Petrarchan Reform and Reform of Petrarch in Early Modern England

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Abstract

Discussions of Petrarchism in early modern English studies often focus on its influence on secular love lyrics, but Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* also has a religious undertone. Petrarch’s speaker in the *in-vita* section of *Canzoniere* focuses on the image of Laura, where he fluctuates between committing to God and committing to the image of Laura. After Laura’s death, Petrarch’s speaker gradually goes through despair in the *in-morte* section of *Canzoniere* to learn of his mistake and eventually commit to God.

John Calvin, in his *Institutes of Christian Religion*, points out that a supplicant never definitively knows the state of his election. This uncertainty creates within the speaker a fluctuation between the state of hope for his soul’s salvation and a state of despair at the prospect of the damnation of his soul. Calvin, in his “Sermons on Ezekiel” and in some commentaries on Psalms, points out that God often induces a state of despair within his elects to draw them closer to Him. This dissertation identifies this state of fluctuation between two positions and the necessity of despair as two tropes that Calvinism and Petrarchism share.

This dissertation also studies how early modern English poets Anne Lok, Sir Philip Sidney, and John Donne can be perceived simultaneously as Calvinists and Petrarchans. Although Lok’s “Meditations of a Penitent Sinner” apparently appears to have nothing in common with Petrarchism, her sonnet sequence is Petrarchan in nature because it displays the necessity of despair before one commits to God, as well as the fluctuating supplicant. In addition, Donne’s “La Corona” uses the poetic form of rosary poems, which was primarily associated with Roman Catholicism, to display his speaker’s commitment to the reformed doctrines. Furthermore, Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* fails in his endeavor to adapt the poetics that he inherited from medieval Roman Catholic Europe to display the undertones of Calvinist doctrines. Nevertheless, he argues that a poet should inspire virtue among his readers through his poetry. If Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* is read according to this directive, then the only reading of *Astrophil and Stella* that makes sense is to read Astrophil as a reprobate. Donne’s speaker in his “Holy Sonnets” is both Petrarchan and Calvinist because the speaker fluctuates between the positions of hope and dejection in his spiritual journey and must experience despair to eventually commit to God.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the following:

My parents who were supportive and patient with me

Dr. James Dillon Mardock, without whom I would not be where I am today.
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Preface

For a student of early modern English literature, the objective of studying John Donne as a Petrarchan sonneteer is difficult, because in a letter to his friend Sir Henry Goodyear, Donne disparages sonnet writing. Donne’s ill-advised marriage to Anne More had ruined any chance or ambition he had to gain employment in the Jacobean court as a diplomat. At a time when Donne was considered by King James for an ecclesiastical position at St. Paul’s Cathedral, Lady Lucy Bedford, who was quite powerful due to her influence over Queen Anne, had doubts as to whether Donne would be suitable for such a position. Donne writes to Sir Goodyear out of concern, “That that knowledge which she hat of me, was in the beginning of a graver course, then (sic) of a Poet, into which (that I may also keep my dignity) I would not seem to relapse. The Spanish proverb informs me, that he is a foole which cannot make one Sonnet, and he is mad which makes two” (Emphasis added) (Letters 89–90). It is not possible to know for certain whether Donne was being facetious or serious when he wrote those lines, because it seems from the context of the letter that Donne meant what he said; regardless, we find that Donne wrote over 30 sonnets in his career. Hard-pressed for luck and anxious that Lady Bedford’s opinion of him might ruin his chance at obtaining a secured position in the Church of England, Donne was perhaps forced to call himself “mad” in his letter. Donne consciously projected an image of himself, where he associated this “mad” part of him with his youthful indiscretion and his “reformed” persona with his mature years. This argument that Donne’s projection of his young persona as “mad” and his later years as “wise” gives credence to Donne’s attempt at distinguishing between his persona of “Jack Donne” and of “Dr. Donne.” Throughout his life, Donne had encouraged the distinction between these two personas, and an example of such an
attempt at such a distinction can be observed in a letter that Donne wrote to his friend Sir Robert Carr when he sent him a copy of his *Biathanatos*:

> Keep it, I pray, with the same jealou[sie]; let any that your discretion admits to the sight of it, know the date of it; and that it is a Book written by Jack Donne, and not by D[r.]

*Donne*: Reserve it for me if I live, and if I die, I only forbid it the Presse, and the Fire: publish it not, but yet burn it not; and between those, do what you will with it (Emphasis added) (*Letters* 19).

The fact that Donne associated his sonnet writing with madness and an act of youthful indiscretion was a deliberate ruse employed throughout his life becomes further clear to anyone studying his religious sonnets. In this dissertation, I study Donne’s religious sonnets and prove that his religious sonnets show clear evidence of an influence of the Calvinistic theology. Through my dissertation, I implicitly argue that had Donne been truly “mad” and young when he wrote his religious sonnets, he would not have taken religion as seriously as he does in his sonnets.

Often, studies of Donne’s Petrarchism focus on Donne’s secular poems and they tend to ignore his religious poems. Clay Hunt’s *Donne’s Poetry: Essays in Literary Analysis* incorporates a detailed analysis of Donne’s secular poems, where he analyzes the Petrarchan speakers. N.J.C. Andreasen’s *John Donne: The Revolutionary*, much like Clay’s study, has a section on Donne’s Petrarchism. These two books are typical of Donne scholarship on Petrarchism, as they ignore Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” in their discussion. Another book, Patricia Garland Pinka’s *The Dialogue of One: The Songs and Sonnets of John Donne*, has an excellent chapter on how Donnean speakers in Donne’s secular poems take up different Petrarchan
personae. I believe that Pinka’s choice of title—“the songs and sonnets of John Donne”—is deliberate, because Donne’s “Songs and Sonets” are conspicuous in their absence of any regular sonnet. Although we have works such as Heather Dubrow’s *Echoes of Desire* and Gary Kuchar’s “Petrarchism and Repentance in Donne’s Holy Sonnets,” such studies are few and far between in Donne scholarship. I believe that when the majority of Donne scholars think of a Petrarchan speaker, they have a very secular figure in mind, possibly someone such as Sir Philip Sidney’s Astrophil. Scholars in their discussion of Donne’s Petrarchism tend to either ignore or forget, as I argue in this dissertation, that Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* or *Rime Sparse*, which served as models for early modern English Petrarchists, were also primarily religious in nature. I will argue in my dissertation that the secularism of Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* is Sidney’s conscious attempt to show the influence of the Reformation theology on his sonnet sequence.

I argue in this dissertation that in medieval Roman Catholic Europe, the concept of poetics allowed a poet to use an apparently secular text, such as *Canzoniere*, to perform the secular function of entertaining a reader, as well as the religious function of helping a reader to achieve his salvation. For example, the delusion of Petrarch’s speaker in *Canzoniere* was supposed to entertain a reader, and the praise of Laura, who after her death ended up in the company of saints in heaven, acted as “good work” on the poet’s behalf. Moreover, if a reader read and discussed such a text, then he could be perceived as doing “good work.” As the theological doctrine of Roman Catholicism perceived the contribution of “good work” to aid in the salvation of a soul, a work such as Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* could hence be perceived as aiding in a person’s salvation.

After the Reformation split from the Roman Catholic Church, the poets who believed in the Reformation theology struggled with developing a theology that could work with the
Reformation theology. The Calvinist reformation theology argued for the total depravity of humankind, a lack of free will, and the relegation of will to God. In this dissertation, I argue that poets such as Sir Philip Sidney inherited a poetics from Roman Catholic Europe, which he desperately tried to adapt to the theological framework provided by the Calvinist reformation theology, as well as that Sidney fails miserably in this endeavor. Gary F. Waller’s observation of Sidney’s use of language in *Astrophil and Stella*, an observation that has sadly been ignored by most early modern scholars, becomes pertinent to our discussion: “With *Astrophil and Stella*, and, indeed, English Petrarchism in general, the force of Petrarchism was rewritten, in particular, by another dominant cultural language, that of Protestantism” (69). In this dissertation, I expand on Waller’s argument and focus on the areas where Petrarchism overlapped with Calvinism. I agree with Kuchar that any study of English Petrarchism should consider religion along with other aspects of the poem to generate a better sense of how this text is a Petrarchist text, as Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* also had a religious purpose. I also agree with Kuchar that to ascertain a better sense of Donne’s Petrarchism in his “Holy Sonnets”, we need to consider his Petrarchism in his secular poems. Hence, my reading of the Petrarchan strand in Donne’s ‘Holy Sonnets” will be influenced by my reading of his Petrarchism in his secular poems.

My main objective in this dissertation is to show that most Donne critics miss how Donne modifies Petrarchism to cohere with the Calvinist philosophy, because when they analyze Petrarchism in Donne’s work, they tend to focus on the secular elements of Petrarchism, such as the relationship between Donne’s speakers and their Petrarchan mistresses. Frederic J. Jones points out that as long as Petrarch lived, he continued revising his *Canzoniere* (140–141). My dissertation is based on the premise that akin to how Petrarch revised his *Canzoniere* throughout
his career, similarly, Donne engages with, critiques, and adopts Petrarchism in his poems, both secular and religious. This dissertation is driven by the following questions:

1) What do we mean by Petrarchism in a religious context?

2) How does the religious nature of Petrarchism influence our perception of the secular features of Petrarchism?

3) How were the English protestant poets during the Reformation period trying to adapt to and provide a critique of the theory of poetry that they inherited from medieval Roman Catholic Europe?

4) Where do the two diverse ideologies of Calvinism and Petrarchism overlap? How does our knowledge of such an overlap influence our reading of early modern English devotional poetry?

The first chapter establishes how I use the term “Petrarchism” in this dissertation. The term has collected so much currency that I must explain what I mean by Petrarchism in a separate chapter. In this dissertation, when I use Petrarchism, I usually refer to the fluctuating persona, the gradual transformation of the speaker and his conversion to God, or the trope of Laura as an elusive example of earthly glory and a guide to salvation. In this chapter, I follow Thomas Bergin’s lead when I split the image of Laura into that of Laura-Daphne and Laura-Beatrice, where Petrarch’s speaker uses the image of Laura-Daphne in the in-vita section of Canzoniere to gain fame and earthly glory by praising Laura-Daphne and in the in-morte section of Canzoniere, Petrarch’s speaker eventually realizes his mistake and engages in a conversation with Laura’s soul, who now acts as Laura-Beatrice, a guide who helps Petrarch’s speaker to achieve salvation. Petrarch’s speaker realizes that as he had praised Laura throughout Canzoniere and as Laura now resides among saints, his praise of Laura for her virtue actually
counts as “good work,” which would aid him to achieve salvation. This chapter helps me to establish a baseline for my following chapters, as I refer to the elements of Petrarchism that I identify, discuss, and elaborate on in this chapter when I discuss Anne Lok’s Petrarchism, Sidney’s Petrarchism, and Donne’s Petrarchism, including how they differ from one another.

In my second chapter, I compare the sonnets of Lok with Donne’s “La Corona,” as Lok came from a family that was committed to the Protestant cause in England right from the very inception of the Reformation in England. Lok’s father was Stephen Vaughan, an early supporter of the Reformation in England, a supporter of William Tyndale, and a trusted ally and confidante of Henry VIII. Anne Lok was quite close to the Scottish protestant reformer John Knox, whom she hid at her house during the reign of Queen Mary. Eventually, John Knox convinced her to leave England with her children during Mary’s reign and she joined the Protestant community, who were in exile in Geneva, where she met John Calvin and was deeply influenced by his theology. When Elizabeth became the Queen of England, she returned to England with her children and often wrote to promote the Calvinist cause in England.

In this chapter, I identify the trope of despair and a speaker’s vacillation as two essential areas in which Petrarchism overlapped with Calvinism. Petrarch’s speaker descends into despair after the death of Laura, and it is through this necessary trope of despair that Petrarch’s speaker eventually realizes his mistake of praising a mortal beauty and he eventually turns away from such an obsession with Laura-Daphne and with Laura-Beatrice’s aid, he finally commits to God. On numerous occasions, Calvin has suggested that often, God would induce a sense of despair within his elects only to bring them closer to Him. I argue in this chapter that this trope of despair is where Petrarchism overlaps with Calvinism. Again, Calvin in his Institutes of Christian Religion argues that a person can never know the state of his election as long as he
lives. If a person believes that he or she knows for sure he or she is an elect, then that person runs the danger of being complacent regarding the state of his or her soul. Calvin argues that as a person does not know the state of his or her election, that person often vacillates between hope of election and despair over his or her potential state of damnation. Calvin identifies this feature of vacillation between hope and despair as “godly sorrow” and suggests that a person’s “godly sorrow” is perhaps the first indication of his or her state of election. Petrarch’s speaker in

_Canzoniere_ often vacillates between his commitment to God and his commitment to the image of Laura-Daphne, his hope that Laura-Daphne will acknowledge his feelings for her, and his resulting despair when Laura-Daphne does not acknowledge his love. In this chapter, I identify this trope of a speaker’s and a supplicant’s vacillation between two different positions as another area in which Calvinism overlaps with Petrarchism.

Lok’s sonnet sequence, which was published in 1560, is the first published sonnet sequence in the English literature, and it was published with her translation of five sermons delivered by Calvin on Ezekiel. Lok’s sonnet sequence is an elaboration on David’s Psalm 51, where she composes an entire sonnet out of a single line of the psalm. Calvin was concerned that the melody of psalms may distract a worshipper from the scriptural content. Moreover, in one of his sermons, he preaches against consciously using rhetorical stratagems in preaching. In this chapter, I agree with Kimberley Coles’s idea that Lok’s sonnet sequence shows the rhetorical strategies that she adopted from Calvin’s sermons, because she is essentially trying to preach through her sonnets. I also agree with Coles’s contention that Lok shares Calvin’s concern over using melody in Psalms. As she adapts lines from contrite psalms into the form of a sonnet, she deliberately renders her sonnets lackluster so that her readers can focus on her message of godliness and not become distracted by formal strategies often employed by sonneteers, such as
the use of a volta or the method of highlighting a problem in the octave of a sonnet to provide a solution in the sestet. Rather, Lok focuses on the speaker’s awareness of his sinfulness and contrition and shows that her speaker constantly begs for God’s mercy. Her sonnets show that if someone follows Calvin’s ideas of devotion and preaching, those sonnets become uninteresting and lack the dynamism of Sidney or Donne’s religious sonnets. In this chapter, I do not agree with Roland Greene’s assertion that Lok’s sonnet sequence lacks “invention” and I argue that we need to change our concept of “invention” in a poem to realize how Lok uses “invention” in her sonnet sequence. I also disagree with Christopher Warley’s contention that Lok’s “Meditations of a Penitent Sinner” lacks elements of Petrarchism, as I argue that as Lok’s speaker shows vacillation between two positions and almost succumbs to the state of despair, Lok’s sonnet sequence exhibits Petrachism.

In the third section of this chapter, I compare Donne’s “La Corona” with Lok’s sonnets to show how Donne ignores Calvin’s ideas on preaching, but still ends up writing a Calvinist sonnet sequence. I argue that early modern scholars have often missed the point that in “La Corona,” Donne’s speaker engages with the Petrarchan issue of gaining salvation by writing poetry. While writing poems about saints could have counted as “good works” in a Roman Catholic society, a poem written in the similar vein in a reformed society—glorifying Christ without a proper appreciation of how Christ’s sacrifice paved the way for a soul’s salvation—will not help a person gain salvation. Donne’s “La Corona” shows the speaker’s spiritual journey from a point of spiritual naiveté, where he hopes to gain Christ’s glory by praising Jesus Christ; then, the speaker realizes his mistake and eventually exhibits true conversion to God when the speaker gains a proper understanding of the significance of Christ’s sacrifice. In this chapter, I disagree with Barry Spurr, who focuses on the structure of “La Corona” as a rosary poem and misreads
the sequence as Mariolatry and argues that “La Corona” was composed under the influence of the Roman Catholic theology. In this chapter, I argue that unlike Mariolatry, the position of the Virgin Mary in “La Corona” is not that of a partnership with Jesus Christ; rather, the position of the Virgin Mary is relegated to that of a subordinate position to Jesus Christ. In “La Corona,” I argue that Donne successfully adapts the structure of “rosary poems” that were associated with Roman Catholic poetry to serve the purposes of the Calvinist theology, as his speaker in “La Corona” praises Christ in the same way Calvin would have expected from the followers of the Reformed religion.

My third chapter has three sections. In the previous chapter, I show that Donne succeeds in “La Corona” in adapting a poetic form that was primarily associated with Roman Catholic poetry to underscore the Calvinist theology. In my first section, I do a reading of Sidney’s An Apology for Poetry to show how Sidney fails to develop a Protestant poetics in his text from a poetics that he inherited from medieval Roman Catholic Europe. My reading of Sidney’s An Apology for Poetry agrees with Coles’s reading of Sidney’s poetic manifesto and disagrees with Andrew Weiner’s reading of the text, where Weiner finds that Sidney’s An Apology for Poetry succeeds in developing a Protestant poetics. I argue that Sidney’s text fails as a Calvinist text, because it allots too much agency to the poet, the kind of agency that is unacceptable in Calvinism, and the role that Sidney assigns to “imagination” in his An Apology for Poetry is also untenable according to Calvinist doctrines.

In the second section of my chapter, I read Sidney’s Astrophil and Stella through the lens of the Reformation theology to argue that the only reading of Astrophil and Stella that makes sense is if we read Astrophil as a reprobate. The influence of the Reformation theology on Sidney’s poetic manifesto validates such a reading. Scholars who have come closest to my
position are Thomas P. Roche Jr. and Alan Sinfield, who imply a reading of Astrophil as a negative example, but neither of them read *Astrophil and Stella* according to the Calvinistic theology nor do they declare Astrophil a reprobate. Regardless of their positions, I argue that Astrophil’s moral depravity underscores his stature as a reprobate. In this chapter, I also show how Sidney uses the figure of Stella to compensate for the role of Laura-Beatrice as a spiritual guide in *Canzoniere*. Laura-Beatrice in *Canzoniere* is based on the model of the intercession of saints in favor of a supplicant’s salvation, a theological doctrine that the Roman Catholic religious theology approved but that the Calvinist theology did not approve. I show that as Sidney is a devout protestant, he could not present Stella as a spiritual guide, but he does present her as an epitome of virtue, akin to the figure of Laura in *Canzoniere*. Both Calvinism and Catholicism believe that God should be inside your heart. Therefore, when a person introspects, it should help him or her to reflect on God. Petrarch’s speaker in the *in-vita* section of *Canzoniere* has the image of Laura-Beatrice in his heart. Petrarch circumvents this problem by representing Laura as a medium of his speaker’s salvation. When his speaker looked inside, he could see the picture of Laura. As Catholicism allows the method of a saintly intervention approach to God, Laura’s image eventually turns out to be a saintly image who helps Petrarch’s speaker to achieve salvation. Hence, although Petrarch’s speaker does not get to see God in himself, he could still work out a way to achieve his salvation. Sidney does not have that option in a Calvinist context, as Calvinism relegates the role of the mediator to Jesus Christ. A person is supposed to communicate directly with God or he or she can use Christ as a mediator. Hence, Astrophil, who has the Stella’s image in his heart, is left spiritually barren. The spiritual desolate state of Astrophil that also explains his reprobate nature is further highlighted by Sidney when he
shows that Astrophil cannot sustain the idea that Stella symbolizes virtue, and he wants to physically possess her.

Donne was aware of the problem of drafting a protestant poetics from one that he and other early modern poets inherited from medieval Roman Catholic Europe. Hence, Donne never bothered to develop a poetics that could explain his poetic practices. Moreover, Donne was also aware that while a secular poem, such as in *Canzoniere*, could serve both the purposes of entertaining a reader and helping him to gain salvation, this dual role that secular poetry performed in medieval Roman Catholic Europe is no longer possible in Reformed England. Hence, Donne splits his reaction to Petrarchism between his secular poems and his religious poems. In the third section of this chapter, I argue that in his secular poems, he offers a critique of Petrarchan tropes, such as the role of the Petrarchan mistress or the role of the figure of Laura-Beatrice as a speaker’s spiritual guide.

In my fourth chapter on Donne’s “Holy Sonnets”, I focus my reading on the Group III manuscripts that contained texts of Donne’s sonnets under the title “Divine Meditation.” The problem, as it pertains to Donne’s Holy Sonnets, is that the original holographic copies of Donne’s Holy Sonnets is missing. The closest one can get to these lost originals is through the texts of some manuscripts in which the texts of these sonnets were copied from Donne’s lost texts.

My focus on the Group III sonnet sequence is a deliberate reaction in opposition to Helen Gardner’s assertion, “When we look at the two sets of twelve sonnets, we see at once that while the set in the Group III manuscripts presents no obvious sequence” (xl). It is beyond a critical
dispute that Donne’s religious sonnets travelled in groups.¹ Gardner was correct when she perceived these sonnets as a sequence in her edition of Donne’s *The Divine Poems*. Gardner elaborates on the thematic unity in the Group I and Group II sonnet sequences when she writes:

The first six sonnets are quite clearly a short sequence on one of the most familiar themes for a meditation: death and judgement, or the Last Things. The first sonnet is a preparatory prayer before making a meditation, beginning with an act of recollection: [...] the second vividly imagines extreme sickness: [...] the third, with equal vividness, imagines the very moment of death: [...] the fourth brings before us the general judgement at the Last Day: [...] the fifth is more discursive, but its subject is damnation; the sixth is on the death of Death at the resurrection of the just. The last six sonnets do not form a sequence; but they are on two aspects of a single theme, love. The first three (7 – 9) are concerned with the Atonement, and the mystery of the Creator’s love for his creatures, for whom he was willing to suffer death. The last three (10 – 12) reverse the theme and are on the love man owes to God and to his neighbour. The progress is clear: “We love him because he first loved us.” (xl–xli)

Helen Gardner’s observations on the sonnet sequence in the Group I and II manuscript sequences may make sense, but as Gardner focuses on the thematic unity of these sonnets and as she does not find any thematic unity in the Group III sonnets, she makes a number of incorrect assertions mistakes in her hypothesis. For example, she finds:

The set of twelve in the Group III manuscripts has ruined this sequence and makes no sense as it stands. But, if we take out from it the four sonnets which are interpolated there

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¹ In two dedicatory sonnets, “To Lady Mary Magdalen” and “To E. of D.,” Donne refers to a group of sonnets that were supposed to have travelled with the dedicatory sonnets.
and in 1635, we see again that these four are related. Scattered through the Group III set they merely seem ‘separate ejaculations’. Read together, as I have printed them, they are seen to be, if not so obviously a sequence, at least four sonnets on a single subject. (xli)

The problem with such an assertion is, as Patrick F. O’Connell points out, “She sees the four ‘extra’ sonnets as related even though they are never found consecutively in any manuscript, and she must change the order in which they do appear to provide a satisfactory arrangement” (“Successive Arrangement” 327). Another problem with Gardner’s interpretation of the sequence is the way she perceives the relationship between the Group III manuscripts and the Westmoreland sequence. The Group III manuscripts have 12 sonnets and in the Westmoreland sequence, these 12 sonnets are found in the same order, and to it seven more sonnets are added, making the total number of sonnets in the Westmoreland manuscript 19. In her 1952 edition of *The Divine Poems*, when it was not yet discovered that the Westmoreland sequence was transcribed by Donne’s close friend Rowland Woodward, Helen Gardner argued:

\[ W \text{ (Westmoreland sequence) [...] differs on occasion substantially from the Group III tradition. But in the four sonnets of 1635, preserved otherwise by Group III alone, it shows little independence. A possible explanation of its order is that its compiler took these four sonnets from a Group III manuscript, and, when writing them out with the other sonnets in his possession, adopted the Group III arrangement as far as it went. (x)} \]

However, later on, when it was discovered that the scribe of the Westmoreland manuscript was Donne’s close friend Rowland Woodward, who likely did not need a copy of the Group III manuscript for his transcription, Gardner’s theory of the Westmoreland sequence’s scribal
dependence on the Group III manuscripts is shattered. Hence, in her second edition of *The Divine Poems*, which was published in 1978, Gardner develops an alternative theory:

> We can either view *W* as preserving Donne’s first version and the Group III manuscripts as descending from a corrupt copy of it, or if we think the differences between *W* and Group III, though trivial, are sufficiently numerus to be impressive, we could regard *W* as having a slightly different version from the version in Group III, containing minor alterations that Donne retained in the revision that gives us the Group I text. (lxxx)

That Gardner is struggling to devise an explanation that can allow her to retain her original theory of the Group III sonnet sequence as meaningless is obvious here. If only she could accept the fact that the sonnet sequence in the Group III manuscript is just as authentic as the Westmoreland sequence and Groups I/II sonnet sequences, then her problem would have been solved.

O’Connell points out this problem of Gardner’s and offers an alternative theory of the arrangement of the sequence in the Group III manuscripts, as well as how the Group III manuscripts are related to the Westmoreland sequence:

Donne first grouped twelve sonnets together in the order found in Group III and *W* 1–12. These sonnets were copied into the original manuscript or manuscripts which eventually descended into Group III collections, and were later sent, somewhat revised, to Rowland Woodward. Sometime later Donne four more sonnets which he substituted for four of the original set: he inserted the four new sonnets before the original last sonnet, removed the first, third, seventh and tenth original sonnets altogether, and moved
the original fourth sonnet to the twelfth position, giving us the arrangements of Groups I – II and 1633. (“Successive Arrangement” 329)

O’Connell’s theory that the arrangement of the Group III sonnet sequence should be credited to Donne was later validated by the textual scholar Gary Stringer, who published an article in 2002 in the journal “Renaissance Papers,” which provided textual evidence that Donne was revising his sequence of the Holy Sonnets and that the Group III manuscript sequence is an authentic sequence that should be accredited to Donne. An expanded version of Stringer’s article was published in the introduction to the Variorum edition, wherein the editors claimed that the Variorum edition is the first edition to acknowledge the credibility of the Group III sonnet sequence. Hence, in this dissertation, I chose to focus on the Group III sonnet sequence, as, to the best of my knowledge, no critic has ever focused on the sonnet sequence in the Group III manuscript in their reading of the theological influence on Donne’s “Holy Sonnets”.

The effect of Gardner’s arrangement of Donne’s Holy Sonnets has immensely influenced Donne’s scholars’ reading of the “Holy Sonnets”. John Stachinewski, who finds the Calvinistic theological influence on Donne’s Holy Sonnets, points out the discrepancies of Gardner’s arrangement to argue against a sequential reading of Donne’s Holy Sonnets and focuses on individual sonnets in his article. Richard Strier and R.V. Young, both of whom point out that Donne’s speaker cannot sustain the Calvinistic theology in their respective articles, focus on the individual sonnets in Donne’s “Holy Sonnets”. Thus, although I agree with Stachinewski that Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” show a distinctive influence of Calvinistic theology, my reading of Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” as a sequence goes against Stachinewski’s argument in favor of the reading of the individual sonnets.
This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I provide some background on the group of manuscripts of Donne’s Holy Sonnets, along with the examples of the evidence that the editors of the Variorum edition provide, to suggest that the Group III manuscript is just as credible as the Group I/II manuscripts. I use the textual evidence of Donne’s revision from the Variorum editors to suggest that Donne thought of the “Holy Sonnets” as a sequence.

In my second section, I show how the speaker in the Group III sonnet sequence appears to be on a spiritual journey with its ups and downs. In this section, I argue that Donne’s speaker begins as spiritually naïve, akin to the speaker of “La Corona,” and he eventually becomes a devout Calvinist. My reading of the influence of Calvinism on Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” is based on three points: 1) We notice the vacillation in the speaker, a trope observed in both Calvinist devotional practices and Petrarchism, especially through the sonnets “Thou hast made me” to “This is my playes last scene”, where the speaker is spiritually naïve in “Thou hast made me” and “As due by many titles I resigne”, where the speaker exhibits false conversion to God in “Father, part of his double Interest”, and where the speaker eventually displays true conversion to God in “This is my playes last scene”; 2) The speaker has trouble accepting the Calvinist doctrine of salvation, so he contemplates Arminianism, but he finally settles on Calvinism; and 3) Calvin has urged in his Institutes of Christian Religion that a supplicant should be zealous when he prays. We notice the speaker praying zealously in the sonnets “I am a little World” and “At the Round Earths Imagin’d corners”. A non-sequential reading of the sonnet sequence, akin to that of Stachinewski’s, may account for the presence of the Calvinist doctrines in the individual sonnets, but this does not explain the presence of the tropes of vacillation and despair, both of which are essential features of Calvinism and Petrarchism. Richard Strier in his reading of the doctrinal influence on Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” argues, “The pain and confusion in many
of the ‘Holy Sonnets’ is not that of the convinced Calvinist but rather that of a person who would like to be a convinced but who is unable to do so” (361). My reading of the sequential nature of Donne’s “Holy sonnets” compliments Strier’s reading: as Strier does not read Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” as a sequence, and as he was using Gardner’s edition, he fails to notice that although Donne’s speaker begins as a non-committed Calvinist, the speaker does undergo a true conversion to God and becomes a devout Calvinist in the sonnet sequence. Moreover, in this section, I draw attention to the common grounds that sonnets such as “O my blacke Soule” and “Death be not proud” share, and through a comparison of such common grounds with Petrarch’s Canzoniere, I show how the sequential nature of Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” becomes essential to perceiving the conversion of Donne’s speaker.

In the third section of my chapter, I focus on the replacement sonnets of the Groups I/II manuscript to show how the influence of the Calvinist doctrine can be perceived in the replacement sonnets. I argue that the replacement sonnets present Donne’s speaker as a Calvinist, because he follows the Calvinist stricture of praying zealously and he shows the Calvinist trope of vacillation.
Chapter One

Petrarch’s Canzoniere

The term **Petrarchism** has generated so much critical currency that it is necessary for this project to narrow it down for the purpose of this dissertation. In her discussion of Petrarchism, Heather Dubrow raises a number of questions: “Is their fundamental aim the praise of the lady, as some scholars of an earlier generation assumed, or the establishment of the poet’s own subjectivity, as many of their contemporary counterparts would assert? Is the final poem the culmination of a movement or an instance of the ways that movement has been compromised throughout the sequence?” (15). In her endeavor to define anti-Petrarchism, Dubrow notes, “To begin with, a definition of anti-Petrarchism necessarily draws on that perilous enterprise of defining Petrarchism” (6). Heeding Dr. Dubrow’s warning, I do not intend define either Petrarchism or anti-Petrarchism, but rather to discuss a few aspects of Petrarchism that will be useful for my discussion of the poetics of Anne Lok, Philip Sidney and John Donne. The aspects of Petrarchism that I find useful for this dissertation, some of which have received widespread critical attention, include the combination of religious and secular elements, the fluctuating speaker-persona, the gradual transformation of the speaker and his conversion to God, the trope of Laura as an elusive example of earthly glory and a guide to eternal glory, and the issue of salvation. The discussion of Petrarchism in this chapter is focused more on the religious and theological aspects of *Canzoniere* that will be useful to the following chapters.

This chapter is based on the assumptions that the Canzoniere is a sequence. There has been much debate on the nature of *Canzoniere*’s sequential nature. As Petrarch starts *Canzoniere* with “O you that hear in scattered rhymes the sound” (Emphasis added) (1.1), it can be presumed that *Canzoniere* is a collection of scattered verses, but Teodolina Barolini has convincingly
argued that Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* is a sequence. Barolini argues two reasons to perceive *Canzoniere* as a sequence: 1) The title *Canzoniere* is “(derived from a common noun referring literally to a collection of canzoni) … conveys a sense of unity, and hence of (authorial) “willed narrative progression” (2) and 2) the poems in *Canzoniere* “are arranged chronologically, with the result that sequentiality, the flow the text and chronicity, the flow of time, are – more concretely than usual – one” (17). I find Barolini’s argument convincing enough to follow her suggestion to read *Canzoniere* as a sequence.

In this dissertation, I follow Thomas Bergin’s reading of *Canzoniere*’s structure. Bergin identifies two distinct parts of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* based on Laura’s life (154). In this dissertation, I refer to the part of *Canzoniere* that describes Laura when she is alive as “in-vita” section and the section where Laura is dead as “in-morte” section. The watershed poem in *Canzoniere* is poem 264, where we get to know for the first time that Laura has died. Petrarch presents Laura as two different selves, which are essentially parts of a single self: the Laura in the *in vita* section, whom the speaker pursues, and the Laura in the *in morte* section, who acts as the speaker’s spiritual guide. Thomas G. Bergin coins the useful terms “Laura–Daphne” (161) to denote Laura in the *in vita* section and “Laura–Beatrice” (162) to denote Laura in the *in-morte* section, which I use throughout this dissertation. How Petrarch’s Laura is a commentary on Dante’s Beatrice is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but the Petrarchan trope of combining secular and religious elements, is later adopted by John Donne in his own poems.

The Petrarchan trait of combination of the sacred and secular elements, as we shall soon see, exhibits the Petrarchan trope of “false conversion to God”. This important Petrarchan trait, the combination of the sacred and the secular, has surprisingly escaped the notice of most
scholars, though it is a commonplace in scholarship on John Donne. These elements are merged in individual and successive sonnets in the sequence. Petrarch often plays with words and demonstrates how their meanings change when their contexts change. An example of this phenomenon can be observed in the three successive sonnets (61, 62, and 63). The first four lines of sonnet 61 show this typical mixing of sacred and secular elements:

Ah, blessed be the day, the month, the year,
The season, time, the hour, the very stroke,
Fair, countryside, and place where I was caught
By those two lovely eyes that bound me fast.

Petrarch’s speaker starts this sonnet by claiming “blessed be the day,” (61. 1) which sounds like a prayer and a Benediction. After the first line, a reader might expect the speaker to praise God, but the speaker plays upon the reader’s expectations and continues with the elements he wants to praise in the second line. In the third line, the speaker indicates the readers are to be surprised when he starts with “fair, countryside” (61. 3). The invocation “blessed be the day” (61. 1) is reminiscent of psalms such as Psalm 68:19: “Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with

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2 Scholars have commented on the presence of “sacred” and “profane” elements in Donne’s poems. Various titles of books and articles prove this, such as TM DiPasquale’s Literature and Sacrament: The Sacred and the Secular in John Donne, Gary Stringer’s chapter “Some sacred and profane contexts of John Donne’s Batter my Heart,” and Lindsay Mann’s “Sacred and Profane Love in Donne,” to name a few.

3 I am not the first scholar to note these aspects in Petrarch’s Canzoniere. MariannS. Regan in her article “Petrarch’s Courtly and Christian Vocabularies: Language in Canzoniere 61 – 63” notes the use of secular elements and religious elements in the poems 61 – 63 of Petrarch’s sonnet sequence. My reading of sonnet 62 of Canzoniere is heavily influenced by Regan’s reading. However, there is a subtle difference between our respective interests in Canzoniere. Regan is interested in the use of language in these three sonnets whereas I am more interested in the Petrarch’s speaker’s vacillation between his love for Laura and his commitment to God. I find Regan’s article useful as it helps me to show how Petrarch’s speaker finally commits to God in the in-morte section of Canzoniere and how that commitment is different from his commitment to God that we notice in sonnet 62.

4 All quotations are from Petrarch’s Songbook: Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta, as translated by James Wyatt Cook.

5 Benedetto sia, ’l giorno, e ’l mese, et l’anno,
et la stagione, e ’l tempo, et l’ora, e ’l punto,
e ’l bel paese, e ’l loco ov’io fui giunto,
da’ duo begli occhi che legato m’anno;
benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.” Alternatively, David’s Psalms praise God for his salvation and for providing for the Hebrew people, while Petrarch’s speaker praises the day he first saw Laura. Not content with simply praising the time and place he first met Laura, the speaker continues praising all the tropes later associated with Petrarchism:

And blessed be that first sweet breathlessness

That caught at me as I was bound to Love;

The bow, the darts that pierced me, be they blest,

And wounds so deep they struck me to the heart; (61. 5-8)6

“Bows,” (61. 7) “darts/arrows,” (61. 7) and “sweet breathlessness” (61. 5) are all tropes that eventually become clichéd as Petrarchan tropes in early modern English literature. The fact that these non-religious items are introduced by the word “blessed” in the second quatrain makes them quasi-religious in nature. The octave of sonnet 61 thus shows that Petrarch combines secular items with sacred items, which is something that Donne would later adopt in his secular and religious poems.

Although Donne used the Petrarchan trope of combining sacred and secular elements, he uses them differently. Donne seldom drew attention through his speaker to the fact that he is writing the verses when he combines secular and religious elements in his poems. Donne wrote for his coterie audience, who already knew of him and were aware the poem they were reading in the manuscript was Donne’s literary exercise. For example, in lines 10–18 of The Flea, Donne does not draw attention to the fact he is writing these verses:

6 et benedetto il primo dolce affanno
    ch’i’ ebbe ad esser con Amor congiunto,
    et l’arco, et le saette ondi’ fui punto,
    et le piaghe che ’nfin al cor mi vanno.
Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, w’are met,
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that, self-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

In this poem, Donne’s speaker tries to convince his mistress to sleep with him by using the mosquito, which has sucked on both their blood, to further his argument. Phrases such as “temple,” “sacrilege,” and “cloistered” are usually used in religious contexts. The word “marriage,” when associated with “temple,” implies the religious institution of marriage. In this poem, Donne’s speaker is arguing that if marriage is a prerequisite for sex, their blood was already comingled in the body of the flea, which is like a church in this context. Because their blood is blended, they are technically married. The underlying assumption is that the mistress should not have any reservations in sleeping with the speaker. Although there is a merging of religious and secular elements in Donne’s *The Flea*, nowhere in the poem, the full text of which is unnecessary to be quoted here, does Donne draw attention to his writing of the poem. There are two obvious reasons for this. Drawing attention to the act of writing the poem will not help the internal logic of the poem. Moreover, Donne was writing for his coterie, so there was no need for him to remind them that he wrote this poem. Following the same argument, there is no need for Petrarch to draw attention to his verses in sonnet 61, but he does so regardless:
And blest the many words I scattered forth
As I invoked my lady’s name, and blest
My sighs, my passion, and the tears I shed.
And all those pages, blessed be they too,
That purchased fame for her, and blest my thoughts
Of her alone in which no other shares. (61. 9-14)\[^7\]

Reading Petrarch’s sonnet out of context would lead one to question why Petrarch’s speaker mentions the verses that have been written to praise Laura. In the preceding poem in the sequence, Petrarch underscores the act of writing when he writes: “If, when my early rhymes had given him/ Another hope, through her he loses it?” (10-11). These are not isolated incidents, as numerous sonnets in the sequence involve Petrarch continuously drawing attention through his speaker to the act of writing. As we will later see that Petrarch is drawing attention to this act of writing through his speaker because the act of writing will eventually aid in his speaker’s salvation. The point being made in the preceding paragraph and in this paragraph is that although Donne follows the Petrarchan trope of combining secular and religious language, there is an essential difference between them. Unlike most of Donne’s poems, excluding “La Corona” and “Holy Sonnets”, Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* is a sequence. Petrarch takes the opportunity the sonnet sequence offers him: he uses the almost synonymous words in subsequent sonnets to alternate between the words used in the secular and religious context in the previous sonnet.

\[^7\] Benedette le voci tante ch’io
chiamando il nome de mia donna ò sparte,
e i sospiri, et le lagrime, e ’l desio;
et benedette sian tutte le carte
ov’io fama l’acquisto, e ’l pensier mio,
ch’è sol di lei, sí ch’altra non v’à parte.
The mixing of “sacred” and “secular” elements in *Canzoniere* points out to the moral depravity of the Petrarchan speaker in the *in-vita* section. Whereas the sonnet 61 shows the Petrarchan speaker’s misplaced devotion to Laura, the next sonnet in Petrarch’s sequence is framed with phrases like “Father of heaven” (62. 1) and “You were on the cross” (62. 14). In this sonnet, the reader senses that Petrarch seems to have realized the days he spent repining for Laura were wasted:

Father of heaven, after wasted days,
After those nights spent tossing uselessly
With wild desire that kindled in my heart
From watching deeds so graceful to my ill:
Henceforth be pleased, I pray, that by your light,
Another life I turn toward, fairer deeds;
So, having woven nets to not effect,
My bitter enemy is put to shame.
Now, the eleventh year, my Lord, rolls round
When I’ve been subject to that ruthless yoke
Which is most savage to the meekest thrall.
*Misrere*; pity my worthless woe;
My straying thoughts, lead to a better place;
Remind them: this day You were on the cross. (62. 1-14)\(^8\)

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\(^8\) Padre del ciel, dopo i perduti giorni,
dopo le notti vaneggiando spese,
con quel fero desio ch’il cor s’accese,
mirando gli atti per mio mal sí adorni,
piacciati omai col Tuo lume ch’io torni
ad altra vita et a piú belle imprese,
The fact that this sonnet is spoken on Good Friday adds gravity to the speaker’s realization that he has wasted his years. This sonnet thus becomes a crucial prayer, and it presents a tone reminiscent of some of the sonnets of contrition that Lok and Donne would write in the future. The phrase “wasted days” signals to the reader that the speaker may soon reform his ways. His desires, which were always pleasant if not blessed in the preceding sonnets, are now “wild” (62. 3). As this sonnet is a prayer—a prayer to God in a serious tone that does not emphasize items such as the bows and darts of the previous sonnet—the phrase “wild desire,” when associated with the phrase “to my ill,” implies the consciousness of the speaker’s moral depravity and underscores the danger of him losing his salvation. This sonnet indicates to a reader that Petrarch’s speaker has realized the precarious situation of losing his salvation and hence says, “Another life I turn toward, fairer deeds” (62. 6). Of course, the “fairer deeds” in this context involve not writing verses in praise of Laura but of God. Perhaps the speaker will reflect on himself, turn toward God, and write verses in His praise. In the preceding sonnets, the word “light” has been associated with Laura’s eyes. In this sonnet, “By your light” (62. 5) is God’s grace and not Laura’s light. The speaker realizes his verses were nothing more than “woven nets” (62. 7) to ensnare Laura, a married woman. As love encouraged the speaker to weave this net, in this sonnet, love becomes the speaker’s “bitter enemy” (62. 8). As the phrase “bitter enemy” (62. 8) is placed within the context of a prayer and as the speaker’s soul is in peril, one may argue that love is Satan’s agent, because love plotted against the speaker’s salvation, or that

sí ch'avendo le reti indarno tese,
il mio duro adversario se ne scorni.
Or volge, Signor mio, l'undecimo anno
ch'i' fui sommesso al dispietato giogo
che sopra i piú soggetti è piú feroce.
Miserere del mio non degno affanno;
reduci i pensier' vaghi a miglior luogo;
ramenta lor come oggi fusti in croce.
the bitter enemy is Satan himself. However, the danger is over and the speaker has decided to curb his “straying thoughts” (62. 13) and lead them toward “a better place” (62. 13), which is toward God. In sonnet 62, the speaker invokes a Psalm more directly than in sonnet 61.

Petrarch’s speaker recalls Psalm 51 in line 12 of the sonnet, as the Latin words of Psalm 51 start with “Miserere mei, Deus”—i.e., “Have mercy upon me, O God.” While the invocation of the Psalm in the previous line led the speaker to bless what is secular and unimportant for one’s salvation, in sonnet 62, the speaker, after invoking God’s mercy, ends his prayer by meditating on Christ’s sacrifice. The conclusion of sonnet 62 convinces a reader that Petrarch’s speaker has decided to turn toward God and eschew secular verses in Laura’s praise.

Petrarch deliberately plays with the reader’s expectations when he shifts the religious theme of the sonnet 62 in sonnet 63. In line 6 of sonnet 62, the speaker expressed hope to turn toward God: “Another life I turn toward, fairer deeds.” Furthermore, the first quatrain of sonnet 63 is deliberately calculated to remind the reader of line 6 of the preceding sonnet:

Turning your eyes upon my pallor new,
Which causes everyone to think on death,
Compassions moved you, and so, graciously
You greeted me and kept my heart alive. (63. 1-4)⁹

When reading the first two lines, after reading the previous sonnet, the reader assumes Petrarch’s speaker is addressing God. However, while the previous sonnet ended with the speaker contemplating Christ’s death, the reader may find it unusual that God would think of death when

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⁹ Volgendo gli occhi al mio novo colore che fa di morte rimembrar la gente, pietà vi mosse; onde, benignamente salutando, teneste in vita il core
He sees the speaker’s pale visage. The third line is not that suspicious, as God could be compassionate and moved by Petrarch’s speaker’s realization of his mistake and his contrition. However, the fourth line dispels all doubts and demonstrates the speaker is addressing Laura. While in the fifth line of sonnet 62 the speaker appealed to God with “Henceforth be pleased, I pray,” in the third line, he compliments Laura with “Compassion moved you.” With her “gentle, sweet, angelic voice,” (63. 7) Laura is a mistress of a beast who “prods lazy beasts” (63. 9) and pokes “awake the burdened soul” of the speaker (10). Line 10 of sonnet 63, “You goad awake the burdened soul in me,”¹⁰ implies that Laura inspires the “wild desire” (3) of the preceding sonnet in him. The speaker’s transformational return to his focus on Laura, a position from where he started in sonnet 61 is now complete.

This switching of positions, something that Dubrow has identified as “tempestuous tossing back and forth,” (23) is typical of a Petrarchan speaker, and Sidney and Donne would use it later in their sonnets. The fluctuation identified in sonnets 60, 61, and 62 is related to another trope of Petrarchism necessary for this dissertation—the trope of conversion. Petrarch’s Canzoniere is not simply about the speaker’s unfulfilled love for Laura; it is also about writing poetry. A true Roman Catholic should know the source of all human activities is God. St. Augustine in his Exposition of Psalms 99 – 120 illustrates this point about idolatry:

Does anyone worship with his eyes fixed on the image, without being persuaded that the image is hearing his petition and without hoping that it will give him what he wants? Probably not. So thoroughly entangled do people become in such superstitions that they often become in such superstitions that they often turn their backs on the real sun and pour out their prayers to the statue they call Sun; or again, while the sound of the sea is

₁⁰ cosí destaro in me l’anima grave
battering them from behind they batter the statue of Neptune with their sighs as though it were conscious, that statue which they venerate as representative of the actual sea. What causes this error – almost forces the illusion on them, in fact – is the human likeness with all its bodily senses, and so they judge that a body very similar to their own is more likely to be responsive than the sun’s orb, or the wide waves, or any other object clearly not built on the same plane as the living creatures they are used to seeing. (315 – 316)

Petrarch’s speaker is yet to learn that in the in-vita section of Canzoniere he focuses on the statue of the sun i.e. Laura instead of the real sun i.e. God. Petrarch’s speaker laments at Laura’s death, thinking it was most unfortunate that his treatment of Laura was idolatrous, and in some sonnets of Canzoniere, the speaker creates the impression of an ambitious poet. The praising of a mortal woman and the pursuit of fame through verses are essentially secular pursuits that will not aid the speaker in his salvation. Petrarch knows this and uses Canzoniere to show the journey of his speaker from the pursuit of mortal fame to spiritual salvation. This change in pursuit, which is identified as the essential Petrarchan trope of conversion, can be observed in the sonnets of Lok and Donne.

Petrarch’s speaker aims for immortality in his sonnet sequence. The human desire for immortality is an ancient pursuit, as can be observed in the oldest existing epic: The Epic of Gilgamesh. As death is an invariable truth of human existence, the closest a person can come to achieving immortality is by creating something and leaving it behind so people will remember

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11 My reading of immortality in Petrarch’s Canzoniere is influenced by Mariann Regan’s reading of Canzoniere. I do agree with her that we can trace progress in the poet-persona in Petrarch’s sonnet sequence. However, my reading significantly differs from her reading. Regan finds the presence of at least five “selves” or personae in Petrarch’s Canzoniere: the protagonist, the Christian, the lover, the poet, and Petrarch (“The Evolution” 23). I do not agree with Regan’s reading because, in my opinion, splitting the persona into five selves defeats the purpose Petrarch was trying to achieve. Petrarch’s Canzoniere presents the struggle of a man pursuing salvation through a tumultuous journey. The aspects of the Petrarchan self that Regan identifies with the lover, the Christian, and the poet are, I believe, different phases the speaker must go through to reconcile finally with God.
him or her in posterity. Petrarch’s speaker knows this and hopes his verses will help him to achieve immortality:

That loving thought which dwells
Within has been disclosed to me in you,
So from my heart all other joy’s withdrawn;
Hence, words and works come forth

*From me so shaped that with their aid I hope*

*To make myself immortal, though flesh die.* (Emphasis added) (71.91-96)\(^{12}\)

The speaker has insinuated previously that his verses may be used by someone in the future, “Ever in tears, I’ll wander every shore,/Perhaps creating pity in the eyes/Of persons born from hence a thousand years (30.33-35)\(^{13}\). This is the first time in the whole sequence that the speaker refers to the immortality he can achieve through verses. The “loving thought” is not simply the love for Laura but also for the verse he is writing, and the writing has from his “heart all other joy’s withdrawn.” Thus, Laura is not simply a woman with whom the speaker is in love, but she is also a tool and a means for the speaker to achieve undying fame. The speaker’s use of Laura as a means to achieve fame brands him a hypocrite, as his love for Laura is not selfless; he exploits

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\(^{12}\) L’amoroso pensero
ch'alberga dentro, in voi mi si discopre
tal che mi trâ del cor ogni altra gioia;
 onde parole et opre
escon di me si fatte allor ch’i’ spero
farmi immortal, perché la carne moia.

Another instance of the speaker repeating this tactic of using Laura as a device to achieve immortality is in canzone 119:

“I hope through her to live/A long time after others think me dead.” (14 – 15)

[spero per lei gran tempo/viver, quand'altro mi terrà per morto.]

\(^{13}\) sempre piangendo andrò per ogni riva,
per far forse pietà venir negli occhi
di tal che nascerà dopo mill’anni,
his verses for Laura by generating fame for himself. These two incidents are not isolated where the speaker errs and speaks of achieving immortality through verse. In sonnet 205, the speaker hopes, “Perhaps, yet someone sighing will remark/(Tinged with sweet jealousy): “In his time this/One’s borne much for love most beautiful” (9-11)\textsuperscript{14}. These lines suggest the speaker is craving sympathy from a reader of \textit{Canzoniere}. Furthermore, the reader’s sympathy becomes a surrogate for Laura’s love, which the speaker cannot achieve in the text of \textit{Canzoniere}. However, when these lines are read in the context of sonnets 71 and 30, the words “his time” gain importance. When read in the context of sonnets 71 and 30, the speaker seems to have another agenda in sonnet 205. The phrase “his time” implies a sense of chronology. It implies the speaker hopes his sonnet will survive the tests of time and that it will be read in the future. The speaker does not stop at simply hoping his sonnets will be read in the future, but he also aspires to become an emblem of a suffering lover or a sort of celebrity among the cult or community of “Love’s servant”\textsuperscript{15}:

My song, upon the field
I’ll stand firm, for to die while fleeing is
Inglorious, and I
Reproach myself for such complaints, so sweet
My fate, tears, sighs, and death.
Love’s servant, you who read these lines, this world

\textsuperscript{14} Forse anchor fia chi sospirando dica,
tinto di dolce invidia: Assai sostenne
per bellissimo amor quest'al suo tempo.

\textsuperscript{15} As we shall later see in the third chapter of this dissertation that John Donne plays upon this idea of a cult of lovers in his “Canonization”.
Possesses no good that can match my ill. (207.92-98)\textsuperscript{16}

This is perhaps one of the rare occasions in \textit{Canzoniere} where the speaker addresses an anonymous reader as “you.” In the previous sonnets and in other poems in the sequence, the speaker has cemented his persona as a love-struck character who continues to sigh and weep; hence, the words “fate,” “tears,” “sighs,” and “death” are inseparable from his image. This community of “Love’s servant” will share the speaker’s misfortune and “fate,” which will encourage reference to his verses, and readers will sigh and shed tears for both their and the speaker’s misfortune. The speaker is so obsessed with this concept of mortal fame that he does not offer his readers the option of composing verses to vent their own pain. The verses in \textit{Canzoniere} are the speaker’s “song,” and he will “stand firm” beside his songs because he believes they will bring him glory, as can be perceived from the word “inglorious.” This reading demonstrates that Petrarch’s speaker is usurping what any devout Christian, be he a Roman Catholic or a Protestant, would believe is due only to God. Without God’s grace and will, the “song” for which the speaker is ready to “die” and the verses the speaker believes will bring him glory, and immortality would not have been possible. A devout Roman Catholic would be privy to this knowledge that everything emanates from God’s will, but \textit{Canzoniere} is about Petrarch’s speaker learning this lesson. Petrarch’s speaker cannot perceive this truth, because he is blinded by the earthly pursuits of glory and pride, which are impediments to his salvation.

Petrarch’s speaker is not only ambitious about his worldly fame but is also guilty of being proud. His pride can be noticed in the way the speaker perceives himself in the sonnet sequence:

\begin{verbatim}
Canzon mia, fermo in campo
starò, ch'elli è disnor morir fuggendo;
et me stesso reprendo
di tai lamenti; s'è dolce è mia sorte,
pianto, sospiri et morte.
Servo d'Amor, che queste rime leggi,
ben non à 'l mondo, che 'l mio mal pareggi
\end{verbatim}
Perhaps so doubly my one work I’ll shape
Between the moderns’ style and ancient tongue
That (and I dare to say this fearfully)
At length you’ll hear it noised abroad in Rome. (40.5-8)\textsuperscript{17}

The speaker is about to forge a new style in his verses from classical languages, such as Latin and Greek, and vernacular languages; he is sure of his success and the fame it will generate for him. The phrase “and I dare to say this fearfully” (40. 7) is nothing but mock modesty. The “one work” to which the speaker refers in line 5 is the body of the sonnet sequence. The speaker is not content simply to speak about how his verses will create a sensation in Rome; he must also draw attention to his status as a poet laureate, “To me that crown which customarily/Adorns one who, while shaping verses, writes” (24.4-5)\textsuperscript{18}. Gerhard Regn argues that Petrarch succeeded in fashioning the moment of his crowning through his works, which signal the “beginning of a new era” (S80). The same sort of hubris can be identified in the above two lines, where the speaker draws attention to his laurel. His pride in his verse is further reflected when he compares himself to Virgil and Homer:

If Virgil and if Homer had but seen
That sun which, with my eyes I see, they would
Have bent their every power to bring her fame,

---

\textsuperscript{17} i’ farò forse un mio lavor sí doppio
tra lo stil de’ moderni e ’l sermon prisco,
che, paventosamente a dirlo ardisco,
infin a Roma n’udirai lo scoppio.

\textsuperscript{18} non m’avesse disdetta la corona
che suole ornar chi poetando scrive
And one style with the other have combined. (186.1-4)19

In sonnet 40, the speaker claims he will combine the styles of the “ancients” and the vernacular. Who better to represent the “ancients” than Virgil and Homer, the pillars and touchstones of Latin and Greek literature? By claiming that were Virgil and Homer alive, they would “one style with the other have combined” (186. 4), the speaker validates what he is doing in his verse—combining the style of the ancients and putting himself on the same pedestal as that of Virgil and Homer. While the speaker sees himself on par with ancients like Virgil and Homer in sonnet 186, he reveals himself in poem 70 on the same pedestal as the leading figures of his age. The speaker shows this by appropriating the lines of Guido Cavalcanti (“A lady entreats me, thus I wish to speak” [20])20, Dante (“So in my speech I want to be severe” [30])21, and Cino de Pistoia (“In the sweet season of my early youth” [40])22 (Cook 423). The most damning line as far as preferring secular verses to devotion to God is concerned comes in poem 70 when the speaker says, “If with compassion no one lends me ear,/Why scatter prayers to heaven so frequently? (3-4)23. A devout Roman Catholic would never dream of equating Godly concerns and secular concerns as Petrarch’s speaker does. Moreover, these lines are almost akin to the note of despair that is later demonstrated in Donne’s sonnets. Petrarch’s speaker has yet to learn about God’s compassion. Petrarch’s speaker must journey from this precarious position concerning the state of the speaker’s soul to get to a point where he can say, “In that small scrap of life that I have left,/And

19 Se Virgilio et Homero avessin visto quel sole il qual vegg’io con gli occhi miei, tutte lor forze in dar fama a costei avrian posto, et l’un stil coll’altro misto:

20 Donna m’i priegha, per ch’io voglio dire
cosi nel mio parlar voglio esser aspro
21 nel dolce tempo de la prima etade
22 che se non è chi con pietà m’ascolte, perché sparger al ciel sì spessi preghi?
at my death, vouchsafe Your ready hand;/In others, well you know, I have no hope. (Emphasis added) (365.12-14)\textsuperscript{24}. To move from a position of spiritual abjection, as stressed in poem 70, to that of absolute faith in God, the speaker must change his attitude toward God. It is this change in attitude that I identify as the Petrarchan trope of conversion.

There are two types of conversions: false and true, which, as will be seen, will become important in the discussion of Donne’s sonnets. There is an apparent change in the speaker’s attitude in poem 264, which is a pivotal section in \textit{Canzoniere}, because it divides the sonnet sequence into the \textit{in vita} and \textit{in morte} sections.\textsuperscript{25} The speaker notes:

\begin{quote}
And hour by hour I feel grow in my heart
A worthy scorn, severe and harsh, which sets
Forth all my secret thoughts
Upon my brow for others to observe.

\textit{Indeed, to love a mortal thing with faith}

\textit{As great as that due but to God}, is most

Denied him who the most for merit yearns. (Emphasis added) (264.95-101)\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

This is not the first time the speaker realizes he must pay attention to God instead of a mortal human: sonnet 62 ends with a reflection on Christ’s crucifixion, but as we have seen, in sonnet

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{24} A quel poco di viver che m’avanza
et al morir, degni esser Tua man presta:
Tu sai ben che ’n altrui non ò speranza.
\textsuperscript{25} It is in sonnet 267 that readers are informed about the death of Laura. However, I agree with Dennis Deutschke that Part II of \textit{Canzoniere} begins with canzone 264, as we the speaker subject himself to pensive and somber self-reflection (93), and furthermore that this canzone foreshadows Laura’s death.
\textsuperscript{26} et sento ad ora ad or venirmi al core
un leggiadro disegno aspro et severo
ch’ogni occulto pensero
tira in mezzo la fronte, ov’altri ’l vede:
ché mortal cosa amar con tanta fede
quanta a Dio sol per debito conversi,
più si disdice a chi piú pregio brama
\end{flushleft}
63, the speaker returns his attention to Laura in verse. Again, in sonnet 81, the speaker is visited by a vision of Christ who exhorts the speaker, “O ye who labor, here the pathway is;/Come to me, if no other bar the way (81.10-11)\(^{27}\). Something does block his path to Christ, however: his devotion to Laura, as demonstrated in the opening lines of sonnet 82, “I was not ever wearied loving you./My lady, nor while life lasts, shall I be; (1-2)\(^{28}\). I identify this temporary turning toward and then away from God before committing one’s self to His mercy and wishes as false conversion, which can be sensed after reading a group of sonnets, such as sonnets 61, 62, and 63 and sonnets 81 and 82. It can also be observed in a single poem, such as in poem 264 or 142:

More steadfast ever, thus, through every season,

Where I heard one who called to me from heaven

I followed, led by clear and gentle light,

I came back always, pledged to those boughs (142.19-22)

…

But now my brief life, and the place and season

Direct me to another path to heaven,

To bring forth fruit, not merely flower and fronds.

Some other love, new fronds, another light,

Another star to heaven through other hills

I seek (the season’s right), and other boughs. (142.34-39)\(^{29}\)

\(^{27}\) O voi che travagliate, ecco ’l camino; venite a me, se ’l passo altri non serra

\(^{28}\) Io non fu’ d’amar voi lassato unquancho, madonna, né sarò mentre ch’io viva;

\(^{29}\) Però più fermo ognor di tempo in tempo, seguendo ove chiamar m’udia dal cielo
The speaker’s non-commitment in lines 19–22 is a rare instance where we find the speaker confessing that he has tried to commit to God and then turned away from Him. Usually, the speaker’s non-commitment is akin to what is observed in lines 34–39, where he commits himself to turning toward God and later, in the next sonnet or poem, he retracts himself from his decision. In lines 19–22 of Petrarch’s poem 142 we find the speaker confessing he has tried to commit himself to God but could not maintain his commitment. Lok’s and Donne’s speakers will not be so explicit, but I will demonstrate in the following chapters, Lok’s and Donne’s sonnets suggest that their speakers had trouble committing themselves to God in a past time that may not be covered within the text of their sonnets. Moreover, by comparing the sonnets in Petrarch’s Canzoniere, we can further conclude that the speaker is fully committed to God, and this full commitment to God is identified as true conversion. Marian Regan acknowledges Petrarch’s speaker’s change in attitude in poem 264 and comments, “He begins to change his mind in that pivotal poem of the book cclxiv” (“The Evolution” 34). I have demonstrated that the speaker does not commit to God in earlier sonnets and poems. Regan argues that poems like sonnet 80 and poem 142, especially lines 13-24 and 34-39, are spoken by the “Christian self” and not by the “speaker self.” If we view those lines where the speaker contemplates turning to God as any other self than the speaker himself, the vacillation of the speaker is lost, which is the hallmark of Petrarchism.  

30 There is a difference between the way Regan perceives the way personae change in Canzoniere and the way I perceive this change. My view of Petrarchian vacillation is between two points so that there can be a vacillation
conversion. In sonnet 362, aided by his vision and Laura’s guidance, the speaker is able to meet God, “She leads me to her Lord, then I bow down./And humbly pray for His consent that I/May there remain to see her face and His” (9-11).\(^{31}\) The speaker does not say that God is “his” Lord; rather, He is Laura’s Lord. Again, he wants to stay in heaven because he wants to gaze upon Laura’s face. The fact that the speaker identifies God as Laura’s Lord and that her face comes before His face shows that, although it may seem the speaker has committed himself to God, this is still a false conversion. The speaker’s true conversion is evident in sonnet 363, when he prays to God, “And to the Lord I worship, whom I thank,/Who merely with an eyelash orders heaven,/I turn, life-weary, not just satiate” (12-14).\(^{32}\) Finally, after all the “tempestuous tossing back and forth,” the speaker is not simply weary of life but also satisfied with the way his life has turned out. He has accepted God’s wish and has submitted himself to God’s wish. This section is identified as an instance of true conversion, because there are only two more sonnets and one poem—which is a prayer to the Virgin Mary—left in Canzoniere, and the speaker never once muses upon Laura. Finally, Petrarch’s speaker has achieved the wisdom and faith of a devout Roman Catholic.

The speaker writes secular verse not only to ensure his personal fame but also to immortalize Laura’s beauty, a goal that obstructs his salvation. The speaker first foreshadows Laura’s death in poem 264, but by the logic of the text, Laura is still alive. In sonnet 267, the

\[\text{Menami al suo Signor: allor m’inchino,} \]
\[\text{pregando humilmente che consenta} \]
\[\text{ch’i’ stia a veder et l’uno et l’altro volto.} \]

\[\text{et al Signor ch’i’ adoro et ch’i’ ringratio,} \]
\[\text{che pur col ciglio il ciel governa et folce,} \]
\[\text{torno stanco di viver, nonché satio.} \]
speaker informs his readers of Laura’s death. The time the speaker takes from poem 264, where he first foreshadows Laura’s death, until sonnet 363, where he finally commits to God, is because of his obsession with the image of Laura. The impediment to the speaker’s salvation is also integrally intertwined with the speaker’s attempt to immortalize Laura’s beauty in his verse. The speaker has spent decades obsessing over and writing about Laura. Even after her death in the text of *Canzoniere*, we find him aiming to preserve Laura’s virtue. Petrarch’s Catholicism helps him to overcome the problem of his speaker’s salvation, an option that Sidney, Donne, and Lok did not have; hence, they struggled to find a solution to this dilemma. When Sidney engages with the secular aspect of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, his speaker Astrophil finds himself entangled in the same problem with idolatry as Petrarch’s speaker. As we shall soon see, since Petrarch was writing in the medieval Roman Catholic Europe, he can show model the figure of Laura in the *in-morte* section on that of a saint who intercedes in behalf of a soul to aid in his salvation. As Sidney was writing in the Reformed England, he did not have the option to show Stella as a saintly figure who intercedes on behalf of Astrophil’s salvation. Lok ignores this problem of idolatry, perhaps because she was not consciously engaging with Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* in her sonnet sequence.

Petrarch’s speaker aims not only at his own immortality, but also at Laura’s, because she is more than a tool or a device used to garner fame. She is the symbolic source of the speaker’s creative activity, as he makes clear in sonnets 5 and 34. In sonnet 5, the speaker introduces the Apollo/Daphne myth to parallel his relationship with Laura:

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33 According to the myth, to avenge Apollo’s insult toward him, Eros, the god of love, shot Apollo in the heart with a golden arrow and the nymph Daphne’s heart with a leaden arrow. The golden arrow made Apollo fall in love with Daphne, who in turn abhorred Apollo after being shot with the leaden arrow. Apollo continued pursuing her to possess her physically and make her his wife. When Daphne realized she could not escape Apollo and was on the verge of being caught, she prayed to her father, the river god Peneus, to transform her so she could protect her virtue. Peneus transformed her into a green laurel tree. As Apollo, the god of poetry, could not possess Daphne in her physical form, he adopted her surrogate form, the laurel tree, as his own tree.
When I breathe forth my sighs to call on you,
And sound that name which Love wrote in my heart,
Outside, one starts to hear the notes of LAUd
First accents of swelling music sweet.
Your REgal state which I encounter then,
Doubles my prowess for the lofty task;
But “sTAy,” the end cries out, “to honor her
Must burden shoulders worthier than yours.”
Thus does the word itself instruct those who
Invoke your name, to LAUd and to REvere,
O worthy of all reverence honor’s prize;
Only Apollo himself, perhaps, disdains
Whatever rash, presuming moRTAl tongue
Bespeaks his laurel branches, always green. (5. 1-14)\textsuperscript{34}

Petrarch uses his speaker to play on the myth to draw attention to how his suffering is akin to
that of the god of poetry, Apollo. The consequence of the act of love being written in the

\textsuperscript{34} Quando io movo i sospiri a chiamar voi,
e l'nome che nel cor mi scrisse Amore,
LAUdando s'incomincia udir di fare
il suon de' primi dolci accenti suoi.
Vostro stato REal, che 'ncontro poi,
raddoppia a l'alta impresa il mio valore;
ma: TAci, grida il fin, ché farle honore
è d'altri homeri soma che da' tuoi.
Così LAUdare et REverire insegna
la voce stessa, pur ch'altri vi chiami,
o d'ogni reverenza et d'onor degna:
se non che forse Apollo si disdegna
ch'a parlar de' suoi sempre verdi rami
lingua mortal presumptiosa vegna
speaker’s heart in line 2 is Apollo being shot by Eros’s golden arrow. Just as Apollo could not physically possess Daphne, similarly, the speaker’s love for Laura will never be consummated. Apollo adopted the green laurel as his tree, and the poet, by invoking Laura’s name in his “mortal” tongue (5. 13), both “lauds” and “reveres” (5. 10) Laura, and in doing so, he adopts Apollo’s laurel branches, the leaves of which were used to make the crown for the poet Petrarch. Thus, the speaker in sonnet 5 posits “laurel” is synonymous with “Laura,” the adoption/pursuit of which/whom will bring the speaker glory. As mentioned before, the use of the myth guarantees the speaker cannot ever physically possess Laura. Hence, the speaker adopts Apollo’s tactic. The speaker substitutes the physical possession of Laura with the surrogate act of writing poetry. As the speaker adopts the laurel in verse as a surrogate for the real-life Laura/laurel, Laura becomes symbolic and the source of the poet’s creative activity.

In sonnet 34, the speaker removes any doubt that a reader may have about the speaker equating himself with Apollo and Laura with Daphne, the object of the speaker’s unending pursuit:

Apollo, if that fair desire still lives
Which once inflamed you by Thessalian waves,
If to oblivion, with wheeling years
You’ve not consigned that blonde, beloved hair,
From sluggard frost, from weather harsh and cruel
That lasts as long as you conceal your face,
O, now protect the honored sacred fronds
Where you first, and then I, were snared with lime;
Which once sustained you in this bitter life,
O clear the air of these obscuring mists;
Thus you and I will see a wondrous sight:
Our lady sitting down upon the grass
And making, with her arms, shade for herself. (34. 1-14)\textsuperscript{35}

The “fair desire” in line 1 is not simply Apollo’s desire but also the speaker’s desire, a fact the speaker underscores in line 8, when he equates himself with Apollo. Throughout the sequence, the poet draws attention to the golden locks\textsuperscript{36} and associates them with Laura. Line 7 is of crucial importance to the speaker’s creativity. There is always a chance the object created in verse can be lost in oblivion. If that happens, the speaker’s aim of gaining immortality will fail. Hence, the speaker invokes Apollo and beseeches him to “protect the honored sacred fronds” (34. 8). As Apollo and the speaker share their concerns over the sacred fronds, it establishes a sort of congenial relationship between them, where Laura/Daphne/sacred fronds need protection from “obscuring mists” (34. 11). The “obscuring mists” were read not only as an impediment to perceiving the speaker’s object of creation (Laura), but also as a hint of being obscured in time, thereby lost in oblivion and hindering to creativity. Furthermore, as Marian Regan identifies, the image of Laura/Daphne is “reflexive, self-contained”:

\begin{italics}
\textsuperscript{35} Apollo, s'anchor vive il bel desio
che t'inflammava a le thesaliche onde,
et se non àì l'amate chione bionde,
volgendo gli anni, già poste in oblio:
dal pigro gielo et dal tempo aspro et rio,
che dura quanto 'l tuo viso s'asconde,
difendi or l'onorata et sacra fronde,
ove tu prima, et poi fu invescato io;
et per vertú de l'amorosa speme,
che ti sostenne ne la vita acerba,
di queste impressiōn l'aere disgombra;
sì vedrem poi per meraviglia insieme
seder la donna nostra sopra l'erba,
et far de le sue braccia a se stessa ombra.
\end{italics}

\textsuperscript{36} For example, in sonnets 59 and 227.
as she sits on the grass shading herself with her arms, she divides herself from the sky.
For the “fronde” of this laurel-lady are “onorata e sacra” in themselves, not *in their reach towards heaven*. These sacred leaves are protected from time in a realm of myth evoked and recreated in this poem: in the prolonged monosyllables of the last line, “la donna nostra” slowly draws her arms up to their final pose and becomes Daphne and Laura, lady and laurel tree and eternal image. By inhabiting the world of art she may leave the mutable world of “volgendo … anni,” the “tempo aspro e rio” that is bad weather and destructive time; she may escape the oblivion in this poem. (Emphasis added) (“The Evolution” 38)

In this sonnet, Laura’s distinguishing of herself from heaven is symbolic and of utmost importance to the speaker because, as long as the speaker can restrict Laura to earth, it will ensure his creativity, as she will continue to act as his muse and energize him with creative force. Furthermore, the containment of Laura within the realm of art and ensuring she “escape[s] the oblivion” (“The Evolution” 38) will protect the continuity of the speaker’s fame and his immortality. After drawing attention to the frailty of other works of art, such as the statues of Caesar, Marcellus, Africanus, and Paulus, the speaker underscores his desire for immortality in the concluding tercet of sonnet 104, “Pandolfo mine ,such works are far too frail/To last for long, but our pursuit is one/That makes men grow immortal through renown” (12-14). The last line clearly demonstrates the speaker's belief that he can achieve immortality through verse. This sonnet in praise of Pandolfo Malatesta demonstrates the speaker’s views on immortality:

My heart thus tells me, that on paper I

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37 Pandolfo mio, quest'opere son frali a ll lungo andar, ma ’l nostro studio è quello che fa per fama gli uomini immortali.
Must something write that lifts your name in praise;

In no way can one sculpt so solidly

From marble as to make a living. (104.5-8)\textsuperscript{38}

It is only in poetry that one can secure the immutability and immortality of a poetic subject, because any other art form, including sculpture, is perishable. Thus the speaker in this sonnet shows his awareness that a poet can only achieve immortal fame if his subject is immortal. What led the speaker to choose this subject for his poetic creation? The answer lies in the first line: “That virtue, much desired, which bloomed in you.”\textsuperscript{39}

Laura’s association with virtue helps the speaker in the in vita section of \textit{Canzoniere} but becomes a threat to his fame after Laura dies in the poem 264. Several poems and sonnets of the \textit{Canzoniere} associate Laura with virtue, or with words that are synonymous with virtue. For example, in sonnet 261, Laura is "A lady seeking glorious renown / For judgment, valor or for courtesy" (1-2).\textsuperscript{40} In sonnet 186, she is “That ancient flower of virtue and of arms”\textsuperscript{41} (9), and in sonnet 146, she is a "noble soul with ardent virtue graced” (1)\textsuperscript{42}. Hence, the line addressed to Pandolfo Malatesta is also applicable to Laura. Thomas M. Bergin identifies Laura in the in vita section as Laura–Daphne (162), and the speaker’s implicit inference that Laura–Daphne can help him to generate his poetic material can be noticed in the sonnet 263:

\begin{quote}
O you victorious and triumphal tree,

Glory of poets, and of emperors,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38} Però mi dice il cor ch'io in carte scriva cosa, onde 'l vostro nome in pregio saglia, ché 'n nulla parte sí saldo s'intaglia per far di marmo una persona viva

\textsuperscript{39} L'aspectata vertù, che 'n voi fioriva

\textsuperscript{40} Qual donna attende a gloriosa fama di senno, di valor, di cortesia,

\textsuperscript{41} Quel fior antico di vertuti et d'arme

\textsuperscript{42} O d'ardente vertute ornata et calda
How many doleful days, and happy too
You’ve caused me in my brief and mortal life!
True lady, only honor do you prize,
And far above the rest you garner it;
Love’s birdlime you fear not, no springes, nets;
No ruse against your judgment can avail.
Nobility of birth, those other things
Precious to us, like rubies, pearls, and gold,
You equally disparage as vile dross.
Your lofty beauty, peerless in the world,
Proves vexing but it seems to adorn
And grace your treasure fair of chastity. (1-14)\textsuperscript{43}

Laura–Daphne, against whom “no ruse” (263. 8) can prevail, is a “victorious and triumphal tree” (263. 1) for two reasons: she has successfully avoided the speaker’s ruses and pursuits, and by avoiding such advances, she has given “glory” to the speaker, allowing him to compose poems about his disappointment. Being a virtuous woman, the only thing she cares about is her chastity.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{43} Arbor victoriosa triumphale, onor d'imperadori et di poeti, quanti m'ai fatto di doliosi et lieti in questa breve mia vita mortale! vera donna, et a cui di nulla cale, se non d'onor, che sovr'ogni altra mieti, né d'Amor visco temi, o lacci o reti, né 'ngano altrui contr'al tuo senno vale. Gentilezza di sangue, et l'altre care cose tra noi, perle et robini et oro, quasi vil somma egualmente dispregi. L'altra beltà ch'al mondo non à pare noia t'è, se non quanto il bel thesoro di castità par ch'ella adorni et fregi
\end{flushright}
As long as she can keep defending her chastity by not falling for the speaker’s ruse and disparaging any such advances, thereby continuing to vex the speaker, the speaker would be “triumphant and victorious” by composing verses about his failure. As mentioned above, the Laura of the in-vita section, i.e. Laura–Daphne, although by no fault of her own, is an impediment to the speaker’s salvation. Her death in sonnet 267 precipitates a crisis for the speaker’s creative force, because the speaker has no source of creative energy. When Lok and Donne’s speakers are trying to deal with their spiritual crises and the issue of the salvation of their souls, they are definitively responding to Petrarch’s mechanism to show how his speaker copes with this crisis and eventually finds a way to his salvation without the aid of an intermediary saint-like figure.

Faced with Laura’s death, Petrarch’s speaker is disheveled by the crisis he faces in his creative productivity and he tries his best to overcome. As we shall see later in this dissertation that both Lok’s and Donne’s speaker have to share the torment and anguish that Petrarch’s speaker must endure until he gets a better sense of his mistakes. As mentioned in the concluding tercet of sonnet 272, “I see a storm in harbor and by now/My pilot’s wearied, split my masts and sails,/And those fair lights I steered for are snuffed out” (13-15).44 The “storm in harbor” to which the speaker refers here is related to his shock, dismay, and frustration at his lack of creative output. As Laura, the “fair lights” in this sonnet, has been extinguished or “snuffed out,” as the speaker puts it, the speaker loses his source of inspiration and the object of his pursuit. Indeed, from sonnet 273 to sonnet 338, this “storm” rages, as the speaker blames everything,

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44 veggio fortuna in porto, et stanco omai il mio nocchier, et rotte arbore et sarte, e i lumi bei che mirar soglio, spenti
including death, the heavens, and nature, for the untimely demise of Laura and, in turn, for
ruining his opportunity to create verse.

The acute crisis of the speaker can be adequately realized when sections from sonnet 74
are placed beside a section from poem 325. At the height of his creative production, at a moment
when human mortality had never crossed the speaker’s mind, when he had never thought Laura
could die, the speaker says in sonnet 74, “My tongue has never left off, nor my voice,/Calling
your name aloud by day and night;” (7-8). When these two lines are read in the context of
sonnet 104, the sections of which have been quoted, discussed, and analyzed previously in this
chapter, it means the speaker hopes to continue composing poems about his subject, Laura.
However, the untimely demise of his subject acts as a truth for the speaker, and he realizes his
“living figure” of Laura has turned into “marble” (325.49). His laurel/Laura–Daphne is now,
“ripped out as if it were/By wind uprooted, or dislodged by iron” (318.1-2) and in a “little
grave” where she is “sealed” up. Due to Laura’s untimely death, the speaker realizes, “My days,
which were so bright, are now as dark” (303.12). While in the past, the speaker was determined
that “still I must pursue the venture high” (73.21), where the “venture high” refers to writing
poems about Laura in lofty rhymes, the speaker now finds his rhymes are “lowly” (332.24) and
“weary” (332.61). The speaker simply cannot accept that his “laurel” has “withered” and
replaced by “oaks and elms” i.e. non-amatory contrite verses full of despair and dejection
(363.4).

45 non è mancata omai la lingua e 'l suono
di et notte chiamando il vostro nome
46 che si svelse
come quella che ferro o vento sterpe,
47 i dí miei fur sí chiari, or son sí foschi
48 pur conven che l'alta impreza seguа
The absence of “laurel” that is symbolic of Laura–Daphne forces the speaker to turn to God. He now must accept that the source of his amatory verses is gone and turn to God, and begin writing contrite verses, or “oaks and elms.” The speaker fails to realize the sagacity of his own lines: “The labyrinth I stepped; I see no gate” (211.14). Being fixated on Laura–Daphne and expecting to produce rhyme from her memory is like being trapped in a labyrinth from which there is no escape. The opening quatrain of sonnet 211, which is in the \textit{in-vita} section, becomes important to this discussion because it shows exactly what the speaker is searching for in the \textit{in-morte} section:

\begin{quote}
Will spurns me forth, Love guides me and directs
My Pleasure pulls me, Custom drives me on,
Hope flatters and revives me, stretches forth
Her right hand to my heart indeed worn out. (1-4)
\end{quote}

Laura’s hand is no longer over his heart. With Laura gone, there is no pleasure for the speaker, and following custom can only produce lowly rhymes. When the speaker turns to his guide, love, for guidance, love’s words do not quite help the speaker:

\begin{quote}
Check that great grief which carries you away;
For your desires too great
Will lose that Heaven where your heart aspires,
Where she who, seeming dead to others, lives.
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{49} nel laberinto intrai, né veggio ond’esca
\par
\textsuperscript{50} Voglia mi sprona, Amor mi guida et scorge,
Piacer mi tira, Usanza mi trasporta,
Speranza mi lusinga et riconforta
et la man destra al cor già stanco porge;
\end{flushright}
About her fair remains
She smiles within, but sighs on your behalf.
And her renown, which still
Your words breathe forth on every side,
She prays you won’t extinguish;
Her name instead make brighter with your voice
If her eyes precious were, or sweet to you. (268.67-77)\(^{51}\)

In these lines, love is asking the speaker to write not about Laura–Daphne, but about Laura–Beatrice, a fact the speaker fails to understand in his blind grief. Misunderstanding love’s advice, the speaker continues to attempt to compose verses on Laura–Daphne and stumbles along the way. He can see that his talent is failing him, “No artful quill—much less a weighty style/Or speech—could wing its way where Nature flew/As she was weaving my restraint so sweet” (307.9-11).\(^{52}\) The fact that the speaker uses the past tense when referring to Laura suggests that he is speaking about the now-lost Laura–Daphne. The speaker cannot realize his “artful quill” (9) is failing him because he is fixated on Laura–Daphne. The speaker has been under the impression that he has been celebrating Laura’s virtue, but all he has been doing thus far, as

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\(^{51}\) Pon' freno al gran dolor che ti trasporta, ché per soverchie voglie si perde 'l cielo, ove 'l tuo core aspira, dove è viva colei ch'altrui par morta, et di sue belle spoglie seco sorride, et sol di te sospira; et sua fama, che spira in molte parti anchor per la tua lingua, prega che non extingua, anzi la voce al suo nome rischiari, se gli occhi suoi ti fur dolci né cari.

\(^{52}\) Mai non poria volar penna d'ingegno, nonché stil grave o lingua, ove Natura volò, tessendo il mio dolce ritegno
demonstrated through his focus on Laura’s eyes, breast, brows, arms, etc., is that he has been engrossed by her body. The phrase “she was weaving my restraint so sweet” (307.11) recalls Laura’s right hand over the speaker’s heart in sonnet 211.

The speaker is yet to realize his mistake is that his dependence on Laura–Daphne is deterring his salvation. He perceives the ill-effects of his dependence on Laura – Daphne’s image as his “courage falters, skill and art as well” (308.14), and yet he believes, “To work my skill, time, papers, pens and inks/ But rhyming has not reached perfection yet” (309.8-9). The fact that the speaker uses “yet” means “he may still have a few hopes of success” (Regan 39). Having not yet learned his lesson, the speaker continues trying to compose verse using Laura–Daphne as inspiration, despite becoming frustrated and adding to his despair. He has been frustrated before and has thought of ceasing writing verses, “Here let me finish now my amorous song;/The well-spring of accustomed skill is dry,/And my lyre is to lamentation turned (292.12-14). The longer Petrarch’s speaker holds on to the image of Laura-Daphne, the more vulnerable to despair he is. By making his speaker hold on to Laura–Daphne’s image Petrarch implies that the speaker has to go through despair before he understands his mistake. Without any aid from any external influence, the speaker has to realize that he needs to stop writing “amorous verses” and begin writing prayers for his salvation. As long as he does not move away from amorous verses, the speaker will continue finding the “well-spring” (292. 13) of his “accustomed skill” (292. 13) dry. Despite contemplating ceasing to write verses, the speaker continues, because he will soon learn that in writing verses lies his road to salvation.

53  ingegno, tempo, penne, carte, e ‘nchiostri.
    Non son al sommo anchor giunte le rime:

54  Or sia qui fine al mio amoroso canto:
    secca è la vena de l’usato ingegno,
    et la cetera mia rivolta in pianto.
Salvation in Roman Catholicism rests both on good works and faith in God. Herein lies the necessity of one of the arguments of this dissertation—any argument of Petrarchism in a sonnet, especially a religious sonnet, should include a discussion of how Petrarch deals with the issue of salvation in *Canzoniere*. As we will soon see that Petrarch’s speaker uses the figure of Laura-Beatrice as a spiritual guide. The idea of Laura-Beatrice as a spiritual guide is based on the Roman Catholic theological doctrine that saints may act as intermediaries between a supplicant and God. Calvinist theology relegated the role of a mediator to Jesus Christ. Hence the option of using a figure like Stella in a sonnet sequence to act as a guide who helps a supplicant to gain salvation was not available to the reformation poets like Sidney, Lok and Donne. Since Petrarch deals with salvation in his sonnets, I believe any discussion of Petrarchism in the sonnets of Lok, and Donne, and poets who deal with the issues of salvation and redemption, will remain incomplete.

While the speaker was paying tribute to Laura–Daphne, he was essentially paving the way for his own salvation because he was doing “good work.” Through a sleight of hand, as shall soon be demonstrated, Petrarch shows that Laura–Daphne and Laura–Beatrice are essentially the same Laura/laurel. Hence, when the speaker thought he was paying tribute to Laura–Daphne, he was actually honoring Laura–Beatrice. His perception was simply wrong. Hence, *Canzoniere* demonstrates the speaker adopting the correct perspective of Laura. It is true that Laura–Beatrice is not God, but paying her tribute in turn helps the speaker beseech her to intervene for his salvation. In the *in vita* section, the speaker often uses religious vocabulary to praise Laura. Examples can be found in sonnet 160, where the speaker exclaims “Ah! what a miracle occurs when she,”55(9) in sonnet 167, where he says, “so clear, angelic, gentle and

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55 Qual miracolo è quel, quando tra l’erba
divine,” (4) and “The heavenly siren peerless in our mind,” (14) and in poem 126, where he says, “In paradise she certainly was born” (55). The speaker’s verses can be seen as good work that can merit salvation. The speaker does not know the full potential of his own words when he says, “And, if my rhymes have any influence,/Your name here among noble minds will be/Held sacred in eternal memory” (327.12-14). The use of “your” in line 13 refers to Laura–Daphne. In his mind, the speaker has been praising Laura–Daphne’s virtue, but in reality, he has been praising her mortal beauty. The speaker is so misguided in his beliefs that he utters almost blasphemous lines, “I shall have grace, for brighter than the sun/My faith is in my lady, and the world. (Emphasis mine) (334.3-4) According to any Christian doctrine, grace can be obtained by having faith in God and not in a mortal figure. It is for the same misguided reasoning that the speaker had earlier failed to realize why in poem 323, Laura–Beatrice, in the form of a phoenix, had “turned as in disdain, and vanished all/ At once” (59-60). Laura vanished because the speaker was not ready to realize his delusion. Laura–Beatrice shows up only after the speaker realizes his delusion and confesses his mistake in sonnet 339:

So wide had heaven opened up my eyes,  
And diligence and Love so spread my wings,  
I knew things graceful, rare but mortal too,  
Which on one being every star bestowed.  
Those many other lofty forms so strange,

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56 chiara, soave, angelica, divina,  
57 questa sola fra noi del ciel sirena  
58 Costei per fermo nacque in paradiso  
59 et se mie rime alcuna cosa ponno,  
consecrata fra i nobili intellecti  
fia del tuo nome qui memoria eterna  
60 mercede avrò, ché piú chiara che 'l sole  
a madonna et al mondo è la mia fede  
61 quasi sdegnando, e ’n un punto disparsa:
Undying, heavenly, and singular,
Since they did not befit my intellect,
My feeble vision could not well endure.
Thus everything I said or wrote of her
Who now pays back my praise with prayers to God,
Was but a droplet in the boundless deep.
For style does not extend itself past wit,
And, when one has his eyes fixed on the sun,
As it shines brighter, so the less he sees. (1-14)\(^2\)

The speaker must realize his “feeble vision” (339. 8) caused him to lose sight of the heavenly eternal glory and God and instead to fixate on Laura–Daphne. As mentioned above, Catholicism allows for intermediaries, such as a priest, in a person’s salvation who are supposed to intercede on behalf of the supplicant. Lok and Donne, as Calvinists, did not have this option for their speakers. Hence, with no spiritual guide to perform the role of Laura–Beatrice in *Canzoniere*,

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\(^2\) Conobbi, quanto il ciel li occhi m'aperse, 
quanto studio et Amor m'alzaron l'ali, 
cose nove et leggiadre, ma mortali, 
che 'n un soggetto ogni stella cosperse: 
l'altre tante sí strane et sí diverse 
forme altere, celesti et immortali, 
perché non furo a l'intellecto eguali, 
la mia debil vista non sofferse. 
Onde quant'io di lei parlai né scrissi, 
ch'or per lodi anzi a Dio preghi mi rende, 
fu breve stilla d'infiniti abissi: 
ché stilo oltra l'ingegno non sí stende; 
et per aver uom li occhi nel sol fissi, 
tanto sí vede men quanto piú splende

Soon after this sonnet, Laura – Beatrice shows up in Sonnet 341 and says:
“My faithful, dear one, much I’m grieved for you, 
Though with you I was stern for our own good” (341, 12 – 13)
(Fedel mio caro, assai di te mi dole, 
ma pur per nostro ben dura ti fui)
Lok and Donne’s speakers substitute the role of Laura–Beatrice with self-introspection. As Petrarch was a Catholic, he had the option of presenting Laura–Beatrice as his speaker’s intermediary. Now that his eyes are opened “wide” (339. 1) by “heaven” (339. 1) (as the speaker believes at this point), he realizes that although the tributes he paid to Laura–Daphne were misplaced, they can still aid in his salvation. Sonnet 339 can thus be called a turning point for the speaker, where he takes the essential step toward his salvation. This moment is a turning point, but not a true conversion moment for the speaker, as he must still submit to God.

Although the speaker comes to this realization, he must still accept that Laura–Beatrice and Laura–Daphne are essentially the same Laura/laurel. As the speaker takes the first step toward his salvation, Laura–Beatrice visits him in his sleep and comforts him:

“What use,” she says,

“Is knowing to the comfortless? Shed tears

No more. Have you not wept enough for me?

You should be living now, as I’m not dead!” (342.11-14)\(^63\)

As the speaker mentioned in sonnet 339, whatever eulogy and tribute he has paid to Laura–Daphne is actually “but a droplet in the boundless deep” (11)—i.e., insignificant compared to the praise that he should have paid to God. Laura–Beatrice hopes in the last line that she has revealed herself in her spirit form to the speaker so he can start composing verses in praise of God or at least start praying to God for his salvation. Her revelation as her spirit form creates a new problem as the speaker seeks his salvation—i.e., he wants to be in heaven for the wrong

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\(^{63}\) “Che val - dice - a saver, chi si sconforta?
Non pianger piú: non m’ai tu pianto assai?
Ch’or fostú vivo, com’io non son morta!”
reason: to be with Laura. The speaker’s desire is underscored by the concluding lines of at least three sonnets that follow sonnet 342:

So all my longing thoughts I raise to Heaven,
Because I hear her pray that I make haste.\(^6\) (346.13-14)

Pray that I soon may hasten to your side.\(^6\) (347.14)

Will gain me grace so I can be with her.\(^6\) (348.14)

Hence, the speaker appeals to Laura–Beatrice in sonnet 347 for salvation:

O marvel among women, rare and sublime,
Now in the countenance of Him who sees
All things, you see my love and that pure faith
For which I spent much ink, so many tears,
You know on earth my heart felt toward you as
It does in Heaven now, and never longed
For more from you than sunshine from your eyes; (5-11)\(^6\)

The speaker’s faith may have been pure, but it was certainly misplaced. It is acceptable that the speaker never desired anything more than the “sunshine” of her eyes, but it is unacceptable that the “ink” and the “tears” (8) were spent and are still being spent on her and not on God. Laura–Beatrice, now being in Heaven, can see what is in the speaker’s heart in “the countenance of

\(^{6}\) ond’io voglie et pensier’ tutti al ciel ergo
perch’i’ l’odo pregar pur chi’i’ m’affretti.
\(^{6}\) prega chi’i’ venga tosto a star con voi.
\(^{6}\) m’impetre grazia, ch’i’ possa esser seco
\(^{6}\) o de le donne altero et raro mostro,
or nel volto di Lui che tutto vede
vedi l’ mio amore, et quella pura fede
per ch’io tante versai lagrime e ’nchiostro;
et senti che vèr te ’l mio core in terra
tal fu, qual ora è in cielo, et mai non volsi
altro da te che ’l sol de li occhi tuo:
Him” (6), which is a reason for concern for the sake of the speaker’s salvation. The speaker’s delusion is highlighted in poem 359, where the speaker finally asks Laura–Beatrice, “‘‘Is this the blond hair, this the golden knot,’” I say, “that snares me still? And those fair eyes/That used to be my sun?’” (56-58). The peril that the speaker’s association of Laura – Daphne with “sun” posed for his salvation becomes clear if these lines are read along with St. Augustine’s Exposition 2 of Psalm 113 that is quoted above in this chapter. Hence, no wonder that Laura–Beatrice chides the speaker, “‘‘Stray not with fools’’” (58). Just before this conversation, Laura explained something the speaker clearly did not grasp:

O you,

Whose quill to one of them such homage pays,

The palm means victory, for I, while young,

Subdued both world and self; the laurel stands

For triumph, which I earned; (359.47-51)

Laura explains that she was virtuous in life, which is why she has been rewarded with the laurel and why the speaker should think of her as Laura/laurel. These lines represent Petrarch’s sleight of hand, whereby in one stroke, he combines Laura–Daphne and Laura–Beatrice into Laura/laurel. Laura thus argues in these lines that the speaker has been pursuing her as a laurel, just as Apollo pursued Daphne. The speaker, like Apollo, had not respected Laura–Daphne’s

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68 Son questi i capei biondi, et l’aureo nodo,  
- dich’io - ch’ancor mi stringe, et quei belli occhi  
che fur mio sol? ”

69 Non errar con li sciocchi  

tu la cui non penna tanto l’una honora:  
palma è victoria, et io, giovene anchora,  
vinsi il mondo, et me stessa; il lauro segna  
triumpho, ond’io son degna,
chastity and virtue, but had rather deluded himself into believing he had respected her virtue in his poems. Nevertheless, he celebrated her virtue in his poems. While she earned her triumphs for her virtue by ascending to heaven, the speaker earned his glory on earth by celebrating her virtue. By subduing the “world and self,” (359. 50) Laura–Daphne earned the laurel, and now that laurel symbolizes who she is—Laura–Beatrice, the speaker’s spiritual guide. However, if he continues composing his “charming and delusive nonsense” (359. 41) verses in dedication to her in the way he did when she was alive and continues to “follow her” (359. 42-43), his spirit can rise from this mortal world to heaven. That said, Laura also specifies that, for salvation, the speaker must “Straight to Him turn, form Him implore relief,” 71(359. 54) and that is what the speaker does after meeting God in sonnet 362; he begins praying to him from sonnet 363. Turning to God practically guarantees his salvation through true conversion and the fact that he had done “good works” by ensuring Laura remains in the eternal memories of people.

71 a Lui ti volgi, a Lui chiedi soccorso
Chapter Two

Anne Lok and Donne

After establishing the facets of Petrarchism in the previous chapter that are important for this dissertation project, I would like to explore the way certain Reformed English sonneteers used their Petrarchan legacy, and the way that legacy can be seen to overlap with (and deviate from) that of burgeoning English Calvinism. Even a lay reader would realize that although Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* engaged in the issue of the salvation of the speaker’s soul, Petrarch’s text, when compared to texts such as Lok’s *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner* or Donne’s religious poems, is not necessarily religious in nature. Nevertheless, although Petrarch’s primary goal in his *Canzoniere* was not to praise God or thank him, he does show how the praise of Laura ends up aiding in the speaker’s salvation. Certain tropes, including a persona’s vacillating vexation, idolatry, and attempt at gaining personal glory and despair, which are associated with Petrarchism, an obvious non-religious ideology, are analogous to tropes in Calvinist theology.72

The relationship between Petrarchism and Calvinism has usually been neglected by early modern scholars. The scholars who do discuss Petrarchism and Calvinism tend to focus on Sir Philip Sidney and his sister Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, in their discussion to show how they associated Petrarchism with the tenets of what we today identify as Calvinism.73 The critical reception of Sidney’s sonnet sequence is beyond the scope of this

72 I am fully aware that the term “Calvinism,” as with “Petrarchism,” comes with baggage, and I will devote a section of this chapter to Calvin’s theology to expound what I mean by and to elaborate on Calvinism in the following chapters

73 In their discussion of Calvinism in Sidney’s works, scholars including Alan Sinfield, Jennifer Richards, and Andrew D. Wiener more often than not tend to focus on Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry*. Scholars such as Roland Greene tend to concentrate on Sidney’s Psalter when it comes to a discussion of the infusion of Calvinist tenets into early modern poetry. Gary F. Waller’s observation of Sidney’s use of language in *Astrophil and Stella*, which has sadly been ignored by most early modern scholars becomes pertinent to our discussion: “With *Astrophil and Stella*,

chapter and belongs in the following chapter. Although Lok’s sonnet sequence was published in 1560, long before Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* or Mary Sidney’s Psalms were published, the lack of critical attention that Lok’s work received compared to that of the Sidney duos is both incredible and appalling. In this chapter, I will join my critical voice with the small retinue of scholars who have focused their work on Anne Lok’s sonnet sequence.

Some Lok scholars have made passing reference to how Lok’s sonnet sequence *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner* anticipates Donne’s and other metaphysical poems’ sonnets. After elaborating on the formal aspects and the theology of Lok’s sonnet sequence, John Ottenhof writes in his conclusion, “We might contrast Loke’s psalms with those of Wyatt, George Gascoigne, the Sidneys, and countless other poets and compare other appropriations of biblical language in poets like Henry Lok, Donne and Herbert” (304). In other words, Ottenhof identifies Lok within the sixteenth century tradition of devotional writing and makes only an offhand remark about how Lok’s poems anticipate Donne’s and Herbert’s devotional poems. Susan Felch approaches Lok’s works from a pedagogical point of view. After presenting a brief survey of Lok’s life and work, Felch writes in her conclusion, “Her poems are well suited to any course, from introductory surveys to upper-level seminars, that deals with the sonnet genre or devotional lyrics. Their vivid imagery draws on earlier religious writings and foreshadows the metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century” (“Anne Vaughan Lock” 134). The fact that Ottenhof and Felch imply, though they do so rather dismissively, that Lok is Donne’s precursor and the fact that Lok’s sonnets were part of the first published sonnet sequence in the history of English literature render a comparative reading of Donne’s sonnets and Lok’s sonnet relevant to and, indeed, English Petrarchism in general, the force of Petrarchism was rewritten, in particular, by another dominant cultural language, that of Protestantism” (69). Although Waller makes a very pertinent observation of Calvinism and Petrarchism, he does not build on that statement. Rather, in his article, Waller focuses on the non-religious elements of Petrarchism in Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*. Very few scholars along with Helen Vincent concentrate on the issue of Calvinism in early modern sonnet sequences such as *Astrophil and Stella*. 
this dissertation because both of them were influenced by Calvinist doctrines. A critic would be tempted to compare Lok’s sonnet sequence with Donne’s *Holy Sonnets*. For example, Robert C. Evans lists many similarities between both these sonnet sequences to argue, “It would not be surprising to learn that Donne had read and been influenced by Lok (although no evidence of his familiarity with her work is presently known to survive)” (99–100). However, in this chapter, I will discuss Donne’s “La Corona” along with Lok’s *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner*, because both sonnet sequences provide an interesting contrast to each other; yet, at the same time, both come across as sonnet sequences deeply influenced by Calvinism. As I will show in this chapter, whereas Lok’s speaker begins as a typical contrite Calvinist speaker and Donne’s speaker more as someone who is concerned with the issue of fame and glory, a concern shared by the speaker of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, both these speakers alter their positions, which makes both sonnet sequences to some extent conform to Calvinism.

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part of this chapter, I discuss how certain traits of Calvin’s theology overlap with certain tropes of Petrarchism. In the second part of this chapter, I identify how Lok’s sonnet sequence shares both Petrarchan and Calvinistic features as well as deviate from them. In the third part of this chapter, I elaborate on how Donne succeeds in adapting a poetic model that has a strong Roman Catholic association to serve the purposes of the reformed religion in his sonnet sequence “La Corona” and how the sonnet sequence is both Petrarchan and Calvinistic in nature. Neither Lok nor Donne quite follow Calvin’s strictures about prayer. Yet Donne’s speaker in “La Corona” emerges as in their devoutly Calvinistic whereas Lok’s speaker emerges as someone who is struggling with Calvinism. As these two poets accomplish their objectives using different strategies, I have paired them together in a single chapter.
Calvinism’s overlap with Petrarchism

It is Calvin’s concept of “faith,” especially his differentiation between “true faith” and “false faith” and his concept of “unformed faith” in III. ii of his *Institutes of Christian Religion*, that creates a motion within a believer, who might very well be an elect, identical to the Petrarchan trope that Heather Dubrow has identified as “tempestuous tossing back and forth” (23). Just as the speaker of a secular love lyric would vacillate between whether or not his mistress would respond to his love, similarly, a Calvinist speaker would also vacillate between hope of salvation and despair. In III.ii.6 of the *Institutes*, Calvin traces the source of faith in God’s word and later goes on to imply his concept of “unformed faith:”

Of course, most people believe that there is a God and they consider that the gospel history and the remaining parts of the Scripture are true. Such a judgment is on par with the judgments we ordinarily make concerning those things which are either narrated as having once taken place, or which we have seen as eyewitnesses. There are, also, those who go beyond this, holding the Word of God to be an indisputable oracle; *they do not utterly neglect his precepts, and are somewhat moved by his threats and promises. To such persons an ascription of faith is made, but by misapplication, because they do not impugn the Word of God with open impiety, or refuse or despise it, but rather pretend a certain show of obedience. (Emphasis added) (III. ii. 9)

Maintaining one’s “faith” in God out of fear or greed is not “true faith,” as it is akin to doing the right thing for the wrong reason. Faith stemming from terror or greed means that one does not trust God’s Word that salvation can only be possible through His Grace; rather, it is like one has

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74 In this dissertation, I will use Calvin’s *Institutes of Christian Religion* which is edited by John T. McNeill and published by Westminster Press, Philadelphia. Henceforth, it will be referred as *Institutes*. 
blind faith in God without a proper understanding of His Grace. No wonder Calvin declares in III.ii.10 that “unformed faith” is an “illusion of faith.” An elect might begin by having “unformed faith,” but through God’s will, this elect will pass through numerous experiences and will end up having “true faith.” The faith that reprobates professes is what Calvin identifies as “false faith.” By acceding that even at times reprobates might be equally affected by “the light of faith,” just “as the elect” in III. ii. 11 of the Institutes, Calvin goes on to clarify: although it is evident from the teaching of Scripture and daily experience that the wicked are sometimes touched by the awareness of divine grace, a desire to love one another must be aroused in their hearts. Thus for a time in Saul there flourished a pious impulse to love God. For he knew that God was a father to him, and he was attracted by something delightful about His goodness [I Sam., chs 9 to 11]. But as a persuasion of God’s fatherly love is not deeply rooted in the reprobate so do they not perfectly reciprocate his love as sons, but behave like hirelings. (Emphasis added) (III. ii. 12)

In other words, to bring in a military analogy, the outcome of a battle cannot be trusted upon mercenaries, as they are “hirelings” not committed to the cause of a party; similarly, reprobates are not persistent in maintaining their gratitude to God and would soon lose vision of God’s grace that arises within them temporarily.

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75 This “unformed faith” was paralleled by the concept of “worldly sorrow,” a concept that had its root in the Calvinist concept of contrition, a concept that must be distinguished from “godly sorrow,” these two concepts of sorrow have their roots in sincere contrition and feigned contrition. Peter Iver Kauffman cites Thomas Wilson’s Christian Dictionary when he distinguishes worldly sorrow from godly sorrow. Worldly sorrow is a “disquiet stemming from a natural aversion to punishment … was fear of divine justice and retribution” (22), whereas godly sorrow, which “presupposed God’s mercy,” was the “greefe and displeasure of mind which we feele for offending the God” (22). As a person possessing “godly sorrow” trusts in God’s mercy and thereby is eventually able to overcome the sorrow, similarly, no matter how much doubt a person possessing “true faith” has, he is eventually able to overcome his doubt.
The problem for a believer is there is no way to know for certain that his faith is “true faith” or “false faith” and as a person does not know this answer, he suffers from anxiety. Calvin recognizes this issue when he writes:

Still someone will say: “Believers experience something far different: In recognizing the grace of God toward themselves they are not only tried by disquiet, which often comes upon they are not only tried by disquiet, which often comes upon them, but they are repeatedly shaken by the gravest terrors. For so violent are the temptations that trouble their minds as not to seem quite compatible with that certainty of faith.” Accordingly, we shall have to solve this difficulty if we wish the above-stated doctrine to stand. Surely, while we teach that faith ought to be certain and assured, we cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety. On the other hand, we say that believers are in perpetual conflict with their own unbelief. Far, indeed, are we from putting their consciences in any peaceful repose, undisturbed by any tumult at all. (Emphasis added) (III. ii. 17)

This anguish from not knowing the state of one’s soul was supposed to force one to delve deeper into one’s self, forcing one to reflect on one’s sins and transgressions against God, which in turn was supposed to generate “godly sorrow” in elects.

The anxiety stemming from not knowing the state of one’s salvation would make one vacillate between hope that one might be an elect and despair that one might be a reprobate.

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76 This fact of not knowing whether one’s faith is “true faith” or “false faith” has a parallel in the nature of contrition that Calvinist theologians stressed in Reformed England. As Kaufman points out, “With only subtle signals at the start, godly sorrow was not all that readily distinguishable vague regret or mannered self-reproach” (21).
77 Kaufman cites William Perkins, a prominent Calvinist theologian during the Reformation in England when he writes that “anguish and remorse, ingredients for what Elizabethan pietists termed ‘godly sorrow’ were the first signs of election and sanctification” (20).
which is akin to a Petrarchan speaker in a secular sonnet sequence dithering between hopes and despair of whether or not his mistress would accept his love. A Petrarchan sonnet sequence continues because the mistress does not accept the speaker’s love and the speaker is able to write about his anxiety throughout the sequence. Similarly, Calvin points out that the doubts a person has about the state of his soul are never resolved when he traces the source of this anxiety by reflecting on “elects:”

the godly heart feels in itself a division because it is partly imbued with sweetness from its recognition of the divine goodness, partly grieves in bitterness from an awareness of its calamity; partly rests upon the promise of the gospel, partly trembles at the evidence of its own iniquity; partly rejoices at the expectation of life, partly shudders at death. This variation arises from imperfection of faith, since in the course of the present life it never goes so well with us that we are wholly cured of the disease of the unbelief and entirely filled and possessed by faith. (Emphasis added) (III. ii. 18)

The crucial difference between the vacillation found in a Petrarchan sonnet sequence and that of Calvinism is that in a Petrarchan sonnet sequence, the conflict may or may not resolve by the end of the sonnet sequence, but the vacillation definitely stops, whereas Calvin argues this conflict in a person is never resolved and the vacillation never stops. Moreover, Calvin argues that these doubts, which are products of “weak faith,” still provide an insight into God’s will. 78

The problem that Calvin’s theology had for believers is that it is often very difficult for someone

78 Calvin mentions in his Institutes:
by being ignorant of certain things, or by rather obscurely discerning what it does discern, the mind is not hindered enjoying a clear knowledge of the divine will toward itself. For what it discerns comprises the first and principal parts in faith. […] Thus, bound with the fetters of an earthly body, however much we are shadowed on every side with great darkness, we are nevertheless illuminated as much as we need be for firm assurance when, to show forth his mercy, the light of God sheds even a little of its radiance. (III. ii. 19)
to sustain faith, and often one would fall into despair; as we shall soon see, Calvin believes that
often, God deliberately induces despair in a believer. It is again the purpose of despair that
Calvinism and Petrarchism commonly shared.

Calvin argues elsewhere that God deliberately induces despair to draw his elect toward Him.\(^79\) Calvin stresses this point when he comments on Jeremiah 48:16:

> It serves to alleviate the sorrow of the faithful when they understood that the Moabites
> would shortly be punished; for it was a grievous and bitter trial when *God severely chastised his own children, to see that the wicked in the meantime were spared. As, then, he deferred his judgments as to the wicked, that delay tended to drive the faithful to despair*, at least they could not bear with sufficient patience the scourges of God.
>
> (Emphasis added) (27)

As Calvin would later elaborate in the commentary, God often saves his wrath for the reprobates
for later and brings them down from their prosperity in full force. Yet, as humans do not have
access to God’s mind, often, His elects end up doubting their faith, if not losing it. As Calvin
states in his *Institutes*, at times, the elect would become distracted by worldly temptations and
since God cares about them, he must be harsh on his elect to draw them toward Him.\(^80\) Calvin
touches upon the same topic in his five sermons on Ezekiel, which Lok translated along with the
sonnet sequence *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner*. In these sermons, Calvin points out that God

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\(^79\) This should not be taken to mean that Calvin encourages or even condones despair in a person because despair is
a sin. Rather, he argues that despair in an elect is a part of the divine will, which God induces in an elect to draw him
closer to God.

\(^80\) Calvin writes in III. ii. 12 of his *Institutes*:

> God, while not ceasing to love his children, is wondrously angry toward them; not because he is disposed of himself to hate them, but because he would frighten them by the feeling of his wrath in order to humble their fleshly pride, shake off their sluggishness, and arouse them to repentance.
punishes Ezekiel by blighting him with an incurable disease because he becomes distracted by material pursuits, and God punishes Ezekiel, who is elect, only to draw Ezekiel toward Him. The OED describes “despair” as “to lose hope, or give up hope; to be without hope.” In the first sermon on Ezekiel, Calvin points out when Ezekiel is struck by God’s wrath and thinks he is about to die:

he thought all to be lost when God shold take him out of the worlde; and in this we see nothing but the sinne of infidelity [unbelief]. He tormenteth and rageth with him self (as it seemeth) with a rebelling, uncomely for a servant of God: …all the faithe whiche Ezechias had was only in hys prosperitie and quiet,, and also that he gave the bridle to much unto him selfe in his heavinesse, in so muche that he complained of god. (9–10)\textsuperscript{81}

As Ezekiel, although being a “servant of God,” commits the “sinne of infidelity” to God and complains to God, this is an act of despair against God. However, as Ezekiel is elect, he recovers from his disease and, “forgat not the corrections whiche he had received at the hand of god, nether the anguishes which he felt but minded to make a memorial of the whole, that those which come after might be enstruc
ted thereby” (9). Calvin terms the doubts that elects have about the states of their souls and their salvation as “spiritual battails” in the second sermon on Ezekiel.\textsuperscript{82} For Calvin, these “spiritual battles” might induce a spell of despair among the believers because it is God’s way of drawing the erring elect toward Him.

\textsuperscript{81} This is Anne Lok’s translation of Calvin’s sermons.
\textsuperscript{82} Calvin writes:

We cal spiritual battails, when god compelleth us to cast an eye unto our sinnes, and on the other sid so awaketh us that he maketh us have in mynd what his wrath is, and to conceive that he is our judg, an that we be summoned to appere before him, to render accompte. This is a battel which we cal spiritual, which is much more heavy, and much more terrible then all the sorrowes, anguishes, feares, torments, doubts that we may have as in the worlde. (31)
This necessity of momentary despair to bring a person to the proper path is something that Calvinism shares with Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*. The only difference between these two approaches is that in the case of Calvinism, God is who decides when to end the torment of a believer, whereas in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, it is the speaker who, after grieving for Laura-Daphne for numerous years, eventually realizes his mistake on his own.

Petrarch’s speaker must go through despair in the *in-morte* section, especially from sonnet 269 to sonnet 341, where he continues perceiving “death” as an antagonist, finally to realize his own error in viewing Laura as Laura-Daphne and not as Laura-Beatrice. In sonnet 269, which is quite early on in the *in-morte* section, we find Petrarch’s speaker blames “death” for the demise of Laura and Cardinal Giovanni Colonna and perceives him as an adversary when he declares:

That column high, that laurel green as well
Which to my weary reverie gave shade,
Are felled; I’ve lost what I can’t hope to find
From north to south, Indic to Moorish seas.

*My double treasure, Death, you’ve snatched away.* (Emphasis added) (1 – 5)\textsuperscript{83}

The speaker stops lamenting the death of Cardinal Colonna from “That column high” to the next poem onwards and becomes fixated on the death of Laura. Eventually in sonnet 273, the speaker temporarily realizes for the first time that he is supposed to look toward “heaven” and toward the

\textsuperscript{83} Rotta è l’alta colonna e ’l verde lauro
che facean ombra al mio stanco pensero;
perduto ő quel che ritrovar non spero
dal borrea a l’austro, o dal mar indo al mauro.
Tolto m’ài, Morte, il mio doppio thesauro,
transient nature of human beauty and the mortality of the human race, “Let us seek heaven if nothing please us here:/ For we perceived that beauty to our ill/ If live and dead it must prevent our peace” (12–14). Although the speaker realizes that he must turn to “heaven” if not for the salvation of his soul, at least for his mental peace in this sonnet, we find the Petrarchan trope of “tempestuous tossing back and forth” when in the next sonnet, the speaker out of despair blames “Fortune, Love and Death” for his tragedy and perceives them as his adversaries, “My unrelenting cares O, grant me peace!/Won’t it suffice that Fortune, Love and death/Make war all round me” (274, 1–3).

This is not the first time the speaker turns away from God in the Canzoniere. In my previous chapter, I drew attention to sonnets 61–63, wherein the speaker thinks about turning toward God and then reverts back to Laura-Daphne in sonnet 63. After going through despair in the following sonnets and poems, including blaming “Death” for snatching away Laura, the cure to his disease in sonnet 276 that involves engaging in hyperboles to underscore his despair in sonnet 288, which begins with the line “All of the air here I’ve filled with sighs,” the speaker again momentarily realizes his mistake. As I mentioned in my first chapter, the speaker’s problem is that he is pursuing Laura-Daphne when he should be at least pursuing Laura-Beatrice, if not God. For example, in sonnet 278, the speaker contemplates his death and declares out of despair:

Ah, why am I not stripped of mortal flesh

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84 Cerchiamo ’l ciel, se qui nulla ne piace: ché mal per noi quella beltà si vide, se viva et morta ne deueva tör pace

85 Datemi pace, o duri miei pensieri: non basta ben ch’Amor, Fortuna et Morte mi fanno guerra intorno

86 L’ò pien di sospir’ quest’aere tutto
By that last day, the first of future life?

For, just as my thoughts run on after her,

So follows her my soul, light, joyous, quick (7–10)\(^87\)

The problem in the above-quoted lines is that the speaker is yet to realize he is still pursuing Laura-Daphne in the *in-morte* section, the mortal beauty whom he praised in his poems to gain fame, though he should have been praising Laura-Beatrice, who acts as her spiritual guide and eventually solicits on behalf of him for the salvation of his soul. In sonnet 290, the speaker has a momentary glimpse into why Laura had to die and why he had to go through despair when he writes, “I see/And feel that torment was to save my soul,/That brief war was to bring eternal peace (2–4).\(^88\) It goes without saying that the “eternal peace” (line 4) the speaker mentions in the sonnet is the peace that one achieves through the Petrarchan trope of true conversion to God, and the “torment” (line 3) is the anguish that generates from despair. Despite this realization, the speaker gradually begins receding back to despair from the next sonnet, as he focuses on Laura-Daphne and in sonnet 292 when he emphasizes Laura-Daphne’s “arms and hand, the feet and face” in line 2 and finds himself in despair, “Yet I live angry; grieved am at that,/Left here without the light I loved so much/In a great storm, a ship without a mast” (9–11).\(^89\) The irony of the situation is that the Petrarch’s speaker does not realize that the more he focuses on the mortal beauty of Laura-Daphne, the more he ends up being susceptible to despair.

\(^{87}\) Deh perché me del mio mortal non scorza l’ultimo dì, ch’è primo a l’altra vita? Ché, come i miei pensier’ dietro a lei vanno, così leve, expedita et lieta l’alma

\(^{88}\) che per aver salute ebbi tormento, et breve guerra per eterna pace.

\(^{89}\) Et io pur vivo, onde mi doglio et sdegno, rimaso senza ’l lume ch’amai tanto, in gran fortuna e ’n disarmato legno
It is only due to the pain that the speaker feels from the relentless torment generated from despair that the speaker is able to realize his torment will cease as soon as he turns his thoughts toward God. Eventually, after much “back and forth motion” in the in-morte section of Canzoniere, the speaker eventually realizes his mistake of writing about his unrequited love, the lyrics that afforded him fame, when in sonnet 327 he writes, “For love with thoughts so dark has weighed me down”\textsuperscript{90} (line 8). In sonnet 335, we find the speaker realizing his materialist thoughts about his fame by focusing on the Laura-Daphne’s beauty when he writes, “for my fleshy weight/And passed before long wholly from my view;/I freeze still at the thought of it, grow numb” (9–11).\textsuperscript{91}

The Petrarchan speaker’s realization of this mistake is significant in sonnet 335 because it is the first time in the sonnet sequence that the speaker is mortified when he realizes the magnitude of his errors, a reaction that Calvin expects from the contrite elect of God. Whereas before the speaker had slipped into describing Laura’s physical beauty like “arms and hand, the feet and face” soon after realizing that he should turn his thoughts toward heaven, in sonnet 336, the speaker focuses on the virtues of Laura-Beatrice as “chaste, fair” (line 5) and in the concluding couplet of sonnet 337, the speaker finally realizes that the death of Laura was subject to God’s will, “When God, to deck out Heaven, took my tree/Again; for she was His indeed”.

Eventually, as I discussed in my first chapter, in sonnet 339, the speaker finally realizes the error of his ways when he acknowledges he was doing the right thing for the wrong reason, i.e., he was praising Laura as Laura-Daphne to gain fame in this world, whereas in actuality, he praised

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} di sí scuri penseri Amor m'ingombra.
\item \textsuperscript{91} al mio peso terrestre,
et poco poi n'uscì in tutto di vista:
di che pensando anchor m'aghiaaccio et torpo.
\end{itemize}
Laura-Beatrice, who will now help him to gain salvation. Hence, it is no surprise that after, in sonnet 340, the speaker does not blame “Death” for stealing Laura from him, but realizes that Nature acted as God’s agent when it took Laura in lines 1 and 2, where we find Laura-Beatrice appear in sonnet 341 for the first time to console Petrarch’s speaker and guide him toward heaven.

**Anne Lok’s Calvinism and Petrarchanism**

Any discussion of Petrarchism as manifested in Lok’s *A Meditation of a Penitent Sinner* must begin with a discussion of whether the sonnet sequence even qualifies as Petrarchan, because unlike other Petrarchan sonneteers in the early modern English literature, Lok is not consciously emulating Petrarch in her sonnet sequence, and it is very hard to trace a volta in her sonnets. As Kimberley Ann Coles points out, Lok was modeling the dialectic strategy of her sonnets on Calvin’s sermons, which she translates and attaches to her letter to the Duchess of Suffolk, who was a fellow Marian exile like her. Unlike George Herbert, Lok never overtly displays her awareness of the fact that Petrarchism can be adopted for devotional purposes. She refers to the medicinal nature of her work in her letter in the following words, as she discusses the need for faith among the followers of the Reformed religion:

> This healeth the Christians sicknes, this preserveth him from death, this maketh him to live for ever. This medicine is in in this little boke brought from the plentifull shop and

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92 Coles observations on Calvin’s dialectic strategy become pertinent to this discussion: the sonnet sequence, as its headnote declares, ‘well agreeth with the … argument’ in Calvin’s *Sermons*, and it follows the same discursive practice. The *Sermons* themselves are a dilation of Isaiah 38. Like the sonnet sequence, each sermon begins with a citation of the lines of biblical text that it will treat. Calvin starts at Isaiah 38:9, and exfoliates between three and four verses in each address. Throughout this oration, he repeats the verses that are the subject of his sermon, explaining the terms and expounding upon the themes, but always organizing his speech around the Text. Lok, in turn, imports Calvin’s rhetorical strategy of dilating scripture into a poetic practice: he enlarges four lines into a sermon, she expands a single verse into a sonnet. (129)
sstorehouse of Gods holye testament, where Gods everabiding purpose from beyond
beginning is set fourth to the everlasting salvation of some, and eternall confusion of
other. Beside that, this boke, hath not only the medicine, but also an example of the
nature of the disease, and the meane how to use and apply the medicine to htem that be so
diseased. (7)

The “disease” to which Lok refers in this passage is the loss of hope and faith, which results in
despair among Reformed Christians. As scholars have not yet noticed the necessity of despair for
the Petrarchan speaker to realize the error of his ways, Christopher Warley’s contentions that
Lok’s work is “not Petrarchan in any traditional sense” (45) and that “the sequence completely
lacks the conventional language of Petrarchism” (46) might seem convincing, but is quite
misleading.93

It is true that Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* is not exclusively “devotional” or a “prolonged
meditation,” but it does share certain elements with Lok’s *Meditation*. Lok’s speaker shares
Petrarch’s speaker’s contrition and sense of despair. Unlike in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, especially
in the *in-vita* section, where the speaker’s errors are highlighted through his misplaced obsession
over Laura-Daphne, in Lok’s sonnet sequence, the speaker’s errors or sins are not at all

93 Warley in his chapter on Lok’s sonnet sequence, argues that Lok packaged Calvinism for the English middle class
by publishing her work. Warley’s failure to identify the issue of Petrarchism in Lok’s sonnets reflects the attitude of
a group of academics, one of whom is Greene, who think of Petrarchism in terms of the unrequited love of a lover
who pursues the object of his/her affection. Greene writes about Lok’s sequence:

The process of the *Meditation* is not so much fictional in the manner of the Petrarchan *canzonieri*, where
more or less differentiated speakers find plots of amatory and spiritual crisis in the *variatio* of their own
moods and utterances, but performative: like other liturgical and devotional scores it exists to be read (not
necessarily aloud and internalized as the model of a prolonged meditation over a more concentrated
spiritual text. (*Meditation* 157)

Greene’s definition of the Petrarchan fails to notice that the *Canzoniere* does contain devotional and religious
elements.
presented. Rather, as with Petrarch’s speaker in the in-morte section of the Canzoniere, Lok’s speaker is contrite for his sinful past. In poem 366 of the Canzoniere, when the speaker has finally realized his mistake and has undergone the true conversion to God, the language with which he prays to the Virgin Mary has the same emotional intensity as Lok’s speaker has:

Not me, but Him who deigned to shape me, heed;
Let not my merit, but His likeness high
In me move you to care for one so low.
Medusa and my fault have made me stone,
Distilling idle tears. (Canzoniere 109 – 113)

Calvin in his Institutes argues against any role of mediation that saints can play in the salvation of one’s soul. Hence, Lok, who was a devout believer in the Reformed religion, could not show her speaker praying to any saint; the speaker must pray directly to God. Her speaker’s language is just as intensely contrite as that of Petrarch’s speaker in poem 366. The “Preface, expressing the passioned minde of the penitent sinner” starts with the line “The hainous gylt of my forsaken ghost:” just as Petrarch’s speaker realizes the attraction that he felt for Laura-Daphne was like a destructive attraction that someone would feel when enchanted by “Medusa” (361. 11) and realizes his errors in the in-vita section, similarly, Lok’s speaker identifies his erstwhile sinful life as that of the life of a “ghost,” devoid of any spiritual grace. Soon after talking with Laura-Beatrice, Petrarch’s speaker starts praying to God, and his intense emotional prayer finally culminates in his prayer to the Virgin Mary, wherein he asks her to intercede on behalf of his soul. Lok’s speaker, throughout the sonnet sequence, urges God to have mercy on him and to forgive his sins. I have shown in my first chapter that Petrarch’s speaker must transition from false conversion to God to true conversion to God. In the third sonnet of Lok’s sonnet sequence,
we find the speaker laments, “Ofte hath thy mercie washed me before,/Thou madest me cleane; but I am foule againe” (5–6). The fact that Lok’s speaker has turned to God only to move away from him “but I am foule againe,” or as he confesses in the first sonnet “beynge fled from thee” (line 2) he has abused God’s mercy (line 5) makes this speaker exhibit the Petrarchan trope of false conversion to God.

Lok in her sonnet sequence comes up with a new conception of “invention”, that some early modern scholars failed to notice. When literary scholars think of the term “invention”, they think of it in terms of rhetoric. Peter Ramus, a prominent Protestant rhetorician from contemporary France, defined Invention as:

Dialecticke otherwise called Logicke, is an arte which teacheth to dispute well. It is divided into two partes: Inventin, and judgement or disposition. Invention is the parte of Dialecticke, whiche teachethe to invente arguments. An argumente is that which is naturally bente to prove or disprove anything, suche as be single reasons separatly and by themselves considered. (Emphasis added) (17)

Greene has this conception of “invention” in his mind when he declares, “Lock’s Meditation stands for a refusal of invention” (Meditation 161). Indeed at first glance, Lok’s sonnet sequence would seem to lack “invention,” as Greene pronounces.

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94 Greene raises an important question: “What then are the logic and values of a Calvinist sonnet sequence?” (165) and answers his question by stating that in a Calvinist sonnet sequence, “serial structures are often neutralized by the reiteration of patterns such as “disobedience-punishment-repentance-deliverance” as well as the continual watchfulness over the self” (165). Although Greene does not explain what he means by the “serial structures” of a sonnet, a careful reading of his article shows that he means the architectural structure of a sonnet, where a sonnet is split either into an octave and a sestet or three quatrains and a couplet. Drawing upon George Gascoigne’s observations of “invention,” Greene finds that “Lok’s Meditation stands for a refusal of invention” (161). I agree with Greene that Lok’s work challenges our conception of a genre and hence, in this chapter, I will argue that to do justice to Lok’s sonnet sequence, we need to rethink our conception of “invention.” As I will show in this chapter, Lok follows Calvinist ideas on prayers and devotions almost to the letter and as Calvin was not concerned with
There is invention in Lok’s sonnet sequence, but not in the traditional sense of “invention” as it was used in contemporary rhetoric. She is the first published sonnetteer in the English literature who uses “double sonnet”. Lok’s sonnets have an argument, and they might have a volta. However, in any traditional sonnet, a problem is presented in the octave so that its solution can be provided in the sestet. For example, sonnet 1 of Lok’s Meditation is based on the first line of Psalm 51, where David asks for God’s mercy:

Haue mercy, God, for thy great mercies sake.

O God: my God, vnto my shame I say,

Beynge fled from thee, so as I dred to take

Thy name in wretched mouth, and feare to pray

Or aske the mercy that I haue abusde.

But, God of mercy, let me come to thee:

Not for iustice, that iustly am accusde:

Which selfe word Iustice so amaseth me,

That scarce I dare thy mercy sound againe.

But mercie, Lord, yet suffer me to craue.

Mercie is thine: Let me not crye in vaine,

poetry, his ideas on devotions and prayers do not reflect the way early modern religious poets like Donne practiced devotion in religious poetry. Hence, when Greene mentions that Lok’s “series lacks the manifest order that emerges in one fashion or another out of such meditative poems as Donne’s Anniversaries and George Herbert’s The Temple” (163), he fails to realize that Lok’s sonnet sequence lacks the manifest structure that can be found in Donne because of her Calvinist affiliation. Therefore, when Greene asserts that Lok’s “sonnets consist of fourteen lines without emotional modulation or intellectual conclusions” (166), he fails to realize that his assertion qualifies Lok as an ideal Calvinist sonnetteer. While I agree with Greene’s observation that “where most versions of the psalm suggest that the very shape of humankind signifies venality, Lok finds occasion to emphasize voluptuousness” (164), which is evident from the fact that she emphasizes sin in her sonnet sequence, I will argue that the fact that Lok’s sonnet sequence is “a stalling, indecisive, circular performance” (163) makes her sonnet sequence Petrarchan in nature and the fact that Lok’s sonnet sequence “seems to go nowhere, and only over the run of the entire series does it so much as rehearse the (already scrambled) logic of its original” (163) makes Lok’s project an essentially Calvinist sonnet sequence.
Thy great mercie for my great fault to haue.

Haue mercie, God, pitie my penitence

With greater mercie than my great offence.

Unlike a traditional sonnet, this sonnet does not have a strong turn, as the speaker continues repeating his plea for God’s mercy and reiterating his fallen nature. There is a volta, albeit very faint, in line 11: when the colon introduces the caesura after “Mercie is thine,” the following phrase “Let me not crye in vaine” hardly adds anything new to the sonnet besides hoping that his passionate plea will not go unheard by God. The structures of all other sonnets in the sonnet sequence are identical to this sonnet, as they hardly present a problem followed by its solution.

Most sonnets follow the English rhyme scheme invented by Surrey: ababcdcdefefgg. As these sonnets hardly try to prove anything, by the definition of invention provided by Peter Ramus, Lok’s poems indeed lack “invention,” as Greene suggests. However, the OED shows that the word “invention,” used as early as 1513, can be defined as “the manner in which a thing is devised or constructed; invented style.” I argue that as Lok’s sonnet sequence is the first sonnet sequence published in England, she should be credited with the “invention” or creation of the concept of “double sonnet” in the “The Preface expressing the passioned mind of the penitent sinner.”

The hainous gylt of my forsaken ghost

So threates, alas, vnto my febled sprite

Deserued death, and (that me greueth most)

Still stand so fixt before my daseld sight

The lothesome filthe of my disteined life,

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95 For a copy of the full text of Lok’s Meditation along with the Preface, please see Appendix 1.
The mighty wrath of myne offended Lorde,
My Lord whos wrath is sharper than the knife,
And deper woundes than dobleedge sworde,
That, as the dimmed and fordulled eyen
Full fraught with teares & more & more opprest
With growing streames of the distilled bryne
Sent from the fornace of a grefefull brest,
Can not enioy the comfort of the light,
Nor finde the waye wherin to walke aright:

So I blinde wretch, whome Gods enflamed ire
With pearcing stroke hath throwne vnto [the] grou[n]d,
Amidde my sinnes still groueling in the myre,
Finde not the way that other oft haue found,
Whome cherefull glimse of gods abounding grace
Hath oft releued and oft with shyning light
Hath brought to ioy out of the vgglye place,
Where I in darke of euerlasting night
Bewayle my woefull and vnhappy case,
And fret my dyeng soule with gnawing paine
Yet blinde, alas, I groape about for grace.
While blinde for grace I groape about in vaine,
My fainting breath I gather vp and straine,
Mercie, mercie to crye and crye againe.

The argument that is introduced in the first sonnet of the preface is not resolved by the end of the sonnet, but is carried on to the following sonnet as well. The speaker’s erstwhile sinful life is his “forsaken ghost,” a life that he has abjured at the moment but he will again adopt, as can be seen in lines 5–6 of the third sonnet, which has been quoted above. The fact that the problem of the speaker’s sin and its solution cannot be contained within a single sonnet creates an impression that the speaker has sinned so much against God that at least to him, his salvation seems highly doubtful. Hence, one sonnet takes up the speaker’s reflections on his sins, whereas the following sonnet shows contrition for his sins.

A curious thing about this “Preface,” as well as about the sonnets in the Meditation, is that the speaker does not quite specify his sins. Indeed, the only specific sin that is mentioned in Meditation is the sin of having sex, which is further related to the fallen nature of mankind due to Original Sin:

For lo, in sinne, Lord, I begotten was,

With sede and shape my sinne I toke also,

Sinne is my nature and my kinde alas,

In sinne my mother me conceiued: Lo (7, 1–4)

The reason Lok’s speaker is not specific about his sins can be traced to Calvin’s observations on why a penitent should keep praying for the forgiveness of his sins. Calvin writes about the penitent believer “that he groan under the present ills and anxiously fear those to come, yet at the same time take refuge in God, not at all doubting he is ready to extend his helping hand” (III. xx. 11). As Lok’s speaker does not know the full extent of his sins up to the present moment and
does not know the sins that he might commit in the future, he hence prefers not to be specific about his sins. The “Preface” prepares the readers to perceive the speaker to be modelled on believers of the reformed religion, giving in Calvin’s words “proof of huge torments, not to say vexations, when they speak of uttering their plaintive cry to the Lord from the deep abyss, and from the very jaws of death” (III. xx. 4); sure enough, we do find in the sonnet sequence a tormented speaker crying out because of agony. Although the speaker in *Meditations* does exhibit what Calvin points out as “the tribulations which drive and press us from all sides are so many and so great that there is reason enough continually to groan and sigh to God” (III. xx. 28), Lok’s speaker does exhibit a certain problem that does not quite fit in, at least not until sonnet 18 of *Meditations*, with the characteristics of the contrite nature of a Calvinist speaker. I mentioned above that Calvin’s notion of “faith” introduces the Petrarchan trope of “tempestuous tossing back and forth” that Calvinism shares with Petrarchism. This vacillation between doubt and hope is missing in Lok’s sonnet sequence. Until sonnet 17, the speaker is so much tormented by his anguish that he almost feels despair. For example, in sonnet 3 of the “Preface,” the speaker mentions, “Euen then despeir before my ruthefull eye/ Spredes forth my sinne and shame, and semes to saye” (lines 3–4), in sonnet 5 of the “Preface,” the speaker concludes with the couplet, “Thus tost with panges and passions of despeir,/Thus craue I mercy with repentant chere,” the

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96 While reflecting on the role faith plays in prayer, Calvin describes how a believer should feel about the state of his soul:

> But “assurance” I do not understand to mean that which soothes our mind with sweet and perfect repose, releasing it from every anxiety. For to repose so peacefully is the part of those who when all affairs are flowing to their liking, are touch by no care, burn with no desire, toss with no fear. But for the saints the occasion that best stimulates them to call upon God is when, distressed by their own need, they are troubled by the greatest unrest, and are almost driven out of their senses, until faith opportunely comes to their relief. For among such tribulations God’s goodness so shines upon them that even when they groan with weariness under the weight of present ills. And also are troubled by the fear of greater ones, yet relying upon his goodness, they are relieved of the difficulty of bearing them, and are solaced and hope for escape and deliverance. (III. xx. 11)
opening couplet of sonnet 2 of *Meditation* states, “My many sinnes in nomber are encreast,/With weight wherof in sea of depe despeire,” the opening line of sonnet 12 of *Meditation* states, “Sinne and despeir haue so posset my hart,” lines 9 and 10 of the sonnet 13 of *Meditation* states, “Thy holy sprite, which is myne onely stay,/ The stay that when despeir assaileth me,” and finally, the opening couplet of sonnet 17 states, “Lo straining crampe of colde despeir againe/In feble brest doth pinche my pinyng hart.” The fact that Lok’s speaker has to experience despair to eventually get some peace and confidence, as reflected from sonnet 18 onwards, proves that Lok’s speaker has both Petrarchan and Calvinist qualities. However, the fact that Lok does not show the vacillation in the speaker until sonnet 17 makes the sonnet sequence almost unCalvinistic and almost unPetrarchan in nature. Greene’s quote from the seventeenth-century divine Henry Hammond is relevant to this discussion:

> And proportionally, the reciting of a few Psalms daily with these interpunctions of mental Devotion, suggested and animated and maintained by the native life and vigour which is in the Psalms, may deserve much to be preferred before the daily recitation of the whole Psalter. *The danger being very obvious, and easily foreseen, that what is beaten out into immoderate length, will lose of the massiness; and nothing more fit to be averted in religious Offices, than their degenerating into heartless dispirited recitations.*

(Emphasis added) (159)

Just as the recitation of the whole Psalter might cause a devotee to lose focus, similarly, the “massiness” of beating a sonnet out of a single line of a psalm might not serve any purpose at all, and it will make the sonnet sequence into very “dispirited recitations,” which is not conducive for devotional purposes.
Lok’s religious sonnets, unlike the religious sonneteers that followed her, such as Donne and Herbert, show what I identify as a deceptive lack of eloquence, and Calvin’s influence can be traced to this characteristic feature.\textsuperscript{97} Coles’ assertion that, “This absence of eloquence is central to the formal choices of Lok’s work” (130) might seem quite appropriate initially.\textsuperscript{98} The “deceptive lack of eloquence” in Lok’s sonnet sequence can be traced back to Calvin’s directions on the use of psalms.\textsuperscript{99} Calvin is suspicious of the use of rhetoric for religious purposes because he associates rhetoric with insincere heart which can be gathered from his second sermon on Ezekiel:

Therefore if one would make an arte of Rethorick of the praiers of the faithful, it is a great abuse; for our lord humbleth us to this end, that we shold not imagine to obteine anything at his hands by any fair tale: he had rather that we were so confused, that we had only one word a right in oure praiers, but that nowe we shoulde cast our puffynges, and blowinges, and anon that we should abide styll with silence; alas my God alas what shal I do? and when we shall mourne so, that we shoulde be so wrapped in, and tangled, that there should neither be begynnynge nor ending. Then when we shal be brought to that point, our lord knoweth this kind of language, although we understand it not, and although our perplexities hinder us, that we can not bringe for the one perfect sentence,

\textsuperscript{97} This section is influenced by Coles’ analysis of Calvin’s Psalms in her book.
\textsuperscript{98} Coles asserts in her chapter:
Calvin certainly places a high premium upon preaching. But the oration, as Cavlin himself demonstrates, should be in as plain a style as possible. When Calvin claims that ‘we shold not imagine to obteine any thing at [God’s] hand by any fair tale’, he is referring the rhetoric of preachers as well as the faithful: ‘that all the imagination of men when they trust in their own stengthes is nothing but a dreame, bicause they loke not vpon God, and do not there stay themselues, that they mighte be spoled of all vayne ouerwening of themselues’ (130)

\textsuperscript{99} Calvin never mentioned anything about poetry. The closest he comes to engaging in a discussion about poetics is in his preface to Mariot-Beza’s translation of Psalms.
so that men also understand not what we would say: yet God (as we had said before) wyl\nheare us well ynoughe. (29)

Calvin repeats this point, that true and devout prayer should manifest as a confused utterance in\nhis *Institutes*, when he discusses the role that the Holy Spirit plays in prayer:

not that [the Holy Spirit] actually prays or groans but arouses in us assurance, desires,\nand sighs, to conceive which our natural powers would scarcely suffice. And Paul, with\ngood reason, calls “unspeakable” these groans which believers give forth under the\nguidance of the Spirit; for they who are truly trained in prayers are not unmindful that,\nperplexed by blind anxieties, they are so constrained as scarcely to find what is expedient\nfor them to utter. Indeed, when they try to stammer, they are confused and hesitate.\n(Emphasis added) (III. xx. 5)100

Calvin implies in these two passages that one should pray in a plain language, and if one does so,\none is bound to stammer because he is moved by emotion. Does that mean God is offended by\nthis confused prayer? Not really, as Calvin asserts in his *Institutes*:

God will reject those prayers in which he finds neither perfect faith nor repentance,\ntogether with a warmeth of zeal and petitions rightly conceived. […] God tolerates even\nour stammering and pardons our ignorance whenever something inadvertently escapes us;\nas indeed without this mercy there would be no freedom to pray. (III. xx. 16)

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100 Calvin’s concept of prayer can be a bit confusing. He says that while praying, a supplicant must go through a\ntempestuous motion, yet the final goal of the prayer is to temper the emotions. In III.xx.14 of *Institutes*, Calvin\nwrites, “he (Paul) bids believers so to temper their emotions that while still waiting to obtain what they desire they\nnonetheless cheerfully bless God.”
Lok believes her sonnets should perform the same function as Calvin’s sermons. This assertion is clear from the following passage of her letter to the Countess of Suffolk, where she mentions:

This medicine is in this little boke brought from the plentifull shop and storehouse of Gods holye testament, where Gods everabiding purpose from beyond beginning is set fourth, to the everlasting salvation of some, and eternall confusion of other. Beside that, this boke hath not only the medicine, but also an example of the nature of the disease, and the meane how to use and apply the medicine, to them that be so diseased. For when a man languishing in corporall sicknes, heareth his neighboure reporte unto him, or himselfe hathe before time sene in an other the same cause of sicknes, the same maner of fits, passions, alterations, and in every point the same qualities of sicknes, and the same disposition of the body that he knoweth and feleth in him self: it geveth him assurance, and maketh him assurance of the same disease that th’other was: whereby knowing howe th’other was healed, what diet he kept, what Physicke he toke, he doeth with the greater boldness, confidence of mynde, and desire, call for, taste and greedely receyve that healthfull and lifefull medicine whereby he saw and knew his neighbour healed and with the greater care keepeth the same diet wherewith he saw and knew the other persevered.

(7)

The medicine to which Lok refers comprises of both her sermons and her sonnet sequence which she believes would heal spiritually ailing members of the reformed church. This “lack of eloquence”, that Coles identifies in Lok’s sonnet sequence, might seem to explain why until sonnet 17, no possible progress is detected in the sonnet sequence in the way that progress can be detected in Canzoniere. Greene identifies the movement of the sonnet sequence as “stalling and
In sonnet 18, the speaker’s desolate tone disappears, and it is further reduced in sonnet 19, where the sonnet details the sacrifice of his sinful past to God and says, “Such offering likes thee” (19. 13). The lack of a desolate tone and the confidence the speaker gets in these two sonnets allow him to make a “sacrifice,” which is definitely progress from the contrite self that was always complaining to God until sonnet 17. The speaker makes further progress when in sonnet 20, he prays for the entire congregation, as implied in the word “Sion” in the following lines.  

The structure of the sonnet sequence, as Greene points out

101 The structure of the sonnet sequence, as Greene points out

  lacks the manifest order that emerges in one fashion or another out of such meditative poems as John Donne’s *Anniversaries* and George Herbert’s *The Temple*. Rather, Lock’s *Meditation* is a stalling, indecisive, circular performance: in most of the measure we can keep in mind (that is, from line to line or from sonnet to sonnet), it seems to go nowhere, and only over the run of the entire series does it so much as rehearse the (already scrambled) logic of its original. (163)

Greene’s observation is partly correct, because progress can be observed from sonnet 18 of *Meditation*.

102 Rosalind Smith argues that “Sion” and later on “Jerusalem” in this sonnet stand for England. Smith reads Lok’s sonnet sequence through the lens of the contemporary religious tension between Catholicism and Protestantism that resulted from the mixed signals that tolerance toward Catholics during the early Elizabethan reign sent to the protestants and argues that although Lok dedicated her text to Catherine Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk, her work was directed toward the reigning female monarch of England, Queen Elizabeth. Smith draws attention to an interesting incident that sent Elizabeth’s Protestant subjects into panic mode:

  A point of focus for this personal conservatism was Elizabeth’s reinstatement of the cross and candlesticks in the royal chapel in October 1559 for the marriage of one of her ladies, in the face of official injunctions of the same year calling for the removal of ‘things superstitious’ from churches, a designation interpreted by Protestants to include the cross. The reaction of Protestant bishops to Elizabeth’s retention of the cross and candlesticks in the royal chapel indicates the anxiety that her action provoked in Protestant circles, and the uncertainty attaching to her religious alliances during this early period of her reign. (49)

The strategy of dedicating a work to an aristocrat but aiming it at Queen Elizabeth was not an uncommon practice among non-aristocratic female writers. For example, Smith points out that Elizabeth Hoby and Mildred Cecil dedicated a manuscript to “Leicester, and aimed again at Queen Elizabeth” (52). Lok’s poem is, in Smith’s opinion, “a Protestant humanist attempt to conciliate Elizabeth and direct her towards a more radical position, in line with the politics of Lok’s second husband, Edward Dering” (52). Although, Smith’s work provides an excellent context to Lok’s work and she does not engage with Calvinist theology in her article. Smith mentions Calvin’s letter to William Cecil, wherein he had urged Queen Elizabeth not to falter from the Protestant cause and explains how Lok’s sonnet sequence shares Calvin’s concern, Smith does not engage in detail with Calvinist theology in Lok’s sonnet sequence. Rather, she is more interested in reading Lok’s sonnet sequence in terms of gender issues. Smith’s thesis lies in her argument that dedicating a work to an aristocrat allowed a middle-class woman such as Lok to comment on politics that was an absolute domain of men in Elizabethan patriarchy. In this chapter, I am not interested in gender politics in Lok’s works. Rather, I will supplement Smith’s work by discussing Calvinist theology in Lok’s sonnet sequence.
Shew mercie, Lord, not vnto me alone:
But stretch thy fauor and thy pleased will,
To sprede thy bountie and thy grace vpon
Sion, for Sion is thy holly hyll: (1–4)

However, Greene’s observation is applicable until sonnet 17, as the speaker continues asking for God’s mercy and God’s grace to absolve him of his sins. We find circular elements in the sonnet sequence, as sonnets 1, 4, 5, and 6 all have the word mercy in their first lines. Whereas the first lines of sonnets 1 and 4 are almost identical: “Have mercy, God, for thy great meries sake” (1. 1) and “Have mercie, Lord, have mercie for I know” (4. 1), the opening lines of sonnets 5 and 6 are not that identical, but they are close: “Graunt thou me mercy, Lord: thee thee alone” (5. 1) and “But mercy Lord, O Lord some pitie take,” (6. 1). The sonnet sequence is replete with exhibitions of parallelism between lines from different sonnets, such as “Yet washe me Lorde againe, and washe me more” (3. 7) and “Ah wash me, Lord: for I am foule alas:” (9. 11), and parallelism between single lines, such as “I fele my sinne, my sinne that hath opprest” (4. 7).

What Greene fails to realize is that the “stalling, indecisive” movement that we notice until sonnet 17 is a deliberate strategy that Lok uses in her sonnet sequence. The parallelism and the repetitive language in the sonnet sequence creates an impression of a confused speaker who is so overwhelmed by his sins that he continues repeating himself, something that, as I have shown, Calvin identifies as the characteristic features of a genuine prayer. Moreover, these repetitions also create the impression of a Calvinist abjuration of rhetoric, as Coles argues in her book chapter. Hence, by not following the structure that Donne and Herbert follows, Lok partially succeeds in presenting her speaker as a Calvinist speaker.
Moreover, Lok echoes Calvin’s anxiety about the use of Psalms for devotional purposes in her transcription of sonnets in her *Meditations*. Calvin decided during the Reformation to spread the Scriptures to the lay audience, who were mostly illiterate because Calvin knew the easiest way to spread an awareness of the Scriptures among the illiterate laity was if Psalms were set to music. However, he was also aware that music presented a danger quite like that of rhetoric: the illiterate laity might become seduced by the melody of the Psalms and ignore the spiritual message contained within the Psalms. Hence, he writes in an “Epistle to a Reader,” which was published along with the book of Mariot-Beza’s Genevan Psalms, that the Psalms should provide proper direction to the congregation, as “it is most important to know their contents, meaning, and in what direction they lead, in order that their use may be beneficial and advantageous, and therefore rightly directed” (63), with the caveat that “It is always necessary to give heed that the song may not be light and vulgar, but may have poise and majesty, as Saint Augustine says” (65–66). The lack of any traditional division of an octet and a sestet in Lok’s religious sonnets may be guided by the same principle to which Calvin draws attention in his epistle to the Genevan Psalter. Just as the laity might become distracted and even seduced by light and vulgar tunes, a sonnet’s wit and aesthetic form might distract the devoted reader from its message. Hence, Lok deliberately avoids the division between an octet and a sestet and the problem with its solution pattern.

To argue there is a lack of eloquence or rhetoric in Lok’s sonnet sequence is to ignore the fact that the sonnet sequence is full of figures of speech. This apparent lack of eloquence in the sonnet sequence, despite using figures of speech that go almost unnoticed unless someone pays close attention to the text, is deceptive. The figures of speech used in the sonnet sequence all
underscore the speaker’s sins and the requiring of God’s help to be cleansed of the sins. For example, the anaphora in sonnet 2 is meant to reinforce the sinful nature of the speaker:

Rue on me, Lord, releue me with thy grace.

My sinne is cause that I so nede to haue

Thy mercies ayde in my so woefull case:

My synne is cause that scarce I dare to craue (9–11)

This is also true of the repetition in line 4 of sonnet 7: “I fele my sinne, my sinne that hath opprest.” The repetition of “sinne” in sonnet 8 draws attention to the sinful nature of the speaker, but at the same time, it clarifies that the speaker is elect:

This secrete wisedom hast thou graunted me,

To se my sinnes, & whence my sinnes do growe:

This hidden knowledge haue I learnt of thee,

To fele my sinnes, and howe my sinnes do flowe (5–8)

The fact that the speaker has been provided special vision by God, which allows him to see his own sins, proves he is elect. Again, the repetition of “washe” in sonnet 3 is meant to underscore the fact that only God’s grace can help the sinned speaker, “Yet washe me Lord againe, and washe me more./Washe me, O Lord, and do away the staine” (7–8). As mentioned above, because Calvin did not advise the use of rhetoric for the purpose of preaching or for praying and Lok was consciously emulating Calvin’s structure from sermons, the question becomes why Lok deceptively uses rhetoric. The answer is to underscore the fact that the speaker, although a Calvinist, is struggling with his commitment to Calvinism.
The speaker seems to be struggling with Calvinistic doctrine because he seems to bribe God for the sake of his salvation. The fact that the speaker is struggling with his commitment to Calvinism has much evidence in the sonnet sequence. For example, the speaker in sonnet 6 asks God to absolve him of his sins for His glory’s sake, “O Lord of glory, for thy glories sake:/That I may saved of thy mercy tell” (3–4). The sentiment that God should save the speaker for the sake of His own glory is again repeated in sonnet 15, where the speaker mentions:

Lord, of thy mercy if thou me withdraw
From gaping throte of depe deuouring hell,
Loe, I shall preach the iustice of thy law:
By mercy saued, thy mercy shall I tell.
The wicked I wyll teache thyne only way,
Thy wayes to take, and mans deuise to flee (1–5)

It was a common theme in Psalms that a supplicant would ask God to bestow grace upon him so he could spread the word of God’s mercy and benevolence, but this theme, although being approved by Calvin, is a problematic concept. As humans are fallen creatures, it is not possible for them to know if these praises are indeed flowing from “sweetness of love.” As they are fallen creatures, there is always a chance that the supplicants might end up praising God with the

\[103\] Calvin discusses the subject in his *Institutes* when he writes:

Indeed, when believers entreat God to do something for his name’s sake, as they profess themselves unworthy to obtain anything in their own name, so they obligate themselves to give thanks; and they promise that they will rightly use God’s benefit, to be the heralds of it. … Not only do God’s benefits claim for themselves the extolling by the tongue, but also they naturally win love for themselves. “I loved the Lord,” says David, “because he heard the voice of my supplication.” [Ps. 116; cf Comm. And Ps. 115:15, Vg.] Also, elsewhere recounting what help he had experienced: “I shall love thee, O God, my strength” [Ps 18:1 p.]. But praises that do not flow from this sweetness of love will never please God. (Emphasis added) (III. xx. 28)
intention of bribing him, i.e., they might praise God with hopes that if God is pleased with their exalted praise, then God might end up bestowing Grace upon them. This would be a distortion of prayer, because a supplicant is supposed to pray to God to thank Him for His mercy and kindness and not with the hope of gaining salvation.

The issue of gaining grace, in Calvinism, has already been determined by God; hence, the idea of praying to God with the hopes of gaining salvation is a corrupt idea. Besides this concept of corruption of prayer that can tempt a believer, there is another danger associated with Psalms, as Mary Trull points out:

In the Book of Psalms a speaker often seems to negotiate with God by offering praise in exchange for salvation. A frequent motif is the silence of the dead, with the psalmists contrast with their own lively thanksgiving; implicitly, if God does not help them, he will lose the glory of their voices raised in worship. The theme of the beauty of language of their voices raised in worship and its power to move God sparked another Protestant concern: that the “sacrifice of praise” would be a new mode of self-worship and stimulate

104 My reading of the Calvinist theology in Lok’s sonnet sequence differs from Trull’s reading, which analyzes Lok’s sonnet sequence through the lens of the Calvinist theology of “sacrifice of praise.” Trull points out in her article that with Christ’s death, sacrifice became a divine act rather than a human act. Whereas the Old Testament mentions several animal sacrifices to please God, in the New Testament, Christ’s sacrifice is supposed to replace those animal sacrifices and open the path for the redemption of the human souls. The term “sacrifice of praise” implies praising Christ for his sacrifice to redeem mankind. During early Christianity and throughout the Middle Ages, the ritual of Mass was celebrated as humans figuratively participating in Christ’s act of sacrifice. However, the issue of sacrifice became a contentious issue during the Reformation. The point of contention for Protestants is excellently summarized by Trull: “Protestants criticized the Catholic Mass, with its charged symbolic gestures and elevation of the priest to the role of the mediator with God, as an atavistic perversion of Old Testament sacrifice by claiming to benefit God” (4). Protestants rather thought that God and Christ should be thanked for the benefits that have been heaped upon humans. By identifying the issue of sacrifice as a contentious issue for the reformers, Trull argues that Lok’s sonnet sequence is particularly concerned with the issue of “sacrifice of praise.” Trull’s reading becomes important because she aims to correlate Calvinism and Petrarchism in Lok’s sonnet. I find Troll’s reading of Petrarchism a bit simplistic. Although I agree with her premise that the issue of “sacrifice of praise” is evident in the sonnet sequence, I do not agree with her impression of the speaker that emerges out of the sonnet. Whereas her reading implies the speaker is a sinner, albeit a committed Calvinist, my reading would show that Lok’s speaker is not a confirmed Calvinist, but rather someone who is having trouble understanding Calvinism.
a sense of pride incompatible with one’s fallen nature and incompatible with appreciation of one’s fallen nature and openness to the operation of prevenient grace. (7)

No evidence in the sonnet sequence definitely proves the speaker’s supplication, which is that if bestowed with grace, he will spread the word of God’s benevolence, emerges from his “sweetness of love.” Hence, the technique of negotiating with God in the sonnet sequence is precarious at best. The fact that the speaker is struggling to understand Calvinism is conclusively proven in lines 10 – 14 of sonnet 14, where the speaker says, “The swete retorne of grace that I haue lost, / That I may hope I pray not all in vayne.” Any Calvinist would know that a person cannot lose God’s grace because the concept of predestination has already determined who would be bestowed with God’s grace and who would be deprived of it long before a person’s birth. Hence, a reprobate cannot lose grace because he never had grace to begin with, while an elect can never lose grace because he was chosen by God to have it. The fact that the speaker states that line proves he is still struggling with the concept of Calvinism and is yet to come to terms with Calvinism. Perhaps the irony of the situation is that every Calvinist by the doctrinal requirement of vacillation between doubt and hope was required to struggle with Calvinism as long as he lived. In this sense, perhaps the fact that Lok’s speaker struggles with Calvinist doctrine makes her a Calvinist. As we will soon see that unlike Lok’s speaker, Donne’s speaker in “La Corona” turns out to be a devout Calvinist.

**Donne’s “La Corona” and the Repurposing of Catholic Poetics**

At first, Donne’s “La Corona” and Lok’s *Meditation* seem to share nothing in common, because the apparent lack of structure and rhetoric in *Meditation*, which I have identified in this chapter is deceptive in nature, would apparently seem incompatible with the structured and
ordered “La Corona.” However, these two sonnet sequences do share a few things in common. Both, in subtly different ways, praise God, the Father in the case of Lok and the Son in the case of Donne. In both sonnet sequences, the respective speakers begin by individually praying for themselves and end up praying for the whole Reformed Christian community, although Donne does not use his speaker in “La Corona” to show this praying for the community as overtly as Lok does in her sonnet sequence. And finally, the speaker of Donne’s “La Corona” exhibits the danger to which Trull and I have drawn attention, the tendency to slip into bargaining with the divine over his salvation. In “La Corona”, Donne’s speaker starts with a sense of pride, and the misconceived notion, where he thinks he can bribe Christ for his salvation.

In this sonnet sequence, Donne succeeds in adapting a Catholic form of meditation for Reformed purposes. In my next chapter I will argue that Sidney desperately tried and failed to adapt a poetics they inherited from Roman Catholic Europe into a framework that can be accommodated within the Reformation theology, but Donne never bothered with a theory of poetics. Rather, Donne shows how the poetic legacy of Catholic Europe could be put to use in Reformed England by directly engaging in, to borrow a term from Sidney’s An Apology for Poetry, praxis.

The fact that Donne is using a Catholic form is clear from the title of the sonnet sequence “La Corona.” As Louis Martz points out:

the use of the term “corona” with reference to meditations focused on Christ would find a precedent in the popular practice, mentioned also in these English rosary-treatises of using a “corona of our Lord”—a rosary of thirty-three Aves. At the same time, Donne’s

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105 To borrow a phrase from Barbara Lewalski, Meditation exhibits a sort of “hymnic praise,” whereas “La Corona” indulges in a “mode of praise, though praise here does not mean hymnic praise but rather meditative wonder and admiration over the mysteries of redemption” (258).
title describes the continental practice of linking sonnets or stanzas in the form called the corona, where the last line of each sonnet or stanza forms the first line of the next, and the last line of the whole sequence repeats the line that began it. (107)

The form of “corona,” i.e., inter-connected sonnets, was practiced in Roman Catholic Europe, such as in France and multiple Italian states. In this chapter, I have argued that the repetitive nature of a prayer, a form that was preferred by Calvin, when adopted in a sonnet form takes the shape of a repetitive utterance. Donne in his “La Corona” uses the circular nature that the structure of the interweaved sonnets provided him in the form of a corona to turn “La Corona” into a Calvinist sonnet sequence.

Donne shows through his sonnet sequence “La Corona” that the Petrarchan issue of transcendence from the pursuit of worldly glory to praising God and that a better knowledge of one’s salvation lies in one’s identification with God can be possible in Reformed England without the need for a figure such as Laura-Beatrice. “La Corona” begins with showing the delusional speaker who starts off the sonnet sequence with the following sonnet:

*Deign at my hands this crown of prayer and praise,*

*Weav'd in my low devout melancholy,*

*Thou which of good, hast, yea art treasury,*

*All changing unchanged Ancient of days,*

*But do not, with a vile crown of frail bays,*

*Reward my muse's white sincerity,*

*But what thy thorny crown gained, that give me,*

*A crown of Glory, which doth flower always;*

*The ends crown our works, but thou crown'st our ends.*
For at our end begins our endlesse rest,

The first last end, now zealously possest,

With a strong sober thirst, my soul attends.

'Tis time that heart and voice be lifted high,

*Salvation to all that will is nigh*

“La Corona” begins with a sonnet that shows the speaker is delusional for two reasons: 1) he believes that Christ sacrificed himself for glory and 2) he can gain salvation in exchange of his verses where he praises Christ. For a sonnet sequence that is supposed to discuss the “crown” of Christ, as can be inferred from the title of the sequence “La Corona,” it is of utmost importance that the first sonnet of the sequence not start with a poem eulogizing Christ for His sacrifice. The fact that the speaker believes that he can gain salvation in exchange for his verses highlights his delusion. His delusion is further stressed by the fact that the speaker hopes to gain Christ’s “crown of glory” by writing verses. According to Calvinist theology, a supplicant has to properly understand the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice and pray to Christ for that. In the first sonnet of Donne’s “La Corona”, the speaker has no idea of the implications that Christ’s sacrifice has for the salvation of his soul. The first sonnet of Donne’s “La Corona” thus establishes a delusional speaker who has to go on a spiritual journey to gain proper understanding of Christ’s sacrifice.

However, as the speaker is writing in a Reformed society, unlike that of Petrarch, he cannot show that the Laura-Daphne figure is actually a Laura-Beatrice figure. In other words, as Petrarch was writing in medieval Roman Catholic Europe, he could show that his speaker was mistaken in his pursuit of Laura as Laura-Daphne for gaining fame. Rather, he should have perceived Laura as his spiritual guide, Laura-Beatrice. The figure of Petrarch’s Laura-Beatrice or
even Dante’s Beatrice is modeled on saints in the Roman Catholic theology. As an appeal to an intermediary figure such as Laura-Beatrice is out of question in a reformed society, the speaker hence chooses an addressee acceptable for a reformed religious poem: Christ. As Calvin underscores the intermediary and the intercessory role of Jesus Christ in III. xx. 17–20 of his Institutes, a prayer to Jesus Christ for the salvation of a supplicant’s soul is the right approach in a reformed society, therefore, the speaker begins with the right approach to prayer.

I have drawn attention to a passage from Calvin’s Institutes earlier in this chapter, which states a speaker should always fear God, must toss around with trepidation while he prays, and must be contrite. Calvin elsewhere in his Institutes highlights the proper attitude that one should have toward God while he prays:

> For God, as has been seen above declaring that he will be gentle and kind to all, gives to the utterly miserable, hope that they will get what they have sought. Accordingly, we must note the general forms, by which no one from first to last (as people say) is excluded, provided sincerity of the heart, dissatisfaction with ourselves, humility, and faith are present in order that our hypocrisy may not profane God’s name by calling upon him deceitfully. (Emphasis added) (III. xx. 14)

The speaker is missing two of the qualities that Calvin identifies as essential for a proper prayer: “dissatisfaction,” and “humility” in the first sonnet of “La Corona.” The speaker does start with a line that creates an impression that he is humble. As he uses the phrase “devout melancholy” in

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106 Calvin in his Institutes discredits any role that saints can play in the salvation of one’s soul:

> Then who, whether angel or demon, ever revealed to any man even a syllable of the kind of saints’ intercession they invent? For there is nothing about it in Scripture. What reason, then did they have to invent it? Surely when human wit is always seeking after assistance for which we have no support in God’s Word, it clearly reveals its own faithlessness. (III. xx. 21)
line 2, it further creates an impression that he is sincerely contrite, much like a Calvinist supplicant would be when he prays to God. However, the speaker’s pride is first highlighted due to the nature of the reward, where the speaker asks for his “white sincerity” (line 6), i.e., his sincere supplication to Christ. Any contrite supplicant, like Lok’s speaker, would have thanked God and would have asked for the absolution of his sins. In this sonnet, the speaker asks for “A crown of Glory” (line 8), which proves the speaker is ambitious and not humble. Moreover, he believes Christ’s “thorny crown” (line 7) got Christ “crown of Glory,” and herein, the speaker’s delusional nature is fully revealed. The speaker is so delusional that he equates his “crown of Glory” with Christ’s “thorny crown” and does not realize that Christ’s “thorny crown” symbolizes Christ’s sacrifice that paved the way for the speaker’s redemption.

This sonnet highlights the problem that a devotional poet might face when he tries to write a poem about Christ’s sacrifice. Patrick F. O’Connell draws attention to the problem of approaching a religious poem with the aesthetics of a secular love poem:

Divine poetry cannot be “imitation” in the same sense as love poetry without falling into the trap of taking God’s name in vain. To write a poem that is only an imitation, with only a formal resemblance to prayer, is to subordinate the religious to the aesthetic and so to “use” God for one’s own ends. Prayer is thereby reduced to a laboratory for poetic effects as the poet focuses his own, and the reader’s attention not on God but on the speaker. The poem becomes a feigned prayer, but it is a feigned prayer to a real God. (Emphasis added) (“La Corona” 120)

The fact that the speaker is the primary subject of the first sonnet of “La Corona” and not Jesus Christ or God proves his prayer, which seemed genuine in the first two lines of the sonnet, is
actually a “feigned prayer,” something that Calvin abhors. The speaker realizes he has made a
mistake in the octet and tries to fix his problem in the sestet when he changes his strategy.
Although he claims in the sestet that as Christ’s sacrifice has paved the way for his salvation,
“thou crown'st our ends” (line 9), and for that reason, the speaker looks forward to death so he
can unite with Christ (lines 11–12), this logic does not resolve the problem that the speaker
creates in the octet, which is the fact that the speaker hopes to gain “glory” and not salvation by
using his talent in verses to praise Christ without even comprehending that Christ’s sacrifice led
to the salvation of his soul. As the problem raised in the octet is not resolved, the speaker’s
supplication to Christ in the sestet is unconvincing.

The sonnet ends with the line “Salvation to all that will is nigh,” where the speaker’s
erroneous view of salvation is highlighted because he believes that whoever “wills” salvation
will get it and not that God has already decided who will achieve salvation. Rather, the speaker
seems to mimic ideas of salvation that he might have borrowed from somewhere without
comprehending the necessary factors involved in salvation. However, something that is
noteworthy here is that the speaker might not yet comprehend properly the ramifications of
Christ’s sacrifice, yet he does the right thing in taking refuge in Christ in the sestet of the sonnet.
The fact that he takes the right step creates the impression that the speaker has taken the first step
to understand Calvinism and before this he had imitated Calvinist strictures on how to pray in the
opening lines of the sonnet without even comprehending the meaning of a proper prayer in
Calvinism. The sonnet sequence in “La Corona” is thus “the speaker’s journey toward self-
discovery, which depends for the Christian on the prior awareness of the identity of Christ. This
discovery of the real Christ makes possible a genuine relationship with him: that is it leads to
authentic prayer” (O’Connell 120).
Although Donne does not make his speaker ask readers of “La Corona” to follow his journey as Petrarch’s speaker does in the first sonnet of Canzoniere, neither does he make the speaker sound didactic as Lok’s or Petrarch’s speakers do in the sonnet sequence by making the speaker say the readers should learn from his mistake. However, the readers do follow the speaker. Diane Chambers succinctly summarizes the effect of the speaker’s journey on the reader when she notes:

Within the well-known circularity of “La Corona” is a linear progression; through each sonnet the persona carefully take the reader from one aspect of Christ’s life to another, each adding to the understanding of Christ’s nature and his purpose on earth. Should the reader chose, she can take up persona’s role and enter into the sequence. Gradually the reader then becomes more involved in Christ’s life, sees the offer of salvation, and offers in return prayer and praise. (Emphasis added) (164–165)

107 My reading of “La Corona” is influenced by O’Connell’s reading of “La Corona.” O’Connell illustrates the sonnet sequence’s poetics, but he does not connect “La Corona” with any broader traditions, such as Petrarchism or Calvinism. His reading helps me put “La Corona” in the confluence of the two traditions of Petrarchism and Calvinism. I do have some disagreements with O’Connell’s readings of the poem. For example, O’Connell writes, “It is not the speaker’s search for Christ but Christ’s search for the speaker, that will draw them together” (125–126). My reading of the sequence suggests Christ is not “searching” for the speaker; rather, the speaker is already one of the elects. The speaker realizes his state of election when he finally realizes the effect Christ’s sacrifice has on the state of his soul. Again, O’Connell writes, “Yet his prayer is in no sense individualized he asks only to be included among ‘all men’ whom Christ draws to himself” (126). I do not agree with the first part of the statement, but I do agree with the last part. Throughout the sonnet sequence, there is no use of the pronouns “you” or “we” until we reach “Ascension,” which is the last poem of the sequence, where we find the speaker directly address the readers when he writes, “Yee whose just teares, or tribulation” (line 3) to make it a generalized prayer. Donne’s speaker begins the sequence as Lok’s speaker does with a highly individualized voice, and it is only after he realizes the scope of Christ’s sacrifice in the sonnet “Crucyfying” that the speaker’s prayer becomes a generalized prayer in the last sonnet “Ascension.”

Contrary to O’Connell, I believe that not only John Donne but the persona as well knows where he is headed at the beginning and not only asks the reader to join in the journey but also explains why: “Tis time that heart and voice be lifted high./Salvation to all that will is nigh.” (13–14)

Contrary to Chambers, I believe Donne knows where his speaker is heading, but the speaker does not know his destination. If the speaker knows the direction he is taking, then it does not explain why he makes a mistake akin to Petrarch’s speaker in the first sonnet and it does not explain why in the sonnet “Resurrection,” the speaker discusses himself and not Christ. By the time that the speaker ends the sonnet “Crucifying,” the speaker has realized the role
As the speaker makes the right decision to praise Christ, though he might not have a proper understanding of Christ’s sacrifice when he begins his journey, his decision implies the speaker is perhaps a misguided elect and not a degenerate reprobate. Moreover, in this journey, we find the speaker, akin to Petrarch’s speaker, renouncing his ambition of gaining glory through writing verses for a proper understanding of the effect of Christ’s sacrifice.

The way Donne makes the role of Mary subordinate to the role of Christ in “La Corona” proves he is modifying the structure of a corona, a structure that engaged in Mariolatry, as it focused on the lives of both Mary and Christ, to simply glorify Christ. Louis L. Martz identifies the strategies employed in a rosary, “The first is the meditation according to the divisions of the Dominican rosary — now the established *rosary of the Catholic Church*. This is a rosary of 150 “Aves,” divided into fifteen “decades,” which are, for meditation, subdivided into three parts of five decades each” (Emphasis added) (101). A glance at the sonnets “Annunciation,” “Nativitie,” and “Temple” show there is no “idea of partnership of the Son and Mother” that establishes a “redemptive process” (127), as Barry Spurr suggests. Rather, the sequence operates as Diane Chambers points out: “While subordinating the role of Mary, he includes traditional events covered in a rosary (the annunciation, nativity, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension)” (163). In the second line of “Annunciation,” the speaker addresses Christ and not the Virgin Mary when he writes, “That All, which always is All every where,” where “All” stands for Christ. This line exemplifies what I would identify as “turning toward God” and not necessarily the Petrarchan trope of “true conversion to God,” because the speaker must still grasp the true ramification of Christ’s sacrifice. Although the Virgin Mary is introduced in line 4 of the sonnet, her role in the

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that Christ’s sacrifice has played in the salvation of the speaker’s soul. The sonnet “Resurrection” is not about Christ but about the speaker’s resurrection from his spiritual naivety to spiritual maturity.
sonnet is hardly that of a partnership with Christ. Rather, the role of the Virgin Mary in the
“Annunciation” is simply to act as a conduit through whom God could work His miracles. In
other words, though the Virgin Mary simply acts as a vessel for God, her womb is a place where
Christ is “shust in little roome” (line 13) to show His miracle through Immaculate Conception.
The Virgin Mary in the sonnet “Annunciation” is nothing like the Virgin Mary of poem 366 of
_Canzoniere_, where she plays a predominant role. The role of Virgin Mary in “Nativitie” is just as
subordinate to Christ as it is in the “Annunciation.”

The importance of “Nativitie” in the sequence of “La Corona” does not lie in the Virgin
Mary–Jesus Christ partnership, but in the way the speaker tries to determine his position in the
mystery of Christ’s nativity. For this reason, the speaker addresses his soul in the opening line of
the sestet, “Seest thou, my Soule, with thy faiths eyes, how he” (line 8). Had this sonnet been like
a rosary, the speaker would have addressed the Virgin Mary and perhaps would have prayed to
her. Instead, in this sonnet, we find the speaker realize his insignificance as a mere mortal
compared to the magnificence of Jesus Christ, “Was not his pity towards thee wondrous
high./That would have need to be pittied by thee?” (11–12). The speaker’s realization that Christ
had pitied him is a significant step toward realizing that Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross has paved
the way for the salvation of the speaker’s soul. Clearly, the speaker has come a long way from
the first sonnet of “La Corona,” where he hoped he could trade salvation for his verses. In the
sonnet “Temple,” Joseph is introduced as someone who shares the responsibility of raising Christ
along with Mary. The speaker and the readers, who having been following Christ’s life in the
sonnet sequence, get to see in this sonnet the child Jesus instruct Jewish doctors of divinity on
God’s Word. This miracle of young Jesus makes the speaker realize that in the last line of the
sonnet “Temple,” Christ’s power over mankind far exceeds that of any ordinary being; hence, in
retrospect, his idea of gaining Christ’s “crown of glory” in the first sonnet of “La Corona” seems immature. The vision and the knowledge the speaker gains by following Christ’s life now prepares him to finally realize his identity as a man is “intimately bound up with the person and mission of Christ, so that the moment of definite encounter will also be a moment of self-discovery” (O’Connell 126).

The speaker’s spiritual journey that started from the first sonnet of “La Corona,” where he is delusional, finally reaches its climax in the sonnet “Crucifying,” where we see the Petrarchan trope of “true conversion to God” and in the following sonnets of the “La Corona,” we find a more mature speaker transformed by his knowledge of his identification with Jesus Christ.

*By miracles exceeding power of man,*

He faith in some, envy in some begat,

For, what weake spirits admire, ambitious hate:

In both affections many to him ran,

But Oh! the worst are most, they will and can,

Alas, and do, unto the immaculate,

Whose creature Fate is, now prescribe a Fate,

Measuring selfe-life's infinity to a span,

Nay to an inch. Loe, where condemned he

Bears his own cross, with pain, yet by and by

When it bears him, he must bear more and die;

Now thou art lifted up, draw me to thee,

And at thy death giving such liberal dole,
"Moyst, with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule."

In the second and third lines of the sonnet, the speaker draws attention to the Calvinist theory of predestination. Those in whom Christ “begats” “envy” are reprobates, whereas those in whom he inspires “faith” are elects. Again, line 7 the speaker perceives fate as Christ's "creature," which also seems to be about predestination. In the sestet of the sonnet, the speaker finally understands the magnitude of Christ’s sacrifice. The speaker understands it is hard and well-nigh impossible to depict the full scope of Christ’s infinity in verse, as can be inferred from the run-on line of the octet that runs into the sestet. The paradox of Christ’s sacrifice that He suffered not for His own crimes but to redeem humanity becomes clear in the sestet of the sonnet. The first three lines of the sestet describe Christ’s suffering, which generates pity in the speaker and this pity then turns into a cry for mercy in the last three lines of the sonnet. As Christ is raised up on the Cross, he dies. However, it is not the death of Christ that the speaker highlights in the last three lines of the sonnet; rather, he realizes the infinite bounty of Christ’s mercy. As the speaker sees Christ on the Cross, he does not see a dying Christ, but rather sees someone who has provided an opportunity for the speaker’s salvation. He realizes Christ’s constant love for mankind, and his “dry soul” is in dire need of Christ’s love. This realization culminates in the impassioned line, “Moyst, with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule,” and it is herein that we notice the Petrarchan trope of “true conversion to God.”

The speaker’s realization of his total dependence on Christ for his salvation is what makes him a Calvinist. The attitude of a reformed believer is highlighted by William Halewood when he writes, “But nothing is more characteristics of Reformation attitudes than the sense of total dependence on God, and nothing derives more naturally from that sense than the notion of sudden conversion, which like other benefits of God may come suddenly” (63). The speaker, who
started in the first sonnet of “La Corona,” much like Petrarch’s speaker in the in-vita section of Canzoniere, has finally realized the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice without a guiding figure like Laura-Beatrice. This knowledge of the speaker’s complete dependence on Christ makes him a newly resurrected person, a theme that is underscored in the sonnet “Resurrection,” where the speaker reiterates his complete dependence on Christ’s mercy.

*Moyst, with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule*

Shall (though she now be in extreme degree
Too stony hard, and yet too fleshly) be
Freed by that drop, from being starved, hard, or foul,
And life, by this death abled, shall control
Death, whom thy death slew; nor shall to me
Fear of first or last death, bring misery,
If in thy little book my name thou enroll,
Flesh in that long sleep is not putrified,
But made that there, of which, and for which ’twas;
Nor can by other means be glorified.
May then sins sleep, and deaths soon from me pass,
That waked from both, I again risen may

*Salute the last, and everlasting day*

The word “moyst,” which was a verb in the sonnet “Crucifying,” becomes an adjective in the sonnet “Resurrection,” which implies the speaker’s prayer in the sonnet “Crucifying” has been heard by Christ in the sonnet “Resurrection.” The speaker realizes his soul was “too stony hard” and “too fleshy” at the beginning of the sonnet sequence, and readers realize these factors were
responsible for the speaker’s naïve thought that he could gain a “crown of glory” like Christ. The future tense of this sonnet, as implied by use of the word “shall,” is a significant break from other sonnets written in the present tense. Calvinist theologians during the Reformation believed that occasionally, one might have a very brief glimpse of his election, and the sonnet “Resurrection” is such a moment in the speaker’s journey. Physical death always brings the possibility of spiritual death. Spiritual death for a believer is being denied God’s grace. The speaker has realized that Christ’s death has eliminated the possibility of his spiritual death, as we can see in line 7 where he is not afraid of “first or last death,” i.e., physical death or spiritual death. Confident with the knowledge of his election, the speaker realizes in line 9 that his life on earth, “Flesh in that long sleep,” is not doomed. As the speaker is away from the source of his Grace, i.e., God, his life on this earth is a “long sleep.” The speaker in the next line has further realized his life is a part of God’s plan, “But made that there, of which, and for which ‘twas,” and in line 11, the speaker has realized there is nothing he can do to gain glory that truly belongs to Christ. Thus, the sonnet “Resurrection” is not about Christ’s resurrection, but about the speaker’s regaining of his faith. This resurrected speaker’s confidence in his faith encompasses readers in his prayer in the third line of his next sonnet “Ascension,” when he addresses his readers as “Yee” for the first time in this sonnet sequence. The speaker is confident that Jesus Christ, much like a “strong Ramme” (line 9), has “batter’d” (line 9) the doors of “heaven” (line 9) for him. As the speaker offers his prayer “Deigne at my hands this crowne of prayer and praise” with the knowledge that the “holy Spirit” (line 13) and not a Virgin Mary or Laura-Daphne or Laura-Beatrice is the source of inspiring his “Muse” (line 14), the speaker’s prayer in the sonnet “Ascension” becomes a true prayer, where he is humble, quite unlike the “feigned prayer” of the first sonnet of “La Corona,” where he is ambitious.
The circular nature of a rosary implies that the movement through the sonnet is an ongoing repetitive process. Whereas Lok uses parallelism in her sonnet sequence to underscore that one has to repeatedly pray to God, Donne adapts the structure of rosary sonnets to accomplish the same goal. When a reader has finished reading “La Corona” and returns to the first sonnet of the sequence, which starts with the same line with which “Ascension” ends, the impression that a reader gets is that the speaker, although an elect, as with Ezekiel, has become unfocused by his prosperity and must endure the process of regaining his faith and moving from a “feigned prayer” to a “genuine prayer” all over again. Perhaps Donne is successful in adapting a form that has a strong Roman Catholic association to serve the purposes of the Reformation, because he never bothered developing a theory of such poetry. As we shall soon see in the next chapter, whereas some devoutly Protestant poets fail to develop the poetics they inherited from Roman Catholic Europe, Donne could make fun of some Petrarchan tropes because the Reformation has severed any religious significance of such tropes possessed in a Roman Catholic society.
Chapter Three

Sidney and Donne

Although Wyatt and Surrey are known to have introduced sonnets to English literature and Lok is now credited as the first poet who published a sonnet sequence in English literature, Sir Philip Sidney’s influence on making Petrarchism more popular among the early modern English poets through his sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* cannot be denied. In the previous chapter, I aimed to show that Lok imitates Calvin’s doctrine of contrition and presents her repentant speaker similarly to how Calvin described a penitent speaker in Book III of his *Institutes*, while Donne’s speaker in “La Carona” comes across as a Calvinist by praising Christ for His sacrifice and paving the way for mankind’s redemption.

The current chapter is split into three sections. The first section engages with the theology of poetic theory, particularly regarding Sidney, who inherited a poetics that was based on Roman Catholic theology. I will argue that in his *An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney tried to develop a moral poetics within the framework of his Calvinist theology, but he was ultimately unable to modify the underlying Catholic basis of medieval moral poetic theory to serve the goals of Calvinism.

In the second section, I argue that if *Astrophil and Stella* is read through the lens of Sidney’s treatise on poetry, the only approach that makes sense is to read Astrophil as a negative example, as a reprobate whose tragedy emanates from his lack of free will and his moral depravity. Astrophil’s moral depravity and his inability to sustain the idea that Stella epitomizes “virtue” prove his stature as a reprobate.

Finally, in the third section, I will discuss Donne’s Petrarchism in his secular poems. My discussion of Petrarchism in Donne’s secular poem is based upon the hypothesis that Donne—unlike Sidney—had realized that secular poetry under the Reformation could not serve the
purpose of commenting on spiritual issues as it could during medieval Roman Catholic Europe. Hence, he relegates the discussion of spiritual issues to his religious poems, while using his secular poems to provide a critique of Petrarchism.

**Calvinism in Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry***

The influence of Calvinism on Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* is almost irrefutable,\(^{108}\) which perhaps can be traced back to the early influence on him of his family and teachers. His maternal grandfather was the Duke of Northumberland who “brought England to its closest point of contact with Geneva during his tenure as head of Edward VI’s council” (Weiner 8), and his uncle Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, wrote in 1576 to his coreligionist, the Marian exile Thomas Wood:

> But I have manifest wrong to be thus charged to be a slyder or a faller from the Gospel or I cannot tell what. No, I am no hypocrite nor Pharisy; my doings are plaine, and chiefly in the causes of religion. I take Almighty God to my record, I never altered my mind or thought from my youth touching my religion, and yow knowe I was ever from my cradle brought up in it; (qtd. in Collinson 13)

The evidence of Sidney's own Calvinist upbringing supplied these influential familial connections is supplemented, Andrew Weiner argues, by the fact that one of the first purchases Sidney made when he entered his school at Shrewsbury “was a copy of Calvin’s catechism” (Weiner 8). It comes as small surprise, then, to observe the influence of Calvinism in *An Apology for Poetry*. Sidney writes that the scriptural examples of divinely inspired poets, both in antiquity and excellency, were they that did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God. Such were David in his Psalms; Solomon in his Song of Songs, in his

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\(^{108}\) Katherine Duncan-Jones believes that *An Apology for Poetry* was not written under the influence of Calvinism.
Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs; Moses and Deborah in their Hymns; and the writer of Job: which beside other, the learned Emanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius do entitle the poetical part of the Scripture. Against these none will speak that hath the Holy Ghost in due holy reverence. (Emphasis added) (86)

Sidney deliberately chooses figures from the Bible who were used as models for the Reformed religion. No one in Reformed England would have an issue with choosing David as a model for a poet, as Calvin himself wrote a preface to the translation of David’s psalms. That said, before I discuss the influence of Calvinism on An Apology for Poetry, I must point out which aesthetics of medieval poetry Sidney was trying to accommodate in his poetics.

Medieval aesthetics of poetry stressed the facts that (1) a poet should be able to move his reader toward some higher truth, an insight which would eventually draw the reader toward God, and (2) that the reader had the ability to be moved toward God. This medieval notion of moving a reader can be traced back to Horace’s dictum in his Ars Poetica, where he mentions, “It is not enough for poems to be fine; they must charm and draw the mind of the listener at will” (Horace 45). The agency that Horace associates with a poet changes when it is adopted in the medieval Christian aesthetics, as D.W. Robertson points out, a poet’s job in the medieval period is not simply limited to charming and drawing the mind of a reader, as Horace suggests; rather, it becomes the sacred duty of a medieval Christian poet to draw allusions through metaphors, and to gradually wean the readers away from “terrestrial things” and lead them toward invisibilia Dei, i.e., God. For example, as I discussed in my first chapter, Petrarch’s speaker realizes toward the end of Canzoniere that he was pursuing Laura-Daphne in the in vita section of Canzoniere for the wrong reasons. Laura-Beatrice makes Petrarch’s speaker realize that he had done the right

\[109\] non satis est pulchra esse poemata; dulcia sunto, et quocumque volent animum auditoris agunto.
thing for the wrong reason. Although he had praised Laura for her virtue, he nonetheless lamented through most of the in vita section about Laura’s indifference to him to gain fame, which was the wrong reason to compose verses. Eventually, he realizes that Laura’s virtue had landed her in the company of saints in heaven, and he should have praised Laura simply for her virtues without any other ulterior motive. However, the fact that he praised her for decades can be interpreted as “good works,” according to Roman Catholic theology. Over the decades, he had been praising a person of saint like virtue, and this is “good work” according to traditional theology. The readers of Petrarch’s Canzoniere also read about the virtues of Laura, and they were expected to learn their own lessons from the misperceived notions of the Petrarchan speaker. They were expected to follow Laura-Beatrice’s advice: “Straight to Him turn, from Him implore relief,” 110(359. 54). Thus, Petrarch in the late medieval period follows the strategy that Robinson identifies. Petrarch uses the speaker to move his readers from their obsession with “corporal” issues to meditate on issues that involve invisibilia Dei. Moreover, traditional theology allowed Petrarch’s speaker to beseech Laura-Beatrice to intercede with God on his behalf and to implore for salvation. These medieval poetics, with the goal of leading the audience toward God, carried over into the Renaissance, but the strategies used by Catholic poets in the middle ages and early Renaissance became a problem in the Reformation. Since Reformation theology did away with the concept of “good work” as a justification for salvation, the strategy that worked for the salvation of Petrarch’s speaker could not do so for the Reformed Christian. Moreover, Calvin argues in the Institutes that only Jesus Christ can be the mediator of a person’s salvation, and saints cannot intercede on behalf of a sinner. Such changes in theology threw suspicion upon the medieval poetics associated with traditional theology, and left Reformed theorists of the

110 a Lui ti volgi, a Lui chiedi soccorso
moral purposes of poetry in a precarious position. Moreover, the Calvinist theology did away with the concept of “free will”. In the medieval period, it was believed that a reader had the will power to turn towards God. According to the Calvinist theology, a reprobate can never turn towards God and an elect will eventually turn towards God because all will resides in God. Philip Sidney struggled with these changes as he tried his best to align the poetics that was derived from the medieval period to those of the Reformed theology. In this chapter, my reading of Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* agrees with Weiner to the extent that Sidney was aiming to develop a poetics that could accommodate the medieval values that were inherited from Horace, values that we see very much present in Boccaccio, into the framework that Calvinism provided. However, where Weiner finds Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* successful as a Calvinist text, I find Sidney failing in his attempt to incorporate the medieval values of poetics into the framework of Calvinist theology.

We can see that Sidney’s theory of poetry is influenced by a poetics that he inherited from a medieval Roman Catholic Europe. For example, Sidney claims that poetry helps to facilitate God’s work:

> For what else, is awaking his musical instruments, the often and free changing of persons, his notable *prosopopeias*, when he maketh you, as it were, see God coming in His majesty, his telling of the beasts’ joyfulness, and hills leaping, but a heavenly poesy, wherein almost he showeth himself a passionate lover for that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the minds of the eye, and cleared by the faith? (84)

Sidney’s strategy in this quoted passage is remarkable for multiple reasons. A few lines above the quoted passage incorporate the Latin term “vates” to imply the poet as a “divine seer” when he asks: “And may not I presume a little further, to show the reasonableness of this word vates,
and say that the holy David’s Psalms are a divine poem?” (84). Clearly, Sidney sees the poet as a gifted person with the ability to pierce through the veils of God’s divine secrets and have a vision of His mystical truth. In his his *Genealogia Decorum Gentilum*, Boccaccio similarly asserts that although poetry originated as prayers in all cultures, the prayers offered in the Old Testament by Moses and Abraham can be classified as origins of poetry in a Judaeo-Christian tradition.

No matter how opposed one was among Sidney’s contemporaries to poetry, no follower of the Reformed religion could dare deny that David was not elect, and through his Psalms, especially his penitential Psalms, he was showing others the path to Godliness. Sidney’s comparison of poetry with devotional psalms is another masterstroke, and this comparison is clear from the use of the phrases “poesy” and “musical instruments” in the quoted passage and from a line that comes soon after the quoted passage, “But truly now having named him, I fear me I seem to profane that holy name applying it to Poetry, which is among us thrown down to so ridiculous an estimation” (84). As I have argued in my previous chapter, although Calvin does not discuss the purpose of poetry in his writings, the closest he comes to discussing the purpose of poetry in advancing the cause of the Reformed religion is in his theory of Psalms. Although critics may argue in the sections of his *Apology for Poetry* dealing with Psalms, Sidney was preparing his audience for his Book of a translation of Psalms, on which he may have been working at the moment, I argue that by bringing poetry to the same pedestal as that of Psalms, Sidney aimed to accommodate poetry in the infrastructure of the theology that the Reformed religion provided him. However, whereas critics such as Weiner find Sidney successful in developing a Protestant poetics, I think such estimation overlooks one crucial difference between the theory of poetry under the traditional religion and the Reformed religion. Under the theology of the traditional religion, the quasi-religious poems and even some secular poems could claim,
by positive or negative exemplum, that they were advancing Godliness and even paving the way for a soul’s salvation. Doing “virtuous action” counted as “good works” under the traditional theology; hence, if poetry could inspire a reader to “virtuous action,” it had grounds to claim that it paved the way for a soul’s salvation. However, under the Reformed theology, “good works” did not account for a soul’s salvation, so the “virtuous actions” toward which Gascoigne claims that his poetry leads his readers does not have the same importance in theological terms that Boccaccio could claim for poetry. Hence, when Sidney claims that poetry “doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue” (95), the only influence that poetry can claim is that it makes society better by asking its readers to be nice people. Under the Reformed theology and unlike the traditional theology, this concept of being better people has no bearing on the state of a person’s soul.

The root of Sidney’s concepts of eikastike and phantastike, can be traced back to the concept of the role that poetry played in the medieval European Roman Catholic society. Boccaccio points out that the critics of poetry often “cry out that poets are seducers of the mind, prompters of crime, and, to make their foul charge, fouler, if possible, they say they are philosophers’ apes, that it is a heinous crime to possess books of the poets” (35). Later on, he points out that the detractors of poetry “search the pages of Catullus, Propertius, and Ovid, and from the foolish suasion of such, expressed in sweet-sounding verses, and in easy but ornate style, with whole-hearted inclination they surrender to its influence are deluded, seduced and enthralled” (77). In this statement, Boccaccio implicitly agrees that some poetry may distract and seduce a person from righteousness, but Boccaccio, blames the readers when he presents the detractors of poetry in words that could to some extent classify Sidney’s Astrophil when he writes:
Of course they (the detractors of poetry) can mention only those they study themselves. But their own accusation shows which these are. Why, bless me, these zealots love, and are loved, make eyes at laughing girls, dictate love-notes, write verses, dash off ditties, which they charge with their thrills and sighs, and when their own ingenuity fails, resort for timely aid to professors in the art of love. (77)

Unlike Boccaccio, who is aggressively confrontational, Sidney is much more diplomatic and resourceful in his treatise. He is aware that the detraction of poetry has a long history that can be traced back to Plato. Thanks to the Reformation, the detractors of poetry among his generation have not only changed their approach to reading the Scriptures and transferred this reading technique to reading in general, but they also have extra ammunition to blow poetry off the waters. He knows that blaming the reader like Boccaccio will not help his argument in the Reformed society, as critics will still blame the poet for misleading the people. Hence, Sidney, as an astute strategist, acknowledges there is some validity to the argument that some poetry, which he identifies as *phantastike*, can be harmful for readers. After acknowledging the validity of the arguments of poetry’s critics, Sidney then adopts the path that Boccaccio adopted in his *Genealogia Decorum Gentilum*. Here, Boccaccio says that although some poetry has been misleading and has the power to do more harm than “any other army of words” has because of its “sweet charming force” (104), it does not suffice to condemn all poetry. Sidney, along the lines of Boccaccio, comes up with the concept of *eikastike*, which he defines as “figuring forth good things” (104). According to Sidney, *eikastike* is really helpful for readers because it provides readers with some “notable examples” to follow.

Sidney’s concept of invention is influenced by the Reformation theology. Boccaccio, when he discusses the influence of the Roman Catholic theology over poetry refers to works of
two people in particular: Dante and Petrarch, and he specifically points out how Dante’s works “often unties with amazingly skillful demonstration the hard knots of holy theology” (53). For Philip Sidney, to use Dante and Petrarch or any other famous poet of Reformed English society as examples to prove his point, as Boccaccio did, would be disastrous, because they are Roman Catholics. Therefore, Sidney devises another unique strategy to defend poetry. He chooses subjects including law, grammar, rhetoric, logic, and history, and he argues:

The lawyer saith what men have determined; the historian what men might have done. The grammarian speaketh only of the rules of speech; and the rhetorician and logician, considering what in Nature will soonest prove and persuade, thereon give artificial rules, which still are compassed within the circle of a question according to the proposed matter. (85)

The common denominator for subjects is that they are all bound by rules and as they are bound by rules, they can only provide a factual and a very literal interpretation of texts. Compared to these professionals, it is only a poet, according to Sidney, who is “not tied to any subjection” and has the capability of being “lifted up by the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never in Nature” (85). According to Sidney, it is a poet’s “invention” that, unlike a lawyer, a grammarian, a rhetorician, a historian, or a logician, helps him avoid being tied down to the literal interpretation of a text. Couched in a language that is reminiscent of Reformation theology, Sidney argues that by not being tied down to mundane affairs, a poet who is a “passionate lover of that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of mind, only cleared by faith” can see “God coming in His majesty” (84). Often, a poet chooses figurative language and allegories to convey this “unspeakable and everlasting beauty” of “God coming in
His majesty” to his readers. When Sidney tries to theorize how a poet conveys this mystic beauty of God, he runs into trouble with the Reformation theology.

Sidney in his manifesto accredits a poet with too much agency as running the risk of countering what Calvin has stressed in his theological writings. For example, in the above-quoted passage, Sidney comes very close to denying or discrediting God of any authority when he writes, “Better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never in Nature” (85). If read out of context, this line sounds blasphemous, as if a poet can usurp God’s authority. Sidney is aware of the nature of this line, but he has to write it because as a theoretician of poetry, the concept of the “idea” of a subject (85) and “poiein,” which, as Sidney classifies, means “to make” (84), is very important to him. Essentially, Sidney thinks of a poet as an “elect,” to use a phrase from Calvinist theology, where “the eyes of mind, only cleared by faith” (84) can conceive of an “idea” that can move the readers, and the poet has “to make” poetry to flesh out the “idea.” If read within the framework of Calvinism in the late sixteenth century, Sidney’s concept of a poet is problematic. However, what if the poet is a reprobate? Calvin has repeatedly asserted there is no way for a person to know for sure if he is an elect or a reprobate, albeit an elect may sometimes be given some indication of his spiritual state. This would be a very pertinent question for the late sixteenth-century English audience, because even Sidney accepts that some poetry misleads the audience. Hence, it stands to reason that if a reprobate were a poet, then his poetry would mislead his audience from paths of God. Sidney never discusses this issue of a reprobate poet, because his theory does not accommodate a reprobate poet. Then, the question that arises is how we classify the poets who compose phantastike, a question that Sidney leaves unanswered in his An Apology for Poetry. Sidney could have chosen Boccaccio’s strategy, where Boccaccio claims on multiple occasions that poetry springs from
God’s bosom. However, Sidney avoids treading that path, because doing so would take the creative agency away from the poet. The fact that Sidney leaves the question of a reprobate poet unanswered is an essential weakness of poetry. This question becomes important for this dissertation, because for all meaning and purposes, the text of *Astrophil and Stella* would have appeared to be a *phantastike* to Sidney’s contemporary readers. It is easy to dismiss the text of *Astrophil and Stella* by claiming that Sidney fails to follow his own formulated poetics or to argue that Sidney was thinking of the translation of Psalms when he was composing his *An Apology for Poetry*. Hence, the poetics that he formulates in his manifesto is not applicable to *Astrophil and Stella*. Sidney, who was a devout and militant Protestant, would never have composed *Astrophil and Stella* had he thought it was a *phantastike*. Rather, Sidney, who thought of himself as an elect, would have perceived *Astrophil and Stella* as an *eikastike*. Hence, as I will soon establish in an upcoming section, the only way to read *Astrophil and Stella* that can be accommodated through the poetics of *An Apology for Poetry* is as a negative *exemplum*. The poet Sidney, who is an elect, is writing about a character, Astrophil, who is possibly a reprobate and from whose mistakes Sidney’s readers should learn lessons.

Sidney’s concept of “erect wit” and “infected will” is his clear attempt to couch his poetics in Calvinistic terms that, albeit, fails miserably. Soon after Sidney writes the hubristic sentence, “either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never in Nature,” he writes a section that serves the dual purpose of espousing Calvinism and reiterating that a poet promotes God’s work:

Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man’s wit with the efficacy of Nature; but *rather give right honor to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works*
of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in Poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing her doings, with no small argument to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam: since our erected wit maketh us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keepeth us from reaching unto it. (85–86) (Emphasis added)

A careful analysis of Sidney’s percepts of “erected wit” and “infected will” shows that although Sidney echoes Calvinistic language, his idea of a poet does not adhere to the place Calvin allots to the descendants of Adam as fallen creatures. Kimberly Ann Coles points out that in I. xv. 7 of Institutes, Calvin observes, “The human soul consists of two faculties, understanding and will” (83). Hence, there can be no doubt that Sidney’s concepts of “erected wit” and “infected will” are based on Calvin’s perceptions of understanding and of will. Although, due to their fallen state, humans are often distracted into investigating trivial affairs, Calvin does allot some intelligence to humans to gain insight into their fallen state: “Yet its (man’s) efforts do not always become so worthless as to have no effect, especially when it turns its attention to things below. On the contrary, a human is intelligent enough to taste something of things above, although it is more careless about investigating these” (II. ii. 13). Therefore, it may seem that when Sidney speaks of “erected will,” he is actually speaking of what Calvin suggests “taste of something of things above.” However, Calvin has asserted for complete depravity of human faculties.111

111 Calvin writes in his Institutes: [S]oundness of the mind and uprightness of heart were withdrawn at the same time (during the Fall). This is the corruption of the natural gifts. For even though something of understanding and judgment remains as a residue along with the will, yet we shall not call a mind whole and sound that is both weak and plunged into deep darkness. And depravity of the will is too well known. Since reason, therefore, by which man distinguishes between good and evil, and by which he understands and judges, is a natural gift it could not be completely wiped out; but it was partly weakened and partly corrupted, so that is misshapen ruins appear. (II. 2. 12)
Sidney’s humanistic training makes him assign too much agency to a poet, which is untenable in Calvinism. According to Calvinist theology, elects have an occasional glimpse into their state of the soul and that too when God wills it. Our “corruption of the natural gifts” is so absolute and our understanding and judgment are so “weak and plunged into deep darkness” that the agency Sidney claims for the poet is virtually untenable in Calvinism. Even if one is an elect, an absolute of his state of election is always a precarious issue in Calvinism. If someone who is a poet and an elect is not to know for sure the state of his soul, then how can that poet’s “erected wit” help to guide the readers to resist the ramifications of their “infected will?” Perhaps “divine breath” would help the poet to influence his readers’ imaginations. However, even the way Sidney uses the phrase “divine breath” is to some extent at odds with Calvinism. When Sidney uses the phrase “divine breath,” he implicitly argues that with divine inspiration, a poet can transcend the fallen nature that he inherited due to the original sin of Adam and he can show his readers the errors of their ways. However, in II. i. 5 of Institutes Calvin writes that all humanity possessed was “filthy plagues, blindness, impotence and impurity, vanity, and injustice.” As humans have depraved nature, Sidney’s concept of “divine breath” is simply untenable according to Calvinism.

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112 Calvin writes in II. 1. 5 of his Institutes:

As it was the spiritual life of Adam to remain united and bound to his Maker, so estrangement from his was the death of his soul. Nor is it any wonder that he consigned his race to ruin by his rebellion when he perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and on earth. … Since, therefore, the curse which goes about through all the regions of the world, flowed hither and yon from Adam’s guilt, it is not unreasonable if it is spread to all his offspring. Therefore, after the heavenly image was obliterated in him, he was not the only one to suffer his punishment—that, in place of wisdom, virtue, holiness, truth and justice, with which had been clad, there came forth the most filthy plagues, blindness, impotence and impurity, vanity, and injustice—but he also entangled and immersed his offspring in the same miseries. (Emphasis added)

113 Elizabeth Coles draws our attention to this point, when she writes:
It is not only Sidney’s theory that the role imagination plays is untenable in Calvinist theology, but also, some of his other ideas can prove hard to be accommodated in Calvinism. Sidney’s contention that the process of moving a reader (praxis) is more important than the reader having the knowledge of his wrongdoing (gnosis) can be hard to accommodate in Calvinism. A poet may try to communicate something, but he is helpless to determine his reader’s response to the message that he wants to communicate. A reader can read his poems and can deliberately choose to ignore the message. Sidney solves this problem by quoting Aristotle and asserting that “moving is of a higher degree than teaching…It is not gnosis but praxis must be the fruit” (94). Calvin mentions in his Institutes, “It therefore remains for us to understand that the way to the Kingdom of God is open only to him whose mind has been made new by the illumination of the Holy Spirit” (II. ii. 20). It is to be noted that for Calvin, it is the knowledge that the “Kingdom of God” is available to a person that matters most. The phrase “illumination of the Holy Spirit” does resemble Sidney’s concept of the “divine breath,” but as mentioned before, there is no guarantee that a poet cannot be a reprobate. In all fairness to Sidney, Calvin does mention something that can be vaguely associated with Sidney’s praxis:

God works in his elect in two ways: within, through his Spirit; without through his Word.

By his Spirit, illuminating their minds and forming their hearts to love and cultivation of righteousness, he makes them a new creation. By his Word, he arouses them to desire, to seek after, and to attain that same renewal. In both he reveals the working of his hand according to the mode of dispensation. When he addresses the same Word to the

Sidney is asserting a ‘divine essence’ in man that is both the source of the poet’s insight, and the spirit to which the didactic powers of imagination appeal. This argument is simply unacceptable in the strict interpretation of Protestant doctrine. … Protestant theology simply does not admit the ‘divine breath’ that is the source of Sidney’s model of inspiration—the corrupted nature of man’s imagination guarantees that what proceeds from it must also be corrupt. (86)
reprobate, though not to correct them, he makes it serve another use; today to press them with the witness of conscience, and in the Day of Judgment to render them the more inexcusable. (II. v. v.) (Emphasis added)

Although Calvin does discuss the process (praxis) of how God works with his elects and reprobates, the passage clarifies that knowledge that God’s purpose is to imbibe “love and cultivation of righteousness” in an elect and “to render” the vices of the reprobates “inexcusable” is more important for Calvin than the process of how God functions.

Sidney’s theory that praxis is more important than gnosis has its parallel in Petrarch’s On His Own Ignorance and that of Many Others:

Unless I am mistaken, I have read all of Aristotle’s book on ethics, and have heard lectures on some of them. … At times they made me more learned but never a better person, as was proper. I often complained to myself and sometimes to others that the goal announced by the philosopher in Book One of his Ethics is not realized in fact – namely, that we study this branch of philosophy not in order to know, but in order to become good. I see how brilliantly he defines and distinguishes virtue, and how shrewdly he analyzes it together with the properties of vice and virtue. Having learned this, I know this slightly more than I did before. But my mind is the same as it was; my will is the same; and I am the same.

For it is one thing to know and another thing to love; one thing to love; one thing to understand, and another thing to will. I don’t deny that he teaches us the nature of virtue. But reading him offers us none of those exhortations, or only a very few, that goad and inflame our minds to lover virtue and hate vice. Anyone looking for such exhortations will find them in our Latin authors, especially in Cicero and Seneca, and surprisingly in
Horace. What good is there in knowing what virtue is, if this knowledge doesn’t make us shun it? By heaven, if the will is weak, an idle and irresolute mind will take the wrong path when it discovers the difficulty of the virtues and the alluring case of the vices.

(Emphasis added) (315 – 317)

Just as Petrarch asserts the knowledge of “virtue” and “vice” and how to distinguish them are not sufficient as long as a subject is not “moved” to act on the knowledge, similarly to Sidney, “to be moved to do that which we know, or to be moved with desire to know, hoc opus, hic labor est” (95) is more important. However important the process of moving than teaching may be for Sidney and Petrarch, for Calvin, it was the knowledge of one’s state that was more important than the process of moving. Sidney’s commitment to the cause of Protestantism was so absolute that he protested the Catholic Duke of Anjou’s marriage proposal to Queen Elizabeth, a move that landed him in trouble with the English monarch. Yet, as we have noticed, the apparent failure of Sidney to accommodate his poetics into Calvinism begs the question how we are supposed to interpret his sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*. It would foolish to simply point this out, as Sidney’s *An Apology for Poetry* shows that he tried to accommodate Calvinism in his poetic theory and he has talked about God and King David as God’s bard, yet Sidney never mentions God in *Astrophil and Stella*. The fact that Sidney uses the phrase “Petrarch’s long deceased woes” in *Astrophil and Stella* definitively proves he had Petrarch on his mind when he was composing his sonnet sequence.114

114 As for weaning one’s reader away from the paths of vice and moving him toward the paths of virtue, as Petrarch has emphasized in his *On His Own Ignorance and that of Many Others* and Sidney emphasized in his *An Apology for Poetry*, Neil L. Rudenstine’s opinion seems to reflect the reaction of any reader. After asserting that Astrophil, the poet, should be identified with Sidney, the poet in *Astrophil and Stella*, Rudenstine goes on to claim:

> If Astrophel is prone to role playing and if his feelings have trouble accommodating themselves to traditional modes of Petrarchan praise and complaint, the cause has a great deal to do with the very
It would be a mistake to conclude that Sidney fails to “move” his readers in *Astrophil and Stella*. Although it is contentious to assert that Sidney’s verse “never rises in the moving, persuasive strains of celebration and reverence which we find in Petrarch” (Neil Rudenstine 204), my goal is not to challenge Rudenstein’s assertion. Rather, my purpose is to point out that if there is a lack “in the moving, persuasive strains of celebration and reverence which we find in Petrarch”\(^{115}\) (Rudenstine 204) in Sidney’s verse, then it was a deliberate strategy on Sidney’s part. Petrarch composed his verses when Roman Catholicism held its sway on the reading public and hence, Petrarch did not have a problem with the issues of poetry unveiling God’s secret and the issue of figurative language and literal language in poetry. The Reformation had a significant impact on how people approached religion and the issues such as poetry revealing God’s works; issues that Roman Catholics, including Petrarch, and Boccaccio, could take for granted, Sidney could not. Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* may fail to move readers as Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* did, but Sidney, as with Petrarch, succeeds in sending the message to his readers on how to stay on the paths of virtue by using Astrophil as an example of what his readers should avoid. In other words, by failing to adhere to the poetics that Sidney laid down in his *An Apology for Poetry* or underscoring the major facets of Calvinism that we find in Lok and Donne’s devotional poems, Sidney comes close to achieving through *Astrophil and Stella* in Reformed England what

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\(^{115}\) Although Rudenstein does not elaborate on what he means by “the moving, persuasive strains of celebration and reverence which we find in Petrarch,” it is my understanding that the Petrarchan speaker’s realization of his mistake and the final poem in *Canzoniere*, where the speaker prays to Virgin Mary, acknowledges his past mistakes, and urges her to intercede on his behalf to God for his salvation, qualifies as Rudenstein’s phrase “celebration and reverence which we find in Petrarch.”
Petrarch achieved in medieval Roman Catholic continental Europe: to send a message to his readers regarding what to avoid so that they can stay on the paths of virtue.

**Petrarch’s speaker vs. Astrophil: Astrophil as a reprobate**

Both Petrarch and Sidney drew attention to their act of writing in the first sonnet of their respective sonnet sequences, but for different ends. Petrarch begins his *Canzoniere* to emphasize the “good work” of Petrarch’s speaker which would eventually aid in the speaker’s salvation. Petrarch begins his *Canzoniere* with the following sonnet:

O you that hear in scattered rhymes the sound
Of those sighs that I used to feed my heart
In my first youthful error, when I was
In part a different man than now I am,
Whoever knows of love by trial, from him
If pardon none, compassion then I hope
To find, for this the various style in which
I weep, debate these vain hopes, this vain woe.
Now I see clearly how to everyone
I long have been a fable, and of that
Deep in myself I often an ashamed;
Shame is the fruit of my delirium;
As is repentance, and the knowledge sure
That worldly joy is but a passing dream.  

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116 *Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono di quei sospiri ond'io nudrivai l'core in sul mio primo giovenile errore*
As I explained in my first chapter, as Roman Catholicism allowed good works as a means to one’s salvation, Petrarch, who was writing in medieval Roman Catholic Europe, draws attention to his “scattered rhymes the sound/Of those sighs that I used to feed my heart,” because praising Laura-Beatrice through his sonnets is technically “good work” that could pave the road to Petrarch’s, the poet, salvation.

If the first sonnet of Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* is read in the context of the Reformation theology, it is clear that Sidney implicitly implies Astrophil’s reprobate nature:

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show
That she (dear She) might take some pleasure of my pain:
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain:
Oft turning others’ leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sun-burn’d brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention’s stay,
Invention, Nature’s child, fled step-dame Study’s blows,
And others’ feet still seem’d but strangers in my way.

quand’era in parte altr’uom da quel ch’i’ sono,
del vario stile in ch’io piango et ragiono
fra le vane speranze e ’l van dolore,
ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,
spero trovar pietà, nonché perdono.
Ma ben veggio or sí come al popol tutto
favola fui gran tempo, onde sovente
di me mesdesmo meco mi vergogno;
et del mio vaneggiar vergogna è ’l frutto,
e ’l pentersi, e ’l conoscer chiaramente
che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno.
Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,

Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite--

“Fool,” said my Muse to me, “look in thy heart and write.”

The scholars to my knowledge who have come the closest to observe Astrophil’s reprobate nature are Thomas Roche Jr., who is a Spenserian, and Alan Sinfield. Roche Jr. speculates about Sidney’s intention, a speculation that I find tenable: “I think that Sidney wanted us to be delighted by Astrophil’s wit and to be instructed by the image of a man whose reason gives way to his will and whose hopeful desire finally lead him into despair. Astrophil is not a hero precisely because he succumbs so wholeheartedly to the pursuit of his desires” (187–188). Building on Roche Jr.’s observation, I argue that, Sidney presents Astrophil as “not a hero precisely because” he wants his readers to perceive Astrophil as a reprobate. His reprobate nature is underscored in the actions of Astrophil as a foolhardy hedonist who loses his way by pursuing his desires. Astrophil, akin to Petrarch’s speaker, begins with the ambition of winning Stella’s grace. Any person, whether living in Roman Catholic Europe or Reformed Europe, was certainly aware that a person is supposed to seek God’s grace and not the grace of some mortal person. Chauncey Wood’s observations in his comparative analysis of Herbert’s sonnet “The Sinner” and the first sonnet of Astrophil and Stella become important for our observations. Wood points out that “while Astrophil hopes (vainly as it turns out) that his writing will win his lady’s ‘grace,’ Herbert’s sinner wants God to do the writing” (23). Sidney wanted his readers to spot the errors of Astrophil’s ways right away. For that reason, in the first sonnet of Astrophil and Stella, he presents Astrophil’s goal, as Wood rightly points out, “to obtain ‘grace’ through ‘pity’ by expressing his pain in verse, can be achieved by first finding the image of Stella, which will eventually lead to the attraction of the living woman” (22). Astrophil’s attraction for a mortal
Stella, his finding of Stella’s image within his heart, and his failure to perceive the virtuous nature of Stella condemn Astrophil as a reprobate. If Sidney the poet, who most certainly perceived himself as an elect, wanted his readers to perceive Astrophil as an elect, then he would have shown one of the following: 1) A contrite Astrophil, like the Petrarch’s speaker in the in-morte section, who turns to God after realizing his mistake 2) A hedonist Astrophil cries out for God’s mercy after being struck by God’s wrath like Calvin’s Ezekiel and Lok’s speaker. The fact that we do not see either of these two features in Astrophil proves the argument that Sidney wanted his readers to perceive Astrophil as a reprobate.

In their respective sonnet sequences, both Petrarch and Sidney draw attention to contemporary events or histories, but Petrarch does this to remind his readers of the fictional nature of his speaker’s relationship with Laura, whereas Sidney does it to underscore Astrophil’s moral depravity. Petrarch did not belong to a noble family like that of Philip Sidney and he owed favors to his powerful patrons and supporters. Petrarch’s speaker addresses some real persons in some poems of Canzoniere and bringing in these actual persons also helps Petrarch to pay homage to people to whom he was indebted in his life or to express his appreciation for what they have done. For example, Petrarch’s friend Antonio da Ferrara had believed a rumor of Petrarch’s death and had written a eulogy on Petrarch. Petrarch uses sonnet 120 as an opportunity to show his appreciation for Ferrarra’s verses, claiming that he is an unfit subject for his verses. Again, he uses sonnet 10 to thank Stefano Colonna, the elder and a friend, patron, and protector of Petrarch. Similarly, in sonnet 27, Petrarch pays homage to King Philip VI, to whom he was indebted; he praises Cardinal Giacomo Colonna, father of Stefano Colonna, the elder, and he urges him to take a leadership role in the crusades. The effect of these canzones and sonnets, which do not fit into the narrative of the Petrarchan speaker’s love for Laura, would have been
jarring for Petrarch’s readers but would have reiterated the virtuous nature of Petrarch’s speaker. The people like King Philip VI or Cardinal Giacomo Colonna were benefactors of some sections of Roman Catholic Christian society. Hence the fact that the speaker pays his respect to these people points to the speaker’s appreciative nature, which further signifies the speaker’s virtuous nature.

The sonnets of *Astrophil and Stella* which do not focus on Stella, highlight Astrophil’s unscrupulous nature. For example, Astrophil in sonnet 75 chooses the figure of Edward IV from English history to praise:

Of all the kings that ever here did reign,
Edward nam’d Fourth, as first in praise I name;
Not for his fair outside, nor well-lin’d brain,
Although less gifts imp feathers oft on Fame:
Nor that he could young-wise, wise-valiant frame
His sire’s revenge, join’d with a kingdom’s gain;
And, gain’d by Mars, could yet mad Mars so tame,
That balance weigh’d what sword did late obtain;
Nor that he made the Flow’r-de-luce so ‘fraid,
Though strongly hedg’d of bloody Lion’s paws,
That witty Lewis to him a tribute paid;
Nor this, nor that, nor any such small cause,
But only for this worthy knight durst prove
To lose his crown, rather than fail his love.
Astrophil’s reason for choosing Edward IV highlights his dubious nature, if not his moral depravity. In sonnets 41 and 53, Astrophil participates in the sport of jousting, a sport associated with the ideological baggage of chivalry and knight-errantry. If Sidney wanted to present Astrophil as an upright person, then he would have made Astrophil pick a king from English history such as Richard, the lion-heart, who was a symbol of medieval chivalry, Edward I, who humiliated Scotland, or Henry V, who had won a decisive victory against France at the Battle of Agincourt against overwhelming odds. Instead, Astrophil chooses the odd figure of Edward IV, who pales in comparison to the figures of Henry V, Richard I, or Edward I, for example. For an unscrupulous character like Astrophil, Edward IV is the perfect royal exemplum — a womanizing adulterer embroiled in a civil war, but also a chivalric hero of sorts. Moreover, the reason Astrophil chooses to praise Edward IV is problematic. He does not praise Edward IV for his wisdom and having a valiant visage (line 5) or for avenging his father’s death and ensuring the stability of his kingdom (line 6). He deliberately misrepresents history in lines 9–11, where he implies that despite France being protected by Scotland, Edward IV forced the king of France to pay a tribute of 75,000 crowns. France was isolated when Edward IV invaded France and unlike Henry V, Edward IV did not secure any territory in France. Astrophil’s reason for choosing Edward IV is for his love over his crown. As noble as this idea sounds, Edward IV’s action has a repercussion not only for his subjects, but he must also briefly lose his crown.

Astrophil’s moral depravity and unscrupulous nature is further underscored in some other sonnets. For example, in sonnet 21 we get to know that Astrophil is shirking his public responsibilities:

Your words, my friend, (right healthful caustics) blame

My young mind marr’d, whom Love doth windlass so,
That mine own writings like bad servants show
My wits, quick in vain thoughts, in virtue lame;
That Plato I read for nought, but if he tame
Such doltish gyres; that to my birth I owe
Nobler desires, lest else that friendly foe,
Great Expectation, were a train of shame.

For since mad March great promise made of me,
If now the May of my years much decline,
What can be hoped my harvest time will be?

Sure you say well, “Your wisdom’s golden mine,
Dig deep with learning’s spade.” Now tell me this,
Hath this world aught so fair as Stella is?

Astrophil’s friend, the addressee, is within his rights to rebuke Astrophil for the dereliction of his duties. Sidney’s readers would not have failed to notice that Astrophil acknowledges that he has ignored the lessons learned from reading Plato and that his chastisement is justified; yet, he ignores his friend’s objections in the concluding tercet, in the words of Alan Sinfield, with “audacious irrelevance” (3). Sonnet 21 is not the only sonnet in which he acknowledges his error and chooses to ignore it, as Astrophil repeats the same process of acknowledging his error and choosing to ignore it in Sonnet 23. Sonnet 30 of *Astrophil and Stella* discusses contemporary events, as in poem 28 of *Canzoniere*:

> Whether the Turkish new moon minded be
> To fill his horns this year on Christian coast;
> How Poles’ right king means, with leave of host,
To warm with ill-made fire cold Muscovy;
If French can yet three parts in one agree;
What now the Dutch in their full diets boast;
How Holland hearts, now so good towns be lost,
Trust in the shade of pleasing Orange tree;
How Ulster likes of that same golden bit
Wherewith my father once made it half tame;
If in the Scotch court be no welt’ring yet:
These questions busy wits to me do frame.
I, cumber’d with good manners, answer do,
But know not how, for still I think of you.

This sonnet would be alarming for Sidney’s immediate audience. If choosing to ignore contemporary events that involved “Muscovy” and “Poles’ right king,” France and Ireland were not enough, Astrophil chooses to ignore the threat of an Islamic invasion of European Christendom and the Reformed Netherlands, whose hope lay with the Duke of Orange. Sidney’s audience who knew of Sidney’s commitment to the Protestant cause would have viewed “Astrophil’s stratagems with suspicion” (Sinfield 3). Sinfield makes an astute observation about Sidney’s style in *Astrophil and Stella*:

> Though we are obliged initially by the first-person presentation to see through Astrophil’s eyes, we are encouraged by the early sonnets on virtue and reason and then by other factors to trace Astrophil’s self-deceptive manoeuvres back to the moral truth which provokes them. (3)
Although Sinfield’s observation helps us to perceive Sidney’s narrative strategy, it does not explain why Sidney chooses Astrophil to place emphasis on “virtue and reason” in the early sonnets, and he makes him deviate from the paths of “virtue.” Moreover, Sinfield does not quite explain the “moral truth” of *Astrophil and Stella*. The “moral truth” of *Astrophil and Stella* is that Astrophil is a reprobate which makes him incapable to perceive the virtuous nature of Stella.

Astrophil can be perceived as the product of the Reformation who lacks free will. 117 Although Sinfield’s reading of *Astrophil and Stella* hints at such a reading, Weiner is the one who reads Astrophil’s problem stemming from his lack of “free will.” Weiner, in his reading of *Astrophil and Stella*, urges, “Astrophil’s problem is to find a way to adore the true Beauty, God, in the ‘temple’ of his heart, not Stella the ‘shade’ of that true beauty” (7). Sinfield, along the lines of Weiner, points out, “Astrophil makes a willed choice in sonnets 2 and 4; in 14 he asserts that if a love is sin, ‘let me sinfull be.’ Only subsequently (e.g. in sonnets 71, 72) does he find himself trapped by his earlier choices” (4). Indeed, when Astrophil starts sonnet 4, “Virtue, alas, now let me take some rest;/Thou sett’st a bate between my will and wit,” only to ask “virtue” to leave in the following couplet, “If vain love have my simple soul oppressed,/ Leave what thou lik’st not, deal not thou with it,” Astrophil clearly echoes Sidney’s observation in his *An Apology*

117 Charles Trinkaus’s observation on Calvinsim may be relevant for our discussion of the issue of Calvinism in *Astrophil and Stella* because he points out that often in our discussion of the influence of Calvinism in the Reformed England, we often forget that Calvin was more interested in spiritual issues than with the secular issues:

Despite his deprecation, however, he did not deprive man of an ability to control human affairs and to direct the course of nature through science. He thought of man as deprived of free will and thoroughly corrupted morally by the Fall of Adam. But what is frequently overlooked is that he meant this lack of free will to apply primarily to man's ability to determine his spiritual condition. Man could not save himself no matter how hard he tried; and moral virtue carried with it no merit toward justification and salvation, since the latter were predestined from eternity. It is significant, however, in fact that Calvin recognized the capacities of man in secular and social matters, though he denied them in spiritual things. (Emphasis added) (74)

Based on Trinkaus’s argument, I would like to present a hypothesis that perhaps Astrophil’s unscrupulous nature was supposed to warn Sidney’s readers and bring them back on the paths of virtue in the contemporary society.
for Poetry. Astrophil’s “erected wit” makes him aware that what he is doing is wrong, yet his “infected will” is getting in the way of reaching “what perfection is,” which is an appreciation of God. Expanding on his observation, Weiner locates Astrophil’s predicament in the absence of free will, an idea that Calvinism underscored during the Reformation. Weiner points out:

Between Petrarch and Astrophil, however, the Reformation, with its insistence on the powerlessness of the will to act efficaciously in the quest for salvation, intervened. … Hence for Astrophil there is no way that he can free his “malicious and perverted will” from loving Stella. His mournful conclusion, “True, and yet that I must Stella love,” thus has an ominous ring of finality to it. (8)

Although Weiner’s explanation clarifies why Astrophil insists on indulging in sensuous love, even if it is a “sin,” his explanation does not account for why Astrophil, unlike Petrarch’s speaker, gets the idea that Stella is an epitome of “virtue.” Yet, he fails to transcend beyond the realm of physical love to that of a proper appreciation of God and insists on having a physical relationship with Stella. In other words, Astrophil’s lack of “free will” does not explain why Astrophil seems to almost get the idea that Stella symbolizes the concept of “virtue,” “almost” being the key word here, and yet eventually fails to grasp the concept of “virtue” and insists on having a physical relationship with Stella, something that Petrarch’s speaker never does in Canzoniere.

Petrarch’s speaker, like Astrophil, emphasizes his own desire for Laura. In the opening couplet of the sonnet 6, Petrarch’s speaker acknowledges his desire for Laura-Daphne, “So wayward and so crazed is my desire/ That he pursues a girl who’s turned to flee,” (Lines 1–2).118

118 Sí travïato è ’l folle mi’ desio
a seguitur costei che ’n fuga è volta,
The use of this phrase “desire” is a bit ambiguous here in this sonnet, because nowhere in the sonnet sequence does Petrarch’s speaker want to have a physical relationship with Laura. Perhaps the speaker wants his love for her to be acknowledged by Laura. Moving on, in sonnet 9, the speaker associates Laura with “virtue” when he repeats the theme of Laura’s birth from sonnet 3, “A virtue drops down from his flaming horn/That dresses all the world in freshened hues—“(Lines 3–4)\(^{119}\) and stresses the nature of Laura as an allegorical figure, as well as his own blindness in the concluding quintet of the sonnet:

Thus she among women is a sun,

Creates the thoughts and deeds and words of love,

Stirring me with the rays from her fair eyes;

But any way she guides or governs them

For me, no matter, spring will never come. (10–14)\(^{120}\)

The speaker early on in the sonnet sequence is sending a message to the readers through his association of God with Laura, who is virtuous, and the speaker’s immaturity and blindness prevent him from seeing this. The speaker’s blindness makes him perceive that Laura’s “deeds and words” are “of love.” Petrarch’s speaker, early in the sonnet sequence, hints at the role of a spiritual guide that Laura would play later in the sonnet as Laura-Beatrice in line 13, and he reiterates his “youthful error” in line 14 of the sonnet sequence.

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\(^{119}\) cade vertú da l’infiammate corna
che veste il mondo di novel colore;

\(^{120}\) cosí costei, ch’è tra le donne un sole,
in me movendo de’ begli occhi i rai
cría d’amor pensieri, atti et parole;
ma come ch’ella gli governi o volga,
primavera per me pur non è mai.
Sidney somewhat follows the same strategy in sonnets 4 and 5 of *Astrophil and Stella*. Astrophil begins sonnet 4 with, “Virtue, alas, now let me take some rest./Thou set’st a bate between my will and wit” (1–2). The fact that Astrophil can address “virtue” as an apostrophe proves he can conceptualize the abstract concept of “virtue.” Moreover, when in the first line of sonnet 9, Astrophil associates virtue with Stella, “Queen virtue’s court, which some call Stella’s face,” which shows he is aware of Stella’s virtuous nature. The concluding sestet of sonnet 5 further proves Astrophil is aware the paths of “virtue” should lead to godliness and eventually to one’s salvation:

True, that true beauty virtue is indeed,
Whereof this beauty can be but a shade,
Which elements with mortal mixture breed:
True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
And should in soul up to our country move:
True, and yet true that I must Stella love. (9–14)

Weiner is right when he reads the last line of sonnet 5 as an example of Astrophil’s lack of “free will.” Sidney, early in his sonnet sequence, underscores the blindness of Astrophil, who, as with Petrarch’s speaker, is blinded by a desire, refuses to acknowledge the potential role that Stella may play in the sonnet sequence as his spiritual guide. What is significant here is the fact that Astrophil is fully aware of the possibility of the allegorical role of a character in a narrative, akin to Petrarch’s speaker. However, the way Astrophil approaches Stella early in the sonnet sequence presents a crucial difference, as he insists on the corporeal presence of Stella, something that Petrarch’s speaker draws attention to but never underscores in *Canzoniere*. As mentioned in my chapter on Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, Petrarch’s speaker, on numerous occasions,
resorts to blazon, where he objectifies Laura’s body parts, such as her blond hair, her eyes, her arms, her lips, and her teeth, but Petrarch’s speaker never proceeds beyond praising Laura’s body. This fixation of Petrarch’s speaker can very well be called “desire,” and Petrarch’s speaker acknowledges that in sonnet 6 of Canzoniere. However, he also provides a solution to how he deals with his desire. When Petrarch’s speaker writes in line 12 of sonnet 6, “Only to bring me to the laurel”\(^\text{121}\), he implies his unrequited love for Laura-Daphne is the source of his fame and as long as his love is not fulfilled and he gets to write about it, he will gain fame. Gaining fame and not sleeping with Laura is Petrarch’s speaker’s ultimate objective in this material world. Unlike Petrarch’s speaker, Astrophil claims in the opening line of sonnet 90 “Stella, think not that I by verse seek fame.”\(^\text{122}\) Instead, Astrophil wants to possess Laura physically, something that he almost does when in sonnet 79 he celebrates the fact that he stole a kiss from Stella.

The text of Astrophil and Stella is full of examples to prove the point of Astrophil’s moral depravity. Unlike Petrarch’s speaker, Astrophil would never be satisfied if Stella acknowledges her love for him. Astrophil mentions in sonnet 40, “Upon a wretch that long thy grace hath sought” (line 7), or in sonnet 27, Astrophil declares, “Unseeen, unheard, while thought to highest place/Bends all his powers, even onto Stella’s grace” (lines 13–14). Therefore, he simply does not mean Stella’s acknowledgement of his love for her, as we shall see soon that he is not satisfied with such an acknowledgement. Astrophil wants to take it a step further and sleep with Stella, something that Petrarch’s speaker never does. Again, in sonnet 28, he aims to ennable Stella, so he could conceive the only epithet “Princesse of Beautie” in the second quatrain; later, he seems to abandon the attempt. Another curious example is the way Astrophil

\(^{121}\) sol per venir al lauro
\(^{122}\) Perhaps Sidney in his Astrophil and Stella exposes the hypocrisy of Petrarch’s speaker. Sidney could have felt that the Petrarch’s speaker is a hypocrite as no one who obsesses over the body of his mistress can claim that his love for his lady is chaste and virtuous. Hence, Sidney makes his Astrophil perhaps more honest than Petrach’s speaker because Astrophil obsesses over Stella’s body and claims that he wants to sleep with Stella.
uses the image of the “sun” in sonnet 22. Unlike Petrarch’s speaker, who associates the image of the “sun” with that of God and then with Laura to imply Laura’s godly nature and virtue, Astrophil presents the sun kissing Stella: “The sun, which others burned, did her but kiss” (line 14). Astrophil starts with a lofty line: “In the highest way of heaven the sun did ride” (1), where, as with Petrarch’s speaker, he begins by underscoring the sun’s nobility. However, instead of showing that Laura is just as noble as the sun, he makes the sun “kiss” Laura. The fact that instead of using the “sun” to draw attention to Stella’s virtue like Petrarch’s speaker, Astrophil uses an erotic gesture like kissing proves his moral depravity. Petrarch’s speaker is fully aware of Laura’s virtuous nature, but he uses Laura’s virtue to gain fame by writing poetry about it. Although Astrophil is aware is the concept that beauty reflects virtue, “Where virtue is made strong by beauty’s might, /Where love is chasteness, pain doth learn delight” (48, 2–3), he simply cannot sustain the idea of his moral depravity. Hence, although he may acknowledge that Stella is an epitome of virtue, he finally breaks down this association of virtue and Stella in sonnet 52, in which he concludes with a couplet where he physically wants to possess the beautiful Stella, “Let virtue have that Stella’s self; yet thus,/ That virtue but that body grant to us” (Emphasis added) (13–14). This emphasis on Stella’s body underscores Astrophil’s moral depravity. No wonder Astrophil gives his passion free reign in sonnet 64, ultimately leading to him kissing Stella, which finally precipitates the crisis in the sonnet sequence, in which outraged Stella refuses to talk to him.

Astrophil’s encounter with Stella also reflects his moral depravity. As Sidney was writing in the reformed England, he could not use Stella as a figure who transcends from the earthly.

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123 This incident has a parallel in Calvin’s theology. In III. ii. 12 of Institutes Calvin argues that although reprobates like Saul may occasionally become aware of divine grace, yet due to depraved nature they cannot sustain the pious nature that such visions of divine grace inspire in them. Similarly, as Astrophil is a reprobate, he is not satisfied with Stella’s virtuous nature. Rather, he gives in to his carnal desires for Stella.
realm to the heavenly realm. For Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, this device of transcendence of the figure of Laura is crucial for multiple reasons. First, if this device of Laura’s transcendence does not work, then the speaker cannot gradually evolve from his earthly love of Laura-Daphne to his love and veneration for God. If the speaker does not gradually shift toward God, then his soul is damned. The speaker must realize he needs to change his perspective of the figure of Laura from Laura-Daphne to that of Laura-Beatrice, and that is possible only through the conversation that Laura-Beatrice has with Petrarch’s speaker. Second, if the device of transcendence in *Canzoniere* is absent, then Laura-Beatrice loses the spiritual significance that she has to the speaker. Petrarch does not claim that Laura-Beatrice is a saint, but he mentions she has been close to God and has been in the company of saints. The canonization of a figure fell under the Catholic Church’s absolute authority. If Petrarch had claimed that Laura became a saint after her death, then it would have been blasphemous, and he would have faced the wrath of the Roman Catholic Church. Hence, the closest Petrarch could come to show the saintly nature of Laura-Beatrice was to suggest that after her death, she joined the company of saints. However, as Laura-Beatrice was neither a saint nor an angel, a literal reading of the text risked rendering the figure of Laura-Beatrice considered at best a benevolent spirit or at worst a ghost, as with Don Andrea’s ghost or Horatio’s ghost in *The Spanish Tragedy* or the ghost of Hamlet’s father in *Hamlet*. Such a reading of the text, which was essentially a disastrous misreading from Petrarch’s perspective, would have undermined, as Petrarch was attempting to show Laura’s influence on the speaker in the *in-mote* section of *Canzoniere*, akin to that of Dante’s Beatrice.

The conversation that Astrophil has with Stella bears some resemblance to the conversation between Petrarch’s speaker and Laura-Beatrice in *Canzoniere*, and this conversation highlights Astrophil’s moral depravity. I have mentioned above that Astrophil
refuses to recognize the potential role of Stella as his spiritual guide, and Sidney deliberately shows Astrophil’s refusal because the model of a mistress as a supplicant’s spiritual guide is based on the Roman Catholic theological doctrine of the intercession of saints, a doctrine that was not accepted in Calvinist theology. In the sonnet 341 of the in-morte section of Petrarch’s Canzoniere, Laura-Beatrice visits Petrarch’s speaker only after he realizes his mistakes and she points out, “My faithful, dear one, much I’m grieved for you, Though with you I was stern for our own good” (12 – 13). In Petrarch’s Canzoniere, it is of significant importance that Laura-Beatrice appears in the in-morte section only after the speaker himself has realized his mistake. The speaker had to take the first step in realizing his mistake that he should have focused on God instead of on the image of Laura, though I have also mentioned elsewhere that Petrarch’s speaker would have been happy had Laura simply acknowledged his love. In the “Eighth Song” of Astrophil and Stella, we find Stella acknowledge that she too loves Astrophil, which is a rare privilege for Astrophil, as Laura never acknowledges her love for Petrarch’s speaker. She tells Astrophil in the “Eighth song”:

‘If to secret of my heart
I do any wish impart
Where thou art not foremost placed,
Be both wish and I defaced.

‘If more may be said, I say:
All my bliss in thee I lay;
If thou love, my love content thee,
For all love, all faith is meant thee. (Lines 85–92)
Stella acknowledges that she loves Astrophil, but refuses any possibility of continuing a relationship on account of her being someone else’s wife. The fact that Stella cannot be in a relationship with Astrophil, compounded with Astrophil’s previous knowledge that Stella is an epitome of virtue, should have sent a message to Astrophil that his obsession with Stella is wrong. While Petrarch’s speaker had to experience despair to realize the fallacy of his obsession, Stella herself tells Astrophil that any relationship between the two of them is out of question because of her virtue. As Stella is a virtuous lady akin to Laura, she cannot have an extra-marital affair. Petrarch’s speaker in Canzoniere already realized his mistake in the in-morte section of Canzoniere before Laura-Beatrice appears to converse with the speaker. Petrarch’s speaker did have some remnants of delusion left in him, as can be seen in poem 359, when he says, “Is this the blond hair, this the golden knot,”/ I say, “that snares me still? And those fair eyes/ That used to be my sun?” (56–58), to which Laura-Beatrice justly chides, “Stray not with fools” (58). We find the same delusion in sonnet 91 of Astrophil and Stella, where Astrophil, much like Petrarch’s speaker, obsesses over Stella’s body, even after Stella has told him that any relationship between them is out of the question:

Some beauty’s piece, as amber-coloured head,

Milk hands, rose cheeks, or lips more sweet, more red,

Or seeing jets, black, but in blackness bright:

They please, I do confess, they please mine eyes. (Lines 6–9)

The “infected will” of Astrophil and his morally depraved nature prevent him from realizing Stella’s virtuous nature, and in the “Eleventh song,” Astrophil appears below Stella’s window at her husband’s house, hoping he can still court Stella. Stella’s response in the “Eleventh Song”
shows how close Sidney brings Stella to the role of Laura-Beatrice, which could be accommodated within the framework of the Calvinist theology:

‘But your reason’s purest light

Bids you leave such minds to nourish’

Dear, do reason no such spite;

Never doth thy beauty flourish

More than in my reason’s sight. (Lines 26–30)

I have mentioned elsewhere in this dissertation that Calvin’s belief in the complete depravity of man led him to conclude that human reason was tainted by the noetic effects of sin. In the “Eleventh Song,” a mortal Stella, who is as virtuous as the deceased Laura, points out the morally depraved nature of Astrophil, as he continues listening to his infected reason that somehow convinces him there is always a chance Stella may give in to his desires. This infected reasoning in the morally depraved Astrophil prevents him from gaining any closure that Petrarch’s speaker gains in Canzoniere. Sidney’s readers were meant to recognize this morally deprived Astrophil and stay on the paths of virtue, because if they strayed toward the path that Astrophil followed, they would end up in despair along with Astrophil, from which, as the sonnet sequence Astrophil and Stella shows, there can be no relief.

Sidney uses Astrophil to provide a critique of contemporary poetry, something that Donne shares with him. For example, in sonnet 3, Astrophil claims to stay away from “dainty wits” (line 1) who engage in elaborate allegories and “Pindar’s apes” (line 3) and in sonnet 15, he abjures “Petrarch’s long deceased woes” (line 7). As we shall soon see in the next paragraph, Donne too used his sonnets to comment on poetry. Sidney’s problem in Astrophil and Stella lies in the fact he was using poetics that was developed under Roman Catholic Europe and he was
trying to adapt poetics to poetry written in Reformed England, something in which he was not quite successful. This change in the theological framework that influenced poetics is aptly underscored by John Donne in a verse epistle, “T’have written then, when you writ,” which he addressed to Lady Bedford:

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Temples were not demolish’d, though prophane;
Here Peter Joves, there Paul hath Dian’s Fane.
So whther my hymnes you admit or chuse,
In me you’have hallowed a Pagan Muse, (lines 13–16)
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Although architects may have built St. Peter’s Basilica over that of a temple of Jupiter and St. Paul’s Cathedral may have been built over a temple of Diana, this strategy of superimposing something over an already existing framework, according to Donne’s speaker, does not work in the case of poetics. Sidney is the best example in this instance, as he tried and failed to build Reformed poetics on the framework of the poetics developed during the Roman Catholic period. Donne realized that whereas in the medieval period, a secular poem could have worked to help in the salvation of a person’s soul, a secular poem in the Reformation could not achieve that. Hence, he relegates the discussion of spirituality in his religious poems and uses his secular poems, which have been stripped off their associations carried during the Roman Catholic period in Reformation England, to provide a critique of Petrarchism.
**Donne’s critique of Petrarchism in his secular poems**

John Donne follows Petrarch and Sidney to use the sonnet form to either comment or critique the contemporary literary fashion, and this comment or critique is often hidden in epideictic rhetoric. His dedicatory sonnet E. of D.\(^{124}\) proves to be a curious example in this case:

See, sir, how, as the sun’s hot masculine flame
Begets strange creatures on Nile's dirty slime,
In me your fatherly yet lusty rhyme
—For these songs are their fruits—have wrought the same.
But though th’ engend’ring force from which they came
Be strong enough, and Nature doth admit
Seven to be born at once; I send as yet
But six; they say the seventh hath still some maim.
I choose your judgment, which the same degree
Doth with her sister, your invention, hold,
As fire these drossy rhymes to purify,
Or as elixir, to change them to gold.
You are that alchemist, which always had
Wit, whose one spark could make good things of bad.

A casual reading of this epideictic poetry would suggest it praises the Earl’s influence on Donne’s sonnets. A poet’s imagination implied by “strange creatures on Nile” is influenced by

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\(^{124}\) Critics are not unanimous on the identity of this “E. of D.” Helen Gardner believes this poem is dedicated to the Earl of Doncaster, whereas other scholars, such as C. A. Patrides, have argued that “E. of D.” stands for the Earl of Dorset. As there is confusion among scholars about the identity of “E. of D.,” I will refer to the dedicatee as “the Earl.”
someone’s literary achievement. In this case, it is the Earl’s “hot masculine” rhyme. The product may be gross, but it must be revised, either by the poet or, as the persona mentions, with the help of “an elixir” or “an alchemist” under someone’s influence, which in this case is “the Earl.” This poem is similar to sonnet 1 of *Astrophil and Stella*, where the speaker sheds light on a poet’s creative process. This poem becomes significant in the discussion of Donne’s creative process, because he acknowledges in this poem that the speaker argues that “invention” and “judgment” are important considerations during a poem’s creation. The speaker identifies “judgment” and “invention” as sisters and, therefore, feminine qualities, unlike composing rhyme, which he finds masculine. This gender dynamic in the poem leads Thomas Sloan to argue that “judgment” and “invention” are passive elements, which is implied by their identification as feminine qualities. However, to read this poem through the lens of gender is to miss the point that this poem emphasizes the target audience’s judgment. As Donne, unlike Sidney, depended on the system of “patronage,” the audience becomes an important factor in Donne’s creative process, as the poem is created with the audience’s judgment in mind. Whereas Sidney perceives a poet in *An Apology for Poetry* as superior to his readers and hence should trust his judgment, a point that is reiterated in sonnet 1 of *Astrophil and Stella*, when Astrophil’s muse asks him to “look in thy heart, and write;” for Donne, the judgment rests on the target audience. This poem is a curious corollary to Donne’s “Upon the Translation of Psalms by Sir Philip Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke, his sister,” another epideictic poem where Sidney and his sister Mary, Countess of Pembroke, are congratulated for translating psalms and thereby establishing a model for others to follow. Although Donne thanks Sidney in the poem, his functional view of the literature is different from that of Sidney. Whereas Sidney believes a poet should instruct, entertain, and move the audience, Donne’s concern lies in how his audience will react to his poem. As this sonnet, there are some
other verse epistles where Donne, similar to sonnets 3, 6, 15, and 74 of *Astrophil and Stella*, comments on poetry, but unlike Sidney, Donne’s commentary is hidden in his epideictic rhetoric. Donne’s verse epistle addressed to “R.W”\(^\text{125}\), which starts with the line “Kindly I envy thy songs perfection,” proves it would be a mistake to assume from “E. of D.” that Donne thought of the poetic creation as if it was an exclusively masculine affair. The subject matter of this sonnet is similar to that of sonnet 120 of *Canzoniere*, where a speaker thanks a friend for his verses:

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Kindly I envy thy songs perfection
Built of all th’elements as our bodyes are:
That Litle of earth that is in it, is a faire
Delicious garden where all sweetes are sowne.
In it is cheriising fyer which dryes in mee
Griefe which did drowne me: and halfe quench’d by it
Are satirique fyres which urg’d me to have writ
In skorne of all: for now I admire thee.
And as Ayre doth fulfill the hollowness
Of rotten walls; so it myne emptiness,
Where tost and mov’d it did beget this sound
Which as a lame Eccho of thyne doth rebound.
Oh, I was dead; but since thy song new Life did give,
I recreated, even by thy creature, live.
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In her discussion of two other verse epistles, “To C.B.” and “To L.L.,” Heather Dubrow points out the prevalence of “homosocial desire” and “the erasure of the woman” that characterize these

\(^{125}\) R.W. could stand for Roland Woodward.
poems (218). Such a gender criticism is useful, as it raises questions on how Donne perceived the creation of poetry. Whereas “E. of D.” discusses that a poet’s poem is dependent on the audience’s judgment, this poem shows that Donne thought of poetic creation as an androgynous affair. This can be inferred from the implication that the “hollowness” of the speaker is “filled” by his male friend’s verses, and this fulfillment allows the male speaker to “recreate” poetry, where “recreation” or giving birth are associated with a female.

Donne draws attention to the doctrinal changes in the reformed society as pertained to the dead in his poems “The Computation” and “The Apparition”. In Donne’s “The Computation,” the speaker questions the hyperbole that is often latent in a Petrarchan poem:

For my first twenty years, since yesterday,
I scarce believed thou couldst be gone away;
For forty more I fed on favours past,
And forty on hopes that thou wouldst they might last;
Tears drowned one hundred, and sighs blew out two;
A thousand, I did neither think nor do,
Or not divide, all being one thought of you;
Or in a thousand more, forgot that too.
Yet call not this long life; but think that I
Am, by being dead, immortal; can ghosts die?

Even a lay reader who may not be well versed in the mores of Petrarchism would realize from a cursory glance at the poem that by making the speaker spend decades and centuries on trivial activities, such as reminiscing on the past, pondering about the future, crying, and sighing, Donne is being ironic in this poem. The last line becomes important for this dissertation project,
as the concept of the afterlife changed during the Reformation. Laura in *Canzoniere* could visit Petrarch’s speaker and still not be considered a “ghost” but a “spirit,” the essential difference between the two being in the connotations associated with these terms. The former has a negative connotation, whereas the latter has a positive connotation. A ghost in Roman Catholic society would technically belong to purgatory, from where he or she can pay occasional visits to earth. Laura, in the *in-morte* section of the *Canzoniere*, is not a saint, but dwells among the company of saints in heaven. Although the Reformation movement did accommodate “spirits” as the souls of elects who end up in heaven, it did rid the concept of “purgatory” from Roman Catholic society. Hence, any “ghost” who visits earth in a Reformation society can only be a devil in disguise aiming to mislead a person.¹²⁶

Donne, further exploits this suspicion of and uncertainty in the Reformation theology in its approach to the dead in his poem “The Apparition,” where he gets to show how a situation that worked for Petrarch in medieval Roman Catholic Europe cannot work for him in England under the Reformation. Donne’s “The Apparition” presents the situation of poem 359 of *Canzoniere*, one of the most important poems of the sequence, in the context of the

¹²⁶ Reformation theologians were always suspicious of “spirits.” Ludwig Lavater focuses on this change in an approach to “spirits” during the Reformation in his *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Night*:

Moreouer, in that age wherein *Gregorie* liued, men belgan to attribute muche to those apparances and visions. And at that time the true and sincere Doctrine began greatly to decay. Truly the time in which a man happens to lyue, is much to be regarded: he himselfe confessed that hys time was the latter tymes. Therefore the Scrip|tures shoulde haue bêene more diligently haue lent vnto, neither should any thing haue béen retained that was not agreable vnto them. Some going about to excuse him, for that he hath stuffed his Dialogues full of myracles and wonders, say he dyd it to mollifie by those examples, the peruerse and hard heartes of the *Longobardes*, to the end they might embrace the true Religion, which they had so gréeuously persecuted. But that it is in no wise profitable to make knowen the true fayth, by these helpes, which are nothyng else but vayne tales, euen Viues himselfe, in his first booke *De tradendis disciplinis* doth acknowledge.

Some vrge vs with the authoritie of counsels, whiche haue allowed certain apparances of soules, and haue suffered some booke, whiche are extant of such apparitions, to be read for the edifying of the simple, and some agayne together with their visions, they haue cleane reiected. (153)
The Petrarchan context of the poem is not news to early modern scholars, as can be observed from the readings offered by scholars including Helen Gardner, Donald L. Guss, and N.J.C. Andreasen. All these scholars focus on the reversed situation of the male speaker being dead and the mistress being alive, only to be tormented by the visiting spirit of the spurned lover:

When by thy scorn, O murd'ress, I am dead,
And that thou thinkst thee free
From all solicitation from me,
Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,
And thee, feign'd vestal, in worse arms shall see:
Then thy sick taper will begin to wink,
And he, whose thou art then, being tired before,
Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think
Thou call'st for more,
And, in false sleep, will from thee shrink:

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127 My reading of Donne’s “The Apparition” is hugely influenced by Robert G. Collmer’s reading of this poem. Collmer’s argues that Donne’s poem “exhibits what Northrop Frye (in another context) calls a “demonic epiphany” (34). Northrop Frye defines “demonic epiphany” as a phase where we see or glimpse the undisplaced demonic vision of the *Inferno*. Its chief symbols, besides the prison and the madhouse, are the instruments of a torturing death, the cross under the sunset being the antithesis of the tower under the moon. A strong element of demonic ritual in public punishments and similar mob amusements is exploited by tragic and ironic myth. (223)

Although I find Collmer’s reading of “An Apparition” in the context of the Reformation useful for my dissertation, I do not agree with the basic premise of his argument. It is true that the mistress’s bedroom may feel similar to a “prison” to her when the speaker’s ghost shows up, as she cannot escape from there and her present lover may be akin to her cellmate. However, her bedroom is certainly nothing resembling a “madhouse.” There are no “instruments of a torturing death,” no “demonic ritual,” no “public punishment,” or the presence of a “mob” in this poem. Instead of perceiving this poem as a demonic epiphany, as Collmer did, although segments of Donne’s generation who were passionately committed to the Reformation theology may very well have found this poem “demonic” and “papist,” I read this poem as a piece where Donne parodies one of the most important poems of *Canzoniere*. 
And then, poor aspen wretch, neglected thou
Bathed in a cold quicksilver sweat wilt lie,
A verier ghost than I.
What I will say, I will not tell thee now,
Lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent,
I'd rather thou shouldst painfully repent,
Than by my threatenings rest still innocent.

I find it incredible that scholars have commented on the issue of Petrarchism in this poem but have failed to notice how closely this poem parodies the poem in the Canzoniere, where Laura-Beatrice visits Petrarch’s speaker from heaven to discuss his realization of the error of his ways. Instead of Laura being dead in the poem, here, the speaker is dead. As I mentioned in my chapter on Petrarch’s Canzoniere, Laura-Beatrice visits the speaker only after he has started to realize the error of his ways. Her visit is to urge Petrarch’s speaker to turn his ways toward God and solicit him to renounce whatever infatuation he may still have with Laura-Daphne. In this poem, the mistress has not realized her mistake in shunning the speaker, whereas the speaker wants his mistress not to realize her mistake so he can torment her when she sleeps with another man. The fact that the speaker uses the word “ghost” suggests, in Reformed England, that he is a damned soul from hell. Another section from Lavater’s text can further corroborate this point:

Héereunto belongeth those things which are reported touching the chasing or hunting of Diuels, and also of the daunces of dead men, which are of sundrie sortes. I haue heard of some which haue auouched, that they haue séene them.
No man is able to rehearse all the shapes wherein spirites haue appeared, for the Diuell, who for the moste part is the worker of these things, can (as the Poets faine of Proteus) chaunge himselfe into all shapes and fashions. […]

Spirits oftentimes awake men out of their sleepe, and cause many to forsake their owne houses, so that they can not hire them out to any other. (Emphasis added) (96)

I have mentioned above that the visitation of a dead person would have been perceived as suspicious in the Reformed England, and that is another reason why Sidney could not kill off Stella and present her as a spiritual guide, as with Petrarch’s Laura. Donne, being aware of this problem of Petrarchism, as well as suspicious of the appearance of the “spirits,” ensures there is no ambiguity about the nature of his speaker’s “spirit” in “The Apparition.” The fact that unlike Laura-Beatrice’s entreaties for the sake of the salvation of the soul of Petrarch’s speaker, the speaker’s “solicitation” has been similar to Astrophil’s solicitation: to sleep with his mistress, proving the speaker’s soul has joined Satan’s legions. Thus, in a way, Donne’s “The Apparition” shows Astrophil’s soul had he died. The use of the word “apparition” in the title of the poem allows Donne to make an implicit argument in his poem that if a spirit similar to that of Laura-Beatrice’s is used in a poem in a society influenced by the Reformation theology, the spirit may very well be perceived as anti-Christian, if not the anti-Christ. It is interesting, as Collmer points out, that the word “apparition” does not show up in the poem; rather, “it sketches the province of the entire poem” (37). The OED classifies the word “apparition” as a “manifestation of Christ” and “epiphany.” Although the OED notes 1652 as the first year when the word “apparition” was used in the context of “epiphany,” texts from Donne’s sermons show he was aware of the association of “epiphany” with “apparition”. In a sermon on Christ’s Incarnation, Donne writes:
But whether the *manifestation of God in the flesh were referred to the Incarnation of Christ*; or to his Declaration, when the wise men of the East came to see him at Bethleem; whether when it was done, or when it was declared to be done, hath admitted a question, because the Western Church hath call’d that day of their coming to him, the *Epiphany*; and *Epiphany is Manifestation*. (III. 9. 213) (emphasis added)

Whereas the sermon quoted above shows that Donne perceived epiphany in terms of the Incarnation of Christ, Donne, in another sermon, associated the word “apparition” with Christ’s Incarnation: “And in some *apparitions*, where the Son of God is said to have appeared, he cals (sic) himself by that name, Sapientiem Dei” (III. 15. 328). The use of the word “apparition” by Donne in the poem, a word later used in association with Christ’s Incarnation, can perhaps be regarded as Donne’s caustic joke on Petrarchism in a Reformed society. Laura-Beatrice’s spirit had urged Petrarch’s speaker in poem 359 to turn to God for salvation, “If some coerce you now,/ Straight to Him turn, from Him implore relief,/ Thus we shall be with Him at your life’s end.”¹²⁸ Christ’s purpose on earth was to redeem humanity from the effects of Original Sin. In Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, a text composed in medieval Roman Catholic Europe, the figure of Laura-Beatrice, who is also a spirit, which could have been read as an allegorical entity symbolizing virtue in Roman Catholic society, reminds Petrarch’s speaker to turn toward God. In Donne’s poem “The Apparition,” the title of which bears a reference to Christ’s incarnation, the figure of the speaker’s ghost, in a situation that is identical to Petrarch’s poem 359, wants to ensure she cannot “painfully repent.” The Petrarchan speaker’s contrition in *Canzoniere* is an essential condition for the salvation of his soul. Petrarch’s speaker repeatedly claimed his

¹²⁸ Or tu, s’altri ti sforza,  
a Lui ti volgi, a Lui chiedi soccorso,  
sí che siam Seco al fine del tuo corso
thoughts of Laura were chaste and hence, he was innocent of the charge of lecherous thoughts. In “The Apparition,” Donne implies that if a spirit resembling Laura-Beatrice does show up in a Reformed society, instead of actively helping a person to achieve salvation or at least praying for another person’s salvation—praying for salvation being a role that Calvin encouraged his followers to take on—the spirit, which in a Reformed society will essentially be a lost soul from Satan’s legions, will mislead someone away from the paths of God.

Through the figure of Lady Lucy Bedford in Donne’s verse epistle, “Reason is our soul’s left hand, faith her right,” Donne, as with Sidney in *Astrophil and Stella*, presents a surrogate to Petrarch’s Laura, where Donne also gets to make fun of Laura-Beatrice, whom Petrarch’s speaker implies is enjoying the company of saints in heaven. Donne also uses the epideictic rhetoric that was expected from a poet to pay for his patronage in this poem to conflate the situation in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* with the Jacobean court. We will see in the chapter on Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” that Donne was always suspicious of the capability of “reason,” leading one toward the knowledge of God’s divinity. The speaker in this verse epistle begins with this distinction between reason and faith in the first stanza of the poem:

Madam,

Reason is our soul's left hand, faith her right ;

By these we reach divinity, that's you ;

Their loves, who have the blessing of your light,

Grew from their reason; mine from fair faith grew. (1–4)

This stanza is an implicit echo of sonnets 346, 347, 348, and, to some extent, 349 of *Canzoniere*, where Petrarch’s speaker repeatedly expresses the desire to be in heaven so he can enjoy Laura’s
company. As I explained in my chapter on *Canzoniere*, Laura-Beatrice in poem 359 of *Canzoniere* explains his aim to be in heaven is the right choice, but it is not for the right reason, as he should aim to be in heaven to be with God and not with Laura-Beatrice. The speaker in this verse epistle resembles Petrarch’s speaker, who wants to reach Lady Bedford, as he perceives her as a picture of divinity, which is a theological pose unacceptable in both the Roman Catholic and Reformed religions. It is in the third and fourth stanzas of the poem that Donne’s good-natured mockery, directed at the Jacobean court and the figure of Laura-Beatrice, becomes clear:

Therefore I study you first in your saints,
Those friends whom your election glorifies;
Then in your deeds, accesses and restraints,
And what you read, and what yourself devise.

But soon the reasons why you're loved by all,
Grow infinite, and so pass reason's reach;
Then back again to implicit faith I fall,
And rest on that the Catholic voice doth teach— (9–16)

Petrarch’s speaker’s study of Laura-Beatrice in heaven leads to the realization of his mistake, and eventually he turns toward God. Petrarch’s speaker “glorifies” Laura-Beatrice in *Canzoniere* because in a Roman Catholic society, “good works” can help a person to achieve salvation, and praising someone who is in the company of saints is “good works.” Donne’s speaker completely turns the tables on the theological base on which Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* is based. Whereas Laura-Beatrice’s spiritual state in *Canzoniere* is glorified by Petrarch’s speaker, in this poem, Lady Bedford’s spiritual state, which is implied using the word “election,” glorifies her community.
Lady Bedford came from the Harrington family, which, although being a good family, was not as prominent a family as that of her husband, the Earl of Bedford. Moreover, the Earl of Bedford had participated in Essex’s rebellion against Queen Elizabeth and he was saved by his act of cowardice when he deserted Essex on his way to Queen Elizabeth. When King James ascended the throne, Lady Bedford found favor with King James’s wife, Queen Anne. Margaret Maurer’s observation on the conducts of Lady Bedford helps us to gain a better perspective of the third stanza of the poem:

Lucy Russell’s intimacy with the royal family afforded her opportunities to sustain a position she could in no sense claim. *Like every courtier, she was constantly solicitous in her own behalf; but, more than most of them, she was active in promoting herself through maneuverings on behalf of others.* She was a go-between, who received for her services some indirect reward (like the advancement of a favored project) or a straight cash payment. In her position as go-between, Lucy Russell was the embodiment of means.

(215)

Whereas Laura-Beatrice’s “deeds,” which were exhorting Petrarch’s speaker to rectify his ways, eventually helped him to set on a path to his own salvation, Lady Bedford’s “deeds” (line 11), her “devise” (line 12), and whatever she reads to achieve her “devise” are to facilitate some court intrigue. Lady Lucy Bedford’s “election” to a state of royal and not spiritual grace ends up serving the material needs of the courtiers, rather than attending to the state of their souls. Donne’s satirical critique of the corruption of the Jacobean court in the fourth stanza, where Lady Lucy Bedford’s favors to her fellow “saints” (line 9) are “infinite,” restores the speaker’s “faith” (line 15). If the speaker is a Protestant, then nothing can be more heretical in a Reformed society than if he listens to a “Catholic voice” (line 16). Donne draws attention to this point when
he punned on the word “catholic” and he makes the speaker say in the opening lines of the fifth stanza, “Thou are good: and not one heretic/ Denies it; if he did, yet you are so” (Emphasis added) (lines 17–18). Thus, in a Reformed society, poetics based on the Roman Catholic theology becomes dysfunctional, as, instead of helping to work for a soul’s salvation, the surrogate of Laura-Beatrice in the Reformed English court works for the material gains of Jacobean courtiers, which very well may detract them from God’s path. Donne’s speaker further stresses the difference between Laura’s surrogate in the Reformed English court and that of Petrarch’s Laura, when he mentions that despite being “the first good angel” (line 31), she needs a mithridate (line 27) to protect her from “extrinsic blows” (line 23). It is needless to point out that whereas Laura-Beatrice and even Stella do not need a spiritual balm or a medicine because they are epitomes of virtue, Countess Bedford’s “balsamum” (line 22) is made of her “birth” and “beauty” and not her virtue. Her “learning and religion,/And virtue” (lines 25–26) that are her “mithridate” are, as mentioned earlier, used for court intrigues. Donne takes the issue of the Laura-Beatrice as a supplicant’s guide a step further and shows that in the Jacobean court, a Laura-Beatrice surrogate is perhaps as corrupt if not more corrupt than the practices of the Roman Catholic Church, the theology of which had influenced Petrarch’s Canzoniere. The turning of the tables on the foundation of Laura-Beatrice as the guiding spirit of Petrarch’s speaker is complete in the final stanza of the poem:

Since you are then God's masterpiece, and so

His factor for our loves, do as you do ;

Make your return home gracious, and bestow

This life on that ; so make one life of two.
For, so God help me, I would not miss you there,
For all the good which you can do me here. (lines 33–38)

Donne’s speaker, unlike Petrarch’s speaker, does not want the Laura-Beatrice surrogate when she returns to heaven to work for his soul’s salvation. Working of the Reformed theology can clearly be observed in this stanza. Calvin in his *Institutes* had restricted the role that saints play for a soul’s salvation and had relegated the role of the mediator of salvation to Jesus Christ. Donne’s speaker knows that even though Lady Bedford is a Laura-Beatrice surrogate, she does not have the power over the salvation of the speaker’s soul, as she is a product of the Reformation society. Therefore, unlike in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, where the in-morte Laura is superimposed on the in-vita Laura, i.e., Laura-Beatrice is superimposed on Laura-Daphne so that the speaker finally realizes that Laura-Daphne and Laura-Beatrice are essentially the same Laura/laurel, Donne’s speaker asks the Laura-Beatrice surrogate, Lady Bedford, to superimpose her life on earth onto her life in heaven, because she has been more successful on earth than she could ever be in heaven. It is for the same reason that he wants her here in the Jacobean court rather than in heaven advocating for the salvation of the speaker’s soul to God. Thus, in this poem, we do not even have the Petrarchan trope of what I have identified as “false conversion” in my chapter on Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*. Rather, we have a deliberate “turning away” from God toward material pursuits. Donne could make such an argument on Petrarchism in this verse epistle, because saints were not as sacred in the Reformed theology as they were in Roman Catholicism. Donne’s exploitation of this phenomenon in the Reformed theology to make an argument on Petrarchism can be further noticed in his another poem “The Canonization.”

In the poem “The Canonization,” John Donne uses certain aspects of church practices that do not hold the same significance in a Reformed society as held in a Roman Catholic society
to show that he can do something in his poems that Petrarch could not do in his *Canzoniere*. In the third stanza of “The Canonization,” the speaker cries out:

> We can die by it, if not live by love,
> And if unfit for tombs and hearse
> Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;
> And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
> We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;
> As well a well-wrought urn becomes
> The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
> And by these hymns, all shall approve
> *Us canonized* for Love. (lines 28–36)

Petrarch’s lover in the *in-morte* section of *Canzoniere* has repeatedly expressed a wish to die. In the first half of the *in-morte* section, Petrarch’s speaker wants to “die” out of despair over Laura-Daphne’s death, as her death had deprived him of his muse. Eventually, when the speaker could work his way out of despair, he still wants to “die” so he can be with Laura-Beatrice in heaven, and throughout the sequence, Petrarch’s speaker creates “pretty rooms” in “sonnets.” In other words, Petrarch’s speaker creates spaces in “verses” where he narrates his one-sided chaste and virtuous love for Laura and the influence she has had over his life. As I mentioned in my chapter on Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, in poem 207, Petrarch’s speaker becomes an emblem of a suffering lover who enjoys the status of a celebrity in the community of “Love’s servant:”

> My song, upon the field
> I’ll stand firm, for to die while fleeing is
Inglorious, and I
Reproach myself for such complaints, so sweet
My fate, tears, sighs, and death.
Love’s servant, you who read these lines, this world
Possesses no good that can match my ill. (207, 92–98)\(^{129}\)

Donne’s speaker in “The Canonization” takes this concept of community and transforms it into a “cult” in the next stanza, where essentially “all” (line 35) members of this cult of “canonized” lovers would pay obeisance to the lovers. I mentioned in the early sections of this chapter that Petrarch could not suggest that Laura became a saint after her death because that would have been usurping the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and Petrarch would have irked the ecclesiastical figures of the Roman Catholic Church. In the Reformed society of England, the process of “canonization” was considered heretical and a form of “mis-devotion,” a term Donne uses in his poem “The Relic” and akin to idolatry. Petrarch and Sidney make an argument through their sonnet sequences, Petrarch overtly and Sidney implicitly, that such a misplaced devotion to humans is not conducive to one’s salvation. Donne uses the Reformation’s views on idolatry and canonization to achieve something that Petrarch could not achieve in Canzoniere. In Reformed England, Donne’s speaker cannot only “chronicle” his love for his mistress, akin to Petrarch’s speaker, but he can also claim the eminence of sainthood for both his speaker and his mistress, as the process of canonization has lost its reverence in the Reformed society.

\(^{129}\) Canzon mia, fermo in campo
starò, ch’elli è disonor morir fuggendo;
et me stesso reprendo
di tai lamenti; sí dolce è mia sorte,
pianto, sospiri et morte.
Servo d’Amor, che queste rime leggi,
ben non à ’l mondo, che ’l mio mal pareggi
Sidney, as with numerous other poets of his generation, inherited a poetics that was intertwined with Roman Catholic philosophy. In his *An Apology for Poetry*, he tries to create a poetics from the one he inherited from medieval Roman Catholic Europe and fails. His *Astrophil and Stella* is the closest he can come to warning his readers to avoid straying from the path of godliness, while at the same time sticking to the poetics he was trying to generate for the purpose of poetry in the Reformed society. John Donne, who belongs to a generation that came after Sidney’s generation, knew the role that poetry could perform in medieval Roman Catholic European society. It could entertain readers and work on a soul’s salvation, which is no longer tenable in a Reformed society. Hence, Donne uses his secular poems to critique Petrarchism, as well as for other purposes, such as providing an occasional critique of religion and society and relegating the purpose of working on a soul’s salvation, in his religious poems.
Chapter Four

Donne’s Holy Sonnets

Thus far in this dissertation, I have established how Donne successfully used the structure of “rosary poems,” a poetic form essentially associated with Roman Catholicism, to show his speaker praise Christ, and the way the speaker praises Christ makes the speaker a Calvinist. I have also established that Donne uses his speaker in his secular poems to provide a critique of Petrarchism by focusing on tropes, such as venerations of saints, which may be significant in the Roman Catholic religion but lost its significance in the Reformed England. In this chapter, I argue that the speaker of Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” is influenced by the Calvinist doctrine. It is unfortunate for scholars and students of early modern poetry that none of Donne’s holy sonnets survives as an original holograph artifact. The closest we can come to guessing Donne’s intentions of revising his poems is by analyzing the contents of a group of manuscripts containing Donne’s religious sonnets.\(^\text{130}\) Moreover, just as Petrarch kept revising his Canzoniere as long as he lived, similarly, Donne revised his holy sonnets throughout his life. Although some assumptions can be made about when Donne composed two sonnets\(^\text{131}\), definite bibliographical information on when Donne composed or revised other sonnets is missing. As it is difficult to determine when a sonnet was composed, it hence becomes more difficult to determine which theological doctrine influenced a particular sonnet or sonnets. Therefore, from a reading of the sonnet sequence, I aim to provide a hypothesis that Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” were composed under the influence of Calvinist doctrines. The editors of the Variorum edition have identified

\(^{130}\) Until the original manuscripts of Donne’s poems are found, a scholar can only hypothesize and guess at best.

\(^{131}\) It is widely accepted that the sonnet “Since she whome I loved” was composed after the death of Anne Donne, and the sonnet “Show me dear Christ” was composed after the defeat of the Protestant forces of Frederick V, Elector of Palantine, at the Battle of White Mountain on 8 November 1620.
the manuscripts containing copies of Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” into four groups: the Group III manuscript sequences, the Westmoreland manuscript sequence, and the Groups I and II manuscript sequences. Scholars including Barbara Lewalski, Paul Cefalu, and John Stachniewski

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132 For convenience, this chapter will use shortened forms of the sonnets for discussion. Here are the following short forms of the sonnets that will be discussed in the chapter:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First line of the sonnet</th>
<th>Shortened form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thou hast made me, and shall thy worke decay?</td>
<td>HSMade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As due by many titles I resigne</td>
<td>HSDue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O might those sighes and tears returne againe</td>
<td>HSSighs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father, part of his double interest</td>
<td>HSPart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh my blacke Soule, now thou art summoned</td>
<td>HSBlack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is my Playes last scene, here heauens appoint</td>
<td>HSScene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am a little World, made cunningly</td>
<td>HSLittle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the round Earths imagind corners blow</td>
<td>HSRound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yf poisonous Mineralls, and if that tree</td>
<td>HSMin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YF faithfull Soules, be alike glorified</td>
<td>HSSouls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death be not proud, though some haue called thee</td>
<td>HSDeath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilt thou love God, as he thee? then digest</td>
<td>HSWilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spitt in my face ye Jewes, and pierce my side</td>
<td>HSSpit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why are we by all Creatures wayted on?</td>
<td>HSWhy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What yf this present were the worlds last night?</td>
<td>HSWhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batter my heart, three-persond God, for you</td>
<td>HSBatter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since she whome I lovd, hath payd her last debt</td>
<td>HSShe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show me deare Christ, thy Spouse, so bright and cleare</td>
<td>HSShow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh, to vex me, contraryes meete in one:</td>
<td>HSVex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
have argued that Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” were composed under the influence of the Calvinist doctrine. However, no scholar has thus far argued that the sonnet sequences in the Group III and Groups I and II manuscripts show a predominant Calvinist influence. In this chapter, I argue that the sonnet sequences in the Group I, Group II, and Group III manuscripts show Calvinist influence. Before I engage in my close reading of the sonnets, and although this dissertation is not a dissertation on textual criticism, I find it necessary to explain certain facts about the manuscripts and why I am not engaging in a discussion of the sonnet sequence found in the Westmoreland manuscript.

**Background Information on Manuscripts**

The manuscript transcription of Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” went under three phases. The earliest collection is found in a group of manuscripts that has been identified by the Variorum editors as the Group III manuscripts, the second stage is identified in the Westmoreland sonnet sequence, and the final phase of the transcription is identified in a group of manuscripts known as the Groups I and II manuscripts. The Group III manuscripts consist of a manuscript (B₄6) located in the British Library, another manuscript (HH₁) located in Henry E. Huntington Library, and another (H₅) located in the Harvard University Library. The Group III manuscripts includes a numbered sequence of 12 sonnets under the heading “Divine Meditations,” which begins with *HSMade* and concludes with *HSWilt*. The sonnet sequence in the Group III manuscripts is as follows:

*HSMade > HSDue > HSSighes > HSPart > HSBlacke > HSScene > HSLittle > HSRound > HSMin > HSSouls > HSDeath > HSWilt*. The Group III manuscripts also consist of few other manuscripts: the

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133 I am heavily indebted to the editors of the Variorum edition for this information on the manuscripts.
Narcissus Luttrell manuscript (C9), the Norton ms.4504, and the O’Flahertie manuscript, which share the same sonnet order as B26, HH1, and H5 with additional sonnets HSSpit, HSWhy, HSWhat, and HSBatter that were later added to these manuscripts under the title “Other Meditations.” These four sonnets later replace HSMade, HSSighes, HSLittle, and HSSouls in the sonnet sequence found in the Groups I and II manuscripts. In this chapter, when I refer to the Group III manuscript sonnet sequence, I refer to the 12 numbered sonnets that begin with HSMade and end with HSWilt. In this chapter, I decided not to discuss the four sonnets that were later added under the title “Other Meditations” because they are also found in the Groups I and II manuscripts. I discuss these sonnets in my section on the replacement sonnets in the Groups I and II manuscripts.

The second phase of the transitional history of these holy sonnets can be noted in the Westmoreland manuscript, which is found in the handwriting of Donne’s friend Rowland Woodward.134 The sonnet sequence in this manuscript has 19 numbered sonnets, of which the first 12 sonnets follow the sequence of the Narcissus Luttrell manuscript (C9), the Norton ms.4504, and the O’Flahertie manuscript. The title of the sonnet sequence changes from “Divine Meditations” in the Group III manuscripts to “Holy Sonnets” in the Westmoreland manuscript. In the Westmoreland sequence, we find HSShe, HSShow, and HSVex added to the 16 sonnets found in the Narcissus Luttrell manuscript (C9), Norton ms.4504, and the O’Flahertie manuscript. It is not only the change to the generic heading that proves Donne had revised his sonnet sequence, but there is also other evidence. For example, “thus vsurpe in” in line 9 of HSDue of the Group III manuscript changes to “then vsurpe in” in the Westmoreland manuscript, and “was I” in line 2 of HSDue of the Group III manuscript changes to “I was” in the Westmoreland

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134 The editors of the Variorum edition identify the Westmoreland manuscript as the Group IV manuscript.
I agree with the argument of the Variorum editors that since multiple manuscripts show the same changes can be taken as evidence that they were copied from original documents composed by Donne. Moreover, I also agree with their argument that the reordering of the sonnet sequence by Donne proves that Donne thought of this sonnets as a sonnet sequence. In my reading of Donne’s “Holy Sonnets”, I draw attention to how often sonnets in “Holy Sonnets” echo each other due to parallelism. I contend that these elements of parallelism, which reflect upon the speaker’s progress in his spiritual journey prove that Donne conceived of “Holy Sonnets” as a sequence. The order of the sonnets in the Westmoreland Manuscript is:

\[ \text{HSMade} > \text{HSDue} > \text{HSSigges} > \text{HSPart} > \text{HSSBlacke} > \text{HSScene} > \text{HSLittle} > \text{HSRound} > \text{HSMin} > \text{HSSouls} > \text{HSDdeath} > \text{HSWilt} > \text{HSSpit} > \text{HSWhy} > \text{HSWhat} > \text{HSBatter} > \text{HSSShe} > \text{HSShow} > \text{HSVexI}. \]

The third major stage in the evolution of these sonnets can be noticed in the Group I and II manuscripts. The Group I manuscripts consist of the Newcastle manuscript (B32) found in the British Library, the Cambridge Balam manuscript (C2) found at the Cambridge University Library, the Dowden manuscript found at the Bodleian library, Oxford, and a manuscript (SP1)

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135 Other examples of revision include

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sonnet</th>
<th>Line number</th>
<th>Group III manuscript</th>
<th>Westmoreland manuscript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HSDue</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>thy image</td>
<td>thyne image</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSDue</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>shall see</td>
<td>do see</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSPart</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>he with</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSPart</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>thy all-healing</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSPart</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>thy last</td>
<td>ylast</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSSBlacke</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thou, like a</td>
<td>Thou’art like a</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSSBlacke</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>from whence</td>
<td>to whence</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSScene</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Latest</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSScene</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>me every</td>
<td>my every</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSLittle</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>thereire flames</td>
<td>those flames</td>
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<td>HSRound</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Death</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSMin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>or if the</td>
<td>and if that</td>
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<td>HSMin</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>and reason</td>
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<td>HSMin</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>no more</td>
<td>Some clayme</td>
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<td>HSSoules</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>greife</td>
<td>true griefe</td>
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found at the St. Paul’s Cathedral’s library. The Group II manuscripts consist of the Denbigh manuscript (B7) found at the British library, the Puckering manuscript (CT1) found at the Cambridge University, Trinity College Library, a manuscript (DT1) found at Trinity College, Dublin, Norton ms.4503 (H4) found at the Harvard University Library, and the Dolau Cothi manuscript found at the National Library of Wales. Some alterations to the Westmoreland sequence are identified in the sonnet sequence of the Group I manuscripts: the word “humbly” changes to “only” in line 3 of HSSpit and the words “wch” and “no” change to “how” and “none” in line 4 of HSSpit.136

As far as this dissertation project is concerned, the difference between the texts of Donne’s sonnets in the Group I and II manuscripts is very negligible, while the main difference between the manuscripts of the Groups I and II sonnet sequences is that the sonnet sequence listed in the Group I manuscripts retains the title “Holy Sonnets,” whereas the sonnet sequence in the Group II manuscripts is untitled. Another difference between the Group I and II sonnet sequences is that the phrase “this might” in line 13 of HSSblacke of the sonnet sequence of the Group I manuscripts reads as “his might” in all the sonnet sequences of the Group II manuscripts, except the Dolau Cothi manuscript, where the phrase is retained as “this might.” In the Group I manuscripts, there is a phrase in line 7 of HSScene that reads “or presently (I know not).” This phrase changes to “my ever waking part shall” in the Group II sonnets. The word “dare” in line 9 of HSSmin in the sonnet sequence of the Group I manuscripts changes to “dares” in the Group II manuscripts. Finally, the word “have” in line 1 of the sonnet HSDdeath changes to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sonnet</th>
<th>Line number</th>
<th>Group III manuscript</th>
<th>Westmoreland manuscript</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HSWhy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>are we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSWhy</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Alas I’ame weaker</td>
<td>Weaker I am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSWhat</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Looke</td>
<td>Marke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSWhat</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>ranck</td>
<td>Fierce</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

136 Other examples of revisions include:
“hath” in all the manuscripts of Group II, except H₄ and the Dolau Cothi manuscript, which retain the word “have.” As the difference between the sonnet sequences of the Group I and II manuscripts is negligible compared to the difference between the Group III manuscripts and the Westmoreland sequence, I have followed the pattern established by the editors of the Variorum edition; I treat the sonnets of Groups I and II as if they were identical texts. Hence, in this chapter, I use the expression “Group I/II,” which I have borrowed from the editors of the Variorum edition. The major revision can be observed in the sequencing of the sonnets, where the 19 sonnets of the Westmoreland manuscript are scaled down to 12 sonnets in the Group I/II manuscripts. The sequential order of the sonnets is:

HSDue > HSBlake > HSScene > HSRound > HSMin > HSDDeath > HSSpit > HSWhy > HSWhat > HSBattle > HSWilt > HSPart. The editors of the Variorum edition write in their introduction, “Editors have not generally recognized the authenticity of the early, Group-III collection, and this *Variorum* is the first edition ever to present it as a distinct sequence” (lxiii). Most editors have not recognized the authenticity of the sonnets of the Group III manuscripts; similarly, most scholars have not focused their discussions on the Group III sonnets. Hence, in this dissertation, I explore the doctrinal influence on the sonnet sequence in the Group III manuscripts and argue there is definite proof of the Calvinistic doctrine in the sonnet sequence titled “Divine Meditations” in the Group III manuscripts. Moreover, I also conduct a reading of the three sonnets that were added to the Groups I/II manuscripts to argue further the identification of Calvinist influences on them, as well.
The Group III Manuscript Sonnet Sequence titled “Divine Meditations”

In any play, the exposition scene is always important, as it gives its audience an idea of the play’s theme and sets the tone of the play. The same is true for a drama, where the first sonnet in a sonnet sequence usually establishes the tone of the whole sequence. As such, *HSMade*, the first sonnet in the Group III sonnet sequence, is an example of this notion. In this sonnet the tone is set through the abject supplication of the persona to the in-text audience, God, and the looming danger of the persona’s soul being attacked by Satan should have prepared Donne’s coterie audience for what would occur in the following sonnets. We can notice the speaker’s spiritual journey in the Group III sonnet sequence, where the speaker transitions from being spiritually naïve to a devout Calvinist and this transition can be observed in three ways: 1) We notice the vacillation in the speaker, a trait I have already established was a trope observed both in Calvinist devotional practices and in Petrarchism, especially through the sonnets *HSMade* to *HSScene*, where the speaker is spiritually naïve in *HSMade* and *HSDue*, the speaker exhibits false conversion to God in *HSPart*, and the speaker eventually displays true conversion to God in *HSScene*; 2) The speaker has trouble accepting the Calvinist doctrine of salvation, so he contemplates Arminianism, but finally settles on Calvinism; and 3) Calvin has urged in his Institutes that a supplicant should be zealous when he prays. We notice the speaker praying zealously in the sonnets *HSLittle* and *HSRound*.

The speaker in *HSMade* and *HSDue* comes across as a person having a spiritual crisis and being spiritually naive. When Donne’s speaker asks for God’s grace in *HSMade*, he does show his remorse for his “past pleasure,” something that Calvin would have expected from the believers of the reformed religion. The speaker in his contrition is reminded of Calvin’s presentation of Ezekiel in his sermons that were translated by Lok, where Calvin stressed how
Ezekiel was distracted from the ways of God because of his material prosperity. The speaker’s “past pleasure” may refer to his indulging in such pleasures because of his prosperity. It is lines 3 and 8–9 that particularly allude to (V. II) of Marlowe’s play, Dr. Faustus, where Faustus is dragged into hell by Satan’s minions. The speaker in HSMade is yet to trust in God’s word and gain confidence by understanding the effect of Christ’s sacrifice on salvation. As we shall later see, Donne uses the same allusion to the same scene from Dr. Faustus in HSScene to underscore the confidence that the speaker has gained in his spiritual journey. The speaker’s argument in HSScene depends on the effective presentation of the picture of a self that is beset by paradoxes.

The sonnet starts with a paradox:

Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?

Repair me now, for now mine end doth haste,

I run to Death, and Death meets me as fast,

And all my pleasures are like yesterday;

I dare not move my dim eyes any way,

Despair behind, and death before doth cast

Such terror, and my feebled flesh doth waste

By sin in it, which it towards hell doth weigh.

Only thou art above, and when towards thee

By thy leave I can look, I rise agayne; (Lines 1 – 10)

The naïveté of the speaker is highlighted through one of the paradoxes in the poem: he has been made by God and God’s work is decaying. The fact that the speaker is naïve is addressed in the first sonnet of the sequence through his underlying implication that God’s creation should be perennial because as per Christian theology, Roman Catholic or reformed, due to Adam’s act of
disobedience, humans who are his descendants must die. This paradox is followed up by another paradox in line 4, which mentions that both the speaker and Death are rushing toward each other. By calling himself God’s “work,” the speaker not only implies again that he is penitent, but he also denies his own agency by turning himself into an object and further implies that God is the subject in the discussion. Line 5 presents the speaker in abject fright, so scared that he is “staring in the dark, not moving one limb lest he disclose his position to the enemy” (Simon 118). Line 5 can be read as an allusion to a battlefield, where a person is ambushed in the dark and he cannot move himself and risks being spotted by his enemies. This reading is further justified by the fact that the reader sees presents himself as a prize over which Satan wants to lay claim. Although, unlike the sonnets HSDue or HSPlayes, there is no direct reference to Satan in this sonnet; however, the fact that the speaker mentions in line 8 that he feels he is being pulled toward hell leads one to believe the speaker perceives himself as being targeted by Satan, a point that he brings up in the next sonnet, HSDue. Furthermore, “dimme eyes” is also a pun on “demise,” which could have been used as a legal term to imply “conveyance or transfer of an estate or a will” (Pollock 83). The use of the pun on “demise” creates an impression that whatever agency the speaker thought he had before HSMade started, now, the speaker insists the agency has demised. In other words, just as the speaker suggested above by using the word “work” that he has surrendered his agency to God, similarly, in this line, by using the pun on the words “dimme eyes,” the speaker reiterates that he has effaced his agency. He surrenders his agency to God hoping God can save him, a theme that is fully developed in the following sonnet in the sequence, HSDue. This pun also likens the speaker’s “falling eyesight directly with his approaching death, thus emphasizing his spiritual dilemma as he both runne[s] to death and dreads it” (Pollock 83). One can observe a difference between the treatment of Death by
Petrarch’s speaker in *Canzoniere* and the way Donne’s speaker feels about Death. When the speaker is going through his phase of despair in the *in-morte* section of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, the speaker hopes death will eventually relieve him of his misery: “Death will free me, where Love binds me fast” (307. 4). When the speaker is further stressed by his despair in sonnet 327, he cries out, “I beg for Death’s assistance against Death/For love with thoughts so dark has weighed me down” (7–8). Alternatively, Donne’s speaker in *HSMade* is wiser than Petrarch’s speaker in sonnet 327 of *Canzoniere*. Unlike Petrarch’s speaker, who believes that being separated from Laura-Daphne is death to him, Donne’s speaker understands that without God’s grace, his soul will be damned. As I mentioned in my second chapter, Calvin believed that at times, God may induce a state in an elect that would often feel like despair to the elect only to draw the elect closer to God. In this sonnet, Donne’s speaker is anxious that there is a chance he may not be rewarded with God’s grace. This anxiety induces a despair-like state in Donne’s speaker and as with Petrarch’s speaker in sonnet 307 of *Canzoniere*, he believes the only way he can obtain reprieve from this agony is by dying. Hence, the speaker runs to “Death.” However, if the speaker meets Death, there is a chance he will find out he has been deprived of God’s grace, and the speaker shudders at the thought of such an encounter. Unlike the speaker of Donne’s “La Corona” in the sonnet “Resurrection,” the speaker in *HSMade* has yet to comprehend the ramifications of Christ’s sacrifice. He has yet to understand and accept that Jesus Christ, through his sacrifice, has opened up an opportunity for his salvation; all he must do is have faith and trust God’s providence. The speaker presents a graphic image of his situation in lines 6–7—“Despair behind, and death before doth cast/ Such terror”—to underscore the terror and anguish he feels at the prospect of facing Death. The employment of a graphic image in poetry, in my opinion, is
always effective as a visual aid to a speaker’s argument. In line 8, the speaker underscores the message of line 2 and thereby reminds Donne’s readers of the argument of the poem: unless God saves the speaker’s soul by bestowing Grace upon him, the speaker will end up in hell. The speaker introduces the volta in line 11 and then finishes his petition, reminding God that only He can save the speaker from such a desolate situation by bestowing upon the speaker his Grace:

But our old suttle foe so tempteth me,
That not one houre I can my selfe sustain;
Thy grace may wing me to prevent his Art,
And thou, like Adamant drawe mine iron hart. (Lines 11–14)

The “iron hart,” which is heavy from sin, is responsible for weighing down the speaker in line 8. The speaker’s iron heart is heavy and cannot rise by itself, but again, as it is “iron” (sinful), it is attracted by God’s magnet as resolute “Adamant” love (Simon 120).

Although Donne’s speaker appears to be contrite in asking for God’s grace, Donne is also sure to present his speaker as someone who is spiritually naïve, much like the speaker in the first sonnet of “La Corona.” Donne creates this impression in HSMade by deliberately using certain ambiguous elements. For example, in the first line of HSMade, the speaker tries to efface his agency by presenting himself as “thy worke” of God, where “thy,” when added with the word “worke,” draws attention to God as someone who has created the speaker. However, he is unsuccessful in this strategy, as he speaks about the possessive “I” in the third sentence.

Furthermore, the use of “Repaire me now” is ambiguous, as it sounds more like an imperative

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137 Andrew Marvell’s poetic persona employs a picture in his poem “To His Coy Mistress” that is almost identical to this line. Marvell’s persona mentions to his mistress:

But at my back I always hear
Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity. (21–24)
command than a supplicant prayer. One must wonder that if someone fears for the state of his soul, should he not be begging for God’s grace rather than issuing a command? In fact, because Donne’s speaker does not pray for once proves the fact that he is struggling in his spiritual journey, as Simon points out about the speaker’s question in the first line:

his question sounds like a reproach to God, who has made him and allows his creature to decay. It is as thou he were putting the responsibility on God, “Thou hast made me, And shall thy worke decay?” This one line at once raises the question of God’s purpose in creating man, a being lost in darkness, unable to help himself and to reach his true end.

(118)

The fact that the speaker questions God’s purpose indicates his spiritual naiveté. Moreover, it is unclear from the fourth line in the sonnet whether the speaker has quit his “pleasures,” as he mentions his pleasures are “like yesterday,” but he does not clarify whether he has stopped indulging in the pleasures that led him to the predicament in which he finds himself. The use of “Only thou art aboue” in line 9 is ambiguous, as it is unclear whether the speaker puts emphasis on “thou” or on “art.” As Simon points out:

If the stress is on thou, it (the line’s meaning) suggests that this is an answer to the question in line 1: it is not in the nature of God to let His creatures decay; in this case “thou” seems to imply that the just God cannot but be a loving God who will lend a hand to help His creature. If the stress is on art, it suggests that the very existence of God, — “I am that I am”, (Ex. III, 14), — will counterbalance the effect of the weight that draws the feeble flesh towards hell. (119) 138

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138 My reading of *HSMade* is influenced by Simon’s reading of the sonnet, yet I do not entirely agree with her reading. Simon, a new critic, finds that the poem ends with the speaker confident of God’s mercy. Simon continues after this section:
These elements of ambiguity, when read along with the elements of contrition in *HSMade*, which is the first sonnet of the sequence, creates an impression that this sequence is a narrative of a person who has not figured out his relationship with God. Donne’s use of “agayne” is very important in this sonnet, because the phrase “I rise agayne” implies that “the fall and rise has occurred more than once, and hence is likely to occur again, that this is not the final” (Simon 119). The phrase “I rise agayne” also implies the speaker of *HSMade*, as with Petrarch’s speaker in poem 142 of *Canzoniere*, exhibits the Petrarchan trope of “false conversion to God.” Finally, in the phrase “Thy grace may wing me,” the cardinal word is “may,” as it implies that even after the speaker’s supplication, there is no certainty that God will bless him with Grace. These two lines would have impressed upon Donne’s target audience that they are watching the journey of a soul through its ups and downs and to expect such upheavals in the subsequent sonnets.

In addition to the spiritual naiveté of his speaker, in *HSDue*, Donne presents the speaker as a religious free-thinker, as he struggles and cannot fully accept the predestinarian implication of Calvinism. *HSDue* shares certain things that can also be observed in *HSMade*. For example, as we will soon see, in both sonnets, the speaker struggles with Calvinism as he explores his relationship with God. The speaker exhibits a sense of despair in both sonnets: in the first two

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In view of the stresses above, *thee*, and *thy* that follow I am inclined to think that Donne first expresses his confidence in God’s existence, then considers His nature, and finally realizes that the hard God whose dark purpose cannot be fathomed (l. 1) is also the loving God. “I rise again”, over against “weigh towards hell”, suggests the opposite poles to which man is attracted again as a physical force that cannot be resisted. Yet “By thy leave” qualifies the effect of this other force by linking with it the idea of a grant, a gift, an act of mercy.” (Emphasis added) (119).

The resolution of conflict implied in the phrase “a grant, a gift, an act of mercy” eventually leads Simon to claim, “The poem, which began on a note of despair, thus ends in Donne’s confession of his utter reliance on God” (120). Unlike Simon, as I am reading these poems in the context of the Calvinist theology and essentially as a part of a sequence, I find the ambiguities to which I refer in my reading of *HSMade* are not resolved. Perhaps the most damaging evidence in Simon’s reading is the presence of the word “may” in “thy grace may wing me.” If Donne’s speaker reflected his “utter reliance on God,” then he would use the word “will” instead of the word “may.” Donne deliberately does not resolve the ambiguities in the sonnet to imply the speaker of *Holy Sonnets*, as with the speaker of “La Corona” or Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, has begun a journey where he will eventually go through the “true conversion to God” and finally commit to God.
lines of *HSMade* and in lines 9 and 10 in *HSDue*. In none of these two sonnets does the speaker pray to God and in both the sonnets the speakers exhibit the Petrarchan trope of “false conversion to God.” Donne reiterates the impression of the speaker as someone who is exploring his relationship with God, as well as someone who is spiritually naïve, in the first eight lines of *HSDue*, when the speaker lists the “titles” by which he is due to God, which sounds like a business transaction and a legal discussion:

As due by many titles I resigne  

Myselfe to thee (o god): first was I made  

By thee, and for thee, and when I was decay’d,  

Thy bloud bought that, white which before was thine;  

I am thy sonne, made with thy selfe to shine,  

Thy servant, whose paines thou hast still repayd,  

Thy sheepe, thy Image, and (till I betray’d  

My selfe) a Temple of thy spirit Divine.  

Why doth the Deuill thus vsurpe in me?  

Why doth he steale, nay ravish thats thy right? (Lines 1–10)

Be it Roman Catholic theology or Reformed theology, one is supposed to submit to God and not negotiate with Him. Only someone who has yet to properly understand God’s mercy and benevolence—in His action of sending His son to pay for the crime of Adam’s disobedience—can think of negotiating with God as a common businessman. In this regard, Donne’s speaker in *HSDue* is spiritually immature, as with the speaker of the opening sonnet of “La Corona,” where the speaker treats Jesus Christ as an ordinary person because he believes that the “Crown of glory” that Christ achieved by sacrificing Himself can be achieved by writing verses. Moreover,
the interrogative sentences in lines 9 and 10 make the first eight lines sound like a subtle accusation. Just as in the first two lines of *HSMade* there was a subtle hint that the speaker was accusing God for being responsible for his fallen state, similarly, the speaker in *HSDue* comes across as someone who is audacious, desperate, and bold enough to slyly accuse God. The speaker starts in *HSDue* by presenting an asymmetrical relationship between God and the speaker (Pallotti 172). He seems to “resigne” his titles, but the speaker deliberately puns on “resigne.” In the following seven lines, the speaker lists the “titles” from which he is resigning, but by resigning from his titles, he is also (re)signing a new contract, a new document that renews the old relationship that he had with God. It is hard to miss that Donne’s speaker comes across as “hard and cold, as if he was loth to admit the many titles by which he is ‘due’ to God” (Simon 123).

The speaker is revising his relationship with God out of despair. Although, he may appear to be “cold and hard,” lines 8–9 (till I betray’d/ My selfe) show he knows he was at fault in ruining the relationship and the contract he had with God, and it is out of despair—“Why doth the Deuill thus vsurpe in me?/ Why doth he steale, nay ravish thats thy right?” (lines 9–10)—that the speaker is revising his relationship with God. Just as in the phrase “I rise agayne” in the previous sonnet *HSMade*, we noticed the Petrarchan trope of “false conversion to God;” similarly, in this resigning of a contract with God, in trying to reestablish new terms of a relationship with God, we notice the speaker’s “false conversion to God” because a truly devout person would never perceive his relationship with God in terms of a business negotiation. The way Donne’s speaker arranges his argument in the octet further implies the renegotiating of his relationship “is imposed upon him by his reason, and not the natural overflow of his feelings toward God” (Simon 124). In line 4 when the speaker says “Thy blood bought that, the which
before was thine,” he feels the “full weight of his own unworthiness in the face of a God who was paradoxically redeeming what was already His” (Gaster 1986). In other words, the “business-like” speaker does not have faith in God, but as it was his fault the previous business deal did not work out with his client (God), the speaker wants to renegotiate a “new” contract, wherein he hopes God could forgive him. As with any savvy business negotiator, he starts his “negotiation” by slyly accusing God of being the reason his business agreement did not work out. The fact that the speaker approaches God as a business associate and not as a supplicant should underscore his spiritual immaturity. Most critics fail to notice that the speaker in *HSDue* is sly and cunning in the way he re-fashions his self, or as Pallotti puts it, forges a new status quo, which make the readers misread the speaker’s actions. For example, unlike *HSPart*, wherein the speaker is honest in the first two lines in acknowledging that Christ allows him to identify himself with “This lambe” (line 5), the speaker in *HSDue* simply replaces Christ with himself in “I am thy sonne,” “Thy servant,” “Thy sheepe,” and “thy image.” For someone who has betrayed God and is on the verge of despair, that person should use Christ as a mediator for his salvation. Instead, we find the speaker directly ignores Christ’s role as a mediator for his soul’s salvation. While writing about Christ’s role as a mediator in *Institutes*, Calvin draws attention to those who do not acknowledge the role that Christ played by sacrificing Himself:

> Also, by this very thing they obscure the glory of his birth, and make void the cross; in fine, they strip and deprive of its praise all that he has done or suffered! For all these things lead to the conclusion that he alone is, and is to be deemed, the Mediator At the

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139 Lever points out the sources of this sonnet’s line 7. The biblical image of “sheep” can be observed in Matthew 18. 12–14, “image” in Genesis 1. 27, where it is mentioned that humans are made in God’s image, and “temple” in Corinthians 1 Corinthians 6. 19. Lever observes that these images “become increasingly impersonal and remote” (179). However, these are not the only sources where these images are found. As Pallotti points out, “Allusions to Christ as servant can be found in the so-called Servant Songs (Isaiah 42, 49, 50, 53); as sheep in Acts 8:32: as an image of God in Colossians 1:15 and Hebrews 1:3; as a temple in John 2:21” (182). The association of Christ with these images works in the poem.
same time they cast out the kindness of God, who manifests himself to them as the
Father. *For he is not Father to them unless they recognize Christ to be their brother.*

(Emphasis added) (III. xx. 21)

The fact the speaker does not approach God through Christ as a mediator, but usurps the role of
Christ out of despair, as Jacob usurps the birthright of his elder brother in *HSSpit*, shows that he
has a long way to go to becoming more mature spiritually. Pallotti argues that Donne’s speaker
presents his case as a lawyer: through the “insistent repetition of pronouns of the first and second
person, especially possessive, the tense itself constantly shifting from present to past, from past
to present, in order to cover the whole of human history from creation to fall to redemption,” to
underscore the “existence of an ‘essential’ tie, a ‘natural’ bond holding” (Pallotti 173) between
God and the speaker. She further observes:

Compatible with this meaning there is another sense which the verb *resign* conveys, that
is, *re-sign*, or sign again, or writing one’s name with the implication, here, that the
speaker re-signs not in his own name, but in the name of God (see Docherty 1986:138 –
9). Since the name implies identity, a re-signation implies a change in, a renewal of,
identity. The act of naming or re-naming – it should be remembered – is firmly placed
within the biblical tradition where it suggestively indicates ‘the mark of a new status quo’
(Lawton 1990: 106), a significant intertextual liaison connotatively enriching the
speaker’s opening act. Moreover, the verb *sign* also has the specific Christian meaning
connected with the sign of the cross. Thus re-signing oneself is an act that implies also a
renewed profession of faith. (182)

Pallotti is correct when she quotes Lawton to suggest the speaker is trying to establish a “new
status quo;” however, she fails to notice that the speaker neither prays to God as a profession of
faith nor expresses any remorse for betraying God. Because the speaker does not pray to God and does not show any contrition, his “renewed profession of faith” cannot be taken seriously. As with Pallotti, Docherty makes a mistake when noting the confusion in the first few lines of the sonnet between “I” and “thee” and asks:

Whose blood is shown here; whose body the ‘property’ or identity of whom? The confusion of identity is made shockingly explicit in the identification of Donne as other than himself, as the Son or representational incarnate figure or image of the ‘Father’ or God. In so far as Donne is also a temple of the Spirit (a repository of the breath/spirit, perhaps, or medium through which the spirit articulates itself in history), he becomes the Holy Ghost and its manifestation as ecclesia, as temple or church itself. (139)

Docherty’s explanation works if the lines are read in the context of the Protestant theology, but not so much when read in the framework of the poem. The speaker himself sets up the context of a business-like relationship with God, and he points out it was his fault that the relationship was jeopardized in line 4 and lines 7–8. Despite these mistakes, the interrogative sentence in line 9 reads more as an accusation, as if the speaker is asking: if I am your property (although I have made some mistakes), how come I, your property, am usurped by another proprietor, your arch-rival Satan? While distinguishing between justification and sanctification in Donne’s “Holy Sonnets”, Daniel Derrin writes:

It was an important concept in Protestant theology and is indeed likely to have occurred to those whose attention Donne wanted to secure. Once a soul or religious selfhood is justified by Christ, it “inherits” some coherence despite the ups and downs of the sanctification process. Cefalu has emphasized the importance of this “Calvinist” distinction between the processes of justification and sanctification for understanding
Donne’s *Holy Sonnets* more generally. The distinction developed from St. Paul’s remark (apparently about the longer process of sanctification): in Philippians 2:12 “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” From that point of view, the “I resigne” of line 1 is not an absent or false self, despite its faltering coherence, if it has at least been justified by God. The purchase of blood (l.4), which deals with both the religious self’s decay (l.3) and his betrayal (l.7), thus refers to the act of “justification” in which the sinner is simply given righteousness by God. The usurpation (l. 9) therefore describes rather the up-and-down state of sanctification, in which the saved person tries to become better. To that extent, the “I resigne” (l.1) still implies a sense of agency and selfhood, one which is simply conferred on it by justification, (148–149)

Derrin is correct when he notes the speaker in *HSDue* has not yet surrendered his sense of agency to God, something one must do in Calvinism to gain salvation. Derrin’s thesis lies in his argument that Donne used the persona in his “Holy Sonnets” to reflect on his predicament when he was about to take orders to join the Anglican Church, and his acquaintances, some of whom who were socially prominent and influential, such as his ex-patron Lady Bedford, attendant to Queen Anne, were suspicious of his decision as they remembered his past life (167). Because Derrin reads Donne’s Holy Sonnets as Donne’s attempt to refashion an image for himself in his social circle, he finds it difficult to accept Marotti’s observation that the speaker offers a “moral ultimatum” (Marotti 255) in the concluding lines of the sonnet (Derrin 149). However, when the sonnet is read in its own context, it is hard to miss that the speaker is blackmailing God:

> Except thou rise and for thine own worke fight,
> Oh I shall soone despare, when I doe see
That thou lov’st mankind well, yet wilt not chuse me,
And Satan hates mee, yet is loth to lose me. (Lines 11–14)

Thus, the sense of mild despair that is present in the opening line of HSMade becomes more severe in the concluding lines of HSDue, where the speaker believes he is about to end up in Hell. As we shall soon see, the speaker will recover himself this position of despair and will eventually exhibit “true conversion to God” in the sonnet sequence.

The speaker’s non-commitment to Calvinism becomes clear in the final couplet of HSDue because the lines can be interpreted in terms of Calvinism, as well as of Arminianism. This sonnet presents the speaker as a religious freethinker, or as Donne’s friend Sir Toby Matthew called him, a “libertine.” By using lines that can be interpreted in terms of multiple religious sects of Protestantism—especially Calvinism and Arminianism—the speaker is viewed as a religious freethinker. The concluding couplet of HSDue has both a Calvinist and an Arminian reading. Stachniewski’s reading of the couplet becomes useful in this context:

Calvinist influence is reinforced in the poem where Donne complains to God: That thou lov’st mankind well, yet wilt not chuse me.” William Perkins, the supremo of English Calvinism, ridiculed the syllogism: “Christ died for all men: Thou art a man: Therefore Christ died for thee” … In line with Calvinist theology then, Donne sees God as 1) beyond the scrutiny of human reason and morals 2) arbitrarily selective in the bestowal

\[140\] F.W. Brownlow draws our attention to this incident from Sir Toby Mathew’s life. He writes:
In 1607, when Mathew returned from Italy as a Catholic, the authorities imprisoned him. His friends, including Donne, visited him. They talked religion, and Mathew concluded that Donne and his friend, Martin, “were mere libertines in themselves”:
The thing for which they could not long endure me was because they thought me too saucy, for presuming to show them the right way, in which they liked not then to go, and wherein they would disdain to follow any other.
In calling Donne a libertine, Mathew was not accusing him of immorality or atheism; he was describing him as an ecclesiastical freethinker, unwilling to commit himself. (Emphasis added) (94)
of the grace necessary to repentance and thus to salvation 3) irresistible by those He chooses 4) loving all kinds of men but not all individuals. (Emphasis added) (701–702)

However, these lines can also be read as reiterating Arminian Universalism (Veith 120). “Thou lov’st mankind well” can be understood as implying that God loves all mankind, “so that God does not choose individuals whom He will save” (Veith 120). When the second part of the line—“yet wilt not choose me”—is read along with the first half of the line, it appears the speaker is saying that “God loves all mankind, and he is not just going to choose me to save.” As Veith points out, “Arminians do believe ‘Thou … wilt not choose’ the individual, except insofar as God chose to offer mankind a chance to be saved; rather, the individual must choose God. Calvinists would believe the opposite: God condemns mankind as a whole, but chooses the individual” (120). Even an Arminian reading of the sonnet would present the speaker as a duplicitous character whose method of choosing God is crafty. As we will see, from this position of religious non-commitment, Donne’s speaker will eventually commit to Calvinism.

Unlike *HSMade* and *HSDue*, wherein the speaker exhibits his spiritual naïveté by accusing God, the speaker in *HSSighes* and *HSPart* takes steps in the right direction toward a better understanding of his relationship with God; in *HSSighes*, the speaker comes across as a contrite speaker and in *HSPart*, he has properly understood the value of Christ’s sacrifice for mankind. Donne deliberately shows this dramatic change in the persona of his speaker, from someone who is audacious enough to blame God in *HSMade* and *HSDue* to that of a contrite speaker in *HSSighes*, to underscore the desperateness of his speaker in *HSMade* and *HSDue*. Moreover, as we shall soon see, when lines 9–14 of *HSDue* are read after *HSSighes*, the speaker appears more desperate to save himself rather than trying to blame God for him being in Satan’s clutches:
O might those sighes and teares returne againe
   Into my brest and eyes, which I haue spent,
   That I might in this holy discontent
Mourn with some fruit, as I have mourn’d in vain.
In my idolatry, what showers of rayne
   Mine eyes did waste! what griefs my hart did rent?
   That sufferance was my sin, now I repent;
Because I did suffer, I must suffer paine.
Th’Hydroptique, and night-scoutinge Theife
   The itchy Lecher, and selfe-tickling proud
Haue the remembrance of past ioyes of releife
   Of comminge ills: to poor me is allow’d
Noe ease, for longe, yet vehement greife hath byn
   Th’efect and cause, the punishment and sinne. (Lines 1 – 14)

The speaker adopts an oft-repeated gesture among Petrarchan speakers in the first two lines of the sonnet, when the speaker draws attention to his “sighes and teares” and “brest and eyes” in lines 1 and 2 of the sonnet. In HSSighes, Donne comes closest to commenting on how Petrarchan tropes can be used to serve a religious purpose. In a secular Petrarchan poem, the sighs and tears of a lover are calculated moves aimed at convincing the mistress of the sincerity of the lover’s affection. The speaker in a secular Petrarchan poem learns whether he has hard luck, as with that of Petrarch’s speaker in Canzoniere, where his mistress rejects his love, or whether he is luckier than Petrarch’s speaker because his mistress gives in to his appeals. However, in a religious sonnet specially written under the influence of the Reformation theology, there is no way for the
speaker to know for certain whether God has listened to his appeal; hence, the speaker suffers from anxiety about the state of his soul. However, treating God as a beloved is very problematic, as Fetzer observes, “Deliberate calculation, which encourages a speaker to act in a certain way in order to trigger the desired reaction, is highly problematic when the addressee is God,” (159) because unlike a mistress in a secular poem, God is omnipotent. One cannot fool God, and if one thinks he or she can fool God, then the speaker’s intentions may at best suggest he is spiritually naïve and at worst that he is a reprobate. With the knowledge that God knows everything and there is no way he can hide his sins from or con God, the speaker in line 3 of the sonnet takes recourse to “godly sorrow,” as can be assumed from the phrase “holy discontent.” In this line and especially in lines 5–6, the speaker contrasts his “godly sorrow” with the “worldly sorrow” of his past, in which he indulged when he shed tears over some mistress. In lines 5–6, the speaker repents for spending “tears” over his “Idolatry,” which scholars such as Smith and Grierson have taken for Donne’s youthful indiscretion. However, when line 7 is read along with lines 5 and 6, we draw a new meaning: the three lines underscore that the speaker in past has indulged in idle regret and melancholy or, as Gransden puts it, a “false grief for unworthy objects” (132). The meaning of “Idolatry” does not have to be an attachment to a lady or multiple ladies, as scholars such as Richards or Grierson seem to imply. According to the OED, “Idolatry” can also mean an attachment to a thing. Therefore, in lines 5–7, the speaker has realized that in his past, he was overtly attached to material objects and one lady, or perhaps multiple ladies, and has wasted his emotions by crying over his objects of affection. The speaker’s realization of his mistakes in lines 5–6 reminds one of line 10 of *HSMade*, where the speaker implies that in the past, he had transgressed against God through the phrase “I rise agayne.” Thus, Donne deliberately creates allusions within sonnets by leaving subtle clues to underscore the speaker is on a spiritual
journey through which he comes to understand his relationship with God. *HSSighes* is a significant sonnet in the sequence, because here, Donne’s speaker, unlike Petrarch’s speaker in *Canzoniere*, has realized without the aid of a figure such as Laura-Beatrice that by engaging in idolatry, he had turned away from God. Now that the speaker has realized his mistake, his object of affection has changed to God and he repents for his past sins. As Williamson points out, “‘sufferance’ signifies both ‘suffering’ and ‘indulgence’; likewise, ‘suffer’ means both ‘tolerate’ and ‘endure.’” (61). Thus, the speaker differentiates his state and that of a drunkard, a thief, or a lecher in that while they enjoy reminiscing about their indulgences, the speaker’s reminiscence is painful, as he is reminded of his sins. The irony of the speaker’s situation lies in the fact that the speaker thinks that the pain he must suffer by remembering his past indiscretions is akin to his pains in the past, when he was sad in his material pursuits. The speaker has yet to realize that the pain and anguish he must suffer while praying and lamenting for his past sins is much more severe than what he endured in past. The fact that Donne’s speaker has not realized this fact about agony and spiritual anxiety reinforces the impression that the speaker in *HSSighes* is still attempting to determine his relationship with God. Moreover, as in *HSMade* and *HSDue*, the speaker does not pray to God, and Donne deliberately makes his speaker not pray in *HSSighes* because the speaker has yet to understand the magnitude of Christ’s sacrifice and its effect on the salvation of a soul.

After establishing the speaker’s contrition in *HSSighes*, we finally find the speaker realizing the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice in *HSPart*. Unlike in *HSPart* and *HSDue*, the speaker in *HSPart* does not accuse God, but rather acknowledges Christ’s role as a mediator, something he did not do in *HSDue*:

Father, part of his double Interest
Vnto thy kingdme, thy sonne giues to me;

His ioynture in the kotty Trinity
He keeps, and giues me his Death’s conquest.

This lambe, whose Death with life the worlde hath blest
Was from the worlds beginning slayne, and he

Hath made two Wills; he with the Legacy

Of his and thy kingdome doth thy sonnes invest. (1–8)

This honest supplication is where the speaker realizes that by sacrificing himself, Christ has conquered Death, i.e., He has provided the opportunity for humans, including the speaker, “thy sonnes invest” (line 8), to gain salvation, which is a big step from HSDue; as we shall soon see, the next logical step for the speaker would be to pray to God. The speaker also implies his awareness of the concepts of being an elect and a reprobate according to the reformation theology in lines 9–10, when he writes, “Yet such are thy lawes, that men argue yet/ Whether a man those statuts can fulfill”. The people who doubt God’s laws are clearly reprobates, unlike the speaker, who seems to have submitted to and accepted God’s laws. As Klinck points out, the speaker in HSPart has become mature enough to speak of God as “power or sovereignty, is spoken of having a “kingdome”; the Son, as a redeemer, has invested in mankind with an interest in this “kingdome;” man, however, cannot fulfill the laws of this “kingdome” without “all healing grace and spirit” (line 11) (251). However, as the speaker is on a spiritual journey, and as any journey has its ups and downs; similarly, the Holy Sonnets present the speaker’s spiritual journey with “ups” and “downs.” If HSSighs and HSPart can be perceived as “ups,” then HSBlacke shows the speaker sliding back from what he has gained thus far in his journey.
Donne deliberately positions the sonnet *HSBlacke* to follow the sonnets *HSSighs* and *HSPart* to suggest the Petrarchan trope of “tossing back and forth,” i.e., vacillation in his sonnet sequence. Moreover, Donne’s *HSBlacke* dramatizes the speaker’s forgetting of the lesson of the effect of Christ’s sacrifice for the redemption of a human’s soul and then the speaker’s gradual remembrance of his lesson. As we shall soon see, *HSBlacke* raises the question on the speaker’s sincerity, because this sonnet creates an impression that the speaker may be play-acting in these sonnets, i.e., he is simply pretending to be penitent. This move to show the speaker in a sort of moral peril could very well have been a planned strategy on Donne’s part to highlight the kind of temptations and risks a person encounters in his day-to-day life regarding his salvation. It is these risks that a closer reading of *HSBlacke* seems to underscore, as it is a very ominous poem in that it begins with an apostrophe, where the speaker addresses his soul. The allusion of medieval chivalry is presented in the second line of the sonnet, as “Sickness” is presented as “Death’s Herald”:

Oh my blacke Soule! now thou art summoned
By sickness, Death’s herauld, and Champion;
Thou art like a pilgrimme, which abroad hath done
Treason, and durst not turn to whence hee’s fled;
Or as a Theife, which till Deaths doom be read,
Wisheth himselfe deliuered from prison,
But Damn’d and hal’d to Execution,
Wisheth that still he might b’ imprisoned. (Lines 1 – 8)

The phrase “thou art summoned” is an allusion to a courtroom, as if a defendant is summoned to faces charges. As in the previous sonnets, where Donne deliberately parallels other sonnets,
similarly, in *HSblakke*, Donne alludes to *HSDue*, where the speaker tries to negotiate his relationship with God. Unlike *HSDue*, wherein the speaker accuses God, here, the speaker turns the tables on himself and implies he is about to die and hence must face “sickness” in court. *HSblakke* paints a devastating picture of the speaker, who is afraid of facing “sickness” and who is not even his real opponent, which is Death. The impression of the speaker as a pathetic figure is reiterated through multiple metaphors in the octet: 1) the speaker is scared to face “Sickness,” 2) the speaker has committed “treason” in line 4, and 3) the speaker is like a “condemned” thief in line 5 who cannot face “death” like a brave “champion,” but rather seems to try desperately to stay alive. Due to its implicit reference to the sonnet *HSDue*, the speaker further appears as a hypocrite, as he had urged God to fight Satan over him, whereas he is reluctant, as implied in line 4 of the sonnet, to face his opponent. Just as the speaker in Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* turns toward God in sonnet 62, as shown in the first chapter, and later on turns back toward Laura-Daphne, similarly, in *HSblakke*, we find Donne forgets the lesson that he had realized in *HSPart*: Christ’s death has killed Death (line 5), i.e., Christ’s sacrifice has paved the way for the salvation of the speaker’s soul. Again, in sonnet, line 4, “durst not turn to whence hee’s fled,” presents the speaker as someone who has turned away from the source of his salvation. As Thomas Hester puts it:

he (the speaker) is guilty of “Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee’if fled.” “Durst not” denotes both the speaker’s lack of trust in mercy of the Word (“Turn ye to me” [Zach. 1:3]; “… from whence cometh my hel” [Ps. 121]) and his inability to “turne” to himself for a cure. … The “durst not” of the speaker’s fearful misreading of his relationship to Christ is mirrored, then, by unfolding presentation of the pilgrim conceit in which the initial premise of the comparison is negated by the subsequent “traitorous”
amplification. Thus, the traitorous pilgrim motif typologically repeats in a more elaborate shape the absence of response to the martial motif – itself merely a repetition of the proud betrayal of God’s “titles” in the previous sonnet [*HSDue*], a betrayal recognized there as a repetition of man’s original betrayal in Adam. (18–19)

The fact the speaker has reverted to the position of *HSDue* is further highlighted in the sestet of the sonnet.

The idea of the speaker struggling with the concept of Calvinism and the impression of the speaker as a religious freethinker are reiterated in the sestet of this sonnet. The subjunctive mood implies the speaker thinks he can receive grace if he is repentant.

Yet grace, yf thou repent, thou canst not lacke,
But who shall give thee that grace to begine?
Oh make thy self with holy mourning blacke,
And red with blushinge as thou art with sinne;
Or wash thee in Christ’s blood, which hath this might
That being red, it dyes red souls to white. (Lines 9 – 14)

The use of the word “grace” in line 9 is ambiguous, as it is unclear in which context the speaker uses the word “grace?” Does the speaker mean that God’s grace is available as long as the sinner chooses to repent, but that the speaker needs grace to repent in the first place (Wilmott 66)? The need for grace to repent is a Calvinist concept, but a Calvinist would never make his salvation contingent upon repentance, which the speaker attempts to do from line 11 onwards. Rather, the speaker in lines 9 and 10 appears as Arminian. As Veith has astutely pointed out, the conditional clause in line 9 (“Yet grace”) “intrudes itself between grace, offered as an alternative to damnation (…) and its “abundance” (“Thou canst not lacke”)” (124). The ambiguity of the
context and the question in line 10 reinforce the image of the speaker as a religious freethinker, which was generated in *HSDue* in the sequence and shows the speaker has yet to accept the Calvinist doctrine of salvation.

The use of the word “make” in line 11 of the sonnet raises the question of the sincerity of the speaker’s intention. The speaker asks his soul to “make” itself “blacke” through “holy mourning.” The use of the word “make” is synonymous with the word “manufacture:” just as on stage an actor often manufactures emotions, similarly, the word “make” implies the speaker pretends to turn his soul “black,” i.e., the speaker pretends to be contrite, but is not really contrite. The fact that the speaker is ambiguous about the context in which he is using “grace” indicates he may not be serious about his appeal. If the word “make” is read in the context of the suggested ambiguity, these lines imply the speaker is simply engaging in a verbal exhibition of passion and is not serious about his transformation. However, the concluding couplet does provide some hope for the speaker. The reference to Christ’s blood in line 13 repeats the allusion to Christ’s sacrifice. Although in the octave the speaker seems to have forgotten the lessons he had learned in *HSPart*, in the concluding couplet of the sonnet, he seems to have remembered something from his lesson, as he remembers that Christ’s sacrifice (Christ’s blood) has prepared the way for the speaker to gain grace, because it is due to being washed in Christ’s blood that his sinful red soul can transform into a pure white soul. Thus, in the concluding couplet, the speaker draws attention to the difference between Christ’s grandeur and the fallen nature of man:

> The creative “might” of His sacrifice offers a sharp contrast to the mortal nothingness of fallen man, whose fondest “Wish” is that he “might be,” whose sickest desire is to re-live his past and be “still …. imprisoned” rather than to be “delivered.” And the eternality of Christ’s gift is denoted by the present tense “dyes,” “hath this might,” and “being,” and
thus provides further contrasts to the deadly debt of man’s moral history which summons
him to be “damn’d and hal’d.” Christ’s blood, then, is present to “give [man] that grace to
beginner.” (Hester 22)

As the speaker suddenly remembers his lesson from *HSPart*, although he forgets his lesson for
some time in the sonnet, the speaker eventually gets ready to finally pray to God in the next sonnet.

In *HSScene*, we find the speaker praying to God for the first time in the sequence and
accepting the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, something with which he had struggled in the
previous sonnets of the sequence. The speaker mentions the trope of “pilgrimage” in line 2 to
highlight his spiritual journey that he started from *HSMade* to underscore the progress he has
made thus far. The speaker, who is glib in *HSDue* and a coward in *HSBlack*, has transformed in
*HSScene* to become honest and brave. Donne differentiates between the speaker’s tone and
attitude in *HSScene* and its preceding sonnet, *HSBlack*, through multiple factors, and he starts
with the use of the trope of “pilgrimage” in line 2, which becomes evident in the octave:

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This is my Playes last scene; here heav’ns appoint
My pilgrimage’s last mile, and my race
Idly, yet quickly run, hath this last pace,
My span’s last inch, my minuts latest point;
And gluttonous death will instantly vnjoint
My body and my soule, and I shall sleep a space;
Or presently (I knowe not) see that face,
Whose feare already shakes my euery ijoint. (Lines 1–8)
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Whereas in the octave of *HSBlack*, the speaker comes out as a pilgrim who is really worse than a criminal exile, because he had turned his back against God and doubts the Word of God, here, in *HSScene*, the speaker seems to genuinely compare himself to a religious pilgrim. While the speaker was afraid to face Death’s minion “Sickness” in *HSBlack*, in this sonnet, he does not panic about death. Unlike a condemned “thiefe” kicking and screaming, the speaker is calm about his approaching death. The speaker in *HSScene* has remembered from his lesson in *HSPart* that he does not need to fear death, as Christ’s sacrifice has paved the way for the salvation of his soul; hence, we find the speaker no longer afraid of Death. This knowledge calms the speaker when he says that he will be torn apart as soon as he is grabbed by “gluttonous death” in line 5.

In the concluding couplet of *HSMade*, the speaker doubts whether God’s grace “may” save him and he knows his soul will end up in Heaven:

> Then, as my soul to Heav’n (her first seat) takes flight,
> And earth-born body in the earth shall dwell,
> So fall my sins, that all may have their right,
> To where they are bred, and would press me, to Hell.
> Impute me righteous, thus purg’d of euill,
> For thus I leave the World, the flesh, the deuill. (lines 9–14)

The fact that the speaker prays in line 13 and asks God to “Impute me righteous” proves he has accepted the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. Lever points out that the first line also points toward the concluding scene of *Dr. Faustus* (260). Lever points out that in line 11, “the sins are granted repatriation in hell; but the sins are trying to jostle” the speaker with them, and hence “the conceit thus resembles the finale of *Dr. Faustus*” (180). Unlike the character of Dr. Faustus, the speaker is confident in his revived knowledge of Christ’s sacrifice and is confident God will
listen to his prayer, as implied by his imperative tone, and he will be “purg’d of ecuill” by God’s grace. As the speaker, finally prays to God in the sonnet, we can identify this sonnet as a moment that shows the Petrarchan trope of “true conversion to God.”

Despite the metamorphosis in the speaker’s image in *HSScene*, some elements are troublesome and still cast doubts on the speaker’s spiritual maturity. Lines 6–7 are problematic because of the ambiguous use of “I” in line 6. It is unclear from the line if “I” stands for the body or for the soul. If “I” stands for the soul, then these two lines would read that after death, the speaker’s soul will rest (“sleepe a space”) until Judgment Day, when he will get to see God’s face (Grierson 232). The belief that souls do not get to see God until Judgement Day is known as Mortalism and was perceived as heresy during Donne’s time. In fact, Donne himself rejected Mortalism in his sermons (7: 134). This potential reference to Mortalism can be made deliberately by Donne to imply this concept of heresy. Again, it is unclear in lines 7–8 whose face the speaker is afraid to see. Is it the “Devill’s,” as Pitts suggests, or is it God’s face? The reading of face as either God’s face or the Devil’s face seems to work in this context. The speaker may be scared that he is doomed and he believes that when he dies, he will end up facing Satan. If the face is indeed the “Devill’s” face, then the question comes up as to why the speaker prays to God to “impute” him with “righteousness.” The answer is that the speaker still prays to God with a fleeting hope that maybe he is wrong in his assumption that he is doomed, because according to the Calvinist doctrine, there is no way for a person to know whether he or she is an elect or a reprobate. Again, if the face is indeed God’s face, then lines 7–8 imply the speaker is afraid to face God because of his sins and hopes that God will spare him. These two alternate readings do not resolve the ambiguity, because some questions still remain unanswered. However, if the face is indeed God’s face, then the question arises: why does the speaker not use
nouns such as “Father,” “Lord,” “Christ,” or “God” as he does in other sonnets? Why does he address God in line 11 in an imperative tone: “Impute me righteous?” Should the speaker be submissive in his humility when he prays to God? The presence of such troubling elements in the sonnet may have been deliberate by Donne to suggest that although the speaker may have accepted the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and may have exhibited “true conversion” to God, there is always a chance that the speaker will get distracted by either material pursuits or by rival theological philosophies, such as Mortalism or Arminianism, which would distract the speaker from God and will eventually bring back the Calvinist trope of vacillation between hope and despair within the speaker.

Donne’s speaker follows Calvin’s exhortation to pray zealously in HSLittle and HSRound. As referred to in my chapter on Lok and Donne, Calvin expects in III. xx. 11 of the Institutes that a supplicant’s faith in God and hope in the salvation of the supplicant’s soul due to Christ’s sacrifice trump the supplicant’s fear of damnation when the supplicant prays to God. However, according to the Calvinist doctrine, a supplicant can never know whether he is an elect as long as he lives. This fact that the supplicant has no guarantee of his election is responsible for making the supplicant pray fervently and zealously to God. In the second line of HSLittle, the speaker draws attention to the divine elements—“Angelicke spright”—still present in him despite the fact he is a fallen creature. In line 3, “But blacke sinne hath betrayed to endless night,” the speaker points out that it is this fallen nature of mankind that has made him “sin” and now, he faces damnation. This realization of the speaker that he has sinned makes him contrite, just as Calvin discusses in III. ii. 2 of Institutes, and we find the speaker prepares to weep out of remorse in lines 6–8 of the sonnet. Weeping is a common trait among Petrarchan speakers and
there can be no doubt that the speaker of “Holy Sonnets” is a Petrarchan speaker. What makes this speaker Calvinistic, at least in this sonnet, is his zeal in the sestet:

   But oh! It must be burnt: alas the fire
   Of lust and envy haue burnt it heretofore
   And make it Fowler: let their flames retire
   And burne me, o Lord, with a firy zeale
   Of thee and thy house, which doth, in eating, heale. (9–14)

The repetition of the exclamation in lines 9 and 13, the repetition of caesura in lines 9 and 12 creates the impression that the speaker is overcome with remorse for his sins of “lust” and “envy” and feels the only way for him to suffer for his sins is if God punishes him rigorously “And burne me” (line 13). Unlike Lok’s speaker, who is not specific about his sins, Donne’s speaker is very specific about his sins; whereas Ezekiel did not ask God to punish him in Calvin’s sermons but was thankful nevertheless that God had punished him, Donne’s speaker asks God to punish him for his sins. There is a definite allusion to James 5.3 in the concluding lines of the sonnet: “Your gold and silver is cankred, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eate your flesh, as it were fire.” As Paul Delany points out, “The resolution of the poem comes out from the union of ‘fire’ and ‘zeal’ since one kind of fire will consume those guilty of greed and lust by eating their flesh, while another kind, the fire of zeal, will heal the sinner and prepare him for resurrection” (7). As the speaker belongs to the Reformation period, he does not need to believe in purgatory. God’s punishment of him on this earth, as with God’s punishment that he meted out on Ezekiel, will “burne” the speaker, but will at the same time develop a “firy zeal” in the speaker.
The Calvinist nature of the speaker is clearer in the sestet of *HSRound* than it is in *HSLittle*. The speaker assumes a prophetic voice in the octave of the poem, where he brings up the allusion of Judgment Day in the octave of *HSRound*; however, in the sestet, we notice a sharp change in the speaker’s tone, as we find that instead of a prophetic voice, the speaker engages in a personal prayer to God:

But let them sleepe Lord, and me mourn a space

    For yf aboue all these my sinnes abound,

‘Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,

    When we are there; here on this lowly ground

Teach me howe to repent, for that’s as good

    As yf th’ hadst seal’d my pardon with thy bloud. (Lines 9 – 14)

This sestet is evidence of what Calvin has identified as “true faith” in III. ii. 11 of his *Institutes*. Reprobates, such as Saul, according to Calvin, may have an impulse to love God and a temporary insight into God’s magnificence. However, here, the speaker, despite realizing it may be too late for him to pray for his sins, like an elect, has “true faith” and confidence in God’s word and “hope” that he will still be saved and asks God to teach him “howe to repent.” This sestet is also an example of a believer in the Reformed religion looking for a sign of election. Calvin has suggested that an elect may have an occasional sign of election. In the couplet, the speaker takes his repentance as a sign of his election. The doctrinal confusion of the couplet has not gone unnoticed by the critics. Rollin points out, “What most marks this confusion of Donne’s speaker, however, is his claim that learning how to repent will be ‘as good/ As yf th’ hadst seal’d my pardon with thy bloud.’ The conditional mood used here is shocking if not heretical” (138).

What Rollin fails to notice is that in III. xx. 5 of *Institutes*, Calvin has pointed out that when a
supplicant uses plain language in his prayers, he can get confused and overwhelmed, and God does not mind this confused prayer in III. xx. 16. Hence, the speaker’s doctrinal confusion that his repentance guarantees his salvation actually proves the speaker as a Calvinist. As we shall see in the next section, the sonnets HSSpit, HSBatter, HSWhat, and HSWHy in the Group I/II sequences that replace the sonnets in the Group III manuscript sequence underscores the Calvinistic nature of the “Holy Sonnets”.

Replacement of the Sonnets in the Group I/II Manuscript Sonnet Sequence titled “Holy Sonnets”

In HSSpit, the speaker alludes to HSDue to underscore he has changed due to his true conversion to God in HSScene. The speaker’s passion becomes obvious in the first line of the sonnet due to his imperative tone:

Spitt in my face yee Iewes, and pierce my side

Buffett, and scoff, scourge, and crucifie mee,

For I haue sinn’d, and sinn’d, and only hee

Who could doe none iniquite hath dyed.

But by my death cannot bee satisfied

My sinnes which pass the Iewes impietie;

They killl’d once an inglorious man, but I

Crucifie him daily, being nowe glorified. (Lines 1 – 8)

The opening lines of the sonnet allude to HSDue, wherein the speaker tried to renegotiate his relationship with God. Just as in line 5 of HSDue, where the speaker had tried to replace Christ in the phrase “I am thy Sun” in line 5, similarly, in this sonnet, Christ is replaced in the opening quatrain of the sonnet. As Asals points out, “The opening lines are the ‘re-signing,’ i.e., the
‘rewriting and resigning’ of the speaker to God that he ‘announced as his intention’ in *HSDue* 1–2” (130). However, while the speaker was spiritually naïve in *HSDue*, lacking the proper knowledge of the implications of Christ’s sacrifice, the speaker in *HSSpit* knows his death will not be enough to redeem himself. Calvin in III. xx. 9 of *Institutes* has implied that we should pray daily because we sin daily: “we see that it is not enough for us to call ourselves to account each day for recent sins if we do not remember those sins which might seem to have been long forgotten.” Similarly, the speaker in the second quatrain emphasizes that he sins daily against Christ: “I/Crucifie him daily” (lines 7–8). In a way, the speaker renounces his identification with Christ in the second quatrain and identifies with a Judas-like figure. As Roston points out, the second quatrain thus implies that the speaker’s “own grave impiety in moments of weakened faith” causes him “greater anguish than even the sin of the original murderers” (384). It is exactly this anguish or this godly sorrow that a Calvinist is supposed to display in his daily prayers. This renunciation of an identification with Christ by the speaker due to his fallen nature exhibits the speaker’s spiritual maturity and is sharply different from the attitude that he exhibited in *HSDue*, where he tried to negotiate his relationship with God and somewhat supplanted Christ. The fact that the speaker displays this “godly sorrow” may be a sign that the speaker is an elect. The speaker further displays his spiritual maturity through the allusion of Jacob gulling his father:

    And Iacob came cloathed in vile harsh attire

    But to supplant, and with gainfull intent;

    God cloath’d himself in vile mans fleash that soe

    Hee might bee weake enough to suffer woe. (lines 11–14)
The difference between Christ and Jacob is that Jacob, although an elect, is still tainted by Original Sin, which is pretty obvious. Jacob, who is an elect, gulled his father into blessing him for his “gainfull intent,” whereas Christ out of his infinite mercy sacrificed himself to ensure mankind’s salvation. The fact that the speaker displays his awareness that even though a person can be an elect, he still has the seed of depravity within him proves he is spiritually mature.

In *HSWhat*, the speaker highlights the Calvinist doctrine, as it can be deduced from Calvin’s sermons on Ezekiel that even though one is an elect, there is always a possibility that the person can be distracted from God’s path without realizing. This sonnet alludes to *HSSblacke* and *HSDeath*, because the speaker, unlike how he was in *HSSblacke* and like how he was in *HSDeath*, is not scared of death. The speaker ponders the possibility that the particular day when he faces Death can very well be Judgment Day and in doing so, the speaker further alludes to *HSScene* and *HSRound*. While in line 7 of *HSScene*, the speaker is scared to meet God (or may be “Deuill”?), the speaker in *HSWhat* presents as sure of his state of election in that he is not afraid to face God, the Son, Jesus Christ. This sense of assurance is always a suspicious thing in Calvinism, and *HSWhat* shows the speaker errs from his false sense of assurance.

In the octave, the speaker addresses his soul by asking him what it would do if the particular day in which the sonnet is set is the Judgment day.

What if this present were the worlds last night?

> Mark in my hart Ô Soule where thou dost dwell

The Picture of Christ crucified, and tell,

> Whether that countenance can thee affright.

Teares in his quench the amazeing light,

> Bloud fills his frownes which from his pierc’d head fell
And can that tongue adjudge thee vnto hell

Which prayed forgiuenessfor his foes fierce spight? (Lines 1 – 8)

Any sensible speaker would have developed the eschatological reference in the octave and would have shown how the soul should be terrified of Judgment Day. However, this speaker, who is a master at seducing ladies, knows from his art of seduction that in a devotional setting, the strategies of persuasion that had worked on women will not work on Christ. In other words, the speaker is spiritually mature enough to know that to bring Christ down to the pedestal of his mistresses would not only be a foolish thing, but it would also be a sin. Therefore, instead of dwelling on the impending doom, he tells his soul that it shares its residence, which is his heart, along with the object of the speaker’s admiration: a picture of Jesus Christ. The speaker’s admiration of Christ’s picture can be perilous in a predominantly Calvinist setting, as Calvin has mentioned in his Institutes that a supplicant can become distracted from God by an image. However, it is crucial for the speaker’s objective to suggest that his heart holds a picture of Jesus Christ, as he wants to convince Christ to spare him from the harrows of Judgment Day and not send him to Hell as a punishment for his sins. This emphasis on Christ’s image in the octave implies that although the speaker may have good intentions, he became distracted from God’s path. It is true that Calvin expects supplicants to keep Christ in their hearts, but he never implies that he expects the supplicants to have an “image” of Christ in their hearts. Rather, he expects the supplicants to have God’s Word and Holy Spirit within them. The fact that the speaker focuses on Christ’s image as can be inferred from phrases including “The Picture of Christ” (line 3), “Teares in his quench” (line 5), and “Bloud fills his frownes” (line 6), which present the speaker

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141 One of the criticisms against Catholicism was that Catholics focused more on objects, such as a crucifix or statues of saints, rather than the Holy Spirit or the scriptures. The same criticism can be levied against Petrarch’s speaker in the in-vita section of Canzoniere, where he focuses more on the image of Laura-Daphne, i.e., her hair, arms, legs, etc., than the actual Laura.
as being guilty of “idolatry.” The irony of the speaker’s speech in the octave becomes obvious when one follows the way the speaker builds his argument. For example, the speaker asks his soul if it is scared by the distorted features of Jesus’s face, the face which the speaker’s soul describes has “teares” in its eyes and “blood” in its “frownes” (line 6). Usually “frownes” would imply that subject is angry. However, in this context, the speaker implies that the frown upon Jesus’ face is due to the pain of his head pierced with thorns. Therefore, through subtle implications, such as the ones described in the previous sentences, the speaker transforms a face that would have horrified its audience into an object of beauty. The speaker’s purpose in such a transformation is to flatter Christ and to gain his mercy on Judgment Day.

It is in the sestet of the sonnet, the speaker makes his decisive rhetorical move to convince Christ not to punish him. The octave ends with a rhetorical question, as it is implied by the speaker that his soul will not be scared of Christ. However, the speaker is yet unsure of his salvation. Hence, to be sure of the efficacy of his rhetorical move, the speaker flatters Christ by discussing Christ’s beauty in the context of his seduction. In the sestet, the speaker assures his soul that Christ, much like his numerous mistresses, has a beautiful face. The speaker, while courting his mistresses, had flattered them by saying that a person with a beautiful face is generous. Because Christ has a beautiful face, by the speaker’s logic, Christ should be merciful and should not punish the speaker. However, the speaker’s anxiety becomes obvious when one scrutinizes the analogy of a beautiful face. As per Christian theology, Satan, much akin to Christ, can take beauteous form. Therefore, the speaker’s logic of Christ being merciful is fallible because Satan, who can take the shape of a beautiful person, is not merciful, which proves that mercy or pity has nothing to do with a person’s beauty. Carey’s observation becomes helpful to deciding why the speaker engages in such a dubious move in *HSWhat*: “The poem’s
argumentative collapse,” argues Carey “gives us a glimpse of a mind humiliatingly aware of its limits, when faced with the divine” (34). This sonnet highlights the mistakes a supplicant can make out of desperation. The speaker in this poem is desperately searching for a sign of election. However, as he contemplates Christ’s distorted bloody face, “all he can find among the dazed licentious thought that have become habitual to him in the hideous piffle about pity and pretty faces which the last six lines throw up” (Carey 47). Thus, unlike in HSSighes, where the speaker genuinely regrets his “idolatry” (line 5), the speaker in his desperate search for a sign of election ends up using “idolatry” to convince himself of his election, which turns out to be a disaster.

HSBatter is perhaps the most Calvinistic of the sonnets that are added in the Group I/II manuscript sequence, because the speaker believes that God should be more severe to him, only to draw the speaker closer to God. Moreover, this sonnet underscores Calvin’s notion of the complete depravity of human beings, as can be noted in the first 10 lines of the sonnet:

Batter my heart, three person’d God; for you

As yet, but knock, breathe, shine and seeke to mend,

That I may rise and stand, orethrowe mee, and bend

Your force to break, blowe, burne, and make mee newe.

I, like an vsurp’d towne, to another due,

Labour to’admitt you; but oh to noe end,

Reason, your Vice-roye in mee, mee should defend,

But is captiu’d, and provues weake or vntrue,

Yet dearly I loue you, and would bee loued faine

But am betroath’d vnto your enemye.

Divorce mee,’vntyre or breake that knott againe;
Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I,
Except you inthrall mee, neuer shalbee free
Nor euer chast except you ravish mee. (Lines 1 – 14)

It is no surprise that this sonnet follows HSWhat in the Group I/II manuscript sequence. In HSWhat, the speaker is desperate for a sign of election and makes a mistake while praying to Christ. In HSBatter, the speaker is equally desperate for salvation and prays with a passionate zeal, as he does in HSSpit. The speaker in HSBatter believes he has so sinned against God that the only way he can be saved is if God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all join their forces and save the speaker. God the Father is to “breake” the door of the speaker’s sinful heart and force it open instead of merely knocking, God the Son, Jesus Christ, is to “burne” the speaker’s sinful heart instead of simply shining the light of faith in it, and God the Holy Spirit can infuse grace, but the speaker’s heart is so sinful that He must “blowe” grace into the speaker’s heart, instead of just breathing it. There are opposing sets of verbs in lines 2 and 4; “knock” is paired against “break,” “breathe” is paired against “blowe,” “shine” is paired against “burne,” and “bend” is paired against “make.” When the violence associated with words like “break,” “blowe,” and “burne” is compared with the verbs from line 2 such as “knock,” “breathe,” and “shine,” it underscores the difference between the treatment that the speaker has received so far from God and the kind of treatment that the speaker wants from God. The speaker feels that the God has been relatively easy on him thus far, and the speaker wants God to be harsher to him, because only by being severe to the speaker can God save the speaker. Thus, in a way, HSDeath alludes to HSLittle of the Group III manuscripts, where the speaker asks God to be more severe to him. Due to the fallen nature of human beings, Calvin was suspicious of the human faculty of reason. Calvin insisted no part in a fallen man, which included human reason,
is free from the noetic effects of sin.\textsuperscript{142} “Reason,” as Wilmott points out, “is God’s deputy, planted in man to enable him to distinguish between right and wrong, and so should be available to ‘defend’ him from ‘the crafts and assaults of the devil’” (69). However due to the depraved nature of humans, reason, which is supposed to be God’s viceroy in the speaker, has only made him “a calculated and efficient a sinner” (Fausset 244). It is due to his depraved nature that the speaker finds himself “betroath’d vnto” (line 10) both God’s and his enemy, Satan. The speaker in \textit{HSBatter} thus turns out to be a more pious person than an elect, such as Ezekiel. Whereas Ezekiel had ignored God when he was prosperous and asked for God’s mercy only when he was afflicted by God’s wrath, Donne’s speaker begs God to punish him for his sins before God actually decides to punish the speaker. The paradox of the concluding couplet is paralleled in line 3 and the couplet point to the speaker’s complete surrendering to God. Just as the speaker can only “stand” (line 3) straight and sinless only after he has been tormented by God by being overthrown on the ground, similarly, the speaker can only be “chaste” if he has been ravished by the “three person’d God.” This paradox finds its corollary in the Calvinist doctrine. The principal actor in \textit{HSBatter} is God; no matter how much the speaker prays in \textit{HSBatter}, if the God decides not to “ravish” the speaker, there is nothing that the speaker can do about it. Similarly, according to the Calvinist doctrine, a supplicant can keep praying for a sign of election, but as long as he is alive, he will never know for sure the state of his election.

In a letter to his friend Goodyear, Donne writes: “a graver course, then (sic) of a Poet, into which (that I may also keep my dignity) I would not seem to relapse. The Spanish proverb informes me, that he is a fool which cannot make one Sonnet, and \textit{he is mad which makes two}” (Italics mine). As Donne wrote multiple sonnets, one can never know if he thought of himself as

\textsuperscript{142} As he strongly believed in his doctrine of human depravity, he also remarked in his Commentary on Genesis 6:3 “the reason of man is no less blind than his affections are perverse.”
a “fool” when he wrote that letter or whether it was a private joke between him and his friend, Goodyear. Unlike Herbert, Donne may not have written a sonnet explaining how he could use Petrarchism to present a speaker as a devout Calvinist. Although Donne may not have explicitly expressed an awareness like that of Herbert in using Petrarchism to present his speaker as a Calvinist, as this dissertation project has shown, it can be definitely concluded that Donne was certainly aware of the fact that Petrarchan tropes can be used in religious sonnets to underscore Calvinist theological doctrines.

143 George Herbert wrote the “Sonnet I” when he was seventeen over a New Year’s Eve and sent it to his mother. In that sonnet, Herbert shows clear awareness that Petrarchan tropes can be used to pray to Christ as a Calvinist would.
Conclusion

This dissertation project initially began with a focus on Donne’s “Holy Sonnets,” including the objective of tracing its influences. An investigation of the theological issues of, the influence of different theological doctrines on, and the place among modern English sonnets occupied by Donne’s “Holy Sonnets” broadened the scope of this dissertation. Eventually, I included an analysis of Donne’s “La Corona” and his secular poems, and this finally led to the current structure of this dissertation, which broadly participates in what Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti identified as the “turn to religion” movement in early modern English studies, by which they meant the plethora of academic writing focused on the topic of religion. In their article, Jackson and Marotti present a brief survey of literary scholars and historians who have written during the 1980s and 1990s on the influence of the Christian religion, both the Roman Catholic and the Reformed sects, on sixteenth and seventeenth century English literature, society, and culture. That said, there is a crucial difference between the way Jackson and Marotti use the expression “turn to religion” in their article and the way I use it in this section. Jackson and Marotti’s understanding of the concept of the “turn to religion” phenomenon in early modern English studies is essentially based on the use of critical theories, such as New Historicism and French phenomenology. In my dissertation, I have deliberately disregarded the use of theory-based criticism, such as gender criticism, new historicism, or Marxist criticism. Unlike the popular trend of using theories in academic works, my dissertation belongs to the camp of traditional formalist criticism and new criticism. As I primarily focus on the effects of the Calvinist theology on the genre of the sonnet, this dissertation can also be perceived as genre criticism. Unlike Jackson and Marotti, I am using the expression “turn to religion” to signify any
academic writing that may or may not be based on theory in early modern English studies and that focuses on religion as its subject matter.

Now that I have completed the major chapters of my dissertation and now that I can think of this dissertation as a very rough draft of a book manuscript, I realize the focus is not quite on the literary and theological influences on Donne’s Petrarchism. Rather, this dissertation is a manuscript of a book on the Reformation poetics in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century English literature. Hence, I believe that one way to revise this dissertation into a draft of a book manuscript is to rearrange the chapters and include a chapter on Petrarch’s *Canzoniere*, a chapter on Anne Lok, a chapter on Sir Philip Sidney, and perhaps two chapters on Donne.

The critical controversy of the nature of the Reformation and the Catholic resistance to the Reformed theology is still a topic of debate in early modern English studies. For example, the narrative of historian John King that posited the Reformation was forcefully imposed by the upper echelon of English society and passively accepted by the commoners has been challenged by historians such as Eamon Duffy and Christopher Hugh, who argue that residual Catholic elements still survived in the English Reformation and that the commoners were resistant to the imposition of the Reformation theology on them. Scholars such as Patrick Collinson and Ethan H. Shagan provide a more nuanced reading of this transition from the renunciation of Catholicism to the adoption of the Reformation theology in English society. Shagan, for example, argues that this transition involved a complex process of negotiation between the state and ecclesiastical authorities and the mass populace. This dissertation can also be developed into

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144 He reads Donne’s “Canonization” as a poem, where “the poem’s speaker and his beloved embody the sacerdotal abuses of the Church of Rome or more probably, their vestigial presence in the Church of England” (120). Labriola points to a vestigial presence of the Church of Rome in the Church of England:

The laity provided stipends along with their requests invoking the religious to pray on their behalf to the Lord and to the saints. At times, a rich benefactor donated substantially to a cathedral chapter, thereby invoking the religious, most notably the canons and canonesses to pray for his or her intentions or to include these intentions in a liturgy. (116)
a work that parallels Shagan’s work. I have discussed in this dissertation how Sidney tried to adapt a poetics that he inherited from medieval Roman Catholic Europe into a theory that worked with the Calvinist theology, but what can come out this dissertation is a more in-depth comparative study of how both Protestant and Catholic poets both adapted or modified Petrarchan tropes to underscore their respective theological doctrines. Sonnets by Catholic poets, such as William Alabaster’s sonnet sequences, may become useful for this study.145

The useful contribution this dissertation makes to early modern English studies is in the discovery of areas in which the tropes of Calvinism and Petrarchism overlap. This discovery helps us to recognize the Petrarchan qualities of a sonnet sequence, such as that of Lok, which are otherwise difficult to identify. The discovery of this overlap may also generate a new discourse on how attempts were made in reformed England to adapt a theory of poetry that originated from medieval Roman Catholic Europe. Due to the limited time and scope of this dissertation, I focused my discussion of Calvinism on Calvin’s Institutes and some of his commentaries on Psalms, and my discussion of Petrarchism was focused on Petrarch’s Canzoniere and a section from Petrarch’s On His Own Ignorance and That of Others. If the scope of the study of Calvinism and Petrarchism was broadened, i.e., if other texts by Calvin and Petrarch were incorporated into the study of Petrarchism and Calvinism, then I am sure the overlap between Petrarchism and Calvinism would have been much wider than in this dissertation.

This dissertation also makes another significant contribution to the study of Petrarchism in early modern English studies. I have drawn attention in my chapter on Petrarch’s Canzoniere to the religious nature of Petrarchism, wherein I argue in my chapter on “Sidney and Donne” that

145 William Alabaster’s life serves as a curious corollary to that Donne. Alabaster converted to Catholicism and wrote sonnets about his Roman Catholic faith and conversion. He later renounced Catholicism and received a prebendary in St. Paul’s Cathedral.
Donne could provide a critique of Petrarchan tropes, such as the role of a saintly figure for the salvation of a supplicant, because the doctrines of the Reformation theology relegate the role of a mediator to Jesus Christ and refuse any role to the saints as agents interceding on behalf of a supplicant. Donne’s critique of Petrarchism in his secular poems can thus be seen as a part of the complex process through which English society gradually transitioned from Roman Catholicism to the Reformation. My reading of Donne’s secular poems as a critique of Petrarchan tropes that lack any religious significance in the Reformed society paves the way for a reading of any Petrarchan trope used by any early modern English poet in their secular poems either as a reaction to or as a process of the complex transition from Roman Catholicism to English Protestantism.
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