values and expectations.

The dramatic turbulence that greets Jessica's flight to Christianity in Act Two is subdued but still in evidence in Act Five. As part of three married couples, she enters the world of Belmont, but the memory of Shylock's humiliation in the courtroom scene pervades and informs our reactions to events. It is an act that, in the comedic fashion, resolves conflict: Antonio's fortunes are secure again; three couples are united and married, bound by the spiritual and commercial wealth symbolised by the rings which are 'lost' at the end of act four to be returned to their rightful place at the end of the drama. All seems well, except that Act Five is a fantasy, an 'implausible *tour de force*', a comedic parody that masks the seriousness of the unification of materialism and conversion and its resultant tragic outcome.³⁸⁹ For underneath Act Five is Shylock, erased from the text in the courtroom scene of the previous act, but arguably still present in his daughter, whose move into the Christian world is uncertain. The result is an unsettling Act Five, where the differences between Jessica and Belmont prove disconcerting.

³⁸⁹ Peter Milward S. J., 'Shakespeare's Jesuit Schoolmasters', in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, ed. by Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay and Richard Wilson (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 58-70 (p. 69).

This division is seen immediately in the opening lines, which appear to suggest harmony and tranquillity, though the invocations to the great lovers of the past are tinged with irony as they are all doomed to end disastrously. As the scene progresses there is a reference by Jessica to her stolen soul:

In such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
And ne'er a true one. (V.i.16-19)

This speech comes immediately after Lorenzo's reference to Jessica's theft of Shylock's wealth and her elopement. The juxtaposition of the references to stealing money and souls is placed strikingly next to Lorenzo's vows of faith. Here we have the Jewish soul that has been kidnapped and the vows Lorenzo makes not necessarily being constant as suggested by the references to the doomed, pagan relationships. Both talk of stealing, either souls or money, and it is difficult to differentiate between the two as Shakespeare places them metrically and structurally in consecutive quatrains, thus mirroring the idea.

There is further evidence that this is not a true, Christian world when Lorenzo and Jessica contemplate the 'floor of heaven' (V.i.57). Lorenzo's speech at first seems a panegyric to the harmony of celestial constancy and movement. However, the speech ends with a reference to the couple's inability to achieve harmony as it is reserved for immortal souls to hear the music of the spheres and not souls encased in bodies.³⁹⁰ Lorenzo, in citing this

³⁹⁰ Maurice Hunt suggests that Lorenzo's world cannot attain that supreme knowledge that links Man to the divine. Hunt cites the Neo-Platonist writer Castiglione's *The Courtier*, where Petro Bembo muses on the nature of knowledge within the soul, indicating that Man can attain the divine through the application of

Platonic principle, speaks of the ‘floor of heaven’ (V.i.57) that the lovers look up to but in fact are excluded from, for they ‘cannot hear’ the music of the spheres (V.i.64) as they are entrapped within ‘this muddy vesture of decay’ (Vi.63) and that, ‘for them, the floor of Heaven is a barrier’ and thus they cannot access the divine.³⁹¹

Whilst on one level Lorenzo’s comments apply to all mortality, on another it does have implications for the future of their relationship. Jessica’s line as the musicians play: ‘I am never merry when I hear sweet music’ (V.i.50) again is evidence of discord and reminds us of Shylock’s dislike of carnival music in Act Two. Her husband’s response to Jessica’s lack of concord is found in a speech where he makes parallels between Jessica’s want of musical taste and wild beasts in need of control and education:

For do but note a wild and wanton herd
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
Which is the hot condition of their blood,
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
Or any music touch their ears
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
Their savage eyes turned to a modest gaze
By the power of sweet music. (V.i.70-78)

The implication of Jessica’s nature being infused with the animal, albeit a youthful colt, is exactly Graziano’s response to the nature of Shylock’s soul when he refused to accept Christian values in the courtroom scene (IV.i.129-32). Lorenzo’s speech suggests the idea of submission, as the colts will turn a ‘modest gaze’ by the ‘power’ of the music, an

‘intellect, whereby man can communicate with the angels’ and through this intellect man uses his Will which ‘feeds upon spiritual good’. See Maurice Hunt, ‘Ways of Knowing in *The Merchant of Venice*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 30:1 (1979), 89-93 (p. 90).

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

intimacy possibly of both cultural dominance and the taming of the ‘beast’ within the outsider and it is significant to note that Jessica from hereon is silenced for the remainder of the play, a possible pun on the ‘mutual stand’ that the colts make. Jessica as a savage stranger to heavenly music is clearly stated here. Rather than someone who is integrated as part of that harmony, Jessica must merely listen in an act of awed subjection. Given nothing to say for the rest of the drama emphasises this seclusion, the prohibition of her use of the musical pentameter an indicator of her difference. Like Adriana in *The Comedy of Errors*, there is here the suggestion of the Will of Lorenzo’s soul subduing the soul of Jessica, a soul that lacks Reason in his suggested links to the colt, and which has been stolen and silenced.

Camille Slights suggests that Jessica’s change from Shylock’s daughter to a Christian, loving wife unites ‘moral, emotional and familial loyalties’ and that the resultant move into Lorenzo’s world through the comedic device of disguise brings about eventual harmony.³⁹² However, Jessica’s position in the last act, along with the unsettling banter from the other newlyweds, raises doubts about the social bonding that is supposed to end such dramas. Jessica’s flight has rather unfixed her from a world that was albeit unhappy for her into a world where she cannot readily position herself and whose final line is indicative of discord ‘I am never merry when I hear sweet music’ (V.i.68).

What remains in question is the salvation of Jessica’s soul, which has been subdued by the overbearing Will of Lorenzo, a ‘reassertion of dominance’ by the Venetian world

³⁹² Slights, ‘In Defense of Jessica’, p. 362.

over outsiders, as Walter Cohen suggests.³⁹³ The inabilities of the Christians to accommodate the Old Testament world, seen in the eradication of her father, and Jessica's decision to forget that world, are symptomatic of an Augustinian tri-partite imbalance. This is seen in the images of dominance and over-zealous Christian evangelism. The road to Belmont is marked by religious shrines where Portia 'doth stray about / By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays' (V.i.30-31) and where the smallest orb 'like an angel sings, / Still choring to the young-eyed cherubins' (V.i.62-63). It has in it Portia and Nerissa who 'drop manna in the way / Of starved people' (V.i.295-96). Portia herself, on her return from the court sees her home as shining light on a 'naughty world' (V.i.90), yet on closer inspection there are indications of sickness in the image of the night:

This night, methinks, is but the daylight sick.
It looks a little paler. Tis a day
Such as the day is when the sun is hid. (V.i.123-25)

These words are suggestive of doom rather than the radiant hope she believes she sheds. The reference to manna, which interestingly brings 'life and living' (V.i.285) to Antonio is also a reminder again of Old Testament Jewish culture that has been colonised by these Christians.³⁹⁴ The move of Jessica's soul from her father's house into Belmont, then, appears to have left it stranded in a world that believes itself to be wholly Christian yet wanting in the divine intellect, or Augustinian Reason.

³⁹³ Walter Cohen, 'The Merchant of Venice and the Possibilities of Historical Criticism', in *Materialist Shakespeare: A History*, ed. by Ivo Kamps (London & New York: Verso, 1995), pp. 71-92 (p. 85).

³⁹⁴ See Exodus 16: 1-36, 4, 'Look, I shall rain down bread for you from the heavens'.

The inability to reach the divine, though Belmont follows the letter of Christian justice and goodness, is foregrounded by the language of purchase when referring to Jessica's soul. The accumulation of monies and goods supersede or become conflated with conversion, and it is a trait frequently acknowledged in Shakespeare's time when a dominant culture collides with another. For example, Richard Hakluyt's Epistle Dedicatorie to Sir Francis Walsingham in his 1589 *Principall navigations, voyages, and discoveries of the English nations*, juxtaposes conversion and commerce:

for mine owne part, I take it as a pledge of God's further favour both unto us and them: to them especially, unto whose doores I doubt not in time shalbe by us caried the incomparable treasure of the trueth of Christianity, and of the Gospell, while we use and exercise common trade with their marchants.³⁹⁵

In an earlier work describing his journeys in the Americas, *Divers Voyages* (1582), the Epistle Dedicatorie speaks of 'Godliness in great riches'.³⁹⁶ Belmont's faith appears to reside more with Hakluyt's Protestant idyll that follows from 'Godliness in riches' and it is into this world that Jessica has placed her soul. The conflation of money and marriage in the image of Jessica and her casket signifies the subjection of one race to another. Ania Loomba has indicated this subjection in her work on non-European women by the merchant-traveller 'the ideology of "willing subjection" [...] develops simultaneously within the crucible of the family, mercantilism, and colonialism'.³⁹⁷ For the marriage between Lorenzo and Jessica, moreover, it also marks the economic shift between the

³⁹⁵ Richard Hakluyt, *The principall navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation* (London: 1589), p. 3.

³⁹⁶ Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages* (London: 1582), p. 8.

³⁹⁷ Ania Loomba, 'The Great Indian Vanishing Trick', in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, pp. 163-87 (p. 181).

feudalistic patriarchies defined in Old Testament laws of Shylock's world into an emerging capitalistic market.

Though Jessica's marriage epitomises a journey from Old to New Testament, the disruption of the past is always there, a repressed memory that continues to haunt and trouble the neat Christian world of the present. The journey that Jessica makes from Shylock to Belmont, an exodus to a promised land with the wealth that was taken out of 'Egypt' (Exodus 3. 21-22), arguably offers less than imagined as her final sad note of failing to be heartened by sweet music suggests. M. Lindsay Kaplan argues that, for Jews, conversion is synonymous with self-annihilation:

While many Reformation theologians believed that conversion to Christianity was the Jews' only hope for salvation, from a Jewish perspective, conversion is a kind of self-destruction, a death; the term for conversion in Hebrew, (*shamad*), also means to destroy or annihilate.³⁹⁸

The Christian world that has lost its Father in its forgetting of the past, epitomised by Portia and her 'kind', has crushed Shylock and we see that the accommodation of his daughter has filled the Venetians with unease. This central unease must be the paradox of Shylock's own forced conversion, which the Christians see as a *punishment*, raising doubts about its central spirituality. Certainly, Jessica, whose 'position appears to decline rather than improve after her marriage', must find her own salvation questionable.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ M. Lindsay Kaplan, 'Others and Lovers in *The Merchant of Venice*', in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, pp. 341-57 (p. 349).

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

All seems to be done in the name of Christianity but there is an obvious price that has been paid at the end of the play that highlights the uncertainties of Belmont and Venice. The doubtfulness of the Portia/Bassanio and Graziano/Nerissa couplings that is signalled in the men's duplicitous actions surrounding the rings signal instability, while Antonio, the 'tainted wether of the flock, / Meetest for death' (IV.i.113-14), gives a poignant reminder to the way in which both he and Shylock have been excluded by the end of the play. Antonio at the close of the drama acts as a silent memorial to Shylock as one who does not fit. As his Christian opposite, both he and Shylock are presented as images of Old and New Testament values that sit uneasily with one another. The Christians do not integrate the memory of an old world deeply layered under Venice, which Shylock represents. Such division leaves Venice and Belmont uncomfortably negotiating its position with its past, the residual presence of a former culture creating fissures and contested ideologies rather than positive assimilation.

The result at the end of *The Merchant of Venice* is a sense of a lack of closure, of uncomfortable relationships and uncertain futures. In both the Jewish and Christian worlds the remembrance of goodness is subsumed by vengeance and a desire to control. Both Portia and Jessica's failed relationships with their fathers can be read as an obscuration of the true meaning of mercy and goodness that comes from God and the subsequent actions of the daughters confound and perpetuate that initial fault.

‘Speak of me as I am’: Self-Construction and Edited Memory in *Othello*

The possibility of the salvation of the soul and its accommodation into the Christian world via marriage, which I have argued is doubtful in *The Merchant of Venice*, lends itself to the tragic-comic tone of the play. The wandering soul is a feature of *Othello*, where Othello finds that perfect joy in marriage ‘My soul hath her content so absolute’ (II.i.180-87) before the Venetian world sets out to destroy it. The destruction of the lost soul, I will argue, is central to its tragedy.

The severance of concordant Memory is a trope reconfigured in *Othello*, where we see a re-fashioning and editing of the past. In his attempts to be accepted into the narrative of western Christian discourse, Othello writes himself into its story. From his initial appearance in the play, Othello sees himself as part of the western world, most notably in the ultimate acceptance of his marriage to Desdemona. He believes that his speech, where he informs the Venetians that he wooed her with fantastic stories of his past, can woo them too. The Duke says as much, but then he needs Othello to fend off the Turkish fleet at Cyprus. From the onset, Othello’s construction of his past deceives him into believing in his acceptance into Christian Venice.

Stephen Greenblatt’s lengthy discussion of Othello’s performance and his dependence on being part of a western discourse also argues that they are also the means by which he is destroyed:

It is this dependence that gives Othello, the warrior and alien, a relation to Christian values that is the existential equivalent of a religious vocation; he cannot allow himself the moderately flexible adherence that most ordinary men have

toward their own formal beliefs. Christianity is the alienating yet constitutive force on Othello's identity.⁴⁰⁰

Othello's construction of himself as a convert to the Venetian life, however, means that he invests a great deal into a narrow discourse. I would like to further Greenblatt's notion of Othello's narrative rendering him vulnerable to Venetian forces of power by suggesting that, in his re-fashioning, it is his expurgation of his past, and those of the Venetians, too, most of whom have lost a sense of concordant Memory, that is the source of the tragic events of the play.

Othello's sense of himself as a Christian means a careful editing of the past, an erasure of a great part of himself in order that he might fit into the Venetian world, and a deliberately false remembrance of that past, seen in the exotic tales of his travels and the myth behind the magical handkerchief. As part of that false ideology, Iago works upon Othello, constructing the 'erring barbarian' (I.iii.346) and effecting a split in Othello's nature that causes him to lose all sense of proportion and reason, with its tragic outcome in Act Five. Othello is at the mercy of false Memory, in his attempts to integrate into a society that, with the exception of Desdemona and Cassio who act as reminders of his merits, finds him repellent, and in Iago's attempts to disenfranchise him from that society.

As an image of Augustine's tri-partite model that has become degenerate, Othello, Iago and Desdemona signify, respectively, the conflict between uncontrolled Will and cold

⁴⁰⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 245.

Reason, with the resultant marginalisation of beneficent Memory, where the degenerate Reason of Iago sets itself against the unrestrained appetite that is Othello's jealousy to the detriment of Desdemona, who is a reminder of the goodness that her husband forsakes. What I would also like to signal here is the gendering of Memory, for Desdemona's marginal position as concordant Memory is set against the masculine forces of Reason and Will, a point to which I will return to at the end of the chapter. This tri-partite structure forms a model of the medieval psychomachia that pits good and evil, in the form of Desdemona and Iago, against each other in an attempt to win Othello's soul. Like Jessica, Othello is a convert to Christian Venice but, unlike Jessica, he is given range to boast of what he believes is his assimilation into Venetian life.

When doubts are raised concerning his marriage, Othello's response is to publicly announce the absolute purity of his soul 'My parts, my title, and my perfect soul / Shall manifest me rightly' (I.ii.31-32). It is this absolutism, along with Othello's emotionally volatile nature, that Iago exploits in order that Othello's Will might overwhelm his Reason and his Memory of what he knows to be a true Desdemona. In Iago's application of degenerate Reason he inverts the notion of judgement as a means to good actions, to an instrument of destruction that is made quite clear to the audience and to Roderigo from the start. Iago's use of the image of birdlime 'but indeed my invention / Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frieze' (II.i.125-26), which we have seen is used by Shakespeare as a means to trap the soul, signifies his 'power to ensnare others'.⁴⁰¹ Desdemona, as the dynamic to the plot in her elopement and choice of husband, is gradually superseded by Iago's 'narrative', which will sideline Desdemona's beneficent

⁴⁰¹ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning*, p. 233.

influence on Othello. Before Iago embarks on a series of soliloquies that will implicate the audience in his misdeeds, he also tells Roderigo of his plans, knowing full well that this knowledge is safe in the hands of such a foolish character. We, then, as audience, are asked to follow this fatal line of Reason, its dramatic irony polarising the distance between such cold rationale and the increasing excess of Will that is maddening Othello, turning him from the faithful Christian that he perceives himself to be at the beginning of the play, to the faithless ‘barbarian’ that is capable of destroying the virtuous Desdemona and the remembrance of what was once good.

Frank Kermode indicates in this psychomachiac structure that the play is in some senses a re-enactment of the Fall, where Othello moves from heavenly ignorance to the torment of knowledge:

an enactment of the Fall [...] a psychomania, with Iago as the bestial parts of man, and Othello as the higher [...] The greatness of *Othello* lies, in the end, there – in the beautiful complexity with which it renders an individual instance of generic Pascalian man, repository of truth, sink of uncertainty and error.⁴⁰²

Alvin Kernan suggests that *Othello* to some extent offers ‘an allegorical journey between heaven and hell on a stage filled with purely symbolic figures’.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, Othello is ejected from the mainstream Christian world by his own perfidy, albeit encouraged and manoeuvred by a Venetian subject, and with that exile *he* believes his soul is lost. His closing speeches are replete with his belief in his own damnation: ‘Here is my journey’s

⁴⁰² Frank Kermode, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, 2nd edn (London: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), p. 1250.

⁴⁰³ *Othello*, ed. by Alvin Kernan, The Signet Classic Shakespeare (New York: The New American Library of World Literature Inc., 1963), p. xxxiv.

end' (V.ii.265), 'Where should Othello go?' (V.ii.269) and, 'When we shall meet at compt, / This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven, / And fiends will snatch at it.' (V.ii.271-73). Here is Desdemona as his 'soul's joy' (II.i.180), his connection to Christianity through marriage now lost through the temptation that is Iago, which has made him forget the goodness that Desdemona represents, causing him to divorce himself from his own soul in an act of self-destruction. The antimetabole, his last emphasis on 'kiss' and 'kill', (V.ii.354-55), is reminiscent of the ultimate betrayal of Christ by Judas, thereby placing him as far as possible from Christian perfection whilst paradoxically, at the same time, mingling his soul with Desdemona/Christ at the moment of death through the kiss.

It is a difficult image to interpret, at once a vision of expulsion, at another of desired reunion and longing, an image that anticipates the pain and ecstasy of Donne's *Divine Meditations*. After the penultimate speech before he stabs himself, we are invited to envisage Othello as part of a more exotic world: the 'base Indian', 'subdued eyes', the medicinal gum of Arabian trees, the 'turbaned Turk' and the 'circumcised dog' evoke in an audience the magic, pagan place from whence they (and he) believe Othello came. It is as though he is returning, perplexed, to a past that has in effect been constructed for him, a past that competes with the heroic exoticism of the stories that he told Desdemona, and which eventually supersedes that narrative. Gazing with western eyes and with Iago directing the story, we as audience become complicit in that narrative:

The effect of this [Iago's seduction of the audience] should be to compel us to confront our own collusion in Othello's tragedy, a collusion confirmed by our

involuntary attraction to Iago's self-interested cynicism, and by our tacit acquiescence in the degrading mentality that finds in him such a seductive spokesman.⁴⁰⁴

The move from the salvation to the damnation of Othello lies in the split that is wrought in his marriage, which marks the beginning of a new 'narrative' of Othello by Iago. The unfolding story of Othello as barbaric 'other' would, as Daniel J. Vitkus suggests, severely concern Shakespeare's audience as it sets up a polarity with what is thought to be good versus evil.⁴⁰⁵ He indicates the fear that Protestants had of Catholic threats to re-convert England 'by the sword' but also the threat of the Ottoman Empire, which was making inroads into Europe.⁴⁰⁶ Such paranoia over the menace of these two factions allowed for an association between the two that

conflated the political/external and the demonic/internal enemies, associating both the Pope and the Ottoman sultan with Satan or the Antichrist. According to Protestant ideology, the Devil, the Pope, and the Turk all desired to "convert" good Protestant souls to a state of damnation, and their desire to do so was frequently figured as a sexual/sensual temptation of virtue, accompanied by a wrathful passion for power.⁴⁰⁷

Vitkus also notes the significance of Othello's epilepsy as part of this fear for it indicates a kind of demonic conversion, where Othello's turns from Christian to the 'devil' to kill his wife. Othello's epileptic fit would:

characterise a soul-shaking conversion experience [...] The Moor's ordeal in Act Four, Scene One parodies the physical collapse that accompanies an episode of

⁴⁰⁴ Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare*, 3rd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 86.

⁴⁰⁵ Daniel J. Vitkus, 'Turning Turk in *Othello*: The Conversion and Damnation of the Moor', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48:2 (1997), 145-76 (p. 145).

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

divine or demonic possession – he kneels with Iago, falls down, and then undergoes a seizure like those experienced by other prophesying victims of “the falling sickness”, a malady associated with both sacred and Satanic inspiration.⁴⁰⁸

This episode ultimately concludes with Othello’s resolve to murder his wife for her misdeeds. Vitkus suggests that the fit would also concur with a common, Christian belief that the Islamic prophet Mohammed’s claim to divine possession was in fact a bout of epilepsy, brought on as punishment for lechery.⁴⁰⁹ Certainly Iago’s rather intimate dealings with Othello in these scenes indicate the reasoned devil, in the guise of beneficent helper, converting the good Othello into a possessed and enraged fiend. The constant references to Othello’s lustful nature in the opening scene and in Iago’s belief that he has cuckolded him, allow for this idea of punishment for lechery. The juxtaposition of Iago’s purported Christianity and Othello’s Islamic otherness is here shown as the destructive power of the former to debase the latter, the shoddiness of the Christian world that needs to destroy rather than accommodate, an image that is informed in the racist subtext of the play.

Certainly, the frequent descriptions of Othello as the devil and indeed as sexually voracious, link him strongly to these fears of the overwhelming powers of the ‘enemy’ that might damn Venetian souls. From the language that is threaded through the opening scene we know from the start that it is the Venetian world and not just Iago that cannot accept the Muslim turned Christian. The introductory scenes present us with places of authority where Othello’s reputation and lineage are constantly judged: the environs of Brabantio’s house where Iago and Roderigo maliciously gossip over the bestial and

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 155.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

devilish offspring that would ensue from the coupling of Othello and Desdemona; and the Duke's quarters where officialdom, eager for Othello to do the state some service, decrees his marriage legitimate and renounces magic as the Moor's means of seduction. The play's shift to Cyprus and the stormy voyage en route there reveals a significant change from Cinthio's source story, *Gli Hecatommithi* (1565), Shakespeare's inclusion of the storm and the Turkish threat allowing for the development of the theme of the religious battle between Christianity and Islam for Othello's soul as represented by Cyprus and its surrounding tempest.⁴¹⁰

Here, salvation or damnation is contested, like a place of execution that is expediently distanced from Venetian sensibilities. This may have resonance to a Jacobean audience that might be aware that Cyprus belonged to the Turk at the time of composition and that 'Cyprus had not much been blessed for the past thirty-two years, and that that idea perhaps had ominous implications for our noble general Othello'.⁴¹¹ When the tragedy has run its course, Venetian authority takes over, preferring the Florentine, Cassio (V.ii.340-41). As with Shylock, Othello's wealth is brought under Venetian control, 'seize upon the fortunes of the Moor' (V.ii.376), a haunting reminder of Iago's ambiguous, repeated line encouraging Roderigo to put money in his purse, thereby gaining power as well as wealth – and this seizure of monies and goods renders outsiders literally and metaphorically valueless, a reminder of Vitkus's comment on the conflation of the political with the demonic.

⁴¹⁰ J. H. Walter, ed., *The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice* (Oxford: Heinemann Educational, 1976), p. 297.

⁴¹¹ David C. McPherson, *Shakespeare, Jonson, and the Myth of Venice* (London & Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990), p. 81.

This growing presentation of Othello as barbaric ‘other’ can only succeed, however, if the fissure created between him and his wife is maintained and enlarged, thereby removing him from the remembrance of goodness that she exemplifies. Their marriage is accepted early on in the play because his military skills are urgently needed, and Iago clearly acknowledges that the marriage will probably be a good one were he not to interfere ‘And, I dare think, he’ll prove to Desdemona / A most dear husband’ (II.i.277-78). It is the gradual estrangement from Desdemona that Othello experiences, as a result of his overwhelming Will, along with Desdemona’s own irresolute firm stance in her honesty that marks out Othello as moving away from a redemptive world and into chaos. Paradoxically, it is a move that is largely informed by his ‘Venetian belief’, fed by Iago, that all women are dishonest. This makes him disbelieve his wife and also Emilia when he questions her about Desdemona’s fidelity ‘she’s a simple bawd, / That cannot say as much’ (IV.ii.21-22); and of Desdemona ‘This is a subtle whore, / A closet lock-and-key of villainous secrets’ (IV.ii.22-23). It is a shift that ironically is recognised by Othello himself, although not fully understood until he has cast himself into damnation:

Perdition catch my soul,
But I do love thee and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again. (III.iii.91-93)

The shift of his soul from heavenly bliss to damned chaos, moreover, is already set up within the Venetian world. The likelihood of Othello’s estrangement from the Christian world is presented to us in the opening scene, which creates an uncomfortable mood, revealing distaste for the convert with whom the Venetians are not only forced to live but

to respect. As in *The Merchant of Venice*, the Christian world depicted here has lost the remembrance of goodness and has become obsessed with the perpetuation of its corrupt self and its augmentation of the fear of the outsider, epitomised in the Turk. Like Jessica's gold, Othello has a commodity, his military skills, that will, ironically, keep the 'infidel' away. The opening lines inform us of Iago's mercenary exploits with Roderigo's money whilst Iago's first word is a blasphemy that peppers the remainder of the play. The mood from the outset is ugly, Iago's hatred inextricably bound up with his desire to accumulate wealth and power, 'I know my price, I am worth no worse a place' (I.i.11). Unlike *The Merchant of Venice*, the hatred of the outsider is presented to us straight away; there is no idyllic painting of the Venetian world here, but one that is already in turmoil over Othello's marriage and the impending war with the Turks, Othello being the soldier who can secure salvation for Venice:

for he's embarked
 With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,
 Which even now stands in act, that, for their souls,
 Another of his fathom they have none
 To lead their business, (I.i.150-54)

Furthermore, Desdemona's soul is already considered in peril as it has been stolen by Othello, 'Thieves, thieves! [...] Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul / Even now, very now, an old black ram / Is tugging your white ewe' (I.ii.81-89). In a complete reversal of the Lorenzo/Jessica situation, where the Christians reputedly steal her soul, here there is concern for Desdemona's salvation, which is linked to the fear of miscegenation that abounds in the rest of the scene. Here he is 'kidnapping' Desdemona's soul for the Islamic world, as though the 'devil' Othello has absconded

with a 'fair' Venetian soul. Whether or not we should believe Iago's slander of Othello's nature here is one thing, what is unsettling is Roderigo and Brabantio's quick concordance with it.

Iago's listeners adhere to a social reality that has been founded on this idea of cultural similitude and as such are ready to believe Othello to be the outsider they always thought he was. Indeed, such is its power that Othello himself, as a product of the Venetian world, will also come to believe in his distinctive otherness.⁴¹² Stephen Greenblatt discusses this further when referring to the conquests in the New World, by suggesting that the dominant culture can permeate another, and will eventually assimilate it into its ideology to do with it as it pleases.

What is essential is the Europeans' ability again and again to insinuate themselves into the pre-existing political, religious, even psychic structures of the natives and to turn those structures to their advantage [...] There are periods and cultures in which the ability to insert oneself into the consciousness of another is of relatively slight importance, the object of limited concern; others in which it is a major preoccupation, the object of cultivation and fear.⁴¹³

This is what Venice does to Othello. By the enticements that Venetian culture seems to offer to a persuaded Othello, he 'becomes' a Venetian Christian, adopting a veneer of Venetian consciousness that he takes to be more deeply layered than it actually is. What is more, Othello's memory of his past undergoes a re-ordering and editing 'made possible by the subversive perception of another's truth as an ideological construct'.⁴¹⁴ Here, the

⁴¹² Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 48.

⁴¹³ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 227.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Venetian world clouds Othello's view of his past, giving him space to create an exotic myth about himself but at the same time always ready to subvert that myth into something more sinister, the 'erring barbarian' that can be immediately expelled, if necessary. When he commits outrage through the murder of his wife, he becomes the split subject, believing himself to be both the white man that shares his fellow Venetians' horror at the crime, and the 'other', Venice's reconstruction of him as the subject who must have viciously perpetrated it. The tragedy, then, comes from his difference, for it is his 'blackness' and his 'otherness' that he 'murders' at the end of the play, 'I took by th' throat the circumcised dog / And smote him thus' (V.ii.364-65).

Though he becomes both victim and perpetrator of his own downfall, he has also become what he believes the white Venetian thinks he should be, the uncontrolled outsider. Othello has failed to enter fully into Christian Venice not only because fundamentally it will not accommodate him, but also because his very attempt to insinuate himself into this dominant culture through marriage has forced him to destroy, in a misguided act of self-repulsion, a construction of his identity that has been forged through western discourse. It has also destroyed his wife, his Memory of goodness, through, as Katherine Eisaman Maus has noted, 'a kind of empathetic excess, fatally accepting a European outlook when it is least in his interests, inappropriately applying to Desdemona the conditions by which he defines himself'.⁴¹⁵ It is this attempt by Othello to look into Desdemona's character that Maus suggests is problematic, for in that attempt he sees only himself 'making the beloved comprehensible as a version of oneself: fair warrior,

⁴¹⁵ Katherine Eisaman Maus, 'Proof and Consequences: Inwardness and Its Exposure in the English Renaissance', in *Materialist Shakespeare*, pp. 157-80 (p. 173).

captain's captain, general's general'.⁴¹⁶ In this sense, the Othello/Iago/Desdemona psychomachiac pattern critiques the interiority debate in that Othello can see no further than his own image of himself in both Iago and Desdemona, shown in his disastrous efforts to 'read' the characters of his wife and his ensign.

But it is fundamentally the cold logic of Iago that brings about Othello's self-destruction, for Iago presents to Othello an alternative bond to that which he has with his wife. Iago's control of events after the Venetian court has accepted the marriage is designed to move Othello away from the idyll that he shares with Desdemona into a union with him. The lengthy Act Three, Scene Three that begins with an untroubled Othello closes with them both kneeling and swearing an oath to pursue and punish Cassio and Desdemona. The change in Othello is striking and signifies his move from the heaven that is Desdemona to the chaos and perdition that he will find in his bond with Iago, the homo-social alternative world that Iago offers him divorcing him from his soul and condemning him to a non-Christian otherness where Iago believes he belongs. What marks out the horror of Iago's actions is the fact that the Christian world destroys Othello from within their own environs whilst at the same time ensuring that it is Othello's own hand that metes out his own destruction in the murder of his wife and his own suicide. The enemy is twofold, therefore, in both Iago's world and Othello's own belief in his otherness.

Iago's actions also signify the social punishment that must be handed out to both Othello and his wife. Theirs is a marriage based not on the economic and cultural rules of the white Christian world but a supposed debasement of them. Paradoxically, the bond of

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p. 173.

love between Othello and Desdemona, along with the racial differences, marks them out as unsuitable, an aberration that disgraces Venetian sensibilities and puts into question the fate of Desdemona's soul. The disturbing coupling problematises all of Venice's Christian certainties and foregrounds Othello's wandering soul that has lost its way in a Venice that cannot accommodate him. The charivari as Iago noisily awakens Brabantio at the beginning of the drama, as Michael D. Bristol has noted, is intended to bring about the 'abjection and violent punishment of its central figures'.⁴¹⁷

The punishment of Desdemona, and her marginalisation from Othello's life, is set against the potentially redemptive qualities at her death. Bereft at the end of the drama, Othello, in true tragic mode, realises too late what he had forgotten – the memory of the goodness that was Desdemona and the image of her as his own soul that he has cast asunder 'of one whose hand, / Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away / Richer than all his tribe' (V.ii.355-57). As an image of concordant Memory personified in the female, like Donne's Elizabeth Drury, she is the forgotten part of the Augustinian tri-partite soul and as such full assimilation with the divine cannot take place for Othello, but also for Venice. Othello's closing lines indicate the damnation of the soul that has failed to accommodate this Memory 'Here is my journey's end', 'Where should Othello go?' (V.ii.274, 278). Desdemona's power as a redemptive figure for Othello has been overshadowed by the struggle between Will and Reason that has so dominated this drama and is probably seen most clearly in the fracture in their marriage that the insistent persuasions that Iago causes in the centrally placed Act three, Scene Three.

⁴¹⁷ Michael D. Bristol, 'Charivari and the Comedy of Abjection in *Othello*', in *Materialist Shakespeare*, pp. 142-56 (p. 142).

It is here that the 'divine' Desdemona becomes the 'whore'. Her faint cries as she dies epitomise her marginalisation through the text, reminiscent of Adriana's soul that is bruised with adversity and silenced, an image of fading Memory that is ignored and estranged from the main action, though ironically she is central to its dynamic. Her wish to be shrouded in her wedding sheets is a reminder of times when her husband knew of her goodness (IV.iii.23-24). Othello's portentous lines on finding that Desdemona has survived the tempest to Cyprus unnervingly remind us of a perfect moment in Othello's soul when Desdemona's powers to generate such perfection were at their height:

It gives me wonder great as my content
 To see you here before me. O my soul's joy [...]
 If it were now to die
 'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear
 My soul hath her content so absolute
 That not another comfort like to this
 Succeeds in unknown fate. (II.i.180-89)

The fall of Othello from this moment of perfection that marriage to Desdemona offers is bound up with the discarding of the Memory that epitomises her, which leaves Reason and Will to battle for supremacy. For Iago, the combination of the two, the cold, amoral judgement along with the drive to destroy, will overwhelm the hapless Othello who wears his heart on his sleeve 'For daws to peck at' (I.i.65).

This emotional excess is seen as a weakness that Iago notes several times in the play and we are informed on numerous occasions how self-control is the key to achieving one's own ends. Twice Iago tells Roderigo to control his Will and use his Reason: 'we have

reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts' (I.iii.325-26), that his feelings are 'merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will' (I.iii.329). Earlier he indicates the power of the Will 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners' (I.iii.316-18). Here, Will is capable of destruction without Reason to control and guide and where, as R. S. White indicates, the 'individual can do something about the future by exercising his will'.⁴¹⁸

The concordant Memory that is personified in Desdemona cannot have great effect against the might of Iago. One of the problems that besets Desdemona's power as an agent of Memory is her restricted access to the main part of the action. Though it is the central dynamic at the start of the text, Desdemona's character is restrained through the genre of tragedy that must focus on the collusion between Othello and Iago as their story forms the main thrust of patriarchal, tragic narrative. As part of this patriarchal discourse, her role, in early modern English custom, is to be marginal and silent, diametrically opposite to Iago and Othello's generation of words that in effect destroy her. When she speaks of her 'divided duty' (I.iii.180) between her father and the Moor with whom she has eloped and married, she speaks her sin, a deception that will be used by Iago to haunt Othello and which has already subverted the 'rightful' custom of a father to bestow his daughter on another, a 'magnanimous gift' that in fact ensures the daughter's ultimate obedience to the father.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ R. S. White, *Innocent Victims* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Tyneside Free Press, 1982), p. 69.

⁴¹⁹ *Daughters and Fathers*, ed. by Lynda Boose and Betty S. Flowers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 32.

Desdemona's authority, then, is constrained by the dominant male narrative and her death, a fading away, marks out the limit of her influence. Her independence of spirit and her single-mindedness that generates the action in the first third of *Othello*, action that defies strict convention, for she not only marries without her father's consent but also instigates the courtship between herself and her choice of suitor, should preface a strength that can be actioned through the play but cannot because of the restrictions of genre, and a dignified suffering marks her end. This spiritedness, or Will, is also her undoing, however, for it signals to Venice and to Othello disinclination to submission. Certainly, her single-mindedness has created in Othello, as Alison Findlay suggests, 'an underlying insecurity about Desdemona's independence of will [that] undoubtedly contributes to the ease which he believes Iago's lies' and her name itself is suggestive of the demonic.⁴²⁰

Notwithstanding, Desdemona's moral vigour remains strong despite the calumny that is spoken against her and when the unyielding and vicious force of patriarchal Venice comes down upon her, from her father, her husband and Iago, Desdemona's chastity and wifely obedience appear unquestionably intact. Her Christian forgiveness, in spite of the cruel defamations levelled against her, shines through the last two acts: 'If any such there be, heaven pardon him!' (IV.ii.139); 'Unkindness may do much; / And his unkindness may defeat my life, / But never taint my love.' (IV.ii.163-65); and her final line may be read as absolution for her husband's sin 'Nobody. I myself. Farewell. / Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell!' (V.ii.133-34).

⁴²⁰ Alison Findlay, *A Feminist Perspective on Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 142.

In contrast with the demonic images that permeate Iago's language, Desdemona functions as a diametrically oppositional force, the 'good angel' that Othello refuses to hear. As the play progresses and his moral descent quickens, Othello's own linguistic framework begins to evolve into a similar patterning to that of Iago and he, too, is set against the force of Desdemona's goodness:

Othello: She's like a liar gone to burning hell:

'Twas I that killed her

Emilia: O, the more angel she,

And you the blacker devil!

Othello: She turned to folly, and she was a whore.

Emilia: Thou dost belie her, and thou art a devil.

Othello: She was as false as water.

Emilia: Thou art rash as fire to say

That she was false. O, she was heavenly true!

Othello: Cassio did top her. Ask thy husband else. (V.ii.138-45)

Though Harry Berger Jr. ultimately argues that Desdemona is ethically culpable as her selfless actions paradoxically point to her moral high-mindedness, she nonetheless is:

a warrior, a trooper, who defends against the fate predicted by Iago in 2.1: it is possible to be a good wife and yet to avoid being reduced to a suckler of fools and chronicler of small beer. When the man she loves begins very soon, and unaccountably, to abuse her, she turns the other cheek. She makes excuses for him. She forgives him. Finally, when all else fails, she reduces herself to poor Barbary, who, forsaken by her mad lover, dies singing the willow song.⁴²¹

M. Lindsay Kaplan indicates the prevalence of the subordination of women at this time, which marks out Jessica, and Desdemona, too, as the subdued wife, who, like Eve must

⁴²¹ Harry Berger, Jr., 'Impertinent Trifling: Desdemona's Handkerchief', in *Othello: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by Lena Cowen Orlin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 103-24 (p.121).

pay for her transgressions.⁴²² As in Donne's *The Progresse of the Soule*, Eve's wrongdoing also instigates the wandering, lost soul that characterises Othello's damned journey.

When commenting on Western modes of power-wielding in the Virginia colony, Stephen Greenblatt argues that the implementation of the dominant force of the Christian God puts fears and doubts into the Native Americans and in turn subverts their hitherto firm beliefs. Further, in order to please this God, the indigenous population must serve their new masters otherwise the Almighty, too, will punish them. By conferring their own possible fall from grace on to the Native Americans, Greenblatt observes that this deliberate creation of subversion 'is the very product of that power and furthers its ends'.⁴²³ And to a point this is so in the plays examined here. As with Jessica, the world in which Othello finds himself is also a place that has fallen from grace and lost its remembrance of what was good. Venice is full of contradictions that situates his soul in an uncertain location, and in this hesitant space, Will has been overwhelmed by the cold force of degenerate Reason. When Othello asks why Iago 'hath thus ensnared my soul and body?' (V.ii.308), Iago's response is to invoke silence, the end of the dominant narrative and cold logic that has overpowered Othello. Though Iago will be tortured, there is no indication that he will be executed, which again suggests the triumphant power of Venice.

⁴²² Kaplan 'Others and Lovers in *The Merchant of Venice*', in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, pp. 342-44. Kaplan here describes Chrysostom's and Augustine's views on the position of female to male. She also cites the 1632 *The Lawes Resolutions of Women's Rights*, which tabulates laws up to the year 1597/8 and which stipulates that 'their desires are subject to their husband' because of Eve's first sin.

⁴²³ Stephen Greenblatt, 'Invisible Bullets: Renaissance authority and its subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*', in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 18-47 (p. 24).

Reason and Will in this play have been exemplified in the characters of Iago and Othello, parts of the soul that have been gendered masculine and set against feminised Memory. As part of the tri-partite equation, Reason and Will also appear to present to us a mirroring of the social hierarchy of male dominance that is foregrounded in much early modern tragedy, the feminised Memory subdued, forgotten or marginalized. In *The Merchant of Venice* the memorials to the past are effectively obliterated in the exclusion of Shylock and the sidelining of Jessica in Belmont. Marriage has been the means through which both Jessica and Othello have tried to engineer their salvation in a Christian world yet both suffer dislocation from that world. Their prospects of redemption are in doubt at the close of these plays, Christian Venice failing to secure a safe haven for their souls, as both characters fail to be accommodated in a world that has yet to reconcile itself with its past.

Though the gendering of Reason, Will and Memory are clearly seen in *Othello*, the gendering of Memory will be examined in more varied and subtle guises in the next chapter, where the importance of the female character in Shakespeare will be explored in greater detail. The image of Desdemona as a force of Memory that in this text has failed due to the overpowering presence of aggressive Will and Reason, will be examined further. The idea of the female character as both positive and negative agents of the Augustinian soul, some who can wreak havoc but also some who can bring about regeneration and reconciliation, will also be investigated.

Chapter Four

‘Her smiles and tears / Were like a better way’: Soul-agents and redemptive heroines

In the previous chapter the texts explored the uncertain fate of the wandering soul that moves into a world that prioritises the importance of the commercial, the concrete and the ascendancy of a kind of cultural imperialism over individual salvation: that to become ‘Christian’ was primarily an act of social integration that in itself was ranked, categorised and judged. The image of the silenced Desdemona at the close of *Othello* symbolises the extinguishing of Othello’s only means of salvation as she embodies the remembrance of a goodness he once possessed. These next two chapters will explore further this idea of female characters as emblems of Augustinian Memory. Like Elizabeth Drury and Desdemona, the female characters in these next plays are also used to direct others to a better way, though they both, up to a point, fail to fully realise this goal. I would like to call these characters “soul-agents”, for they represent the workings of Augustinian Memory for other characters and they actively help to bring about some kind of redemption.

I wish to examine two tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*. My choice is determined by how the central female character in each represents Augustinian Memory in a slightly different way. Juliet’s steadfastness, through the tribulations that seek to overwhelm her, sets her up as a beacon of hope. This hope is seen in Romeo’s descriptions of her as celestial and divine, which he seeks to attain, but also in her

resolute love that can overcome much. The hope she generates is seen in the other characters that salute the suggestion of a monument erected to her at the close of the drama. It is also seen in the spectators as well, moved by the unwavering power of her devotion. She shines through the text and she becomes the gold statue of Montague's wishes at the close of the play. She is a lasting monument, 'There shall no figure at such rate be set' (V.iii.300), the remembrance of love.⁴²⁴ Cordelia, too, brings remembrance of love, acting as an agent to promote the Memorial part of Augustine's tri-partite soul in others, onstage and offstage. Her stillness and infinite wisdom inform the text, the curative qualities of her character assuaging Lear's despair.

The soul-agent does not belong exclusively to the tragedies, for female characters in comedy are also active agents of Augustinian Memory, in patterns of education and restoration. For instance, Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Viola in *Twelfth Night* are examples of characters that help others to enlightenment, often by the freedom of movement that their change of gender permits. In the competitive and tyrannous court, Rosalind is a constant reminder of the contemplative self-scrutinising preferred by her father who finds 'sermons in stones and good in every thing' (II.i.16-17). As Ganymede, she educates all those who come to the Forest of Arden. She is the collaborative spirit of the forest, intimately connected to the play's mysterious religious figures – the 'old religious uncle' (III.ii.310-14), the old religious man' who converts Frederick (V.iv.149), and the 'magician' (V.ii.59) who invisibly directs others to harmony and wholeness by reminding them of good. Viola's actions in Illyria have a similar effect but she is a more

⁴²⁴ All references to Shakespeare's works are taken from *Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997).

profound image of Memory, as the faith she has in her belief that her brother is still alive, does indeed resurrect him. A wandering soul in search of her 'body' that is Sebastian, she functions to keep alive remembrance of her twin through her own persona subsumed into that of Cesario.

'As high as heaven itself': The steadfastness of Juliet

It is in the tragedies, however that the soul-agent works most profoundly for the redemption of others, for in the works examined here, her agency allows us a glimpse of the divine. The prototype of figures like Desdemona and Cordelia is probably to be found in Juliet. Created around the same time as the tightly perfected sonnets (c.1595), she is always associated with luminosity and the celestial, 'her eye in heaven / Would through the airy region stream so bright / That birds would sing and think it was not night' (II.i.62-64). The tropes that identify Juliet are conventional to the courtly love tradition and are found in many sonnet sequences. Shakespeare's text uses the conventional associations of the sonnet mistress with the divine and expands on this in the character of Juliet as an agent who acts as a beacon for the salvation of others. Moreover, Juliet, as a character on a stage, can extend beyond the celestial female of the sonnet form to embrace the body and the practical and social world that she inhabits in the play. This is important to the development of the soul-agent as one who can occupy both the physical and metaphysical and to the idea that redemption is found through the interaction of the two.

The occupation of divine space can be seen in Juliet as an image of the Augustinian soul and its direct link to the Trinity, which places her firmly in the ethereal world. She is figured as both the Will of the Holy Spirit, pure light to which others are drawn, but also one who becomes the memorialised icon to remind us of heaven. In Act Two, Scene One she is the east and the sun. Her eyes are ‘spheres’ (l. 59), the ‘brightness of her cheek would shame those stars / As daylight doth a lamp’ (ll. 61-62), and she ‘would kill the envious moon’ (l. 46), unusual in itself as women were more often associated with the inconstant moon which Juliet acknowledges is far removed from the love she has for Romeo (II.i.151-53). Romeo’s position dramatically forces him to gaze up at her from below the balcony as if she were heaven itself. His desire to ascend is not merely sexually motivated but from a stronger kind of love, ‘It is my soul that calls upon my name’ (II.i.209), his name in some sources meaning wanderer or pilgrim, the former he will have to endure when banished to Mantua, the latter when he visits his supposedly dead wife.⁴²⁵

The physical world that interacts with this divine space can be seen from the moment Romeo first sees Juliet. The short sequence takes the form of a Shakespearean sonnet, enveloping Juliet in a metaphorical shrine, giving Romeo the first quatrain and the final line of the couplet; she is the responding quatrain and the opening to the resolution found in the couplet. Their voices intertwine, she answering his questions, suggesting the two are one, and that Juliet is knowledge. The fifteenth line, outside the sonnet, is indicative

⁴²⁵ *World of Worlds* by John Florio (London, 1598) has the word *romeo* translated as ‘wanderer’ or ‘palmer’, a pilgrim to the Holy Land, *The Norton Shakespeare*, footnote 7, p. 888. See also Philippa Berry, ‘Between Ideology and Astrology: Modes of Temporal Repetition in *Romeo and Juliet*’, in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. by Dymphna Callaghan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 358-72 (p. 363).

of resolution through the purging of Romeo's sin by Juliet's divinity 'Thus from thy lips, by thine my sin is purged'. The next line, however, implies desecration as Juliet's lips have been infected by the word that is in Romeo's kiss, 'Then have my lips the sin that they have took', an unsettling thought given Juliet's doomed future. Within the sonnet, though, her hand is a 'holy shrine'(l. 91) and it would be 'profane'(l. 90) to touch it. His lips are 'two blushing pilgrims' (l. 92) and her lips would purge his sins (l. 104), an image in contrast to Donne's wayward pilgrim that has lost his way.

These lips will form a double paradox in the vault scene at the end of the play when they become the doors of breath for Romeo as he prepares to die when he kisses what he believes to be a corpse. Juliet's body becomes a blazon, each kissed part is eulogised, objects of adoration and paradoxically a restorative as Romeo leaves this world. It is a world that he knows to be a diseased and corporeal place when he visits the apothecary with its unpleasant images of suspended animation in the stuffed tortoises and alligators, the pressed rose petals, 'old cakes of roses' (V.i.47), indicative of Juliet as the 'sweetest flower of all the field' (IV.iv.56) yet doomed to be unfulfilled:

And in his needy shop a tortoise hung,
An alligator stuffed, and other skins
Of ill-shaped fishes; and about his shelves
A beggarly account of empty boxes [...]
O, this same thought did but forerun my need. (V.i.42-53)

The use of Memory here is seen in the degenerate remembrance of the 'meagre' (V.i.40) apothecary and the dead images that surround him, suggestive of time at a standstill, is set in opposition to the positive Memory of joining with Juliet 'forerun my need'. The

images that surround the death that Romeo must experience to be with Juliet signal a regenerative entrance to another world: 'life-weary' (l. 62); 'cannon's womb' (l. 65); 'Come, cordial and not poison' (l. 85).

So here is a character that has both images of the celestial and divine surrounding her but also strength to repair and assuage those who come near her. More than the mistress of the conventional sonnet, Juliet becomes an agent of remembrance of divinity seen in the image of the restorative cordial that brings death. She is heaven where 'immortal blessing' (III.iii.37) may be bestowed through her lips and anywhere where Juliet is not, is banishment and hellish 'the damned use that word in hell' (III.iii.47), again anticipating Donne's feelings of despair in *Divine Meditations* when he is estranged from God. This combination and seeming contradiction of gentleness and strength, the ability to suggest hope and dispel that which is loathsome is worked through in detail in this text, for intrinsic to Juliet's nature is action. She is not simply an icon of light and divinity, for Shakespeare takes great care to suggest her worldly agency. She has desires that drive her into action that sets her apart as the dynamic force of the couple, the one to whom Romeo looks for guidance before he can 'wander'. It is she who takes Romeo out of the world of romantic, passive love that epitomises his relationship with Rosaline, into the more tangible world of marriage, sexual consummation and the tricky management of exile. Here, Romeo learns to move, as a pilgrim, from the earthly desires that occupied him in Verona before his banishment, to the 'feasting presence full of light' (V.iii.86) that is Juliet's tomb.

The dynamic movement towards Juliet as a beacon that reminds us of the divine, and which separates her from the passivity of the sonnet mistress, is epitomised in the vault scene where all characters will gather and experience the dénouement at the close of the drama. It is a resolution that will have them all contemplate the monument to her. It is to Juliet that we as audience are also asked to look at the end of the play and it is into her world that we are invited during the course of the drama. For example, Shakespeare indicates strongly the transgressive nature of Romeo and Juliet's relationship as it inverts the Elizabethan norm of social coupling. Romeo is frequently shown entering a female world: the masked ball at Capulet's house; the orchard; the balcony scene; the wedding bed and finally the vault all belong to Juliet's imprisoned existence and as such emphasise that their marriage is private rather than socially recognised. Juliet, then, is situated outside of social law and one can also argue that the celestial imagery that surrounds her sets her outside of linear time and into the eternal. Philippa Berry, citing Kristeva, argues that conventional marriage would equate the couple with temporal continuity but as their marriage is covert and exists only within Juliet's domain, it becomes, 'repetitive or cyclical, and monumental (or eternal) - in opposition to the linearity of historical time'.⁴²⁶ The father's authority, which, on the betrothal would be conferred upon the husband, is negated, setting Juliet free from the constraints she would normally have to suffer in a typical marriage.⁴²⁷ As she retains her sense of self, it is Romeo who loses his identity in the marriage rather than the conventional tradition of the

⁴²⁶ Philippa Berry, 'Between Idolatry and Astrology', p. 359.

⁴²⁷ Julia Kristeva, 'Romeo and Juliet: Love-Hatred in the Couple [Le couple amour-haine selon *Romeo et Juliette*]', in *Romeo and Juliet: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by R. S. White (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 68-84 (p. 69).

loss of the bride's nomenclature and maidenhood. There is an irony, then, in the balcony scene when Juliet asks Romeo to 'doff thy name' (II.i.89) to:

Retain thy dear perfection which he owes
Without that title [...]
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself. (II.i.88-91)

Name comes to signify loss and it is Romeo, not Juliet, who must surrender his name and his virginity. It is he who 'must stay and die' (III.v.11), a reference to impending death if he does not flee to Mantua but also a suggestion of death in sexual ecstasy, a term usually associated with the female. From the beginning of the play, it is clear that Romeo is unfulfilled, that his desire is, 'predicated on lack and even its apparent fulfilment is also a moment of loss'.⁴²⁸ She organises their relationship, and whilst one could argue the case that this may be ultimately what leads to their doom, she nonetheless represents an image of the driving authority of the female that in the romance plays will accrue restorative power.

Like the romance heroines, discussed in the next chapter, Juliet is in a way dispossessed and this separates her from all the other characters in the play. Locked within the confines of Capulet's narrow world, she has little connection with her parents, no brothers or sisters. Her closest family member, Tybalt, is killed, her husband exiled, and the nurse and, finally, Friar Laurence eventually estrange themselves from her. She is an independent figure who acts outside social law. This allows her to soar into a transcendent realm, beyond the confines of the societal limitations that so dominate this

⁴²⁸ Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 139.

drama. As Harold Bloom notes, ‘her sublimity *is* the play’.⁴²⁹ And through her character we experience intimations of ecstasy.⁴³⁰

As a consequence, death seems to evade Juliet, even at the end of the drama, though it has pursued her throughout the text. It is ‘amorous’ (V.iii.103), she is ‘his paramour’ (V.iii.105), he ‘lies on her like an untimely frost’ (IV.v.28). Yet there is much vigour in Juliet and a strong resilience and life-drive. Indeed, Juliet, like Desdemona, experiences two ‘deaths’, for both revive briefly. Juliet’s first death is a mistake, a misunderstanding or a presumption before actual death. She has the opportunity to die again and, in a sense, this second death can be read as resurrection. Juliet parts company with the world using the paradox ‘die with a restorative’ (V.iii.166), and the watchman compounds the idea with the term ‘newly dead’ (V.iii.174). The gold monument to Juliet that Montague has raised becomes an image of her immortality, outshining the sun itself that is too sorrowful to ‘show his head’ (V.iii.305), and interestingly it is an image that is indicative of Catholic memorial and festival.⁴³¹

Juliet, then, can be seen as the beginnings of the idea of the female soul-agent as bringer of hope and fulfilment through remembrance of the divine. She steadfastly guides Romeo like a pilgrim towards redemption. Lloyd Davis cites an earlier, seminal text that provides a similar idea. Pietro Bembo’s ‘Neo-platonic paean to divine love’ at the end of Castiglione’s *The Courtier* deserts sexual love for greater wisdom:

⁴²⁹ Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare and the Invention of the Human* (London: Fourth Estate, 1999), p. 89.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁴³¹ See Berry, ‘Between Idolatry and Astrology’, pp. 368-9.

through the particular beautie of one bodie hee guideth her to the universall beautie of all bodies [...] Thus the soule kindled in the most holy fire of true heavenly love, fleeth to couple herself with the nature of Angels.⁴³²

He remarks how Bembo relinquishes his identity and gains transcendence. Similarly, Romeo is complete only when he surrenders his sense of self to Juliet. It is his essence, rather than his social position in Veronese society, that constitutes this idea of fulfilment and only Juliet can complement and fill this spiritual space. Such loss of self 'brings narration and character to an end'.⁴³³ The final line of the play states that he is '*her* Romeo', [emphasis mine], and the couplet ends with a feminine stress, perhaps to indicate the story is not finished even if the play is. Her memory and that of her Romeo should inspire love and reconciliation between Montagues, Capulets and spectators on and off stage who are encouraged to go and 'talk of these sad things' (V.iii.306) by the Duke. The monument erected to her indicates her memorial immortality.

'A soul in bliss': The transcendent wisdom of Cordelia

In a later text Shakespeare again provides evidence of the development of the female who guides and brings about change though this text explores a far bleaker world than *Romeo and Juliet*. Written around 1604-1605, certainly after *Othello* and before *Macbeth*, *King Lear* features a female character whose gentle strength is pivotal to the plot. She is one who shifts the reality of Lear's world that initially is based on the dogma of feudal

⁴³² Lloyd Davis, 'Death-marked love': Desire and Presence in *Romeo and Juliet*, in *Romeo and Juliet: Contemporary Critical Essays*, pp. 28-46 (pp. 34-35).

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

servitude, to a more humane level, 'one who speaks the words of aspiring humanity'.⁴³⁴

In a reversal of expectation, the allegiance that is expected of Cordelia as the daughter of a feudal sovereign is turned into seeming rebellion, but it is through this that Lear begins his journey into self-realisation. The social bond that unites them in ancient Britain becomes transformed into a more humane bond that unites them at death.

Yet there are elements of a more spiritual relationship that emerge between Lear and his daughter, although this is painfully brief. Earlier, Lear acknowledges that she is 'a soul in bliss; But I am bound / Upon a wheel of fire' (IV.vii.46-47), an image of the purgatorial voyage that Lear has still to make before he attains rest. A few lines later he indicates that she is already a spirit, has already died, 'You are a spirit, I know. When did you die?' (IV.vii.49). The scene is replete with images of reparation and devotional overtones: Lear is a 'child-changed father' (l. 17); his clothes are changed as he sleeps, indicating renewal (l. 22); Cordelia cites the magical powers of her lips, 'Restoration hang / Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss / Repair' (ll. 26-28) words deeply reminiscent of Juliet's final lines. When Lear is asked by his daughter to hold his hands over her in benediction (l. 58) to bless her, it prompts Lear to kneel in supplication, her very request suggesting that she has acted as an agent for his humility.

But this sacred bond comes about only after the initial lack of tri-partite unity that leads to dislocation and chaos in the opening scenes, where Lear's ploy of dividing his kingdom into three distinct sections results in his own downfall as well as that of his most

⁴³⁴ Arnold Kettle, 'The Humanity of 'King Lear'', in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by Kiernan Ryan (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1993), pp. 17-30 (p. 20).

loving daughter, Cordelia. That which was once a kingdom falls into disrepair, through Lear's indulging his desire to mete out largesse through power and his shock at not receiving what he desired to hear. Lear's dictatorial approach is manifested through his verbal munificence that contrasts with Cordelia's refusal to use language to speak untruths, the play's exploration of authoritarian language over silence suggesting that the latter indicates a means of understanding through faith rather than the might of the word. As R. S. White has suggested, 'eyes may be a more trustworthy index of truth than words'.⁴³⁵

Lear's over-abundance of self-esteem, however, seems 'hideous rashness' (I.i.154), a 'foul disease' (I.i.168) that has infected his system. This infection has split his 'soul' in the form of his three daughters who were symbolic of his unified kingdom before his rash decision. This split can be seen in an Augustinian tri-partite model of the soul that has become infected through sin. The degenerate Will of Lear is seen again in Regan and Goneril's insistent attempts to seize power. Good Reason has been displaced and Memory, exemplified in Cordelia's simple reminder of unsung love, is forgotten. Lear's 'madness', or loss of Reason, referred to by Kent at the moment of his tumultuous decision in the opening scene, (I.i.149), does subside when he 'remembers' his daughter towards the end of the play and the 'great breach in his abused nature' (I. 15) is cured. Here, regenerate Reason and sense are returned once the memory of what his child really is, is restored:

Lear: Methinks, I should know you, and know this man;

⁴³⁵ R. S. White, *Innocent Victims* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Tyneside Free Press, 1982), p. 84.

Yet I am doubtful, for I am mainly ignorant
 What place this is [...] Do not laugh at me;
 For, as I am a man, I think this lady
 To be my child, Cordelia. (ll. 64-70)

The doctor's statement that the 'great rage' (l. 78) has subsided concludes the scene.

The restoration of balance through Cordelia as divine Memory is brought about to remedy Goneril and Regan's intemperance in the earlier scenes. They present to us the dual force of 'selfish wilfulness', which, like Plato's charioteer, are impossibly difficult to control once power is given to them.⁴³⁶ The force of this Will, and its alarming predilection for choosing evil over good, was thought in the seventeenth century to be powerful by Protestant thinkers as well as Catholics. The Anglican divine Joseph Hall, for instance, states in 1632:

The will is no less cunning: which though it make faire pretences of a generall inclination to good, yet [...] in particulars, hangs towards a pleasing evill; Yea though the Understanding have sufficiently informed it of the worthinesse of good, and the turpitude of evil, yet being overcome with the false delectableness of sinne, it yields to a misse-assent; Reason being (as Aquinas speakes) either swallowed up by some passion, or held downe by some vicious habit: It is true, still the Will follows the Reason, neither can doe otherwise; but, therefore, if Reason misled be contrary to Reason, and a schism arise in the soule, it must follow that the Will must needs be contrary to Will and Reason.⁴³⁷

Goneril and Regan's collective Will has subsumed Reason, which is now 'held downe by some vicious habit', as Hall indicates. Dislocated from their sister, they fall prey to greed and lechery, prompting Lear's comment that 'Man's life is cheap as beast's' (II.iv.268), subject to baseness without good memorial influence and without full rational control.

⁴³⁶ William R. Elton, "*King Lear*" and the Gods (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1968), p. 280.

⁴³⁷ Joseph Hall, *The Great Imposter* (London, 1632), pp. 17-18.

Goneril and Regan prompt an inversion of the chain of being – a debasement of Man’s affiliation with God - leading William Elton to argue that ‘Goneril and Regan help to destroy that Medieval and Renaissance pride in the unique and exemplary possession of a rational soul, that “dignity of man”’.⁴³⁸

Lear’s closing lines over Cordelia’s body emphasise the shift from this dignified status to utter baseness, ‘Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life, / And thou no breath at all?’ (V.v.307). Their indulgent Will is realised in the linguistic intemperance that dominates their opening speeches in the ironic ‘A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable’ (I.i.58) and the excessive ‘she names my very deed of love; / Only she comes too short’ (I.i.70-71) that contrast with Cordelia’s ‘spare’ love. The prose they use at the end of this important opening to the drama reinforces the idea, as John Reibetanz has indicated, that ‘the well-balanced blank verse was, like all their later speech, meant for public consumption; this prose that begins with a hiss (‘Sister, it is not little I have to say of what most nearly appertains to us both’) bares for a brief moment the fangs of the real Regan and Goneril – these adders, as Edmund calls them (V.i.56-57)’.⁴³⁹ The force of this appetite is to ‘eat’ all that was Cordelia’s, ‘Cornwall and Albany, / With my two daughters digest the third’ (I.i.127-28). Shakespeare’s juxtaposition of the words ‘hideous rashness’ and ‘judgement’ (I.i.151) in Kent’s speech also enforces the loss of Reason that has befallen Lear once he divides his kingdom. As Goneril coldly indicates with an incisiveness that is reminiscent of Iago, ‘Old fools are babes again; and must be us’d / With Checks, as flatteries, when they are seen abus’d’ (I.iii.19-20).

⁴³⁸ Elton. *“King Lear” and the Gods*, p. 191.

⁴³⁹ John Reibetanz, *The Lear World: A Study of King Lear in its Dramatic Context* (London: Heinemann, 1977), p. 87.

Such a fracture of the Augustinian tri-partite model, then, creates a sense of separation from the divine. Huston Diehl argues that the world of *King Lear* is bereft of spirituality, where ‘the gods are repeatedly invoked but never manifest themselves, a country where the human capacity for evil is very much in evidence’.⁴⁴⁰ Diehl links this to the anxiety that surrounds the Protestant Reformation and the fear of dislocation from God that such reorganization may have inadvertently created. As Debora Shuger suggests, such dislocation creates ‘a sense of the absence of God that verges on despair’.⁴⁴¹ Certainly, Cordelia’s exile from the main action of the play in the opening scene, and her sojourn in Catholic France until she returns to free Lear from his ‘bereaved sense’ (IV.iv.10) and rain holy tears on his ‘ungovern’d rage’ (IV.iv.20), indicate this despair and the overwhelming effects of unchecked Will.

The three sisters - with Goneril and Regan acting as one force of uncontrolled Will - and their father also provide a mirror that reflects a similar tri-partite positioning within the play in the domestic sub-plot of the Gloucester/Edmund/Edgar story. Like Cordelia, Edgar is banished from the world of his foolish father and evil brother to become Poor Tom, an image of the outcast, a man without identity, who, through the course of the play, is in fact redeemed. His exile effects a position similar to Cordelia: his status as ‘mad’ renders him as an abject force, liminally positioned along with the female, outside of the societal governance of Lear’s patriarchal world. As Lear’s god-son, Edgar is

⁴⁴⁰ Huston Diehl, ‘Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespearean Tragedy*, ed. by Claire McEachern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 86-102 (p. 96).

⁴⁴¹ Debora Kuller Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 70.

indeed reminiscent of the deranged king who is exorcised as ‘the outcast with no possibility of working his way back to the centre’.⁴⁴²

The Gloucester plot shows us another version of the king, on a more domestic level, with the Will of Edmund wearing away at the deranged father’s loss of Reason, whilst the virtuous brother is forced into social exile. W.R. Elton suggests that the double plot in *King Lear* ‘identifies in Lear and Gloucester traditional aspects of the sensitive soul: the irascible and the concupiscible matching the protagonists’ anger and lechery’.⁴⁴³ And certainly, excessive appetite, or Will in the Augustinian model, within the sensitive soul has caused the problems that set in motion each character’s catastrophic trajectory. For Lear, occupying the higher rank of the two, his excess is to be found in the mind, which ‘receives the conventional punishment of madness’, whilst Gloucester’s is to be found in the flesh, with ‘the conventional retribution of blindness’.⁴⁴⁴ Elton goes on to cite, among others, Guillaume Du Vair’s 1598 *The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks* where the senses disturb the area of the soul where wrath and sexual excess dwells and that as a result, Reason cannot take firm hold.⁴⁴⁵

The ‘miracle’ that Edgar works on his deranged father can be seen in the Dover cliff scene. The feigned cliff edge that brings Gloucester from despair to hope is central to the idea of faith through Memory that Cordelia brings back to Lear when he realises his mistakes. Gloucester’s renouncement of the world (IV.vi.35) moves to forbearance on

⁴⁴² Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 117.

⁴⁴³ W. R. Elton, ‘Double Plot in *King Lear*’, in *Shakespeare: King Lear. A Selection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Frank Kermode (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1969), pp. 245-64 (p. 245).

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

Edgar's advice that he remembers the gods 'thou happy father, / Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours / Of men's impossibilities, have preserv'd thee' (IV.vi.72-74). Edgar's theatrical chimera allows his father a chance at redemption that he would otherwise have rejected in suicidal despair, manifested in his resolution to bear his afflictions once he acknowledges the divine and realises the 'fiend' that has hoodwinked his sense, 'a new recognition of his role in a larger play, [that] enables him to tap the previously hidden resources in his being'.⁴⁴⁶

I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear
Affliction, till it do cry out itself
"Enough, enough" and "die." That thing you speak of,
I took it for a man: often't would say,
"The fiend, the fiend:" he led me to that place. (IV.vi.75-79)

But what is also central to this scene is the importance of the manifestation of faith through illusion, for both Gloucester and the audience. The cliff exists neither in the reality of the play nor could it ever on the stage itself. Gloucester's change from despair to hope is brought about through trickery, though the outcome has proved that the method is effective.

Edgar's miracle works on us too, as we suspend our disbelief and for a moment before the trick, believe the cliff to be there, part of an audience's acceptance of stage conventions. Gloucester informs us that he thinks 'the ground is even' (IV.vi.3) but Edgar tells us it is 'Horrible steep' (IV.vi.3), which concludes the pentameter and helps conflate the two meanings of 'even' and 'steep', suggesting it is both at the same time. This belief

⁴⁴⁶ Reibetanz, *The Lear World: A study of King Lear in its dramatic context*, p. 66.

through illusion counteracts the prevalent post-Reformation movement, epitomised in Samuel Harsnett's 1603 *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* that argued the connection between Papist idolatry and the artificiality of theatre, of negative manipulation through deceit. For, argues Diehl, Shakespeare here reveals 'how deep is the human longing for a divine miracle, how unbearable life can be in a world where good seems absent, remote, hostile, or indifferent. He shows how easily people can be tricked into a false belief in miracles and asks whether, for some people at least, such a belief, however fallacious or delusional, is necessary'.⁴⁴⁷ Such a moment is Gloucester's refutation of the 'fiend' that has led him astray, indicated by Stephen Greenblatt when describing the potency of the exorcist, that 'by the power of theatrical suggestion the anxious subjects on whom the priests work their charms come to believe that they too have witnessed the devil depart in grotesque form from their own bodies, whereupon the priest turn their eyes heavenward and give thanks to the Blessed Virgin'.⁴⁴⁸

Though both Greenblatt and Diehl argue the benefits of theatrical and theological illusion, they both believe it to be just that. Greenblatt states that 'evacuated rituals, drained of their original meaning, are preferable to no rituals at all'.⁴⁴⁹ Diehl suggests they are 'a deep nostalgia for lost rituals and old ways'.⁴⁵⁰ However, the trickery that is the theatre, which is brought to our conscious attention in the Dover cliff scene, is an effective transubstantiation that shows that truth and illusion can exist at the same time. Though Lear, Gloucester and Cordelia will all 'die' at the close of the play, deaths that

⁴⁴⁷ Diehl, 'Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy', p. 97.

⁴⁴⁸ Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. 118.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴⁵⁰ Diehl, 'Religion and Shakespearean Tragedy', p. 100.

move us quite profoundly, they in fact do not die at all, for they are resurrected at the next performance. Shakespeare's use of the pentameter, too, signals that Cordelia's death is both truth and illusion:

Lear: If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
 Why, then, she lives.
 Kent: Is this the promised end?
 Edgar: Or image of that horror?
 Albany: Fall and cease!
 Lear: This feather stirs; she lives! (V.iii.260-64)

Lear's heartbreaking conditional 'If that her breath will mist or stain the stone, / Why, then she lives' (V.iii.261-62) is followed by a doom-laden response from Kent 'Is this the promis'd end?' (V.iii.263) Edgar's next line 'Or image of that horror?' (V.iii.264), however, indicates its artificiality as a piece of stage action but also, like Cordelia, he brings hope of resurrection. Shakespeare's use of the pentameter is employed here to give multiple meanings, for 'Why then she lives' runs on to 'Is this the promised end?' changing the meaning of Kent's line to an image of hope. Similarly, Edgar's 'Or image of that horror' runs on to Albany's 'Fall, and cease!', suggests that the sight of a dead Cordelia should come to an end. If we take this reading of the language, Lear's 'The feather stirs; she lives!' then can be seen as actually true. Given breath of life by the actors and within the pentameter itself, the bleak end to *King Lear* can in effect offer miraculous recovery: Cordelia's goodness not erased in the bleak landscape, but very much present, for the stone will mist and the feather will stir. The miraculous, then, is present in the creation of character itself that can never die 'As long as men can breathe

or eyes can see' (Sonnet XVIII, l.13) and our interaction with it, as when Gloucester is about to jump, is at once real and unreal.

As a symbol of the central power of the tri-partite soul that represents Memory, which for Augustine corresponded to Jesus Christ, Cordelia has been linked to the Christian idea of the Saviour who reminded the world of God's goodness. The Christian imagery that is woven into Cordelia's lines offers hope and a promise of salvation despite the play's seeming pessimism and depiction of a world that is without a sense of an afterlife and is rooted in a language that focuses continually on the negative. The repetitive strains on 'never' (V.iii.307) are, as Stephen Greenblatt suggests, 'the poetics of despair'.⁴⁵¹ Cordelia's 'light' that shines through the text does indeed seem extinguished at the end, though Lear's final words recall the magic of her lips and instructions for all to gaze on her as though there are remnants of hope 'Look on her, look, her lips, / Look there, look there' (V.iii.309), highlighting again our attention to focus on the living, breathing mouth of the actor. And indeed, despite its gloom, there are elements of the 'great structural rhythms of Christianity: a passage through suffering, humiliation, and pain to transcendent wisdom and love', and ultimately it is Cordelia that has set such a journey in motion.⁴⁵²

In this light, Cordelia can be seen as a Christ-like figure, sent down to redeem the earth through patience and goodness. Her powers of redemption and link to Christ can be seen

⁴⁵¹ Greenblatt, *The Norton Shakespeare*, p. 2311.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 2313.

when we are reminded that she has saved the world from the ‘general curse’ of Adam and Eve’s sin:

Thou hast one daughter,
Who redeems nature from the general curse
Which twain have brought her to. (IV.vi.199-201)

This is spoken by the ‘choric’ Gentleman and extends the idea, to the audience as well as the characters in the play, the link between Lear’s redemption and that of mankind. Paul N. Siegel has suggested that through the analogy between Cordelia and Christ and the choric figure that utters the line, the play escapes the boundaries of the theatre into a more profound space:

There is, then, hinted to the poetic imagination a miracle greater than all the other miracles in the drama that has been wrought by the ‘love, dear love’ (IV.iv.29), which has brought Cordelia from her high place in another country to suffer in gentle fortitude for the sake of Lear. This miracle is the redemption of Lear for heaven, a redemption analogous to the redemption of mankind, for which the Son of God had come down on earth.⁴⁵³

Further to this are Cordelia’s tears that seem to ‘rain’ virtue over the whole of the text as though attempting to purge the tortured landscape that is so indicative of Lear’s pain:

All bless’d secrets,
And unpublish’d virtues of the earth,
Spring with my tears! be aidant, and remediate,
In the good man’s distress! – Seek, seek for him;
Lest his ungovern’d rage dissolve the life
That wants the means to lead it. (IV.iv.16-21)

⁴⁵³ Paul N. Siegel, ‘Adversity and the Miracle of Love in *King Lear*’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 6:3 (1955), 325-36 (p. 335).

Her ‘importuned tears’ (IV.iv.27) are from divine eyes ‘There she shook / The holy water from her heavenly eyes, / And clamour moisten’d’ (IV.iii.28-30) that indicate the restorative power of her grief. Yet she is ‘Sunshine and rain at once’ (IV.iii.17), ‘the image of the rainbow, the pledge of future harmony arising out of contradiction’ that offers hope to others in the play.⁴⁵⁴ Indeed, it is at this point in the play that Lear ‘unequivocally associates himself ‘ with his daughter who has shown him ‘a better way’ (IV.iii.20), though tragically it cannot take hold in such a world as is Lear’s.⁴⁵⁵ Alison Shell has suggested that tears as a literary trope are commonly found in the works of both Catholic and Protestant divines, an image of purgation and suffering that must accompany prayer and ritual, and can often be read as a lead up to conversion:

Tears-literature called to repentance, repentance was the necessary prelude to conversion, and though conversion was potentially a part of spiritual life for any Christian, it often necessitated changing doctrinal allegiance. Ecstatic repentant weeping was frequently experienced by converts, including those changing from Protestantism to Catholicism.⁴⁵⁶

As soul-agent to Lear, Cordelia’s tears do indeed bring her father to a ‘better way’, a renunciation of his former self, though it is not to be found in the ‘concrete’ world of his other daughters whose greed does in fact lead to poisoning (V.iii.228). The scene where Cordelia next appears after she has rained her tears on the earth (IV.iv) finds her dead in Lear’s arms, eradicated by what Arnold Kettle describes as the ‘new people [Goneril, Regan, Edmund, Cornwall] who hate and fear her’.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Kettle, ‘The Humanity of “King Lear”’, p. 28.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁵⁶ Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 88.

⁴⁵⁷ Kettle, ‘The Humanity of “King Lear”’, p. 27.

The better way that Cordelia offers is, like the morality plays found in medieval drama, set against the ‘back-drop of eternity’.⁴⁵⁸ An Everyman figure, Lear is led to self-knowledge not only through the companionship of Good Deeds that is Cordelia but also the insistent intrusion of Vice who beguiles and tempts him. The ‘psychomachia’, or spiritual conflict, which ensues from this intrusion, is part of Man’s lot on Earth before redemption may be found in Heaven.⁴⁵⁹ However, Shakespeare’s notion of redemption here is more problematic than the earlier dramas, for salvation is not so easily defined in the early seventeenth century. Though I have argued that Cordelia’s death is in fact a resurrection, there is still the problem of the tragic form that encompasses and destroys her.

Perhaps what Juliet, Desdemona and Cordelia do that has such a profound effect upon the other protagonists in the plays is that they act, and their actions refute the conformity of the social world in which they find themselves. They are agents whose behaviours reject the absolutism of the strictures that would normally enclose them within patriarchal confines. Possessing a stubbornness that is born of a moral certitude, they cannot be swayed and as such they provide the ethical core to the texts.

Removed from life at the end of their dramas, all these women in fact die ‘twice’: Juliet’s suicide after her initial ‘death’; Desdemona’s short-lived recovery from smothering; the hope and truth that is in Cordelia’s breath all suggest images of resurrection in their second, ‘true’ death. For Cordelia, her ‘divinity’ cannot be extinguished by the dark insinuation of non-existence that surrounds the world depicted in *King Lear*.

⁴⁵⁸ Oscar James Campbell, ‘The Salvation of Lear’, *English Literary History*, 15:2 (1948), 93-109 (p. 94).

⁴⁵⁹ David M. Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth and Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England*, p. 10.

Do these ‘redemptive’ females, then, bring about their desired resolutions?⁴⁶⁰ Locked within the confines of tragic discourse, the heroine cannot but fade from the text. Though the deaths of Juliet, Desdemona and Cordelia have connected to them images of renewal, they are nonetheless characters of tragedy that are conventionally fated to come to an untimely end, unfulfilled and arguably unable to exert their very commendable influences to a positive effect. Although they bring about self-enlightenment for the heroes – similar to Elizabeth Drury’s effect on Donne - and a kind of ‘sacred’ transformation before death, as soul-agents should do, they cannot gain salvation for them, for they are all incarcerated within the tragic framework of these plays. In *King Lear*, one can be persuaded to believe, as Jonathan Goldberg has argued, that the hope that is in Kent’s speeches (III.i.), so important at this mid-point of the drama, of ‘the restorative forces of France, the return of Cordelia, the regaining of identity’, seems ultimately dashed.⁴⁶¹

Yet I would argue that Cordelia points to ‘a better way’ (IV.iii.18), for her devotion is undoubtedly ‘moving and edifying’, the illusion of the theatrical providing such an emotive response.⁴⁶² Though the tragic mode has transported its main characters towards a sense of doom, the very presence of these young females has offered a ‘kind’ of transfiguration for them and perhaps for us, the audience, too, whose sense of hope is re-

⁴⁶⁰ In comedy, both Rosalind and Viola regenerate and vivify those around them, Arden and Illyria offering space that can accommodate their energised actions. Their disguises are central to their success for they offer both characters a freedom to act and speak in a manner that their female world would never allow. One senses, though, that their return to a more conventional world and marriage at the close of the dramas signal the end to their remarkable powers and there is a strong indication that they fade from significance.

⁴⁶¹ Jonathan Goldberg, ‘Perspectives: Dover Cliff and the Conditions of Representation’, in *King Lear: Contemporary Critical Essays*, pp. 145-57 (p.145).

⁴⁶² Richard C. McCoy, ‘Shakespearean Tragedy and Religious Identity’, in *A Companion to Shakespeare’s Works* (Vol. 1, *The Tragedies*), ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp. 178-98 (p. 190).

kindled at each performance. Stephen Greenblatt argues that ‘The close of *King Lear* in effect acknowledges that it can never satisfy this dream [of redemption], but the acknowledgement must not obscure the play’s having generated the craving for such satisfaction’.⁴⁶³

Shakespeare’s female soul-agents in the tragedies do not work with the same transformative and iconic power as Elizabeth Drury in Donne’s *Anniversaries*. For Donne, the transition from the diseased world of ‘The First Anniversarie’ to the optimism of ‘The Second Anniversarie’ is predicated on the immortality that he affords to Elizabeth Drury as an emblem of the soul’s divine continuity: she is his re-birth after the gloom and despair of earlier years and a signal that he will be redeemed, and his publication of these poems an indication of their communal, celebratory qualities. Nevertheless, the daily performances of Shakespeare’s dramas signal a similar sense of that continuity, for, like Elizabeth Drury, these females are given life through art. A. C. Bradley reminds us of the ‘contrast between the outward and the inward, Cordelia’s death and Cordelia’s soul’, that the corruption that the play examines ‘which break our bodies, set our souls free’.⁴⁶⁴ This inner world that these soul-agents lead us into, away from the concrete to a more fluid space, will be explored in the next chapter, where Shakespeare’s Romance dramas offer us possibilities outside of the realm of the tragic mode and its insistence of the force of the individual will, to a more collective, shared space. Certainly, after the emotional ‘emptying out’ that is *King Lear* it is difficult to imagine a further exploration of such personal despair; or if indeed the unsettling effects of tragedy can

⁴⁶³ Greenblatt, *Shakespeare Negotiations*, p. 125.

⁴⁶⁴ A. C. Bradley, ‘King Lear’, in *Shakespeare: King Lear. A Selection of Critical Essays*, pp. 83-117 (pp. 112, 113).

truly offer an understanding of the sacred. It is as though these female characters can do no more than signal, in their final moments, the dreamscapes that will present to us the promise of the divine.

Chapter Five

‘Rich and Strange’: Soul-Agents as Catalysts of Harmonious Regeneration

At the close of *King Lear* we saw the pieta of Cordelia in her father’s arms and a direction for us to look at her lips, which I have suggested can be read as an image of hope, for they remind us of the breathing actor who will play future roles and explore further what Cordelia so readily demonstrates: quiet remembrance that can offer peace. This final chapter looks at other roles that Shakespeare creates in which the extent of the soul-agent’s capabilities, previously dashed by the limits of the tragic mode, are explored. The single most important feature, which allows these soul-agents more scope than Cordelia or any other female character examined thus far, is the genre in which they are depicted. The Romance, I will argue, opens up a freer space where the soul-agent may function. Such space is created by the displacement of a privileged patriarchal discourse central to the tragedies. This new world allows for the burgeoning and liberation of the individual imagination, or individual dreaming, which, at the same time, paradoxically sets up the theatre as a space for communal memory. One trope that Shakespeare uses to explore these changes and transformations in the drama is alchemy, which is embedded into the verbal and stage imagery and action of the plays, and is recreated on a larger scale in the theatrical performance itself.

Romance, Soul-Agency and Alchemy

Four of Shakespeare’s last plays will be examined: *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*. Neither Shakespeare nor his contemporaries would have used the

term ‘romance’ to describe any play text at that time, of course. Edward Dowden is the first to use the term suggesting that, in the plays to be considered here (excepting *Pericles*), ‘the ties of deepest kinship between them are spiritual’ and that, (including *Pericles*), ‘there is a certain romantic element in each [...] they avoid the extremes of broad humour and of tragic intensity’.⁴⁶⁵ Tragi-comedy could be applied to these plays, to describe the plot or action. The ‘romance’ plot offers a wider scope for the soul-agents to operate, to generate the goodness that both comedy and tragedy so abruptly extinguish. The late plays of Shakespeare, coming after a series of tragedies and comedies, also have within them the ‘miraculous’, found to a lesser extent in, say, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, (c.1594-96). It is worth pausing to consider how the miraculous events typical of romance are reworked in the dramatic narratives of Shakespeare’s late plays.

The texts have the ‘miraculous’ woven into their plots, setting up the conditions for the dominant themes of re-birth and regeneration, and each also has a young heroine who is intrinsic to the development of these themes. Romance, I would argue, goes beyond plot for it also suggests the effect that the plays have on the audience: they become enraptured, captivated but also filled with wonder at miraculous outcomes, making them an active part of the dramatic experience. Much has been made of the themes of redemption, forgiveness and re-birth but also of the vibrancy of change that these plays offer. Simon Palfrey’s *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (1997), for example,

⁴⁶⁵ Edward Dowden, *Shakspeare: A Critical study of His Mind and Art*, 10th edn (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1892), p. 403.

talks of the ‘fearlessness’ of these texts, that they are dissonant, conflicting and diffuse.⁴⁶⁶

Non-linear narrative and ancient Greek, Roman and ‘new world’ landscapes contribute to the disorienting effect for spectators. The dramatic devices reveal gaps, lacunae and slippages in the plot structures of the texts, quite removed from the more conventional, Aristotelian techniques that are seen in earlier work, particularly in the tragedies. These spaces make room for the soul agents to work a sense of the miraculous on other characters and the audience.

The young heroines, Marina, Perdita, Innogen and Ariel/Miranda (I wish to take these characters together), are all catalysts in the re-shaping of the narratives in their plays. Marina and Perdita, for example, become regenerative agents that make possible redemption for characters who have suffered loss, sometimes through their own mistakes. Innogen and Miranda bring together new worlds, allowing for communal and political regeneration. The soul-agents are re-creators, transporting spectators, through the heroine’s fortitude and patience, to a greater world than the one they are exposed to in the opening scenes of each drama. The exploration of such female ‘alchemy’ will be central to this chapter.

The diverse ‘ingredients’ in these dramas are important when considering the soul-agent’s function, for, paradoxically, it is within the hurly burly of narrative possibilities,

⁴⁶⁶ Simon Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare: A New World of Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 265. See also H. W. Fawkner, *Shakespeare’s Miracle Plays: Pericles, Cymbeline and The Winter’s Tale* (London & Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992); Helen Hackett, ‘Gracious be the Issue: Maternity and Narrative in Shakespeare’s Late Plays’, in *Shakespeare’s Late Plays*, ed. by Jennifer Richards and James Knowles (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 23-39; Peggy Muñoz Simonds *Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare’s Cymbeline: An Iconic Reconstruction* (London & Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1992), pp. 280-82; David M. Bergeron, *Shakespeare’s Romances and the Royal Family* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p. 184.

outside the conventional modes of tragedy and comedy, in which spectators are both beguiled and awed, that the soul-agent can find a space. Barbara A. Mowat has argued that these texts:

expand the implications of the tragic and comic perspectives, juxtapose tragic and comic effects, include death and weddings, throw open the world to gods, spirits, beasts and monsters, and force the spectator to oscillate between (or to experience simultaneously) sentimentally naïve responses and a sophisticated awareness of the ironic.⁴⁶⁷

Mowat's definition of Shakespeare's texts indicates that the audience's response is complex and variable and, I would argue, fresh. Pre-suppositions of what a text will reveal cannot be presumed when the plots defy expected dramatic logic, are conflated and distorted, extending the margins of improbability and making them reminiscent of dreamscapes. They invite wonder through the exploration of the possibility of worlds outside the realm of the 'real'.

It is important to note how Shakespeare's romance dramas differ from their earlier counterparts that found popularity in the medieval period and beyond. Simon Palfrey has argued that traditional romance offers the audience a 'sentimental image of shared nostalgias, based in the airing of familiar language (proverbs, puns, aphorisms, stock jokes, and metaphors) and generic situations that are at once liberating and comforting'.⁴⁶⁸ He notes that these dramas are ultimately a 'social narcotic' that largely

⁴⁶⁷ Barbara A. Mowat, *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1976), p. 27.

⁴⁶⁸ Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare*, p. 18.

gratifies the audience.⁴⁶⁹ This cannot be said of Shakespeare's use of the romance formula, for I would like to argue, again citing Palfrey, that these texts are deeply disturbing and often violent and that Shakespeare is in fact creating 'a new genre [...] emerging amid the wreckage of old distinctions'.⁴⁷⁰ The depiction of Caliban as a 'thing of darkness' (V.i.278), of the severed body of Cloten, of Antiochus's rape of his child, of the death of Mamillius after the abrupt severance from his mother, combined with domestic and political miracles, all work on the imagination to perturb, intrigue and confront expectations and to contest our assumptions about drama itself.⁴⁷¹ H. W. Fawkner suggests that these texts are 'close to signifying nothing', that they create an empty space of signification that allows for 'otherness' to take hold of the audience and thus experience drama anew, an idea that allows a space for the soul-agent to operate.⁴⁷²

It is here, in the gap that Shakespeare has created, that the soul-agent may effectively function. Cordelia, for example, is exiled from Lear's court for a great part of the play; she is in France but we cannot go there for the tragedy must focus on Lear's world. In *Pericles*, Marina, too, is exiled, but here we can go with her and see what powers she has over others before she will return to help redeem her father. This is true also of Perdita, whose sojourn away from Leontes' court allows us to see more clearly her considerable qualities, and of Innogen and the effect she has on Belarius, Guiderius and Arviragus in Milford Haven. By subverting the expected prioritisation of one character and place over another, these texts can give scope to 'lesser' characters whilst over-ruling monolithic

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁷¹ All references to Shakespeare's works are taken from *Norton Shakespeare*, ed. by Stephen Greenblatt and others (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997).

⁴⁷² Fawkner, *Shakespeare's Miracle Plays*, p. 17.

assertions of what drama might constitute. They are a ‘theatrical experience, which breaks through the aesthetic, deliberately destroying dramatic coherence and consistency in order to waken us to new insights or truths, or to provide us with an experience sharply different from the experience of watching closed-form drama’.⁴⁷³ Such hybridity through inversion of expectation, permits a freedom to female characters, able to perform within less patriarchal structures, moving in spaces and time that would otherwise be denied them.

Why, then, does Shakespeare embark on such ‘indiscriminate levelling of hierarchies and scrambling of distinctions’?⁴⁷⁴ It was a move that prompted a bemused Ben Jonson to describe the romance dramas as ‘a concupiscence of jigs and dances’.⁴⁷⁵ But their ultimate merriment reveals far more than this, for they are dangerous in their delight of the pagan, the uncultivated and the untamed, glorying in a world that finds regeneration in the conflation of pre-Christian and Christian mores that re-evaluate and challenge a chronological vision of birth, life and death.

Furthermore, these texts can be seen as correctives, repairing the mistakes made by earlier Shakespearian characters. It is not critically reductive to suggest echoes of Desdemona are heard in Innogen’s ‘False to his bed? What is it to be false?’ (III.iv.39); or Othello in Leontes’s ‘Too hot, too hot: / To mingle friendship farre is mingling bloods’ (I.ii.110-11). Or of Lear’s wish-fulfilment in Cymbeline’s ‘O, what am I? / A mother to

⁴⁷³ Ibid., p. 100.

⁴⁷⁴ Kiernan Ryan, ‘Introduction’, in *Shakespeare’s Last Plays*, ed. by Kiernan Ryan (London & New York: Longman, 1999), pp. 1-21 (p. 15).

⁴⁷⁵ Ben Jonson, ‘Bartholomew Fair’, in *Three Comedies*, ed. by Michael Jamison, 6th edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), *The Induction on the Stage*, ll. 118-19.

the birth of three? Ne'er mother / Rejoiced deliverance more' (V.vi.369-71). Wrongs righted are integral to these plays, giving characters a chance for reparation and forgiveness denied to earlier creations, and this can happen only in romance. Death is as real in these plays as in the tragedies and often comes about through similar moments of ill-fortune or bad judgement; but death can be reversed and fortunes restored to those who are patient and let fate take its course, 'Led on by heav'n, and crowned with joy at last' (*Pericles* Sc. 22, l. 113). Indeed, patience and faith underpin these texts and it is the young female characters that, like the earlier creations examined in the previous chapter, act as agents to promote these two qualities in others.

If patience and faith are central to these dramas, then they are not limited to characters on stage but also are qualities that are required in the audience, which cannot apply a priori knowledge in order to make the texts legible. This is where the function of the soul-agent extends beyond the acting space into the communal world of the audience, for it is to the soul-agent that the audience is drawn. She becomes our ultimate guide and we are directed to follow her journey, whether it is a literal one in *Pericles*, or a metaphorical one as Miranda moves from ignorance to knowledge of a new world and marriage in *The Tempest*. As the audience are invited to become involved in the drama as more than just spectators of, and reactors to, events, the soul-agent steers us through the seeming inconsistencies that this new genre generates. She is presented as an image of constancy, guiding us through the dramatic 'jarrings' and non-teleological narrative structures that disengage the audience from the conventions it expects, which, as Peter Platt argues,

‘evince[s] a dramaturgy that reinforces their intellectual preoccupation with uncertainty’.⁴⁷⁶

Such loosening of the usual strictures of dramatic practice, I would argue, allows for the introduction of the soul-agent device that can efficiently and freely work within the new structural dynamic that the romance sets up. This genre also permits the soul-agent to act as redeemer for characters *and* audience who have been encouraged to wonder and who are guided and enlightened at the close of the drama. ‘Let your imagination hold’ (Sc.10, l. 58) advises Gower; ‘Imagine Pericles arrived at Tyre’ (Sc.15, l.1); ‘Strike all that look upon with marvel’ (V.iii.100) states Paulina as Hermione is brought to life; ‘Yet you are made / Rather to wonder at the things you hear / Than to work any’ (V.v.53-54) says Posthumus in response to an extraordinary chance meeting; ‘This is as strange a maze as e’er men trod; / And there is in this business more than nature / Was ever conduct of’ (V.i.245-47) marvels a bewildered Alonso as Prospero’s magic is worked through. By placing the audience in this active, if somewhat unpredictable role, through the sense of uncertainty that Peter Platt has indicated, it can more readily receive the miraculous transformations that each text demands. The intercessions of the central female characters bring about these strange alterations, allowing a reading of existence beyond the ‘real’ and thus challenging what might be thought as ‘definitive editions of what life is or might be like’.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Peter G. Platt, *Reason Diminished: Shakespeare and the Marvellous* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 127.

⁴⁷⁷ Kiernan Ryan, ‘Shakespearean Comedy and Romance’, in *Shakespeare’s Romances: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by Alison Thorne (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 27-52 (p. 37).

Thomas Rist has suggested that invitations to let the imagination wander hearken to Augustinian Memory, where we must go back into our past in order to comprehend what is being presented in the non-causal narrative that the romances generate ‘According to St. Augustine [...] God is to be found in memory [...] Such recollection entails the activity of the imagination’.⁴⁷⁸ He cites John Rist, who notes that such introspection enables us ‘to reach something fixed and unchanging, something within us which is not an image constructed from our defective reading of ourselves and of the external world, but a meeting (which can be misunderstood and misinterpreted) with the unchanging God’; and that ‘Augustine holds that all thinking is based on a form of recreation of images, of imagination’.⁴⁷⁹ The contemplative mood that these dramas effect allows an audience to delve deeper into internal worlds other than those that they would normally use as their prime mode of referencing when confronted with the theatrical experience. I would like to further Thomas Rist’s argument by suggesting that it is the soul-agent in the texts to be studied here who is primarily identified with Augustinian Memory and who ultimately facilitates beneficent remembrance.

We have, then, in Shakespeare’s romances a concoction, a collision of ‘ingredients’, of forms, lacunae, non-causal narratives, which defy dramatic logic and can arguably generate a sense of wonder and a remembrance, in Augustinian terms, of ‘something fixed and unchanging’. Central to this, I am arguing, is the soul-agent who can find a space to operate within this new form and can be an agent of Augustinian Memory. The

⁴⁷⁸ Thomas Rist, *Shakespeare’s Romances and the Politics of Counter-Reformation* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), p. 63.

⁴⁷⁹ John Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptised* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 88, 86.

soul-agent is a kind of catalyst, who sets in motion the changes that are needed to effect the regeneration that the romance genre offers, but who herself will not inherently change, for she represents that which is constant, and, as we will discover, is linked to images of the divine. As my use of the term ‘catalyst’ suggests, I believe that Shakespeare is drawing on another cultural source that helps to underpin these ideas of regeneration and wonder, particularly in *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*: namely alchemy.

The philosopher’s stone that can transmute base metals into gold is often symbolised as an alchemical wedding, where male and female materials come together to form one harmonic whole. This coming together accentuates another feature of the romances, which is the romantic attachment of the young hero and heroine, seen, for example, in the marriages of Innogen and Posthumus in *Cymbeline* and Miranda and Ferdinand in *The Tempest*; but it is also in the reunification of Leontes and Hermione in *The Winter’s Tale* and Pericles and Thaisa in *Pericles*. It may also anticipate the betrothal of James’s daughter Elizabeth with Frederick, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, for whom, though evidence is not conclusive, the masque in *The Tempest* may have been later added.⁴⁸⁰ But this process cannot be fully realised until all ‘corruption’ is removed from the two halves and their ‘death’ – the removal of foul matter – is signalled by the presence of *nigredo* a black substance that suggests the putrefaction is removed. This ‘corruption’ can be seen in the arduous journeys that certain characters must make in the texts until they reach a state of wisdom, which is achieved through the catalyst in each text – the soul-agent. To use alchemical terms, she is the *prima materia*, or, as De Rola suggests, ‘the Mercury of the Wise’:

⁴⁸⁰ E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1957), p. 29.

The *nigredo* phase ends with the appearance on the surface of a starry aspect, which is likened to the night sky which told the shepherds and kings that a child was born in Bethlehem. And so the first work, the degree of perfection, nears completion when, from the mutual destruction of conjoint opposites, there appears the metallic, volatile humidity which is the Mercury of the Wise.⁴⁸¹

The link here with Christ's nativity is important to this thesis as it allows the soul-agent to be identified both with the regenerative properties that alchemical purification offers and the redemptive properties that Christ represents 'The figure of Christ as the "almighty chymist" descending to purge the world of its [corrupt matter] and make it new, is frequently employed in seventeenth century alchemical literature'.⁴⁸² Stanton J. Linden indicates such poets as Vaughan and Milton as examples of 'eschatological doctrine conceived alchemically' but also notes other writers such as Flamel, Sendivogius, Houpreght and Tymme.⁴⁸³ Thomas Tymme's 1612 *A Dialogue Philisophicall* states:

The true felicitie of that Heavenly and most blessed life to come, consisteth in these things. First, in the restoring of all the chiefe things in Nature to a farre greater, and more high perfection then now they have [...] Also, in [Paul's] Epistles to the Ephesians, and Colosians, he saith: that all things whether in Heaven or in Earth, shall be restored in Christ.⁴⁸⁴

John Frederick Houpreght's 1680 *Aurifontina chymica*, follows a similar line:

⁴⁸¹ Stanislas Klossowski De Rola, *Alchemy: The Secret Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 11.

⁴⁸² Stanton J. Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks: Alchemy in English Literature from Chaucer to the Restoration* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), p. 35.

⁴⁸³ Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks*, pp. 34-35.

⁴⁸⁴ Thomas Tymme, *A Dialogue Philisophicall* (London, 1612), p. 68.

Wherefore Gold is by Art dissolved with *Mercury*, that the unripe may be holpen by the ripe, and so Art decoting, and Nature perfecting, the Composition is ripened by the favour of Christ. Whence the cause may be derived, why by the help of the Philosophick Art, more perfect, noble, and by many degrees more elevated Gold is made, sooner and in less time, than by the work of Nature.⁴⁸⁵

Peggy Muñoz Simonds has argued that the early modern mind would be adept at deciphering the complicated alchemical coding system that is difficult to modern readers.⁴⁸⁶

Though alchemical symbolism is varied and complex, the romance dramas draw on set images that are central to alchemical practices. One key image is derived from Paracelsus's notion of the *tria prima* – salt, sulphur and mercury – from which all matter is made. Sulphur, which corresponds to the soul, is the 'mediating principle which unites the two contraries'.⁴⁸⁷ Mercury is the spirit, also linked to the soul and the prime material in the production of the philosopher's stone; salt is the body to ensure growth and structure and will be linked with the use of the word 'dust' or 'ashes', in Arviragus and Guiderius's lament over Innogen's body, for example, or in Gower's story in *Pericles*.⁴⁸⁸

The alchemical wedding, the bringing together of male and female elements, produces the philosopher's stone, or wisdom, and is facilitated by a third means, Mercurius, or the prima material, which seals the union. This image of conjunction can be seen in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* by the soul-agents Miranda and Perdita's means of bringing together parents who have been separated; but it is also seen in *Cymbeline* and *The*

⁴⁸⁵ John Frederick Houpreght, *Aurifontina chymica* (London, 1680), pp. 211-12.

⁴⁸⁶ Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, Music in Shakespeare's Cymbeline: An Iconic Reconstruction*, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁸⁷ Lyndy Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 176.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

Tempest where the soul-agents themselves, Innogen and Miranda, are part of the wedding that harmonises political strife.

One of the most important alchemical processes refashioned in Shakespeare's Romances is the *nigredo*, or the drawing out of that which is impure can be seen in the numerous references to poison that will be examined in these texts, particularly the Queen's desire to administer such to Innogen in *Cymbeline*. Poison is also used metaphorically in the descriptions of characters such as Antiochus and Giacomo, for example. This process of putrefaction takes place in the 'alembic', the container in which transformations take place, an idea that will feature in *The Tempest*.

The drawing out of impurities finds its counterpoint in the image of the tree. In *Pericles* and *Cymbeline* the tree represents, in alchemical terms, the philosophical tree which symbolises, in its growth, the route to the completion of the philosopher's stone. The tree supposedly is nourished with 'arcane mercurial water', also considered to be the *prima materia*, and water imagery will be central to soul-agents such as Marina, Miranda and Ariel.⁴⁸⁹ The tree is also used in these texts to indicate the renewal of an edenic utopia, suggestive of new beginnings.

Shakespeare's introduction of alchemical symbolism to the theatre brings together the relationship between art and nature. It was thought that art, the magus's ability to mix together the right materials, could improve nature and bring it closer to the ethereal or the divine and it is a central quality of the dramatist himself. This relationship is debated in

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 151.

The Winter's Tale between Perdita and Polixenes 'an art / Which does mend nature' (IV.iv.95-96) and exemplified when the statue of Hermione is brought to life. It is central to *The Tempest* where Prospero uses his magic to make good the wrongs of the past and is also fundamental to theatre itself that can transform ordinary actors and spectators into something remarkable, 'something rich and strange' (I.ii.405).

Shakespeare's use of the soul-agent in relation to the workings of the romance drama and in his employment of alchemical symbolism will here be explored in two sections: firstly, through the domestic troubles Pericles and Leontes confront, which impact on their sovereignty, and then in the political and social worlds that affect Cymbeline and Prospero. The idea of the journey, where in alchemical terms the nigredo is putrefied, will be examined in *Pericles*, while the art and nature debate will be explored in *The Winter's Tale*. The alchemical wedding of Posthumus and Innogen will become the apotheosis of *Cymbeline*. And the theatre itself, the alembic in which the ingredients are distilled in order to create the Philosopher's Stone, will be central to *The Tempest*.

'Thou that begett'st him that did thee beget': Marina and the Water of Life

Pericles was written around 1607-8 and is thought to be a collaboration with George Wilkins, though the nature of this alliance is uncertain.⁴⁹⁰ Its source is John Gower's fourteenth century *Confessio Amantis* and unusually, the author, Gower, appears as the

⁴⁹⁰ The substantiation of this joint venture rests largely on the pedestrian verse of the first nine scenes, with their abrupt end-stoppages and proliferation of rhyming couplets that have been attributed to Wilkins and resemble other writings of his. The rest of the play, with the possible exclusion of Gower's Epilogue, is ascribed to Shakespeare. It was omitted from the First Folio of 1623, probably because of its joint authorship and it was not until 1780 that it was provided with act and scene divisions, though the Norton edition, used here, prefers consecutive scenes to the end, providing indication of possible act divisions.

presenter of the narrative, unfolding and editing it for us, leading us to a resolution that we cannot easily decipher for ourselves through conventional means, as if un-packaging a dream. This makes spectators receptive to the new narrative structures that they are about to witness and consequently open to different prioritisation of characters for when the soul-agent is presented to us. Gower is also an agent of memory and of wonder. His archaic Prologue has been resurrected from ‘ashes ancient’ (l. 2) in a dramatic alchemical reconstitution of pre-Reformation days: ‘It hath been sung at festivals, / On ember-eves and holy-ales’, (l. 5-6) and will be a ‘restorative’, (l. 8).

This choric figure’s narrative has ‘the effect of distancing or framing the events, and creating a split in the audience between empathetic participation and critical awareness somewhat as in the Brechtian alienation effect’.⁴⁹¹ He guides us to the eventual interweaving of plots that introduces Marina’s actions:

I do beseech you
To learn of me, who stand i’th’ gaps to teach you
The stages of our story [...]
Like motes and shadows see them move awhile;
Your ears unto your eyes I’ll reconcile. (Sc 18, ll.7-22)

Like an efficacious sermon, Gower’s story edits and presents only that which will edify his listeners and watchers, so that what is merely ‘motes and shadows’ shall indeed become clear, the patience of his audience being tantamount to the success of his tale, ‘exercising his god-like power to bring before us only what we most need in order to

⁴⁹¹ Ruth Nevo, ‘The Perils of Pericles’, in *Shakespeare: The Last Plays*, ed. by Kiernan Ryan, pp. 61-87 (p. 68).

prepare ourselves for the miracle he is here to report'.⁴⁹² This editing will help Pericles to the margins through the lethargy that will infuse his being, and provides a space for the introduction and development of the soul-agent.

The plot is that of the fortunate Fall, the *felix culpa* that allows for the coming of Christ, where Pericles appears in an allegorical landscape as a kind of Everyman figure whose odyssey, from despair to salvation, will comprise the play. The fall paves the way for the introduction of the soul-agent as the catalyst that will bring about this redemption, the link to Christ a reminder of Cordelia's role in Lear's narrative. Pericles's fate hangs upon a riddle, and he must wander to find the answer to his life, to move away from the skeletons that inform Antiochus's barren world, unhappy and full of misfortune, for the story will end 'in a vision, the revelation which restores Pericles from his death-like sleep to the sound of glory'.⁴⁹³ From his departure from Antiochus's palace until his marriage to Thaisa and the subsequent storm in Scene 11, that will herald the birth of Marina, there is a lethargy that permeates Pericles's nature, a 'sad companion, dull-eyed melancholy' (Sc. 2, l. 2)

The opening scene reveals a world that is replete with decay and mortality, a world that anticipates Donne's image of the world without Elizabeth Drury in 'The First Anniversary': 'This great consumption to a fever turn'd, / And so the world had fits' (ll.19-20). Pericles's encounter with Antiochus and his daughter situates him in a mock pre-lapsarian world where the tree image is central, 'To taste the fruit of yon celestial tree

⁴⁹² John Arthos, 'Pericles, Prince of Tyre: A Study in the Dramatic use of Romantic Narrative', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 4:3 (1953), 257-70 (p. 265).

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

/ Or die in the adventure' (ll.64-65), the 'fair Hesperides / With golden fruit' (ll.70-71). The rottenness that is at the core of Antiochus's court – his incestuous relationship with his daughter – is indicative of the stagnant state that cannot proceed but turns in on itself and can be linked to the nigredo, or poison, that must be eradicated through alchemical putrefaction. Helicanus's story (Sc. 8) of the conflagration that is the death of Antiochus and his daughter follows an alchemical patterning of purification.⁴⁹⁴ The ensuing progress of Pericles is seen in his journey through a landscape that is bleak and perilous, reminiscent of Donne's wandering soul of 1601, until finally redeemed by his daughter. Pericles, however, is the object of action rather than the agent of it. This displacement causes him to become a re-actor to events rather than controller of them, which will allow a lacuna for Marina to fill. Pericles is a cipher, 'frail mortality' (l.85), not fully formed, and placed in an over-determined environment, at the mercy of events until he undergoes transformation at the end of the drama through the intercession of his daughter.

Before Marina's entry into the drama, Thaisa's fate prepares us for her daughter's links to the fluid and the ethereal. Thaisa has no real burial; she is cast 'scarcely coffined' (l. 59) into the sea where she must lie with 'simple shells' (l.63). Such a burial suggests that the body is 'sleeping' rather than decaying, the sea providing a transient, almost womb-like resting place, 'humming water' (l. 62). In alchemical terms, Thaisa's repose in the coffin surrounded by seawater suggests the image of the bath, or balneum, where cleansing takes place.

⁴⁹⁴ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, p. 76.

The bath, submersion, drowning and baptism are synonymous, and symbolise the breaking down and cleansing of the old outmoded state of being, leading to the birth of the rejuvenated, illumined man.⁴⁹⁵

That Marina and her mother are inextricably linked to the sea foregrounds the fluidity that is often associated with the power of the female but also is suggestive of baptism and new beginnings, reminiscent of the alchemical process. Re-vivification through water is found in Thaisa's journey from death to Ephesus, also by the sea and the place where St. Paul converted many to Christianity. Water is also linked to alchemical imagery as 'arcane mercurial water' of the balneum was thought to feed the philosopher's tree.⁴⁹⁶ In the scene where Cerimon revives Thaisa, there are references to the coffin being 'wondrous heavy' (Sc. 12, l. 52), 'o'ercharg'd with gold' (l. 55) and her eyelids have 'fringes of bright gold' (l. 98), the repetition of gold suggestive of the regenerative power of alchemy to transform Thaisa into something rich and strange, 'Did not you name a tempest, /A birth and death?' (Sc. 22, ll. 53-54).

Marina, an apt nomenclature, is born on the waves and is always situated close to it. She has no fixed roots, seen in the cyclic images conjured in the rhetorically linguistic phrasing 'born'/'buried'/'found'. Marina is not 'of any shores' (Sc. 21, l.91), and 'wast born at sea, buried at Tarsus, /And found at sea again' (Sc. 21, ll.182-83), giving a fluidity to her nature that unlocks her from an earthly base that might fix her to a more concrete world. H. W. Fawcner describes Marina as 'groundless', not belonging to solid land, and links this with Shakespeare's desire to extricate characters from generic

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 151.

restrictions, allowing them to move from a peripheral to a central space where they may become active agents within the drama.⁴⁹⁷

Marina's first appearance strongly suggests her allegorical signification as a soul born in tempest and set to wander. Lychorida introduces her as 'this piece / Of your dead queen' (Sc.11, ll.17-18) and anticipates Paulina's scene with the newborn Perdita.

The living part of Thaisa remains and will become active in the resurrection of her mother through the intercession of the goddess, Diana, in the final scenes of the play, where Thaisa will be reunited with her 'soul', Marina. Marina's entrance into the world is 'blust'rous' (l. 28), the elements being invoked as her introduction. But heaven is also added to this list, suggestive of the intermingling of elements with the divine to create a perfect alchemical union:

Thou hast as chiding a nativity
As fire, air, water, earth, and heav'n can make
To herald thee from th' womb. (ll. 32-34)

It is an indication not only of her dramatic entry that augurs an active life, but that divine providence will also be associated with her future, the positioning of 'heav'n' directly after the elements suggesting its inextricable link with life on earth. We are also reminded here that she is a princess that has had the 'rudliest welcome' (l. 30) to the world, possibly reminiscent of Christ's beginnings and Palfrey has suggested that 'the romance

⁴⁹⁷ Fawkner, *Shakespeare's Miracle Plays*, p. 18.

heroines evoke a tradition [...] in which the princess is symbolical vessel of the ideal nation or true church'.⁴⁹⁸

Marina's 'divine' power to transform others is clearly demonstrated in the brothel scenes. Abandoned and left in the brothel, Marina miraculously escapes the imminent rape to become a soul-agent for the redemption of others. Despite the crude overtones to the scenes, Marina affirms a saint-like fortitude, reminiscent of tortured resilience:

If fires be hot, knives sharp, or waters deep,
Untied I still my virgin knot will keep.
Diana, aid my purpose. (129-31)

Such fortitude inspires the conversion of the two gentlemen to virtue 'I am out of the road of rutting forever' (Sc. 19, ll. 8-9); astonishes the Bawd 'she is able to freeze the god Priapus, and undo a whole generation' (11-12); and mollifies Boulton, whose attempts to ravish her fail.

Marina's fortitude here links her to a divinity that allows for redemption in others in the community as well as the domestic once she encounters her father. The brothel scene indicates the communal self-renewal that is brought about by the simplicity and commitment that she adopts. What is significant about these brothel scenes is the way Marina uses language to unravel another's desires. It is particularly noticeable in the scenes with Lysimachus and Boulton. Like Cordelia before her, and indeed Isabella in *Measure For Measure* who is a 'thing enskied and sainted' (I.iv.33), there is both a quiet

⁴⁹⁸ Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare*, p. 199.

resilience that is born of moral certainty, and a sense of Marina as beyond the earthly who thus cannot be touched.⁴⁹⁹ Her language and her thoughts are unaffected by the pressures around her, for she ‘retains possession of a language uncolonised by her oppressors’.⁵⁰⁰ When questioned by Lysimachus she firmly and repeatedly pronounces her affiliation to his honour:

Let not authority, which teaches you
To govern others, be the means to make you
Misgovern much yourself. (Sc. 19, ll. 91-93)

When pressed by Boult, Marina shames him by pointing out his slavishness to others that demand the services of the brothel ‘Thy food is such / As hath been belched on by infected lungs’ (Sc. 19, ll. 183-84) and offers to teach him a better way of living. Unlike the female who must, as the Bawd indicates, ‘go the way of women-kind’ (Sc. 19, l. 165), Marina is set her apart from the corporeal. Her dialogues with Lysimachus and Boult allow them to question themselves, whilst she remains implacable and essentially truthful. Lysimachus notes that ‘Though I brought hither a corrupted mind, / Thy speech had alter’d it’ (Sc. 19, ll. 121-22), and that she is a ‘Preserver in that clear way thou goest’ (l. 127). As governor of Mitylene, he leaves the brothel a changed man that may affect his citizens for the good. Even the uncouth Boult is transformed by the prospect of Marina’s suggestion that she educate him. By providing the brothel ‘family’ with the

⁴⁹⁹ Lorraine Helms discusses the uses Shakespeare makes of metaphoric androgyny in Marina’s character that also prevents rape in the brothel scene in ‘The Saint in the Brothel: Or, Eloquence Rewarded’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41:3 (1990), 319-32 (pp. 328-30).

⁵⁰⁰ Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare*, p. 206

possibility of positive change, she is one who ‘works to negotiate the aspirations of the commonality’ as Palfrey suggests.⁵⁰¹

It is, however, Marina’s effect on her father that offers us a vision of her as one who can revivify and regenerate the past. As memorial influence, Marina as soul-agent is reminiscent of Cordelia’s effect on the ‘blind’ Lear who eventually ‘sees’ his child. Her opening speech to Pericles on their first meeting since her birth indicates the importance of the past as central to an individual’s understanding of himself, for Marina’s forbearance since her move from parents who ‘stood equivalent with mighty kings’ (Sc. 21, l. 79) suggests that she, like her father, has undergone an edenic fall but still retains hope. Her genesis in water reminds us she is a creature capable of change, shown in the inversion of role when she becomes father to her parents, ‘Thou that begett’st him that did thee beget’ (Sc. 21, l. 182). This also foregrounds and anticipates new beginnings that confound patriarchal solidity:

Tell thy story.
 If thine considered prove the thousandth part
 Of my endurance, thou art a man, and I
 Have suffered like a girl. Yet thou dost look
 Like patience gazing on kings’ graves and smiling
 Extremity out of act. (Sc. 21, ll.122-27)

The word patterning that Shakespeare employs in the moments of recognition is a deliberate rhetorical device that underlines the trope of remembrance. The use of anadiplosis, the doubling back of a word, forces an emphasis and a remembrance of it:

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., p. 204.

Pericles: Here of these shores?
 Marina: No, nor of any shores (Sc. 21, l. 91)

Here, Shakespeare also allows Marina to finish the pentameter that is suggestive of their coming together. The use of chiasmus, mirrored phrases, to dramatise Pericles's gradual recognition of his child, enacts the process of redemption through the recall of memory brought about by Marina, the soul-agent:

Pericles: Where were you born?
 And wherefore called Marina?
 Marina: Call'd Marina
 For I was born at sea.
 Pericles: At sea? What mother?
 Marina: My mother was the daughter of a king. (Sc. 21, ll. 142-45)

And when memory has been restored to Pericles, there is a compression of both these devices:

Thou that begett'st him that did thee beget,
 Thou wast born at sea, buried at Tarsus,
 And found at sea again. (Sc. 21, ll. 182-84)

It is seen again when Thaisa is reunited with husband and child:

Thaisa: Did you not name a tempest,
 A birth and death?
 Pericles: The voice of dead Thaisa!
 Thaisa: That Thaisa
 Am I, supposed dead and drowned. (Sc. 22, ll. 53-58)

The rhetorical devices allow for the idea of remembrance to become embedded in the audience's imagination, the rhythmic patterning imposing the past on to the scene.

Like Lear, Pericles puts on fresh garments when he recognises his daughter, an indication of renewal. The celestial music that comes with Pericles's new understanding, 'Marina [...] sings her father back to speaking life, releases the 'heav'nly music'(l. 218) of the spheres,' also brings the goddess Diana who brings us to the resurrection of Thaisa in a pre-Christian age, again a sense of new beginnings with Marina as the memorial influence 'her most clear remembrance' (Sc. 22, l. 32) that has produced it.⁵⁰²

Cerimon's revival of Thaisa at Ephesus suggests the dead woman's journey in the coffin has been but to a place of waiting in a world that has yet to encounter the religious tensions that are found in Shakespeare's time, and it is to here that Pericles has come. Marina's final lines are deeply suggestive of her as part of the soul and of her 'cosmic status as emblematic of originary loss'.⁵⁰³ Described as the living piece of the dead queen at her birth, she now wishes to leap back into her revived mother, her task as a facilitator of Memory over: 'My heart / Leaps to be gone into my mother's bosom' (Sc. 22. ll. 66-67). The reunion of husband and wife, the alchemical wedding that has been brought about through Marina's intercession is configured in the symbol of the gold ring, an image of the Philosopher's stone, that Thaisa recognises as the one her father gave to Pericles. It is a symbol that confirms and crowns Pericles's joy 'this great miracle' (Sc. 22, l. 81).

⁵⁰² Fawcner, *Shakespeare's Miracle Plays*, p. 46.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

‘Our Perdita is found’: The Recovery of Faith in *The Winter’s Tale*

The reunification of mother and daughter in *Pericles* is also to be found in *The Winter’s Tale*. As her name suggests, Perdita encapsulates all that her parents lose including, I shall argue, their son Mamillius. Though Leontes, Polixenes and Antigonus all comment on the sexual instability of women, most obviously demonstrated through Leontes’s actions towards Hermione, Perdita in effect becomes a ‘via media’, an image of femaleness accepted to dispel the strict misogyny that has dominated the first half of the play.⁵⁰⁴

The rejection of Perdita is symptomatic of the rejection of good Memory from the court. As Leontes’s Will overtakes his sense of Reason, he forgets the loyal wife and his children. All previous suggestions that he and Mamillius resemble each other, for example, are lost to his ‘diseased opinion’ (I.ii.298), a man who, as Camillo indicates, is in ‘rebellion with himself’ (I.ii.356). Yet Shakespeare employs another soul-agent in the play, Paulina, whose role is primarily to remind Leontes of what he has dismissed. When Perdita is born Paulina believes that the sight of the child might coax Leontes to repent ‘We do not know / How he may soften at the sight of the child’ (II.ii.42-43). Paulina suggests that her words and the presence of the child will ‘bring him sleep’ (II.iii.33). Her desire to ‘purge him of that humour’ (II.iii.38) is an alchemical allusion that enforces Paulina’s ability to remind Leontes of his need to change. It is Paulina’s insistence through the play, and one presumes the sixteen years that pass in the story, reminding him of his crimes and of what he has lost, that will facilitate repentance.

⁵⁰⁴ Palfrey, *Late Shakespeare*, p. 222.

Though Paulina constantly reminds Leontes of his past, it is Perdita who touches him most profoundly. Like Marina, she must have her own ‘voyage’ before she encounters her father and it is in Bohemia where we become aware of the singular qualities that will assist her father’s redemption. She, like Marina, has a fluidity that frees her from generic restrictions. Often linked to water and music, she provides a counterpoint to Florizel’s need to keep her still in order to comprehend her, for she is, like a wave, never fixed, but forever in flow:

What you do
 Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
 I’d have you do it ever: when you sing,
 I’d have you buy and sell so; so give alms;
 Pray so; and, for the ordering of your affairs,
 To sing them too: when you dance, I wish you
 A wave o’ the sea, that you might ever do
 Nothing but that; move still, still so,
 And own no other function. (IV.iv.135-43)

The speech provides us with the central dynamic to Perdita as a constant, moving force that cannot be arrested. It is a dynamic that has as its centre renewal and regeneration in the image of the wave that sets her apart from the dark sexual insinuations of Leontes’s world, which has stillness and atrophy at its heart, and indeed the deeply suggestive fecund pastoral world, too, that has an unsettling sexual ambience at its core. Palfrey notes how Perdita is a character that keeps the play flowing with a dynamism that moves inexorably towards the moment when Hermione is resurrected:

Florizel sees Perdita as the miraculously human site of a kind of endlessly mobile self-reproduction he can only apprehend as the charging of each separate moment with the force and sweetness of the whole motion – and vice versa. Perdita seen so is a force never expended and ever renewing, that resists the freezing even of

aesthetic celebration [...] It is the crowning moment of the scene, and will be answered itself in turn in the final animation of Hermione's statue, also a greatly stilled and moving moment.⁵⁰⁵

Perdita animates, initiates healthy flux and renews life at the close of the play. As soul-agent that facilitates memory, Perdita has replaced her mother in the Bohemia scenes, for her strong sense of her sexuality is reminiscent of the very qualities that damned Hermione in the first place. In Act Three, Scene Three, Antigonus reminds the audience of their connection as he recollects his disturbing dream of Hermione 'Poor wretch, / That for thy mother's fault are thus exposed / To loss and what may follow' (III.iii.48-50).

That Perdita can touch ordinary mortals is clear in the pastoral scenes but is also evident in the way she affects the servant of Leontes's court in Act V. His comments on Perdita's rarity are juxtaposed with his forgetting of Hermione 'The one I have almost forgot' (V.i.104), soon to be remedied by Perdita's entrance into the court. She is 'the most peerless piece of earth, I think, / That e'er the sun shone bright on' (V.i.94-95). Derek Traversi has noted that her presence evokes a desire for spiritual devotion that is echoed in Paulina's chapel in the resurrection scene; she is a 'creature, / Would she begin a sect, might quench the zeal / Of all professors else, make proselytes / Of whom she but bid follow' (V.i.106-9).⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 156.

⁵⁰⁶ Derek Traversi, 'The Final Scenes', in *Shakespeare: The Winter's Tale*, ed. by Kenneth Muir (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1990), pp. 159-83 (p. 165).

But it is Leontes whom Perdita most profoundly affects. He notes that ‘she is a woman / More worth than any man; men, that she is / The rarest of all women’ (V.i.110-12).

Leontes’s response to the daughter he does not yet recognise is to call her ‘goddess’ whilst remembering what is lost:

And your fair princess, goddess! – O alas!
I lost a couple, that ‘twixt heaven and earth
Might thus have stood, begetting wonder as
You gracious couple do. And then I lost
(All mine own folly) the society,
Amity too, of your brave father; whom,
Though bearing misery, I desire my life
Once more to look on him. (V.i.130-37)

Though Paulina is Leontes’s memory at court, it remains only verbal recounting of past action and a means of promulgating guilt. It is Perdita’s return as a concrete and active preserver of the past, as soul-agent, that awakens faith. Here we are reminded not just of personal loss but the communal loss that Leontes’s action has caused, the division of kingdoms and the ensuing grief to many. In this speech he speaks of loss, folly and broken friendship, all of which he has experienced. But he is also aware of wonder, which is to be found ‘twixt heaven and earth’, and is seen in the couple before him.

There is a strong sense of regret and entreaty in these lines that anticipates the renewal of Leontes. The overpowering Will is becoming diminished through the remembrance of things lost and the appreciation of ‘begetting wonder’ that is, unknowingly, his daughter, who becomes for him the encapsulation of Memory.

It is the resurrection of Hermione that occurs after Leontes's awakening of faith on 'finding' Perdita that forms the central image of redemption in the play. Like Marina, Perdita's mother expires shortly after her birth, 'who ended when I but began' (V.iii.45) and is similarly contained in suspended animation until her return. In the resurrection scene Perdita kneels before the statue of her mother in the chapel to ask blessing and to touch her hand; and it is from here that Hermione comes to life. Perdita speaks to her mother as though indicating that she is already alive, capable of movement 'Lady, / Dear queen, that ended when I but began, / Give me that hand of yours to kiss' (V.iii.44-46). From this contact Hermione's life gradually returns: her breath, colour, the warmth of her lips, the movement of her eyes and it is to Perdita that she first speaks, asking how her daughter has been preserved and marking how she has preserved herself to see her child. Like Marina, Perdita has no more lines, her role as re-animator done, the contact between Hermione and Leontes taking precedence. It is as though Perdita, again very much like Marina, is a part of Hermione that is kept alive when the body is dead, the immortal part, or the soul.

What is also important about this final scene is that it is witnessed by all, a sense of communal memory is re-ignited, reminding each of familial and social happiness 'You precious winners all' (V.iii.132).

The final scene, like the preceding recognition scene, is communal; all of the characters need to recover Hermione. Paulina shapes the desires of the participants into a shared verbal ritual, so that their speech gradually imbues the statue with life – for them and for the play's audience.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁷ Carol Thomas Neely, 'The Winter's Tale: Women and Issue', in *Shakespeare: The Last Plays*, pp. 169-86 (p. 182).

The 'verbal ritual' that Carol Thomas Neely describes is reminiscent of prayer, which re-animates faith. That this scene takes place in a chapel in Paulina's house brings together Paulina's desire to remember her mistress and the communal gathering of believers necessary to bring faith, in the form of Hermione's resurrection, alive. But it is Perdita's instigation of faith as she prays to the icon of her mother that initiates the miracle, an image of remembrance that can bring alive all that has been lost.

Perdita as Memory is like the wave that moves backwards and forwards, or of nature in flux, dying and being reborn as she observes in the flower scene. All characters are subject to this change from life to death but Perdita allows the switch also from death to life, which begins when Leontes's faith is renewed. She is also an image of Art itself that can transform the dead into the living, for she is at once part of Mamillius and Hermione and she is also Time, which moves onwards but can also be reversed, as seen in the resurrection of Hermione who has aged sixteen years but at the same time is born once more.⁵⁰⁸ Time also allows Perdita the opportunity to develop away from the dead world of Sicilia, providing us with a fresh and relatively uncontaminated individual some sixteen years after her birth. Being a young woman allows Perdita as soul-agent to be an active force in the community, something a newborn child could not.

⁵⁰⁸ Art that transforms nature, fundamental to the alchemical process, can be seen in the conflation of time in the play that allows for reparation 'the advantage of alchemy's imitative methods for producing silver and gold over those of Nature chiefly involve duration of time: what takes Nature ages to accomplish within the earth, can be greatly shortened by the efforts of a knowledgeable alchemist'. Linden, *The Alchemy Reader*, p. 14.

Perdita also provides a memorial bridge between Mamillius and Hermione. As Mamillius exits the drama, a grown Perdita emerges, providing a strong co-existence between death and birth and also an image of regeneration of male to female, loss being transformed by metamorphosis. Perdita as the initiator of recovery reminds us that, in the transformation from Mamillius, she has become something greater than him, for she has become an agent of political stability and alliance in the form of the sole heiress. In practical terms, the boy actor who plays Mamillius can easily change costume to play Time and then become transformed into Perdita who is, on the early modern stage, both male and female. Opening comments on Mamillius indicate his importance to the health of the monarchy, ‘a gentleman of the greatest promise’ (I.i.30-31) who ‘makes old hearts fresh’ (I.i.33-34). The kingdom, which suffers on his death, is renewed through the re-emergence of the daughter and through the resurrection of Hermione not only as an image of the family re-born, but also of the body politic, for she is an agent of alliance in bringing together Bohemia and Sicily through marriage, the wedding that changes all for the better.⁵⁰⁹

While in *Pericles* and *The Winter’s Tale* the memorial influence of soul-agents allows for parents to be re-united, repentance accepted, and a domestic utopia imagined, it is important to note that they also promote communal bonds of social and political tolerance. Perdita wishes to tell Polixenes that:

the selfsame sun that shines upon his court
Hides not his visage from our cottage, but

⁵⁰⁹ Leonard Tennenhouse, ‘Family Rites: Patriarchal Strategies in Shakespearean Romance’, in *Shakespeare: The Last Plays*, pp. 43-60 (pp. 57-58).

Looks on alike. (IV.iv.432-34)

anticipating the incorporation of the rustics into Leontes's court at the close of the drama. David M. Bergeron has highlighted the importance of the tableaux of the stable monarchy and its subjects as an indication of communal unity at the close of the romance dramas. The move from domestic, familial memory towards a communal and shared remembrance that instigates future concord, is explored more fully in *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*.⁵¹⁰

Innogen and the Recovery of National Memory

In *Cymbeline*, Innogen facilitates a national memory in the gathering together of the king with his lost children at the close of the drama. Placed at the very end of the First Folio, after the tragedies, *Cymbeline* signifies the reunification of both domestic and public loss that the tragedies have explored. Its title is reminiscent of *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Lear* but its re-positioning of the eponymous character to a more liminal point signals the atypical patterning that can accommodate the soul-agent. The broken relationship between father and daughter severs familial and political ties, enrages the king to assert unbridled Will against balanced Reason, which in turn causes unease and a sense of barrenness through the land and the exile of Posthumus. Innogen's confinement and move to Wales emphasises this dearth and it is not until her return that Cymbeline's Britain is once again come alive, and relationships are restored. Innogen, I would argue, is soul-agent of the text, for it is she who sets in motion the action of the play and it is she who reconciles all at the end.

⁵¹⁰ Bergeron, *Shakespeare's Romances and the Royal Family*, p. 178.

The importance of good memory, which seeks to reunify loss and restore goodness to a blighted kingdom in *Cymbeline*, is set against what Augustine terms memory remembered by the ‘outward senses’, or false memory that has caused these broken ties.⁵¹¹ In the play, there are instances of forgetting or of remembering that which will bring sorrow, which serve only these outward senses and undermine the kingdom. Posthumus, for example, ‘Has forgot Britain / And himself’ (I.vi.113-14), the Queen sees Pisanio’s good memory ‘the remembrancer of her’ (I.v.77) as an obstacle, and Giacomo, whilst observing the sleeping Innogen states ‘Why should I write this down that’s riveted, / Screwed to my memory’ (II.ii.43-44).

Loss of faith in what is good and the abuse of memory set up a model for the psychomachiac patterning discussed earlier in the thesis. As soul-agent Innogen can be seen in conjunction with the Queen and Cloten vying for the soul of Cymbeline. In a psychomachiac structure that echoes *Othello*, Innogen becomes the force of good that is ignored at the king’s peril and his subsequent confinement of her unleashes the force of her oppositional characters’ malevolence. In the tri-partite Augustinian model, the Will of both the Queen ‘Yet I’ll move him / To walk this way’ (I.i.104-5) and Cloten, has set the king’s Reason awry allowing base Will to take control, and good Memory, in the form of Innogen who reminds her father of her childhood with Posthumus (I.i.145-46), is denied. Augustine reminds us in *De Trinitate* that ‘when the will leaves better things, and greedily wallows [...] then it becomes unclean; and they are so thought of hurtfully, when they are present, and also more hurtfully when they are absent’, an idea that can

⁵¹¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. by Sir Tobie Matthew (London, 1620), Bk. X, Ch. 21, p. 512.

readily be applied to Cymbeline's unkindness to both Posthumus 'Thou'rt poison to my blood' (I.i.129), and Innogen 'O disloyal thing' (I.i.132) in the opening scenes and in their subsequent exile.⁵¹² Linked to poison, which in alchemical terms must be eradicated through putrefaction, the Queen is directly associated with actual poisonous substances and her vicious nature revealed by Cornelius in Act One, Scene Five.

Maurice Hunt has argued that Cloten's death is a necessary sacrifice that will free Innogen and enable her goodness to work upon the kingdom. He sees both Cloten and the Queen's evil in terms of a disease that is poisoning Britain and this idea relates directly to Augustine's view of the debilitating effects of uncontrolled Will. Arviragus's comments on seeing the sickening Fidele that 'to gain his colour / I'd let a parish of such Cloten's blood, / And praise myself for charity' (IV.ii.169-71) 'portrays Cloten in terms of bloodletting, the standard Jacobean medical technique for draining the imagined excess tumour supposedly causing a disease'.⁵¹³ Certainly the image of the diseased individual is tied up with excess Will that can damage all around and it is only once this is eradicated that others can be free. Hunt goes further by suggesting that Cloten's death 'makes possible the ravishing lyricism of Arviragus's elegy for Innogen-as-Fidele'.⁵¹⁴ Hunt's argument allows for the release of Innogen that will eventually help bring about a harmonised Britain. I would, however, take Hunt's idea a stage further by suggesting that this release not only helps to bring harmony through her goodness, but that Innogen's

⁵¹² Augustine, *On The Trinity*, trans. by Stephen McKenna, ed. by Gareth B. Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), Book XI, Ch. V, p. 70.

⁵¹³ Maurice Hunt, 'Dismemberment, Corporal Reconstitution, and the Body Politic in *Cymbeline*', *Studies in Philology*, 99 (2002), 404-32 (p. 419).

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 420.

liberation and subsequent return to her father and husband offers redemption to them and the kingdom through the restoration of good Memory.

The psychomachiac patterning, where good Memory is displaced and then restored, can be seen in the Posthumus/Giacomo/Innogen triangle, with Giacomo and Innogen vying for Posthumus's soul. Giacomo, when referring to the mole upon Innogen's breast, tells Posthumus 'You do remember / This stain upon her?' (II. Iv.138-39) after which Posthumus loses faith in his wife.⁵¹⁵ Posthumus's exile can be seen as an arduous journey back to Innogen after the poisonous episode with Giacomo. As William Barry Thorne has noted:

In a sense, Posthumus has to 'win' Innogen again by good deeds; he must prove himself by battle in a good cause, and, therefore, much like Pericles in his charity to Tarsus and his struggle in the tournament, he joins the British in the battle with the Roman force, which is to eventuate in happiness and fertility.⁵¹⁶

This reunification can be seen in an Augustinian tri-partite patterning that sees good Memory restored to a kingdom that has been blighted by the unbridled Will of Giacomo, who poisons Posthumus's mind, and the Queen, who unleashes intemperance in her husband. Both represent the forces of excess, but also are symbols of the division of Britain and of a nation and monarchy that has forgotten itself.

Part of Posthumus's crisis in the play is his loss of faith not only in his wife but also in his sense of himself. At the close of the drama, Posthumus likens himself to a tree where

⁵¹⁵ Maurice Hunt notes that the cinque-spotted mole would 'assume' the shape of a star, which from the time of the fourteenth century *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* was a symbol of divinity. *Ibid.*, p. 427.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

Innogen may hang again like fruit, a signal that his ‘rootedness’ to her and to Britain is intact. This forms part of an edenic structure that has also been seen in *Pericles* and in *The Winter’s Tale*. Earlier in *Cymbeline* the dislocation of the tree image is apparent.⁵¹⁷ In the opening exposition the Gentleman says of Posthumus, ‘I cannot delve him to the root’ (I.i.28), that he is without any living relative, orphaned at birth, the son of a soldier whose British identity is established by war against the Romans. Posthumus being ‘unrooted’, and the subsequent journey that the play traces, suggests Posthumus’s search for himself. Like the wandering soul that is without a firm base, Posthumus’s unrootedness makes him vulnerable to bad Memory that will manifest itself through Giacomo’s machinations. The crisis of the self is further exacerbated when, on hearing of Innogen’s supposed infidelity, he doubts the same of his mother:

We are all bastards;
 And that most venerable man, which I
 Did call my father, was I know not where
 When I was stamp’d; some coiner with his tools
 Made me a counterfeit. (II.v.2-6)

Lack of identity, linked to the un-rooted, or truncated tree, is often found in alchemical imagery. The growth of the philosophical tree corresponds to the creation of the philosopher’s stone, by some thought to be actual gold, but also the wisdom that an individual can attain, an idea that, as Peggy Muñoz Simonds has demonstrated through the proliferation of Renaissance emblem books, would be familiar to many in

⁵¹⁷ Caroline Spurgeon notes the importance of the tree image in *Cymbeline* as it is used not only to define Posthumus’s character but also Cymbeline himself ‘the lofty cedar’ (V.vi.454) and his sons the ‘lopped branches’ (V.vi.455). Innogen also states that Cymbeline, as tree, ‘shakes all our buds from growing’ (I.iii.38). Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare’s Imagery and what it tells us* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 292-93.

Shakespeare's time.⁵¹⁸ The deracination that Posthumus experiences in Italy severs him from the British/Roman world with which he identified and where he had been in concord with his wife. It is further expounded in the headless corpse scene, where Innogen mistakenly believes Cloten to be her husband. The image of the trunk of the body without its reasoning head that functions as a prime factor in the acquisition of wisdom suggests that all has been lost. Innogen's recovery after the scene is facilitated by the presence of Lucius and the Roman army that help Innogen to revitalise herself and move back to the court where she will be 're-hung' on Posthumus's 'tree', in alchemical terms the bonding of male and female, sol and luna, to produce the 'stone' or gold, or, in this case, the perfect union.⁵¹⁹

The journey of Posthumus back to his wife is also a journey from what appears to be Renaissance Italy to ancient Britain. This conflation of time allows for the examination of what Peter A. Parolin suggests are deep-seated fears by Shakespeare's audience concerning the seductive and corrosive powers of a decadent Italy, far removed from its glorious past as a founder of what constitutes civilisation. It is a place of cupidity epitomised in Giacomo and the detrimental effect he has on a Posthumus whose roots are, as yet, not firmly established.

Contemporary Italy stands as the polity that ancient Rome degenerated into, so that even as Britain works towards an alliance with Rome, Italy insists on Rome's degradation over the course of history. Through the anachronistic presence of Italy, *Cymbeline* raises the disturbing possibility that Britain may not end up resembling Rome after all, but rather Italy, that it may not be seen as exclusively

⁵¹⁸ Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare's Cymbeline*, p. 17.

⁵¹⁹ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, pp. 150-51.

masculine but also as feminine, and that it may not be defined exclusively by military strength but also by weakness.⁵²⁰

From a Jacobean point of view, this feminisation and degeneration of a culture that is directly Catholic, along with James's desire to align himself with Roman/Trojan roots, 'deconstruct[s] rather than confirm[s] tenuous Jacobean fantasies about the leading historical role Britain might play in Europe and the heightened state of civility such historical engagement might offer the nation'.⁵²¹

However, this notion of an effete land that is set in opposition to the masculinised Britain/Roman world, I would suggest, does not take into consideration the energising effect that Innogen has on both. Innogen's power is transformed from the political world of the estranged daughter of the king 'into the symbolic power that guarantees Jupiter's prophecy for Britain', which will unite her with her husband and reunite a father with his sons.⁵²² The metaphorical rapes of Innogen by decadent Italy and poisoned Britain are certainly countermanded firstly by the civilising effects of Rome encapsulated in the decent character of Lucius, and by Wales, as a location for regeneration and renewal. It is Innogen who encounters and draws strength from both these beneficent forces at Milford Haven. As the 'tender air' (V.vi.446), she breathes new life on to the court that has begun its life in Act One as a moral wilderness with a blighted king, averting the tragedy that *Cymbeline* signals itself to be in those early scenes.

⁵²⁰ Peter A. Parolin, 'Anachronistic Italy: Cultural Alliances and National Identity in *Cymbeline*', *Shakespeare Studies*, 30 (2002), 108-216 (p. 190).

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, p. 204.

Cymbeline's opening speeches are reminiscent of Lear's intemperance that is to exile Cordelia; he is a man who 'like the tyrannous breathing of the north, / Shakes all our buds from growing' (I.iii.37-38). Though more assertive than Cordelia, Innogen nonetheless speaks truths to a father whose wilfulness has become outrageous, and Innogen's exile allows us to draw parallels between her and the memorial influences that Cordelia had on the kingdom. Fragmentation is central to these opening scenes, where the family and the nation are split, fractures that will be explored metaphorically through the journey that Innogen – and also Posthumus - make until Innogen facilitates their reconstitution at the end of the drama.

The play is like a jigsaw puzzle whose broken-apart and mixed-up pieces must be matched and put together [...] Fragmentation is brought into a phantasmagoric extreme; even bodies are dismembered and not recognised.⁵²³

The fragmented nature of the kingdom has a spiritual dimension, too. Lila Geller has noted that the fractures in Cymbeline's kingdom can be seen as the break up of a covenant-contract theology, where the plots surrounding Innogen-Posthumus, Belarius-Cymbeline, Briton-Roman, king-subject, highlight the serious consequences of schismatic action.⁵²⁴ She states that covenantal thought, which gained new popularity in the early Reformation, considers it necessary to establish the primacy of one religion over others which verifies the 'validity of the original covenants made between God and man,

⁵²³ Ruth Nevo, 'Cymbeline: the Rescue of the King', in *Shakespeare's Romances: Contemporary Critical Essays*, pp. 91-116 (p. 95).

⁵²⁴ Lila Geller, 'Cymbeline and the Imagery of Covenant Theology', *Studies in English Literature*, 80 (2001), 241-56 (p. 241).

then demonstrating the deviation of intervening groups from the contract'.⁵²⁵ Moreover, the Protestant John Foxe indicates in *Christ Jesus Triumphant* of 1579 that there is a journey to be made by those other religions that have strayed from the true path 'to suffer so as to achieve wisdom'.⁵²⁶ Not surprisingly he cites the 'persecuting Tyrantes' of Catholicism and the 'crooked necke' of Judaism as needing such wisdom.⁵²⁷

Innogen as Fidele, I would argue, works as an agent of Memory who can reconcile the three temporal zones that Foxe describes into one kairotic or eternal time. The temporal and spatial confluences that produce this eternal instant can be effected through Shakespeare's choice of historical moment. *Cymbeline* is set at the time of the birth of Christ when the Pax Romana of Augustus was seen as 'a prerequisite to the Incarnation' and that 'the unforced allegiance to Rome at the end of the play [...] suggests an England returned to its fundamental faith'.⁵²⁸ Bringing this fulfilment is Innogen, a name linked to the Brutus legend, which has its roots in Trojan myth, connecting 'symbols of past and future'.⁵²⁹ Here, an image of a multitude of beliefs is brought together into a kairotic moment at the close of the drama to produce a new faith that is brought together when Innogen becomes Fidele. Moreover, this historical time disqualifies a precise religious era though it does suggest the idea of Foxe's three faiths: it is at the birth of Christ and on the cusp between Old and New Testament; it is in the heart of Roman paganism with its desire to be linked with a Trojan ancestry; and it is before the establishment of a firm

⁵²⁵ Ibid., p. 242. Such concern over a religion's ancestral 'pedigree' is discussed in Richard Verstegan's 1605 work *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence*. See Introduction, p. 22.

⁵²⁶ Geller, p. 245.

⁵²⁷ John Foxe, *Christ Jesus Triumphant*, trans. by Richard Day (London, 1579), p. C4v.

⁵²⁸ Geller, pp. 246, 247.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., p. 247.

Catholic or Protestant theology. It signals new beginnings that can look back and forward, an eternal time. For Geller, this can be seen in the Posthumus-Innogen reconciliation, where Posthumus represents the ‘pre-Christian Christian whose covenant of works [the laws of the Old Testament] is supplemented by a covenant of faith [found in the New Testament]’, creating a link with man to the divine, an image that often surrounds Innogen-Fidele.⁵³⁰ This central pull of Fidele, I would suggest, brings harmony not only to her husband but unites all in the final scene that sees the kingdom brought back together:

All fundamental relationships – that of Britain to world history, that of king to country, that of husband and wife – are seen as based on the analogous relation of man to God within the covenant that leads to man’s salvation.⁵³¹

The conflation of time and space to produce one kairotic moment is also used in the construction of the pastoral world, which, I shall argue, allows for a reading of Innogen/Fidele as a new Adam who brings a second paradise to Cymbeline’s Britain. Innogen/Fidele as faith that unites is exemplified, according to Margaret Jones-Davies, in Innogen’s separation from the court and her sojourns in the pastoral world of Milford Haven. Here, Faith is ‘asleep’ and has rendered the land sterile.⁵³² Whilst this thesis concentrates primarily on the soul rather than ‘faith’ in a broader sense, I would like to further Margaret Jones-Davies’s argument by suggesting that Augustinian Memory, which can re-balance a soul that is overwhelmed by regenerate Reason or Will, can be

⁵³⁰ Ibid., p. 249.

⁵³¹ Ibid., p. 254.

⁵³² Margaret Jones-Davies, ‘Cymbeline and the sleep of faith’, in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, ed. by Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay and Richard Wilson (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 97-217.

linked to the idea of faith, as used here, and I would like to draw on Jones-Davies's use of faith in the play to analyse Innogen as a soul-agent.

Jones-Davies notes that the late plays examine how Reason is becoming seen as 'the suspect source of many evils'.⁵³³ An important source for Shakespeare at this time was Montaigne's fideistic philosophy, where Faith is seen as the means by which Reason may be counter-balanced, and it is here that I would like to draw the parallels between Faith and Memory.⁵³⁴ The notion of Reason controlling excess emotions, or Will, has already been suggested by Augustine as extremely problematic as he notes 'myne owne iron and untoward will', often in conflict with itself:

O God, who art our only certaine pleasure, was not yet in termes to maister that other, which had beene established by so long continuance. Thus did my two *Wills*, one old and another new, one carnall and another spirituall, fight one against the other, and by their discords they did, as it were divide, and drawe my soule asunder.⁵³⁵

Indeed, according to Augustinian philosophy, it is the balanced combination of Reason, Will and Memory moving towards goodness that produces concordance and, as this thesis has demonstrated, it is the interception by Memory that can re-balance the all too often maverick forces of regenerate Reason and Will. Applying this to Jones-Davies's suggestion that Innogen is an image of Faith that awakens and effects beneficent closure

⁵³³ Ibid., p. 198. The Council of Trent's argument that faith is supreme to reason (1545-1563) does not in itself suggest that Shakespeare is advocating a Catholic reading of *Cymbeline*, though drawing on the Catholic Montaigne, for the Protestant movement was equally adamant in its pursuit of Augustine's view of the importance of faith. Ibid., p. 200.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., p. 198.

⁵³⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk VIII, Ch. 5, p. 361.

through the re-introduction of the lost children and the restoration of good Reason to Cymbeline, I would suggest that Faith and Memory could be here aligned.

Innogen presents us with an image of goodness in contrast to the court around her, in particular Giacomo and Cloten, both of whom test her fidelity and her powers of forgiveness. She is often seen as the antithesis to cold reason that can and does destroy.

Giacomo sees her steadfastness:

The love I bear him
Made me fan you thus, but the gods made you,
Unlike all others, chaffless (I.vi.177-79).

Jones-Davies argues that:

Whereas Innogen is an obvious allegory of Faith, Iachimo is an antithetical allegory of Reason, as his familiarity with the workings of the human mind shows [...] [yet]he can do nothing when he is confronted with Innogen's staunch faith in Posthumus. Against the tricks of Reason, Innogen remains adamant, thereby proving the supremacy of Faith.⁵³⁶

Like Marina and Perdita before her, Innogen's shift to a space outside the realm of the court allows the audience to witness her goodness in action, revealing the remedial powers she has on others. Here, she is aided by that other 'remembrancer' (I.v.77) in the play, Pisanio, for he guides Innogen to transform herself into Fidele when she moves to the redemptive space that is Wales and to 'change command into obedience, fear and niceness' (III.iv.154-55).

⁵³⁶ Jones-Davies, 'Cymbeline *and the sleep of faith*', p. 199.

In Tudor mythology, Milford Haven was traditionally seen as a space of redemption as it was here that Henry Tudor landed before his battle with Richard III at Bosworth, a place that ‘grounds the resistance of her true defenders.’⁵³⁷ However Milford Haven can also be seen in a diametrically opposite light for it was the delineated site of invasion by Catholic forces from Spain had Guy Fawkes’s 1603 attempt to persuade Philip to attack England been successful.⁵³⁸ Milford Haven, then, ‘functioned in the English cultural imagination as the site of either triumphal entry or martial invasion [...] that which is both familiar and strange, both a part of (and way into) England and an alien land on the other side of the Severn’.⁵³⁹ This ambivalence lends itself well to Shakespeare’s hybrid genre for it allows for increased tension in an audience that cannot anticipate which way the drama will move. Innogen’s time in Wales is precarious and fraught; it is a difficult ‘journey’, though ultimately she will effect the return of Cymbeline’s sons and will bring reconciliation and regeneration.

Garrett A. Sullivan also suggests that Wales is ‘a geographical site across which English cultural struggles take place’.⁵⁴⁰ Certainly this is articulated in the scenes with Cymbeline’s two sons and Belarius whose sojourn in Wales ultimately becomes an educative exercise and it is the place where Innogen will become the ‘sacred’ Fidele who will prompt them to return to England. In the pastoral world of new beginnings, Guiderius and Arviragus’s nobility is seen immediately in their demeanour, for ‘an

⁵³⁷ Jodi Mikalachki, ‘The Masculine Romance of Roman Britain’, in *Shakespeare’s Romances*, pp. 117-44 (p. 132).

⁵³⁸ Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., *The Drama of Landscape: Land, Property, and Social Relations on the Early Modern Stage* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 137.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

invisible instinct should frame them / To royalty unlearn'd' (IV.ii.178-79) and their upbringing at a remove from court allows them a grace that is sadly lacking in their father's world. Belarius's first encounter with Innogen/Fidele is suggestive of the divine that has been connected both to Marina and Perdita. It is also reminiscent of the prelapsarian garden that positions Innogen/Fidele as Adam, an image that Posthumus draws upon at the close of the play:

By Jupiter, an angel! Or, if not,
An earthly paragon! – Behold divineness
No elder than a boy! (III.vi.42-44)

Arviragus notes of Fidele 'how angel-like he sings' (IV.ii.49) and she is likened to a bird, often an image connected to the soul, when she is presumed dead 'The bird is dead, / That we have made so much on' (IV.ii.198-99). As Jones-Davies has argued, she is linked with the sleep of faith not only in her choice of name, Fidele, but also in her response on waking from the drug 'Faith, I'll lie down and sleep' (IV.ii.296). Arviragus and Guiderius's eulogies to Innogen are replete with images of budding nature that suggest they wish to keep Fidele's memory alive:

With fairest flowers,
While summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,
I'll sweeten thy sad grave. (IV.ii.219-21)

John Erskine Hankins has noted that in their dirge for Innogen the repetitive strains on ‘dust’ reminds us of mankind’s fate after the Fall, an image that Innogen escapes as, Christ-like, she rises again.⁵⁴¹

As Fidele, Innogen is confronted in Milford Haven with the two worlds of Britain and Rome and her ultimate faithfulness to the former and its importance to the continuance of a national identity at the close of the drama is often suggested as a result of her choice between the two.⁵⁴² However, as a memorial influence, I would argue that Innogen’s relationship with Lucius marks a turning point in the play that allows her return to court and which brings together the warring sides in a new peace ‘Let / A Roman and a British ensign wave / Friendly together’ (V.vi.479-81). The co-existence of her two names suggests a political regeneration that precedes the period in which the play is set. Innogen’s name is possibly linked to the wife of Brute, the first king of Britain, and is indicative of remembrance of the birth of the nation.⁵⁴³ Indeed, her remarks to Pisanio in Act Three also indicate her vision of Britain as not confined to the present nor to its pre-dominance, but she sees it as an important part of a greater world, though only a part:

I’ the world’s volume
Our Britain seems as of it, but not in’t;
In a great pool, a swan’s nest. (III.iv.137-39)

⁵⁴¹ John Erskine Hankins, *Shakespeare’s Derived Imagery* (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1967), p. 97. See Genesis 3:19, Job 34:15, Psalms 103:14 and Ecclesiastes 3:20.

⁵⁴² Jodi Mikalachki suggests that Innogen changes her allegiance on several occasions in ‘The Masculine Romance of Roman Britain’, in *Shakespeare’s Romances*, pp. 117-44, (p. 133).

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

She also reconciles other characters whose names also have memorial significance that stretches beyond the idea of one nation to encompass a past that resonates across centuries and eras. Donna B. Hamilton argues that Guiderius's other name whilst in exile, Polydore, is linked to King Priam's exiled son in Virgil's *Aeneid*; Arviragus's name Cadwal brings to mind the last king of the Britons, Cadwallader; and Posthumus recalls Brute's grandfather.⁵⁴⁴ Such distant recollection invites a coming together of pre and post-Christian thought, which culminates at this moment in Cymbeline's reign, which significantly coincides with the birth of Christ. In the 1611 *The history of Great Britaine*, the historian John Speed wrote that the correspondence between Cymbeline's reign and Christ's coming meant that the 'worlde stood universallie in quiet, as waiting the comming of that Prince of peace'.⁵⁴⁵

Innogen, then, as soul-agent not only brings harmony to the domestic world of Cymbeline's kingdom, in the return of his sons and the reconciliation with Posthumus, but she also facilitates an awakening of a national identity that is based on peace and harmonious exchange, and, in her name, a remembrance of the past. As Memory, she is responsible for the return of the sons and allows Cymbeline to become 'A mother to the birth of three' (V.vi.370), an image that joins together both genders in one individual and renders the wilful king excesses to good reason 'Pardon's the word to all' (V.vi.423). The image of the dead tree that is brought back to life by the re-grafting of the branches, reminding us of Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, is a clear indication of future growth and solid lineage. But also there is the image of Innogen as the 'tender air' (V.vi.438), which

⁵⁴⁴ Donna B. Hamilton, *Shakespeare and the Politics of Protestant England* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp. 149-50.

⁵⁴⁵ John Speed, *The history of Great Britaine* (London, 1611), p. 189.

the soothsayer indicates is also linguistically linked to the Latin for a constant wife ‘mulier’ (V.vi.449), again a bringing together of Rome and Britain. This constancy is indicated earlier in Posthumus’s remarks about the return of his soul to Innogen ‘Hang there like fruit, my soul, / Till the tree die’ (V.vi.263-64), which is suggestive of fertility and longevity, but also in a more profound sense, with images of the Fall and with the regeneration of the king and his realm to edenic harmony.⁵⁴⁶

Innogen’s reconstitution of state and domestic worlds can also be seen in the imagery that surrounds her. Margaret Jones-Davies suggests that the re-configuring of religious deity and the king who is linked to the divine in *Cymbeline* – Jupiter is an androgynous divinity, Cymbeline a mother of three – point the way forward to new religious and political beginnings.⁵⁴⁷ She continues this idea by discussing alchemical imagery, often opposite or contradictory, which culminates in the reunification of Innogen and Posthumus, where male and female unite along with other warring opposites to produce an ‘opus alchymicum’.⁵⁴⁸ Jupiter’s entrance on an eagle also has alchemical connotations that Jones-Davies suggests links together masculine and feminine, but also, more significantly, the spirit with the soul:

In alchemical terms the apparition of Jupiter on an eagle symbolizes the long-sought-for union between the masculine and active principle of sulphur (spirit)

⁵⁴⁶ Donna B. Hamilton briefly discusses the image of Innogen as the true church whose encounters through the play are with ‘manifestations of Antichrist’ in her chapter on the impact of the oath of allegiance in post-Reformation England (p. 138). She indicates a link between Innogen and Una in Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* and cites critics who have likened Posthumus to Christ and Innogen as his bride (p. 211, n. 28). This is an interesting connection that recalls the medieval drama *Wisdom Who is Christ* discussed in the introduction, where the soul ‘marries’ Christ.

⁵⁴⁷ Jones-Davies, ‘Cymbeline and the sleep of faith’, p. 207.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

and the feminine passive principle of mercury sometime represented as an eagle (soul).⁵⁴⁹

Shakespeare's use of alchemical imagery is also significant in that its genesis is pre-Christian, again allowing the coming together of worlds before Christ's birth with the time of *Cymbeline* and the contemporary Italian world that is created when Posthumus meets Giacomo. Such conflation produces in itself alchemy of time and place, allowing an audience to see the happy workings of such a mixture at the close of the drama. The edenic image that Posthumus conjures when he states that Innogen, like fruit, should return to the tree is also indicative of alchemical design and a reminder again of Innogen's link to a pre-lapsarian world.⁵⁵⁰

Alchemy is based on the Hermetic view that man had become divided within himself, separated into two sexes, at the fall in the garden of Eden and could only regain his integral Adamic state when the opposing forces within him were reconciled. The union of these universal male and female forces produced a third substance or effect which could heal not only the disease of the physical world but also the affliction of the separated soul. Metaphysically, the chemical wedding is the perfect union of creative will or power (male) with wisdom (female) to produce pure love (the child, the Stone).⁵⁵¹

Lyndy Abraham also notes that before this wedding is complete and the 'Stone' created, there must be some kind of sacrifice or death, which can be seen in the play as Fidele's 'death' in Milford Haven and the new Innogen who helps reconcile Cymbeline's kingdom; but it can also refer to Cloten, whose removal can be linked to the process of

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

⁵⁵⁰ The philosopher's stone is sometimes shown in the image of a tree from which the branches can constantly and infinitely develop. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁵¹ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, pp. 36-37.

putrefaction, where impurities are drawn out.⁵⁵² This new world of Britain brings together the physical, which has been in a state of dearth, and the spiritual, to form a harmonious whole:

At a metaphysical level, the aim of the separation of the soul from the body is to free it from its age-old attachment to the body so that it can transcend the turmoil and pull of the merely natural forces of matter. The separation of the soul is a kind of ‘death’ to the world. In its new state of equanimity the soul is able to become conscious of its own true nature and of the difference between natural and spiritual man. In the light of this knowledge the soul desires to unite with the spirit above and become illumined by it. The subsequent reunion of this spiritual awareness with the new, purified body means that knowledge gained in a state of higher consciousness can now be put into action, made manifest in the phenomenal world. At this point the male and female energies of the universe are united and balanced within the individual, bringing into being a whole or holy state.⁵⁵³

Maurice Hunt argues that sacrifices are made through the play, from Cloten’s beheading, Innogen’s self sacrifice to become a servant to Belarius and Lucius and from Cymbeline himself, who delivers his kingdom into the body of the Augustan Pax Romana. Such sacrifice, Hunt suggests, points to their absorption into the greater body of Christ that is soon to take place at Christ’s death, ‘the supremely redemptive self-sacrifice’.⁵⁵⁴ Hunt reads the Soothsayer’s final lines, that the Roman eagle ‘Lessen’d herself and in the beams o’ the sun / So vanish’d’ (V.vi.472-73) as an indication of a greater power than earthly might, where ‘the Roman Empire would be absorbed and revalued within the greater body of Christendom’.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵² Ibid., p. 37.

⁵⁵³ Ibid. pp. 38-39.

⁵⁵⁴ Hunt, ‘Dismemberment, Corporal Reconstitution, and the Body Politic in *Cymbeline*’, p. 429.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 430.

In Augustinian terms there is the coming together of the Will and the Memory to form a concordance that is manifest in the true marriage between Innogen and Posthumus that the play struggles to achieve. The understanding, or Reason, that Posthumus ultimately gains allows him to see beyond the sexual anxieties that dominated his imagination at the beginning of the play, rather akin to Leontes, to a more refined and ethereal view of love that transcends the body, for when good Memory, Reason and Will are linked, says Augustine, knowledge is produced.

In two of these three, therefore, in the memory and the understanding, the knowledge and science of many things are contained; but the will is present by which we may enjoy or use them.⁵⁵⁶

The overpowering Will is also demonstrated earlier in the play in the alchemical imagery that informs Posthumus's renunciation of Innogen's gold and diamond ring to Giacomo, which indicates that the 'gold', or virtue, of his wife might indeed be 'base metal'. His Will allows his jealousy to take hold, which is only remedied, of course, by Innogen's fidelity, or the return of the ring to its original unadulterated compound, and, like the philosopher's stone, Innogen returns all to virtue, or gold.

Peggy Muñoz Simonds has noted that the diamond was thought to be incorruptible and cites Stephen Batman's 1582 *De proprietatibus rerum* that the diamond or

Adamas is a little stone of Inde [...] Nothing overcommeth it, neither iron nor fire, and also it heateth never: for of the Greekes it is called, a vertue that may not

⁵⁵⁶ Augustine, *On the Trinity*, Bk. 10, Ch. 10, p. 55.

be daunted [...] Dioscorides saith, that it is called a Precious stone of reconciliation and of love.⁵⁵⁷

She states that it ‘was a well known symbol of Christ and of the immortality of the human soul [...] It follows that those people who are most like Christ in the world actually seem – like the diamond – to contain some of his divine essence, a belief that does appear to be true of Innogen, despite her immaturity and all too human imperfections’.⁵⁵⁸ As with Cordelia, Innogen’s link to Christ presents us with an image of the memorial function of her as soul-agent.

Like Marina and Perdita before her, Innogen ‘fades’ from the action in the closing lines. Much has been made of Cymbeline’s comment that she has lost a kingdom, rendering her subordinate to the male line, but if we are to see Innogen as soul-agent, then her response ‘No, my lord; / I have got two worlds by it’ (V.vi.374-75) indicates her position as facilitator for the reconstitution of the past with the present. As the play takes place at the time of the birth of Christ, her actions are suggestive of Jesus’s bringing together of two worlds, of the physical and spiritual but also of past and present. Most significantly, she brings Will under control and restores good Reason to Cymbeline and her husband. Posthumus shows individual mercy to Giacomo and Cymbeline’s ‘pax’ restores the State; and the soothsayer’s lines indicate divine consent ‘The fingers of the powers above do tune / The harmony of this peace’ (V.vi.466-467). She reunites father and sons, husband

⁵⁵⁷ Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare’s Cymbeline*, p. 280. Bartholomaeus, Anglicus, *Batman upon Bartholome his booke De proprietatibus rerum*, trans. by Stephen Batman (London, 1582), p. 255.

⁵⁵⁸ Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare’s Cymbeline*, pp. 281-82. Simonds also cites George Wither’s 1635 *A Collection of Emblemes: Ancient and Moderne*, where an engraving shows God’s hand striking a diamond with a hammer. Wither also connects the diamond with Christ ‘that most *Precious-stone*, which God hath set / On his right hand, in *beaming majestie*’.

and wife, two empires, but, importantly, signals the distant past, the birth of Britain descended from ancient Troy, as part of the present and the future, shown in Shakespeare's decision to make the Italian scenes suggestive of Renaissance, Christian Italy, and it is these images of the 'brave new world' of possibilities that is explored further in *The Tempest*.

Freeing all Faults: Miranda, Ariel and the Investment of Communal Grace

The Edenic associations that surround Innogen and Posthumus are to be found in the closing scenes of *The Tempest*, when Miranda and Ferdinand are about to go forth into the world outside of Prospero's power. It is an image of hope rather than one of exile and furthers the idea that Shakespeare is presenting us with new possibilities, a new sense of the spiritual that acknowledges time and memory as an important crucible for the working through of past differences and the opportunity for forgiveness. David M. Bergeron has suggested that the twelve years of exile that Prospero has endured has been linked to the twelve days after Christ's birth that culminates in the Epiphany and it is a suggestion that links to ideas of birth and enlightenment through the play: the seafarers are 're-born' after the tempest and many gain greater knowledge about themselves; Miranda is made aware of her own birth and childhood; Prospero experiences a metamorphosis from magus to mortal and moves from vengeance to forgiveness; Miranda and Ferdinand are 'born' into the new world of the future through Prospero's intercession.⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁹ Bergeron, *Shakespeare's Romances and the Royal Family*, p. 184.

Bergeron's temporal reading of the play stems from a sermon read by Lancelot Andrewes before the king and queen on Christmas day, 1609, where the dominant theme of the text is the fullness of time that is worked through from Christ's birth to its celebration at the Epiphany. Though Bergeron cannot be certain that Shakespeare ever heard the sermon, he suggests that some of Andrewes's main ideas can be seen in *The Tempest*, the 'ripeness of time' being the most significant to his argument, akin to Kermode's view of a 'time filled with significance' that brings together divine and worldly time.⁵⁶⁰ What is evident in the play is that time seems to stand still for the duration of Prospero's 'spell'. He states that 'The hour's now come' (I.ii.36) when he begins to unfold the past to Miranda, and remembrance is cast upon all and revelation given to them at the close of the drama when 'time' is resumed. This applies not only to the characters, of course, but also to the audience who, like the Magi twelve days after Christ's birth, are transformed by such revelation.

The Tempest goes further than *Cymbeline* in its conflation of different periods of time, presenting to us the culmination of *chronos* and *kairos*, human and divine time. This is presented, if we take Bergeron's view of the play, through the period between the birth and the epiphany, which Shakespeare condenses to a time-span of one day. Augustine notes that defining time is problematic, as it has passed before it can be measured. The present moment is fleeting, so the instant moment of importance, that brings together human and divine time, must have some human measurement in order to experience it 'Behold how the *present time*; which we have found to be only called *long*, is already

⁵⁶⁰ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 47.

contracted to the space of a *day*'.⁵⁶¹ This conflation of time is foregrounded by Shakespeare's use of memory, as we are constantly reminded of the events in Milan and the future return to it, bringing past, present and future together, which, according to Augustine, is where God may be found 'unchangeably *eternall*'.⁵⁶² The conflation is further highlighted in Shakespeare's use of place as the island is the permanent setting for this play, reminiscent of Mitylene, Bohemia and Milford Haven, where the soul-agent is 'exiled' and where she may function before returning 'home'. We are denied that return in this text but are held in a suspended world, somewhere in the Mediterranean or the Caribbean, an indeterminate place where linear time is halted.

This suspension allows for the putting together of human and divine in an alchemical mix of past, present and future that will produce wisdom. Stanton J. Linden has noted that for early moderns, links existed between alchemical imagery and 'alchemy's concentration on spiritual and philosophical values and ideals'.⁵⁶³ He cites Thomas Tymme's 1605 dedication to Joseph Quervetanus's *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermetical Physicke* where Tymme suggests that Alchemy might move beyond the material meddling with substances to the 'secret operations of all aspects of creation' defining it as an agent for the perception of the divine.⁵⁶⁴

This bringing together of these two features of existence is central to my interpretation of the play for it allows for kairotic time to impose itself on the 'world' of the text, which

⁵⁶¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. XI, Ch. 15, p. 609.

⁵⁶² Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. 11, Ch. 31, p. 642.

⁵⁶³ Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks*, p. 8.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

allows linear time to move forward. As I have mentioned, time appears to stand still at the beginning of this play, permitting Prospero to work his magic until time is resumed at the close of the text and characters consider their return to Milan, most of them having undergone a transformation. At the heart of these metamorphoses are two aspects of Memory that allow for the sea changes in individuals. The two soul-agents are firstly, Miranda, who I will suggest represents the movement of worldly time, for she is a reminder of Prospero's worldly past and features in his concern for the future. Secondly, Ariel, pure spirit, is associated with kairotic time, in which an individual moves beyond chronological time into a consciousness of an eternity where past, present and future co-exist and can be reconciled. All who are affected by Ariel's 'magic' gain a sense of past wrongs and are changed by the experience. Their sojourn on the island reminds them of a world beyond the material, which can offer a richer existence on their return to Milan.

Yet the edenic world that culminates in the union of Miranda and Ferdinand is far from perfect. Miranda is aware of her potentially subservient position as female to her future husband in the revelatory chess scene 'You play me false' (V.i.174) and there is resignation in its inevitability 'for a score of kingdoms you should wrangle, / And I would call it fair play' (V.i.178). Sebastian and Antonio remain outside 'the common joy' (V.i.210) ready, one suspects, to take advantage in this new future once they have left the island. And there is Caliban, the outsider 'demi-devil' (V.i.275) who cannot be contained within this pre-lapsarian idyll. What, then, is Shakespeare suggesting at the close of *The Tempest* and how can the soul-agents be read in this drama?

As in *Cymbeline*, there are strong indications that Shakespeare is employing alchemical symbolism to suggest the idea of the perfect union of male and female that brings wisdom. As the alembic, the container in which materials are distilled in order to produce a chemical reaction that will result in the philosopher's stone, the island and the performance provide an image of a vessel that will be the receptacle for Prospero's experiment, with the shipwrecked crew washed up as necessary materials that will ensure the eventual union of Miranda and Ferdinand, or the alchemical wedding that will produce wisdom, or 'gold'. Yet this alchemical trope can stretch beyond the 'island' to the theatre itself (or indeed the world), 'the great globe' (IV.i.153), where the audience, too, is part of this distillation, their wonder, and indeed their applause at the end, a necessary part of the process. At the centre of the 'coniunctio' are Miranda and Ariel, the memorial agencies through which Prospero and the shipwrecked crew meet and interconnect.⁵⁶⁵ I will now examine Miranda's function as a mediator for the recollection of worldly past.

Prospero informs Miranda that he has 'done nothing but in care of thee' (I.ii.16), that now the crew are washed up on the island 'the hour's now come / The very minute bids thee ope thine ear' (I.ii.37-38). She becomes the centre of the 'experiment' that will reconcile past enmity through her marriage to Ferdinand, 'Is she the goddess that hath sever'd us, / And brought us thus together?' (V.i.190-91). Rather than an active agent in the pursuit of harmony, however, Miranda is far more enclosed than her predecessors, Marina, Perdita and Innogen. While their exiles from patriarchal authority give them scope to become

⁵⁶⁵ Coniunctio is the 'triumphal moment of chemical combination where such opposite states and qualities as sulphur and mercury, hot and cold, dry and moist, fixed and volatile, spirit and body, form and matter, active and receptive, and male and female are reconciled of their differences and reunited'. Abraham, p. 35.

active, Miranda has always been an exile but she is inextricably entwined with her father's actions and much under his control. A rebellious streak is certainly there, though, as she disobeys her father's commands by helping Ferdinand with the logs of wood, tells him her name, and proposes to him 'I am your wife, if you will marry me' (III.ii.83). The energy that comes through in Miranda's character in these moments of wilfulness is the very power that will allow her to break free from her father and found a new relationship with Ferdinand, which, although she knows in the chess scene that he will have ultimate control, nonetheless suggests she will be an active and forthright queen.

As soul-agent, Miranda's principal purpose is to energise and question Prospero's memories, thus driving the narrative as Prospero seeks to reconfigure past wrongs. Memory becomes the guiding force of the play, for the shipwrecked crew are reminded of Prospero's exile and Antonio's usurpation, and in the second scene of the play Miranda is asked to recall what she can of her past before Prospero brings forth remembrance of their story from Milan to the island. Miranda's function is also to reanimate the past for her father as her mere presence and her years of growth on the island are reminders of what has changed. She is a nurturing presence that is animated with the divine:

a cherubin

Thou wast that did preserve me. Thou didst smile,
Infused with a fortitude from heaven. (I.ii.152-54)

Miranda's marriage to Ferdinand and re-entry into Europe allows Prospero to move on from the stagnation that the twelve years on the island have been and to put away the

memories of his usurpation. When Gonzalo describes the utopia that he longs for there is an indication of the possibility of a society ‘T’excel the Golden Age’ (II.i.168), hearkening back to Frances Yates’s comments, a suggestion that communal concordance would bring a period that would exceed all others in history. Antonio’s comment ‘The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning’ (II.i.158), though spoken ironically, does hold the truth about the importance of letting negative Memory go in order to move on.

Letting this memory go, however, is not straightforward. Evelyn B. Tribble has argued that Shakespeare’s treatment of memory in *The Tempest* works intersubjectively, that each character has his or her own means of remembrance that may not in fact bring together a harmonious whole. She cites the revelation scene between Prospero and Miranda as an example of how Prospero’s more vivid memories of the past overshadow and re-form Miranda’s misty remembrance of her early years.⁵⁶⁶ Tribble begins her essay by quoting from Thomas Wright’s 1601 *The Passions of the Minde* where Wright, after Augustine, contemplates the complexity of memory within the soul of individuals. Its capacity for such complexity suggests that ‘it must be defended both against its own tendencies to slide into disorder and against the onslaughts of other minds and competing memories’.⁵⁶⁷ Such is Prospero’s situation and his insistence on his dominant narrative of events, exacerbated only by Caliban’s reminders of an alternative reading of life on the island. The play, then, also considers the prioritisation of memories and sees the working through of good memory that can bring harmony to most of the shipwrecked crew.

⁵⁶⁶ Evelyn B. Tribble “‘The Dark Backward and Abyss of Time’: *The Tempest* and Memory’, *College Literature*, 33:1 (2006), 151-68 (pp. 156-58).

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

The desire to realise Miranda's union with Ferdinand is the force motivating Prospero through the play. Miranda's main agency as soul-agent, therefore, is to instigate action in others, chiefly her father as the alchemist, or magus, who works to bring about the wedding. Yet the text signals that this process is neither simple nor easy to bring about. An example of Prospero's failure to bring about the right alchemy is seen in the breakdown of the betrothal masque in Act Four. The disruption of Prospero's calm during the masque suggests that the present circumstances, with the ceremony of the gods that bequeath fertility and legitimate marriage on Miranda and Ferdinand, are not yet right. The disruption is caused by the unhappy remembrance of Caliban and the two seamen who are plotting against Prospero's life. It is significant that the remembrance of Caliban should strike so deeply as we are also aware of Caliban's own memory of the island as one of edenic concordance and the sudden cessation of the masque is a reminder of Prospero's own sin in usurping the island. It is a memory lodged deep in Caliban and is also linked with sleep and awakening that signifies his loss 'if I had then waked after long sleep / Will make me sleep again' (III.ii.134-35). The masque, then, is in a sense too perfect, an 'insubstantial pageant' (IV.i.155) that fails to encompass a darker world that Caliban's island signifies and which Miranda and Ferdinand must acknowledge if they are to cope with the responsibility of sovereignty. And it is only when the whole of the crew and the inhabitants of the island are present that a true wedding of differences can in fact be successfully negotiated.

The true wedding, however, requires the ‘common joy’ (V.i.210) that indicates the communal concordance that the play seeks to realise through the joining together of Miranda and Ferdinand. The close of *The Tempest* does not immediately indicate that the distillation has worked, for Antonio and Sebastian fail to be part of this brave new world. What is in evidence at the close of the drama, however, is how the move from individual concerns to those of others, experienced by most of the characters, is signalled through the loss that is experienced by them. Through the pain that is suffered by many of the characters ‘Our hint of woe / Is common’ (II.i.3-4), there emerge transformations in them into something new and wondrous. These changes into ‘something rich and strange’ (I.ii.405) are brought about largely through the other soul-agent in the play, Ariel.

Like the perfect alchemical wedding of Innogen and Posthumus, female and male in harmonious union, Ariel can present to us the force of both: he/she changes gender according to whatever is required, being sometimes a female harpy or a male sprite. Ariel’s main task is to remind the shipwrecked crew of past demeanours:

But remember,
For that’s my business to you, that you three
From Milan did supplant good Prospero. (III.iii.68-70)

Keith Sturges has argued that Ariel is the result of Shakespeare’s reading of Hermetic writings, in particular those of Cornelius Agrippa and that the character can be linked to mercury, the central symbol in alchemy that can bring about transformation and is also linked primarily with the female in the chemical wedding:

Ariel is the arch shape-changer in a play of metamorphosis. He shifts costumes readily to act out roles assigned by Prospero [...] and in his own person he is seen only by his master.⁵⁶⁸

As shape-changer, Ariel does indeed transform others in the play at the same time he alters his/her own persona. This transformation is brought not just to other characters but also to the audience, whose sense of wonder is produced not only visually by costume change and probably rapid and unexpected movement but also aurally as Shakespeare marks Ariel's speeches with sweeping cadences. The links with the elements are found through the text, which underpins Ariel's fluidity:

I come
To answer thy best pleasure. Be't to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curled clouds. (I.ii.190-93)

The antithetical juxtapositions - 'Jove's lightning' (I.ii.202) and 'Mighty Neptune' (I.ii.205) – give us a dizzying sense of unearthly speed and expanse of space. Music, too, is often produced by Ariel, which is recognised as celestial and moves us, in conjunction with the language, from the bodily to the spiritual. In his song to Ferdinand, for example, Ariel reminds him of mortality and the possibility of transcending the flesh:

Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange. (I.ii.403-5)

⁵⁶⁸ Keith Sturgess, "'A Quaint Device': *The Tempest* at the Blackfriars", in *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's The Tempest*, ed. by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan (London: Prentice Hall International, 1998), pp. 107-29 (p. 118).

The line also suggests a move into a different and perpetual time frame from the worldly that has been left.

The transformations allow characters to move on. Remembrance is central to these transformations as it has resurrective qualities. Augustine notes that Memory can be seen as the search for God, as a way towards happiness but also a means whereby the soul and the body may live. It is not merely simple recollection of a person or a past event, but a memory that delves deep into the human that brings forth an understanding of God and from this a new, transformed and better self emerges:

For when I seeke thee, my God, I seeke a *happy life*; and I will seeke thee that my *Soule* may live, for my *body* liveth by my *Soule*, and my *Soule* liveth by thee [...] How then doe I now seeke it? Whether it is by the way of *remembrance* [...] But I only desire to know, whether or no, *happy life* be in the *Memory*.⁵⁶⁹

The redemptive properties of remembrance are instigated through Ariel and are seen in the effect that the storm has on the crew. At the beginning of Act Two, Scene One for example, we have Antonio's sarcastic comment about the 'lord of weak remembrance' (II.i.228), Gonzalo, whose remembrance of the marriage of Claribel through the freshness of the garments that they wear, which should have been ruined by the storm, reminds Alonso of the loss of his son. Yet Gonzalo acts as an instigator of hope 'Beseech you, sir, be merry: you have cause' (II.i.i.) for Antonio's comment that it is impossible that Ferdinand has not drowned is, of course, proved false, and the son is 'resurrected'. The 'new-dyed' (II.i.64) clothes become symbolic of the process of transformation that is brought about by Ariel's intervention in this scene, which is underpinned by Gonzalo's

⁵⁶⁹ Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. X Ch. 20, pp. 509-11.

belief that all is not lost. Ariel's use of music to put to sleep those who will change in the course of the play is set against the wakeful and exploitative characters of Antonio and Sebastian. Their inability to be susceptible to Ariel's music suggests that they are not ready to change or have suppressed any sense of guilt. The sleep that all except these two characters experience that can 'shut up my thoughts' and is 'wondrous heavy' (II.i.194), then, becomes indicative of the sea-change that the characters will undergo and lends an ironic twist to Antonio's confidence in Ferdinand's death 'Tis as impossible that he's undrowned / As he that sleeps here swims' (II.i.233-34). Loss, as experienced chiefly by Alonso in this scene, will bring forth great gains in the revival of his son, a miracle he attributes to Miranda's power. The possibility of a utopian commonwealth is also signalled here in the communal sleep of those who undergo a change for the better and who will outnumber the two characters who resist Ariel's charms.

Ariel's role as a shape-changer also has spiritual connotations since in alchemy Mercurius is 'an aerial spirit or soul symbolized as clouds or fume' and 'often depicted as the 'soul' (anima) which unites 'body' and 'spirit'.⁵⁷⁰ Mercury was considered the chief substance that the alchemist must use in order to create the Philosopher's stone. The Polish alchemist Michael Sendivogius's early seventeenth century work *A Dialogue between Mercury, the Alchymist and Nature*, thought to be the inspiration for Jonson's 1612 *The Alchemist*, notes the importance of Mercury as a prime substance 'But the chiefest opinion [of alchemists] was of Mercury, and that especially because of the sayings of the Philosophers, because they hold that Mercury is the first true matter of the

⁵⁷⁰ Abraham, *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery*, pp. 125, 127.

Stone, also of Metalls'.⁵⁷¹ Certainly, Ariel is the prime substance on the island in the sense that he/she is the true native of it, preceding Caliban and even Sycorax. Ariel is a catalyst to work up the elements, desiring only to be free, or to return after the work is complete.

Keith Sturgess notes that Mercury is linked to Art that can help nature and that a Renaissance audience might well be aware of Ariel's function by possible bright costumes and varied guises that codifies Art at work within a text.⁵⁷² The Art/Nature debate, which can be seen worked through in the Bohemia scenes in *The Winter's Tale*, here shows how the magus/chemist can transform Nature through the beneficent workings of Art:

Like the *magus*, the alchemist saw himself as one who, although operating within the traditional worldview, was able to alter and manipulate the normal course of nature through highly specialised knowledge and experience. Thus the alchemist believed he could shorten the natural process of goldmaking within the bowels of the earth by bringing base metals to perfection through secret formulas and recipes, just as the magus believed it possible to accomplish unusual feats through the help of familiar spirits invoked by occult powers. In each case "art" was decidedly an "improver" of nature.⁵⁷³

This 'art', the compression of time that makes perfect what would take nature an age, can also be linked to Augustine's idea of remembering the divine time, when past, present and future co-exist. It creates an image of a pre-lapsarian state, perfected by its very transition from 'base metal' to 'gold'.

⁵⁷¹ Michael Sendivoguis, 'A Dialogue between Mercury, the Alchymist and Art', in *The Alchemy Reader: from Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*, ed. by Stanton J. Linden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.174-190 (p. 183).

⁵⁷² Sturgess, "'A Quaint Device'", pp. 118-19.

⁵⁷³ Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphicks*, p. 21.

Through this remembrance Ariel teaches Prospero both penitence and humility. This allows Ariel, like Caliban, to be seen as part of an Augustinian tri-partite model, where Caliban is presented as the force of barely governed Will that is at odds with Prospero's overly-dominant Reason and Ariel's Memory of a pre-lapsarian state. As Caliban and Ariel return to the earth and air respectively at the close of the drama, Prospero becomes a transformed character. Jonathan Bate has argued that metamorphosis is 'this drama's principal motif', that Ariel's speeches are 'metaphors for the inner changes that Prospero seeks to work', an idea that positions Ariel as soul-agent, or instrument to enlighten Prospero as well as others.⁵⁷⁴ There is also a direct reference to Ariel as part of Prospero's soul 'It goes on, I see, / As my soul prompts it' (I.ii.424-25) and is spoken as Prospero is pleased with Ariel's bringing together of Miranda and Ferdinand, an act that will help repair past wrongs. Prospero's comment on Caliban as 'This thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine' (V.i.278-79) sees Caliban return to his master, Will under control; and his setting free of Ariel 'to the elements / Be free' (V.i.321-22) suggests a release of his spirit, a resignation of life; and these are played out just prior to Prospero relating to the audience his position not as powerful magus but as penitent human.

The beginning of Act Five shows Ariel's ability to change Prospero's excessive control to 'nobler reason' (V.i.26). Ariel prompts Prospero to remember his humanity and release the incarcerated crew and his followers:

⁵⁷⁴ Jonathan Bate, 'From Myth to Drama', in *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's The Tempest*, pp. 39-59 (pp. 44, 43).

shall not myself [...]
 be kindlier moved than thou art?[...]
 Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
 Do I take part. (V.i.22-27)

This ordering of Reason marks the start of Prospero's move from the earthly to the divine. The release of Ariel, the agent of divine Memory, suggests a release of control on Prospero's part and it is at this point that Prospero begins to consider his own spiritual future. Having re-ordered the community so that they might progress in relative harmony, Prospero's thoughts on the grave indicate his moves towards transcendence. Augustine notes the importance of the contemplation of the spirit and the leaving behind of the body:

The puffing up of pride; the delight of lust; and the poison of curiosity; which are the affections of a dead soul. For it doth not so dye, as to want all motion; because it dyes, by only departing from the fountain of life, & so is taken up, by this transitory world, and conformed with. But thy *word, O God*, is a fountaine of eternall life, and it passeth not away [...] *Do not conforme your selves, to this World; that so the earth may produce a living soule* [...] a chaste soule, by the imitation of such as imitate thy Christ.⁵⁷⁵

In a re-working of Christ's passion, Prospero commends his spirit to the audience 'But release me from my bands / With the help of your good hands' (Epilogue, ll. 9-10), rendering them divine, with Prospero at their mercy 'Let you indulgence set me free' (Epilogue, l. 20).

This transference of spiritual power to the people mirrors the shift that Prospero must make from individual to communal welfare. This move from self-absorption to social benevolence is shown in the change from the all-powerful magician that creates the storm

⁵⁷⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. XIII, Ch. 21, p. 763.

to the gentle supplicant in the Epilogue. The play tracks the journey that Prospero travels from Milan to become ruler/usurper of the island to his eventual request for pardon from his audience. Prospero must move beyond this remembrance of wrongs and remember goodness if he is to move on and Ariel is the agent for this, exemplified so clearly at the beginning of Act Five. This is signalled in the Epilogue that reminds us that the magician himself has been transformed from avenger to forgiver and that the surrender of personal memory is essential to this. Memory, then, can be seen as central to this drama that relies on past action to prompt present events. All characters are called upon to recollect and to consider reconciliation. Michael Neill has noted how past wrongs that are forgiven by Prospero are religiously significant:

in *The Tempest* memory becomes re-membering, re-jointing the divided self, reincorporating it in the membership of community, and the theatre, for its part, becomes Communion: Prospero's final words, echoing the Priest's invitation to the Table, summon us all, audience as well as actors, to participate in the celebration.⁵⁷⁶

Though Neill's comments allow for such re-incorporation and a sense of community between characters and between audience and actors, there is an indication that even in the brave new world to which these people will return, the forces of unbridled Will will continue to be present. Not only do Antonio and Sebastian fail to commit themselves to such accordance but also, as Evelyn B. Tribble notes, Gonzalo's speech, which asks that collective reconciliation be memorialised 'set it down / With gold on lasting pillars'

⁵⁷⁶ Michael Neill, 'Remembrance and Revenge: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*', in *Jonson and Shakespeare*, ed. by Ian Donaldson (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983), pp. 35-56 (p. 49).

(V.i.210-11), which should ‘inscribe and freeze memory’, comes before the drama is complete and all are present on stage.⁵⁷⁷

Though Tribble’s argument indicates the failure to control memory either individually or collectively, Prospero’s plea for prayer at the close of the play that ‘frees all faults’ (Epilogue, l. 18) allows for hope that drama itself, which cannot be frozen as it exists always in a fluid state, repeated yet changed, can be some kind of effective custodian of remembrance that goes beyond the worldly to the divine. Prospero’s relinquishing of his powers at the end of the drama allows for the surrender of his individual Will to the collective – the audience – who take on divine status, for Prospero must pray for their indulgences. They are the communal that exist outside of ‘real’ time for the duration of the performance and are thus part of *kairos*, the moment of importance. Russ McDonald has indicated the insistent repetitive strains that are heard through the text give it an ‘incantatory appeal’ through the echoes, which focuses audience attention.⁵⁷⁸ These act as a kind of choric hymn of remembrance as ‘the mutual effect of concentration and repetition creates a poetic counterpoint that challenges and exhilarates the auditor [...] and this contrapuntal effect induces aurally a sense of wonder’.⁵⁷⁹ Being part of this moment of divine time, I would argue, replenishes and regenerates the sense of a spiritual otherness that may no longer be found in more orthodox places of worship, freeing the individual’s imaginative faculties, allowing him or her to wonder. Stephen Greenblatt has indicated that Prospero’s power that is relinquished at the end of the play passes as social

⁵⁷⁷ Tribble, “‘The Dark Backward and Abyss of Time’”, p. 165.

⁵⁷⁸ Russ McDonald, ‘Reading *The Tempest*’, in *Critical Essays on Shakespeare’s The Tempest*, pp. 214-33 (p. 219).

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

energy to the audience where ‘the magic of art resides in the freedom of the imagination and hence in liberation from the constraints of the body’.⁵⁸⁰ Such freedom from social and physical restraint marks out the theatre as a place where discourse and change are unavoidable, and where the audience is an intrinsic part of this heady alchemical process:

Prospero’s magical power and princely authority [...] pass, in a startling display of the circulation of social energy, from the performer onstage to the crowd of spectators. In the play’s closing moments the marginal, vulnerable actor, more than half-visible beneath the borrowed robes of an assumed dignity, seems to acknowledge that the imaginary forces with which he has played reside ultimately not in himself or in the playwright but in the multitude.⁵⁸¹

The repetitive nature of drama can also bring together communal concordance that can uplift and transform and help transport us out of a more fearful ‘real’ world. John Bender suggests that ‘*The Tempest* becomes a conjuration against winter, a miniature re-enactment of the annual endeavour to countermand the cold, dark, fearful out-of-doors through indoor revels’.⁵⁸² Though Bender indicates *The Tempest* can provide a counterpoint to the concrete world, I would also suggest that it offers a bridge between the spiritual and the worldly. The sense of communal grace and spiritual transformation that this play offers can open up challenging readings of what drama can do. David Norbrook suggests that the ‘magic island of Shakespeare’s play is at once an instance and an allegory of the players’ project of opening up new spaces for discourse’ and I would like to extend that to the other plays examined in this chapter.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespeare Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 159.

⁵⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵⁸² John B. Bender, ‘The Day of *The Tempest*’, *English Literary History*, 47 (1980), 235-58 (p. 244).

⁵⁸³ David Norbrook, “‘What Cares These Roarers for the Name of King?’: Language and Utopia in *The Tempest*”, in *Shakespeare: The Last Plays*, pp. 245-78 (p. 251).

Though the play concludes with a marriage and the prospect of good sovereignty, which would not go unnoticed by a royal audience in Shakespeare's theatre, *The Tempest* also reminds us of the dangers of unleashed power that exploits and condemns, and that forgiveness and reconciliation must be at the heart of good governance. Each of these romance texts presents to us wise sovereignty that is brought about through loss and the necessary journeys that are made bring transformation through reminders of what is inherently good. They explore the possibility of new worlds outside the dominant power structures that exist beyond the theatre walls and central to these new worlds is the incorporation of the soul-agent as reconciler and bringer of wisdom through remembrance.

Conclusion

The main point that I have tried to convey in this study is that *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*, and Donne's *Anniversaries* and sermons, provide some resolution to the problem of the pining, exiled soul that is presented to us at the beginning of this thesis. Donne's 'pilgrim' who has lost his way, and Shakespeare's sick and pining soul, perishing within a gaudy mansion, are re-directed away from the political-religious wrangling of the 'Church' to a more accommodating space that the theatre offers, suggested in Prospero's acknowledgement that the audience is custodian of the spiritual. James's failed attempt to bring together the disparate factions at the Hampton Court conference of 1604 to a practical compromise can be seen as reaching a more successful conclusion here, where the romances condense time to bring about religious tolerance through the conflation of history. Such tolerance is found in James's later endeavour to achieve religious harmony through royal marriage, seeing himself as 'the peacemaker of Europe, marrying his children into both Protestant and Catholic princely families on the European continent'.⁵⁸⁴ At the same time, the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible, 'moulding the religion of generations of English people', would endorse, once and for all, the might of the new Protestant world.⁵⁸⁵

For all the socio-political changes that are exacted upon a nation by king or government, real change, I believe, comes from those places where community and creative enterprise are vibrant. Changing people's hearts and minds happens in the powerful arenas of cultural exchange - the preacher's space and the theatre - that Donne and Shakespeare so

⁵⁸⁴ Alan G. R. Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State: The Commonwealth of England 1529-1660* (London & New York: Longman 1987), p. 263.

⁵⁸⁵ S. Reed Brett, *The Stuart Century 1603-1714* (London: George G. Harrop & Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 25.

skilfully utilise. These two spaces allow the expression not only of new ideas but also the accommodation of the past, which can be assimilated, recorded and witnessed by the congregations and audiences that made up so much of London's population.

Shakespeare's and Donne's use of these arenas transformed the way people think about their sense of salvation far more, I would say, than any amount of doctrinal policy from Church or court.

Shakespeare reveals to us the power of the theatrical space, which can engage an audience to see religious authority through the perspective of time and with an acknowledgement of recent, ancient and pre-lapsarian memories. Demonstrably evident in the romances are themes of forgiveness and regeneration that are worked through by means of the soul-agent who allows us 'to reach something fixed and unchanging', as John Rist would suggest. It is something that can be revealed through Augustine's concept of Memory, which can take us from linear time to the circular, the eternal: 'that which was conceived of as simply successive becomes charged with past and future: what was *chronos* becomes *kairos*'.⁵⁸⁶ Gender provides the bond that links both Memory and time but it is also the connecting force between Donne and Shakespeare. There are distinct parallels between Elizabeth Drury and Shakespeare's treatment of his young female characters, but Juliet in particular. Both Elizabeth and Juliet become poetry itself, providing the central dynamic to each writer's text. However, as muses, they are developed beyond the Petrarchan conceit for they are also connected to the worldly and the practical. Elizabeth Drury is Donne's spiritual saviour who offers closure to his anxious relationship with Catholicism and arguably shifts him away from the private

⁵⁸⁶ Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, p. 46.

world of the poet to public office in St. Paul's. Juliet moves beyond the spiritual sonnet she embodies when Romeo first sees her to embrace the practical and social world of the play where she must concern herself with concrete matters of forbidden love, secret marriage and filial disobedience. The practicality that surrounds Juliet can be extended to Shakespeare's other soul-agents who offer not only redemptive solutions but bring together family, nation and state.

Both writers acknowledge the importance of the performance space, aware of the structural link to anatomy theatres that can draw in an audience to witness the very intricate and most private inner spaces of an individual, making the pulpit and the stage conducive to contemporary debates on spiritual interiority and man's cultural position in early modern society. They are also mindful, moreover, of how this space, that can provide a portal into the imagination, is in itself wondrous, for through the power of physical performance an audience or congregation can be affected and changed by expression of word, gesticulation, ekphrasis and remembrance. For Donne, such change finds its most powerful moments not only in the quiet of meditative prayer that demonstrates a one-ness with God, but also in the might of the sermon that can generate communal and spiritual consolidation. Shakespeare, too, is aware that the stage 'prayer', the soliloquy, the most intimate of theatrical expression, must also stand alongside iconic moments of pure 'theatre', Lear's pieta and Hermione's awakening being prime examples. Both writers, alert to the affective responses such changes produce in the individual and the collective, work the shift from private to public/communal moment to produce a sense of awe.

I argued at the beginning of the final chapter that the romance dramas allow an individual to imagine, or to dream, but I also suggested that this dreaming could be linked to a shared, communal space. The romances create this communality through the diversity of individual experience of the audience, which I believe generates wonder, and a sense of joy that such miracles can believably happen in these texts. Donne, too, explores this communal/individual world not only in the publication of his *Anniversaries*, which celebrates the redemption of the world, but in the relationship between congregation and preacher, where the soul is enlivened by language in a kind of alchemical process as the sermon becomes a catalyst in the process of salvation. Donne's pilgrim, who had lost his way in the opening sonnet, may find a route to redemption through the reclamation of a Marian aesthetic that is seen in the embodiment of wisdom in Elizabeth Drury as Augustinian Memory in the *Anniversaries* and through the Word absorbed into the body of the hearer and 'enskiéd' by the preacher.

The theatre that Shakespeare creates through these new dramas becomes a theatre of tolerance, where harmony may arise out of diversity, epitomised in the heady mixture of styles that are the romances. Released from the strictures of the tragic, the romances free the female character and allow her to become the custodian of a redemptive space. As soul-agent, her gender not only typifies readings of the soul as 'she' from antiquity to Shakespeare and Donne's historical moment, but also locates her as Memory, the dynamic in Augustine's tri-partite model. Most importantly, I would suggest, as a

character on stage, she becomes part of the living body of actor and audience, an active, communal, spiritual force that can work beyond the theatre walls.

Hope in what lies beyond the real is central to these dramas and can moderate and even diminish the prosaic scepticism of characters like Antonio and Sebastian, for instance, who, at the close of *The Tempest*, fail to be embraced by such positive, communal grace. Under such a wealth of beneficence that these plays hold out, those who remain outside the re-established collective order are notably and visibly reduced by their separation, though they might still signal future unrest. Unlike the 'real' world of the Church in Shakespeare's day, this theatre does not interrogate men's souls; neither does it catechise nor force confession, but offers journeys that can lead the 'pilgrim' to salvation through the remembrance of goodness. As Donne suggests, 'The art of *salvation*, is but the art of *memory*' and in this thesis I have demonstrated how the soul-agent, central to the works of Donne and Shakespeare, expresses salvation and memory and seeks to heal the spiritual fractures of the post-Reformation.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁷ *John Donne: The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. by George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 2:73.

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