The Exculpation of the Desperate: Comforting the Desperate in England, 1580-1680

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In *Troilus and Cressida*, William Shakespeare writes that "Words pay no debts." The irony is clear: a playwright and poet who paid his monetary debts with words observes that language can only do so much to repay (or pay back) those we owe a non-monetary debt. Now, long after I began writing this dissertation, I'll use some words to repay the debts I owe to so many.

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For my daughters,

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Abstract

In *The Exculpation of the Desperate*, I explore how four prominent figures use despair to comfort the desperate, exploring how despair rhetorically functions throughout a largely religious discursive environment. Focusing on the years between 1580 and 1680, I show that despair allowed writers a rhetorical conceit by which they were able to assuage religious doubts, encourage emotional support, and argue doctrinal contentions. I primarily focus on religious despair, showing that these case studies are capable of simultaneously drawing on residual and emergent notions of a term in order to engage with on-going cultural, legal, and religious controversy. Each chapter focuses on a specific author, including William Shakespeare (*Richard II*), John Donne (Works), Robert Burton (*Anatomy of Melancholy*) and John Milton (*Paradise Lost*).

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Chapter I

"Above All Fears and Despairs"[1]:
An Introduction to Religious Despair

Writing a year after the Great London Fire of 1666, Owen Stockton explains that "No man should let such great judgments as this Fire and the late Pestilence pass away, without being some way bettered in his spiritual Estate by them." A nonconformist minister, Stockton was interested in soothing the trauma left by the fire and in explicating its anagogic purpose, that "the design [of said Fire] whereof is to instruct and excite both such as escaped, and such as suffered by this dreadful Fire, to make an holy use and a Christian improvement of this sad and solemn Providence, and also to quiet and comfort such as are troubled and cast down at the loss of their Estates."[2] Naturally, the suffering from the fire was great,[3] but for the survivors, the eschatological effects were greater: Why did God punish England with fire? Why did he spare some and not others from the destruction? Fear is rooted deep within these questions, a dreadful need to find out what obscured wrong had warranted this punishment. Stockton's goal, to be crass, is to put trauma and suffering to work both to promote Christian values (God's involvement on earth) and suffering (God's concern for the sufferer), but he is forced to engage with the realities of such catastrophic events as the London Fire, including the dangerous, long-lasting effects of despair.

Catastrophes like the fire encouraged a sense of doom within the city, exacerbating the city's occasional struggles with famines and pestilence, like the early bubonic outbreak of 1665, and we should not ignore how these communal woes impacted the individuals who survived

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[1] John Smith, "The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion," In *Select Discourses* (London: J. Flesher, 1660), 426.

[2] Owen Stoctkton, "To the Reader," In *Counsel to the Afflicted* (London: E. Cotes, 1667).

[3] As the first major London fire, the Great Fire destroyed nearly a quarter of the metropolitan area (over 13,000 buildings) and burned for around four days. Garrioch has recently questioned how successful the Fire was in changing how the English approached urban life. David Garrioch, "1666 and London's Fire History: A Re-Evaluation," *The Historical Journal*, 59, no. 2 (2016): 319-338. 10.1017/S0018246X15000382

them. Illustrated by Stockton's anagogic comments above, the darker side of traumatic survival included how to make sense of God's punishment, and the lingering desire to escape a life tainted by suffering. Most shocking were the lingering desires to murder oneself or—worse—"destroy" one's children."[4] These shocking temptations urged Stockton to use suffering as a vehicle for faith: "Doth God hear the voyce of the young Ravens when they cry, and provide them food? and do you think that he will not hear the cryes of your young children, and provide them food?"[5] Following a typical Christian framework, Stockton frames even the horrific inclinations to murder as temptations from the devil, movements when Satan entices via envy for others' good fortune, sorrow for one's faults, or despair at one's exclusion from grace. These are the voices of the devil, and Stockton evokes these concerns to explain that God "instructeth both those that are in affliction, and others also in the use of means" through affliction.[6] Pain was another way God taught.[7]

In engaging with the anagogic significance of the London Fire, in using it to save the survivors from themselves, Stockton must grapple with the framework of suffering and temptation, the idea that suffering bears with it key eschatological markers, external marks of one's redemptive status. While he as a minister reminds the sufferers that their suffering has purpose, that it provides a spiritual benefit, he is faced with the dilemma that not all his readers can buy into this paradigm. When the world has recently been caught up in a great conflagration, the temptation to see fire as judgment with punitive significance is natural, and much of Stockton's book is spent engaging with the severity of this punishment, without understanding the (mis)reasoning for it. Still, Stockton is sensitive to those who saw themselves as targets of God's ire,

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[4] Stockton, *Counsel to the Afflicted*, 238.

[5] Ibid., 186.

[6] Stocktton, "To the Reader," In *Counsel to the Afflicted*, 238.

[7] Frances Dolan has written on how English Protestants sought a cause for the fire, a human agent in the destruction of the great city. I'm less interested in the cause as in the eschatological use of the fire. See Frances Dolan, "Ashes and "the Archive": The London Fire of 1666, Partisanship, and Proof," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies,* 31, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 379-408.

and this line of reasoning culminates when, even as an ejected minister, Stockton must grapple with the most taboo of religious conditions: despair and the temptation of self-murder.

> There is hope for a man as long as God continueth him in the land of the living, that he may obtain Salvation by Jesus Christ, if he repent of his sins, and believe in Christ, how desolate, and distressed, and desperate soever his condition seem to be. I add this proposition, because *Satan can hardly draw a man to destroy himself, till he hath brought him to despair; and therefore if the person that is under this temptation could be convinced, that there was hope of mercy and salvation for such an one as he is, it might be an effectual means of preventing the temptation from taking place.* I shall therefore endeavour to prove, that no man whatever is to conclude his case desperate, so long as God permits him to live upon the face of the earth; but there is a possibility, yea, there is hope that he may obtain salvation, if he will use the means appointed by God for the saving of his soul.[8]

Yes, the London fire was punishment, but surviving this punishment granted opportunity for redemption.

During the period covered by this dissertation, the term *despair* carries with it various residual connotations and exegetical implications. Although Stockton is a late example, he offers a useful example for parsing competing uses of despair. In the above paradigm case, Stockton exemplifies how despair typically was mobilized as a punitive divine judgment, a spiritual affliction that draws on soteriological and eschatological discourse. Despair and doubt are seen as soteriological moments—places where one's strength and dedication to God are tested. Stockton is drawing on an earlier, more biblical usage, one that frames despair as a type of judgment, especially in the light of the London Fire. Divine punishment taught the survivors of the uncertainty of grace, and despair here evokes the continual, reoccurring fear of suicide, the temptation that self-murder is impulsive, and the internalized belief that Satan could, at one's weakest, coerce one to kill oneself. In framing despair in terms of its redemptive qualities—mingled with divine judgement and the finality of one's redemptive potential—Stockton's language mobilizes punishment as a type of comfort by almost reenforcing the weight of divine judgment. In doing so, he brushes by religious doctrinal controversies—e.g. the perseverance of the saints—to argue that being spared from the fire, no matter what one has lost, is a sign of God's love and

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[8] Stocktton, *Counsel to the Afflicted*, 244.

continual availability. In this way, he frames suffering as a sign of God's continual grace, not an exclusion from it, in his attempt to curtail a life of continual self-exclusion.

Stockton's language is drawn from early modern English strategies to use God's grace to comfort the desperate. In line with this, he evokes concepts like continued living and additional time as potentials for change. However, by emphasizing the need to return to grace, Stockton never frames the source of suffering (God) as the cause of the suffering.[9] Instead, there is a divide between the suffering of the body and the pleasures of the mind. For clergy like Stockton, despair is a mental, spiritual failure, the inability for the mind to look beyond its body, the somatic cause of suffering. When confronted with famines and droughts, the somatic (mechanical) body naturally begins to feel the pangs of malnourishment or dehydration, but the mind remains satisfied.

> …when the Lord promiseth to satisfie our souls in drought, there is implyed in this promise, that when the joy of our hearts, when our glory and strength is taken away, when all means of supporting life fail, when we are in the most desolate places, or desolate conditions imaginable, he will under all our troubles give us satisfied mindes.

This is the language of the ascetic or the response of Christ to temptation, the expectation that one can move beyond temporal, material reality: "…though their outward condition may be full of trouble, yet their souls shall dwell at ease."[10] However, Stockton struggles to capture the reality of the desperate condition, a condition which, in Stockton's language, is the "discontent or disquietness arising in our minds" in search of a cause. That cause, for Stockton, is always sin of the individual; suffering, therefore, should be seen as a blessing, as it is meant as a corrective punishment: "We should be so far from disquieting our selves, because of our afflictions, that we

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[9] Although Stockton is considered a nonconformist, these themes are readily found in the *Order for the Visitation of the Sick* in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*: "Sanctifie, we beseech then, this thy fatherly correction to *him*, that the sense of *his* weakness may add strength to his faith, and seriously to *his* repentance. That if it shall be thy good pleasure to restore *him* to *his* former health, *he* may lead the residue of *his* life in thy fear, and to thy glory…" (443). Added to the 1662 prayer book, the phrase "if he [i.e. the sick person] humbly and heartily desire it" (445) places the onus on the individual sufferer to show sincere redemption to the priest. Brian Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011).

[10] Stockton, *Counsel to the Afflicted*, 43.

should account it a matter of great joy when God is pleased to exercise us with divers temptations."[11]

For the purposes of my dissertation, Stockton serves as an example of how clergy typically used despair, mostly by deploying it as a type of judgement and mediating it by emphasizing God's grace. In this way, he is different in kind from earlier church theologians, who saw despair as more episodic, often attached to extreme singular events like apostasy. That said, Stockton is different in degree from some of his contemporaries, clergy who were wary of how despair impacted the rational aspects of humans, specifically extending to the desperate an excusable irrationality. Henry More, Stockton's Platonist mentor, is an example of a clergyman who sought less to impact the desperate themselves, but instead sought to shift how the community evaluated them. These concerned individuals—in whom this dissertation is largely interested—sought to use despair both to comfort the desperate but also to exculpate them from communal judgment, largely by questioning how rational and self-autonomous the desperate were. Given his personal relationship with Stockton, More is an excellent example because he attempts to define despair as a bodily, somatic affliction that impairs the mind.

By the time of the London Fire, religious and cultural perspectives had changed, and many doctors and religious individuals were willing to question the extents of human reason. Henry More provides an example of how despair and suffering exposed the limits of human will and agency. In referencing Matthew 27.46, More explains that, while Christ's final words ("*Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani*"[12]) could be seen as desperate, alleging that God had abandoned his son, they exposed how the crucifixion had impacted Christ's mind. For More, these words are "uttered in the very pangs of death and insufferable torture," and therefore should be excused as "Actiones Hominis."

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[11] Ibid., 85.

[12] More provides the transliteration to the Greek "Ἠλί, Ἠλί, λιμὰ σαβαχθανί." According to the *Oxford Annotated Bible*, Christ is providing an Aramaic translation of Psalm 22.1, a psalm about the abandonment of the faithful and the need for God's comfort. In great detail, Psalm 22 explains the intense anguish felt by the psalmist, including suffering related to social exclusion and the importance of public testimony. Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London: I. Flesher, 1660), 417-8

According to his "humane nature," Christ is simply speaking as "one bemoaning himself in the present sense of his insupportable desertion."[13] Rather than simply excusing Christ's frailty of mind, More extends this consideration to other humans as well, explaining that in the "just and seasonable bemoaning of the dear servants of God," Christians should not "judge rashly the Symptomes," "Impatience or Despair" of their peers.[14] Concerned with doubt and its role in evaluating election, More's implicit reference is to the oppressive form of election especially contentious throughout the Church of England, one inherited from Calvinism and seen by some as dividing and depressing believers.

Like his fellow Cambridge Platonists, More saw Calvinism as a rigid, often oppressive form of Christianity, what More called the "Dogmatical" tendencies of the church "not only in things that may, according to the sense of the generality of men, be either way, but [also those that] conclude and require the belief of such things as are point-blank against either Scripture or Reason, and are impossible according to the Faculties of all men…"[15] While More is not directly engaging with Stockton or Calvinism, he does directly engage with the often rigid, oppressive nature of a religion that discouraged rather than encouraged sinners. As More questions:

> How unevenly must these conditions of Salvation sit upon the spirit of him that is not a mere sot? What *reciprocations of belief and misbelief, of hope and despair of Salvation* must such an one be tortured with, that holds that his share in eternall bliss *depends upon the hearty belief of the truth of the Church in all things, when what she propounds, according to all his Faculties, is not only unlikely, but impossible to be true*?[16]

Holding reason as the primary faculty by which believers confirm themselves saved, More explicitly links how tensions between the believer and the church reciprocated torture, a point fellow Platonist Benjamin Whichcote explains as when men are "by their own Hands" hurried

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[13] Ibid., 417-8.

[14] Ibid., 426.

[15] Henry More, *A Modest Enquiry into the Mystery of Iniquity* (London: J. Flesher, 1665), 82. There is some disagreement over Calvin's importance to the Cambridge Platonists. See my discussion below.

[16] Ibid. While More agrees that despair stems from a guilty conscience, he is also aware that despair is in part correlated with the church: "What struggling and conflicting therefore must [a Christian] undergoe to hold to the Authority of the Church against such strong and fatal sentiments of his own Mind?" (82).

into "external Hell, to avoid internal Hell."[17] Compromised by the torture of internal hell, the desperate rush headlong into suicide, a point the majority of the English would agree led straight to (external) hell.

How much can we make out of More's revealing comment that "hope and despair of Salvation" are a form of torture? What is the soteriological significance of internal hell? Given that even while writing a treatise to comfort those affected by the London Fire, Stockton deploys suffering paradigmatically, a sign of fault, culpability, and affliction; physical suffering and mental anguish were related, though only arguably so. It is telling that, for his (conformist) work on despair, Stockton is rewarded with a temporary church position.[18]

Like many current scholars, I find it difficult not to immediately see the Church of England as culpable for much of the division and oppression stimulated by desperate rhetoric, and More and the other Platonists opened the door to investigating how despair bolstered redemption and how it stifled it. Like many clergy before them, the Platonists were not alone in trying to mediate the rigid effects of Calvinist election, predestination, and despair.

The History of a Desperate Idea: Despair, Puritans, and Predestination.

Despair and guilt—how suffering is mobilized rhetorically by selected individuals to explore culpability—encourage mediation and redemption. From the early roots of this dissertation, I have been interested in exploring how despair, a condition of 'fear without hope,' could be used strategically by authors to move depressed spirits 'above all fears and despairs.'[19] I've chosen several significant and diverse examples to explore how despair is used to exculpate the

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[17] Benjamin Whichcote, "Sermon V: Romans I. 26, 27," In *Selected Sermons of Dr. Whichcot in Two* Parts (London: Awnsham and John Church, 1698), 173.

[18] In his *ODNB* article, J.M. Blatchly implies that Stockton, who had been forced from the pulpit by the 1662 Act of Uniformity. He is relicensed in 1672 as a teacher, preaching in Colchester and Ipswich until his death in 1680. "Stockton, Owen (1630–1680), nonconformist minister," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (12 Apr. 2018).

[19] Smith, "The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion," 426.

desperate, showing that, while some scholars see despair as a bi-product of religious intolerance, it also provided a powerful heuristic for mediating how religion impacted the everyday individual.

Christopher Hill began his seminal work, *The Century of Revolution,* with a statement about the historian of the idea's method: "History is not a narrative of events."[20] Hill calls the seventeenth century "a century of revolution," because in it he recognized the major ideological changes—both residual and emergent—that eventually shaped the event-based history of the England we know today. Still, Hill was forced to concede that events largely shaped how we have received and integrated ideas. In this dissertation's hundred-year period, roughly 1580-1680, the history of despair is likewise not a narrative of events. It is toward this methodological issue that Keith Wrightson remarks, "Social history cannot easily be contained within the walls of neat compartments."[21]

The authors in this dissertation were directly involved in effecting significant religious, political, literary, and cultural changes, changes in which despair seems to play a significant role. Like a ghastly partner, *Despair* often helped them to prove religious and political points. With its residual and emergent meanings, *despair* was sometimes used poetically, sometimes used religiously, but always with a profound social response. I like to believe that the history of despair —to which many others have contributed—operates in a way similar to a dark comet, occasionally recalled to the mind and occasionally manifesting in new and informative ways. When it appears, it exposes the struggle within a world of change and defies the categorization though which we seek to contain it.

Writers within and without the church engage with the term in dynamic ways. For example, between 1580 and 1680 we can assume a loose spectrum of writers between Edmund Spenser and John Bunyan who evoke and mobilize despair for religious/literary ends. Spenser's "Cave of Despayre" represents a residual conceptualization of despair, while Bunyan's cycles of

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[20] Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution 1603-1714* (New York: Norton, 1982), 1.

[21] Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2003), 20.

despair in *Grace Abounding* represent an emergent version. While it is possible to compare these two characterizations, as critics such as Douglas Trevor and John Stachniewski have done, Spenser and Bunyan differ significantly and seek different ends. For instance, a main difference between Spenser's Despayre and Bunyan's cycles of despair is the permanence of the condition. While Red Crosse Knight enters the Cave of Despayre and falls victim to Despayre's rhetoric, this experience is episodic, a religious moment in the overall Christian (allegorical) life of Red Crosse. Conversely, Bunyan conceived of despair as cyclical and reoccurring, not as a singular event but rather as oscillating between doubt and redemption.

A counter argument to this example would compare an allegory with an allegory, Spenser's *Faerie Queene* with *Pilgrim's Progress*, mainly by juxtaposing the dungeon of despair from which Pilgrim must escape. While Red Crosse must subject himself to a holy institutional cleansing, Pilgrim finds within himself the key to escaping despair—the passage out of despair is an individual connection with God. Of course, it is ironic that, while Pilgrim can search within himself to escape incarcerating despair, John Bunyan turns to despair during his twelve-year incarceration. The term therefore provides Red Crosse with an allegorical, soteriological wash, and, in overcoming his desperate moment, he progresses in his spiritual quest. Bunyan, afflicted by chronic bouts that drag him away from redemption, sees despair both within allegory and in his personal life as regressive, a recurring trap from which escape is personalized. The comparison is an important reminder that, for the bulk of the English, religion was an ever-present paradigm through which life was processed.

As a theological concept, despair can be processed through different—and often competing—paradigms, as the Stockton/More discussion showed. This dissertation is primarily interested in religious despair, so I began this introduction with Stockton's writing on the London Fire. The London Fire, like other catastrophes, exposes how extreme emotions tend to elicit differing paradigms; in Stockton's case, *despair* relies on a Calvinistic Protestantism. But when used by contemporary scholars, seventeenth-century Calvinism should be contextualized before we can

begin blaming it for a magnification of despair. This is obvious in More, who found himself defending Christ against the accusation of despair by reassuring the reader that suffering and torture can elicit an emotional response, but that this response is not an albatross to be eternally hung around our necks. Religion of emotion was dangerous. More, aware that reason could be clouded by suffering, bucks Church of England rhetoric, so in approaching *despair*, we should be wary of immediately associating it with draconian Puritanism.

For those concerned with religion, despair functioned as a subcategory of reprobation, set apart by how sin impacted their being, charactered by its extreme sadness and exclusion from grace. Both sorrow and awareness of exclusion distinguished religious despair from general reprobation. As one of the non-elect, a reprobate is damned because he or she will be damned after death, regardless of whether they know they are damned; Conversely, desperate individuals, who may or may not be elect, are in despair because they believe that they will be damned. In this way, *despair* described a condition of earthly salvation and experience in the same semantic moment, making despair of importance to one's redemptive potential: how likely are sinners to escape their suffering and return to obedience to God?

Under Elizabeth I and later monarchs, Church of England clergy were concerned with despair because of its extreme nature and sought to limit its impact by reframing the condition so that God's love mediated doubt, mostly through consultation tracts and sermons. Likewise, these clergy moved to limit individual sorrow by linking sadness to soteriological uncertainty: While we can't be certain we're saved, we can't be certain we're not. Notable Elizabethan theologians William Perkins and Richard Hooker sought to comfort the desperate by reiterating God's grace and by questioning how well one could know God's will. For instance, Hooker described the desperate as a"grieued spirit," concluding that despair was "no argument of a faithlesse mind," and that it should not be conclusive of damnation.[22] Like some of his contemporaries, Hooker's comment is latently

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[22] Richard Hooker, *A Learned and Comfortable Sermon of the Certaintie and Perpetuitie of Faith in the Elect* (1612), 9.

aimed at the community as well, arguing that, because one seems overtly sad, this condition could not be absolutely linked to 'a faithlesse mind,' a phrase he uses to encompass the mental and spiritual faculties and directly evoke discomfort.[23]

Despite the caveat that despair was a liminal evaluation of one's discomfort, Hooker exemplifies the growing awareness that despair itself was characterized by an absence of consolation. A more famous example comes from *A Golden Chaine,* where Perkins dialogized discomfort *as* despair: "But I, saith [the desperate], againe, feele no motions of the Comforter, I haue now no sence of faith, or hope: but I feele all the contrarie."[24] In speaking of a 'sence of faith,' Perkins shows that the desperate condition was beyond consolation because the desperate perceived themselves excluded from God's grace, lacked the comfort of faith or hope," and felt hopeless and unfaithful. As Hooker implies, while despair itself is not a sign of a 'faithless mind,' those in despair often *felt* the opposite.

For the comforter—in this case Perkins—the only thing to be done was to remind the desperate of God's continual grace and to reiterate that the desperate needed to reach to God: "… you haue not qutte lost [God], but that he is as yet in some secret corner of your soule, from whence at your instant praiers he will shew himselfe vnto you, this will plainely declare vnto you."[25] For Perkins, God alone could comfort the desperate, even if they could not actually perceive it. As a telling mark, Perkins acknowledges that, isolated in the 'secret corner' of the mind, despair smothered hope by blocking it from bodily experience.

While despair was primarily a sickness of the soul that obscured grace and prevented redemption, Perkins latently acknowledges that the desperate cannot *see* or *observe* grace, and that, therefore, he or she lacks the full capacities of his or her spiritual being, e.g. the conscience. However, he never moves into discussing the somatic or bodily treatment of despair. His advice is

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[23] The *OED*'s first definition links this condition to despair: "Absence or deprivation of happiness or consolation; desolation, distress, grief, sorrow." "discomfort, n." *OED* Online. March 2016. Oxford UP.

[24] William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine* (London: Edward Alde, 1591).

[25] Ibid.

spiritual, and the tension then is how a spiritual condition could physically manifest one's potential for election or redemption. Does the tension between the mind and body speak to despair's soteriological potential?

Both Perkins and Hooker hesitate to condemn the desperate, but they do not outright excuse them either. Instead, both indicate that despair impacts redemption and reiterate that grace remains for these discomforted souls. In mapping despair's various religious uses, it is useful to reach back to Stockton and More at the opening of this chapter.

Perhaps because he is less signifiant to the church, Stockton occupies a liminal position between the moderated Calvinism of Perkins and Hooker and the residual Arminianism of the 1630s. Embracing Perkins and Hooker's teachings, Stockton deploys despair as a perceived soteriological condition that signaled how one was approaching God's grace. He uses the term as it directly relates to salvation and yet mediates the dangers of the term by limiting the rigidness with which grace is conceived. In this way, his use of despair is less Calvinistic and more Arminian, meaning that, rather than emphasizing the draconian nature of election—one was either saved or not regardless of human will—he emphasized patience in the face of suffering and how willing God was to wait out an individual's desperation and doubt. Still, Stockton's use of despair engages with a doctrinal gray area: the effects of perceived exclusion and the permanence of and probability of escape from despair.

Writing after the fall of William Laud, More's conversation echoes residual debates between strict Calvinist and their Laudian Arminian enemies. More's *Explanation* also draws on olderCatholic notions of despair that, as a classic example, framed Judas' key sin as his desperate suicide and not his betrayal of Christ.[26] However, the main contention of More was with the

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[26] In *The Morall Law Expounded* (1642), Lancelot Andrewes explains Judas' despair: "The Fathers they have ruled a case in the Schooles; for, disputing of the two faults of [J]udas, his betraying of Christ, and his despaire in the mercie of God, and examining that his despaire was the greater sinne, because it was utterly uncurable, and took his breath from him: Therefore we must be sure that we hope: and that our hope be *in verbo Dei*, *in quo spem nobis dedit*, in the word of God, in which he hath caused us to trust: so of this we must take heede that we doe not as the Devill, that will make God so poor in mercie, as if it served for small fins onely" (208-9).

rigidity with which Calvinism approached sin and redemption, specifically through predestination.

The authors I consider are also reacting in part to rigid Puritans within the church who sought to change what they perceived as a taint in the national church. I contextualize Puritans because, for many literary critics, they are most responsible for the strict, dogmatic application of predestination which so easily created despair.[27] As a strong example, Martha Tuck Rozett explains that,

> Implicit in the believer's religious experience was the coexistence of an intense consciousness of natural sinfulness and a belief in the efficacy of God's grace […]. This unresolved tension between two utterly opposed self-perceptions was, as scholars frequently observe, the central paradox of Protestantism, and it created an undercurrent of uncertainty and anxiety that could easily lead to despair in even the most confident member of the elect.

While Rozett is accurate, scholarship on despair—what Nicholas Tyacke and others have identified as the 'darkness' of religious puritanism[28]—is not the complete picture. Not all clergy conformed to the same idea of Calvinism.

While historians and critics tend to debate what the "dominant doctrine"[29] of the Church of England was, individual clergy are typically discussed in terms of conformity to an ideal church doctrinal and political continuity. For example, in discussing the hypothetical life of an English Catholic, historian Philip Edwards goes as far as to say that "The reality was that one could be a Catholic in Elizabethan England only as long as one went to a Protestant church and led a Protestant life."[30] For church officials, inner-spiritual conformity tended to be a secondary issue to

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[27] Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 12.

[28] Nicholas Tyacke, *The Fortunes of English Puritanism*, 1603-1640 (London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1990), 3.

[29] Tyacke, "Anglican Attitudes: Some Recent Writings on English Religious History, from the Reformation to the Civil War," *Journal of the British Studies*, 35, no. 2 (April 1996): 139-167. 143.

[30] Phillip Edwards, *The Making of the Modern English State, 1460-1660* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 240.

political conformity.[31] For historians, doctrinal and political issues tended to determine 'conformity,' and seventeenth-century clergy often used their pulpit to express polemic doctrine—even within the more divisive Carolinian church—so that while the more rigid Calvinists tended to be the Puritans, the term is a fast and loose generalization, both historically and in today's scholarship.

The definition of *Puritan* is difficult to pin down unless historically and contextually mobilized; so, I generally avoid using the term except when it is specifically used by a scholar or if I provide historical framing. None of the authors in this dissertation fit neatly into a 'Puritan' category. The term itself appears in 1567/8 as an *ad homonym* attack on those clergy within the church who sought to remove the taint of Catholicism, including iconoclastic attacks on ceremony and ritual, using *catholic* as a negative modifier, a ready-made attack word to critique church policy and advocate for its change. Calling for a 'stainless religion,' these early Puritans—a term derived from the translation of *cathari* ('heretic')—sought to cleanse the national church of the residual practices and rituals they deemed Catholic, a point emphasized in the factionalism of the Puritan movement.[32]

Described by Patrick Collinson as a "hotter sort" of Protestant, religiously invested Puritans sought to purify the national church via various political, social, and religious acts[33]; however, they did not necessarily wish to separate themselves from the church itself, which meant

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[31] Oddly enough, William Perkins, who is known today as the premier Elizabethan theologian, was primarily "an eminent pastoral theologian who was especially committed to trying to relieve the afflicted consciences of the pious," less interested in the "internal transformation of the [English Puritan] movement" for which he would become so essential. Kaspar Von Greyerz, *Religion and Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Trans by Thomas Dunlap (New York: Oxford UP, 2008), 92.

[32] Kaspar Von Greyerz, *Religion and Culture*, 88.

[33] Patrick Collinson, "The Jacobean Religious Settlement: The Hampton Court Conference," *Before the English Civil War: Essays on Early Stuart Politics and Government* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 29

that the residual structures had to be removed from within by church authority.[34] For these objectors, many of the Church of England's practices were not grounded in scripture, and the litmus of 'scripture first'— a common Reformation exegetical problem more noticeable in the battles over transubstantiation—was as important to members of the Church of England as congregational separatists outside the church. However, whereas Puritans of the mid-seventeenth century would be forced from the national church because of their scriptural interpretations, Puritans before the Civil War[35] sought to influence exegetical and hermetical traditions from within the church. It would be a mistake to assume too much individual conformity within the church; however, there existed a demonstrable symbiotic competition within exegetical church groups under Elizabeth, James, and to some extent, Charles I.

By the time that Elizabeth I dies in 1603, most of her significant theologians have also died, including Hooker (1600) and Perkins (1602). Elizabeth's church was known by the fluidity of its ecclesiology,[36] and the legacy left behind was one of a "broader, looser brand of Puritanism, which applied to the laity no less than to the clergy."[37] With his ascension in January 1604, James rejected more radical Puritan changes at the Hampton Court conference, endorsing Elizabeth's

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[34] Paul Lake explains the extremities of religious thought as popery on one side and separatism on the other, and "a sure sign of a man's religious affiliations was provided by his attitude to the relative significance to be attached to the threat of operation as compared to popery" (77). Moderates then used these extremes talking points to encourage conformist thought. While Puritans attacked Catholic popery, conformist like John Whitgift under Elizabeth "adopted a far more skeptical, low-key approach to Rome" in order to emphasize the "threat of operation, seen as the inevitable consequence of basic precisian principles…" (77). *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1982).

[35] After the Restoration, it became more apparent that separatism was the only acceptable path for religious and political change. In this dissertation, only Milton could fall into this category.

[36] As one general history book explains, Elizabeth was interested less in religious 'truth' and more in obedience, "What she wanted was obedience and loyalty. What she needed was a religious settlement that most people could mostly accept" (122). Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England, 1485-1714: A Narrative History* (Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

[37] Hill, *Century of Revolution*, 68.

fluid-but-Erastian Church structure.[38] Under the new Stuart king, the church would maintain its trajectory of minor alterations in the face of church contention. For example, in dismissing what he perceived of as more radical Calvinist suggestions, James famously quipped "No bishop. No King," and swore to make nonconformists "conform themselves" or he would "harry them out of the land."[39] Toward the end of James' reign, his tolerance for nonconformist Calvinists like the English Presbyterians was tested, opening the door for Charles I's outright war on nonconformists, where conformity always meant 'conforming to the king.'

Generally speaking, the population of England in the period was largely quasi-Catholic, 'superstitious,' and resistant to change. In his seminal *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, Keith Thomas explains that changes in the church were vastly slower amongst the population, whimsically explaining that "fundamental changes are not accomplished overnight." Thomas shows that "the devotional attitudes of the Catholic Middle Ages still lingered,"[40] and that the magical elements of Medieval church practice—the superstitious character of devotion, magical items/artifacts, healing, etc.—only gradually declined. In speaking of this gradual change, Eamon Duffy poetically concludes: "New pieties were forming, and something of the old sense of the

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[38] Named for Swiss reformer Thomas Erastus (1524-83), the Erastian church was controlled by the state authority, who had "the right and duty to exercise jurisdiction in all matters whether civil or ecclesiastical, and to punish offences; and even purely ecclesiastical sanction as excommunications are subject to their approval" (561). "Erastianism," In *The Oxford Guide to the Christian Church,* Ed. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (New York: Oxford UP, 2005). In her *Festschrift* for Robert E. Rodes, Jr., M. Cathleen Kaveny explains that Erastian structures are differentiated from High Church structures in how they relate the church to its respective culture, mainly in how eschatological effects are perceived and legislated. To generalize, while the Erastian church focuses on the material world and its legislative realities, the High Church also incorporates the ideal or spiritual visions of reality. "Erastian and High Church Approaches to the Law: The Jurisprudential Categories of Robert E. Rodes, Jr," *Journal of Law and Religion,* 22, no. 2 (2006): 405-432.

[39] James I qtd in Edwards, *The Modern English State,* 277.

[40] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Penguin, 1982), 73. See specifically "The Impact of Reformation." See also Christopher Haigh, "Church, Catholics, and the People," In *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, Ed. Christopher Haigh (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985). Haigh explains that "Under the tutelage of conservative clergy, the beliefs of the laity may have changed very little in the reign of Elizabeth" (199).

sacred was transferring itself from the sacramentals to the scriptures."[41] Scripture took on its own sense of mystical qualities, acting as a ward against despair and temptation, a codex for political dissent, and a ready-made vehicle for physiological expression. Still, for Duffy, the 'stripping of the altars' by English reformers was a "violent disruption," a tactical and deliberate attack on Catholicism through which time slowly softened the denotations to a nostalgic, residual blurring. For the church leaders, the nostalgic blurring was quickly repurposed as superstition,[42] whereas it occupied the place of folk knowledge and residual popular wisdom, the go-to for a number of local medicinal and cultural practices: "Almost any object associated with ecclesiastical ritual could assume a special aura in the eye of the people. Any prayer or piece of the Scriptures might have a mystic power waiting to be tapped."[43] Outside the immediacy of the church, ecclesiastical power functioned to authenticate knowledge and to mediate residual folk problems.

Despair slots into this discussion as a tension between exegetical control and folk belief, mainly in how scripture impacted the everyday believer. As Burton explains in Chapter IV, the devil could literally occupy the mind to wallow in the desperate's sorrowful bath. When the church sought to target despair as a product of scriptural imprecision, superstition became shorthand for an unthinking or uncritical religious failure, a bookend to *zeal*, which would also become a buzzword to dispatch one's enemies. But, for the general populace, "The decline of old Catholic beliefs was not the result of persecution; it reflected a change in the popular conception of religion."[44] Thomas continues,

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[41] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Alters: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven: Yale, 1992), 586.

[42] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Alters*, 588-993. In his *Speaking with Demons*, Stuart Clark explains that "Between reformers of all persuasions and the ordinary laity, [the power of words, gestures, and symbols] became a badge of growing cultural differentiation." The main point of "theological and liturgical contention" was that it was superstitious to believe that "signs could act transitively" on the "object [to which] they referred…" Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997), 284.

[43] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 45.

[44] Ibid., 75.

> Protestantism thus presented itself as a deliberate attempt to take the magical elements out of religion [i.e. the residual, Catholic, and superstitious elements], to eliminate the idea that the rituals of the Church had about them a mechanical efficacy, and to abode the effort to endow physical objects with supernatural qualities by special formulae of consecration and exorcism. *Above all, it diminished the institutional role of the Church as dispenser of divine grace. The individual stood in a direct relations to God and was sorely depend upon his omnipotence.*[45]

Informing tensions between moderate clergy and their Puritan antagonists, Calvinist rhetoric created a magical and oft-dangerous correlation between sensual temptation and the individual practice of religion, the 'direct relations' between God and the believer, so that when one felt excluded from grace, one believed oneself excluded from grace, and the devil, the bugbear of the Medieval church, became under the Calvinist church a sinister, ever-present threat both outside the body and inside the mind.[46]

This transition from an external stimulant to an internal one was not lost on the church leadership. For Hooker, the individualization of religion opened the door to exegetical complications, and they sought to frame how spiritual illness was in part inspired by competing religious groups. For example, given the free nature of interpretation, some believers found within scripture confirmation of their reprobation. In this dogmatic approach to religion, specifically in instances of "weake consciences," the scripture acted as "a snare and a torment" rather than a salve, creating a type of spiritual illness within compromised believers: "how can [scripture] choose but bring the simple [people] a thousand times to their wits end; how can it but choose to vexe and amaze them?" The problem was one of exegetical control, the lack of a mediating voice to temper strict, dogmatic interpretations. Hooker explains that, despite the scruples of a guilty conscience, the scripture "it self doth [not] cause any such thing." Instead, he explains that despair and other religiously inspired illness resulted from the two-fold individualization of religion:

> *necessities of this life* vrging men to doe that which the light of *nature, common discretion and iudgement of it selfe* directeth them vnto, on the other side this *doctrine teaching them* that so to doe were to sinne against

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[45] Ibid., 75-6.

[46] See Chapter IV on Burton for more details on this movement.

> their owne soules, and that they put forth their hands to iniquitie, whatsoeuer they go about and haue not first [consulted] the sacred scripture of God for direction.[47]

When mediated by the human faculties, the 'necessities of life' and Hooker's reasoning are at odds, one somatically enticing the individual, the other framing all somatic actives as questionable. Thus, Hooker endorses the very paradigmatic framework responsible for stigmatizing the desperate people he faults.

The two-fold nature of this religious dichotomy encourages "infinite perplexities, scrupulosities, doubts insoluble, and extreme despaires" so that "For in euery action of comm[on] life to find out some sentence clearly and infallibly setting before our eyes what wee ought to doe, (seeme wee in scripture neuer so expert) would trouble vs more then wee are aware."[48] Here, Hooker's goal is to wave off the accusation that scripture itself was responsible for "the strict opinion" that Calvinistic Christianity bred. In this 'strict opinion,' critics like John Stachniewski see "the flashpoint of conversion" as a sense of "God's anger," the "emotional reflex questioning the justice and character of God" that has developed within the believer.[49] Calvinists like William Perkins "ministered to the anxiety by conceding the priority of the predestined decrees and setting about detailing ways of knowing, by introspection, in which spiritual category [i.e. elect or reprobate] you fell."[50] Hooker seems to have foreseen these arguments, explaining that scripture itself cannot be faulted for the desperate condition, since religion operates—at least in this moment—as a type of self-actualizing relationship wherein the individual mediates his or herself based on the (perceived) expectations of God, that is the 'ways of knowing' God through one's own inculpation. It is in this self-actualizing, this capacity to position one's self within an unknowable

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[47] Emphasis mine.

[48] Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (London: John Windet, 1604), II.viii.

[49] John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), 18.

[50] Ibid., 26.

knowledge of God, that despair finds its unassuageable roots and much of this dissertation spends its time.

Whether or not Hooker cared to engage with the Puritans on despair, his efforts for dissuading them from their zeal or enthusiasm for religion seems clear: "For what is it which poor beguiled souls will not do through so powerful incitements?"[51] Instead, Hooker curtly concludes, "I therefore leave it to themselves to consider, Whether they have in this first point or not overshot themselves; which, God doth know, is quickly done, even when our meaning is most sincere…"[52] Like the strictness of predestination's meaning, it is up to the clergy and the church to determine whether scripture is sufficient to carry all the judgements and ceremonies of man and God, implying that it is difficult to submit to competing exegetic traditions and interpretations when authority is questioned, and sometimes unreasonable to do so.

Within the Church of England, rigid Calvinists—sometimes called precisianists—believed that election lie strictly in the providence of God's will, meaning that believers could not alter their elected status; saving grace was irresistible.[53] However, for the majority of moderate clergy, election depended upon cooperation with grace, which meant godly living: life was to be moderated, controlled, and productive in the name of showing one's obedience to and cooperation with God.

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[51] Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, preface, III.xiii. 17.

[52] Ibid., II.iix. 122.

[53] Elizabethan theologian John Whitgift emphasized a 'sublapsarian' Calvinism, which in "positing fallen man as the object of predestination[,] taught an unconditional form of double predestination." In other words, God sorts through the fallen mess, saving the elect and consigning the rest to reprobation. Tyacke, "Anglican Attitudes," 150. Peter White and Tyacke are at odds over this, White preferring to believe Calvinists were—what Carl Bangs calls "the horrendous term" of—*creabilitarian* (68). *Creabilitarian* refers to the creation (*creatus*) of man and whether he was 'liable to fall' (*labilis*) or already fallen (*lapsus*) before God decreed his election. The debate is primarily doctrinal, implying a certain culpability within divine decrees and stemming from early debates best known to the church through Beza. Carl Bangs, *Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation* (Eugene: Wipe and Stock, 1985). For White's explanation of "creabilitarianism," see Peter White, *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1992), 16 fn. 6.

For moderate Calvinists, the provision of salvation was that all who believed could be saved, provided they did not actively resist grace.[54]

When contemporary scholars speak of the dangers of predestination, they tend to point to the extreme influence of predestination on the mind, the moments when despair and doubt damage the psyche of the everyday believer. It was extreme Calvinism that, while upholding the mind's spiritual capacities to encompass heaven, exposed how doubt brought hell into the body through the same portal. Conversely, it was a rival group of Christians, followers of Dutch reformer Johannes Arminius, who sought to limit predestination in an attempt to mitigate the mental violence done to the individual believer, not Calvinist.

Church clergy shared overlapping opinions on the bulk of Calvinism—after all, even Johannes Arminius considered himself a Calvinist. This said, the foundations for Arminianism, often seen as an anti-Calvinism, within the church were met with Calvinist ire under James. This was exemplified by the Synod of Dort (1618-9) and its impact on the Church of England.[55] Convened in the Netherlands to address the growing threat of Arminianism, the Synod was a Calvinist shame designed to crush growing Arminian sympathies.[56] However, the Synod helped reduce the Arminian/Calvin divide to several key differences based on the earlier Remonstrance of 1610: 1) Conditional Election 2) Unlimited Atonement 3) Total Depravity 4) Prevenient Grace

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[54] I elaborate more on how Donne relates to Laudianism in chapter 2.

[55] For the English Calvinist response, see George Carleton, *The Collegiat*[*e*] *Suffrage of the Divines of Great Britaine* (London: Robert Milbourne, 1629).

[56] In his recent publication, Andrew T. Hancock argues that the Synod establishes "a relationship of "continuity and development rather than a relationship of strict continuity or discontinuity" (316). In Calvinist circles, this may be the case, but the Synod had the *intended* effect of categorizing the deficiencies of the Arminius Dutch theology, thereby institutionalizing the means to marginalize, punish, and execute Remonstrants. While Kendell—who serves as a significant base for Hancock's argument—does assert that Arminius considered himself a Calvinist, it is empirically demonstrable that the Church of England, with whom I am concerned, actively sought to undermine Arminius by linking him with Catholic teachings. White warns against assuming too much from the five articles. See Hancock, "The Grace of God and Faithful Christian Education," *Christian Education Journal*, 13, no. 2. (2016): 215-330. 10.1177/073989131601300206; White, "Doctrinal definition: the Five Articles," In *Predestination, Policy, and Polemic,* 183-202.

5) and Conditional Preservation. Hillel Schwartz reiterates that, at the time of the Synod, James was among "the most vocal of the opponents of the Dutch Arminianism," and, while Schwartz believes that Arminianism did not gain real political import until right after James' death in 1625[57], even Peter White, who has thoroughly downplayed the church rift between the Calvinist and Arminians, sees the Synod of Dort as a polarizing moment in Protestant circles.

While Puritans, non-conformists, and others marked James' ascension in 1603 with the eagerness and hope of the Hampton conference—the dreams of a new reformation to come[58]—Charles' ascension in 1626 pales in comparison in part because it was seen as an endorsement of the growing Arminianism that threatened James' late rule. Perhaps this is because the final years of James' rule and the early years of Charles' ascension are typically seen as driven by authoritarian, Erastian control, an unyielding compulsion that individual practitioners should conform to religious worship. Because of his role in religious and authoritarian policies, Charles' Archbishop, Laud, became both the tormentor of and scapegoat for Calvinist clergy under Charles I, clergy who viewed Laudianism as crypto-Catholicism and its proponent "the source of all the trouble"[59]; yet, much of this religio-political debate was linked to the individual experience of religion.

In many senses, spiritual conformity became the conflict over the 'tranquilly' of the mind. Before John Milton's Satan espouses similar thoughts, Sir John Eliot philosophizes that "All things are subject to the Mind," measuring in one thought "the whole circumference of heaven," and showing that "Man is an absolute master of himself; his own safety." He concludes, "the tranquility by God […] are made dependent upon himself."[60] For despair, the inverse must be true, and the

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[57] I discuss these differences more in depth in Chapter 5 on Milton. For a general discussion of this topic, see Hillel Schwartz, "Arminianism and the English Parliament, 1624-1629," *Journal of British Studies*, 12, no. 2 (May 1973): 41-68.

[58] Hill recommends an important caveat: it was not yet clear that church reform was impossible, and political division—which I have unfortunately not explicitly discussed— would not reach a head until Charles' explicit dismissal of Parliament. See Hill, *The Century of Revolution*, 63-71; 141-53.

[59] Edward Hyde qtd. in H.R. Trevor-Roper, *Archbishop Laud*, *1573-1645* (London: MacMillian and Co., 1962), 335.

[60] Eliot qtd. in Hill, *Century of Revolution*, 80.

torment of the spirit was the torment of the mind. Consider, though, it was Eliot who, before the collapse of parliament in 1629, attempted to physically ram "through the House three resolutions, denouncing Arminianism and the continued collection of Tonnage and Poundage."[61] The war for the mind was the war for the church, and the Arminian-leaning Laudians rejected a rigid doctrine of predestination and encouraged a more moderate, tempered conditional grace that mitigated the strictness of election.[62]

In the English religious literature of the period, predestination is a significant driving force to despair and worth a few moments of discussion. Supralapsarian predestination[63] has been an essential element of the Church of England doctrine since it was institutionalized by the Thirty-Nine Articles under Elizabeth.[64] Under Charles, the importance of election and predestination increased depending on the rigidity of their application.[65] For Arminian Laudian clergy, universal

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[61] David R. Como, "Predestination and Political Conflict in Laud's London," *The Historical Journal*, 46, no. 2 (June 2003): 263-294. 10.1017/S0018246X03003091. 267. Tonnage and Poundage were, respectively, a duty placed on the imported wine 'tuns' and a duty paid to the Crown by Parliament on imported/exported goods. The *OED* connects the two definitions as historically mobilized in tandem. "Tonnage, n." *OED* Online. January 2018. Oxford UP.

[62] Wrightson goes much further than my assertion: "[Under Laud theology] was liberalized, moving away from the dating Calvinism of the Elizabethan and Jacobean church and towards a gentler, more comprehensive road to salvation. *English Society*, 222.

[63] For a primary source, see William Whitaker, *Articuli Lambethani id est (*London: G.D., 1651). Theodore Beza, pupil of John Calvin, made the argument that election logically occurred before the fall (Supralapsarian) and thus saved man before man had the opportunity to damn himself. This view opposes Johannes Arminius' argument that election logically should succeed the fall by occurring in relation to man's choices (infralapsarian).

[64] In order to reinforce the obedience of her subjects, Elizabeth's church enforced a religion aimed both at supporting her control of her subjects and solidifying her power over the church. The 'compromised' church dogma, one that sought to mitigate emergent objections and residual practices, was a restructured version of the earlier Edwardian Forty-Two Articles of Religion (1554) called the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (1563).

[65] Kevin Sharpe and Sheila Lambert disagree that there was a "silencing" of Calvinist critics; however, as David R. Como has shown, there were three proclamations (1626, 1628, and 1629) addressing predestination, the 1629 proclamation "mostly firmly and unambiguously" forbidding all debate over predestination and providing the "legal basis for the investigation and two High Commission prosecutions that took place in London during these years" (fn. 2). Como, "Predestination and Political Conflict," 264; Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, 1992); Sheila Lambert, "Richard Montagu, Arminianism, and Censorship," *Past and Present*, 124 (1989): 36-68.

grace[66] and other doctrine aimed at tempering predestination's bite. Jonathan M. Atkins makes the point that a "Calvinist interpretation of the Thirty-Nine Articles had never been incorporated as the official doctrine of the Church of England."[67] Yet *predestination* appears quite clearly in article 17 and is addressed by various ministers who sought to temper its applicability, even without reference to the articles themselves.[68] Conversely, Edwards argues that the documents themselves cannot support a complete victory for predestination because the Thirty-Nine Articles were not 'aired' publicly—forbidden by the Lambeth Articles—and that such "high Calvinist theology was irrelevant."[69]

While it *may be* the case that the laity did not see predestination as significant, important theologians like Williams Perkins obviously did, especially for the laity, and sought to temper predestination of the parishioners. For example, in his English Calvinist opus, *A Golden Chaine*, Perkins defines *predestination* as "the decree of God, by the which he hath ordeined all men, to a certain and euerlasting estate; that is, either to saluation or condemnation, for his own glory."[70] And, while Edwards is correct that the articles do not directly evoke double election[71], only

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[66] As one of the more famous Calvinist talking points toward Arminianism, the argument entails whether grace is extended to the non-elect, whether all 'believers' may be saved. This heresy was known as universal election. As Perkins clarifies, "vniuerfall election" is where "God willeth that all men shall be saued in definitely, if they doe beleeue." Simply put, does God's grace extend to all or merely to the elect? For Calvinists, "perseverance in faith doth belong to the Elect alone": "to whomsoever God purposed to give perseverance it is a manifest evidence that the same man was destinated to salvation by the foregoing decree of God" (*Golden Chaine* 114). Again, grace is offered only to the elect. The flip of this, "he willeth also by the like reason that all and each one should be damned if they do not beleeue," is also considered (114). Anti-Laudians preferred to conflate Arminianism with Origen's heretical belief that all demons and reprobates would eventually be saved. I discuss this in more detail in chapter 5.

[67] Jonathan M. Atkins, "Calvinist Bishops, Church Unity, and the Rise of Arminianism," *Albion* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 1986): 414.

[68] I believe Atkins' poor word choice is because he assumes *Calvinist* is a static whereas the term should include a modifier like *strict*: a "*Strict* Calvinist interpretation…"

[69] Edwards, *The Modern English State,* 303.

[70] Perkins, *A Golden Chaine.*

[71] Double election is the belief that when God chooses the elect to be saved, he consequently also chooses those who will be damned.

election, Perkins treats the two as similar enough to evoke together. Lake also cautions that, while theologians may use *predestination*, they may omit semantically linked terms, such as *election* and *reprobation*.

In Calvinism, the saved were the 'elect,' the chosen few whose 'euerlasting estate' was in paradise; yet, Perkins subtly evokes double election when he explains that 'all men' were assigned either 'saluation or condemnation'. While most Puritans believed in election, Edwards is right that double election was considered a separate, sometimes heretical belief. Foreseeing this, Perkins clarifies that "election is that whereby God hath ordained certaine men to his glorious grace in the obtaining of their saluation and heauenly life by Christ," attempting to shift the focus from condemnation to the potential for salvation to the balm of election.[72] The key passage is 'certain men,' and much of the conflict over predestination can be summarized by "How many elect are there?" For the more rigid Puritans, the number was quite small.

There is much disagreement and critical handwringing over how disruptive *predestination* was to the English religious community. In his famous-though-divisive opinion, Nicholas Tyacke sees Laudianism as disruptive of the loose-but-pervasive Calvinist collective, primarily by attacking predestination and its emphasis on double election, whereas other scholars, Peter White leading the charge, disagree there was ever this Calvinist consensus.[73] What is exposed by this critical handwringing is the reluctance of scholars to address the lay believer as the *locus* for religious edification, the object of these theological qualms.

Much is made of the disconnect between the theoretical side of theology and the practice of religion, the supposed divide between the church body theorizing in esoteric universities and

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[72] William Perkins, *A Christian and plaine Treatise of the Manner and Order of Predestination and of the largenes of Gods Grace* (London: William Weley, 1606), 6. Perkins would remain a key Calvinist, and it is not surprising that, when restrictions on the press were lifted during the interregnum, his works saw the press anew.

[73] The divide is between Tyacke and Paul White, with Peter Lake and Anthony Milton forming a type of synthesizing middle ground. For the main debate, see Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and counter-revolution," in *The Origins of the English Civil War*, Ed. Conrad Russel. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1973) and White, "The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered," *Past and Present* 101 (November 1983): 34-52.

the enactment of religious worship in the parishes. As Alexandera Walsam succinctly says, "individuals are rarely as logical and consistent as the 'isms' and 'ologies' historians dissect with the benefit of hindsight."[74] These debates—with their assumptions about clerical disputes and ink-bled theological debates—bely the effect religion has on the individuals, mainly in how arguments over *predestination* came coupled with warnings or prescriptions against their abuse. Briefly, I wish to turn this discussion to be about how predestination evokes both theology and religious practice to show how clergy themselves took pains to address the effects of religion, a task which we need to turn no further than the Thirty-Nine Articles to complete.

In theory, predestination should grant "sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to the godly," and yet, warns the Thirty-Nine Articles, "for curious and carnal persons," God's predestination does instead inspire "a most dangerous downfal, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation."[75] It was paramount, according to this reasoning, that clergy controlled scripture so that the mind—here embodied as the devil—could not create the 'downfal' through which one enters holy desperation.

There was splintered opinion within the church over the strictness of predestination, hence the concern over whether the weak or carnal could process the concept correctly. Lake explains that, "if the doctrine of predestination provided objective roots for the divide between the godly and the wicked, it also ensured that puritan attitudes toward that divide could be nothing if not ambiguous."[76] The ambiguity influenced both the upper tier of the church as well as the individual, lay practitioner, but—and this is an essential point for most theories—the term itself

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[74] Alexandra Walsom, "The Parochial Roots of Laudianism Revisited: Catholics, Anti-Calvinists and 'Parish Anglicans' in Early Stuart England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 49, no. 4 (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1998): 625.

[75] *Book of Common Prayer*, 678.

[76] Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, 151.

refers to a complicated, often competing, theory with many moving points, normally coupled with some form of qualifier to temper its application.

In unpacking Puritanism and its use of despair, scholars often select terms that are important to doctrinal tensions, including *predestination, superstition, election,* and *reprobation*, to construct a religious rigidity. Sometimes they contextualize these terms, but the paradigmatic focus on despair often precludes a broader, contextual reading, mainly because of an accurate—albeit narrow—focus on fatalism. What is lost in these discussions is a simple fact in which some scholars may be less interested: these desperate terms are often evoked *in order to elicit comfort*, not create anxiety or despair. Following Jeremy Schmidt's important work in *Melancholy and Care of the Soul*, I explore how despair and its network of related religious terms are used for various forms of comforting, mediating, or otherwise assuaging doubt, fear, and anxiety.[77] This is not always the case, but, in the literary examples I explore, despair is frequently used to calm rather than disturb. In every case I discuss, despair is used to mitigate some form for evaluation and judgement, thus excusing the desperate from their actions.

The Exculpation of the Desperate: Preview of Dissertation

With the overview above, I have provided historical and religious context to the following dissertation, which often takes for granted a reader's knowledge of the early modern English church. In writing a historical and contextual discussion of despair, I have paid special attention to informative beliefs, doctrines, and events that shape how the four authors engaged with despair and its complicated relationship to the Church of England. I sought to differentiate major movements within the Church of England.

Turning now to the individual chapters, I explore how four seventeenth-century English writers sought to mitigate those suffering from religious despair, an increasingly prominent and

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[77] Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and Care for the Soul: Religion, Moral Philosophy, and Madness in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

often-fatal condition. Each chapter offers a significant look into how religious individuals offered treatment to the desperate, a religious condition which overtly exposes how individuals struggled with religion in England. While some current scholars fault Calvinism for the pervasiveness of despair, my dissertation explores prominent literary figures with religious or political influence who complicate this framework and question the consistency of stances on despair and suffering inside and outside the Church of England. In examining William Shakespeare, John Donne, Robert Burton, and John Milton, I explore how these authors reimagined despair in order to offer a treatment to their readers.

Not every author in this dissertation was a clergymen, but each of the four men maintained an important relationship to despair through the church in one facet or another. In evoking despair, both Shakespeare and Milton provide glosses of the monarchy and the Erastian church, mobilizing despair as a vehicle to both criticize and comfort. Their goals are complicated and directly tied to their historical moment. Both Donne and Burton look to mitigate individual bouts of despair by unpacking scripture. Both authors directly see despair in relation to suicide, and the focus on stifling individual soteriological inquiry is important to the period. All four authors tie their use of despair to what is happening in the England around them, using the spiritual condition and its religious teetering to explore, extrapolate, and mediate religious tensions.

As referenced above, predestination is probably the most well-known Calvinist tenet, and all four authors struggle with the term in their own way, some more doctrinally, the others more individually. For example, in engaging with despair, both Donne and Burton find themselves at odds with the church doctrine, forcing them to carefully extrapolate *election* rhetoric from church practice in order to mitigate desperate thoughts. Whereas Shakespeare tends to ignore strictly doctrinal thinking, Burton explicitly evokes it, struggling logically and methodologically to understand the difficult tangle that is predestination thought. Temperance and moderation are key concepts throughout and, excepting Shakespeare, Arminius is essential to all of these discussions,

providing a significant mode of curtailing doubt by encouraging perseverance and cooperative grace. This is especially true of Milton, who uses the potential for salvation to damn Satan.

In each chapter, I have provided necessary secondary synthesis to provide the reader with a dose of document reception; however, my methodological goal throughout this project has been to focus on primary texts. Where applicable, I have provided footnotes that should broaden discussion beyond despair and the individual author's attempts to mediate it, specifically in the case of Milton for whom secondary literature is a gaping oubliette waiting to devour the vainglorious scholar. Below I preview each chapter's argument, providing a short, albeit insufficient conclusion to such a broad project. Relying on the arguments covered in this chapter, I argue through the following four case studies that in order to mitigate the effects of despair, each author had to maintain a dynamic relationship to the church, making it difficult for contemporary scholars to draw a definitive, static belief for any one of them.

Here I include a brief note on the usages of some religious terms. In general, I borrow key religious terms to code scriptural language. The three most notable examples are *soteriology*, *eschatology*, and *anagogy*. I use *soteriology*, the study of salvation, to show when language is predominantly interested in salvation. This is normally consistent with how other scholars use the term. My usage of *eschatology*, however, is atypical. I use the term less to describe a systemic or group approach to judgement—as might be best implied when discussing Millenarianism—and more to code language specifically invested in judgement or final judgement. Those resistant to these usages should keep in mind that 1) both terms were introduced in the 19th century and were not used during the early modern era, and 2) for the desperate, final judgement and earthly judgement appeared very closely related (if not the same). Finally, I tend to use the adjective *anagogic* to code language specifically associated with spiritual pedagogy, language meant to provide a scriptural lesson or Church of England teaching. For example, John Donne tends to interpret everyday language or occurrences as having scriptural import. In using this language or these occurrences in his sermons, I have said that he is using it *anagogically*, meaning that he

highlights the spiritual import didactically for his listeners. I have provided key definitions of other terms where appropriate.

In chapter two, "The Drowning Man and the Rainbow: John Donne, Communal Voyeurism, and the Desperate," I argue that Donne mitigates the community's negative judgement of the desperate by urging empathy via the golden rule: Do onto others as you wish done to you; judge others as you wish to be judged. By exploring the suffering of individuals and the tendencies for the community to judge them, Donne exhibits despair's complexity of meaning. This complexity is important when discussing Donne's "Death's Duel" as it challenges how scholars approach his mortification. In this chapter, I use original research on grave 'wormes' and their symbolism in England to show how Donne remobilizes church doctrine to mediate desperate thoughts.

In chapter three, "'At Enmity with Cozening Hope': Death, Demise, and Despair in Shakespeare's Richard II," I discuss Shakespeare and his relationship to religious despair. While Shakespeare's *Richard II* is most notably discussed as a history, I explore the play and its relationship to tragedy, arguing that Richard overcomes fatal despair because his wife intervenes to save him, thus negating its tragic trajectory. Shakespeare uses despair to perform ways of seeing history and leadership that instruct the audience to see a tainted king in a new way using a familiar religious condition. Shakespeare uses the tragic king as a locus for political and religious beliefs, exposing effected despair as a conflict between the tragic locus and the historical, rhetorical *figura:* "The sufferings of the man make us forget that he was ever king."

In chapter four, "Robert Burton and the Irrationality of Despair," I show how Burton encouraged tolerance of suicide in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Burton explains that religious despair was a product of incorrect worship, but his major contribution was to mitigate the stigma of despair. Drawing on the legal treatment of suicides and the *non compos mentis* tradition, I engage with contemporary arguments over how suicides were treated in England, concluding that Burton both advocates a fluid view of suicide's value and mediates its stigma.

In the final chapter, "Confirming Oneself as Evil: The Self-Incriminating Despair of Satan," I trace how Milton uses Satan to show the reader his or her place in the Christian cosmos. As an extreme example, Milton positions the desperate reader in a similar relationship with God as Satan. Like Satan, readers can be potentially redeemed by God and damned by themselves. I argue that Milton uses Satan as a good temptation, highlighting God's concern for the desperate and illustrating how desperate individuals damn themselves in the face of scripture.

My research highlights the terms, strategies, and bi-products of early modern religious worship to encourage scholars to re-examine church doctrine's impact. Primarily, my research investigates how clergy defined and addressed affliction, bringing into relief the individuals who experienced it. The authors in this work are divergent, sharing only a liminal sense of 'protestant' religious experience; however, the four converge in their primary goal: the use of despair to achieve some form of mitigation through a remobilization and redefining of the term.

Chapter II

"At Enmity with Cozening Hope"[1]:
Death, Demise, and Despair in Shakespeare's *Richard II*

By the time that *Richard II* was entered into the Registry on August 29, 1597, Elizabeth's solidified power over the national church had been in effect for several decades. Even so, there were several public conflicts over her religious authority toward the end of her reign. For instance, in 1593, internal tensions within the church had been publicized by the Marprelate pamphlets. This public conflict drew signifiant names into the fray, including Richard Bancroft, Francis Bacon, and Richard Hooker, and also literary figures like John Lyle and Thomas Nashe. The situation was divisive enough for Bacon to complain: "The controversies themselves I will not enter into, as judging that the disease requireth rather rest than any other cure."[2] Bacon felt that the public should not see authoritative discord "as if the *civil government itself* […] enter into some convulsion, all things being full of faction and disorder." Though Elizabeth's religious authority was not ultimately jeopardized, the Marprelate pamphlets were a testament to how Elizabeth sought to control her image and to silence public discontent. In the final years of her life, she would again face the 'gravest crisis' in the rebellion of a favorite courtier, Robert Deveraux, the Earl of Essex.[3]

Analogous to the Marprelate incident, the Tyrone Irish rebellion and the domestic Essex rebellion were both significant political events that were exposed to public sentiment in a slightly more round-about manner, including through a key performance of Shakespeare's *Richard II* that would come to dominate the play's reception and demonstrate Elizabeth's need for political and

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, in *The Norton Shakespeare: Histories*, ed. Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 2008): II.ii ll. 68-9.

[2] Francis Bacon, *An Advertisement Touching the Controversies of the Church of England*, In *Francis Bacon: The Major Works,* ed. Brian Vickers, 2-19 (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), 2.

[3] Richard C. McCoy, *Alterations of State* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002), 66. In his chapter, "Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Compromise," McCoy uses *Hamlet* to explore some of these religious and monarchal tensions, exploring some of the monarchical anxieties discussed in my chapter.

religious control. While the historical contentions have been explored in some detail by others,[4] there has been little emphasis on how Shakespeare—writing a decade after the Marprelate debacle—used the themes of kingship to capture Elizabeth's isolation, or how despair—perhaps the most isolating of religious conditions—factored into soothing a several-century-old wound in the public conscience. Most critics argue that Elizabeth's anger at Essex and *Richard II* was because the event exposed the private monarchal sphere to the public eye; however, the Essex rebellion dominates the interpretation, masking how Shakespeare used *Richard II* theatrically to addresses the historical wound of Richard's abdication and thereby negating his attempt to create nationalistic history in service to the Tutor throne. In the following chapter, I discuss how Shakespeare used despair to show how Richard regained monarchal composure, an interpretation that defies the Essex Rebellion's dominance of the interpretative frame. While my focus is primarily on how Shakespeare mobilizes religious despair, much of the interpretation of the play relies on public and private tensions. These tensions strikingly bring into relief Richard's isolated condition, an individual experience that speaks to how the religious and political power structures create an isolating monarchal condition akin to despair.

In reference to the English monarchy, the role of the public is contested; however, as Stephen Greenblatt has rightly argued, Elizabeth relied heavily on public theatricality to distribute her political power. As he explains, Elizabeth's power was "constituted in theatrical celebrations of royal glory and theatrical violence upon the enemies of that glory."[5] This is exemplified by her arrival before the Spanish Armada in 1588 "armed as Pallas [Athena]"[6] and often signaled by her own words: "Princes, you know, stand upon stages so that their actions are viewed and beheld of all

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[4] See Evelyn Albright, "Shakespeare's *Richard II* and the Essex Conspiracy," *PMLA* 42, no. 3 (1927): 686-720. For a criticism of the New Historicism approach to reading *Richard II*, see Leeds Barroll, "A New History for Shakespeare and His Time," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 441-464.

[5] Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets: Renaissance authority and its subversion, Henry IV and Henry V," In *Political Shakespeare,* ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994), 44.

[6] Leah S. Marcus et al., "Notes," In *Elizabeth I: Collected Works,* ed. Leah S. Marcus et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 325n.

men."[7] The unfortunate bi-product of this publicity was the public investment in the monarchal body, and Elizabeth's celebrity and celibacy were a focus of public discourse. For example, Elizabeth's body and her purity became the focus of gender and national arguments against her potential marriage to the Duke of Anjou, Francis of France, in 1579.

The performance of the body draws on the power structures which both embolden and stifle it, often allowing social energy to limit the agency of the individual, even for powerful queens. For example, while Elizabeth evoked the duality of her gender in her speeches, masterfully alternating between the political and complicated nature of the king's two bodies, even her rhetorically gifted and immensely talented platform evoked serious concerns about her femininity and agency. Toward the late 1570s and early 1580s, Elizabeth's body was of increasing importance, her marriage to a foreign monarch at loggerheads with the need for an heir to the throne. Between 1579 and 1581, the potential for marrying even the Protestant Duke of Anjou elicited staunch opposition from the likes of Philip Sidney.[8] And yet, strong-willed, intelligent, and well advised, the queen—even while publicly debated and privately suited— maintained a firm hold on the political union, using her foreign suiters as barriers against each other. Even in these public/private disputations, Elizabeth's strategy was to conflate the symbolic weight of the monarchy with its people, sometimes at the expense of monarchical agency, but always as a mode of control.

Scholars of Shakespeare and his contemporaries are quite familiar with the pomp and ceremony of the monarchy and its relationship to theatrical performance.[9] For these critics, Elizabeth's anger at *Richard II* clearly showed how political clout drew on symbolic and public performance, demonstrating how anxiously the powerful sought to prevent the public from seeing

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[7] Elizabeth I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 189.

[8] See Linda Gregerson, "French Marriages and the Protestant Nation," In *A Companion to Shakespeare's World: Volume 2, Shakespeare's Histories*, ed. by Richard Dutton and Jean F. Howard (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

[9] See Stephen Greenblatt, "Invisible Bullets,"; Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatoo & Windus, 1980).

rebellion as acceptable. If *Richard II* demonstrated anything in the Essex trial, it was that once the political became open,[10] then power began to operate outside the monarch's paradigmatic control: how the public *should* interpret a symbol or a play. As Greenblatt explains in "The Circulation of Social Energy," "virtually everything represented on the stage was at least potentially dangerous and hence could be scrutinized and censored;" the demarcated space of the page, stage, etc., were places where "multiple exchanges" occurred in a transference of a type of social energy that permeates demarcations, infusing theater spaces and exposing power. In these places, art speaks to a contemporary audience in a way slightly askew from historical precedent, yet still empowered by an original energy that receives "supplementary transactions" with each performance.[11]

When revising English history, Shakespeare reinvigorated a residual narrative by investing it with emergent, pregnant energy. For Elizabeth and her censors, the political apparatus carefully received and censored potentially subversive material, even when veiled in the garlands of the past; yet, even during the Essex rebellion, *Richard II* itself acts as a type of social energy interchange, an historical episode invested with new energy by the Elizabethan playwright, who himself becomes a target when new interpretative power structures completely changes the exegetical meaning of his art.[12]

What Greenblatt does not mention directly is that silence—unarticulated knowledge—looms large over every performance, filling in the space of performance as a type of codifying knowledge. How aware was the audience of the original history? How much did the play's

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[10] As is often noted, scholars believe Elizabeth's complaint (the play was performed forty times in the streets) was unfounded, illustrating more her fear than evidence of *Richard II*'s performances.

[11] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 19-20.

[12] Christopher Hill observes that in 1633 the Master of the Revels felt personally burned by Elizabeth's lax censorship, complaining that Elizabethan poets "took a greater liberty than is allowed them by me." In response, "all plays had to be licensed twice, for performance and for the press." In recensoring these earlier plays, the Master offered religious justifications: "[the revival of old plays should be recensored] "since they are full of offens[ive] things against the Church and the state…" (83). Hill, *Century of Revolution*, *1603-1714* (New York: Norton, 1982), 83. For more on Hill's censorship discussion, see his essay "Censorship and English Literature," In *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985).

theological unpinning matter? Richard's narrative provided fodder for analogous historical moments, and a similar traumatic experience would overshadow the eventual execution of Charles I, a moment of deep and resounding trauma throughout Europe. The precedent, however, existed well before Charles. In passing, Peter Saccio quips that "Elizabethans frequently derived from the reign of Richard II analogies to their own political problems."[13] The most obvious example is the relationship between Richard's abdication and the Essex Rebellion because it explicitly exposed a play performing a complex, political, and artistic act. While we can safely say that *Richard II* performs a type of cultural exchange that both enacts its historical past while contextually informing Essex's rebellion, the difficulty is separating how Shakespeare's abdication informed his Richard character while still acknowledging this interchange of historic values.[14] In the case of *Richard II*, the production evokes deeply rooted fear of an unstable leader, a fear that uses despair to accentuate the potential benefit of Richard's abdication; however, how much of that message remained for the queen? Probably very little. Instead, the play's depiction of a desperate ruler resonated in a way that gave energy to a rebellion against her, and the abdication overshadowed the importance of the final rebirth of the king.

In the following sections, I show that, as a political agent, the play functions to perform ways of seeing history, leadership, and despair, instructing the audience using an episodic history, a paradigm for speaking to and of the Elizabethan cultural moment. In order that his historical play could participate in Elizabethan monarchal theatricality, Shakespeare modified the age and role of Queen Isabel to elicit sympathy for the tragic hero, Richard II. By changing the queen, Shakespeare mediated Richard's mental instability and negated the isolating, dangerous condition of despair. Therefore, despair is evoked, mediated, and redeployed in the service of national history in a way that seems to evoke marriage and good council as a potential solution to despair. The final message

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[13] Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle, and Drama* (New York: Oxford UP, 1977).

[14] Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 8. As Howard notes, "To *re*present the world is precisely to present it from a vantage point in contest with other vantage points." Ideologically, the theater both enacted and contested the ideologies it represented.

of the play, one drowned out by the rebellion, was that if not for Richard's abdication and its resulting despair, Richard would never have reached the monarchal grace achieved at the time of his death.

I: Reading History In Reverse

During its original run, *Richard II* only elicited minor discordance, and the play had been acted without much fuss; yet, if we approach the play in terms of Elizabeth's paradigmatic theatricality (how does this play perform for the queen?), the difference between the prior, public performances and the private Essex performance pertains less to the theatrical, political nature of the play itself but rather for whom it was performed, meaning that Elizabeth's preoccupation with her public theatricality was undeniably important to how the play's February 7, 1601 revival was received. The night before the rebellion, Essex's supporter Henry Wriothesley, the Lord of Southampton, organized a private performance of *Richard II*, perhaps encouraging a political *modus operandi* where kings were deposed because they impinged upon the rights of noblemen, like Essex. Southampton, Shakespeare's patron, paid 40 shillings to the actors to revive the play but with one notable difference: while the earlier *Richard II* productions were performed without the abdication scene, the February 7 performance included it. This alteration nearly cost the troupe their lives.[15]

Ostensibly, the play was meant to stir public sympathy for a dethroning, channeling some of the visual, popular support for Bolingbroke's uprising to Essex, who would eventually turn to London's citizens to support his cause. The tactic implicitly relied on the conflation of Bolingbroke and Essex, two rebellious actors rising against their rulers. For the state, this interpretation was

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[15] Historical dates and persons drawn from Philip Edwards, *The Making of the Modern English State, 1460-1660* (New York: Palsgrave, 2001), 212-215. Essex's problems and desire for rebellion are informed by his previous involvement in the 1599 suppression of the Irish rebellion, otherwise known as the Tyrone's rebellion after Hugh O'Neill, second Earl of Tyrone.

confirmed when Elizabeth clarified during the trial: "I am Richard II […]. Know ye not that?"[16] Elizabeth's response shows that she grounded her interpretation in how historical narratives participated in the the divine myth: based on historic narrative, the play's theatricality enacted her religio-political agency across time. This power dynamic gives current critics license to view the abdication scene as a political act in that it depicted a moment when a divinely anointed monarch, albeit confusingly, gave up the crown. Invested with such religio-political clout, the scene remained censored in the first four print editions, and was included only after Elizabeth's death.[17] The Essex performance, therefore, gains some notoriety in that it included a scene that directly impacted the myth of divine providence; however, lost in this discussion, was that the abdication scene exposed the two-body system as a dependent on the fragility of the human body and its oft-frail mind, themes that are still present throughout the play.

As a history, *Richard II* functions to explore the traumatic nature of kingship, something compressed within the abdication scene. In general, Richard's abdication left such a significant trauma in the English mind that it haunted the Elizabethan court, looming over the execution of Mary of Scotland and Essex's attempted rebellion.[18] In the latter case, the rebellion occurred at a time when Queen Elizabeth was most susceptible to questions of her physical and mental stability, making her strained relationship with the much younger Essex a pressure cooker ready to explode.

Both *Richard II* and the Essex Rebellion threatened the divine myth that the king maintained an inseparable human form (king) and a mystical, divine form (King). Exacerbated by its themes of poor leadership and questionable decision making, the drama threatened the

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[16] Stephen Greenblatt, "General Introduction," In *The Norton Shakespeare*: *Tragedy, e*d. Stephen Greenblatt et al., 2nd edition (New York: Norton, 2008).

[17] Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (New York: Norton, 1997), 306-7.

[18] While many critics have discussed this topic, including Anderson, it is worth reading or viewing Friedrich Schiller's *Mary Stuart, A Tragedy*, which dramatizes the final days of Mary, Queen of Scots.

political, theological system which bolstered Elizabeth's power.[19] By dramatizing the effects of Richard's abdication, the drama hypothetically explored what would happen when the body politic is split from the body physical. But much of the 'stripping' is veiled in arguments over culpability: who was responsible for this fall from grace? In arguing that Richard is the most "irresponsible" and "threatening" monarch to his own state, Shakespeare "makes the displaced and dispossessed Bolingbrook into the figure who rescues the principle of genealogy and links it to the law."[20] It is Richard, then, who ruins England, and Bolingbroke who revives it. As historian Ernst Kantorowicz explains, the traumatic abdication is "The charge of high treason committed by the king against the King"[21]; however, if the abdication is treasonous because the act subverts the legal societal framework, then arguments over will and intentionality immediately become important to the act: "The traditional glorifications of his position [i.e. the King's body politic] have become the essence of his being, and he lives in an unreal world in which he thinks of those glorifications as the only reality."[22] If Richard willingly abdicates, is his despair divine punishment? As with most desperate acts, the king's mental faculties are distorted by the King's body politic, meaning that there is a disconnect between how distorted the mind of the man has become while acting as the mind of a god.

In both the play and Essex's coup, the king's divine form is threatened by an attempt to remove or dethrone the physical form, making any an attempt to remove the centralizing figure a direct threat to the individual themselves. This is clear when Elizabeth personally perceived the rebellion as a threat against her body itself: "…how long lived Richard the Second after he was

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[19] See Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (New York: Methuen, 1986). See specifically "Rituals of State: History and the Elizabethan Strategies of Power," 72-101.

[20] Tennenhouse, *Power on Display*, 76.

[21] Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957), 39.

[22] Theodore Spencer, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* (London: Cambridge UP, 1944), 74.

surprised [by his murderers]?"[23] In visiting the scene, Samuel Daniel also plays up this fear of how the king's divine right was diametric to popular will, showing that when encouraged by Bolingbroke, the king's body natural falls victim to the same leviathan that once composed the body politic:

> So, with this bold opposer, rushes-on
> This many-headed monster, *Multitude*:
> And he, who late was feard, is set vpon,
> And by his owne (*Actaeon*-like) pursu'd;
> His owne, that had all loue and a we forgone:
> Whom breath and shadowes onely did delude,
> And newer hopes, which promises perswade;
> Though rarely men keepe promises so made.[24]

Given that both Richard and Elizabeth—to some degree—maintained a theatrical grounding of the monarchal person, popular rebellion threatened to exposed the artificial nature of the king's body, thereby destroying it.

As Daniel's example shows, the king's body was threatened by the same force that empowered it: spectacle. In referencing Essex's uprising in passing, poet Barnabe Barnes explains that "Queene *Elizabeth,* feared not the valour and fortunes of *Robert,* then Earle of Essex; vntill such time as through his owne credulous imprudence, hee wilfully wounded himselfe with his owne intollerable appetite." While Barnes admits that Essex was "deare to the *multitude*," he explains that the multitude is often wooed by "fairest spectacle"—what Barnes calls "Fortunes bable." Unfortunately, "like a momentanie bubble," Essex's reputation "appeared by those great hopes, reports, and opinions, which the people had of him." Unfortunately, the higher one's fame, the more dangerous is their fall: "*Non minus periculum ex magna fama, quam ex mala:* But the daunger of a great [f]ame, is altogether as great, as that which proceedeth from a bad report."[25] As

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[23] *From the speech of Sir Edward Coke at Essex's trial, February 19,* in *The Norton Shakespeare*: *History,* ed. Greenblatt et al., 2nd edition (New York: Norton, 2008). 950.

[24] Samuel Daniel, *The First Fovvre Bookes of the Ciuile Wars between the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke* (London: P. Short, 1595), 12 ll. 1-8. 24.

[25] Barnabe Barnes, *Foure Bookes of Offices enabling Privat Persons for the Speciall Seruice of all good Princes and Policies* (London: George Bishop et al, 1606), 98.

Daniel and Barnes reason, theatricality and spectacle were strong political tools that subsumed the multitude within itself; yet, this usefulness increased the fear that rebellion could undermine the divine myth, thus exposing how the upper-class maintained control over the multitude. It is only natural then that, if one could gain political power from spectacle, theatrical spectacle could threaten it as well, especially when performed for a multitude susceptible to celebrity. Bedazzled for so long, the multitude swelled up to swallow the king.

While historians like Philip Edwards interpret the link between the Essex Rebellion and *Richard II* as relating to a public revolt where an unpopular monarch is deposed through public sentiment[26], the usage of *public* here is questionable as the monarchy's reliance on its gentry was different between Richard's fourteenth- and Elizabeth's sixteenth-century rule. In both reigns, *popular* is misleading given the power dynamics of the monarchy, and the monarch's popularity should be used to allude to how the gentry reacted to the monarch. For example, Richard's purse was empty, and, given that his desire for war with Ireland was unpopular, his desire to seize both the land and coffers of the gentry was extremely unwelcome. As A.K. Gundy explains, the uprising against King Richard came mostly because of his abuse of the gentry, who took actions against the king; these same antagonists, who normally "saw themselves as the king's natural advisors and allies," were responding "to the king's openly aggressive and disruptive rule," protecting themselves against the king.[27] Conversely, Elizabeth gained wealth by maintaining a strict monopoly on prize goods, controlling the gentry through a steady lending of monopolies. For example, her first punishment of Essex was stripping his monopoly on sweet wine. Ultimately, in comparing the two

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[26] Ibid., For more discussion of popularity as politically subversive, see Jeffrey S. Doty, "Shakespeare's *Richard II*, 'Popularity,' and the Early Modern Public Sphere," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 61, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 183-205. Doty explains that by the end of Elizabeth's reign, *popularity* was used to deride "the public circulation of political arguments" (188) or "to signify an individual's cultivation of popular favor for political ends" (189). To explore the latter example, Doty cites Hammer's analysis of Essex's popularity, concluding later that "Essex's London 'uprising' in fact crystallized 'popularity' as sedition itself and turned him into its cautionary figure" (190).

[27] A.K. Gundy, *Richard II and the Rebel Earl* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2013), 15. In discussing"patronage," Gundy synthesizes Richard's economic role and how it is used by historians. For a synthesis of responses to Richard and medieval economic views, see Gundy's introduction.

monarchal systems, the dependence of popularity relied upon how the king both treated the gentry and maintained his wealth: Richard was beholden to his gentry only in so far as they funded and participated in his rule, thus losing popularity when he began seizing the gentry's assets and abusing his privilege; for Queen Elizabeth, the gentry was beholden to her, and thus she was popular for allotting wealth, using her monopolies to empower and punish as necessary.

This clarification is important because it affects how we view Richard's actions. Both historically and in the play, Bolingbroke justified his rebellion on revenging the wrongs done to his family and inheritance, familial grievances that he directly blamed on the monarch and Richard's inability to properly adjudicate; conversely, Essex's reasoning for acting against the queens were based on his bankruptcy, his own political ineptitude, and his unwavering sense of military honor, none of which were helped by the lack of powerful courtiers to support him in the late 1590s.[28] His popular rebellion was largely a failure, and London turned its back on him when he came calling. However, throughout his political career, Essex's seemingly unwavering military honor and its reflective ethos followed him in the court, and he remained—despite the failure to support him—popular. His public reputation was strong, even upon his final arrest, and he levied this public appeal occasionally as a type of check for the queen and her advisors.[29] This all said, Essex's public support proved pointless when, on Sunday, February 8th, 1601, he and his followers marched into London to gather support from the city and its sheriff. Unlike Bolingbroke, who was able to levy

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[28] In order to argue that Essex used his popularity to gain support, we must assume that Essex *planned* a rebellion. Paul E.J. Hammer makes a convincing, well-written case that he did not. Hammer argues that, while much is made of Essex's desire to overthrow the queen, it probably was the case that his attempt to take London shows he was avoiding a coup. He concludes, finally, that there is no connection between the performance itself and the coup, since while the play was being performed, there were no plans for the coup. This assumes that the play itself did not inspire the rebellion rather than the other way around. Paul E.J. Hammer, "Shakespeare's Richard II, the Play of 7 February 1601, and the Essex Rising," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 59, no. 1 (2008),16.

[29] Hammer cites several examples of this strategy, though the most important was Essex's *Apologie*, disseminated in 1598. Written as a letter to Francis Bacon's brother, Anthony, the letter appealed to the public so that Essex could criticize the queen and Lord Burghley, Robert Cecil, and their approach to Europe. The document would surface with renewed import during Essex's trial in 1600. Paul E. J. Hammer, "Devereux, Robert, second earl of Essex (1565–1601), soldier and politician," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004).

gentry support and public reputation to force Richard from the throne, Essex's court shortcomings, in spite of his public reputation, could not secure the success of his "half-baked plan" to seize London.[30]

Despite these specific differences, Edwards rightly shows that there are thematic overlaps between Richard's public coup and Essex's failed one, and yet Edwards assumes, like most critics who approach the topic, that the staging was done to reinforce Essex's popularity as a Bolingbroke figure. Conversely, Eric S. Mallin contends that it is possible that Essex and his conspirators staged the production to highlight the relationship between Richard and Essex, both having returned from Ireland impotent and repentant. For Mallin, it is plausible that in staging *Richard II*, Essex redefined himself "as misunderstood, newly thoughtful and, in a way, repentant ('I wasted time, and now doth time waste me')," and the performance of the play became an amendment of his upstart ways. Even if Mallin is right, he is forced to admit that, from the queen's perspective, "The public gathering of sympathy is in itself an insurrection, a revision of the queen's view of her former favorite."[31] In this reading, both the queen and Essex aligned with Richard, though competing over which character traits they empathized with: the queen with the monarchal, Essex the penitence.

Regardless of Essex's exegetical intention, the state seems to have endorsed Essex as Bolingbroke, focusing almost entirely on his political subversion and not at all upon his repentance. In sermonizing Essex a few days after his beheading, William Barlow used the Richard narrative to explicitly align Bolingbroke and Essex as rebellious. Barlow says that Essex's actions were

> "in pretence finall, all one with that of Henrie Duke of Lancaster [i.e. Bolingbroke], against Richard the second, remoouing certaine which missed the King. In pretence originall, that of Kettes and Tylers [revolt

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Eric S. Mallin, *Inscribing the Time: Shakespeare and the End of Elizabethan England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 228 fn23.

> against] the King [i.e. the Peasants Revolt], as they in your citty cryed in that insurrection for the Queene…[32]

While we may quibble over to whom each principle actor related, it is clear that the queen (and her state apparatus) wished to align her with Richard and Essex with a seditious rebel, a point Barlow explicitly clarifies.

For his part, Barlow echoes William Allen's 1595 writing to the Queen's Privy Council—Essex specifically. In discussing the legacy of the crown, Allen frames Bolingbroke as having "entred the crowne by tyra[n]ny & viole[n]ce, first for deposing, the true and lawful king Richard, and secondly for taking the kingdome vppon himselfe."[33] Writing before the coup, Allen, like Barlowe, frames Richard's abdication by arguing that the commonwealth delegitimates monarchal power, impinging on a rightful monarch's rule by imposing a more popular subject. By framing Richard as ruling improperly and in an unpopular fashion, the Lancasters were able to justify an unjust disposition and supplant the rightful king. In short, Richard's history was essential to legitimizing the rule of the powerful, and protecting it from would-be rebels.[34]

The conspirators including the abdication is the strongest testament to the public revolt theme that dominated the Essex trial, especially because the a scene disrupts the myth of divine providence and culminates in the monarch's 'willing' deposition. According to literary historian E.M. Tillyard, part of Elizabeth's ire toward the February performance of *Richard* stemmed from the threat to the Tudor Myth[35], the narrative which justified the rise and continual success of the

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[32] William Barlow, "A sermon preached at Paules Crosse, on the first Sunday in Lent" (London: Mathew Law, 1601), EEBO.

[33] William Allen, *A Conference about the next Succession to the Crowne of Ingland* (R. Doleman 1595), 58.

[34] cf 59-80. As their primary objective, Allen concludes that the rebels seemed to supply "sufficient proofe to these men, that king Richard of Ingland might be remoued by force of armes, his life and gouerment being so euel and pernitious as before hath bin shewed" (72).

[35] In his approximation of the Tudor myth, Tillyard explains that the two major rhetorical assumptions were that 1) the York and Lancaster houses were united by Henry VIII's "marriage with the York heiress," the "providential and happy ending of an organic piece of history"; and 2) through Henry VIII's Welsh ancestry, "he had a claim to the British Throne unconnected with either his Lancastrian descent or his Yorkish marriage." Tillyard, *Shakespeare History Plays*, 29.

Tudor line. For Tillyard, this mode of history was a top-down strategy, a historical mode that "encouraged [the queen's people] to look on the events that led to their accession" in a "special way."[36] In some agreement with this belief, Henry Ansgar Kelly explains that Elizabethan history and historiography were mobilized by monarchal supporters as myths, complex narratives used to support their current monarch, including the earlier York, Lancaster, and Tudor factions.[37] These rhetorical narratives interacted with the myth of divine providence, mainly that God had ordered the cosmic system and man's fallibility brought discord to the system. In this view, Bolingbroke brought a 'curse' onto England by forcing Richard to abdicate, a just and reflexive curse for removing God's appointed.[38]

While Tillyard's view has largely been critiqued for its monolithic, simplifying nature, the relevance of historical discourse to other discursive spheres was significant. Evidence shows that English histories were essential to social construction of the present, and artists actively reconstituted the past to represent the present. As Richard Helgerson determines,

> More than any other discursive form, chronicle gave Tudor Englishmen a sense of their national identity. […]. [The Elizabethans] imitated it, borrowed from it, reacted against it, and rewrote it. *But chronicle itself did not remain static. In response to changes in the political order of England, it too changed*.[39]

Even a preliminary reading of the English chroniclers indicates that Shakespeare himself is enacting a type of reworking of history in state service; however, *Richard II* demonstrates that the play and its performances do not provide a monolithic framework. as Albert William Levi reasons, we can acknowledge a Tudor historic pattern without arguing that Shakespeare was dominated by

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[36] Ibid., 29.

[37] Henry Ansgar Kelly, "The Lancaster Myth," In *Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 1970). For different usages of Richard's character, see "Lancaster Myth" (9-37) and "Shakespeare's Double Tetralogy: Richard II" (203-14). Kelly indicates that the French chroniclers were kinder to Richard than the English.

[38] For the curse see Shakespeare, *Richard II*, In *The Riverside Shakespeare*, Ed. Herschel Baker et al. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), IV.i ll 136-7, 140-1, and 145-7. For a discussion of the curse in Shakespeare's histories, see Robert Rentoul Reed, Jr., *Crime and God's Judgement in Shakespeare* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1984).

[39] Richard Helgerson, *Frames of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 11-2. Emphasis mine.

it: "Shakespeare's politics may be congruent with the Tudor myth; [but] it is not exhausted by it…"[40] Instead, Shakespeare's *Richard II* does more than simply explore the abdication. It informs and comments on how this historic narrative participated in the current moment.

For Shakespeare, history was an experience in which the present retrospectively informed the past and the past must, reflectively, be made to inform the present; the playwright read "history in reverse,"[41] working his way through contemporary social issues by re-centering their roots in an imagined past, a process that acts as an erasure and a disruption that we might call "revisionist history," as fiction attempts to remove historical events in lieu of a new reality. *Richard II* participates in this erasure, acting as a a piece of Tudor national fiction, but, more importantly, it provides a look into how political and legal theory create mental discordance within the ruler, a performance of emotional introspection.

I do not plan to devolve this section into a discussion of Shakespearean society or by inquiring into what Shakespeare saw in Elizabeth that drove him to Richard's mental breakdown; however, the assumption that history is somehow distinct from other fictions is important to how Shakespeare used despair within the play, as the mental/spiritual condition gained its importance through its service to political and historical reality-making. When Shakespeare wrote history, he did so as a continual reenacting of present social issues, locating them analogically in the past, exemplified here by the deep wound left by Richard's abdication: "…*Richard II* engages the tensions between disruptive, historical events and the narratives that work to record a coherent history that is finally transcended."[42] What we have in in the Essex/Richard debacle is a competition of history-making.

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[40] Albert William Levi, *Humanism & Politics: Studies in the Relationship of Power and Value in the Western Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1969), 68.

[41] Gregerson, "French Marriages and the Protestant Nation," 255.

[42] Thomas P. Anderson, "Richard II and the Politics of Murder," In *Performing Early Modern Trauma* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 65.

I find it troublesome to read scholars who seek to somehow dismiss Shakespeare's 'history' in the face of perceived historical accuracy, a sweeping move that somehow preferences *history* over *history plays* with little or no genre awareness and with little interest into how history is itself narrativized.[43] If we assume that these histories are by nature rhetorical—as the early modern historians would have—then we should begin asking better questions of Shakespeare's 'history.' What specifically did Shakespeare see in his world that made him turn back to the abdication of Richard? How did he see his history as amending or impacting those issues? Perhaps Shakespeare saw in the aging Elizabeth the same instability that, as Hammer indicates, might have encouraged Essex's continual disobeying of her.[44] In agreement, Anderson explains that Shakespeare saw in Elizabeth a type of instability born of political act and murder, including Elizabeth's execution of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1587.[45] Even so, Anderson explains that, when Elizabeth empathized with Richard during Essex's trial, the empathy showed "how the contingent death of sovereignty resists integration into narrative structures that memorialize the past by trying to leave it behind." In other words, even if a prince's actions occurred as if upon the stage,[46] these political events defied both the monarch and her playwright's ability to narrativize—and thus control—them.[47]

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[43] In his article, "Eating Richard," Jeremy Lopez explores some of these issues, discussing how a synthesis of sorts is formed by Shakespeare and his source in this instance, Holinshed:

> My goal in this third part of the essay has been to arrive at a way of describing the origin of the impulse to conflate Shakespearean history with the (or an) historical record. The impulse, I have tried to suggest, originates in a void; Shakespeare's text and Holinshed's are not connected, as by a thread, but rather in orbit around one another, and the space between them is the source of a motion that is enabled by mutual attraction and repulsion. Shakespeare's achievement in *Richard II* at least partially is the creation of something out of nothing--or nearly nothing.

Lopez does not engage with the other historical sources as thoroughly, an omission that complicates some of his deductions. Jeremy Lopez, "Eating Richard," *Shakespearean Studies*, 36 (2008): 207-228.

[44] Hammer, "Shakespeare's Richard II, the Play of 7 February 1601, and the Essex Rising."

[45] See Anderson, "Richard II and the Politics of Murder." Anderson makes the point that Elizabeth went as far as to complain her execution order was misunderstood and refused to acknowledge her role in the execution itself by silencing Lord Burghley' news confirming the execution.

[46] Elizabeth I, "Reply to the Parliament Petitions Urging the Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, 12 November, 1586."

[47] Anderson, "Politics of Murder," 57.

When Shakespeare looked into the nostalgic, collective memory around him, he saw a fear of political instability innocuous enough to be performed on one day, yet malignant enough to warrant another's death the next day. As simplistic as we may view it, Shakespeare realized that history seems to revolve and devolve with the king. Derek Cohen explains:

> What is good or bad in Shakespeare's medieval or Tudor monarchies is always subordinated to the simple but overwhelming fact of kingship. The king simply is: his monarchy survives until his death or until he is usurped. What kind of king he was depends entirely upon his use of power and power's use of him. The king, in his lifetime, while making his history, is feeding the maw of his posterity—the successors and descendants who will remember him, will praise or blame him, and the writers who will reinvent him for their time.[48]

In vivifying the abdication, Shakespeare reinvented Richard by unearthing a not-so-repressed trauma, a concern for an unstable leader with which those in the United States might empathize. In order to mend the wrong done to the Tudor line, Shakespeare recreates the past as a narrative that, when seized upon by the Essex conspirators, struck enough of a chord to be spun to a diametrical political end.

In comparing the Essex performance against the text of *Richard II*, we see how the cultural moment had changed in a short matter of time, a few years between the original run of *Richard II* and its revival by the conspirators. In this short time, the queen's exegetical frame had changed enough that, judging by Elizabeth's post-Essex reaction, *Richard*'s participation in nation-building was less significant than Essex usurpation of it. Whether or not Essex's conspirators meant to use Richard's abdication to style Essex as a Bolingbroke figure, the performance remobilized the play's original historical reworking negating the play's original service. In the following sections, I show how Shakespeare used Richard II's despair to repair the damaged made by abdication, a task he accomplished by drawing on the balm of marriage and good council. I discuss despair as a traumatic, popular theme in Shakespeare's works necessary to evoke the effects of abdication on the individual and to bolster the King's upward return to monarchal nobility. Before directly turning to despair, however, I pose a hypothetical inquiry into why the censor chose to remove the

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[48] Cohen, "History and the Nation in *Richard II* and *Henry IV*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 42, no. 2 (Spring, 2002): 297.

abdication scene (4.1) and why it matters when differentiating the play's text from the Essex performance and has implications linked to despair.

We are not completely certain why the abdication scene was removed, and its removal, as James Busman reminds us, may not have been *censorship*, given that the word connotes political suppression.[49] This said, the scene's inclusion in the Essex performance does at least indicate that whoever organized the conspirator's performance at the Globe saw it as relevant. After all, it marked the first performance of the scene in history.

For some scholars, the abdication scene's removal is paradoxical given the inclusion of the king's closed-door murder, itself a fiction invented by Shakespeare. In his *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England*, Richard Dutton argues that the scenes' viability involved political agency: although the murder scene involved a decision by a single gentlemen, the abdication was encouraged by Parliament, thus the scene implied that parliamentary power exceeded the monarch's.[50] Given that Parliament played a role in Richard's original ascension, I'm not certain how far we can take Dutton's argument; however, I agree with Dutton's point that encouraging Parliamentary control would worry Queen Elizabeth. This said, seen in the light of the *ars moriendi* tradition, the way one dies is of considerable import, meaning that Richard's ability to transcend despair before death is of utmost importance to Tudor history-making, especially in a play where the king is so mentally compromised by an abdication. Likewise, both an execution and a murder were of particular political importance, especially for a king. If we make the point that parliamentary power decided a scene's inclusion, we ignore how much is at stake in the death of an English monarch in the final scenes.

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[49] James C. Bulman, "Appendix," In *King Henry IV, Part* 2 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 445-447.

[50] Richard Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Springer, 2000). For an overview and analysis of the censorship debate, see Cyndia Susan Glegg, "By the choise and inuitation of al the realme": *Richard II* and Elizabethan Press Censorship," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 432-448. In agreement with Dutton, Glegg doubts the direct censorship, surmising that the Elizabethan government was "far less effective in maintaining controls [sic] and surveillance of the press" and "far less interested in these matters than many critics have assumed" (435).

The entire play's message and the history's rhetorical import changes without the murder scene; so, I propose a different reason for including the death scene, one embedded in the play itself and directly tied to Richard's despair: it allows for Richard to become King Richard again. While the abdication scene and its trauma could be conveyed un-staged via character dialogue, the murder scene, its desperate language, and the death of the king are significant to the play's resolution, especially in service to national history, and much of the play's tragedy depends on visually seeing the king's murder. In short, if not for the murder scene and Richard's subsequent descent and ascent from despair, the final image of the king would be that of a pathetic, broken man murdered offstage; what kind of image of the English monarch does that paint? Instead, Shakespeare uses despair—in this case a religiously and politically inspired bout—to kindle a previously unseen monarchal flame in the king. If the loss of the body politic was a disability which could only afflict a king, then the despair evoked by it was both politically and religiously informed.

II: Shakespearean Despair

In a play that takes its religiosity so seriously, it is fitting that despair should sneak silently by religion's side; yet, there is something markedly different about the despair of *Richard II*, something pregnant and ominous, a feeling that the sins of some politically powerful men are more significant than the sins of others. Given that *Richard II* is a history outright, we have to begin with a bit of generic awareness before moving into a strict discussion of the play. For critics, despair is more prominently discussed in tragedies, a genre where death and its emotional ramifications are more qualitatively available, if not paradoxically received and presented.

Much critical analysis of despair comes understandably from a generic interest, mainly focusing on comedic, poetic, and tragic representations of the condition. Because of the sorted sources, Shakespeare's usage of *despair* largely depends upon the stetting and context of the play. For instance, the despair and suicides of *Julius Caesar* are not the same as those in *Hamlet*. As the

deaths of Cassius and Ophelia are received differently, so is the despair *Richard III* different than that of *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare is capable of mobilizing different facets of the term even within his own plays, or evoking the condition figuratively as a fatalistic, emotional response, a conflation of sadness, religious redemption, and death.[51]

Despair can be used in a variety of settings and situations, perhaps best evidenced by Leonato's desire for a dagger when confronted by his daughter Hero's sexual dalliance—an emotional response tethered to suicidal means that makes the response comparable to *Macbeth*:

> **Leonato**: "Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?" [*Much Ado* IV.i l.]
>
> **Macbeth**: Is this a dagger which I see before me,
> The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
> I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
> Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
> To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
> A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
> Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? [*Macbeth* II.i ll.]

The key concept here is 'fatal vision,' which evokes the desperate paradigm symbolized by the dagger. This residual imagery is present in medieval morality plays and also in earlier works like John Skeleton's *Magnyfycence* (1523). Macbeth implies that he sees a hallucinated dagger ('a false creation'); Leonato is asking for a physical sword point from one of the armed men present on stage; however, we see that both these symbols evoke the necessary emotional fatalism, the despair that a bloody act entails an almost eschatological consequence. Recently, James Nohrnberg has discussed these as a traditional "pairing of means and causes," but explains that, unlike the earlier medieval tradition, this pairing allows for an "uncontigent act of self-destruction" and a "critical act of self-definition, a kind of Renaissance self-fashioning taken to its natural limit—self-undoing." The key, as Nohrnberg explains, is the "obtaining [of] material means," here presented as the imagined dagger and Leonato's request; however, I would add that, for the audience, both symbols

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[51] Rowland Wymer, *Suicide and Despair in Jacobean Drama* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986). As an expert on the subject, Wymer says this conflation is one of the "more interesting" paradoxes of suicide and despair, that, "above all sins," the "sinne most dispelsant to Crist, and most adversaire" was also the "most closely associated with redemption" (6). Wymer draws a distinction between temporal and final despair, where temporal is a stage redemption and final is the fatal despair of the suicidal (7).

evoke the state of mind "whereby a person *in extremis* is brought to such despair as they must embrace a way to die."[52] Obviously the comedic genre means that Leonato's fatalism is short-lived, just enough to evoke how a daughter's inferred sin derails her father's mind, and yet we can appreciate Shakespeare's skill in deploying despair and the semantically linked fatalism even in passing.

Because of this generic relationship, it is necessary to discuss despair—especially religious despair— contextually, conceiving of genres as modes rather than as dogmatic structures. When Leonato turns to the audience and asks for a dagger's point, he has slipped dangerously close to tragedy, and only because of dramatic irony are we certain the play will not conclude tragically. In turning now to *Richard II* and how it deploys despair, we should keep in mind that, though the play is invested in historical narrative construction, *Richard II* slips often into a self-conscious tragic mode of writing, a consequence of Richard's poetic disposition, but also the necessary end of the story: the king's closed-door murder and potential suicide.

Shakespeare's tragedies and their reliance on despair make for a window into the complex early modern preoccupation with suffering and death. Like other early modern tragedians, Shakespeare drew on despair specifically to show extreme mental and emotional disturbance, internal elements which, because of the theater's demonstrative capacities, created an important cathartic performance of suffering. Given the theatre's performative capacities, plays with mental anguish and its effects, like *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*, open doors into mental health and its societal role, especially in that *Hamlet* features both a melancholic prince and a mad suicide.[53] It is only fitting that *Hamlet* receives much of the critical inquiry, especially given the potential for

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[52] J. Nohrnberg, "'Swords, ropes, poison, fire': The Dark Materials of Spenser's Objectification of Despair-Assisted Suicide, with Notes on Skeleton and Shakespeare," *Exploration of Renaissance Culture* 43 (2017): 158-201.

[53] It is necessary to be brief here, especially considering the scope of scholarship written on *Hamlet* and *Richard III*. As a minor note, it's interesting that Lily Bess Campbell argues that neither Ophelia nor Hamlet are in despair, using this observation to question the quality of love Hamlet felt for his dead beloved. *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2009), 128-31.

psychological introspection in such a masterful early modern play; yet, the term *despair* never appears in the play itself. Instead, we discuss the melancholic prince and his fatalistic love interest in terms of other informative madnesses, even hinting at the religious condition at several times via *desperate*, a term used most notably when Polonius recognizes how unstable Ophelia has become.[54] With *Richard II*, Shakespeare is kinder to my research endeavors, allowing Richard to describe his bouts of despair openly, most directly in III.ii., by directly referencing despair.

Despair is only used sparingly in Shakespeare's plays, appearing the most (thirteen times) in *Richard III*. Religious despair appears even less. To generalize, the punitive/didactic side of despair acts as the key difference between a general usage of *despair* and a religious one. While the general definition is related to hopelessness, religious despair is seen as purposeful, as the sufferer is punished for perceived sins for spiritual reasons but toward a redemptive end. Analogous cases of despair are hard to come by and we cannot say that Brutus or Othello are in religious despair when they commit suicide, since their despair—and their suicides—are wrapped in the old laurels of military honor, judged, as Montaigne would explain, by different paradigms.[55] Unlike some of the other Shakespearean plays, *Measure for Measure* may more comparable to *Richard II* than some of the tragedies. As G.M. Pincss explains, Shakespeare uses *despair* in *Measure for Measure* as a soteriological marker, a position on a spectrum through which ones moves toward heaven, but sometimes through a low place.[56] This is exemplified when the term is used by Duke Vincentio in IV.iii to reference how one transitions into and out of despair:

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[54] *Hamlet* II.i ll. 1060-65. Polonius is referring to lovesickness ("the very ecstasy of love"), though his reference to "passions under heaven" implies an awareness of the sinful nature of such obsessions. There is plenty written on this topic, but for more on melancholy, madness, and Ophelia's lovesickness, see Carol Thomas Neely, *Distracted Subjects*: *Madness and Gender in Shakespeare and Early Modern Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004), specifically 46-56.

[55] See Michel de Montaigne, "A Custom of the Isle of Cea," in *The Complete Essays, e*d. M.A. Screech (New York: Penguin, 2003).

[56] G.M. Pincss, "The 'Heavenly Comforts of Despair' and *Measure for Measure*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 30.2 (Spring, 1990): 303-313. In Shakespeare's *MM*, see IV.iii ll. 2231-5, where the Duke explains, "But I will keep her ignorant of her good,/ To make her heavenly comforts of despair, /When it is least expected."

> The tongue of Isabel. She's come to know
> If yet her brother's pardon be come hither:
> But *I will keep her ignorant of her good,*
> *To make her heavenly comforts of despair,*
> *When it is least expected.*[57]

The Duke emphasizes the punishment paradigm when he juxtaposes despair as temporary torment against heaven's comfort. Inherited from Perkins' Calvinism, the Duke sees despair as a moment when an individual's salvation is accentuated by a bout of despair. The process then ultimately emboldens the spirit.[58] The usage of despair in *Richard II* is similar in that the condition serves as a temporary placeholder before Richard is able to gain a greater, more regal disposition. Informed by the dualistic generic nature of the play, Richard's final scenes forge a unique usage of religious despair where the king slips downward only to regain his nobility before death.

As a history play, *Richard II* draws on political and national history to elicit a tragic result. As Walter Cohen succinctly states, it is impossible to strictly distinguish some historical drama from tragedy because these histories are "works that consequently possess a certain representative status in the serious drama of the period."[59] To put the cart before the horse, the history of *Richard II* mobilizes tragic conventions toward a nationalistic purpose. As I plan to approach religious despair as a consequence of this tragedy, we must abandon some of the general traits of tragedy and despair and specifically approach the condition via the lens of the king's two-body—the political system that accounts both for the historical and religious discussions within the play. In referencing the political, historical usage, we see that despair in *Richard II* is mobilized less for the

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[57] Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, IV.iii ll. 2231-5. Emphasis mine.

[58] See Perkins, *A Treatise tending vnto a Declaration whether a Man be in the Estate of Damnation or in the Estate of Grace* (London: R. Robinson, 1590), XII-XIII. Perkins explains that "Holy Desperation" is the fourth stage to true humiliation (42).

[59] Walter Cohen, *Drama of Nation: Public Theater in Renaissance England and Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982), 228. Cohen's point in "The National History Play" is that, while histories like Richard II and Edward II are interdependent on tragic conventions, they still explicitly reference the national experience, whereas tragedy does not hold this to be a specific convention of its genre. See pages 218-39.

audience's catharsis—its primary tragic purpose—but instead to act as a historical salve for the abdication itself, repairing Richard's monarchical reputation.

In portraying Richard as "a very lively and dynamic king, an active poet of the disintegration of his double nature,"[60] Shakespeare uses the tragic figure as a locus for political and religious beliefs, exposing effected despair as a conflict between the tragic locus and the historical, rhetorical figura. So, while the *tragedy* of Richard II is his suffering, the play's generic, historic formula hinders the irony of his death: he was a lousy king, finally *becoming* King after he has failed *to be* king. The following section explores how Richard's historic reputation informs his despair and how the political theological system informs his abdication and subsequent exclusion from grace.

III: The Desperate Lion

Shakespeare received much of his understanding of Richard from Hall and Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the anonymous play *Woodstock,* and *Mirror for Magistrate*. From Holinshed, Shakespeare draws the king's self-styling as a monarch, "a theory of the kingly dignity and power more exalted than that of his predecessors."[61] In part, it is Richard's stylized "fecklessness" that lends itself to his character flaw, a poetic idleness that, even before his fall, promotes his dangerous dotages. While we say that the abdication is responsible for the king's despair, his emotional instability metonymizes much of his rule, characterizing his poor reputation and unlikable political decisions.[62]

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[60] François Ost, "Weakling Kings and Perverted Symbolism. How Shakespeare Treats the Doctrine of the *King's Two Bodies*," *Pólemos* 9.1 (2015): 8.

[61] Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings*, 23.

[62] In the recent film version of *Richard II*, part of the *The Hollow Crown* series, Ben Whishaw performs Richard with a haunting aloofness, often looking and speaking beyond the characters with whom he shares a stage. This distance heightens the sense that Richard is outside his own existential moment. *Richard II*. Directed Rupert Good (Universal City: Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, 2012), DVD.

For critics, Richard is an unlikable character, a general antipathy observed in and promoted by his historiographers. For example, in his 1580s *Chronicles of England*, John Stow opens his Richard passage with the following stanza:

> When this King first beganne to raigne, the Lawes neglected were,
> Wherefore good fortune him forsooke, and th'earth did quake for feare.
> The people also whome he pollde, against him did rebell,
> The time doth yet bewayle the woes, that Chronicles do tell.
> The foolish counsell of the lewde, and yong he did receyue,
> And graue aduise of aged heads, he did reiect and leaue.
> And then for greedie thirst of Coyne, some subiectes he accused,
> To gayne their goodes into his hands, thus he the Realme abused.[63]

Within the stanza, we learn several important things about both Richard the person and Shakespeare's character. Born to a contested reign[64], Richard's unpopular rule was infamous enough to have still haunted Elizabethan England— 'time doth yet bewayle the woes' left by the unpopular king's abuse.[65] Nature herself personified Richard's inept rule, exhibited by the earthquake in line two. This lingering influence shows—as Stowe emphasizes—that the chronicles themselves simply depict what history and nature have been already showing, historical faults that linger well behind Richard's thirteenth-century rule. Stowe reiterates the king's centrality to the cosmic and temporal order of things by inversely showing what a bad king can do to the natural system.

In citing *Mirror for Magistrates*, Stow directly indicates that Richard's character is an example of how a single king's failure to live as a king can wreck the world order:

> O Mirrour for the world meete,
> which shouldst in Golde be bette,

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[63] John Stowe, *The Chronicles of England from Brute vnto this present yeare of Christ* (London: Ralphe Newberie, 1580), 471.

[64] The son of Edward of Woodstock, the Black Prince, Richard II ascended the throne by an act of Parliament, supposedly aimed to appease Parliamentary anxiety that John of Gaunt, Richard's uncle, sought the throne for himself. Stowe implies that Richard's ascension came in spite of a much more politically powerful and popular man.

[65] For more on Richard's economic crimes and their effect on the kingdom, see Andrew Zurcher, "Wasting Time: Conditionality and Prosperity in *As You Like It* and the Second Tetralogy," in *Shakespeare and Law* (London: MPG Books, 2010).

> By which all wise men, by foresight,
> their prudent wittes may whette.
> Lo, God doth hate such rulers, as
> here vitiously do liue:
> And none ought rule, that by their life,
> doe ill example giue.
> And this King Richarde witnesseth wel,
> his ende this plaine doth shew,
> For God allotted him such ende,
> and sent him so great woe,
> As such a life deservde: as by
> the Cronicles thou mayst know.[66]

In part, the system is distorted by Richard's singular vices. Besides greed, Stowe's main attack on Richard lies in his poor council and bad decision-making. Drawing on the older leadership with whom Richard was generationally maligned, Stowe points to Richard's advisors as 'foolish,' 'lewde,' and 'young,' indicating that, while his uncles were militarily and politically successful, the young king was neither, and instead coveted the wealth and military success of his peers. Greedy, power-hungry, and inexperienced, Richard is hardly portrayed as a king worth emulating.

While Stowe points to Richard's avarice—his 'greedie thirst for Coyne'—as his principle character flaw, some critics' antipathy for Richard expresses gendered assumptions about his personality. Even as early as the Brut Chronicles of 1399, Richard's manliness is questioned, especially when diametrically opposed to Bolingbroke's:

> And aftir Kinge Richarde þe secu*n*de was deposed and put out of his kingdom, þe lorde & þe comyns, alle w*i*th on assent, and alle oþer worthi of þe Reme, chosyn S*er* Henry of Bolyngbroke, Erle of Derby, sone & heyre of Iohn a Gaunt, Duke of Lancastre, for his worthi manhode þat ofte tyme hadde be founde yn hym, and yn dede previd.[67]

For these critics, Richard is arrogant, dismissive, and, because he is obsessed with monarchal ritual and pageantry, prone to inaction—a juxtaposition succinctly captured by the *Brut* author. Like Hamlet, Richard is often caught in overt thought, and his words tend to come once he has fallen off the precipice. More to the present point, though, is the criticism that, for Shakespeare's

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[66] Stowe, 547.

[67] *The Brut or Chronicles of England*, ed. Friedrich W. D. Brie, EETS (London. 1908). 359. The *Brut* author also lays charges of "mysgou*ernaunce* and extorc*i*on" on Richard, decisions he "maade, and ordeyned, to opresse all þe comyn pepil."

audience, Richard's disposition made him "weak, variable, and womanish," "possessing feelings which, amiable in a female, are misplaced in a man and altogether unfit for a king."[68]

It is in these feelings that we see a tension between the tragic, desperate king and the historical, rhetorical figure of the King: "The sufferings of the man make us forget that he was ever king."[69] As Stowe indicates, the chronicle's main purpose is emphasizing Richard's failure as a leader and supporting how, inversely, Bolingbroke had a strong power of the "pepill, and þat alle þe Schyreve of Engelond reysed vp þe Schires yn streyngthing of hym ayens King Richard"[70]; however, Shakespeare uses *Richard* to expose the tensions between history as a rhetorical form and tragedy as a expressive art, meaning that the tragical discontinuity within Richard floats outside the chronicle's lines. Here the crux lies between the generic tensions in the play, tensions which portray the king as the emotional weight of the production (tragedy), and those that must show him as poor ruler (history); thus, we cannot see Richard as a worthy tragic figure and a worthy king simultaneously, despite the religio-political system which sought to portray him as such. In this way, the king's despair becomes the complicated middle ground between the two generic forms, allowing Shakespeare to mediate the generic differences and produce, albeit through the queen, a tragic figure and a historic salve for the king's abdication and poor reputation.

Attuned to the experience of Richard's tragedy, Shakespeare envisions Richard as "a very lively and dynamic king, an active poet of the disintegration of his double nature"[71], using the tragic figure as a locus for political beliefs and their tragic effect on the person. The king's tragic plot begins as a historic fact: Richard abdicates his crown and thus becomes unkinged by his own actions; yet, as is noted by its general scholastic reception, the play's tragic power lies in that it

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[68] Samuel Coleridge, *Coleridge's Writing on Shakespeare,* ed. Terence Hawkes (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959), 233.

[69] William Hazlitt, "Richard II," In *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (Lexington: Bibliobazaar, 2006), 155.

[70] Ibid., 358.

[71] Ost, "Weakling Kings and Perverted Symbolism. How Shakespeare Treats the Doctrine of the *King's Two Bodies*," 8.

dramatizes what happens when the king has been separated from the King, a splitting of the king's two-bodied nature. The play explores how political theory impacts the material body, how directly the individual is impacted by religio-political belief. It is in the unkinging that Shakespeare's tragic voice shows what the chronicles either cannot or will not: the emotional effects of a historic fact.

The King's unkinging is most famously discussed by Ernst H. Kantorowicz in *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology*.[72] In this important book, Kantorowicz admits that "*The Tragedy of King Richard II* is the tragedy of the King's Two Bodies," that within "the humanly tragic aspect of royal 'germination,'"[73] Shakespeare found a "'kind of god that suffers more of a mortal grief than do his own worshippers.'"[74] Kantorowicz explains that, as king and King, Richard's declination splits his person, creating duplications that are "all simultaneously active," intersecting, and yet continually interfering with each other. The three 'prototypes of twin-birth', by which he means persons created by Richard's two-body nature, are the King, the Fool, and the God. As the play moves closer to the abdication, we see Richard slip in and out of these roles, normally with some expression of his suffering. Kantorowicz explains that, with each passing disintegration, there "follows a state of even greater abjectness."[75] This abjectness culminates with the king's demise and death, creating within the fallen god a mortal despair akin to the fallen angels.

Concerned with the immortal qualities of the English monarch, early English jurists conceived of the king's two bodies as a split between the eternal qualities of the monarchy (the body royal) and the mutable qualities of king (the body natural). Obviously the material body of the king can die; so, to allow for a continuance in monarchy, lawyers preferred the word *demise* to *death*. In its legal context, *demise* refers specifically to the stripping away or disjoining of the King's

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[72] For criticism of Kantorowicz's approach, see Ost.

[73] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 24-7.

[74] V.H. Galbraigth qtd in Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 26.

[75] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies,* 32.

two bodies. As English jurist Edmund Plowden explains, "Demise is a word, signifying that there is a Separation of the two Bodies; and that the Body politic is conveyed over from the Body natural, now dead or removed from the Dignity royal, to another Body natural."[76] By differentiating between *death* and *demise*, jurists could differentiate the mystical and material qualities of the person and facilitate the transition of royal 'dignity' from one person to another. Plowden explains, "because thereby [the king] demises the kingdom to another, and lets another enjoy the functions, so that the *Dignity always continues* […]. *he as King never dies, although his natural Body dies.*"[77] This transition—the "migration of the 'Soul'"—was the transfer of the immortal part of kingship "from one incarnation to another…"[78], and entailed a mantle exchange that drew on symbolic, mental, and physical transferences of power so that, when Richard abdicates the crown, the demise creates a new, unexperienced disposition for the king. Richard's demise is formalized in the abdication, where the monarchal power is transferred to Bolingbroke via the crown.

When compared to his sources, Shakespeare does not invent Richard's despair, and the abdication is obviously traumatic for the king. For example, Holinshed has Richard, while "vtterlie despairing of all comfort," hand over the crown with little resistance and mostly in fear of Bolingbroke's army.[79] Likewise, most of the chronicles include a *mi culpa* moment that emphasizes Richard's grief, normally including a longer statement of fault. For example, Froissart heightens Richard's humility in the French chronicles, mostly by voicing Richard's sense of voluntary sacrifice:

> As any more to reygne or to gouerne people
> Or to beare a crowne I thynke it nat

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[76] Plowden qtd in Kantorowicz *King's Two Bodies*, 40. For Plowden's explanation of the transfer of monarchal power, see *The Commentaries,* "William v. Berkeley," 233-35.

[77] Ibid., 406-8. Kantorowicz explains that *dignity* here refers to both *dignity* in its general meaning confused with the body mystical, used akin to an atypical religious term from Italian legal language. In its English context, the term was "used almost synonymously" with "regard to the king" (406).

[78] Ibid.,13.

[79] Holinshed, "The Articles obiected to King Richard, whereby he was counted worthie to be deposed from his Principalitie," *The First and Second volumes of Chronicles* (London: Harrison et al, 1586), 503.

> And as god helpe me I wolde I were deed by a naturall dethe
> And that the frenche kinge had agayne his doughter
> We haue had as yet no gret ioy togyder
> Nor syth I brought her in to Englande
> I coulde neuer haue the loue of my people as I had before.
> Cosyn all thynges co~sydred
> I knowe we well I haue greatly trespassed agaynst you
> And agaynst other noble men of my blodde by dyuers thynges
> I perceyue I shall neuer haue pardone nor come to peace
> Wherfore with myne owne free and lyberall wyll
> I wyll resygne to you the herytage of the Crowne of Englande
> And I requyre you take the gyfte therof with the resignacyon.[80]

Nestled within the king's "resignacyon," we see the fatalism associated with despair, couched in the voluntary demise: '… Wherfore with myne owne free and lyberall wyll/ I wyll resygne to you the herytage of the Crowne of Englande.' Likewise, The *Myrroure for Magistrates* shows Richard express his grief and culpability: "As vicious humors growe the griefe to feede/Thus kinges estates of all be wurst bastad,/Abusde in welth, abandoned at nede, /And nerest harme whan they be least adrad."[81] While Shakespeare includes these themes as well, he engages with the King's despair by directly evoking the king's will only to question how voluntary the abdication was. Shakespeare achieves this by showing how essentialized the monarchy had become within Richard's persona.

Occurring after what Henry Berger, Jr. calls a "tug-of-war over the physical crown,"[82] Richard's demise essentially leaves him in despair because it exposes how significantly the mystical symbolism has been assimilated within his character, basically correlating the king's abdication with the death of his monarchal identity. The split in his identity—the break between the King and the king—is essentially a 'tug-of-war' between his wills, the will of the King who has lost the kingdom but refuses to relinquish his divine right, and the will of the man who fears to lose his own life.

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[80] Jean Froissart, *The Thirde and Fourthe Boke of Sir Iohn Froissart of the Cronycles of Englande, Fraunce, Spaygne, Portyngale, Scotlande, Bretayne, Flaunders, and Other Places*, Trans. Iohan Bourchier (1525), 327-8.

[81] "Hovve Kyng Richarde the Seconde vvas for his euyll Gouernaunce deposed from his Seat, and miserably murdred in Prison," in *Myrroure for Magistrates* (London: Thomas Marsh, 1559), xvii.

[82] Harry Berger, Jr., "Textual Dramaturgy: *Richard II*, in *Making Trifles of Terrors: Redistrubing Complicities in* Shakespeare (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1977), 177.

As the brightness of human glories are often exposed once they have faded, Richard's unlikable qualities pale when the ruination of his nature is exposed. While *Richard II* focuses on Richard's dwindling control, the abdication cements his impotence, highlighting what has become Richard's divorce from power. François Ost has shown how Richard is unable to control the monarchal symbolism, accounting for some of his own hesitancy to relinquish or preserve his kingship.[83] This is perhaps most obvious in the 'tug-o-war' incident between Richard and Bolingbroke. During the abdication scene (IV.1), Richard prepares to turn his crown over to Bolingbroke, only to then pull it back.

> **Richard:** [*to an attendant*] Give me the crown. [*To Bolingbroke*]
> Here, cousin, seize the crown.
> Here cousin. On this side my hand, and on that side thine.
> Now is this golden crown like a deep well
> That owes two buckets, filling one another,
> The emptier ever dancing in the air,
> The other down, unseen and full of water.
> That bucket down and full of tears am I,
> Drinking my griefs, whilst you mount up on high.[84]

The tug of war recalls the two buckets of Fortuna, a medieval image less common than the wheel, but fulfilling some of the same thematic points. In this depiction, Fortuna balances two buckets so that, when one buckets fills, its descent causes the other to rise 'dancing in the air,' as Shakespeare puts it, and the other sinks down 'unseen and full of water.'[85] The idea that fate has balanced Bolingbroke and Richard in oppositional yet complementary tracts causes Richard Halpern to coyly remark, "The king's two bodies have been replaced by the king's two buckets…" Halpern

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[83] Ost, "Weak Kings," 8.

[84] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, V.i. ll. 181-89.

[85] For example, the image of fortune's two buckets appears in Petrus Alphonsi's 12th century book of tales, *Disciplina Clericali*s. In "The Plowman with His Oxen and the Wolf and the Fox," the buckets play a role in a fox's escape from a well, where a wolf jumps into one bucket intentionally stranding a wolf below in a well, leaving the wolf wet and unseen and allowing the fox to escape. The image also has roots in the German proverb "Glück und Unglück sind zwei Eimer im [Galgen]brunnen," fortune and misfortune are two buckets in the same well (*der Brunnen*), occasionally gallows (der *Galgenbrunnen*), as well. Alphonse, *Disciplina Clericalis*, Trans. William Henry Hulme (Cleveland: Western Reserve: 1919).

explains that the image, depicting "the seemingly horizontal opposition of forces between the kinsmen Richard and Bolingbroke," shows Richard's fate to be "mediated by a vertical, gravitational pull."[86] Richard's sorrows are divinely counterbalanced by Henry ascension, and in Halpern's "gravitational pull" we see the downward force 'mediating' Richard's agency.

The mediating agency is despair, the 'depression' of humoral fluids on the mind associated with extreme spiritual sorrow. While Halpern is clearly referencing gravity, the force of divine punishment acts akin to this natural force through the ballasting of divine lift. Halpern's association is helpful: gravity is a force pulling downward toward the core of the earth—a pressure that draws the bucket down; likewise, religious despair can be said to occur because a lack of lift, where—without the lift of God's supportive grace—the taint of sin draws the soul downward, toward hell and away from God.[87]

While not explicitly essential to *Richard*, despair becomes associated with the two-bucket image mainly through its conflation with biblical scale imagery like that of Psalm 62. In Psalm 62:9, the scales are used to show that the good deeds of evil men weigh less than their continued sin. This biblical example, mainly aimed at God's adjudicative nature, is intermingled with the

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[86] Richard Halpern, "Two Buckets: Kantorowicz, Richard II, and Fiscal T*rauerspiel*," *Representation* 106.1 (Spring 2009): 69.

[87] For a discussion of the somatic effects on continence, see Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie*, XXIX-XXXI. For natural inclination toward despair, Donne uses a similar sense of natural pull (magnetism) in his *Holy Sonnets:* Emphasis mine.

> 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 again*;
> But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
> That not one hour I can myself sustain;
> Thy grace may *wing me to prevent* his art,
> And thou like adamant *draw* mine iron heart.

Donne, "Divine Meditations: 1," In *The Complete English Poems*, Ed. A.J. Smith (New York: Penguin, 1996). 309.

residual notions of fortune and misfortune as bi-furcated, temporary happenings.[88] In Richard's reworking—which figures mostly as a discussion of his own sorrow—the fate is implicitly connected to the weight of sorrow, and misfortune is still seen as some type of karmic justice, implying that Richard's misfortune is deserved.

> **Richard**: Your cares set *up* do not pluck my cares *down*.
> My care is loss of care, by *old care done*;
> Your care is gain of care, by new care *won*:
> The cares I give I have, though given away;
> They tend the crown, *yet still with me they stay*.[89]

As Richard expresses, misfortune here is neither alleviated nor caused by Bolingbroke; instead, Richard's misfortune is sealed by his past/present decisions, a bucket of tears that will forever remain low: "The cares I give I have, though given away;/ They tend the crown, yet still with me they stay."[90] The image thus works to evoke despair as a syncretizing of Fortuna with Christianity, where Richard's karmic punishment becomes embodied by his tears without reprieve. Fate here—the residual fate that Luther says made wise men fools by darkening their hearts[91]—is syncretized with an English Protestant emphasis on redemption, where the scale weighs not action alone but the emotional impact of misfortunate. We see this facet in how Richard emphasizes his sorrow, even while ignoring the adjudicative purpose of suffering: Richard's suffering does not earn him anything. As such, we do not see Shakespeare move to connect this image soteriologically—

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[88] In his *Tradition of the Goddess Fortune in Medieval Philosophy and Literature*, H.R. Patch explores how Fortuna, a pagan concept, maintains a foothold within Christianized Western culture. In his explanation, he provides various poetic uses of Fortune, including Fortune allegorized as a house on a cliff in the *Anticlaudianus*: "'[A house is situated] in the midst of the sea, on a cliff which the water lashes continually, and with which the wave has strife.' now hidden by the waves, now rises to the upper air. It suffers continual changes of climate […]. There are two streams, one pleasant, the other exceedingly disagreeable" (187-8). Several of *Richard*'s themes are present, including the diametric pairs (the streams) and the oscillating happenings (the waves crashes then recedes unseen). H.R. Patch, *Tradition of the Goddess* (Northampton: Smith College, 1922), 187-8.

[89] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 4.1. ll. 185-9.

[90] Ibid., ll. 198-9.

[91] Martin Luther, "The Sovereignty of God," In *Bondage of the Will* (USA: Watchmaker Publishing, 2010), 30.

Richard is not damned for abdicating—but instead he mobilizes the bucket image to emphasize Richard's mortality, the sense that his body and mind are slowly darkening.

The bucket image and its Fortuna import were almost immediately mobilized by other writers interested in despair. In reading *Richard II*, George Herbert saw Richard's sorrow as it related to the common Christian experience. In his "Justice (2)" poem, Herbert cites the image to symbolize how God might tip the balance to allow an ascent from despair: "Thy hand is white,/ Thy scales like buckets, which attend/And interchangeably descend,/Lifting to heaven from this well of tears."[92] In Herbert—and the following two examples—the two buckets simultaneously represent a single person's divine prospects so that the bucket that descends with tears raises the thoughts of the viewer to heaven. Directly citing Psalm 62:9, Francis Quarles does not directly evoke the buckets, instead preferring the traditional image of the scales; yet, explains his "Emblem IV" as a type adjudicative balance, a perceived symbol of one's soteriological potential in which there is an earthly trouble and punishments are weighed against realized sin. In this balancing, a devil and an angel counterbalance the good actions of evil men against the weight of sin: "Lord! what a world is this, which day and night/ Men seek with so much toil, wish so much trouble?/ Which, weigh'd in equal scales, is found so light, So poorly

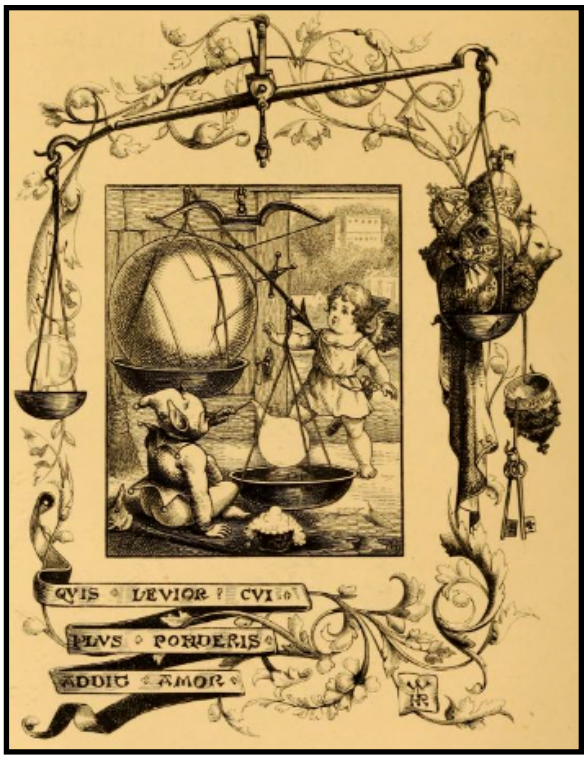

Figure 1: Quarles, "Emblem IV"

[92] Herbert, "Justice (2)," In *The Complete Poems*, Ed. John Tobin. (New York: Penguin, 1991), 15-8

overbalenc'd with a bubble!"[93] Drawing on Quarles' emblem, John Bunyan stretches this scale imagery, using the image like Herbert to emphasize how helplessly awash he is in sin: "…my soul did hang as in a pair of Scales again, sometimes up, and sometimes down, now in peace, and anon again in terror."[94] For Quarles and Bunyan, the scale imagery are directly related to one's individual expulsions from grace and its probable soteriological effects; more obviously tied to *Richard II*, Herbert, too, directly sees in Richard's suffering the bi-product of divine agency, less *Fortuna* and more *Free Will*. In all three examples, the bucket and scale images are used to view an individual's potential, whereas, at least for Richard, fate is a zero-sum game so that Bolingbroke's success can only come at his expense. What the demise entails then is not fear of physical death or religious terror per se but the somatic effect of a change in divine power, a movement away from that which gave Richard meaning, purpose, and—most of all—vigor. The emotional response acts very much like despair in that the fall from grace creates a condition where the individual, fallen from an uplifted position, wallows in the tears of their descent. When monarchal power is removed, the deflation of persona leaves the man hollow, like the crown that once sat on his head. Like the removal of supporting grace, Richard's demise comes from a removal of God via the stripping of ritualized objects.

Seen in Figure 1, the desperate distemper occurs as a war between identities, where the stripping of the crown shows, as one critics explains, the "dispossessed self […] strongly defined by possessions."[95] The strongest physical possession, the thing that most codifies Richard's identity, is the crown, which acts as a type of mystical locus through which society understands the king;

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[93] Francis Quarles, "Emblem IV," In *Emblemes,* Ed. Alexander B. Grosart, Vol. 3. (Bristol: J. Williams, 1978), 111. Figure One is taken from the same page.

[94] John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding*, ed. Sharrock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 65.

[95] Derrick Higginsbotham, "The Construction of a King: Waste, Effeminacy, and Queerness in Shakespeare's *Richard II," Shakespeare in Africa vol.* 26 (2014): 59-73. Using Elizabeth Fowler's recent scholarship, Derrick Higginsbotham splits Richard into "the wasteful man, the effeminate man, and the queer man." Higginsbotham's research is interesting in stressing how contemporary performances of *Richard II* calcify Richard's multiple personalities, thereby impeding "any dramatisation of a self without boarders, of a dispossessed self, in a world, then and now, strongly defined by possessions" (2).

however, as the symbol is invested with ritualized import, it carries with it certain divine attributes that grant the king mystical rights. For the king, the crown's complementary effect acts as a medicinal ward against the mutability of time: "…[The King] never dies; that he is free from the imbecility of infancy and the defects of old age; that he cannot sin or do wrong."[96] While outside of time, the king experiences characteristics akin to the mystical attributes of God, freedom from disease, time's aging, etc; however, these divine aspects are lost when stripped of the ward, and mutability finds the king shortly after.

Degraded from his high status, as Margaret Loftus Ranald explains, "[Richard] is now [of the] unadorned *humanum genus*, subject also to the laws of mortality—suffering and death."[97] Seen in this way, the abdication becomes, as Walter Pater calls it, a "rite of 'degradation,'" where "It is as if Shakespeare had had in mind some such inverted rite, like those old ecclesiastical or military ones, by which human hardness, or human justice, adds the last touch of unkindness to the execution of its sentence…"[98] The stripping of the king's vestments leaves him psychologically torn, warring against himself in a desperate state. The result exposes how much (or little) agency the King has always had, and the resulting mortalized creature is a husk of its former glory: "… nothing could be more miserable, it seems, than the God in the wretchedness of man."[99]

With the loss of symbolic objects, Richard loses some of his divine essence, a loss which strips his monarchal integrity. *Integrity* implies a holiness of person, and it is also important to note how the term is linked directly with other religious external displays, warding away a feigned or false emotion by implying that the sights and sounds of sorrow are testament to spiritual integrity. As Perkins says, "The image of God is the integritie of the reasonable creature, resembling

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[96] Kantorowicz, *Kings Two Bodies*, 495.

[97] Margaret Loftus Ranald, "The Degradation of *Richard II:* An Inquiry into the Ritual Backgrounds," *English Literary Renaissance* 7.2 (March 1977): 194.

[98] Walter Pater, "Shakespeare's English Kings," in *Appreciations* (London: Macmillan, 1910), 198.

[99] Kantorowicz, *Kings Two Bodies*, 34.

God in holinesse,"[100] the residual part of God that lives in the conscience and within the will. While most Christians can claim *integrity* as a type of unification of God's purpose and individual commitment, the concept specifically shows a unification of internal and external dedication, an internal attribute demonstrated by external expressions of emotion.

Richard is largely underserving of the term *integrity*, either in its moral usage or its sense of unification, as his actions are viewed as amoral and self-serving. However, in several places, we see Richard's sorrow is directly used to show a sincerity of being, a moment when he teeters on the edge of character change. In this way, Shakespeare mobilizes sorrow as a litmus for change of character by directly using it to demonstrate integrity. While sorrow demonstrates sincerity in other places in the play, it is most obviously deployed late in the play when the Duchess of York complains of her husband's insincerity:

> [Duchess of York] Pleads he in earnest? look upon his face;
> *His eyes do drop no tears, his prayers are in jest;*
> *His words come from his mouth, ours from our breast:*
> He prays but faintly and would be denied;
> We pray with heart and soul and all beside:
> His weary joints would gladly rise, I know;
> Our knees shall kneel till to the ground they grow:
> *His prayers are full of false hypocrisy;*
> *Ours of true zeal and deep integrity.*
> Our prayers do out-pray his; then let them have
> That mercy which true prayer ought to have.[101]

If integrity is the image of God in man, this image is demonstrated by the emotional display of internal commitment.[102] For Richard, integrity is foregrounded by the complicated decision to abdicate and his obvious struggle to relinquish the crown. In part, that is because, as devoid of

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[100] Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, vii.

[101] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, V.iii ll. 98-108

[102] In *Golden Chaine* chapter 11, "Of mans fall, and disobedience," Perkins says of Adam and Eve's transgression against God: "Thus without constraint, they willingly fall fr[om] their integritie, God vpon iust causes leauing them to themselues, and freely suffered them to fall. For wee must not thinke that mans fall was either by chaunce, or God not knowing it, or barely winking at it, or by his bare permission, or against his will: but rather miraculously, not without the will of God, but yet without all approbation of it." Perkins, *Golden Chaine.*

moral virtues as he may be, Richard's integrity is primarily externalized by the crown as the symbol of his divine role as King. When he abandons this symbol, he not only loses the monarchal integrity, but he is excluded from God. As James L. Calderwood explains, up to this point God has been "an invisible third partner to every dialogue, the final verbal authority, even as He is the invisible third partner in every trial by combat, the final judgmental authority."[103] But, since Richard conceives of himself simply as *the* king," his Divine Right is essential to his being. Richard's integrity is *de facto* granted by his place as monarch: "'King' and 'Richard' are not two words but one indissoluble name." Simply put: these are "anagogic [truths,] not metaphors but identities."[104]

The ontological conflation accounts for much of Richard's own powerlessness, his ineffectual ability to relinquish or keep the crown. For example, while Richard has "immense respect for words conceived as symbols," he has an "inability to distinguish the external sign or symbol […] from what the symbol represents…"[105] This reliance on external markers speaks volumes to how broken Richard's conscience and inner-being is throughout the play; that Richard relies on a signifying codex to structure his thoughts shows how his inner nature, prone to self-pity, becomes solipsistic when it no longer must account for the kingdom.

Over the course of the play, Shakespeare gradually unfolds the fissuring of Richard's integrity, until finally manifesting his loss of integrity as a exclusion from God. Richard slowly loses this partnership with God so that, when he finally abdicates his crown, the verbal authority empowering the abdication is no longer God, but instead Bolingbroke's "twenty thousand silent soldiers," an effective secularization of the monarchal exchange where "the secularization of

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[103] James L. Calderwood, *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad: Richard II to Henry V* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 5.

[104] Ibid.,17.

[105] Hershel Baker, "Introduction: Richard II," in *The Riverside* Shakespeare (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 845.

language" is "the surrender of a sacramental language to a utilitarian one."[106] An important problem in Calderwood's argument here is that by labeling Bolingbroke's demands as 'utilitarian language,' Calderwood shifts the focus to society and Henry, and yet, while this secularization of ritual may allow Bolingbroke to seize the crown, the abdication's effects on Richard are primarily felt as an individual religious exclusion, testified by Richard's intensely personal response to the abdication and his subsequent despair. Richard's loss of Divine Right materializes as an exclusion from grace so that the earth and the natural world morph into prisons for him alone; divorced from God, Richard is swallowed by misery, not unlike a fallen angel, and grieves in the solipsism that is natural to these fallen divinities.[107]

The final acts of the play are obsessed with the isolated musing of the mind so much so that the end of Act IV bolsters the king's alienation from himself. For example, when stripped of his outer regalia during the abdication, Richard claims he will set up an "inner kingship," structuring his "true kingship" as the desire "to retire to inner man, to soul and mind and 'regal thoughts.'" Yet, even before the abdication, the term *thought* is primarily used by Shakespeare to express desperate sorrow, especially toward the end of the play.[108] The word is used by Richard only once before the final scene, and even then, used only to indicate fault in others. The term is never elevated to religious or divine usage. Instead, *thoughts* and inward thinking are reserved to express fear or criticism, negative aspects.

After the abdication when we hear Richard wish to retire in isolation, the kingdom of his thoughts, we should hear the implicit truth. The only thing that has kept his mind from desperation is his monarchal integrity. After the abdication, Richard has lost both his godhood and his crown, dramatically signaled by Richard's destruction of the 'mirror' (IV.i l. 275-9) and

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[106] Calderwood, *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad*, 6.

[107] For more on this infernal mindset, see Chapter V, specifically 36-8.

[108] Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, 37.

Bolingbroke's telling observation: "The shadow of your sorrow hath destroyed/ The shadow of your face" (ll. 282-3).

> **Richard:** Say that again.
> 'The shadow of my sorrow'— ha! let's see:
> 'Tis very true: my grief lies all within;
> And these external manners of laments
> Are merely shadows to the unseen grief
> That swells with silence in the tortured soul;
> There lies the substance, and I thank thee, King,
> For thy great bounty, that not only giv'st
> Me cause to wail but teachest me the way
> How to lament the cause.[109]

The King's external image has been overcast by his grief's shadow, distorted by the emotional toll of his loss, but Richard's point is that his 'external manners of laments' signify his internal, 'unseen grief/ that swells with silence in the tortured soul.' When he points to 'the substance,' it marks a moment where the king's internal person —his integrity—matches his outward appearance. This is not to say he is a dissembler, like Iago, but rather that his will, his conscience, the image of God are aligned, systematically suppressed by his grief.

The lines allude to an earlier scene with the queen in II.ii, significant in that she is essential to the king's despair. In Act II.ii, Queen Isabel has recently parted from Richard, and Sir John Bushy attempts to counsel the queen away from "life-harming heaviness," heaviness here referencing melancholy (l. 3). Attempting to parse the reason for her extreme sadness, the queen hints that there is prophecy in her melancholy:

> **Queen:** […]; yet again, methinks,
> Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,
> Is coming towards me, and my inward soul
> With nothing trembles: at some thing it grieves,
> More than with parting from my lord the king.[110]

The queen is of course referencing the forthcoming abdication and death of the king; however, Bushy's counsel seeks to distance the queen from yet unproven grief, a woman's needless worrying:

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[109] *Richard II*, IV.i. ll. 283-292.

[110] Ibid., II.2 ll. 9-13.

> **Bushy**: Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,
> Which shows like grief itself, but is not so;
> For sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears,
> Divides one thing entire to many objects;
> Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon
> Show nothing but confusion, eyed awry
> Distinguish form: so your sweet majesty,
> Looking awry upon your lord's departure,
> Find shapes of grief, more than himself, to wail;
> Which, look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows
> Of what it is not. Then, thrice-gracious queen,
> More than your lord's departure weep not: more's not seen;
> Or if it be, 'tis with false sorrow's eye,
> Which for things true weeps things imaginary.[111]

In tailoring his counsel to a younger woman whom he sees as less experienced, Bushy blames her for 'looking awry' on a simple grief at her husband's departure and compounding it "with false sorrow's eye," which, "for things true," weeps "things imaginary" (ll.26-7). Again, grief and sorrow are used as testaments to inner integrity (a wife's love for her husband); yet, as with Richard's own sorrow, grief is also an aspect of fate, one's ability to perceive how one's actions effect the future.

When Richard speaks of sorrow as twin buckets traveling diametric paths, he rightly explains the oppositional fate of the two kinsmen. Using Richard's sorrow prophetically, Shakespeare strives to juxtapose how the monarchal image has been passed to Bolingbroke, who has taken on the external guise of God. In Act V when Bolingbroke (now King Henry) pardons Aumerle, the Duchess of York cements this transition in divinity by exclaiming "A god on earth though art" (V.iii l. 134). In the eyes of a worried mother, King Henry the Pardoner is god. Inversely, this line echoes Richard's degradation: Richard has fallen from grace; Bolingbroke has been glorified. And yet, rather than simply cement King Henry's mantle, this scene is important because it evokes the use of despair as a stepping stone to renewal. The Duchess' final lines function to continue this usage, seen when she prays that "God [will] make [Aumerle] new" (l. 144). At one point near execution, Aumerle moves from near death to ascension when Henry pardons him, a cycle of renewal that foreshadowed Richard's arrival in the following scene. It is

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[111] Ibid., ll. 14-27.

quite fitting that the Duke of York, aware of this typical theatrical effect, complains against the audience's pity, especially upon having just seen the King separated from his wife. In response to this pitiful sight, York attempts to provide a heuristic for how the audience should view and respond to the desperate Richard in V.iv, mainly by hardening the audience's heart against the king. York meta-fictionally complains of Shakespeare's efforts to parallel Aumerle and Richard:

> **York**: *As in a theatre, the eyes of men,*
> *After a well-graced actor leaves the stage,*
> *Are idly bent on him that enters next,*
> Thinking his prattle to be tedious;
> Even so, or with much more contempt, men's eyes
> *Did scowl on gentle Richard; no man cried 'God save him!'*
> No joyful tongue gave him his welcome home:
> But dust was thrown upon his sacred head:
> Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,
> His face still combating with tears and smiles,
> The badges of his grief and patience,
> That had not God, for some strong purpose, steel'd
> The hearts of men, they must perforce have melted
> And barbarism itself have pitied him.
> But *heaven hath a hand in these events,*
> *To whose high will we bound our calm contents.*
> To Bolingbroke are we sworn subjects now,
> Whose state and honour I for aye allow.[112]

In breaking the fourth wall, York attempts to frame the two interrupting scenes (V.ii & iii) by critiquing any compassion for the fallen Richard. For York, God's 'strong purpose' is the punishment of the king, and he sees heaven as having hardened the hearts of men against the King's 'gentle sorrow.' York, speaking after the earlier scene, directly shows how effective the theatrical process is, implying that Shakespeare was careful in his structuring of the scenes so that the audience received a measured view of Richard. If Shakespeare has spent the final scenes attempting to degrade Richard, then Richard's degradation begins with the king's desperate meandering to the tower as a monarchal pageantry, debased by "dust and rubbish" (V.ii l. 6) on the way to Pomfret Castle. This physical, social debasement foreshadows Richard's mental breakdown, a systemic breakdown signified by the degradation of his physical, mental, and spiritual integrity.

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[112] Ibid., V.ii ll. 23-40. Emphasis mine.

When we say that Richard slips into despair, we understand that the tensions show how interwoven the image of God was within Richard, the erasure of which removes all traces of God's presence, not just the ones tied to the monarchy. The abdication is the complete removal of integrity. Richard materializes the loss systematically, a somatic, mental, and spiritual sorrow that, when God's image is torn from his being, illuminates despair as the "quasi-religious returning to God of [Richard's] kingly office."[113] Therefore, the final scene must be seen as a struggle over religious emptiness, a loss of integrity that evokes a religious experience toward a political end.

For Calderwood, when Exton sidles up to the prison, he "kills a man who is, in his namelessness, already dead"[114] because the monarchal grace that gave him his identity has been stripped from him. And yet, Richard's play does not end with abdication nor divestment nor simply with a closed-door murder, but instead continues to show that, when stripped of all other glories, Richard's development culminates not with death or nihilism, but a regaining of integrity and monarchal identity. Although Richard slips into isolating despair before the end of the play, this despair is temporary, and, by the end of the play, his integrity has returned.

I focus on the final few scenes of *Richard II* to show how the play ends with a renewal of Richard's spirit and an ascension back to monarchal integrity, a merging of religious, political, and personal being. For King Richard, monarchal integrity was governed by signification, where external signs make the king and not the inner man within; while he has always been king, the semi-forced abdication confirms in part that Richard was never much of a king, and, as explained above, not much of a honorable human. Yet, the final scene is significant to bucking this trend, and Richard's despair enables him to regain composure, his integrity as a man, and his nobility as a king.

What is strange about this measured process is how Richard's final scene implicitly references his soteriological potential: we do not learn whether Richard is saved or not, but

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[113] Ranald, "Degradation of *Richard II*," 191.

[114] Ibid., 19.

Richard's pondering explicitly evokes a salvation the play seems utterly uninterested in discussing.[115] If Richard's final scene is, as Alison Shell has reasoned in *Shakespeare and Religion*, an inquiry into whether Richard will attain an "exemplary death," very little of the scene explicitly pertains to reprobation, desperation, or other soteriological points. Even Margaret Loftus Ranald, who sees the end as redeeming Richard somewhat, remarks only that, when "Stripped to his essential human self, Richard discovers the strength to triumph as man where he failed as king."[116] Ranald does not depict Richard's renewal as anything but earthly.

There is critical agreement that Richard is in despair, which, given the discussion of despair in section II above, can easily be linked with religious despair by Richard's death, reference to Psalms, and clear theological inquiries in the final scene. However, despair is primarily seen as didactic in nature by theologians, a stage of spirituality designated for extreme depreciation and potential—though difficult—salvation. For example, in discussing reprobation, Calvin says that God removes his supportive grace, thus hardening a sinner's heart against redemption so that they are afflicted with a torment and suffering "that [they] may thereby be led to repent."[117] Both Richard's allusions to the gospels pertain to salvation, showing the audience that Richard, at least superficially, conceives of his despair in religious terms; and yet, Shakespeare seems more interested in the physical and mental degradation of the man than showing how humiliation works to redeem the sufferer.

At the time, despair was often part of the process of mortification and, in most treatments of the subject, despair disconnects one's sense of election from his or her potential for it; in effect, man has abandoned grace and consequently lacks the desire or ability to be redeemed thereby. However, Shakespeare never directly evokes the mortification process. Instead, when Richard

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[115] This occurred to me while reading Wolfgang Clemen's *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (1977). Clemen explains that the withered flower and the weakened lion are both important to the queen's appreciation for her husband's condition, and that the Lion is one of the final images of the king before his death.

[116] Ranald, "The Degradation of *Richard II*," 196.

[117] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 429.

alludes to Matthew, there is little meat to the reference, no exegesis or spiritual inquiry. This is to say that Richard's pondering of how one enters heaven is as indebted to the gospels as Seneca, a break down of will and spiritual temperance that primarily speaks to one's earthly distemper, not one's spiritual potential.

Despair—unlike reprobation—creates a distemper within the sufferer, awakening any number of mental afflictions. As Perkins explains:

> Distresse of mind, (which Salom[on] calls a brok[en] or troubled spirit) is, wh[ere] a m[an] is disquieted and distempered in conscience, and consequently in his affections, touching his estate before God. […] [The greater affliction,] Despaire, [is] when a man is without all hope of saluation, in his owne sense and apprehension. I call dispaire a greater distresse, because it is not a distinct kind of trouble of minde, (as some doe thinke,) but the highest degree, in euery kinde of distresse.[118]

Richard's spiritual despair manifests as a type of exclusion from grace that appears as general insanity. The effect of this insanity is a nebulous religious atmosphere. As Richard Waugaman shows, *Richard II* explores several key allusions to Psalm 137, a biblical passage that explores both the decay of God's true religion and the tyranny of the Babylonians via a sense of exclusion. This exclusion theme manifests in Richard's own exegetical application of the passage to his prison sentence, an "implicit gloss of the psalm allusion" that shows that, rather than confirming our spiritual strength, Shakespeare creates an allegorization which prefers an ambiguous interpretation of the Psalm passage, an interpretation which keeps the reader "off balance so that we we do not lapse into false certainty."[119] Waugaman sees that, when Richard meditates on "the 'still-breeding thoughts' which people his prison cell," the depiction shows, that, since the Bible is always open to contradictory interpretations, the "biblical allusions "are not in fact the final word (364). Likewise, Alison Shell explains that Richard's misquotation of the bible—this time to the Gospels—would have endeared him to the audience, who would have spurred him on to self-betterment[120]; and yet, we have to remember that Richard may quote the bible, but he ultimately

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[118] Perkins, *Cases of Conscience*, III.ii (London: John Legate, 1604), 71.

[119] See Richard M. Waugaman, "Psalm echoes in Shakespeare's' 1 Henry VI, Richard II, and Edward III" *Notes and Queries,* 57, no. 3 (September 2010): 359-364.

[120] Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* (London: Methuen Drama, 2010), 132.

turns away from the gospels. Yes, he meditates on the Bible's message, but his mind ultimately turns nihilistic, choosing to abandon his religious path with a final—albeit Faustian—desire to become nothing: "But whate'vr I be,/ Nor I, nor any man that but man is,/ With nothing shall be pleased till he be eased/ With being Nothing."[121]

Confined to prison, Richard's mind naturally turns to his exclusion from society, manifesting as a type of inquiry into one's expulsion from oneself. Stripped of religion and civil utility, Richard's final deduction that he has become nothing marks his self-degradation, the complete and whole-hearted abandonment of one's purpose in society. This self-degradation echoes the association of biblical verses with despair, most prominently in Spenser's *Faerie Queen* where disjointed or misquoted biblical verses are used to seduce Red Crosse Knight.[122] As Richard reasons, the fear was that the Bible could be put at odds with itself, where "thoughts of things divine" are "intermixed/ with scruples, and do set the faith itself/ against the faith" (ll. 12-4). Richard's example then is to pit the two gospel references against each other, one implying that the young and innocent could enter heaven and the other forbidding entry. The diametric opposition evokes a sense of exclusion that reads of election, the bugbear of the Calvinistic world. More importantly, in both Spenser and Shakespeare, we see this biblical exegesis signifies a breakdown of reason, and, when Richard omits *rich* from his Matthew 19:24 quotation, he implies that he is not one of the elect.[123]

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[121] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, V.v ll. 38-41. Harold Bloom calls this "the earliest Shakespearean litany of nihilism predicting *Much Ado About Nothing* and prophesying Hamlet, Iago, and Leontes," *Shakespeare: The Invention of a Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998), 269.

[122] For the RCK episodes, see *Faerie Queene* I.ix. For a discussion of despair as theological temptation in Spenser, see Donald Breecher, "Spenser's Redcrosse Knight: Despair and the Elizabethan Malady," *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 30, no. 1 (October 1, 1986): 1-15.

[123] As is commonly noted, the two gospels quotations are to Matthew 19:14, "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come to me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven, and Matthew 19:24, "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."*Geneva Bible*, 1599 edition. (Tolle Lege Press). The *Norton Shakespeare*, also glosses the Mark (10:14; 10:25) and Luke (18:25) as possible variations of the theme.

That Richard views himself as damned is argumentative. In her gloss of the final scene, Shell links the prison soliloquy to latter religious meditative poetry[124], but Richard never exhibits an awareness of adjudication or that he is being tried or held accountable. In *The Doctrine of Election*, Martha Tuck Rozett explains that Richard has moved temporarily into a state of accountability. While in a state of nothingness— where nothingness signifies "a state of being, not non-being, from which a new 'self' might conceivably emerge"—Rozett sees Richard as temporarily aware of his own accountability, but she can only say that Richard is capable of "acknowledging the relationship between action and reaction, guilt and retribution," and even this stage is noticeably temporary, a blip before Richard reverts "to the preoccupation with complicated visual emblems that has characterized him all along…"[125] The hopelessness of his situation instead implies that Richard feels himself already judged—obviously since he is in a prison—but that does not reach a level of spiritual awareness, excepting perhaps his impotence. Instead, this final cry pertains more to Richard's sense of monarchal loss, a "cancelation of royal identity"[126], where God is not present in the prison to rescue Richard, and no amount of critical exegesis can make this bout of despair match with the religious meditations of Donne and others. In his frustration, Richard's despair lacks the pleading for escape or any awareness that God and inner grace could

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[124] See John Donne, "A Litany,": XV. ll 1-5.

From being anxious, or secure,
Dead clods of sadness, or light squibs of mirth,
From thinking, that great courts immure
All, or no happiness, or that this earth
is only for our prison framed,
Or that thou are covetous
To them whom thou love's, or that they are maimed
From reaching this world's sweet, who seek thee thus,
With all their might, Good Lord deliver us.

[125] Martha Tuck Rozett, *The Doctrine of Election and the Emergence of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984), 288.

[126] Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in England Renaissance Tragedy* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997).

provide his prison with a key; Richard's despair is solipsistic still, and his voice echoes his abandonment and ignorant exclusion from former glory.[127]

Richard's desperate nothingness is an echo chamber for his own inability to save himself. Roland Frye links this passage to Luther's gloss of *Galatians:* "God is the God of the humble […] and of those that are brought even to nothing"[128], but Frye excludes the complete quote, which includes "the miserable, the oppressed, and the desperate," in the list of the humbled. As Frye implies, these categorizations refer to ontological states rather than outlooks or compromised positions in need of redemption; however, Richard does not seem to be evoking Luther. Instead, when Richard offers the belief that his demise has made him nothing, it comes across as an almost nihilistic wish rather than a confirmed destination. He wishes to be nothing because, while powerless, he may slip away with little social or historical effect. This is most obvious in the clock image, when Richard acknowledges just how much of a subject he's become to time and another King, turning into Henry's "jack of the clock" and striking time's passing. But what is interesting is that Richard receives his hope for love from a strange source, from the music which seems to be torturing him. It is this cue that first transitions Richard from desperate toward teetering on renewal. Rather than take on a typical spiritual renewal, Shakespeare instead attempts to regain Richard's monarchal integrity by having him acknowledge his responsibility to the kingdom.

IV: The Queen's Role in Solving Despair

It is a significant leap to get from Richard's despair to its solution, a road that necessarily leads to his marriage to the queen, especially since their relationship seems extremely forced, the

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[127] Picking up the world as prison theme, Quarles will later directly echo Richard's own self-defeat and wish for nothingness:

> O miserable condition of mankind, that has lost that for which he was created! alas! what hath he lost? and what hath he found? He hath lost happiness for which he was made, and found misery for which he was not made: what is gone? and what is left? that thing is gone, without which he is unhappy; that thing is left, by which he is miserable: O wretched men! from whence are we thrown? and wither are we hurried? from our home into banishment…

Francis Quarles, "Emblem X," In *Quarles Emblem* (New York: N. Tibbals, 1800). 297.

[128] Roland Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton, Princeton UP, 1963), 131-2.

only emotion shown the obligatory grief at Richard's imprisonment. The queen's given role has typically been seen as an emotional accelerant, and critics agree that Shakespeare primarily used Queen Isabel's flat character to create sympathy for Richard. As one snarky twentieth-century critic put it,

> [Isabel's own actions] are not so much important in revealing anything of herself as they are in impressing upon the spectators the essentially personal side of Richard's tragedy, as opposed to the kingly side of it […] The Queen has little purpose other than to be decorative, and to suggest a side of Richard's character not otherwise touched on in the play.[129]

Yes and no. Foremost we have to acknowledge that Shakespeare ages Isabel in order to make her an appropriate locus for matrimonial sympathy, moving the queen from around eight or so to an older, though unspecified age. In part this is theatrical: a child mourning her adult husband elicits a different emotion than a young bride forcibly parted from her husband. As Katharine Maus explains, "Shakespeare makes Isabel a mature young women and invents touching, wholly nonfactual scenes in which she intuitively senses her husband's trouble, then discovers the usurpation in a garden and suffers through an imposed parting from her husband."[130] Secondly, if we accept Isabel's function as solely decorative—by which the twentieth-century critic means performative[131]—then we ignore how she participates in the most signifiant moment in Richard's tragedy: his descent into despair and his regaining of monarchal composure.

In her "Marriage and Shakespeare," Frances Dolan reasoned that Shakespeare is a resource for "imagining and expressing our expectations of marriage today"; however, *Richard II* tests this model because in order to save her husband, Isabel must ridicule and chide him. The small piece of agency allotted to the queen is ahistorical, a necessary artistic addition that works to the generic

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[129] W. Robertson Davies, "Women's Roles—Histories," In *Shakespeare's Boy Actors* (New York: Russel & Russel, 1964), 89.

[130] Katharine Maus, "Introduction to Richard II," In *The Norton Shakespeare: Histories*, ed. Greenblatt et al. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 457-66.

[131] Davies makes a excellent observation. In performance, modern adaptations tend to use the queen in the Gaunt scene and elsewhere to show emotion (distress, concern, etc.), allowing her to act as a foil to Richard, whose emotions tend to be counter to hers (condescension, apathy, etc.).

tensions of the play.[132] Rather than only acting as Richard's emotional foil, the queen is a significant spousal fiction that unites the historical and tragic aspects of the play, allowing Shakespeare to evoke the stigma of despair while salving both Richard and the English's (historical) trauma. In Shakespeare's usage, Isabel is the medium through which Richard regains the roots of his namesake, Richard the Lionhearted, and, thus, regains his monarchal dignity as the Lion of England. In other words, she is the companion who saves Richard from himself.

Aside from the grieving spouses, *Richard II* depicts marriage as primarily political, mostly because of its historical sources, depicting little direct spousal emotion.[133] Historically, Richard II was married twice, once to 'Good' Queen Anne of Bohemia in 1382, and again to seven-year old Isabel of France in 1396. While Richard was said to have had a "good affection" for his first wife, his second wife was unpopular with the English, perhaps because of her sexual immaturity.[134] In Shakespeare's sources, there is little reference to Isabel, other than to mention her dower and a desire to have her returned to France. In his *Civil Wars* (1595) Daniel sets a precedent for Isabel's increased role by providing more in-depth discussion of her character, including the moment when she waits for Richard to arrive at Pomfret. In her grief, she mistakes Bolingbroke for Richard, and Daniel provides her with a touching dedication to the king, one that immediately transitions from sorrow to envy to hatred. This emotional response does not exist (in depth) in the histories, and both Daniel and Shakespeare increase the romantic nature of their marriage.[135]

As is noted in the play, Isabel eventually is sent home, though Hall and Holinshed mention a potential for marriage to Henry. The chronicles frame Isabel's role by detailing its political import (dowers and potential linkages between countries) and establishing that the martial terms are

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[132] Frances Dolan, "Marriage and Shakespeare," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 9 (2011): 620–634.

[133] Shakespeare's sources include Hall and Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the anonymous play *Woodstock,* and *Mirror for Magistrate*.

[134] Anthony Tuck, "Richard II," In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (*Oxford, Oxford UP, 2004) online edition, Jan 2009.

[135] See Daniel, *First Four books of Civil War*, II. 71-99.

generally realistic to her young age; the generic interest deemphasizes her nature as a person, meaning that the insight we gain into her character and role in the marriage comes from Shakespeare's imagination and his ability to see humanity in the webs of history. Noticeably, Shakespeare omits a potential marriage between Henry and Isabel.

The alteration to her age proves significant in that it allows Shakespeare to mature her thoughts and create an emotional foil for Richard. While Shakespeare depicts Richard and Isabel in a typical arranged marriage of political, rhetorical, and national import,[136] he need not have aged Isabel to achieve this. So why did Shakespeare age Isabel? Mostly to increase her moral and medicinal significance to Richard.

In some ways, reading, viewing, and acting *Richard II* resembles writing the history play: we have to read backwards. Shakespeare's goal with Isabel is always centered on Richard's mental breakdown and its relationship to English history, a relationship that echoes at the end of the play. Rather than simply recreate the typical arranged marriage of the elite, Shakespeare used a companionate model, bringing into relief how rhetorically and politically important Shakespeare found the positive counsel of the companionate model.

V: The Desperate Slave

After Richard's "tantrum with the mirror,"[137] the most sentimental exchange between Richard and Isabel occurs in Act V, when the queen and her entourage see Richard headed to the Tower of London. As with Daniel's passage, Isabel is personally concerned for the king, referenced also in the passage I cited with Bushy. Despite the inquiry and Isabel's potential melancholy at his departure, we see little emotional exchange between the two until this point, and the reader is

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[136] Most scholars of early modern marriage offer important qualifiers to this claim. For a more precise discussion, Frances Dolan offers a synthesis of the historical approaches in her book, *Marriage and Violence*. See also the discussion of marriage laws in B.J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law and Marriage* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), especially chapters one, two and nine.

[137] Harry Berger, jr., "Textual Dramaturgy: 'Richard II,' In *Making Trifles of Terrors: Redistrubing Complicities in* Shakespeare (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1977), 177.

given little preparation for their emotional display . Instead, the earlier exchange between the queen and Bushy provides most of the heavy emotional set-up for the final scene between the king and queen.

In both the exchange with Bushy and in Daniel's passage, the queen is depicted as melodramatic (or at least framed this way), whereas, when on stage with Richard, she comes across as more stable than the former king, steeling his nerves against his on-coming death. It is important that we acknowledge she has changed, as well: previously she was overly emotional, relying on Bushy to temper her, but then she enacts a role-reversal, taking on Bushy's tempering role and allowing the king to assume her melodramatic one. Given the criticism that the king is effeminate, the fact that he is antagonized by his wife works to show his mental instability, but it also inversely shows his reliance on his wife's stability, meaning that, in his time of need, he is strengthened by his wife's important advice.

Ominously haunting what Berger has called a "weird rhyming contest of moans and groans,"[138] their emotional connection is naturally heightened before the two uncouple. It is the emotional response of double divorce— "'twixt my crown and me,/ And then betwixt me and my married wife"—when the queen would be sent back to her native France and Richard would be sent to prison. The most significant emotional exchange comes when the queen antagonistically responds to Richard's suggestion that she cloister herself.

> **Queen:** What, is my Richard both in shape and mind
> Transform'd and weaken'd? hath Bolingbroke deposed
> Thine intellect? hath he been in thy heart?
> The lion dying thrusteth forth his paw,
> And wounds the earth, if nothing else, with rage
> To be o'erpower'd; and wilt thou, pupil-like,
> Take thy correction mildly, kiss the rod,
> And fawn on rage with base humility,
> Which art a lion and a king of beasts?[139]

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[138] Berger, "Textual Dramaturgy," 177.

[139] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ll. 457-66.

Evoking the language of distemper, the queen's point—you've allowed Bolingbroke to erase your kingly disposition—is lost on Richard, who shows signs that his brooding melancholy will shortly become despair. The queen recognizes the lie in Richard's disposition: he may be framing his weakness as emotion, but she sees that he has been emasculated by Henry. As nineteenth-century critic Beverly Warner explains, the crown's usurpation is less about desperate thinking and more about power: "it is not desperation, nor sorrowful bombast, nor the whine of despair that brings the king to his knees," but rather the "yielding to fate of one to whom the further game is not worth the candle."[140] At least for the queen, Richard has masked his abdication in sorrowful repentance, but it is power, not religion, that is at stake. This can be seen in Richard's suggestion that she *cloister* herself, a type of holy seclusion from society mirroring Richard's ascetic thoughts; however, in her terse response to him, the queen foreshadows the King's eventual rejection of passive martyrdom, and she rightly sees the issue as one of political agency or individual will, not divine right.

The importance of the queen's advice and reaction is not immediately recognized by Richard, who is overwhelmed by his religious suffering, not his lack of power; however, the lines are internalized within the king, slumbering or incubating within the sorrowful groans of his desperate heart. I will return to these shortly. As to the queen, 'groans' are the final words and sounds we hear of her. In terms of plot, her character is swept off to France, lost to the stage, but for Richard and for Shakespeare's audience, we hear her again like a microcosm for the historical play, a past word spoken to future effect, waiting to awaken within the king. If Richard is the divide between the two genres of history and tragedy, then the queen is the mediator, a salve that enlivens Richard in his final breaths and provides him the final generic burst to grant himself a *Nachleben*.

By the final prison scene, Richard has moved from irrationality into despair into a strange, pseudo-awareness that the monarchal subjects are slaves to the king, a condition that directly

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[140] Beverly Warner, *English History in Shakespeare's Plays* (Freeport: Books for Libraries,1972), 77-8.

exposes how power is the root of Richard's despair.[141] His obsession with impotence exists in his fatalistic nihilism, flirting with the idea that life is lived subjugation. But he concludes this meandering by focusing on agency: even for the king the power of death waits in the wings. This awareness is stitched throughout the play. In a III.ii speech, Richard frames death as a type of agency, where even the King cannot completely own another's death; even for kings, death eventually comes. The argument externalizes power, moves even the mighty on earth to be subjects of mortality, tactics observable in metaphysical poets and the mediative writers of spirituality; and yet, the feeling in III.ii—especially from the subjects who hear King Richard lamenting his powerlessness—is that this mediative language is inappropriate, unfitting for time and place.

The true king is a power unto himself, outside time and outside death's control. In part, because his followers wish for him to be a leader, someone like Bolingbroke, and what they are faced with is the bemoaning of a god fallen into humanity:

> **Richard**: […]
> Cover your heads and mock not flesh and blood
> With solemn reverence: throw away respect,
> Tradition, form and ceremonious duty,
> For you have but mistook me all this while:
> I live with bread like you, feel want,
> Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
> How can you say to me, I am a king?[142]

Richard's defeatist attitude speaks to his despair, and Richard can only groan "Our lands, our lives and all are Bolingbroke's…" (l. 147). Absent when Richard speaks these lines, the queen recognizes in Richard what amounts to be a problem with rhetoric: Richard is bad at recognizing exigence. His powerlessness manifests as a slow degradation into despondency, the same problem for which Bushy had chided the queen earlier: small griefs can push one too far. This language of despair reappears when the queen recognizes that Bolingbroke, as the new king, has usurped Richard's

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[141] At times, despair becomes its own mode of reading, and we can see instances where Richard appears more-or-less desperate, including the famous speech in III.ii. Notice that Richard starts by swearing off comfort: "No matter where—of comfort no man speak./ Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs./ Make dust our paper, and with rainy eyes/ Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth…" III.ii ll. 144-147.

[142] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, III.ii ll. 167-3.

place in his own body and, by the time we see Richard again, his distemper materializes as the misrule of his emotions discussed above, but more importantly, as a misunderstanding of integrity in death and how one should compose oneself at one's death. Death is limitless, but there is power in how one dies.

The final iteration of this power-dynamic—Bolingbroke's ruling of Richard—appears in the clock speech in V.v. Rozett uses this passage to argue that, by acknowledging that "now doth time waste me," Richard has gained a "partial recognition, one that lapses backward into self-pity." In total, Rozett sees Richard as gaining two other insights, the first being the pleasantness of music, "an ability to distinguish order from disorder, true time from broken time," and the second being that "the music which inadvertently chides him is in fact a sign of love."[143] But the echo here seems less to me to be order and disorder—although they are present—but rather power, since power remains the key echo in the earlier passages and frames the opening passages of this scene.

The scene begins by acknowledging that Bolingbroke, like the devil[144], has deposed Richard's rightful faculties, undone Richard by sabotaging those organs meant to protect him—his intellect and his heart. As Richard laments, "I am unkinged by Bolingbroke, and straight am nothing." For Richard, Bolingbroke is a Machiavellian character capable of Iago-like inception, supplanting Richard's faculties via extreme dotage. The latent play-on-words evokes losing his crown, but also the loss of his reasoning and, as discussed above, the loss of his self. The fact that music is involved immediately speaks to the common association of music with lunacy, a point Richard directly evokes:

> **Richard**: […]
> Nor I nor any man that but man is
> With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
> With being nothing. Music do I hear?
> *Music*
> Ha, ha! keep time: how sour sweet music is,

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[143] Rozett, *Doctrine of Election*, 288.

[144] Consider Othello's confusion of Iago with a medieval demon: "I look down towards his feet; but that's a fable./ If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee." V.ii ll. 286-7.

> When time is broke and no proportion kept!
> So is it in the music of men's lives.
> […]
> This music mads me; let it sound no more;
> For though it have holp madmen to their wits,
> In me it seems it will make wise men mad.
> Yet blessing on his heart that gives it me!
> For 'tis a sign of love; and love to Richard
> Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world.[145]

Tillyard has been criticized for having linked this scene to order, to the idea that the universe is harmonious and ordered like a song, a continuation of the Elizabethan world picture. While Tillyard might be mistaken, Timothie Bright—like Richard—argues that music can, like laws, reorder the disorderly:

> If the melancholicke be ouer much contemplatiue, it shall then be meete for him to withdrawe his mind to corporall actions of grosser sort: that as the mind by speculation, after a sort disioyneth it selfe from the bodie: so the bodily exercise may reuoke it againe into the former fellowship, and exercise of bodily action. […] *Next to visible thinges, the audible obiect most frighteth the melancholicke person, especialy besids the vnpleasantnesse, if it carieth also signification of terror: & here as pleasant pictures, and liuely colours delight the melancholicke eye, and in their measure satisfie the heart, so not onely cheerefull musicke in a generalitie, but such of that kinde as most reioyceth is to be sounded in the melancholicke eare: of which kinde for the most part is such as carieth an odde measure, and easie to be discerned, except the melancholicke haue skill in musicke, and require a deeper harmonie*. That contrarilie, which is solemne, and still: as dumpes, and fancies, and sette musicke, are hurtfull in this case, and serue rather for a disordered rage, and intemperate mirth, to reclaime within mediocritie, then to allowe the spirites, to stirre the bloud, and to attenuate the humours, which is (if the harmony be wisely applyed) effectuallie wrought by musicke. *For that which reason worketh by a more euident way, that musicke as it were a magicall charme bringeth to passe in the mindes of men, which being forseene of wise law giuers in times past, they haue made choice of certaine kindes thereof, and haue reiected the other, as hurtfull to their common wealthes*; which agreement betwixt concent of musicke, and affection of the minde, when Aristophenes perceaued, he therby was moued to thinke, that the mind was nothing else but a kind of harmonie. [146]

For Bright, the implication is that music is *administered* ('…if the harmony be wisely applyed'), meaning that disorder is corrected by the appropriate music choice, a suggestion he analogizes with wise rule: '…that musicke as it were a magicall charme bringeth to passe in the mindes of men, which being forseene of wise law giuers in times past, they haue made choice of certaine kindes thereof, and haue reiected the other, as hurtfull to their common wealthe.' Music administered correctly, like good laws passed, realigns the unruly parts of the body. *Richard II*

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[145] Shakespeare, "Richard II," V.v. ll. 41-46, 61-66. (524-5)

[146] Timothy Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1586), 246-8. Emphasis mine.

centers the king as the great ordering mechanism of the cosmos; however, while Bolingbroke's ascension soothed the national tensions created by Richard's rule, his ascension also dislodged Richard, thus creating disharmony within Richard's mind so that, when an outside order is imposed via the introduction of music, the effect counters Richard's melancholic thinking only in that it makes him subservient to another power. As the queen once complained, who orders Richard's system? Bolingbroke.

The power dynamic is obvious here, and I see in this dynamic a bit of the tension between power and wills. As Tennenhouse complains, "Richard has been called the poet king by critics who want to read him in the nineteenth-century manner, as a poet king who was a political failure, rather than as a sixteenth-century monarch who destroyed the sign of his own legitimacy."[147] Tennenhouse's complaint seems to be the shift of culpability to the system rather than the individual, yet Richard's fault here shows the inverse aspect, how a stronger ruler deals with a broken cog. As a poor ruler, Richard was deposed, and the system was restored by a stronger will. As physicians view a disorder and administer the correct music to adjust it, so too does a ruler administer just laws. In this instance, the new King Henry has punished the disorderly by removing the malignant agent, Richard. Again, Richard's desperation is born of his exclusion from the system, meaning that he has been maligned because he has been re-assimilated. But how reasonable or rational is Richard actually being here? Asked another way, the subtle question unasked by Richard and unspoken in the play is "Where does the music come from and for whom is it being played?"

> **Richard:** […]
> And here have I the daintiness of ear
> To cheque time broke in a disorder'd string;
> But for the concord of my state and time
> Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.
> I wasted time, and now doth time waste me;
> For now hath time made me his numbering clock:
> My thoughts are minutes; and with sighs they jar
> Their watches on unto mine eyes, the outward watch,

[147] Tennenhouse, *Power on Display,* 81.

> Whereto my finger, like a dial's point,
> Is pointing still, in cleansing them from tears.
> Now sir, the sound that tells what hour it is
> Are clamorous groans, which strike upon my heart,
> Which is the bell: so sighs and tears and groans
> Show minutes, times, and hours: but my time
> Runs posting on in Bolingbroke's proud joy,
> While I stand fooling here, his Jack o' the clock.[148]

The off-stage music *has* to speak to the ordered universe because it comes mid-spiral for Richard, and receives his disorderly state as a rote image of order: the clock. But through this self-fashioning, we learn just enough of Richard to realize that he has allowed himself to be disfigured by Bolingbroke.

In despair, Richard's rational capacity has been compromised, his mind spiraling into a state of permanent displeasure, but the power dynamics appear insofar as despair has transformed him into an automated clock so that he participates in the passing of the natural world by suffering its revolution. The imagery is of a mechanized clock, but the semantics are that of perpetual suffering being acted out upon the body, where time's mortal weight is enumerated again as externalized somatic motion, the sufferer transformed into a watch where tears mark the passing of the hours.[149] Figuratively, the body's slow trudge to death is counted out as "sighs and tears and groans," while the striking bell rings out as "clamorous groans." Literally, though, the passage again shows how despair has contorted the king's face, distorting it to resemble the clock face, where Richard's fingers—"like a dial's point"—cleanse his face of tears (ll. 57-8). What is most unfortunate about this imagery is that, depicted as an external show of suffering, there are no voyeurs to mark his suffering, as if this testament to Richard's integrity really is a nihilistic show, a pointless demonstration with no witnesses.

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[148] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, V.v. ll. 47-60. 524-5.

[149] The melancholic/sufferer as clock image occurs elsewhere in literature, but in Shakespeare most notably in *As You Like It*. The play on "Jack of the Clock," from the French *Jacquemart*, is observed by Wendy Beth Hyman, "'For now hath time made me his numbering clock': Shakespeare's Jacquemarts," *Early Theatre* 16, no. 2 (June 2013): 143-156. For others, see Paula S. Berggren, "Shakespeare and the Numbering Clock," *Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal* 29 (2010): 44-56.

In light of Richard's isolated show, the music plays an interesting role. While it is a common theme that music calmed the maniacal,[150] Richard's remark that 'music mads' him is telling; pleasure brings only pain to the desperate, and the temporary relief dwindles with the realization that Richard is still a fallen king, having squandered his time. He has wasted his time on earth and now, locked in despair, time wastes him.[151] Joseph M. Ortiz concludes his interpretation of the speech by surmising that:

> "…the pathos of Richard's final scene stems from the realization (more for him than for us) that the association between the 'sweet' music that he can still hear and the terms of sovereignty has been nothing more than a willful construction, and that there is no music, earthly or heavenly, that can stop a more skillful politician from 'wash[ing] the balm from an anointed king.'[152]

Ortiz's passing comment is interesting: "…the 'sweet' music that he can still hear and the terms of sovereignty has been nothing more than a willful construction, and that there is no music, earthly or heavenly…" We return to our original question (adding a Donne echo): for whom is the music playing?[153] If we admit that music plays a role in ordering the cosmos, it is paradoxical that Richard, in his exclusion, still participates in this social ordering. To be curt, it simply does not fit with the scene's mood. Instead, what if there is no music at all, just the imagined tune of Richard's fancy? Consider the following lines: "Now sir, the sound that tells what hour it is/Are clamorous groans, which strike upon my heart,/Which is the bell." I'll propose a radical, though plausible, theory. Like the *sir* addressed by Richard in l. 55, the only sound audible to the audience should be Richard's self-proclaimed heartbeat. There is no music, no external sounds that play the tunes of Richard's groaning. Instead, Richard imagines Bolingbroke's ordered universe as an order-

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[150] Consider the insightful madhouse scenes in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* (1622).

[151] Richard's imagery recalls that of the ascetic monk in despair, wasting away in idle contemplation. For the connection between despair and sloth, see Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth* (UNC Press, 2017).

[152] Joseph M. Ortiz, "Impolitic Noise," in *Broken Harmony: Shakespeare and the Politics of Music* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011), 152-3.

[153] See David Lindley, *Shakespeare and Music* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 123-4.

producing song, himself now merely a cog in the mechanism of time, and a slave to natural law[154] and its human-made artifice, monarchal powers, and the suffering of despair. But it is a song of his mind. It is not a sign of love provided by some accidental musician, but the kindling of a sublimated hostility to the new king.

The entire soliloquy began by acknowledging that Richard had lost his crown to Bolingbroke. As discussed above, the crown itself was a symbol of the kingdom,"in the Crown the whole body politic was present – from king to lords and commons and down to the least liege-man."[155] As the microcosm for the universe, Richard is now the desperate everyman, and, especially given his former two-body nature, he stands now as the powerless servant. This is the old Richard again, lost in his self-loathing, but it plausible to imagine, when locked deep in his own wallowing, Richard imagines a dirge that leads him, even while isolated from the world, to concern for others.

As Shell suggests, this passage operates akin to the mediative poets, those who saw the world as a prison and God's grace as a beam of hope. For Richard, the seed for rebirth appears in his self-loathing: "Yet blessing on his heart that gives it me!/ For 'tis a sign of love; and love to Richard/ Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world" (ll. 64-6). The realization of love comes in the unconscious self-reflection, a typical desperate epiphany. If we agree that Richard is solipsistic in his misery, then the implication is that he recognizes in this conjured music an ordering that resonates within himself, implying that "I am responsible for my own love, my own sense of ordering: this all-hating world loathes me, but there is order and love in the madness." For a man dominated by thought and—in this moment—doting sadness, the impetus for action and change

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[154] Paul Raffield takes issue with some of Kantorowicz's claims, explaining that Kantorowicz tends to side more with Plowden's theological, mystical understanding than with Coke's "corporate state with physical substance." "Kantorowicz is more in thrall to the ethereal and mystical description of the body politic provided by Plowden" (39). While not discussed by Raffield, Shakespeare's final conclusion that Richard is subject to nature seems to support this statement. Paul Raffield, "Time, Equity, and the Artifice of English Law: Reflections on *The King's Two Bodies,*" *Law, Culture, and the Humanities*, 13.1 (2017).

[155] Kantorowicz, *King's Two-bodies*, 363.

stems from this unspoken, unacknowledged love, and it grows immediately into an exigence for which Richard has never been known. The difference between this use of despair and that of later usages, like that of John Bunyan in *Pilgrim's Progress*, is that, rather than seeing in his suffering God's grace, Richard sees love—not redemptive love, but love despite others, a definite love that breaks from his desperate wallowing and stands in striking contrasts to fatalism.

I said earlier that there is little soteriological about Richard's death, at least in a traditional sense. While there are passing allusions to the bible and even a general awareness of heaven, Richard speaks and acts less like a brooding spiritualist and more like one sulking in despair; and yet, for a man known for his idleness and impotence, Richard's marked transformation into a renewed king happens suddenly and with little warning. The key to the music and Richard's transformation lies in echoes of earlier lines. When he hears the song and recognizes the sign of love in it, Richard becomes equipped to face his murder, not by passively accepting it, but roaring and raging against it.

Of Shakespeare's sources and contemporaries, most of the English sources have Richard murdered at Pontefract Castle. As Daniel succinctly explains, Richard was "vnto *Pomfret* Castle sent/ by a cruell Knight there murthered."[156] Froissert's nonchalant version is more humorous, but no more helpful: "It was nat longe after / that true tidynges ran thoroughe London / howe Richarde of Burdeaulx was deed / but howe he dyed & by what meanes I coulde nat tell whan I wrote this cronycle."[157] While Shakespeare says that Richard was murdered, some stubborn supporters believed Richard survived by escaping into Scotland.[158] A third group argued, as we acknowledge today, that Richard was probably starved to death, with several possible causes for this death,

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[156] Daniel, *Civil Wars*, III. ll. 4-5.

[157] Froissart, "Cronycles of Englande," 319-20.

[158] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Penguin, 1982), 418. As Tuck says, "It is impossible to credit these stories: they are not dissimilar to other survival legends that gathered round kings who died in mysterious circumstances and which proved useful to politically disaffected elements within the realm and to external enemies." Anthony Tuck, "Richard II."

including voluntary and involuntary starvation. Regardless, Shakespeare follows the general belief that Richard was murdered, changing the murder so that Richard heroically slew several of his enemy combatants before dying.[159]

Richard's transition from tragic to heroic figure comes remarkably quick, especially given the amount of time spent in despair. When he is presented with his last meal, Richard strikes the Keeper who somehow offended him and links King Henry with the devil who has, as explained above, taken over his heart: "The devil take Henry of Lancaster and Thee! Patience is stale, and I am weary of it."[160] This purging of the demon signals the transition of his character; however, the sudden movement from desperate to heroic relies on several significant themes and echoes throughout the play, the primary ones being related to the words of two important women: the Duchess of Gloucester and the queen.

Richard's despair—and despair in general—has roots in sloth, and more generally inaction and slumber. For example, we saw earlier the King's inappropriate leadership and desperate brooding. In III.ii, when confronted by the prospects of Bolingbroke's return, Richard again begins his morose brooding, only to be chided by Aumerle: "Comfort, my liege; remember who you are."[161] It is in Richard's response that we see the seeds of his kingship, really heroism in the wrong place:

Richard: *I had forgot myself. Am I not King?*

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[159] Besides Richard's survival, Tuck explains the other possibilities as 1) "[Richard was] hacked to death by Sir Piers Exton," which "is almost certainly fictitious"; 2) three accounts, by John Hardyng, the Whalley Abbey chronicler, and the monk of Evesham, suggest [Richard] was deliberately starved to death"; and 3) Walsingham and other chroniclers "describe how [Richard] refused food and drink and gradually starved himself to death." Tuck, "Richard II."

[160] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, V.v. ll. 102-3. 526. The could also be a pun here on *stale* and *waste*. According to contemporary historians, Richard II starved (or was starved) to death in prison, so both words also have food-based connotations. Given that the Keeper and Richard are fighting over food, this could be a subtle evocation of that tradition. It may also be implied by the famous "I wasted time, and now doth time waste me."

[161] Ibid., III.ii l. 78.

> *Awake, thou sluggard*[162] *majesty! thou sleep'st!*
> Is not the King's name twenty thousand names?
> Arm, arm, my name! A puny subject strikes
> At thy great glory. *Look not to the ground,*
> *Ye favourites of a king: are we not high?*
> *High be our thoughts.* […][163]

In the lines I have italicized, we see the roots of Richard's heroism grounded in despair. Swallowed by his potential dethroning, the king's mind wallows outside itself, his monarchal heroism asleep; and yet, when he rebounds from this bout, it is not an inward energy, a monarchal flame, that inspires him, but the false comfort in arms, in those twenty-thousand other men that inspires Richard's 'great glory.' The final quoted line is significant. Richard cannot differentiate a hierarchal position (the master-slave relationship) from his lofty self-delusions, those "high" thoughts which convince him that, while looking at heaven, he is in heaven.

We find an odd comparison between Richard's final courageous outburst and his echo of the Duchess' chiding of John of Gaunt. When lecturing Gaunt for his inaction against Richard in Act I.ii, The Duchess complains that patience creates cowardice in the nobility:

> **Duchess** […]
> Call it not patience, Gaunt; it is despair:
> In suff'ring thus thy brother to be slaughtered,
> Thou show'st the naked pathway to thy life,
> Teaching stern murder how to butcher thee:
> That which in mean men we entitle patience
> Is pale cold cowardice in noble breasts.[164]

The Duchess, in invoking these lines, is chiding Gaunt for his inaction against his brother's murder. She links inactivity and lofty values (here, Gaunt's aloofness toward revenge) with cowardice. Thematically, inaction and a loss of character are morally aligned with failure so that, because of a

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[162] The *Norton* Shakespeare prefers *sluggard* from the folio, while the *Textual Companion* has the quarto using *coward*. The difference between the two words is important, but difficult to explore in my argument. While both imply inaction, *sluggard* connotes the sin of sloth, a sin to which despair is normally connected. "One who is naturally or habitually slow, lazy, or idle; one who is disinclined for work or exertion of any kind; a slothful or indolent person." "sluggard, n. and adj." *OED* Online (January 2018). For textual notes, see Wells and Taylor, *A Textual Companion,* 310.

[163] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, III.iii. ll. 79-85.

[164] Ibid., I.ii. ll. 29-34.

weakness of character and an inability to be heroic, evil action is left unpunished and the resulting punishment is despair. Shakespeare uses these negative character traits to frame Richard's character throughout the play, often as a mirror for Bolingbroke's virtuous and heroic traits. Conversely, when Richard damns Henry and strikes the keeper, the action elicits the opposite response, illustrating both an emotional and toned change in him, but also an abandonment of despair, thus creating a new ontological trajectory for his character.

As per his wife's criticism, the king has taken one step away from despair by casting the devil from his heart and back to hell. His redemption allows him to gain virtues that he lacked as a king: courage and action, two virtues associated with his nemesis Bolingbroke. We see this new identity during the skirmish between Exeter and his men, where the tonal change is marked from desperate to heroic language ("Go thou, and fill another room in hell") and Richard, for once, backs his words up with action, dispatching several assailants before being slain.

In his final moments, Richard became the king and conquerer he never was. Recalling again his sigil, the lion, we hear in his final moments the queen's observation that "The lion dying thrusteth forth his paw,/ And wounds the earth, if nothing else, with rage/ To be o'erpower'd."[165] The queen's recollection that the king is like a lion is prescriptive, given it could hardly ever describe Richard, who looked upon his signals and signs as testament enough to his monarchal majesty, with little physical or material input needed from him. In his final breaths, Richard has finally become what his outward signs have signaled: he has become the lion.

As illustrated by the queen's chiding, the lion for the bulk of the play is used as an insult to Richard. While the queen's insult is meant to steel Richard, the Duke of York's is more cutting, a place where Shakespeare echoes some of the historical criticism of Richard. For Richard's uncles, their young nephew was a far cry from their brother, Edward the Black Prince. Using Richard's sigil, York uses a complex reference to the Edwardian line to insult Richard, implying that, while Richard's father, the Black Prince, and York were heroic, Richard lacks both the temper and mettle:

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[165] Ibid., V.i. ll. 29-31.

York:
In war was never lion raged more fierce,
In peace was never gentle lamb more mild,
Than was that young and princely gentleman.
His face thou hast, for even so look'd he,
Accomplished with the number of thy hours;
But when he frowned, it was against the French,
And not against his friends. His noble hand
Did will what he did spend, and spent not that
Which his triumphant father's hand had won.
His hands were guilty of no kindred blood,
But *bloody with the enemies of his kin.*[166]

Fittingly, the insults most used against Richard (his moodiness, his inaction, his despair, his lack of martial prowess) are used in the final moments to show his heroic transition. The language recalled directly draws on activity, bravery, and honor, all terms foreign to Richard's character. It is in this instance that Richard achieves a spiritual quality "almost nonexistent" in the play. This language appropriately motivates the king toward a correct cause, and he achieves a quality of being yet unseen in him. To describe this "dual caliber of spirit," Robert Rentoul Reed, Jr. provides the term *Nobilitas*, the spiritual quality of valor and selflessness typified by "the ideal medieval warrior-statesman."[167] While Reed stops short of saying so, I believe we can say that, in his dying breath, Richard achieves a level of *Nobilitas* unseen in him previously. Thus, in these final seconds, Richard confirms that he has again regained the crown in blood and spirit:

Richard […]
That hand shall burn in never-quenching fire
That staggers thus my person. Exton, thy fierce hand
Hath with the king's blood stain'd the king's own land.
Mount, mount, my soul! thy seat is up on high;
Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die.[168]

Because he has achieved *Nobilitas*, we see Richard die not as a tragic suicide but as a liminal conquerer; a man critiqued for womanish and impotence, Richard's marked transition allows him to usurp Bolingbroke as the play's heroic figure. This change, inspired by his wife's final words,

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[166] Ibid., II.i. ll. 174-84.

[167] Reed, *Crime and God's Judgment*, 15-29.

[168] Ibid., V.v. ll. 108-12.

lends him a hidden power, allows him to achieve a rancorous retribution for his overpowering, and, in his final fleeting moments, to retake the crown: "Exton, thy fierce hand/ hath with *the king's blood* stained the *king's own land*" (ll. 111-2) On death's bed, Richard can again confidently count himself "the King," and even his murderer is forced to concede that Richard died "As full of valour as of royal blood" (l. 115).

VI: Revisionist History: The King Reborn

Critics often approach Richard's death in a way that limits the value the king's final seconds. But both Shell and Rozett search Richard's final scene for a transition, a movement into redemption. I believe it is the same sensation many feel toward Faustus, searching his final moments for a redemptive breath. Perhaps, in a round-about way, Berger encompasses this oddity when he speaks of the queen. In recalling the king and queen's separation outside Pontefract Castle, Berger observes that the most notable feature of the scene is "[the queen's] silence about the actual character of Richard's regime and his contribution to its downfall, a silence so conspicuous as to seem as willfully to avoid what her sometime tortured languages shows she understands too well."[169] But Berger, like Queen Isabel with her husband, is being prescriptive. Shakespeare has provided us with enough evidence to see that the queen has done everything in her power to save Richard, successfully redeeming his character in the final seconds of his life. Berger is like the other brother in "The Parable of the Prodigal Son," looking at the wasteful brother and saying, "Why does he deserve redemption?" But this is the wrong question. In Richard, Shakespeare saw a lowly, miserable man who brought problems on his home country, and in that history, he saw an unsolvable problem: How does a deathbed redemption repair all the hurt wrought during a lifetime?

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[169] Berger, "Textual Dramaturgy," 177.

In depicting Richard's transformation out of desperation, Shakespeare evokes despair as the lowest point of human existence[170], a state of hell felt emotionally and mentally. In exploring the ramification of the abdication, Shakespeare used despair to highlight how diametrically extreme life can be, the movement from one stage of thought and being to another in a matter of a second, a transition from desperate to heroic in a breath. For Shakespeare, the play ends with a redemption, no matter how warranted, as inspired by a desperate person's significant other, one praised by even the former king's enemies, but how much can we make of Richard's final words: "Mount, mount, my soul! thy seat is up on high;/Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die." Frye calls these expressions "essentially commonplaces," words that, if not for Shakespeare's poetry, would be "mere cliché[s] or platitude[s]."[171] Yet, they are perhaps the most important words Richard speaks because they are soteriological words, words that seek to lift Richard 'on high'. The magic in them relies on the echo of *mount,* a word impossible to hear without immediately thinking of how *Faustus*'s chorus frames Dr. Faustus: "His waxen wings did mount above his reach,/And, melting, heavens conspir'd his overthrow."[172] Was Shakespeare juxtaposing Richard's final ascension against Faustus' degradation? Perhaps, but the language is clearly used to evoke culpability. Marlowe's culpability is clear: heaven conspired toward Faustus' ruination, but what of Richard? How much does his voice speak for the heavens? Veiled in the language of mortification ("…my gross flesh sinks…to die"), Shakespeare paints Richard's death by turning Henry into Pontius Pilate, struggling to "wash this blood off from my guilty hand."[173] Given that Shakespeare

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[170] For more on the stigma of despair, see Michael MacDonald and Terence R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls* (Gloucestershire: Clarendon Press, 1990). For a view that discusses the positive connotations of despair, see Alec Ryrie, "Despair and Salvation," in *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (New York: Oxford UP, 2013): 27-48.

[171] Frye, *Christian Doctrine*, 135. Frye explains, "Shakespeare's references to death are most often made against the background of universal human experience." When he refers to a Christian conceptualization, "the references are almost always confined within one or two lines and consist of commonplaces." Frye's criticism is that these allusions were never the "focal point of the plays" (136).

[172] Christopher Marlowe, "Prologue," In *The Tragedy of Dr. Faustus*, Ed. Roma Gill. (New York: Norton, 2000). ll. 22-3.

[173] Shakespeare, *Richard II*, V.vi. l. 50.

strives to depict Richard as a Christ figure, the final implications inculpates Henry for his death, but does it then exculpate Richard? Does it save the former king's soul?

These are the questions often evoked by despair and desperate suicides, explored in the following chapters. For *Richard II*, Shakespeare's great achievement was taking this miserable figure and turning him, in his final moments, into the Lion, the nationalistic figure whose blood strengthened the land even when spent, cursing the Lancaster line. Through Isabel's intervention, Shakespeare evoked and cleansed the desperate stigma, making it acceptable to look into Richard's eyes and call him king; however, the major takeaway from the play may be far simpler: the relationship of individual concern and care to mitigating despair.

The play's obsession with evoking and creating history masks the important takeaway for the individual. Even if Shakespeare's final transformation of Richard only implies that he becomes a man, never moving to the level of monarchal reclamation that I have argued he achieves, we see Shakespeare's point that, in the game of thrones, the individual is often lost. In highlighting Richard's isolated struggle with despair and death, Shakespeare shows how effective matrimonial counsel is to redemption; for Richard and his wife, the important struggle with despair speaks to a need for intervention, showing how loved ones can and should directly engage with their suffering family. While critics often explain that Richard's obsession with language speaks to his inactivity, Shakespeare shows how language and action directly lead to the character's transition out of despair, a movement away from suicidal thoughts to a single, brief return to spirits.

The strange power of Richard's desperate prison, his solipsistic struggle with the exclusion from divinity, speaks to the power of and danger of despair. Given that Richard was fully assimilated by his pseudo-godhood, the declination into despair could be compared to other losses of divinity, perhaps like a proto-echo of Milton's Satan. I bring up *Paradise Lost* intentionally. Critics like Kantorowicz and Christopher Hill have seen in *Richard II* an anticipation of Charles I,

and the suffering and trauma felt by both the kingdom and the king.[174] Was there something to how a man, abandoned to suffer in isolation, could redeem himself? Perhaps something more like a Christian syncretization of Seneca, the ingrained nobility of a man with nothing.[175] When Richard regained the crown, it changed the symbolism of his execution: dying as a king and symbolizing—in part—a metaphysical regaining of former divinity. In a round about way, the shedding of despair reverses the stigma of Eve's ruination of man, where, rather than allow her husband to sink in despair and mortality, Queen Isabel sees in him a weakness that must be solved to regain his self. The similarities are of course forced, but there is thematic overlap: companionate marriages, a change of soteriological states, and temptation. Rather than force the comparison, we can note that it is only because Shakespeare modifies history that this relationship occurs.

I opened this section by discussing how Essex's coup has dominated the interpretation of *Richard II;* and yet, there is something ironic about it. I referenced the argument that Essex and his conspirators may have been trying to link Essex with Richard. There is one minor moment where, in light of Essex's execution, I cannot help but see the two as linked by the isolated suffering felt when locked away in prison. I will close this section by including a vignette into Essex's troubled decision-making. Like Richard, he began to become unraveled when facing empty coffers. In a desperate suit to the queen, Essex pleaded his case through surrogate John Harrington. While the suit ultimately failed, Harrington's description of Essex in the face of bankruptcy is telling: "The Queen knows well how to humble the haughty spirit; the haughty spirit knows not how to yield,

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[174] See Christopher Hill, "The Prerevolutionary Decades," in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill* Vol 1 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 10-12.

[175] Seneca says in "Letter 41," "Praise the quality in him which cannot be given or snatched away, that which is the peculiar property of the man. Do you ask what this is? It is soul, and reason brought to perfection in the soul. For man is a reasoning animal. Therefore, man's highest good is attained, if he has fulfilled the good for which nature designed him at birth." Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Trans. Richard M. Gummere (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), 277.

and the man's soul seethe tossed to and fro, like the waves of a troubled sea."[176] In stripping him of his income, Elizabeth seems to have only exacerbated the situation.

Conversely, although he was was torn asunder by the wealth and difficulties of the court, his disposition in the face of death was disciplined, a 'fine' death—not heroic like Richard's, but mortified:

> So lyeng flatte along on the bordes, and laying downe his head, and fitting it vpon the blocke, stretched out his armes, with these last wordes, which he was requested to say. *Lord into thy hands I commend my spirite.* His head was seuered from his bodie by the axe at three stroakes. But the first deadly, and absolutely depriuing all sence and motion.[177]

A day earlier, twenty-four hours before Essex was beheaded, the Lord Chamberlain's Men were invited by Elizabeth to perform at Whitehall, their role in the *Richard II* staging forgotten.[178]

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[176] Harrington, "From Brief Notes and Remembrances (late autumn 1600)," In *Norton Shakespeare: Histories,* 499.

[177] W. A. Barlowe, *A Sermon preached at Paules Crosse.*

[178] Peter Iver Kaufman, *Religion around Shakespeare* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2013), 188.

Chapter III

"The Drowning Man and the Rainbow:
John Donne, Communal Voyeurism, and the Desperate"

On Feb. 25, 1631, about a month before his death, Donne arrived before the pulpit to deliver his final sermon, "Death's Duel." Standing before Charles I at Whitehall, Donne was a wight, his appearance sickly "with only so much flesh as did cover his bones." According to his early biographer, Isaak Walton, those gathered thought Donne "presented himself not to preach mortification by a living voice, but [to preach] mortality by a decayed body and dying face." Already disturbed by the spectacle of Donne's form, some of the laity pondered if they were witnessing the man's last breaths: "Many that then saw his teares, and heard his hollow voice, professing they thought the Text prophetically chosen, and that Dr. Donne had preach't his own funerall Sermon."[1] In staging his final sermon, Donne designed the message to match the sight: To God alone belong the issues of death.[2]

As his final and most remembered sermon, "Death's Duel" recapitulates much of Donne's theological and sermonic goals, including his monistic—albeit mystical—leanings and personal struggles with despair, two theological aspects which allude to despair-heavy books, such as *Psalms* and *Job.* As with the didactic nature of his own sickly appearance, Donne coupled allusions to despair with a reiteration that God was nearby at death. He was, accurately enough, using his own mortality to teach mortification, his imminent death helpful to ponder the afterlife. Beyond qualifying despair, Donne uses death's inevitability to argue that God's support is a necessity to escape it. In doing so, Donne limits his laity's evaluative gaze toward others in despair, and reiterates the broader limits of communal evaluation, a recurring trope from his earlier sermonic work.

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[1] Walton, *The life of John Donne, Dr. in divinity, and late dean of Saint Pauls Church London,* 1658.

[2] John Carey explores this scene and how Donne stages his death in his *John Donne: Life, Mind, and Art* (Whitstable: Faber Paperbacks, 1983): "[Donne] was stage-managing his own demise" (214).

In the following chapter, I use John Donne as a case study both to exhibit despair's complexity of meaning and to caution against any prescriptive, generalized assertions about its mobilization. In his sermonic project, Donne investigates these nuanced tensions, conditions a less-scrutinizing communal gaze, and limits the negative treatment of the desperate. In order to achieve these mutually informative tasks, I argue that Donne reframes despair so that it is viewed in a more individualistic and less communally evaluative, prescriptive way.

Rather than account for all the instances of the term in Donne's corpus, I specifically explore Donne's usage of despair as a strategy to limit communal inquiries into individual repentance and to increase concern for the excluded. Although I have strived to compare various definitional uses of the term, my litmus is the religious use of the term, a project that is by necessity evaluative. To facilitate this exploration, I provide various theologians as counter examples to highlight how unique Donne is in his treatment of despair. In some sense, I am proposing a hermeneutic for the interpretation of Donne's theological project, assuming an overall continuity in his work. This fits with my overall investigation of despair as essentially a call for comfort.

I. The Critics of Despair: John Donne Scholarship

Current critics interested in Donne's despair tend to differ in the degree to which they connect his personal religious struggle with his greater rhetorical or sermonic project. Among those critics who focus mainly on Donne's personal despair, John Stachniewski in his book, *The Persecutory Imagination*, is perhaps the most prominent. Stachniewski characterizes Donne as a"victim of the Calvinist persecutory imagination," where the "dominant mood of despair" victimizes Donne and acts as a type of pressure cooker so that Donne's "fear, resentment, and despair" are evident in his poetics.[3] Others, who are interested in connecting Donne's despair to a

[3] John Stachniewski, "John Donne: The Despair of the 'Holy Sonnets,'" In *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 254-291.

more dynamic religious context, have shown that Stachniewski's primary methodological problem is inherent in his myopic depiction of Calvinism as unchallenged. Stachniewski's entire scholarly project is to depict the carcereal nature of Calvinistic Puritanism, representing the individual as ensnared by the persecutory nature of Calvinistic Protestantism: "The lack of any serious doctrinal challenge to Calvinism prior to 1630 meant that it presents a virtually unbroken ideological cloud cover to the popular imagination."[4] Stachniewski's thesis necessitates a monolithic Calvinism; however, this monolith is a construct of his own research. He constructs Calvinism as a monolithic bugbear looming over the British isle, Donne as its direct subject.

Richard Strier rightly criticizes Stachniewski, arguing that Donne's religious politics are not monolithically Calvinistic. Instead, Strier sees in Donne's theology a complex interactivity ignored by Stachniewski, showing that Donne struggles with his own personal belief against competing contemporary orthodoxies. As Strier shows, the desperate John Donne of Stachniewski's research is a 'victim' of Stachniewski's own methodological streamlining and, thus, his definition of despair is not dynamic enough to support the project I explore. Instead, because Donne struggles with Perkins' Calvinism *and* continental Arminianism—later embodied by Laud—I show that Donne exemplifies a desperate individual, an individual overwhelmed by theological knowledge.[5]

More dynamic than Stachniewski, Douglas Trevor allots Donne further rhetorical agency in his depicting of despair: "Donne is occupied by a whole range of concerns and worries—personal, spiritual, professional, ecclesiastical—that his melancholy both feeds and complicates." In Trevor's treatment, Donne uses despair in its "scholarly nature," a residual conceptualization akin to Spenser's treatment in the *Faerie Queene* where learning and intense studying led one to despair.

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[4] Ibid., 53.

[5] Richard Strier, "John Donne Awry and Squint: the 'Holy Sonnets,' 1608-1610," *Modern Philology* 86:4 (1989): 357-384, 361.

Still, Trevor shows Donne's despair as complex enough to capture the "turbulent and unstable"[6] religious world in which he is living. Accordingly, he treats Donne as a dynamic object of despair and religious suffering. However, Trevor stops short of engaging with what I see as Donne's greater sermonic project, mainly the exculpation of the desperate. Although Trevor allots individual agency to Donne's projects and engages with Donne's sermons, he does not entirely capture Donne's sermonic and overall rhetorical project, his poetic agency in this treatment, or his use of the 'self' as metonymically symbolic of others. In short, he does not entirely capture Donne's framing of religious despair.

Other critics bridge the divide between an individual's perspective and that of a religious framework by viewing Donne as connecting his suffering with that of a common believer. In *Prayer, Despair, and Drama*, Peter Iver Kaufman warns that Donne's evocations of despair are meant to frame suffering through "instruction and assurance," a tempering qualification which emphasizes that the comfort offered by salvation maintains early living, even when a believer is in the most extreme bout of despair.[7] Interested in the "instruction and assurance" aspect of Donne's sermonic projects, Mary Ann Lund astutely links Donne's desperate struggle to his sermonic engagement with the laity: "Donne puts his personal experience of illness to work to find spiritual meanings for himself and, through publication, others."[8] While Lund is specifically referring to Donne's *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, her comment summarizes my goal here: to show that despair is coupled with comfort as a means to exculpate the sufferer and to warn against judgment of the individual.

In "*Rooted* Sorrow": *Dying in Early Modern England,* Bettie Anne Doebler explores many of Donne's obligations to offer comfort. In her chapter, "A Case Study in Dying," Doebler engages

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[6] Douglas Trevor, "John Donne and Scholarly Melancholy," In *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2004), 87-115.

[7] Peter Iver Kaufman, "Wretched," In *Prayer, Despair, and Drama* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 65

[8] Mary Ann Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine, and Religion in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010).

with comfort for the desperate by using anthropologist Victor Tuner to investigate the relationship between the communal religious framework and the individual. For Doebler, Donne's interest in this relationship is nearer to Augustine's *Confessions* than to other late Elizabethans/Jacobeans: "[T]he quality of [Donne's devotional voice's] expressed internalized longing derives from the bleakness Donne plumbs in the frequent skepticism he exhibits before conventional world strugglers [i.e. religion] [sic]."[9] Doebler seems to see Donne ventriloquizing the shared experience of the turbulent world, a ventriloquizing that allows him to externalize what the laity has internalized.

Scholars of Donne's despair see awareness of suffering as a theme, an encompassing project where Donne addresses an explicit tension between the overarching church framework and the individual practitioner in faith. As Doebler maintains, Donne's voice contains the "skepticism of reason and the world itself that finally ends in God—a recognition of Donne's need for radical Pauline grace in freeing within himself the power of love."[10] Certainly the freeing of "radical Pauline grace" is essential to individual comfort and the acceptance of conditional grace, but Jeffrey Johnson takes Donne's rhetorical aim beyond a simple awareness of Pauline grace for Donne himself. In *The Theology of John Donne*, Johnson sees Donne not only as seeking to awaken grace within himself, but as also prescribing a limitation on God: "Donne believes it necessary and appropriate both to remind and to *bind God* to such promises [as exhibited in *Devotions*' prayers] as a way to guarantee them."[11] Johnson's assertion is accurate, and Donne obviously uses the desperate to show how grace materializes on earth. Rather than exemplify despair as a warning to individuals, Donne uses it to prescribe a contract between God and the believer as a means of almost demanding God's continual support, even for those who do not or cannot see or feel it.

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[9] Bettie Anne Doebler, "A Case Study in Dying," In "*Rooted Sorrow" Dying in Early Modern England* (Madison: Associated UP, 1994), 199.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Jeffrey Johnson, "To Batter Heaven," In *The Theology of John Donne* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer: 1999), 57.

I see Donne's theological project emblazoned in the lack of 'seeing and feeling' typical of both religious and desperate experience. Based on his own struggles with despair and sickness, Donne is well aware that suffering can shift or bedazzle the mind. In this chapter, I explore Donne's theology in the space of his 'skepticism of reason and the world' and his reliance on 'Pauline grace,' two strategies to comfort the desperate. This strategy shows how Donne limits the laity's judgment, a temperance that contextualizes the individual's suffering and accentuates a warning for the Christian community.

Building on Doebler's research, I show that, through his theological endeavors to comfort a world embroiled in despair, Donne uses his own suffering to free the desperate from communal judgment. I draw on disparate Donne sources, treating his sermonic project as having an overarching theme that unites his prose, poetry, and sermons. I establish a theological framework in sections I and II, the first of which provides a framework for despair, self-scrutiny and redemption. The second section highlights Donne's use of the desperate individual to provide an individualized example of suffering. Sections III and IV are close readings of sermons. In section III, I engage with Donne's famous sermon, "Death's Duel," and discuss his use of "wormes" to exemplify comfort/despair; section IV sets up the final section by exploring the image of the crucified thief, a trope which exemplifies the limitations of human knowledge. I show that Donne's ultimate project is both to limit human judgement by limiting human knowledge and to mediate the adjudicative gaze of the community.

I: The Pure Heart: The Desperate Shadow in the Heart of Self-Scrutiny and Redemption

Made a doctor of divinity by royal mandate, Donne entered Holy Orders in 1615. During this time, he engaged with the complicated church and political realities of the period, particularly the growing tensions between conformist and non-conformist Calvinists over election rhetoric. Though aware of this, Donne's theology was more expansive than limiting, perhaps because his life spanned three monarchs. Alternatively, perhaps this is the case because he was interested in the

human condition. With human suffering thematically structuring his work, Donne could interrogate religion as explicitly somatic, explicitly *felt*.

When exploring religious complications, Donne used suffering to explore the limits of salvation, primarily by emphasizing that salvation and grace were religious buffers to the fallen world, God's means so assist the sinners toward salvation. Donne's task embroiled him in terse, political church conflicts, which only reinforced his deeply seated need to help others. As Johnson explains, Donne moved "the church from divisive quarreling" toward "a unifying dialogue,"[12] a task for which he was well-suited because of his dynamic theology.

Readers can easily see Donne's compassion and his need to assist others evidenced in even his early sermons:

> When God bids thee rise from thy sin, say not thou it is too late, or that thou art bedrid in the custome of thy sin, and so canst not rise; when he bids thee rise, he enables thee to rise; and thou maist rise, by the power of that will which onely his mercy, and his grace, hath created in thee; for as God conveyes a rebuke in that counsaile, Surgite, arise, so he conveyes a power in it too; when he bids thee rise, he enables thee to rise.[13]

Donne emphasizes that, when afflicting punishment for sin, God advocates the ability to rise from it, showing his unending belief that God (or the Trinity) is invested in the salvation of man.[14]

Donne advocated the religious practice of self-scrutiny, a practice he titled the attaining of "the pure heart." This spiritual concept involved right living and self-actualizing, principles that outlined Puritan, Pauline conduct: "This is Saint *Pauls* Puritan, Pure in Heart, pure in Hand, pure in Conscience." For Donne, living the right way was not enough to guarantee salvation, but the attempt to do so was still an obligation: "[I must] believe I ought to do this; that really I do it; that

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[12] Ibid., 16.

[13] John Donne, "Sermon X: Preached at the Churching of the Courtesse of Bridgewater, March 2, 1610" In *Fifty Sermons*, EEBO (London: Ia. Flesher, 1649), 77. Compare this to Milton's axiomatic statement that the sinner "is instigated to stumble, because he stumbles." Milton, *The Christian Doctrine*, In *The Complete Poems and Major Prose,* Ed. Merritt Hughes, 900-1020 (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 2003), 986.

[14] See "Sermon XX" for Donne's explanation of Saint Bernard: "As the three Persons of the *Trinity* created us, so we have, in our one soul, a *threefold impression* of that image, and, as Saint *Bernard* calls it, *A trinity from the Trinity*, in those *three faculties* of the soul, the *Vnderstanding*, the *Will*, and the *Memory*.
God" (163). John Donne, "Sermon XX: Preached at Lincolns Inne." In *Fifty Sermons*, 164.

my conscience tell me after, it was rightly done."[15] In the processes of right living and self-scrutinizing, the conscience is significant in that Christians were expected to scrutinize their previous life-decisions, and the faculty allowed the necessary recollection and scrutinizing: "He may have a right heart, that keeps in the right way, in the profession of the right Religion; but he only keeps his heart pure, that watches all his steps, even in the right way."[16]

Despair was a danger inherent in the whole process, mainly when the conscience processed and evaluated sin; for the human believer, there was a subtle difference between knowledge and judgment of sin. For those with insufficient knowledge of the Spirit of Christ, a focus on knowledge of their sin led to overt judgement of sin. As Perkins explains in *Case of Conscience,* "[S]urely despairing of their owne estates, and of the mercie of God, [the desperate] haue either growne to phrensie, and madnes, or els sorted vnto themselues fearefull ends, some by hanging, some by drowning, others by murthering their owne selues."[17] For English Calvinists like Perkins, the knowledge of sin could lead to a type of frenzy, where self-inflicted torture or self-murder was inevitable; however, Donne resisted this prescription because, while he saw Christian life mainly in terms of how earthly suffering ('temporall afflictions') and divine knowledge affected the believer, he felt that spiritual affliction could also lead to a refocusing on God.

Donne emphasizes that, as tenets of the pure heart, one should actively scrutinize one's conscience, but through grounded religious knowledge. As a necessary aspect of obtaining salvation, self-scrutiny meant that one had to engage with past sins and to actively voice repentance, a process which involved people revisiting and confessing their past sins. Self-scrutiny then took on a cathartic effect: "The washing of our feet then, being a cleane, and pure and sincere

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[15] John Donne, "A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross to the Lords of the Council, and other Honorable Persons, 24. Mart. 1616. [1616/17]." BYU.edu. Referenced September 1, 2015. 7. For Paul, see 1 Thessalonians 1.3; 5.8; 1 Timothy 1.5; 1 Corinthians 13.13.

[16] John Donne, "A SERMON Preached at *Pauls* Cross to the Lords of the Council, 24 MART. 1616" In *XXVI. Sermons (*Never Before Publish'd*) PREACHED BY THAT Learned and Reverend Divine John Donne (*London: Thomas Newcomb, 1661), 335.

[17] Perkins*, Case of Conscience.* EEBO. (Edinburgh: Robert VValde-graue, 1592). Perkins blames sin as the catalyst for self-murther.

examination of our actions, we are to wash all instruments of our actions in repentance."[18] This cathartic self-scrutinizing acted as a redemptive act but was intrinsically flawed by memory: "The art of *salvation*, is but the art of *memory.*"[19] *Art* implied several complicated dynamics, but the most relevant was practice and study. But an inherent problem with self-scrutiny lie in the pleasure of recalling past indiscretion: sin was recalled, recollected, and, often enough, reiterated with delight, a response which could lead one away from redemption rather than toward it.

When Donne emphasizes the redemption process, a process by which one cleanses his or her conscience, he compounds it by evoking predestination, a religious tenet that knitted memory, redemption, and sin into a complicated process loop that could prevent believers from either perceiving or obtaining salvation. In effect, the concern lies in *knowing* the end result of one's suffering. Predestination added fuel to the fire by placing soteriological action and the consequence of the action outside the world of human knowledge: One could suffer on earth, live a pure life, and still be damned. Based on a retrospective process of redemption, where the individual experiences previous sins in order to address them, the process should use sin as a catalyst to continue toward God; however, the recalling of sin reiterates one's sinful status but could also disconnect the individual from his/her redemptive focus. The process could recapitulate the sinful nature of the self *and* push the individual away from redemption. In this broken loop, knowledge of one's fate and memory of one's past sins became an all-too-easy means to slip into despair, a cycle that some contemporary critics blame on the intertwining of predestination, salvation, and knowledge.

Although some critics claim predestination and unknowable salvation create a penal atmosphere for the individual, the seventeenth-century Church of England framed predestination

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[18] John Donne, "Sermon VIII: Preached at Essex house, at the Churching of the Lady Doncaster," In *Fifty Sermons,* EEBO, 62.

[19] John Donne, "Sermon XX: Preached at Lincolns Inne," 164.

as "full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons."[20] In church practice, self-scrutinizing was essential to religious integrity and in itself not generally linked to despair; however, in theory, self-scrutinizing evoked theological tensions—tensions over knowledge and who could know it—fundamental to religious despair. For example, the *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion*, a statement of church doctrine published under Elizabeth, was contradictory, teetering between the necessity of predestination and its exclusionary nature, an exclusion which created the despair described later in the same text:

> [F]or curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirt of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of Gods Predestination, is a most dangerous downfal, whereby the deveil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living, no less perils than desperation.[21]

The *Thirty-Nine Articles* stipulates that *despair* refers to when one suffers from a lack of the 'Spirit of Christ,' a framing Donne occasionally echoes; yet, rather than fault God for excluding the individual, the *Thirty-Nine Articles* excuses God by framing predestination and despair as arising from individual faults. By coding *suffering* as part of "mortification," the articles fault desperate individuals for failing to *sufficiently sublimate* their desires and/or overt curiosity. When an individual fails to suppress the impulse to sin or wishes to know the unknowable, it is not sin or knowledge itself, but the individual who is at fault. It is the individual's desires (curiosity and 'carnal' living) and lack of Holy Spirit that leads to despair, not God's exclusion of the individual.

Aware of sin's permanence and a human's propensity to sin, Donne used the predestination/despair tension to emphasize God's mercy and man's potential for salvation; however, sensitive to the human experience, Donne explains that mortification itself—in this usage, the subjugation of the bodily senses—has both a vivifying and edifying effect: when the bodily desires are subdued, the body is enlivened and bolstered by the Spirit.[22] Donne emphasizes

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[20] "Thirty-nine Articles of Religion," In *Book of Common Prayer*, Ed. by Brian Cummings, 674-683 (New York: Oxford, 2011), 678.

[21] Ibid.

[22] See Donne's "Sermon XIIII, preached at Lincolns Inne," In *Fifty Sermons*. Donne clarifies that the corruption of the body is also the corruption of the spirit, but that the redemption of both is possible.

God's grace, but unlike the *Thirty-nine Articles*, he conceives of despair as inherent to the process of redemption, a moment where God's support becomes the most significant and obvious.

In effect, self-scrutiny creates an awareness of one's position in the spiritual hierarchy, what Donne calls a "Fearfull diffidence" or "fearfull consideration." For the individual believer, the will is bolstered by the Holy Spirit, even in moments of doubt. Donne recognizes that despair is not a lack of the Holy Spirit per se, but occurs when one turns from supporting grace. When they sin, desperate individuals see God's adjudication

> …not [as] a *distrust*, but [as] as fearfull *consideration* of that height, and depth; what a high Majesty thou hast offended, what a desperate depth thou wast falling into, what a fearfull thing it had been, to have fallen into the hands of the living God, and what an irrecoverable wretch thou hadst been, if God had not manifested himselfe, to have been in that place, with thee And therefore though he have appeared unto thee in mercy, yet be afraid, lest he goe away againe.[23]

In despair, the individual believer should feel *closer* to the Trinity, despite the insurmountable "height" and "depth" of human sinfulness. Framed thus, desperate tribulation and suffering allow the individual sufferer an even closer spiritual place to God: "[W]e are nearest to our crown of Glory, when we are in *tribulation* in this world…"[24]

Suffering focuses the individual inversely on the Trinity rather than the pleasures in life, pleasures which could indicate one was a reprobate. Donne makes it a point to juxtapose these types of temptations. Whereas some believers treaded on "*Carpets*, or upon *Marbles*"—here symbolizing ease and not necessarily wealth[25]—those closest to God were those who suffered on earth and treaded on ash: "Amongst them that tread in *ashes*, in the ways of holy sorrow, and

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[23] John Donne, "Sermon XI: Preached at Lincolns Inne, preparing them to build their Chappel," In *Fifty Sermons,* EEBO, 92

[24] John Donne, "Preached at Denmark house, some few days before the body of King James, was removed […] for buriall," Apr. 26, 1625. BYU.edu. Retrieved 17 September 2015. 6.

[25] Compare to Donne's comment in "Sermon No. 10." "But who thinks of taking so exact a survey of his Conscience, how that money [used to buy a Mannor] was got, that purchased that Mannor […] And yet how few are there, […] that know that; that know what they have, what they are worth?" 222. Donne, In *John Donne's Sermons on the Psalms and* Gospels, Ed. Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 222.

religious humiliation, thou shalt have the way best marked out [to heavenly Jerusalem] unto thee."[26] To clarify, neither *tribulations* nor *physical afflictions* were monolithically synonymous with *despair* or *reprobation*; even redeemed sinners felt pain and suffering on earth.

Although it is not a sermon, *Devotions* has a similar thematic and stylistic structure through which Donne represents his individual struggles with despair. For example, when Donne speaks of David's 'fear of God' in *The Book of Psalms*, he ventriloquizes his owns fear of God. In using David's words to speak for him, Donne enlivens the devotional, creating a threshold where love and fear are palpable: "*O Lord*, that *feare* thee, and *feare* thee only, who feele this *joy in thee*. Nay, thy *feare* and thy *love*, are inseparable."[27] Assisted by the testimonial tone of Donne's voice, Donne assists his readers in their struggle. Using the religious devotional, Donne bridges the experiential presence of devotion and congregational inclusiveness of group-worship: "Give me tender, and supple, and comfortable affections, that as I *joy* with them that *joy*, and *mourne* with them that *mourne*, so I may *feare* with them that *feare*."[28] The alteration of *I* and *them* creates the bridge, while the testament to "joy," "mourning," and, "fear" creates a bond for others also experiencing them. The use of his own experience, the words of the Bible, and the communal inclusiveness of church allows Donne to bridge his religious experience to help others, a strategy which appears in many of the sermons, both before and after the sickness that catalyzed Donne's composition of *Devotions.*

The major take-aways from the *Devotions*—the experience of suffering, the oscillating exclusiveness of despair, and inclusiveness of grace/the community—are thematically important to Donne's work on despair. They are themes through which I see Donne voicing the plight of

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[26] Donne, *Preached at Denmark house*, 6.

[27] John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, Ed. John Sparrow (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1923), 33.

[28] Ibid., 34.

desperate individuals and creating a buffer for their suffering.[29] Donne's awareness of the individuality of despair and its lived suffering is best embodied in his sermon on *Psalms* 38.03, where he again alludes to David's despair: "There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sinne."[30] In this sermon, Donne discusses Adam and David as archetypal sinners. Rather than stop with an archetypal discussion, though, Donne uses David's personal suffering—recall his use of David in *Devotions*— to universalize the experience of a general believer. According to Donne, man is the "Receptacle, the Ocean of all misery." In this, man is essentialized by inward "decay, and outward violence, bodily pain, and [the] sorrow of heart" so much so that man is embodied by the hardship and sin of the world: "As though man could be a *Microcosm*, a world in himself, [in] no other way, except [that] all the misery of the world fell upon him."[31] Although he maintains that *joy* is the sign of redemption, Donne does so by characterizing the external world as fallen, in line with typical postlapsarian discussions: the world of man is flesh and imperfect; brought on by our sinful nature, corruption works to seep into ours hearts.

In the beginning of *Second Anniversary* poem, Donne conflates human life and suffering/ death in his most moving way, using his poem "Of the Progress of the Soul," to show that humans live in a type of death stasis, what he conceptualizes as the "dead world" (l. 21). The image is of a man who has been beheaded, and yet still stumbles bloodily about thinking himself alive:

> Or as sometimes in a beheaded man,
> Though at those red seas, which freely ran,
> His soul be sailed, to her eternal bed,
> His eyes will twinkle, and his tongue will roll,
> As though he beckoned, and called back his soul,
> He grasps his hands, and he pulls up his feet,

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[29] cf. Calvin's explanation of judgement and reprobation: "The reprobate, though they groan under the lash [of torment], yet because *they weigh not the true cause*, but rather *turn their back, as well upon their sins as upon the divine judgement*, become hardened in their stupor; or, because they murmur and kick, and so rebel against their judge, their *infatuated violence fills them with frenzy and madness*." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008). III.iv.32, 429. Emphasis mine.

[30] John Donne, "Sermon XX. Preached at Lincolns Inne," 163.

[31] Ibid., 166.

> And seems to reach, and to step forth to meet
> His soul.[32]

Donne is figuratively speaking of a man; yet, the beheaded man is a metonymized stand-in for "this dead world" (l.21). Through this metonymizing, Donne exposes a type of shared, postlapsarian world where the soul and man are trapped in a tension between present ("be sailed") and future ("His eyes will twinkle"). Donne typifies this stasis as a shared experience: our shared experience on earth slouches toward heaven like the stumbling of a headless man.

The plight and the suffering of the single person (here the beheaded man) is a microcosm for the universe, a shared realm of emotion, unknowing, and death. He elaborates on this motif in *Devotions:*

> Is [man] a *world* to himselfe onely therefore, that he hath inough in himself, not only to destroy, and execute himselfe, but to presage that execution upon himselfe; to assist the sicknes, to antidate the sicknes, to make the sicknes the more irremediable, by sad apprehensions, and as if he would make a fire the more vehement, by sprinkling water upon the coales, so to wrap a hote fever in cold Melancholy, least the fever alone should not destroy fast enough, without this contribution, nor perfit the work (which is *destruction*) except we joynd an artificiall sicknes, of our owne *melancholy*, to our natural, our unnaturall fever. 'O perplex'd discomposition, O ridling distemper, O miserable condition of Man.[33]

In his meditation section, Donne paradoxically composes man as a "perplexed discomposition," a grouping of diametric forces. As a example of man's internal discomposition, Donne glosses despair as an "artificial sickness of our own melancholy," the effect of 'our own' "sad apprehensions" of sin and unworthinesses.

Between the two quoted passages, the dominant theme is this: What we do while alive is often done without knowing, actions which are senseless and self-inflicted. Donne's last thoughts are disheartening: we have deadened our own senses, beheaded ourselves, inflicted this condition upon ourselves; yet, if despair—the most dangerous stage of melancholy—is produced by "artificial sickness," is the individual responsible for self-inflicted torture? Sin has embroiled man in despair, suffering, and death. Donne likewise argues that affliction, suffering, and death are the natural

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[32] John Donne, "The Progress of the Soul," In *The Complete English Poems*, Ed. A.J. Smith, 287-301 (New York: Penguin, 1971), ll. 9-17.

[33] Donne, *Devotions*, 2.

states of earthly man. He does not say life is hopeless for everyone but rather that desperate individuals add fuel to the 'fire' of their suffering via an "artificial sickness of our own melancholy," using despair to describe the moment when one focuses only on the misery, and not on the results from it.

Donne differentiates between those in despair and those following the pure heart by the object of their scrutiny: for the desperate, the object is their sins, hence the 'sad apprehension' of the human condition; for the saved, the object is God, which also involves an apprehension of the miserable condition, but with an awareness of an end to the suffering via salvation. If we returned to the redemptive loop discussed above, suffering in faith is supposed to bring joy, but it can bring despair. A catalyst for this change in focus lies in the motion, where motion toward redemption is juxtaposed against motion toward suffering; the utility of suffering is conceived of as moving away from the individual, a movement away from the pain and suffering toward God. For example, Donne says in a sermon before King James: "*Goe forth*, that is, *goe farther then thy selfe*, out of thy selfe; at least out of the *love thy self*, for that is but a short, giddy vertiginous walk."[34] With a focus on God, even the saved stumble—we move sometimes sans intent or control—in a "vertiginous" walk toward heaven. While we could split hairs over whether God resides inward or outward, the motion is toward God, not toward sadness.

The *OED's* first definition of 'vertiginous' emphasizes the disorientation of vision, stemming either form "vertigo or giddiness."[35] While other definitions directly link this condition to instability of thought, Donne's usage in this quote implies only the figurative disturbance of vision, as in one's focus on the path to God is disturbed, which means straying from the path entails a disruption of focus, not necessarily of reasoning. In this case, the disruption of focus is on the object, God, which makes sense given the imperceptibility of the divine. By focusing on previous sins, the desperate increase suffering and retrograde away from God into the tortured

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[34] Donne, *Preached at Denmark house*, 6.

[35] "vertiginous, adj.." *OED* Online. June 2015. Oxford UP. (Accessed September 01, 2015).

self, into a type of self-induced spiritual affliction: "O heighth, O depth of misery, where the first Symptome of the sicknes is Hell, and where I never see the fever of lust, of envy, of ambition, by any other light, then the darknesse and horror of Hell it selfe."[36] In Donne's characterizing, the sensation and experience of hell is in the 'darknesse and horror of Hell it selfe.' Drawn from *Devotions*, this passage easily captures the merging of sensation, vision, and experience typical of despair. Conversely explored in the sermon before King James, the vertiginous believer is prone to giddiness by remaining focused on God, and the individual is drawn in a "*direct line*" that is allotted him or her via the "considerations of [God's] mercies afford[ed]" the believer from the beginning.[37] The individual's progression toward God thereby awakens a type of joy, a consolation for the suffering of everyday life, and obvious antithesis for the experience of the desperate. The overlap for the two experiences is in the effects of the object on the sufferer and the necessity of recounting sins; the disconnect between the two occurs when the sins become the only focus and God's mercy is forgotten.

Differentiated by the positive/negative effect on the viewer, both the vertiginous and desperate paths represent a type of misunderstanding of the "errand" for which man was put on earth. While on earth, man is afflicted by a double obligation to "both earth and heaven," thus creating a type of experience prone to cyclical extremes. For example, in a letter to Sir Henry Goodere, with whom he brainstormed over his anti-Catholic tract, *Psuedo-Martyr*, and other religious topics, Donne engages with what he calls "dull Monastique sadnesse," a reference to an earlier conceptualization of despair as a condition for overly-secluded monks and ascetics.[38] Donne frames this obligated religious devotion to God as a type of prison or burial away from

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[36] Donne, *Devotions*, 3.

[37] Ibid., 4.

[38] John Donne, "To all my friends: Sir H. Goodere," In *LETTERS TO SEVERALL PERSONS OF HONOUR*, EEBO (London: J. Flesher, 1651), 46. For a more detailed discussion of monastic despair and its relationship with a*ccidie* or *acedia*, see Siegfried Wenzel, *Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (UNC Press, 2017). For Donne's sermonic treatment of scholarly melancholy, see "Sermon IX, Preached at a Churching," *Fifty Sermons,* EEBO.

God. Humans were meant to engage with spiritual joy as well as "to partake [of] earthly pleasures"; hence, the spectrum in earthly living could swing from the "Presumption [of election]" to the sorrow of despair. Of the two, despair is "infinitely worse" than presuming election: as physically stumbling makes it easier to go physically "down the hill," so the excess of fear makes it easier to slip into the depths of despair.[39]

As despair is a state of earthly living with spiritual and physical ramifications, there is both the "temporall suffering" of earthly sickness and physical pain caused by it, as well as the spiritual suffering of despair. Those individuals at risk of slipping into despair suffer the spiritual effects of perceived rejection, an earthly affliction based on the re-tallying or reacquainting of one's sins by the conscience. For example, Donne characterizes despair in a sermon at Saint Paul's as the days of "inordinate melancholy, and the disconsolatenesse of that, the days of such miseries, as astonishes us with their suddennesse, and of such as aggravate their owne waight with heavy expectation."[40] During these days, the redeemed sinner recalls instances of melancholy and misery that "aggravate their own weight with heavy expectation" for divine punishment.[41] Again, the perception of sin increases its adjudicative and physical weight. Some sinners recall their sins with delight, but desperate individuals *view* their sins as weights that press the spirits beyond elevation and so they become pressed upon by sin. In just recounting one's sins, the weight or pressure is itself a suffering that creates a sadness which cannot be consoled.

With such a danger in mind, Donne still maintains the necessity of recounting one's sins, but tempers the activity with conditions that involve 'weighing' them in relation to God's grace. There are two dangers present in this self-scrutinizing or self-accounting: first, that sinners look back on their sins and see them as too minuscule to punish (*minor iniquitas*); second, that sinners will look back on their sins as being too damning for God to forgive (m*ajor iniquitas*). While the

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[39] Donne, "To all my friends: Sir H. Goodere," 46

[40] John Donne, "Sermon NO. 2, preached at S. Pauls" In *John Donne's Sermons on the Psalms and* Gospels, Ed. by Evelyn M. Simpson, 45-72 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 71.

[41] Ibid.

first is a typical sign of reprobation, it is the second condition—viewing one's sins as too great for forgiveness—that risks a slip into despair.[42] The inconsolability comes with the second option. For those suffering in despair, the weight of previous sins is too heavy for God's grace to alleviate, which means that reacquainting with God—by any means— is impossible.

Donne's sonnet IX from *Divine Poems*, "If poisonous minerals, and if that tree," captures a bit of the desperate logic. The opening quatrain contains several rhetorical inquiries into the the speaker's self-scrutiny, including comparing the human soul to the evil archetypes of the "lecherous goats" and "serpents envious" (l. 3). If mineral and animal souls are spared damnation, how can man, capable of reason and granted mercy by God, be damned? While there are some embedded nuanced answers to these questions—including the propensity for humans to hierarchize sins in the face of the maxim that all sins weigh the same— the speaker dismisses the inquiries with a sweeping and typical Donne response: "But who am I, that dare dispute with thee/ O God?" (ll. 9-10). The line evokes an ongoing theme throughout Donne's discussion of despair, that asking questions can be dangerous: "I enquire not what God did in his bed Chamber."[43] Instead, man's focus should be on one's own conduct via a self-scrutinizing of his or her conscience. Echoing the *Thirty-Nine Articles*' prescription that curiosity leads to despair, Donne warns against pointless inquiries: "Man be too curiously busie, to search what God does in his bed chamber; we have all enough to answer, for that, which we have done in our bedchamber."[44]

Forbidding inquiry into God and Election is a prescriptive policy statement: man *should not* inquire after what God did in his bed chamber, but, as the sonnet supports, the desperate human's mind is often prone to spiraling around unanswerable questions. Prescribing such a theological policy does not resolve these questions, nor does it guarantee an escape from despair,

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[42] Donne, "A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross," 13-15.

[43] Donne, "Election," In *The Major* Works, Ed. John Carey, 401- 417 (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), 289.

[44] Donne, "Sermon VII: Preached at a Christning," In *Fifty Sermons*, EEBO, 55. While *bedchamber* evokes the privacy of one's domicile, Donne is using it simultaneously to evoke the soul, as in his earlier reference: "Though the whole world be [Christ's] Court, thy soule is his bedchamber." Donne, "Sermon VI: Preached at a Christning," In *Fifty Sermons,* EEBO, 43.

as the sonnet upholds. Although the speaker provides an answer in the end of the octet, the desperate fear is still present. The speaker's mind has the theological reason—man is necessarily reliant on God's grace—but the body is still burdened by the weight of the desperate inquiries. Donne clarifies in his sermon on David: "the mind of a curious man delights to examine it selfe upon Interrogatories, which, upon the Racke, it cannot answer, and to vex it selfe with doubt as it cannot resolve."[45]

Donne's assumption is that human knowledge is like an oubliette into which one enters pursuing the knowledge of God and has trouble escaping; the escape from despair is hidden by the afflicted mind, and theological inquiry is not a ward against but a portal to despair. Donne's assumption echoes Calvin's assertion that despair is when "a fatal abyss engulfs those who, to be assured of their election, pry into the external counsel of God…"[46] Echoing Calvin's maritime imagery, Donne explains in *Essays in Divinity* that navigating theology is like navigating the ocean: "Men which seek God by reason, and natural strength, […] are like Mariners which voyaged before the invention of the Compass." [47] In circumnavigating the maelstrom of theological writings, individuals are sometimes lost. Accordingly, Donne's maritime language figuratively qualifies human knowledge as conditional on outside factors (nature, God, etc.) and prone to error.[48]

For Donne, theological knowledge and human agency pertain to those outside of despair, those religiously-minded men that over educate themselves. In Sonnet IX, however, he is interested in desperate logic, the mind of the individual already *within* the abyss. This spiraling logic is

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[45] Donne, "Sermon XX. Preached at Lincolns Inne," 166.

[46] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 640. Donne himself had experience at sea. He was involved in the Island Voyage of 1597 under the leadership of Essex, Suffolk and Raleigh (*Essays* 13).

[47] John Donne, *Essays in Divinity*, Ed. Evelyn M. Simpson (New York: Oxford UP, 1952), 20.

[48] Donne has a lengthy discussion of the advances of knowledge in his December 12, 1626 funeral sermon, where he uses the motif of 'spectacles' to discuss the paradigmatic nature of human knowledge. See "Sermon No. 10." In *John Donne's Sermons on the Psalms and* Gospels, Ed. by Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 222-3.

emphasized in the circular nature of despair: an anchor that moors human agency to its fallacious, desperate reasoning. The final sestet is telling:

> Oh! of thine only worthy blood,
> And my tears, make a heavenly leathen flood,
> And drown in it my sin's black memory;
> That thou remember them, some claim as debt,
> I think it mercy, if thous wilt forget.[49]

For the desperate speaker, the plea is both spiritual and physical. Spiritually, the desperate plea for a Leathen expunging of sin, which some "claim as debt" (l. 13) paid by the Son's death. Physically, the desperate plea for the humoral cleansing of the body of melancholy, that of the "heavenly leathen flood" (l. 11) washing away the melancholic "black memory" (l. 12) of sin. Here despair functions akin to Perkins' "evangilicall sorrow," a sorrow awakened by the knowledge of sin as sin.

The problem with this desperate logic is that the prayer is for the *removal* of something perpetual *within* the individual, a corruption that can never entirely be removed. In fact, fear and dread of sin act as a type of inhibiter to check the ongoing corruption of the soul, and to keep the soul/mind from moving into 'inordinate fear' and, by extension, overt sadness. As Donne clarifies in *Devotions*: "…this feare [of God] preserves me from all *inordinate* feare, arising out of the infirmitie of Nature, because thy hand being upon me, thou wilt never let me fall out of thy hand."[50] It is not human agency that staves off despair, but God's sustaining power both within and without despair. As the speaker in the sonnet implies, despair, unnecessary inquiry, and fear are inherently part of earthly life. They can no more be removed from religious experience than suffering itself from earthly living.

In the quotes from *Devotions* and Sonnet IX, Donne argues that the desperate are reliant on God's mercy and power to escape despair. This assertion reiterates his overall argument that despair is essential to right living and essential to the earthly religious experience: "And though he

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[49] John Donne, "If poisonous minerals," In *John Donne: The Complete Poems*, Ed. A.J. Smith (New York: Penguin, 1996), 312. ll. 9-14.

[50] Donne, *Devotions*, 33. Emphasis mine.

be destroyed by these [elements of suffering which compose him,] yet he consists of nothing but these."[51] In other words, rather than treating despair as a portal to damnation, Donne treats it as the embodiment of earthly Christian living. In moments of right living, despair partially operates to show the individual's reliance on God's mercy:

> [*his Judgments are like a great deep*,] terrible and bottomless, and declining us towards the center of horrour and desperation. *These judgements* we cannot measure nor fathome; yet, for all that, we must more than beleeve them to be just […] *We know the Judgment of God is according to truth*. But yet ofttimes Judgment signifies not meer Justice, but as it is attempred and sweetned with Mercy.[52]

Beyond human knowledge and agency, the absolute nature of justice and the allotted mercy are "attempred" (91) to the individual sinner by God. In this, Donne creates a type of reproach for the judgement of the desperate, one that both reassures those in despair that God is invested in their salvation and creates a buffering space or bulwark against evaluations of their suffering by others. Donne creates this space by making despair a potential threat for all and creating doubt in others' posthumous fate.

II: "Our Faith is not Perfect, nor our Hope is not Perfect"[53]: The Individual's Suffering as a Snare for All

Although individual election is in the realm of divine knowledge—only God knows who is saved and who is damned—Donne's argument is that soteriological knowledge has earthly ramifications for *both* the desperate and those viewing them. In order to exculpate the individual, Donne must also shield him or her from the criticism of communal judgement. This strategy is evidenced by Donne's awareness of the communal need to judge and the fallibility of such judgements. Donne divides the effects of despair between the audience and the individual sufferer. As is explained above, individual despair is a state of (perceived) exclusion from grace, when "a mistaking soul"[54] is more eschatologically focused on justice and sin than on saving grace. For the

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[51] Ibid., 168.

[52] Donne, *Essays in Divinity*, 91.

[53] Donne, "Sermon NO. 10," *John Donne Sermons*, 225.

[54] John Donne, "Sermon III: A Lent sermon preached at White-Hall, February 20, 1628," EEBO, 37.

surrounding community, an individual's despair elicits an eschatological judgement of the individual, mainly that the individual is suffering a deserved punishment, as is the case in *The Book of Common Prayer*. The community voyeurs believe that the desperate are afraid of election and therefore lack sufficient Holy Spirit. However, Donne actively destabilizes the outward signs of suffering as evidence of election or reprobation. In addressing despair in his sermons, Donne argues that it is the inward space that shows salvation and that outward external signs of affliction are in themselves testaments to eventual salvation, not eventual damnation.

Donne locates the communal need for judgment in God's exemplary punishment of sinners, a concept typical of reprobation rhetoric, where the reprobate depicts to believers "a kind of anticipation of the punishment of hell. In these [i.e. the wicked] already see, as from a distance, their eternal condemnation."[55] Via instructive punishment, God's punitive strategy is often dependent on an evaluation of how often an individual's sinful act encourages others to sin. Donne explores this exemplification of punishment in *Biathanatos,*: "God often punisheth a sinner much more severely" because others "have taken occasion of sinning by his fact." The "easines of being scandalized" by others' sins, therefore, leads the community to act "as [God's] assistants, and counsellers," to aid in determining "how far [God] shall punish [the sinner]." In short, "our *interpretation* of *another sinne* doth often give the measure to Gods Justice or Mercy."[56] How far the individual sinner is punished depends often on how susceptible others are to committing the same sin, showing less concern for individual recidivism and more concern for communal impetus. The social adjudicative tendencies are embedded within Christian life—here interrelated with a Calvinistic conceptualization of reprobation— yet Donne tempers these criticisms by interrogating exemplary punishment.

Donne is less interested than Calvin in damning individuals and more interested in alleviating their concerns. In the sermons, Donne references the desperate as *exemplary*, not as

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[55] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* III.iv.32, 428.

[56] John Donne, *Biathanatos* (London: John Dawson, 1644), EEBO, 23.

objects to adjudicate but rather as *examples* of God's mercy *post-divine adjudication*. As Jeffrey Johnson reminds his readers, "Donne imagines prayer and the Christian life as a contest between human weakness and divine faithfulness, as a coming to terms with one's own propensity to sin in relation to the grace and mercy of God."[57] In referencing the suffering of the desperate, Donne depicts the personal experience of religious exclusion so that others not only focus on their own state of salvation (the human will and its inevitable failures), but also so that they emphasize God's mercy and the potential for salvation.

Sin and exclusion from grace are individualized throughout the sermons, allowing Donne to emphasize the conditional election for believers who strive for God and rely on the Lord's power to escape despair. The experience of exclusion and despair exhibits how aware Donne is of the limitations and inhibitions of sin, where individualized suffering is telescoped outward to establish a strategy for tempering communal evaluation. For example, Donne warns against the interrogation of another's salvation after death, although he concedes such questions are to be expected. Secondly, he encourages the timely repentance of the individual believer in order to assuage the posthumous investigation of one's salvation. Finally, Donne dismisses the need for communal judgment of the desperate through a connection of despair with personal scrutiny. Donne argues that it is only through the experience of suffering and despair that one sees the dangers of communal judgement.

By individualizing suffering and reiterating a continued, personal experience with God's mercy, Donne uses empathy to bridge the imagined experience between the sufferer and his or her voyeur. This tactic is significant to a discussion of despair because it exculpates the suffering of the individual, moving suffering and knowledge into the divine realm and outside the human adjudicative space: "He that seekes a reason of the will of God, seekes for something greater then God. It was the Devill that opened our eies in Paradise, it is our parts to shut them so farre, as not

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[57] Jeffrey Johnson, "Devotions upon Emergent Occasions," In *The Theology of John Donne*, 57. Johnson is specifically discussing prayer in *Devotions*; however, his point is applicable to Donne's larger sermonic goal.

to gaze upon Gods secret purposes."[58] Donne's strategy is most apparent in how he sees the individual sufferer as metonymic for all sufferers, perhaps as analogous to the common saying, "What's good for one is good for all":

> …in respect of that extreme anguish which out of an over tendernesse, ordinary men did suffer under the calamities of this life, even this poore indolency and privation of griefe, was a joy, but yet but a halfe joy; the second joy, which is a true joy, but common to all Christians, is that assurance, which they have in their tribulations, that God will give them the issue with the temptation…[59]

Anagogically, Donne shows that suffering—within the Christian framework — confirms that the end result of affliction is knowledge and joy. Within this anagogic read, despair is a systemic church problem.

As an extension of theological tensions over predestination/double election and universal salvation, despair is a complicated theological principle inherently problematic for those guiding and edifying the Christian system of belief. Thus, while Donne treats those suffering in despair and reprobation as individualistic, he also characterizes the conditions as a systemic threat to the religious community:

> [C]onditional salvation is so far offered to every man, *as that no man may preclude himself* from a possibility of such a performance of those donations which God requires at his hands, as God will accept at his hands, if *he do so sincerely endeavour the performing, or sincerely repent the performing of them.*[60]

Drawing from the 1618 Synod of Dort,[61] Donne is eager to emphasize that conditional salvation increases individual voluntary agency while also emphasizing the benevolence of God: salvation is possible for all believers but they are reliant on God for salvation.

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[58] John Donne, *A Sermon Preached at Saint Dunstan's upon New-Years-Day, 1624.* BYU.edu, Retrieved 17 September 2015, 4.

[59] Donne, "Sermon XVI: Preached at Lincolns Inne," 133.

[60] John Donne, "Sermon LXXIII: Preached to the King in my Ordinary Waiting at Whitehall, 18th April, 1626," *Works of John Donne*, Ed. Henry Alford v. 3 (John W. Parker: 1839), 304. See also Paul R. Sellin, *John Donne and "Calvinist" Views of Grace* (VU Boekhandel, 1983).

[61] Not addressed in this section is the difference between self-professed Arminians and those labeled as such. As Edwards indicates, those English Protestants who emphasized free will tended to be labeled as Arminians, sometimes because of their *defacto* stance on predestination. Phillip Edwards, *The Making of the Modern English State, 1460-1660* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 302.

Donne reiterates this reliance on God in his New Year's Day sermon at Saint Dunstan's. While speaking of circumcision, Donne chastises those who seek to judge others:

> I dare not deny that man, whatsoever God may be pleased to grant him […] I dare not presume to say, that that man died well […] that is but a suspicious state in any man, in which another Christian hath just reason to doubt of his salvation. [Augustine says, as] *I am not sure he is damned, so I am not sure he is saved, no more sure of one then of the other.* [62]

Castigation of communal judgement is obvious in this quote. In the first passage engaging with doctrinal belief, Donne is expressing the Church of England's endorsement of conditional election, a moderate Calvinistic tenet which places the onus on each believer to voluntarily struggle in faith and God's unending grace.[63] In the second passage from the sermon, Donne limits how much an individual's salvation may be based on his or her struggle. The two passages essentially divide over how much agency an individual has in securing salvation and how much right living exhibits election.

Donne's idea of right living relies on agency—the active and continual striving for grace. In emphasizing earthly suffering, he shows voluntary submission as a maintaining force within grace; however, Donne's difficulty is in justifying how much agency one has in obtaining salvation. On the one hand, he dismisses critics who exclude human agency—those who argue "the *passive obedience* of Christ onely redeemed us"—by reasserting the need for "*active obedience*."[64] On the other hand, he qualifies despair as a stifling agency that strangles the will and obfuscates clarity. If conditional election is fundamentally the active or voluntary submission to God's will, then Donne

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[62] Donne, *A Sermon Preached at Saint Dunstan's,* 18.

[63] Consider Perkins' *A Christian and plaine Treatise of the Manner and Order of Predestination and of the largenes of Gods Grace* (London: William Weley, 1606): "*And that therefore euery man is prouoked to beleeue and doe good by godly institutions, that no man may despaire of the attainement of eternall life, seeing that there is a reward prepared for a voluntarie deuotion*" (178). The operative word is *voluntarie*. As Kendell explains, much of the tension between Calvinists and Laudians revolves around the voluntarism concept: "The debate between Perkins and Arminius is a case of two forms of voluntarism in opposition to each other" (146). Whereas Perkins sees the individual will co-operating "with grace once the first grace has been bestowed," Arminius ties election/grace to "man's will to believe" (143). R.T. Kendall *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (New York: Oxford UP, 1979), 142-150

[64] Donne "SERMON VI. Preached at a Christning," In *Fifty Sermons,* EEBO, 60.

paradoxically struggles to show that judgement exemplifies an acceptance of grace, especially for a suffer whose will has been drastically impacted by affliction.

To adjust for this reprobation/affliction framework, Donne's models of grace fluidly borrow from Arminius' three-stage approach to salvation—the primary importance of which is that a believer does not actively *resist* grace—although Donne stops short of advocating universal salvation.[65] In parsing *active* and *passive* obedience, Donne paradoxically emphasizes that the mediating force of continual grace saves the desperate individual from themselves by seemingly upholding Calvin's assertion that believers cannot will themselves into reprobation. For example, in reference to the consistency of election, Donne explains that no man listening to his sermon, "though Elect, hath an equal and constant righteousness; nay, no man hath any such righteousness of this own, as can save him; for howsoever it be made his, by that Application, or Imputation, yet the righteousness that saves him, is the very righteousness of Christ himself."[66] Christ established the path to salvation (saving grace) in his death for all, but this neither guarantees salvation for all nor precludes any from it. Rather, conditional election explains that a secondary grace—the continual support by the Holy Ghost—precludes those who actively resist the will of God, but, because it impacts the will, despair complicates how active one can be toward God.

For the desperate, the *active* pursuit of God is confounded by overwhelming melancholy; however, rather than explicitly stating that despair negates fortitude, Donne implicitly places the fortitude for escaping despair in God's hands. For example, in a sermon on Psalms 63.7, Donne explains that "it is the power of God that comforts me; To overcome that sadnesse of soule, and that dejection of spirit, which the Adversary by temporall afflictions would induce upon me, is an act of [God's] Power."[67] In this passage, the Lord's power comes in two forms: comfort and the

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[65] Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism*, 146.

[66] John Donne, "Sermon No. 9." In *John Donne's Sermons on the Psalms and* Gospels, Ed. by Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 214.

[67] John Donne, "Sermon No. 4," In *John Donne's Sermons on the Psalms and* Gospels, Ed. by Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 110.

ability to overcome, but noticeably the individual —here Donne himself—is seen as overwhelmed by a dejection of spirit. As a mutually informative affliction to despair, dejection of spirit evokes similar problems: How can one voluntarily strive for God when the world is pain and exclusion? The takeaway is thus similar between the despair and dejection: active struggling is impossible.

While conditional election is a doctrinal tenet of the church, it carries with it a common association with double election—a problem Donne tries to engage with by emphasizing the staying power of belief. For example, Donne engages with this Christian tenet in *The Lamentations of Jeremy:*

> The Lord is good to them, who on him rely,
> And to the soul that seeks him earnestly.
> It is both good to trust, and to attend
> The Lord's salvation unto the end.
>
> 'Tis good for one his yoke in youth to bear;
> He sits alone, and doth all speech forbear,
> Because he hath borne it. And his mouth he lays
> Deep in the dust, yet then in hope he stays.[68]

In the first quatrain, Donne explains that, provided the soul "seeks [God] earnestly" (l. 25), the grace of God is an ever-present option. For all believers, trust and attendance end in the Lord's salvation. These are the tenets of conditional election.

The first stanza shows a way for all believers to be saved, but Donne moves in the next stanza to situate this belief in terms of a desperate individual believer: "…his mouth he lays/ Deep in the dust, yet then in hope he stays" (ll. 29). Afflicted with sadness and left in contemplation or sin that has stopped his mouth with ash, the individual believer staves off despair in his sadness with a focus on hope. The formula evoked is ancient: only hope can stave off despair, but Donne's message is prescriptive. To assist the desperate in escaping despair, a comforter uses hope and a

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[68] John Donne, *Lamentations of Jeremy*, In *The Complete English Poems*. Ed. A.J. Smith, 334-346 (New York: Penguin, 1971), 341. ll. 25-29. Intentional despair is a latent point within the final quoted lines. Is Donne implying that the suffering intentionally lays 'Deep in the dust'? Theoretically (or theologically), I believe that is the case. Suffering has a certain utility, and despair for Donne assists the individual believer in reaching salvation.

focus on mercy. Again, the key word for Donne is *stay*, and the agency implicit is not human but divine. Via conditional grace God provides the staying power of hope.

Active versus *passive* labels are inherently evaluative, and in deploying conditional grace, Donne struggles to temper them next to the stifling nature of despair. In order to mesh the two informative discussions, he emphasizes *resistance*. If salvation is located in the willed activity of the individual, then grace remains constant provided the individual does not resist it. Because despair attacks the will, a desperate individual cannot be said to actively resist grace, thereby sidestepping willed rejection of God's grace.

Despair is a type of individual snare that attacks hope. Awareness of the condition, however, leads to the negative assessment of desperate individuals as non-Elect. In this way, the terms act as a type of evaluation of another's potential for redemption, a practice which Donne is keenly interested in undermining. If Donne's sermonic goal is to assist individuals in achieving salvation and to bridge the overarching church principles of salvation and redemption, Donne uses suffering as a means to negate evaluation of others by reiterating evaluation of the self: "… never trouble thy selfe, how another shall have [Christ], if thou have him all; leave him, and his church to that; make thou sure thine owne salvation."[69] A significant example of this strategy appears in a Lent sermon at Whitehall, February 20, 1628. In his sermon, Donne expressly criticizes the desperate, but also uses the moment to attack those who evaluate them.

While discussing James 2.12, Donne explores the desperate's sin of evaluating God. In admitting that election is a contested principle, Donne clarifies that the impasse amongst theologians only pertains to the *number* of *elect*, not to the *reason* for *damnation*. Clergy agree that sinners are damned for transgressing God's law placing culpability for sin on humans and thus escaping the double-election trap: God ordains only the elect; humans damn themselves.

In addressing double election, Donne argues that these desperate individuals unfairly erase mercy—itself a type of agency—from God's hands; in removing mercy, the desperate create a

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[69] Donne, "Sermon VI: Preached at a Christning," 62.

one-way adjudication that prevents redemption: "He that conceives any tyrannical act in God, is unjust to the God of Justice, and unmercifull to the God of Mercy." Therefore, in seeing themselves as damned without hope of redemption, these "over-sad" and "despairing soul[s]" do an injustice to God in their suspicious and jealous evaluations of God; by misconstruing his character as monolithically adjudicative and draconian, they usurp or bind God's power of mercy.[70] But rather than stop with this condemnation of the desperate, Donne implicitly critiques the audience as well, who are presumably not desperate. As the desperate seek power over God by excluding themselves from his mercy, so do the communal judges seek power over mercy and damnation by condemning the desperate. Thus, Donne exculpates the desperate while warning his audience latently not to judge them.

III: "…I cannot doubt of deliverance": "Death's Duel" and Life of the Grave Wormes.

In this section, I perform a close reading of Donne's most famous sermon, "Death's Duel," as a place where Donne highlights a disconnect between one's religious experience and how others perceive it. Specifically, he questions the reliability of visual suffering as a way to determine an individual's soteriological potential by a community. I argue that Donne uses grave worms as symbols of unknown eschatological knowledge. While the word *despair* rarely appears in this sermon, Donne evokes symbols (grave worms) and rhetorical tactics (mediating communal evaluation) he has previously used when discussing despair. However, rather than rely on a typical Christian usage of worms—one that equates man's lowness and unholiness with the worm—Donne refigures the Christian grave worm trope, drawing extensively on his previous sermonic treatments and expanding the semantic and rhetorical usefulness of the trope. This allows him to mediate eschatological judgement and assuage individual doubts.

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[70] John Donne, "Sermon III: A Lent-Sermon at White-HALL, February 20, 1628," In *XXVI Sermons (Never Before Publish'd) PREACHED BY THAT Learned and Reverend DIVINE John Donne*, EEBO, 37.

I begin by showing how Donne engages with the church, the grave, and the world at large. These are common areas where individuals visibly gather, but also function with a latent spiritual import. I then excerpt Donne's notions of multiple deaths and salvations to show them as tactics specifically used to differentiate the (visible) earthly community from the seemingly (in)visible individual, illustrated by Donne's own body in this chapter's opening vignette. I explore visibility by analyzing Donne's *topos* of worms and the putrefaction/purification process of the grave. Whereas a traditional usage of the worm highlights man's baseness, Donne uses the worms to explain God's posthumous care for the individual, thereby inverting the Calvinistic usage and emphasizing God's pastural care beyond death.

Serving as the topic for "Death's Duel," the opening biblical quotation explicitly exemplifies both death's evaluative nature and its presence in the sermon: "*And unto God the Lord belong the Issues of death (i.e. from death).*"[71] Visible in the parenthetical,"*(i.e. from death)*," Donne explores whether one's exit *from* life (*exitus mortis*) exemplifies a knowledge of death before his or her exit from life. Informatively, both *exit* and *knowledge* serve as thematic strings, topically structuring Donne's argument that God alone knows the result of one's death and one's potential for salvation. Primarily, the biblical passage and themes both signal that the sermon, like a church, should function didactically as a site for edification.

Donne emphasizes that the church is a site where knowledge and community are formed by exploring how *building* can refer both to the material church and the figurative church community. In reiterating a semantic multiplicity to terms like building, Donne signals that 'sites' like *church* may involve different modes of interpretation—the literal, figurative, and anagogic. These modes offer a range of strategic uses through which he expounds recurring points associated with suffering, including: the individual's reliance on God, the earthly struggle with affliction, the potential for despair, and the individual's fear or doubt of salvation. Anagogically,

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[71] John Donne, "Death's Duel," In *The Major Works*, Ed. John Carey, 401- 417 (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), 401.

Donne explores the church structure: "…the foundation of this building (that our God is the God of all salvations) is laid in this, that *unto* this *God the Lord belong the Issues of death;* that is, it is in his power to give us an issue and deliverance, even then when we are brought to the jaws and teeth of death, and to the lips of that whirlpool, the grave."[72] The church structure is the material site of these immaterial promises, and Donne uses the literal and figurative structure as the visible testament to potential salvation.[73]

Two of Donne's beliefs are especially significant here: God is present in the church and the church should cater to the pure and impure alike. These beliefs are bolstered when he evokes the desperate, who, in this usage, exemplify the titular moment of human spiritual affliction. Donne's goal is to perforate the semantic boundary between *visible* and *invisible*. Donne sees the church as a literal site of Christianity *and* the figurative embodiment of its values, here the insistence that the laity include pure and impure members. However, in agreeing with this church belief, Donne is in stark contrast with those Puritans who wish to purify the church.[74]

In order to purify the church, many Puritans believed that people should be barred from attending a congregation without first testifying to their spiritual purity. However, As Richard Strier explains, Donne was politically positioned with the anti-Calvinist Laudians, who saw

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[72] Ibid.

[73] As Delbeke and Morel show, Church of England clergy referenced early Christian churches as traditional and historical models for their places of worship: "Thus the historical references in consecration sermons not only established the church building as the place of 'good' worship, but also as an analogous space for the 'correct' (Church of England interpretation of) ecclesiastical history (a place of memory) and for the diffusion of knowledge of the true religion (place of knowledge)" (113). Though Delkbeke and Morel are investigating consecration sermons, the precedent is clearly similar to Donne's usage. See Maarten Delbeke and Anne-Françoise Morel, "Metaphors in Action: Early Modern Church Buildings as Spaces of Knowledge," In *Architectural History*, 53 (2015): 99-122.

[74] As a former Catholic, Donne's theological principles are elastic, but he maintains that there is only one church, here drawing on the meaning of c*atholic* as *universal*: "So Synagogue and Church is the same thing, and of the Church, Roman and Reformed, and all other distinctions of place, Discipline, or Person, but one Church, journying to one Hierusalem, and direct by one guide, Jesus Christ" (51). In a 1620s sermon preached in Easter Term, Donne is precise with meaning Roman Catholicism, stating that, even if a man's wife is Roman Catholic, she may inherit the kingdom of Heaven based on the seed of God (*ex semine Dei*): "I am propagated of the seed of God [1 John 3:9], I inherit this peace" (*Major Works* 295). For Donne on Catholicism, see *Pseudo-martyr (*London: W. Stansby, 1610).

Puritan separatists as their enemies. Likewise, Joshua Scodel situates Donne between the two extremes, distancing himself "from both the Arminians and their 'Puritan' critics […] noting (like the "Puritans") the church's 'imperfections…" For Scodel, Donne occupies this position because he insists that "the members of the English Church are on the proper middle path [between purity and impurity] precisely because they are aware of their unavoidable imperfections." Unlike separatist congregations, the Church of England under Charles accepted—mandated—a church body composed of the impure and the pure alike—reprobate and elect—a belief which necessitated a certain type of obligation toward this mixed body. The church's role, therefore, should be a type of normative function where it acted as a nexus for behavioral moderation, a mean "between the defect of unthinking faith and the excess of superfluous curiosity."[75]

While Donne is interested in communal worship, his focus is always on how religion affects its individual practitioners.[76] As he says elsewhere,

> *It is not only a concurring of men, a meeting of so many bodies, that makes a church*; if thy soul and body be met together, an humble preparation of the mind, and a reverent disposition of the body, if thy knees be bent to the earth, thy hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, if thy tongue pray, and praise, and thine ears hearken to his answer, if all thy senses, and powers, and faculties, be met with one unanime purpose to worship thy God, thou art, to this intendment, *a church, thou art a congregation, here are two or three met together in his name, and he is in the midst of them, though thou be alone in thy chamber*.[77]

Donne presumed his congregation believed all individuals had the potential for salvation, a belief which further axiomatically divided him from some church separatists. In drawing on these larger arguments about congregations and purity, Donne is actually reiterating an individual focus all along: the church, the community, and the rules governing both should be invested in helping the individual believer, not ostracizing him or her from the congregation. In what amounts to a *coup de grâce*, Donne severs the need *to purify* the church body itself from the *need to evaluate* the church body, firmly placing 'purification' outside the hands of the community and, as I establish in this section, within the grave.

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[75] Joshua Scodel, "Religious Politics of the Mean," In *John Donne's Religious Imagination* (Conway: University of Central Arkansas Press, 1995), 67.

[76] "Sermon XCII. Preached at Lincoln's Inn, Preparing Them to Build their Chapel," *The Works of John Donne*.

[77] Ibid.

In terms of the larger religio-political context of the era, the primary conflict in "Death's Duel" is not the expunging of people from the spiritual or physical body of the church but rather what happens to individuals when the community can no longer visibly track them: when an individual exits life, why does the church body *need* to know the destination of the soul? Donne prescribes the answer: "Make no ill conclusions upon any man's loathness to die, for the mercies of God work momentarily in minutes, and *many times insensibly to bystander*s, or any other *than the party departing.*"[78] Donne addressing the "bystanders" and "any other" who may be evaluating another's death. Despair acts as a type of reading mode through which we can see how Donne uses death to mark the boundary between evaluation and concern.

Donne is interested in qualifying how the community interprets other people's deaths, outrightly rejecting the laity's condemnation. Donne critiques the community's attempt to pry into 'the issues of death' of others mainly as a rebuttal to Perkins' life of the reprobate.[79] Donne's use of "condemnation" and "judgement" both carry evaluative connotations, which exemplify Calvin's usage of *reprobate* and *reprobation* as primarily divine judgments. By dismissing these evaluations, Donne attacks the community's need to delve into the eschatological state of others:

> [W]hat kind of issue and transmigration we shall have out of this world, whether prepared or sudden, whether violent or natural, whether in our perfect sense or shaken and disordered by sickness, there is no condemnation to be argued out of that, no judgement to be made upon that, for, howsoever they die, *precious in his sight is the death of his saints* [Ps. 116: 15], and with him are the issues of death.[80]

As the existence of suffering during life could not be used as a "*condemnation* to be argued," it could not provide a "*judgement* to be made upon" a transmigration out of the world.[81] In distancing himself from those Calvinists who sought to use external suffering to visibly signal reprobation, Donne believed that because every individual experienced physical, earthly life as suffering, the individual's death could not

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[78] Donne, "Death's Duel," 410. Emphasis mine.

[79] To compare, consider Perkins' comment on external affliction and its soteriological effects: "But as for the Reprobate, it is to them as a boat, to cary them out of a riuer of earthly miseries, into a restlesse & bottomlesse sea of infinite & ineffable torments. And because their felicity (if any) consisteth in the finite fruition of worldly prosperity, God in his appointed time, by death as by [a] knife, cutteth asunder the threed of life, and so casteth them out of their paradise, and sendeth their soules to the place of the damned, where they shall continue terribly tormented, till that dolefull and dismall day of vengeance." Perkins, "A C[hristian] and [plain]e treatise."

[80] Ibid., 402.

[81] Ibid. Emphasis mine.

evidence internal degrees of salvation and faith.[82] Whether "prepared or sudden," "violent or natural," or occurring in "perfect sense" or when "shaken" or "disordered by sickness," an individual's exit could not be soteriologically used by the community to evaluate salvation.[83]

Like the physical church and the Christian community, Christian life is characterized by its reliance on the foundation of God's blessing: "The body of our building is in the former part of this verse [i.e. Psalms 68.20]; it is this; *He that is our God*, *is the God of salvation*" (403). The equivalency (our God is the God of Salvation) works to embody redemption and salvation as divine qualities outside human agency, the god of conditional election. Stressing that salvation ("*ad salutes*") is plural in the original scripture, Donne again reiterates that salvation is lifelong by divine necessity: all need saving from our deaths.

Salvation is not plural to express open access but rather because God grants individuals salvations from multiple deaths. As another step to distancing judgement from life, Donne stresses that death is not a singular event, but instead he refers to separate deaths that require repeated intervention:

> [O]ur deliverance *a morte*, *in morte*, *per mortem*, from death, in death, and by death, will abundantly do all the offices of the foundation, of the buttresses, of the contignation of this our building, that *He that is our God, is the God of all salvation*, because *Unto this God the Lord belong the issues of death*.[84]

Continual perseverance thus bolsters 'our building' (i.e. salvation is the foundation for faith), yet manacles human agency to divine intervention. Donne contends that the church lacks the agency to save people from death, despair, or affliction. Instead, God grants salvation from death, supportive grace as Christ's mercy, and perseverance in the face of of earthly and spiritual contignation.

Donne' reframes predestination in a way that, rather than torment the desperate with thoughts on the afterlife, conditional election creates 'blessed impressions' to assist those who suffer on earth in an otherwise torturous and miserable human condition. In engaging with these

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[82] Consider Hooker's framing of these marks as visible only to God in book III of *Ecclesiasticall Politie:* "They who are of this [saved] society, haue such markes and notes of distinction from all others, as are not obiect unto our sense; onely vnto God, who seeth their hearts and vnderstandeth all their secret cogitations, vnto him they are cleare and manifest" (124). Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiasticall Politie [in] Eight Bookes,* 1604, EEBO.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Ibid.

doctrinal concepts—election, salvation, and reprobation—Donne is directly engaging with tensions over despair. Rather than embrace Calvin's *de facto* categorizing of suffering humans as reprobates, Donne argues that, no matter the state of earthly affliction, salvation is possible, using election to comfort individual sufferers, not to ostracize them. By inverting Calvin's connection between suffering and salvation, Donne remobilizes the maxim 'salvation is open to all' to qualify that, even if one is elect and cooperates with grace, death and suffering *are* universal processes: "But for us that die now and sleep in the state of the dead, we must all pass this posthume death, this death after death, nay this death after burial…"[85]

In "Death's Duel," Donne likewise evokes the thematic world of Calvin's reprobate rather than the material world around him. For example, Calvin's thematic work is one of knowledge and external divine signs, a cosmic narrative divinely written; however, Donne's world is more complicated and less scripted. Calvin's reprobate suffers *unaware* of why he or she suffers and yet, conversely, his desperate characters suffer because they are *aware* of their eventual fate: damnation. Donne's world is not necessarily a place of such certainty. So he carefully reiterates that material life is tethered to empirical facts: everyone dies and divine knowledge is unknowable.

General reprobation logic follows like this: sufferers suffer because they are condemned. Instead of following this logic, Donne see death and suffering as primarily functional aspects of everyday life. In other words, regardless of whether one was dying, a reprobate, or desperate, suffering and death were everyday aspects of postlapsarian life. By emphasizing this new logic, Donne undercuts reprobation logic and essentializes suffering as just another part of life. To do so, Donne turns to *The Book of Job* and positions the individual believer with one foot on earth and one foot in the grave. To support this claim, I explore the *topos* of the worms as a sign of suffering and the individual's awareness of death. I conclude that Donne mobilizes the worms in an unusual way to show the eventuality of salvation instead of reprobation.

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[85] Donne, "Death's Duel," 408.

In "Death's Duel," death and the grave are conceived of as universal inevitabilities where the cycle of life is the instilling of death, and even a child within the womb is condemned to die by the mother from which he or she is birthed.[86] He explains that this "whole world is but an *universal churchyard,*[87] but our common grave, and the *life and motion* that the greatest persons have in it is but as the *shaking of the buried bodies* in their grave by an earthquake."[88] For those of us on earth, actions of the living are but a stirring of the dead, whether within the womb or from the throne. When we see them in the light of the 'good works' *topos*, even the 'greatest persons' are capable only of 'the shaking of the buried bodies,' an allusion to earthquakes[89]: great earthly acts do not extend beyond the material world. Donne explicitly cements the impotence of important men by damningly criticizing them: "[W]e are afraid to speak to the great men of this world of their death, but nourish in them a vain imagination of immortality and immutability." [90]

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[86] See Donne's discussion of the womb as an example. On the intermingling of souls and the taint of sin, see Charis Charalampous *Rethinking the Mind-Body Relationship in Early Modern Literature, Philosophy and Medicine* (Routledge, 2015). Engaging with the origins of sin in birth, Charalampous explains that Donne saw "neither the body nor the soul [as] originally infected. Rather, it is in the combination of the two that stigmatizes humans with sin" (72).

[87] In the first definition offered by the *OED,* the church's ownership and the religious connotations are much more apparent than the modern day *graveyard* implies: "The enclosed piece of consecrated ground in which a church stands, formerly almost universally used as a burial ground for the parish or district, and occasionally still used for Christian burials or memorials when space permits." The usage of *churchyard* and the OED definition stress Donne's early analysis of the church discussed in this chapter. "churchyard, n." OED Online. September 2015. Oxford UP. http://www.oed.com.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/view/Entry/32840?redirectedFrom=churchyard (accessed October 16, 2015).

[88] Donne, "Death's Duel," 405. Emphasis mine.

[89] Compare to Donne's reference in "A Valediction Forbidden Morning," lines 9-12:

> Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,
> Men reckon what it did and meant,
> But trepidation of the spheres,
> Though greater far, is innocent.

As his gloss supports, A.J. Smith shows that on-going movements 'of the earth' evoke 'harms and fears,' but the ethereal plane remains unaffected by such earthly concerns. Smith, "Notes: pp. 83-4, 84-5," In *John Donne: The Complete English Poems*, Ed. A.J. Smith, 405-6 (New York: Penguin, 1971).

[90] Donne, "Death's Duel," 414. Donne had done his share of political service to both James I and Charles I, and one wonders what the thirty-one-year-old Charles I would have thought hearing of his own impending mortality. See Strier's chapter "Donne and the politics of devotion" in *Religion, Literature, and Politics* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996) and Donne *Encaenia the Feast of Dedication* (London: Avg. Mat., 1623).

The earlier sites of life and death diminish about mid-way through the sermon, casting into relief the absence of the church as a site for this discussion. This thought evokes a consideration that even Donne might have resisted: the church itself operates like the grave; yet, I find it difficult not to assume that the church—for all the qualifying and hedging that Donne provides—is also a place of death, a womb for the laity to gather and ponder the exits from life. In introducing his earlier themes (sites, visibility, suffering), Donne uses the grave as a type of encapsulating conclusion, where arguments about the visible suffering of others becomes most important to the living. He achieves this end by conversely exploring the life of the grave from within.

Donne evokes these conflations with the grave in order to recall the fears of the living community, to conjure the stark dread of an unknown grave. The dread of the afterlife is foremost a characteristic of despair, and, because the desperate believe they are in hell already, this dread comes with a sense that one is living as dead, a common mortification tactic. To condition his congregation to receive this theme, Donne draws from many famous Biblical examples of despair, using the grave as a 'transmigration' or transmission site from one state of being to another. For example, when the physical body and spiritual soul together move from earthly life to life after death, the transmigration process conflates the 'life' of the body's decomposition with the life of a person. In exploring life like a grave, Donne transmigrates a lifetime into the body's moldering time, conflating the body enlivened with the posthumous body. In other words, he terms the moldering process as *life* to extend our lifetime into the grave. While most people would consider moldering as a state of un-being or of negation (not-life), Donne reiterates that the body occupies another state of spiritual being in this period. The transition to moldering characterizes the first death, the first exit from life.

Donne believed that the individual transitioned from the grave after a prolonged state, but also that the soul and body were called as a unit. In holding these two complementary beliefs, Donne endorses a tenet similar to the popular 'soul sleeping' theory, which held that the body and

soul 'slept' in the grave until God called them. This belief became more pervasive after "Death's Duel," and is visible in several other major theologians; in this vein,"Death's Duel" is simultaneously a refutation of Christian Mortalism,[91] a heretical belief that the soul died with the body and/or was annihilated in God. As the beginning of the sermon illustrates, Donne discusses Christianity as largely functioning in the terms of communal necessity. In reiterating the individual's relation to God, Donne endorses the temporality of 'soul sleeping' while reinforcing an individualism diametric to Christian Mortalism.

As I acknowledged, Donne stresses that, after physical death on earth, the body's life consists of its moldering in the grave and the soul's wait to be called by God: "…for us that die now and sleep in the state of the dead, we must all pass this posthumous death [i.e. a second death after earthly death], this death after death, nay, this death after burial…"[92] This second death—a second transition—is a state of cleansing, the removal of corruption via the dissolution of the flesh, but it certainly is not the final stage of existence nor the stage before assimilation into the oneness of God.[93] Notice here that there is not an erasure of identity in death. Instead, Donne frames the second death as a stage when an individual is *re*constituted with God, contradicting another popular view which held that death was intrinsically the loss of individuality. In his study of the representation of death in tragedy, Michael Neill stresses that the representation of death and its effects were "profoundly unnatural, an unwarranted annihilation of individual difference, imagined as a brutal stripping away of the outward persona."[94] In a similar vein, some critics view Donne as afraid of death because of its annihilation, arguing that Donne's egocentric

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[91] For information on 'soul sleeping,' see Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndall to Milton* (Cambridge, Harvard UP: 1972); Bryan W. Ball, *The Soul Sleepers: Christian Mortalism from Wycliffe to Priestley* (Cambridge: Jame Clark & Co, 2008).

[92] Donne, "Death's Duel," 408.

[93] Donne's words are more powerful than can be connoted by the word *cleansing*. Consider them: "dissolution," "putrefaction," "vermiculation and incineration," and "dispersion." Albeit not as nuanced or as powerful, the general object of the process is similar: purification of the spirit.

[94] Michael Neill, *Issues of Death: Mortality and Identity in English Renaissance Tragedy* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998), 9.

dissatisfaction with this loss. Robert Watson posits, "Donne lies in the dark thinking pious thoughts, but he does so primarily to scare away the demons of annihilationism hiding under the bed."[95]

Watson's writing is provocative and interesting, but his premises take on too much of a psychoanalytical flavor, reading Donne's piety only in a post *Die Zukunft einer Illusion* light. In short, Watson's framework pushes Donne away from the mysticism that explains his unification with God and stunts Donne's spirituality, suggesting that Donne's religious disposition shows him as immature and as having a narcissistic personality: "An infant lives in terror of being carelessly dropped, into the abyss. So does Donne the preacher, whose desire for divine punishment again comports the infant's craving for material care."[96] Watson is accurate in that Donne reassures the believer of the afterlife because of the reality of oncoming death. Given that his own congregation saw him as speaking while dead, I think we can cut Donne some slack.

Niell and Watson are correct that "Death's Duel" explicitly revolves around a fear of nothingness, a sense that death is the 'stripping away' of identity and a complete annihilation of the self; yet Donne represents death as the means by which an *individual* is continually *effected* in death: the process of death creates a profound sense of continual concern for the body and soul of the individual. Consider when Donne emphasizes that the unity of the body and soul determines individuality, a unity which is chiefly exhibited by Christ. When Christ dies, he becomes 'no man' and loses individuality, but only temporarily: "[Christ] became no man (for the union of the body and the soul makes the man, and he whose soul and body are separated by death, as long as that state lasts, is properly no man)."[97] The key part for this discussion is Donne's qualifier: "*as long as*

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[95] Robert Watson, "Duelling Death in the Lyrics of Love," In *The Rest is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[96] Ibid., 176. I don't disagree with many of Watson's points; however, his tone and conclusions are spoken as if Donne is foolish, his religiosity solely a compensation for loss and driven by self-serving motives. Again, this is unfair to the poet and casts the critic in a pejorative light.

[97] Donne, "Death's Duel," 407.

that state lasts…"[98] Once called by God, the union of body and soul reconstitutes the man after the second state of death.

For Donne, death is not the end of the individual. Yes, ontological aspects are stripped away, but physical death neither erases individuality nor annihilates the individual in the godhead; instead, death is a temporary state of inaccessible life, a new sense of self known only to the dead and to God. The fear and the sense of annihilation is for the community, those who watch and record, because they cannot see the transmigration of the soul and, therefore, like the desperate, need to be reassured of their eventual reconstitution.As Donne reminds himself, : "…as long as I see these [reassuring] marks and live so, I may safely comfort myself in a holy certitude and a modest infallibility of my adoption [into heaven]."[99] While he assures his laity of their own adoption into heaven, Donne evokes mutability and bitterness, ubiquity *of* death, and *process* of death to show that, as with life, the transitional state of death is marked by a loss of bodily self and the temporary loss of individuality.

Second death is defined as a state of putrefaction when the physical body is putrified in transmigration, though the ubiquity of suffering and, in the case of Job, despair do not necessarily end with the grave. Recalling Job's lament that"One dieth at his full strength, being wholly at ease and in quiet [Job 21: 23]; and another dies in the *bitterness of his soul*, and never *eats with pleasure;* but *they lie down alike in the dust, and the worm covers them* [Job 21: 25-26]" we see that affliction itself is not essential to death.[100] Regardless of how or why one suffers, the results of earthly death remain the same:

> that monarch, who spread over many nations alive, must in his dust lie in a corner of that sheet of lead […] and that private and retired man, that thought himself his own for ever, (such are the revolutions of the graves) be mingled in his dust with dust of every highway and of every dunghill, and swallowed in every

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[98] Ibid., 408.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid.

> puddle and pond: this is the most inglorious and contemptible vilification, the most deadly and peremptory nullification of man, that we can consider.[101]

Social status is 'stripped away,' and the process of the second death is when the physical form naturally decomposes and is re-assimilated into the corruption of the world: "In an instant, we shall have a *dissolution*, and in the same instant a *reintegration*, a recompacting of body and soul, and that shall be truly a death and truly a resurrection, but no sleeping, no corruption."[102] Paradoxically, while individual social status is removed, Donne situates the recomposition of the body around the shared bi-products of civilization ('highways' and 'dunghills') and watery places (puddles and ponds), seemingly suggesting—albeit a leap—that death is a shared destination and a transitory process. In part, this figuratively draws on the use of shared places, like intersections, where bodies were displayed after death. Consider extreme cases like suicides or public executions, were bodies were displayed as warnings to passerbys.[103]

In discussing second death, Donne conflates the grave with the moldering process, referring to the grave and moldering simultaneously. This semantic collapse works to collapse the temporal nature of the terms (i.e. the grave and the process of moldering simultaneously evokes both earthly and spiritual temporalities), where the process of present earthly death internalizes the projected second death. In using a conflation of terms, Donne creates a perspective akin to desperation, where the mental faculties (e.g. sight) and afflictions (e.g. despair) distort perception; this is a perspective inherent to the desperate, who see themselves damned in the future while on earth, experiencing hell's judgement despite not being dead.[104] For example, scan the following line for trans-temporality: "But for us that die *now* and *sleep in the state of the dead*, *we must all pass*

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[101] Donne, "Death's Duel," 409.

[102] Ibid., 408.

[103] See Chapter IV on Burton for more on this discussion.

[104] After Donne's death, Spinoza makes this clear in his concise definition: "*Despair* is sorrow arising from the idea of a past or future object from which cause for doubting is removed [in the present]." *Ethics Demonstrated in Geometrical Order and Decided into Five Parts*. Trans. W. Hale White. (New York : Macmillan, 1883), 82.

this posthume death, this death after death, nay, this death after burial…"[105] For 'us' that die now (presently) and sleep 'in the state of the dead' (present & future), we must "all [eventually] pass this posthume death" (future), the death after burial. Like those in despair who suffer when God excludes them from grace while on earth, so too do good Christians blur the distinction between actually dying the first death when they undergo preparations for death while still alive.

Donne emphasizes right living or the correct act of dying, but Donne sees these two prospects as the same: "Our critical day [of judgement] is not the very day of our death, but the whole course of our life."[106] While he does not directly evoke this principle until the end of the sermon, he does clarify the importance of living while thinking yourself dead, a point made evident while lecturing on death and second death. In this section, Donne ontologically conflates the worms (plural) that will consume the body posthumously with the living person (singular) who will eventually be consumed by the lowly beasts; this semantic linking works to stress the unholiness of the body itself and the corruption of the spirit therein, most likely to espouse a *sola fide* belief that man cannot be saved by good works alone; however, the link only works because it uses a worm to indicate man's holiness: "But as for me, I am a worm, and no man: a very scorn of men, and the out-cast of the people."[107] As typified by the psalmist, the theology of the worm, the use of the worm as a marker of lowliness, is remobilized by Donne, who uses it eventually as a mark of assurance rather than as a mark of baseness like the psalmist.

The worms here are markers that the processes of salvation continue for all who die. Although he draws on *Psalms'* usage of worms, Donne will alter the worms' symbolism to embody the posthumous death *in* the living person rather than embody good works and their posthumous

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[105] Donne, "Death's Duel," 408.

[106] Ibid., 411. See Perkins *Golden Chaine,* where he stressed that the "fruit" of Christ's justification is the reason man is saved: "[I]t is false that is just [man?] committeth so much as a veniall s[in]ne, in his best actions, much lesse, that he deserueth eternall death for the same." Perkins,"Chapter 51: Concerning the order of the causes of saluation according to the doctrine of the Church of Rome," From *A Golden Chaine* (1591) EEBO.

[107] "Psalms: 22:6," In *The Book of Common Prayer,* Ed. Brian Cummings (New York: Oxford UP, 2011), 482.

effects, the typical Christian typography. Consider, for example, Perkins' reference to worms in his tract on predestination:

> The elect alone do merit at Gods [hands] for they being alone partakers of Christs meritorious righteousnes, do also alone, it being accounted as their owne, merit euerlasting life of God. Now is not this an exceeding great fauour, that we being but wormes, should deserue euerlasting happines of so high a Maiesty?[108]

As worms are but lowly beasts unworthy of merit, humans too cannot merit salvation by their hands alone. As with Perkins' framing, Donne uses the worms throughout his sermons to emphasize the hierarchical state of man in relation to God. For example, Donne evokes worms often as lowly creatures linked to man to symbolize his own lowly status, as is the case in his sermon on Matthew 18: 7: "[W]e doe charge God foolishly; And shall we that are but *wormes*, but *silke-wormes*, but *glowworms* at best, chide God that hee hath made *slow-wormes*, and other venimous creeping things?"[109] Like a worm, we accuse God of favoring other base creatures over ourselves, a biological "pot-calling the kettle black" moment. When evoking this *Psalm* worm usage, a theologian assures the reader that God is attentive to the worm or that God is above reproach. Donne exemplifies the latter in his Matthew sermon: "[S]hall we that are nothing but boxes of poyson in our selves, reprove God for making Toads and Spiders in the world? shall we that are all discord, quarrell the harmony of his Creation, or his providence."[110] Worms, like toads and spiders, occupy the same hierarchal position as man, and to critique another human is paramount to a toad calling a spider wicked.

Another example where Donne emphasizes the hierarchal distance between man and God and emphasizes man's likeness to base creatures comes from Donne's April 12, 1618 sermon on Gen. 32.10: "[Man] might have been left in *the state of a worm*, or a plant, or a stone; what he was, when he was not so far, but onely in the vast and unexpressible, and unimaginable depth, of

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[108] William Perkins, *A C[hristian] and [plain]e treatise.*

[109] John Donne, "Sermon XVII: Preached at Lincolns Inne," *Fifty Sermons*, EEBO, 143.

[110] Ibid.

nothing at all."[111] The worm is a place holder within the natural hierarchy above mineral and plant but below angel and demon. Donne does not directly reference this usage in "Death's Duel"; however, the point of the quoted passage resonates in that man shares qualities with the other entities (whether worm, plant, or demon). But unlike these entities, he has the opportunity for redemption.

Donne's most overt usage of the worm in "Death's Duel" is distinct from other traditional usages in his sermonic corpus. In a traditional vein, Donne uses the worm in "Death's Duel" to symbolize corruption and/or despair; however, this usage shifts throughout the sermon, especially when he uses it to exculpate the individual and highlight God's agency in the redemptive process, a usage drawn from *Job.* For example, the passage cited from *Job* shows the worm as metonymic for corruption of the spirit and the decay of the flesh: "…in the *bitterness of his soul*, and never *eats with pleasure;* but *they lie down alike in the dust*, *and the worm covers them* [Job 21: 25-6]." In this instance, the worm is used literally to be the vehicle of decomposition ("lie down alike in the dust, and the worm covers them") and to symbolize anguish.The worms feed on the ash and dust which poisons and nourishes them: even Jacob is known by the worm which consumes him. This usage is like the *Psalms*' symbol and Donne uses it to evoke desperation; however, rather than simply characterize despair or a desperate condition, Donne uses a *Job* worm reference to limit or qualify the judgement of individuals, perhaps similar usage as Andrewes' desire to see earth as the grave: "*Make me thinke* long sleepe, to be the sleepe of death, and *my bed to be a grave*, whose stuffing is wormes, and covering dust."[112] As when Andrewes sought to 'thinke' sleep to '*be* death and a 'bed' to '*be* a grave,' Donne references *Job* to show God's comfort and assurance; he uses *Job*'s worms in an evocative way to highlight the eventual, eternal calling from the grave. What makes this

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[111] John Donne, "A Sermon Preached at Whitehall, Aprill 12. 1618," *Fifty Sermons*, EEBO, 174.

[112] Lancelot Andrewes, *A manuall of directions for the visitation of the sicke, with sweete meditations and prayers to be used in time of sicknesse: whereunto is added a short confession of the faith, with a forme of thankesgiving, and prayers for morning and evening,* EEBO (London: Printed by R. Cotes, 1642). Emphasis mine.

rhetorical conceit interesting is that Donne conflates death with the means by which the body is consumed, the worm:

> [The worms are] the mats and the carpets that lie under [the body], and there's the state and the canopy that changes over the greatest of the songs of men. Even those bodies that were the temples of the Holy Ghost come to this dilapidation, to ruin, to rubbish, to dust; even the Israel of the Lord, and Jacob himself, hath no other specification, no other denomination, but that *vermis Jacob*, thou worm of Jacob [Isa 41:14].[113]

The worms show that the grave ontologically reduces even the most holy individuals to their eventual state of deprivation or dilapidation. But saying that the 'worm' consumes the body might be a misnomer. Donne's earliest reference to the worm in "Death's Duel" evokes the *quod me nutrit me destruit* sentiment: "In the grave the worms do not kill us; we breed, and feed, and then kill those worms which we ourselves produce."[114] Although Donne does not provide an interpretive frame for his point, he is drawing on the early-modern belief that the body produced the worms that feed on it. He explains in an earlier sermon on Matthew 22:30:

> One humour of our dead body produces worms, and those worms suck and exhaust all other humour, and then all dies, and all dries, and molders into dust, and that dust is blowen into the River, & that puddled water tumbled into the sea, and that ebs and flows in infinite revolutions, and still, still God knows in what *Cabinet* every *seed-Pearle* lies, in what part of the world every graine of every mans dust lie.[115]

In "Death's Duel," Donne contextually explains that the parasitic relationship of the worm is analogous to human suffering; as we do not die from our pain and death, the worms do not directly die from consumption of the body, but rather are emboldened by it.

Theologians use the worm to analogize suffering, similar to Ames' description of Book V in *Conscience with the Power and Cases:*

> Hence it is, that a *Desperate Conscience* (fully representing all sinnes, together with their exceeding great and unpardonable guilt, and Gods feareful wrath abiding upon Sinners, with the endlesse misery that followes

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[113] Donne, "Death's Duel," 409. Emphasis mine.

[114] Ibid., 403.

[115] John Donne, "Sermon I." In *XXVI. Sermons*, 3.

> thereon) is Gods most powerfull meanes to torment the Reprobate; like unto a worme, that most sharply biteth and gnaweth their hearts for ever: *Mar. 9. 46.* their *Worme dyeth not.*[116]

A contemporary of Donne, William Ames draws from the New Testament a typical usage of the worm: the suffering of the desperate 'biteth and gnaweth their hearts for ever,' Noticeably, the sufferer's '*Worme dyeth not*.' For Donne, a similar figurative usage is evident in his sermons, and he draws a link between worms, corruption, and despair in his sermon on Lamentations 3.1: "Man carries the spawn and seed and egges of affliction in his own flesh, and his own thoughts make haste to hatch them, and to bring them up. We make all our worms snakes, all our snakes vipers, all our vipers dragons, by our murmuring."[117] As with Ames, the worm here is a self-induced affliction, thus the desperate individual exacerbates suffering like a spiritual wound. The noticeable difference between these similar usages is the temporal component of the suffering. Donne does not mark that the desperate thoughts last eternally, which fits with Donne's characterizing of despair as an earthly and idiosyncratic condition (for the saved, pain and suffering are not eternal). On the other hand, Ames reiterates twice that the desperate's suffering is eternal, and his opinion relies on a worm/suffering relationship typical for sixteenth-century English theologians.

Perkins provides an interesting foil to this discussion. Like Donne, Perkins uses the *Psalms* worm both as a hierarchical marker to show man his place in the chain of being and as a marker of anguish; but Perkins also uses it as a marker of adjudication: the symbol of God's punishment for reprobation. As a Calvinistic example, Perkins references this adjudicative symbolism when explicating Cain's story, explaining that worms destroy Cain's body as punishment for slaying Abel. However, the punishment of Galerius Maximinus is more fitting to exemplify Donne's contribution. Perkins cites the anecdote of Maximinus' death to show how God punishes a reprobate, in this case stemming from "an infinite number of wormes" within Maximinus' rotting

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[116] William Ames, *Conscience with the power and cases thereof Devided into V. bookes. Written by the godly and learned, William Ames, Doctor, and Professor of Divinity, in the famous University of Franeker in Friesland.Translated out of Latine into English, for more publique benefit* (London: W. Christiaens et al, 1639), EEBO, 33.

[117] John Donne, "Sermon XLVIII: Preached at St. Dunstan's," *Fifty Sermons,* EEBO, 448.

bowels. Because the smell of moldering flesh caused him to feel debilitating public shame, Maximinus confessed to God and his condition was bettered. When he confessed his sins, Maximinus' earthly rot and the worms that caused it were removed, and his suffering was ameliorated.[118] God punishes with the worm, and soothes by removing it.

In striking contradiction to both Ames and Perkins' usage, Donne disassociates the role of suffering from worms themselves, instead deemphasizing the figurative sense of the worm in "Death's Duel" *as affliction* or *corruption* in order to accentuate the literal sense of the worms' role in decomposing the body; if the worms are symbols of corruption, the literal sense is more significant and less jarring because it accentuates how the worms metonymically symbolize rebirth from death.

In short, like humans, worms also have to eat, and like other mortal life, their life must also end. While Ames' emphasis is on earthly afflictions' spiritual eschatological ramifications—i.e. atemporal anguish eats away at the body as a spiritual worm eternally eats away at the soul—Donne's grave worms exist in a symbiotic relationship with the body on which they feed, and thus are literally granted a lifetime by the body they consume. Consider Perkins' rotting bowels example. With Maximinus, the worms existed in a parasitic relationship by feeding off his sin. Once he confessed his sins, his body was cleansed; however, Ames deploys the worms figuratively and their relationship to Maximinus emphasizes his self-destructive sinning: worms are eating Maximinus' guts because he is still sinning. In this relationship, the worms can hardly be considered beneficial to the life of the individual. Conversely, Donne's grave worms nourish the person spiritually by eating away the body, not necessarily in a negative way and certainly not by signifying corruption themselves.

If the worms were figuratively corruption and literally eating it, they would be eating their own tail. Instead, the worms themselves turn to dust once the body has been consumed,

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[118] William Perkins, *A treatise tending vnto a declaration whether a man be in the estate of damnation or in the estate of grace and if he be in the first, how he may in time come out of it: if in the second, how he maie discerne it, and perseuere in the same to the end*. (London: R. Robinson, 1590), EEBO, 5.

indiscernibly blending with the dust of the body and leaving nothing but the material bones behind. Unlike Maximinus, who is identified by Perkins as a reprobate, Donne makes no evaluation of the individual in the grave. As death is shared by all, the putrefaction process is likewise shared. All lives, like the physical life of the body, end with the worms.

The worms' purification role is apparent elsewhere in the sermons and is important because it provides contextual information significant to understanding "Death's Duel." For example, the worms are essential to debates over earthly purity, exemplified when Donne explains the worm in reference to Job's purified flesh. Donne differentiates Job's purified flesh and Paul's worldly flesh: "*Iobs* flesh can see God, and Pauls cannot; because the flesh that *Iob* speakes of hath overcome the destruction of skin and body by wormes in the grave, and so is mellowed and prepared for the sight of God in heaven."[119] Job's ability to see God, therefore, lies in his shedding of a worldly condition via the purification of the 'wormes in the grave,' commonly evoked at the time as the mortification of the flesh.

Donne's mortification reference is odd, especially in that it involves worms, because Job *is not dead* when it is completed. In terms of the plot of *Job*, however, Donne's assessment makes sense. The fact that *The Book of Job* ends with a trial of sorts where Job is able to see God is justifiable by the purification via the worms *on earth*; yet, the example of Job is an outlier and Donne uses it highlight how the purification process and mortification benefit the individual alone. Rather than stop at either a earthly state (Job's purified body) or annihilation (death is ubiquitous and God's subsuming of the individual), Donne pushes his anagogic point beyond the grave.

Recalling Donne's earlier point about universal death, all lives must go through a second death; the bodies, once put into the ground, molder. The remains blend with the dust so that even the bones left behind can only speak to an unmarked, untestifiable life. In quoting Ezekiel 37:1 (the episode of the 'dry bones'), Donne ponders whether the human bones discovered in the grave

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[119] Donne, "Sermon XV," 127.

—"visible" after death—were a testament of life at all: "Can this thing live?"[120] He answers the question by pointing to the disconnect between the bones and the complexity of the human body in life. By noting the absent sinews in the decomposed body, metonymically Donne explains that those physical aspects which compose the human physical life are lost in the grave. Those viewing the grave lose the dead person's individualism, and, for these viewers, when the body is lost, so is the soul and its individuality; and yet, for Donne, the individual's identity is safe. Still, communal concern is obvious: Can we tell from these bones whether he or she was saved? No, but if Donne were to stop here, our sense of fatalism would be all too apparent: a step into the grave is a step into oblivion, into annihilation, into dust. However, while we stare into the void, Donne exculpates the individual from our egocentric concerns. In showing the fallibility of communal interest in his/her afterlife, Donne accentuates the divine discernment of God, which becomes apparent only to the individual when he or she is recomposed from dust into his or herself again. Though the individual is lost to us, he or she is not to God.

Since we cannot know the fate of the individual, I want to return to the graveside where Donne has taken his laity. Noticeably, the feeling conjured at the grave is akin to despair: What can we make of these bones and what do they mean to us? This question resonates throughout the sermon and is fundamental to Donne's larger sermonic goal. Like his continual motif of Christ's crucifixion, Donne has taken his laity to the grave to learn of God's promise through suffering.

The final section of "Death's Duel" pertains to God's promise to an individual believer, perhaps as a type of answer for Donne's unasked inquiries. In this section, Donne shows despair as a communal affliction, the byproduct of the worms' purification process:

> But in *this death of incineration and dispersion of dust*, we see nothing that we can call that man's. If we say, can this dust live? perchance it cannot; it may be the mere dust of the earth, which never did live, nor never shall. It *may be the dust of that man's worms* which did live, but shall no more. It may be the dust of another man, that concerns not him of whom it is asked. This death of incineration and dispersion is, to natural reason, the most irrecoverable death of all.[121]

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[120] Donne, "Death's Duel," 409.

[121] Donne, "Death's Duel," 409. Emphasis mine.

For those viewing the grave, the individual believer is nothing, just the dust of the body intermingled with the prosaic dust of earth and worm; more so, the individualism—so long felt on earth—is lost in the universalism of the grave. We cannot see the individual reconstituted with God, but Donne is sensitive to those of his laity who followed him to the graveside. Evoking his famous passage from *Devotions*, Donne reinforces the ubiquitous nature of death and the loss of individualism after death: "It may be the dust of another man, that concerns not him of whom it is asked."[122] But, in the dust, voyeurs see only themselves, the abyssal reflection of empty, endless, and final death. In what is perhaps the most powerful image of the sermon, Donne has brought us all to view our own dust and bones, confronted us with the unknowable oblivion that is death, and said—and I am paraphrasing—"Do not judge because this is you."

Although he teeters on absolutist mysticism, evoking tenets of mystical annihilation in particular,[123] Donne reiterates posthumous individualism in order to ward off the despair evoked by absolutism. He does this by accentuating God's unseen agency in differentiating the meaningless, residual dust back into a reanimated form. This reiteration governs how far inquiries in death can go: "[B]y *recompacting this dust into the same body*, and reanimating t*he same body with the same soul*, [God] shall in a blessed and glorious resurrection […] establish *me* into a life that shall last as long as the Lord of Life himself."[124] Donne's usage of the first person is deployed intentionally; it is used throughout the sermons and *Devotions* as a means of reiterating the self-awareness and self-assurance through grave circumstances, and it is not an accident that Donne reiterates that the same dead body, the same pile of dust, is reanimated as *me* in the afterlife: it is his ward against despair, perhaps his own.

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[122] Ibid.

[123] Mysticism, as Evelyn Underhill explains, "is non-individualistic," implying "the abolition of individuality"—that is, the "I, Me, Mine." Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness,* Vol. 8 (New York: Aeterna Press, 2015), 71.

[124] Ibid. Emphasis Mine.

Again, despair is a maligned way of seeing God's role and powers. Donne focuses his laity's gaze on his or her personal reanimation ('[God shall] establish me') and conditions him or her to evaluate the grave by looking beyond the material evidence and seeing the eventual afterlife; he asks them to look behind the veil of annihilation, to see beyond sight. This interpretation is most apparent in Donne's inversion of *Psalms* 139:14 on which this explanation is based: "My bones are not hid from thee: though I be made secretly, and fashioned beneath in the earth."[125] When focused on the limited visible evidence—the dust and bones of the grave—human eyes can no more discern what *is* from what *was*; thus, the laity cannot predict what will be for another, a statement in stark contrast to Donne's personal assertiveness of his own salvation: Not 'God could' or 'God may,' but 'God *shall establish me* into a life that shall last as long as the Lord of Life himself.' With such a policy statement, how can one doubt salvation?

In emphasizing the recomposition of the body, Donne subtly dismisses the figurative use of the worm and its symbolic anchoring in despair and affliction. Where is despair? Affliction? Where is the earthly suffering of torment eternal, internalized within the body and externalized by those physical, extrinsic markers of reprobation? Donne has thoroughly shown these external, earthly markers as visible markers of earthly life and affliction; however, posthumously there is nothing to mark them. Despair has left no marks upon the bones and dust. Instead the bones are benevolent markers of God's continual support through earthly tribulation. In establishing external markers as pointless to the afterlife, Donne explains our own fears and desperate leanings. This fear is evident when Donne juxtaposes a doctor's art and the art of presagition. While the doctor's art allows him to read physical signs of affliction, the art of presagition is less successful at discerning a human's salvation:

> Those indications which the physicians receive, and those presagition which they give for death or recovery in the patient, they receive and they give out on the ground and rules of the art. But we have no such rule or

[125] "Psalms 139. 14" In *The Book of Common Prayer*, 602.

> art to give a presagition of spiritual death and damnation of any such indication as we see in any dying man; *we see often enough to be sorry, but not to despair*.[126]

Related to prognostication, spiritual presagition is when one tries to determine from visible cues the status of election for another. Donne juxtaposes it with the physician's observations of the individual in his or her death bed. Like a doctor triaging, we guess at a dying man's chance at salvation.

Donne may be drawing here on the typical practice of visitation, where priests visited the household to offer comfort, assessment, and, if necessary, last rites to the dying. For example, Andrewes' *Manuel for Visitations* prescribes inquiries into the mental faculties, including soundness of mind and memory, whether the patient is "unquiet," "cheereful of dej[ection]," and whether he or she has 'found comfort.'[127] For both spiritual and medical physicians, the task involves assessing the 'thinking' and 'comfort' of the patient as well as discerning the afflictions that affect both.

While Donne contrasts a physical physician with the spiritual one, his argument is aimed only minimally at the physician, the patient, or the relationship between the two. Instead, as was the case with the graveside voyeurs, Donne implicates those involved with the physicians and the sufferers' experiences, perhaps recalling the deathbed scene from "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning": "As virtuous men pass mildly away,/ And whisper to their souls to go,/ Whilst *some of their sad friends do say/ The breath goes now, and some say, No*."[128] In emphasizing that 'sad friends' watch 'virtuous men' pass away, Donne is recalling the experience of the first death ('virtuous' qualifies 'men' but also souls' in the next line by proxy and implies their certitude of salvation). Donne is creating a scene or theatre for death, drawing on the social gatherings for the dying. Donne prescribes that, while it is natural to feel sorry for one undergoing physical death, we

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[126] Donne, "Death's Duel," 410.

[127] Andrewes, *A manuall of directions for the visitation of the sick.*

[128] John Donne, "A Valediction Forbidding Morning," In *The Complete English Poems*, Ed. A.J. Smith, 84-85 (New York: Penguin, 1971), ll. 1-4. Emphasis mine.

should not despair for them: 'we see often [in another's death] enough to be sorry, but not to despair.'

In this instance, Donne evokes a notion of communal despair, where an individual feels despair on behalf of another. When the desperate take as their object another's salvation, the despair they feel is slightly different from how I have consistently used it. In essence, the reference is only superficially connected to the religious despair; however, there is a sense unique from some of the evaluative rhetoric I have explored in this article. Donne frames evaluation negatively, and normally moves to dismiss it if not outright condemn it; however, he engages with this presagition scene to encourage and console the sad friends, not criticize them. The individual before you, he implies, is not beyond hope and, thus, neither are you. Donne reinforces this concern by immediately shifting his focus at this part of the sermon away from despair, affliction, and the grave, to discussing Christ's sacrifice for all.

Donne does not conclude his sermon by discussing the despair of others or an overwhelming sadness at the thought of their damnation; instead, he returns to the community that began his sermon. In referencing Christ's martyrdom on behalf of others, Donne reiterates the need for those in attendance to consider themselves and their actions toward others. In his idiosyncratic yet pragmatic way, Donne's lofty message is encapsulated by a single sentence: "Discourses of religion should not be out of curiosity, but to edification."[129] After edifying for the congregation the moldering process of the grave and the relationship of the believer to the worm, Donne turns to discuss abstractly the earthly moment. When comparing earthly affliction and the suffering of Christ, can the laity claim to have undergone the same spiritual investigation and self-scrutiny necessary for salvation?

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[129] Donne, "Death's Duel," 414.

> Hast thou been content to come to this inquisition, this examination, this agitation, this cribration[130], this pursuit of thy conscience; to sift it, to follow it from the winds of thy youth to thy present sins, from the sins of thy bed to thy sins of thy board, and from the substance to the circumstance of thy sins.[131]

Donne emphasizes the individual's need to self-scrutinize, evoking right living atypical of the art of dying: "Hast thou gone about to redeem thy sins, by fasting, by alms, by disciplines and mortifications, in the way of satisfaction to the justice of God? That will not serve, that's not the right way."[132] The art of dying is performative, a show to display one's preparation for the end; however, Donne evokes a tension between those outward signs the community can attest to (i.e. mortification of the individual believer) and those the community cannot perceive, mainly the marks of sacrifice Christ earned during his crucifixion (also a spectacle of martyrdom): "There now hangs that sacred body upon the cross, re-baptized in his own tears and sweat, and embalmed his own blood alive."[133] In evoking Christ's crucified image, Donne sabotages the need to scrutinize another by evoking the traditional image of self-sacrifice: Can you compare yourself to Christ?

Throughout his sermon, Donne's imagery largely draws on the moldering process and the worms that consume the buried body; yet, his final image is of Christ's broken form on the cross, not buried in the tomb or resurrected from the grave, but visibly and voluntarily crucified. He frames the crucifix spectacle in terms of the "blessed dependency" of humans on God by highlighting again that humans cannot be saved by their own works alone, but must be redeemed by the voluntary grace of God: "That Son of God […] delivers that soul […] by a *new way*, a voluntary emission of it into his Father's hands."[134] As a symbol of his larger sermonic project,

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[130] The *OED* defines *cribration* as 'sifting,' coming from the verb *cribrate*, "to sift." Donne uses this to figuratively show how intentional the 'pursuit of thy conscience' must be: One must physical sift through one's faults. "cri'bration, n," *OED* Online (Oxford University Press: March 2018).

[131] Donne, "Death's Duel," 414.

[132] Ibid., 416.

[133] Ibid.

[134] Ibid.

Donne uses the traditional sight of Christ's form to invite self-scrutiny and dismiss communal judgment.

Much of Donne's final sermon is invested in the tension between the community, its judgement of the individual believer, the physical fate of the believer, and the dependence of humans on conditional election. I have examined this much-read sermon not just in terms of his overall argument but rather in its reliance on despair-like qualifiers to achieve its end. As a major example, I show that Donne draws heavily on the worms from *Psalms* and *The Book of Job* in order to distance the communal evaluation of the individual, including when Donne critiques Calvin's notion of reprobation by critiquing the external signs of suffering inherent to it. His final goal—and what might be said to be the core to his overall sermonic enterprise—is to comfort those 'sad friends' gathered around their dying friend and to turn the need for communal evaluation away from individual and on to the voyeur via self-scrutiny.

IV: "Reproach no man": Limitations of Judgment

As discussed in sections two and three of this chapter, a community's concern with desperate salvation is a theological quagmire. In section three, I explain that it is an inquiry that cannot be answered on earth. In this final section, I explore how Donne limits rhetorical, eschatological and soteriological questions to stifle communal judgement.

Donne acknowledges that the human mind is most interested in repentance in moments of suffering, but it is during such moments that mental faculties are most compromised. For suffering individuals—whether it be from physical, mental, or spiritual affliction— the danger is a lack of true repentance and the will or fortitude to ask honestly for it. Donne states in his sermon at St. Dunstan's: "[W]e suspect wills that are made of temporal goods in that state [of suffering], at the last gaspe, and shall we think a Man to be *compos mentis*, of a perfect understanding for the

bequeathing of his Soule at his last gaspe?" [135] Donne's use of *compos mentis* is significant. In labeling the actions of a desperate man completely sane, the ramification for despair is *willed* damnation; however, Donne casts doubt on the consequence of the desperate's actions by critiquing the mental faculties of the desperate: we doubt the desire for salvation, but not the will to commit self-murder? His reasoning is firmly situated in a religious framework, though the distinction may be unfair to Donne's analysis of the dynamic redemptive process, a process which begins to complicate the ramifications for suicide/self-murder within and without the religious community.

Donne questions the rational capacity of the soul based on how distant the soul is from the self, creating a type of paradox not unlike contemporary theorization of depression: despair is a condition where the self is removed from the self. This is most notable in how despair affects the faculties of the mind, such as memory. In a sermon on *Psalms* 38.3, Donne emphasizes that memory and remembrance are significant mental faculties to both salvation and despair. If salvation is the art of memory, Donne shows that despair separates the individual from his/herself by poisoning memory: "But in *sicknesse*, I lack my *self […],* as the greatest misery of war, is, when our own Country is made the seat of war, so is it of *affliction*, when *mine own Body* is made the subject thereof."[136] In the loss of the self, Donne emphasizes that the value of God's blessings—that is, how much the individual values it— is also removed by the sickness. Likewise, the capacity to reason in such a state is removed. How can we say one is completely sane with the loss of significant mental faculties, like memory?

Like the affliction, the cure is also reliant on memory. The balm for this despair is to "Remember thy selfe." However, this prescription is qualified by such a task's difficultly: "There may be enough in remembering our selves; but sometimes, that's the hardest of all; many times we are

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[135] Donne, "Sermon Preached at Saint Dunstan's, 1624." 18. For more detail on the overlap between legalistic and religious discourse related to suicide, see Chapter 4 on Burton.

[136] Donne, "Sermon XX," 166.

farthest off from ourselves; most forgetful of our selves." Here, the circular nature of despair is evident. "Being lock'd up in a close prison, of multiplied calamities," the prescription to turn "the key" and restore the desperate "to liberty" is contingent on the individual's ability to "*remember.*" Yet, when the memory faculty has been corrupted by despair, the desperate "wilt see" that his or her affliction "is *because of [his or her] sins.*" Instead of a balm, the memory evokes judgement in their memory.

With an afflicted memory, the self is divided into the *redeemed self* and the *condemned, desperate self*, with the reunification impossible as long as the memory of judgement remains. As the object of its self-condemnation, the self is devoid of the actual faculties *necessary* to return. Where is the will and fortitude to remember a valued, redeemed self when despair has tainted the mind? With memory corrupted, the self-corrective agency implied in 'turning the key to salvation' is entirely contingent on the desperate's returning of control to his or her reasonable self.[137]

To be clear, Donne faults the desperate, specifically in how they mistakenly see God's wrath as toward them instead of their sin. God is judging sin, not the desperate. The deviation here is significant. For the desperate, the prescription in sickness to recall for oneself the mercy of God is entirely contingent on the nature of the desperate as *compos mentis*. We should recall that, while he criticizes their power struggle with God, Donne uses the desperate here as an extreme example of how sin impairs salvation, indicating that, while the object of God's anger is not the individual but rather the sin itself, sin and affliction impede the process of salvation.

As the receptacle for sin, the individual functions as a metonymic stand-in for the community at large: "…wee consider sinfull man, in himself, and so all is desperate."[138] As a communal lesson, Donne uses the individual sinner to give voice to the difficulties and paradoxical logic of despair; however, the desperate in the sermons are used as a vehicle to encourage comfort, and therefore, have an anagogic significance beyond the literal problem of

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[137] Ibid., 165.

[138] Ibid., 170.

despair. Donne uses them anagogically to exemplify God's forgiveness and his judgement. Donne's tone and language support this differentiation, and he never condemns the desperate individual but rather qualifies the suffering as a doctrinal misunderstanding of God, one with a reciprocal mental affliction. In essence, there is an unresolvable cycle of doctrinal misunderstanding, the consequential despair, the church's prescriptive salve for despair, and despair's mental impact. This desperate cycle motivates Donne's reproach of the community and his obvious motivation to excuse the desperate from judgement.

Donne limits rhetorical, eschatological and soteriological questions to stifle communal judgement. For example, the crucified thief is treated as the object of soteriological inquiry, a way of asking questions of others that cannot be answered. Can we know how redeemed the thief was? Did the thief die and go to heaven? The inquiry is pointless for the thief, who would receive divine judgement away from prying eyes. It is thus also pointless for the inquiring minds, but Donne is careful in the latter assertion. Spoken in the first person, Donne's reproach is of himself instead of his audience directly: "I am not sure [the thief] is damned, so I am not sure he is saved, no more sure of one then of the other."[139] In an earlier 1617 sermon on Luke, Donne clarifies in more detail. As Christian symbols go, the "Theeves" are placed as "a way of driving the greater comfort" or "greater assurance." Crucified beside Christ, they are an object of the "mercy of God" and not to test "the wit of Man." While tradition holds that one thief is condemned and the other damned, Donne cautions the audience that "We have no impression, no direction of the time, when his conversion was wrought," or the "speed and powerfull working of this Grace." We are asking the wrong questions of these symbols; they are meant to reassure, not to test.[140]

In his long 1617 discussion of the thief, Donne warns him of the limitations of human inquiry by explaining how the desperate tend to be their own worse judges:

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[139] Donne, "Sermon Preached at Saint Dunstan's, 1624," 18.

[140] Ibid., 7.

> When the fear of God had wrought upon himself, then he comes to his fellow, *Nonne tu times?* fearest not thou? First, *Nonne tu?* We have not that advantage over our auditory [as Christ], which he had over his, to know that in every particular man, there is some reason why he should be more afraid of Gods judgements then another man. But every particular man, who is acquainted with his own history, may be such a Preacher to himself, and ask himself *Nonne tu,* hast not thou more reason to stand in fear of God then any other man, for any thing that thou knowest? Knowest thou any man so deeply indebted to God, so far behind-hand with God, so much in danger of his executions as thou art? Thou knowest not his colluctations before he fell, nor his Repentances since: when thou hearest S. Paul say, *Quorum maximus,* hadst not thou need say, *Nonne tu?*[141]

Self-scrutiny and memory are necessities of salvation, and yet are also the tools by which the desperate condemn themselves. The implication is that "every particular man" who is "acquainted with his own history" has the ability to act as "a Preacher to himself," and yet, by asking "*Nonne tu,*" the religious agent is meant, to evoke fear: "Knowest thou any man so deeply indebted to God, so far behind-hand with God, so much in danger of his executions as thou art?"[142]

Using the crucified thief, Donne asserts a flat hierarchy to redemption, explaining that, because all individuals occupy the same soteriological potential, there is no hierarchy of salvation amongst earthly sinners: "In those that are damned before, we are damned in Effige; such as we are, are damned." If not for the intervention of God's mercy—"*Medius inter personas divinas*"—then all would be damned; therefore, all individual believers should strive to bolster each other. Donne's juxtaposition of the two questions, "Nonne tu times" and "Nonne tu," reiterates this theological belief: "…nothing give the faithful servants of God a greater encouragement that their labors shall prosper upon others, then a consideration of their own case, & an acknowledgment what God hath done for theirs souls."[143] The difference in the two questions is the prescription on how one should approach God, inquiring after another's receptive possibility ('Nonne tu?') rather than inquiring another's fear ('Nonne tu times?'). And yet, since we are all "under the same condemnation," the prescription of fear toward God seems paradoxically conflated within the

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[141] John Donne, "A Lent-SERMON Preached at WHITE-HALL, *February* 20. 1617. Sermon I," In *XXVI Sermons (Never Before Publish'd) PREACHED BY THAT Learned and Reverend DIVINE John Donne*, EEBO, 11.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

Nonne tu question. Therefore, as we all fear, we are all assured: "Thou hast no better a life then I, thou art no farther from thy death then I; and the consideration of my condemnation, hath brought me to fear God: why shouldn't not thou feare, being under the same condemnation?"[144]

In inquiring whether the crucified thief is saved, Donne explores how the self-incriminating logic of the desperate and the community's evaluative condemnation of others is disconnected. This deviation appears shortly after Donne's thief discussion. In analogizing the afterlife, Donne engages with a drowning individual in the midst of desperation: "*Quid mihi*, sayes that man, who looked upon the Rainbow when he was ready to drown; though God have promised not to drown the world, what's that to me, if I must drown? I must be bold to say to thee, *Quid tibi*?" The analogy is straight-forward: Awash in sin and drowning in doubt, the individual inquires into God's promise of eternal life. But, like his conflation of fear and assurance above, Donne's logic is that despair is a shared earthly condition, meaning that all on earth are drowning, not just a specific individual: all are in despair. The desperate, however, are aware of their drowning. The drowning man is aware, and thus is unlike the rest of the drowning individuals. He is like the speaker in *Devotions* who hears the bell and knows it tolls for him: "The bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit again, yet from that minute that the occasion wrought up him, he is united to God."[145] But the drowning man is individualized by desperation, not unified with God by the bell. The distance between God and man is obvious when the drowning man looks to the heavens and asks, "What of me?" The universalism of drowning is not the universalism of the tolling bell.

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[144] Ibid., 14. The evocation seems to address the speaker's own inquiry in the famous Chapter 17 of *Devotions*: "As therefore the *Bell* that rings to a *Sermon*, calls not upon the *Preacher* onely, but upon the *Congregation* to come; so this *Bell* calls us all: but how much more mee, who am brought so neere the *doore* by this *sicknesse*" (97).

[145] Donne, "Chapter 17," In *Devotions,* 97.

The man awash in the sea is a common image, often exhibiting the isolation of the individual from others. The on-going Biblical trope accentuates that God acts as an anchoring point. For example, Donne uses the image in his sermon on 1 Corinthians 15.50:

> That every man that is encompassed within a Sea of calamities in his estate, with a Sea of diseases in his body, with a Sea of scruples in his understanding, with a Sea of transgressions in his conscience, with a Sea of sinking and swallowing in the sadnesse of spirit, may yet open his eyes above water, and find a place in the Arke above all these, a recourse to God, and joy in him…[146]

Evoking the Great Flood as a setting, the drowning man analogy is told from the perspective of a drowning individual, metonymizing earthly suffering via the desperate man. The first-person perspective individualizes suffering. In the drowning man narrative, individuality lies in how the desperate struggle to escape from earthly despair; the experience of exclusion creates the individuality, in part breaking with the universalism of the bell. The latter flood reference works to symbolize desperate suffering only in so far as it separates the individual from God, thus creating an anagogic symbol of the desperate condition via exclusion from unification. The simplistic difference is that the desperate man is aware of his condition and suffers as a victim of God's exclusion from universal grace. Therefore, the anagogic point of the drowning story pertains less to the pervasive nature of despair or the universalism of suffering. Instead, the point is to establish despair as an interpretive paradigm.

In order to frame the drowning man's interpretative paradigm, Donne returns to his rhetorical question strategy. In this example, the drowning man can only see his victimization: "Quid *mihi,*" "What's that [promise] to me?" If God promised to spare the world from another flood, why am I drowning? Here the drowning man explicitly indicts God for breaking his promise —symbolized by the rainbow— not to wipe out humanity with another deluge. The water conceptualizes despair both figuratively and literally via suffocation: one can figuratively suffocate

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[146] John Donne, "Sermon XV: Preached at Lincolns Inne," In *Fifty Sermons*, EEBO, 124-5.

in despair, but the somatic experience involves a humoral drowning of the mental faculties.[147] While the word 'despair' does not appear in the analogy, the evocation is clear through the suffocation of the man, his exclusion from God's promise, and the drowning nature of his desperate condition.

As an interpretive paradigm, despair works to show that it is itself a way of seeing. For example, anagogically, the rainbow symbolizes a communal promise; and yet, the drowning man feels excluded from this group assurance because he *is drowning*; Victimized by God's abandonment, the drowning man looks on the rainbow's reassurance—God has promised not to drown you—and sees only a promise to others, ignoring the prescribed interpretation in order to re-symbolize the rainbow as a symbol of exclusion. This exclusion logic is inverted by Donne when the question becomes *Quid tibi,* "What's that to you?" The inquiry is difficult to parse, as *tibi* is singular and does not directly indict the audience, but the question is clearly meant to be a prescribed self-indictment, similar to the *Nonne tu* discussion above. To whom is Donne referring with *Quid tibi*?

The question operates on several levels. On one level, Donne uses the drowning man's self-awareness and self-focus to show the desperate as an object of Gods' wrath, drawing on the desperate struggle toward God's mercy. There is another level of interpretation that allows Donne to accuse the community of holding similar thoughts as the drowning man: "Dost not thou fear, who knowest more by thy self."[148] While "*Quid tibi*" functions to vocalize the drowning man's inquiry of God, accusing God of abandonment, Donne's use of *bold* to describe himself signals to the audience that he is indicting their voyeurism on another semantic level, thus shifting the object of soteriological inquiry from God and the drowning man to the audience's personal state of salvation.

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[147] The homeopathic understanding of the body may contribute to the aptness of this image. As a sub-sect of melancholy, despair is materially the overwhelming of the body by black bile; the internal balance is literally drowned by melancholy. See Chapter IV for more on this.

[148] Ibid.

As discussed in the Shakespeare chapter, despair creates a type of solipsism in its suffering, and the desperate drowning man himself feels isolated because he focuses on his own suffering. He is well aware of his earthly plight and this awareness causes him to fault God; however, as a sermonic symbol that operates also on figurative level, the drowning man represents a false object, a type of eschatological red herring; Donne uses the red herring as a warning to his audience that they are as mistaken as the drowning man is focusing on the wrong object. The focus of judgement should be sin, not the afflicted.

By using the ambiguity of *tibi,* Donne is able to use the drowning man to voice desperate logic and refocus eschatological inquiry away from the drowning man. Donne's 'bold' question, *Quid tibi*, thus resonates with his audience akin to the *Nonne tu*i, "What's that to you?" Who is more aware of my own sins than I am myself? By inquiring into the state of another's judgement, Donne's rhetorical questioning inverts the object of inquiry. This inversion shifts judgement away from the object of communal voyeurism, away from the desperate, by indicting the evaluating voyeur: "Knowest thou any man so deeply indebted to God, so far behind-hand with God, so much in danger of his executions as thou art?"[149] In vocalizing the desperate paradigm, Donne individualizes the suffering of the drowning man so as to indict the audience themselves: we are all awash in sin and calamity, but some of us look to the rainbow and see assurance, and some look to the rainbow and see abandonment. In judging the drowning man, the communal object is not God or his promise, but instead the exclusion of another.

Throughout the sermon, Donne seeks to displace the *need to inquire* from the *knowledge of sin*, warning that it is only after death that everyone will know everyone else's sin: "all the *sins* of all, shall be manifested to all; even those secret sinfull *thoughts* that never came out of the heart."[150] The inward secrecy of the individual, those hidden 'sinfull thoughts' that tempt the sinner into delight or despair, will be known, eradicating the need to inquire. Until then, the knowledge of

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[149] Ibid.

[150] John Donne, "Sermon XV: Preached at Lincolns Inne," In *Fifty Sermons,* 120.

one's redeemed status manifests via the symbols of God's assurance, the rainbow that stands for eventual salvation. For Donne, these symbols must also ward against a voyeuristic community: "… it is a deep uncharitableness, to reproach any man, of sins formerly repented; and a deep uncharitablenesse not to beleeve, that he whom thou sees at *Communion*, hath repented his former sins; Reproach no man…" Condemnation can only come "after you hast seen him *receive* [the eucharist], with last years sins; except thou have good evidence of his *Hypocrisie* then, or of his *Relapsing* after."[151] In positively framing the individual believer (i.e. going to communion is evidence of redemption) and negatively framing the voyeur (i.e. do not judge without a relapse into sin), Donne concludes his use of the desperate: If we focus on criticizing others, we cannot focus on God.

"He's not of none, nor worst, that seeks the best:"[152] Conclusion

For those viewing or judging the suffering of the desperate, Donne warns that the knowledge of the desperate's suffering belongs with God, not to the voyeurs themselves. In both his final sermon, "Death's Duel," as well as *Biathanatos*, Donne urges the acceptance of others' deaths without condemnation, even in cases of despair and self-homicide. The certitude of potential salvation exists even for those who have died a "sudden death," presumably those desperate individuals who end their life via self-murder: "God governs not by examples but by rules, and therefore make no ill conclusion upon *sudden death* nor upon *distempers* neither, though perchance accompanied with some words of diffidence and distrust in the mercies of God."[153] The echoing of despair is embedded in the term distempered[154] and in the 'sudden death,'

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[151] Ibid.

[152] John Donne, "Satire III," In *The Complete English Poems*, Ed. A.J. Smith (New York: Penguin, 1971).

[153] Ibid., 410-1. Emphasis Mine.

[154] The *OED* defines *distemper* in this 17th-century usage as the "Deranged or disordered condition of the body or mind (formerly regarded as due to disordered state of the humours); ill health, illness, disease." "distemper, n.1." *OED* Online. March 2015 (Oxford UP).

especially as Donne distanced it from death in war. In this, the mental state of the desperate *in the moment* does not testify to either the past redemption or the future salvation.

Even in clear-cut examples of self-murder, human certainty of salvation or damnation is unattainable. In these instances it is difficult to argue that despair—itself a potential threat for any individual believer—is a direct result of God, or that the acts done in despair result in a permanent exclusion from grace itself. In attacking the *compos mentis* discussion, Donne indirectly defends the desperate as *non compos mentis*, done without reason. Regardless of social judgement attached to the the desperate—their will, action, the need to punish and judge them, etc.—Donne warns that the end is beyond human cognition. Instead, we should assume that despair, like salvation, is possible for all.

Chapter IV

"Quod cuiquam contigit, cuivis potest":
Robert Burton and the Irrationality of Despair

In his *Anatomy of Melancholy,* Robert Burton cites the Dutch physician Pieter von Foreest (Petrus Forestus) to provide a story of two melancholy brothers.[1] In the story, the two brothers suffer from despair, eventually making "away with themselves" to alleviate their suffering. Because of their self-murders, the two brothers were "censured to be infamously buried," and their burial was used as a symbol to "terrify others," thereby deterring would-be self-murderers from following suit.[2] Burton's readers would be familiar with this response to suicide, even if they were unaware of Foreest's Dutch context. Suicide was condemned legally and religiously; thus, these brothers were to be displayed somewhere publicly, perhaps along a road or alleyway ("out of Cristian buriall"), with "a stake" driven through their chests.[3]

According to the 1823 Burial of Suicide Act, the stigmatizing of the suicide's body involved the public staking of the suicide on the king's highway, though generally the act occurred at a local crossroads. Folk belief held that this four-way roadway, rather than along a highway, prevented "the ghost from walking" and "diffused the evil influence of the body in several different directions," thereby "rendering it less harmful."[4] Historian Robert Halliday, however, explains that early-modern sources, like John Weever in *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, were less interested in the

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[1] Burton is citing Forestus' *Observationum et Curationum Medicinaliumi*.

[2] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), 1.4.1: 439. Unless otherwise noted, all citations come from the sixth edition.

[3] Ibid., fn. z.

[4] Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern Europe* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 73.

ghostly nature of suicide, instead emphasizing how the body symbolizes a warning to the desperate, a means of frightening others away from suicide[5]:

> And we vse to bury such as lay violent hands vpon themselues, in or neare to the high wayes, with a stake thrust through their bodies, *to terrifie all passengers*, by that so *infamous and reproachfull a buriall*; not to make such their finall passage out of this present world.[6]

In his dubious language, Burton echoes Weever's sentiment and evokes the use of suicides as a demonstrative symbol, a means to 'terrify others' away from suicide. How effective this symbol was is probably impossible to determine, as Paul Seever says: "The deterrent effect, if any, as with most sanctions against criminalization, is hard to measure." Seever does emphasize that the "bizarre and ancient custom of [suicide] interment" was to "dramatize the horror of the act [of suicide] and to deter similar acts by jeopardizing the survival of the suicide's family."[7] Both the horror of suicide and the 'jeopardizing' of the family are apparent in Burton's text, so much so that Burton quickly concludes the narrative by moving into an anxious, hypothetical inquiry into the brothers' fates. By explicitly discussing the suicides as a symbol, Burton engages with an arguable moment in which religious and legal institutions dogmatically enforced the punishment of suicide; however, as a member of the clergy, Burton's sensitivity shows at least an awareness of how complicated suicide and despair were in the early-modern mind, when social perspectives could be more complicated than we often give them credit.

Sensitive as he may be to such imagery, Burton quickly moves from reporting the anecdote to reframing it, shifting the importance of the brothers' suicides to show the church/state's leniency toward the act. What matters most is the second part of the passage. Burton tells us

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[5] Robert Halliday, "The Roadside Burial of Suicides: An East Anglian Study," *Folklore* 121:1 (March 20, 2010): 82. For researchers of suicide, there is some debate over how often staking occurred, and Halliday's research is significant in that it focuses on separating folklore from practice. For example, Halliday explores how the bodies of suicides became memorialized, including serving as boundary markers between properties long after the bodies were removed.

[6] John Weever, "CHAP. V. The reasons wherefore so many haue made their owne Monuments in their life-time," in *Ancient Funerall Monuments* (London: Thomas Harper, 1631). Emphasis mine.

[7] Paul Seaver, "Suicide and the Vicar General in London," in *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jeffrey R. Watt (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004), 27.

that, "upon farther examination of their misery and madness, the censure is revoked, and {the brothers} are solemnly interred…" Burton's passive structure is telling: who lifted the censure and why? Burton does not provide the answer and, given that the context is Dutch, Burton might have purposely omitted the details to make the narrative more applicable to his English readers. The context and system to which Burton is invested is English, and the use of the two brothers fits well with his overall didactic project: increasing awareness of those suffering from melancholy (in this case, despair).

Notice that, while his view shifts shortly after, Burton concludes the brothers' narrative with a focus on the deceased's interment: "…they are solemnly interred…" In this short conclusion, Burton tells his readers all they need to know of the souls of the brothers, the rights of their families, and also the brothers' legacy as Christians. As Halliday points out, the treatment of the body is meant as a punishment both to the legacy of the person and the corporal form of the body:

> Funeral rites and graves are statements of how people should be remembered, while churchyards lay the dead to rest in the community. Interment in a remote, anonymous grave without a funeral was a casting-out: *the person no longer belonged to society.*[8]. *It erased all memory of the self-murderer, and warned others that this fate awaited them too, if they were tempted to end their life.* While it is hard to avoid theorising that driving a stake through the body was to stop the suicide's ghost rising, this was also an extra punishment and deterrent.[9]

In Burton's borrowed anecdote, the interment then shows not just that the brothers were not staked, but that were buried on consecrated ground, their property protected, their souls communally accepted; yet, as with almost all of Burton's anecdotes, there is a textual lacuna between the point of the anecdote and Burton's use of it.

Burton's goal is to mediate the stigma of despair by reframing the reader's view of the desperate. In order to achieve this end, Burton uses a type of lacuna here to break up the narrative and his commentary on it—a strategy that provides a framework for dealing with despair. The

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[8] Christian communities across Europe ostracized the suicidal both socially and posthumously, but while their general rituals shared similarities, there were some significant differences between regions. See *From Sin to Insanity: Suicide in Early Modern Europe*, Ed. Jeffrey R. Watt (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004).

[9] Halliday, "Roadside Burial," 82.

significance lies with the unnamed authority who, upon viewing their"misery and madness," licensed the desperate brothers to be interred on sacred ground rather than skewered on the roadside. Notice that Burton interrupts his own narration:

> Thus of their goods and bodies we can dispose; but what shall become of their souls, God alone can tell; His mercy may come *inter pontem et fontem, inter gladium et jugulum,* betwixt the bridge and the brook, the knife and the throat. *Quod cuiquam contigit, cuivis potest* [what happens to someone may happen to anyone]. Who knows how he may be tempted? It is his case, it may be thine: *quæ sua sore hodie est, cras fore vestra potest.* We ought not to be rash and rigorous in our censures as some are; charity will judge and hope the best; God be merciful unto us all![10]

The lacuna is a convention of *The Anatomy* wherein Burton qualifies a passage or claim either in the midst of or right after evoking it, and it exemplifies Burton's own anxiety. In this instance, the lacuna testifies to how Burton is wary of passing judgement on souls based on our earthly investigation: 'We ought not to be rash and rigor[ou]s in our censures,' especially of those who 'have been long melancholy.' But, beyond testifying to Burton's anxiety, the lacuna does something else. Whether intentionally or not, the lacuna conflates an existing legal and social ambiguity with Burton's own anxiety.

Others have discussed Burton's anxiety, but its presence here is significant in that it is rooted in the stigma of despair. Burton carefully asserts that legal purview over a suicide's material possessions is a right: "Thus of their goods and bodies we can dispose"; however, he offsets this assertion against the divine right over desperate souls: 'but what shall become of their souls…' The clash of these two rights is not immediately obvious, but it amounts to the inability of human courts to determine intention and will, a topic which speaks to Burton's final and most significant argument in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Burton's short anecdote is significant in that it provides us a view into Burton's final project: mediating the judgment of the desperate. For example, in echoing Christ, Burton says of these desperate individuals: "{T}hey know not what they do, deprived of reason, judgement, all…" For Burton, the brothers' desperate actions are above censure because we cannot know their

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[10] Burton, *Anatomy*, 1.4.1. 439. Unless otherwise noted, Burton's Latin translations are provided from the Jackson edition cited throughout this paper.

minds, but he does not quite evoke the *non compos mentis* label : "in regard [the desperate] doth this [self-violence] not so much out of his will as *ex vi morbi* [on account of his disease]."[11] Again, Burton's trick is to qualify the *will* as sometimes beyond what humans can control, thereby questioning whether it is possible for the suicidal to willfully kill themselves.

In the following chapter, I argue that Burton participates in a social moment to reframe suicide. While he primarily argues that religious despair was a product of incorrect worship, Burton's most significant contribution to despair's reframing draws on the legal treatment of suicides and the *non compos mentis* tradition. Using historical records of suicides, I engage with arguments over how suicides were treated in England, concluding that Burton is drawing on a dynamic and fluid view of suicide's value, but one that was limited to London.

I: Burtonian Discursive Madness

Most critical responses to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* identify that the text's form and function devolve into an odd type of experience, where the reader witnesses that Burton's anatomizing of melancholy reifies melancholy itself (often in the form of "madness"). This experience plays into critics' approach to T*he Anatomy* in different ways. For literary critics like Stanley Fish,[12] the *Anatomy* represents a type of self-maddening artifact, an oft-contradictory and labyrinthine text that tends to promote madness rather than soothe it. In *Self-consuming Artifacts*, Stanley Fish famously complained, "nothing…can maintain [*The Anatomy's*] integrity in the context of an all-embracing madness […]. Even syntactical and rhetorical forms—sentences, paragraphs, sections, lose their firmness in this most powerful of all solvents" (329). These critics see form's devolution as inspired by the topic, using *madness* to mean "chaotic" or "irrational,"

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[11] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.6: 408.

[12] For other critics, see Devon L. Hodges, "Anatomy of Reason and Madness," In *Renaissance Fictions of Anatomy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985); Christopher Tilmouth, "Burton's 'Turning Picture' Argument and Anxiety in 'The Anatomy of Melancholy,'" *The Review of English Studies* 56.226 (2005). R. Grant Williams, "Disfiguring the Body of Knowledge: Anatomical Discourse and Robert Burton's The Anatomy of Melancholy," *ELH* 68, no. 3 (2001).

terms which do not necessarily match Burton's careful divisions of *melancholic* (or of *irrational*). Worse, these critics participate in a willful weasel fallacy, purposely conflating temporary *confusion* with prolonged mental disorders, such as those described by Burton, like *madness*, *melancholy*, and *despair*. This said, these critics are correct in that, as with the form of the text, the function of the text—mainly the elucidation of melancholy—is problematic *because* Burton is willing to conflate medical terms that, in theory, are different by degree.

For these critics, Burton's definitional play—specifically with medical and spiritual terms of art— is emblematic of *The Anatomy* as a whole. Combined with the experience of reading the text and considering its original purpose to assuage melancholic symptoms, as Fish complains, the textual experience creates the experience of madness. We can see an example of this in the opening section, where Burton says to the reader:

> So that, take Melancholy in what sense you will, properly or improperly, in disposition or habit, for pleasure or for pain, dotage, discontent, fear, sorrow, madness, for the part or all, truly or metaphorically, tis all one. Laughter itself is madness according to Solomon…[13]

Melancholy literally means whatever Burton's reader takes it to mean, a semantic madness that may please the reader but, objectively speaking, impacts the medical value of the text. As Devon Hodges ponders shortly after the above cited passage, "Instead of curing madness, Burton's *Anatomy* seems to create it. And if Burton's discourse is mad, how do we separate the object of investigation from the language that presents it to us?"[14]

For non-literary scholars, the text's form seems less problematic, or less relevant even. For history of psychology scholars, the *Anatomy* represents an early attempt to anatomize a psychosomatic condition, and scholars like Lawrence Babb explore how Burton accentuates mental afflictions over somatic ones. For history of medicine and religious scholars, such as Mary Anne Lund and Angus Gowland, Burton's text draws on early consolatory discourse in its attempts to mitigate melancholy, and these scholars spend time situating Burton within an ongoing medical

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[13] Burton, *Anatomy*, 40.

[14] Hodges, *Renaissance Fictions of Anatomy*, 117.

and spiritual divide.[15] Amongst the groups, the text itself plays an interesting role in dividing the methodological approaches, and non-literary scholars seem to struggle less with the function of *The Anatomy*.

In approaching how Burton discusses despair in the *Anatomy*, I see the text as essential to understanding how Burton frames despair as a fatalistic and potentially harmful condition for the everyday believer. Some literary critics are trapped by the opening section of the *Anatomy*, where Democritus Jr. attempts to provide a microcosm for the text by creating a 120-page espresso shot of melancholy. But I view it as an important key for unpacking the text. This introduction is responsible for most of *madness*' definitional ambiguity, as Michael O'Connell reasons, because of Burton's conflation of madness and folly, where Burton "has not been using melancholy in a medical but rather in a figurative sense."[16] Many of Burton's critics ignore that *The Anatomy* must be taken as a *gestalt* and not as a particular.

In terms of how literary critics respond to its medical import, "Democritus Jr. to the Reader" is divorced from one of the more prominent features of the book, the synopsis, through which Burton provides definitional and sectional previews of his argument. Borrowed from scientific and theological writing, the synopsis shows that Burton's book is organized as a whole to be read as a whole, though digestible by parts. As Ruth Fox explains,

> *The Anatomy* may be seen, then, as a kind of "Gothic" construct, a formulation of logical contexts which describes a single vision or 'totality' of truth. Its divisions and subdivisions are, technically, 'rooms' of the scholastic treatise. And the synoptic tables clarify the expression of the whole by calling attention to he context and by insisting that the reader be aware of the relationships of any part to the idea of the whole.[17]

I see a holistic reading as essential in that it takes into account the purpose of the text (assuaging the reader's and Burton's own melancholy), the experience of reading it, and the melancholic tradition. As Lund urges, "It is important not to lose sight of the praxis-centered mode of [the

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[15] These scholars and their texts are discussed below.

[16] Michael O'Connell, *Robert Burton* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 55-7.

[17] Ruth A. Fox, *The Tangled Chain: The Structure of Disorder in the* Anatomy of Melancholy (Berkeley: University of California Press: 1976), 27.

Anatomy of Melancholy] as one seeks to understand [Burton's] ideas." In other words, "[Burton's *Anatomy*] is intimately connected with the manner in which he presents it to that reader," a textual experience "unparalleled in early modern English literature" that stems from Burton's "attention to the reader and his construction of the reading process."[18]

Burton constructs his treatise on a level beyond the semantic unit, beyond a reader simply reading; instead, the construction of the text assists the reader in differentiating some of the minor caveats of melancholy as a mode of treatment. For my argument, the experience of the text—when its holistic arrangement is considered—shows the reader how dangerous Burton considered despair.

Throughout his life, Burton revised the *Anatomy*, expanding the sections from within and modifying and adding material throughout the book. Despite these alterations, the despair section, added for the second edition and expanded thereafter,[19] remained the final section.[20] This textual arrangement directly informs our discussion of despair in several ways. By taking into account how Burton organizes the book, Burton's placement of despair as the last section signals two mutually informative points: 1) it materially and literarily signals despair's fatalistic connotations by making it the final stage of melancholy; and, 2) by sectioning despair as part of religious melancholy, Burton structurally signals that despair's affliction is primarily religious.

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[18] Mary Ann Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine, and Religion in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010), 51, 11.

[19] See Angus Gowland, *Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 181-202.

[20] According to Faulkner et al.'s variorum, Burton expanded each of the five editions of *The Anatomy* between 1621 and 1638. These editions grew "at every level from single words to entire paragraphs" (Faulkner et al., *Anatomy,* vol 1., xxxviii), with the posthumous 6th edition of 1651 the most expansive. The 1621 quarto edition of 880 pages gained over 150,000 words by the 1651 folio edition of 842 pages. A seventh edition was published in 1676, followed by fifty or more editions after. In these editions—based primarily on a combination of the 4-6th editions—the textual inconsistencies make it difficult to discuss *The Anatomy* as a single text. Faulkner et al.'s variorum itself draws mainly on the fourth (1632) edition, but the editors added the bulk of the 1638 and 1651 editions. *Anatomy of Melancholy,* Eds. by Thomas C Faulkner, Nicolas K Kiessling, and Rhonda L Blair (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1989).

The final partition is split into four subsections, two earlier sections pertaining to love sickness and the two final sections pertaining to religion; though, because it pertains to a specific type of religiously inspired despair, the final thirty-seven page section should be seen as a subservient though distinct section from religious melancholy. In effect, this subsectioning attempts to solidify the general tenets of despair while preserving its religious effects. For example, Burton defines despair generally as a "sickness of the soul without any hope or expectation of amendment,"[21] and he deploys the term often in *The Anatomy*. Elsewhere, Burton indicates that despair may have multiple causes, including lovesickness and general melancholy. This is visible in his "Synopsis of the Third Partition,"[22] where despair appears in "Heroical or Love-Melancholy," though mostly as qualifier for the dangers of untreated melancholy.

The book's global partition structure defies its local organization. Burton structures the partitions' sequence so that the melancholy topics are discussed in order of least dangerous to most dangerous. Put differently, the partition sequence follows the increasing soteriological risk of melancholy.[23] So on the broadest level, the *Anatomy*'s structure culminates with the greatest risk to salvation: despair. Within the global partitions, membrane and section levels flow from general to specific. Partition One's sections move from infirmities in general (1.1.1.1-4) to melancholy in specific (1.1.1.2-11), and these sections culminate in cures. These sectional levels expose that despair is only treatable by social or communal care, comfort, consolation, etc.—and is wholly reliant on an interventionist approach. *The Anatomy* is globally organized so that it concludes with

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[21] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.1: 392.

[22] Referencing the complaint that Burton was providing a "humorous" imitation of the schoolman, Fox defends Burton's use of a synopsis, saying that "The analysis of the tables is that of the whole book, and so in presenting such a diagrammatic image of his book's structure to his readers, […] [Burton was suggesting] "that to understand the book as we read it, we must recognize first the workings of its structure and comprehend the whole before we begin to investigate the parts." Fox, *The Tangled Chain*, 23.

[23] While contained in the same partition, Burton defines the difference between lovesickness and religious melancholy by differentiating the object of desire: "dividing love-melancholy into that whose object is women, and into the other whose object is God" (3.4.1.1:312). This distinction exposes an internal contradiction within Burton's text, as women whose object is men also suffer from lovesickness.

a stage of melancholy devoid of individual hope, 'cured' only by the intervention of concerned outsiders.

As I have shown, in reading the particulars, readers should beware of forming global inferences, seen in this example drawn where Evan depicts the melancholic as an annoying patient:

> Rational counsel and comfort are worse than wasted upon the melancholy. Their woes are basically irrational, and such counsel and comfort can only add to their exasperation. The whole trouble is that their imaginations are at fault. Eternal fear keeps them in eternal torment. They are 'restless and distracted.' They cannot eat or drink or sleep in the continual apprehension of their own self-tormenting.[24]

Tonally Evans evokes a very different picture of Burton than I am painting. Evans' Burton is an impatient doctor pestered by stubborn clients: "For melancholy people are 'more troublesome to their physicians than ordinary patients.' They are 'averse peevish, waspish'… and he goes on.[25] Certainly Burton says these things, but *he also wrote a tome to categorize and treat the condition*; so, we can also assume that Evans is painting the picture of an agoraphobic who would prefer a book to a conversation, but this obviously ignores the medicinal intentions of the treatise and its role in treating the melancholic and desperate.[26] While Burton emphasizes the madness and irrationality of the melancholic, it is unfair to limit Burton's attempt to treat them by his own agoraphobic struggles.

Burton is invested in creating what we would call an "awareness campaign" for these sufferers. While he may complain about his subject (being melancholic himself), Burton invests in the mental and emotional catalysts of melancholy, signaling how drastically it affected the physical

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[24] Bergen Evans, *The Psychiatry of Robert Burton* (New York: Columbia UP, 1944), 52.

[25] Ibid., 89. Gowland explains that this strategy is typical of the consolation writing, a "generically typical feature of Burton's *consolatio* is his emphasis on the predominantly cognitive psychological character of the passions, which was consistent with his preceding account of why melancholy is treatable by consolation." Angus Gowland, "Consolations for Melancholy in Renaissance Humanism," *Societate si politica* VI.1. (2012): 26.

[26] Lund explains, "Burton takes the perception of reading as an active process further [than Montaigne] as he links it with the notion of reading as therapy." This approach is supported by Burton's inclusionary audience. Rather than prescribe a specific type of audience, Burton's "*Anatomy* is underpinned by an acceptance that there is no such thing as a completely right reader" and "This inclusive treatment is a key to Burton's therapeutic approach" Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine, and Religion*, 50.

and rational faculties; his principal aim was showing how reason was negatively impaired: "We know many times what is good, but will not do it [because] Lust counsels one thing, reason another…"[27] The role then of his text is to offer immediate (continual?) assuaging for melancholy, yet the *Anatomy's* under-appreciated secondary interest is in mental disorder and its relationship to the body: "If our leg or arm offend us, we covet by all means possible to redress it; and if we labour of a bodily disease, we send for a physician; but for the diseases of the mind, we take no notice of them."[28]

Some critics are less interested in this observation, almost willingly preferring the textual quirks over its function. If we imagine the reader—an individual desperate for a cure—engaging with the text, we see a problem with this approach. For example, in regards to Burton's difficulties in writing a medical treatise and exploring medical knowledge, Williams remarks:

> *The Anatomy* overwhelms the reader with the undifferentiated difference of textuality, thereby teaching the lesson of the real: there is a nether side to knowledge that can never be mastered. And this estrangement leads the reader to the (mis)recognition of a deeper helplessness in the face of undifferentiated difference—the (mis)recognition that any imagined body of knowledge has been thoroughly inadequate in rescuing us from our own monstrous selves.[29]

Williams' final comment that we are "monstrous" is strikingly different than my characterization of Burton's exigency because Williams has missed a latent point that these outside conundrums of knowledge—whether they be definitional ambiguities or Burton's own propensity to over-cite his sources—are *internalized* within the textual experience. Who isn't overwhelmed by the vastness of

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[27] Burton, *Anatomy*, 1.1.2.11: 168.

[28] Burton, *Anatomy*, 69.

[29] Williams, "Disfiguring the Body," 607. Tilmouth provides an antithetical view: "Viewed thus, the accumulation of controlling knowledge becomes a frantic effort to maintain the illusion of autonomy, to prove that mankind can be exempt from melancholy by demonstrating that he still retains a critical perspective over it." Time is essential to these debates, more so than knowledge. What Burton's *Anatomy* demonstrates is a coping mechanism, a cathartic mode to prolong one's life, even while melancholic. Knowledge and writing are byproducts of this intention. See Tilmouth, "Burton's Turning Picture," 543.

these anatomies? But critics like Williams isolate *The Anatomy*, framing *The Anatomy* as labyrinthine. As Richard Strier reminds us, "Burton simply is not always so."[30]

No one feels the pains of *The Anatomy* in their soul; no one reads the text and immediately believes God has abandoned them; instead, Williams' melodramatic exegesis conflates the helplessness of despair with the helplessness of general textual meaning, as if Burton's reader's search for meaning is the same as the suffering felt by desperate sinners who believe themselves alienated from the personal and deeply experiential Protestant system of belief: "[the desperate] felt (as he said) the pains of hell *in his soul*."[31] In reference to these sufferers, Burton discusses melancholy to evoke, condition, and create empathy and pity for believers *outside* the text; Burton is writing for an audience and addressing an actual earthly suffering, even if the medicinal value of that approach is questionable. It is this same thought that prompts Tilmouth to reason that the "subject of the *Anatomy*" is less despair and melancholy as medical terms and more the degeneration of the human spirit, a "rarer human condition, with its burden of unremitting sorrow."[32]

In one of the most important features of the despair text, Burton adopts the voice of the desperate, using an explanatory first-person perspective:

> Yea, but thou urgest again [for me to 'cheer up'], I have little comfort of this which is said, it concerns me not: *inanis pœnitentia quam sequens culpa coinquinat*, 'tis to no purpose for me to repent, and to do worse than ever I did before, to persevere in sin, and to return to my lusts as a dog to his vomit, or a swine to the mire: to what end is it to ask forgiveness of my sins, and yet daily to sin again and again, to do evil out of an habit? I daily and hourly offend in thought, word, and deed, in a relapse by mine own weakness and willfulness: my *bonus genius*, my good protecting angel is gone, I am fallen from that I was or would be, worse and worse, 'my latter end is worse than my beginning.'[33]

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[30] Richard Strier, *Resistant Structures: Particularity, Radicalism, and Renaissance Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 36. Strier is specifically responding to Stanley Fish's *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). See 36-40.

[31] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.4: 407.

[32] Tilmouth, "Burton's Turning Picture," 540.

[33] Ibid., 3.4.2.6: 412.

Several points are obvious in this section, including the merging of voices typical of the *Anatomy*.[34] Noticeably absent are his qualifiers, Burton's anxious need for definitional ambiguity. Instead, in quoting John Chrysostom's dealing with desperate individuals, Burton *embodies* the desperate individual himself: '…I am fallen from that I was or would be, worse and worse, 'my latter end is worse than my beginning.' Like Donne, Burton vocalizes the experience of the desperate, giving voice to an affliction that otherwise would exist as objective past tense: disembodied, studied, and otherwise anatomized. If he complained of the desperate in one passage, he has made himself one in another.

What makes this despair analysis unique, however, is that Burton willingly adopts a blending of theological and medical generic structures to organize his text. For example, Burton uses the term *despair* generally to refer to a state of extreme sadness; however, the importance of the term to *The Anatomy* is that it represents a specific ontological position within the melancholic spectrum. When he concludes *The Anatomy* with despair, the conclusion then structurally corrects Burton's general definitional usages. In other words, to further strengthen the fatalistic connotation of despair, Burton brackets his anatomizing of despair under religious melancholy to signal that its melancholic characteristics primarily are religious, pertaining to a sickness of the soul; yet, because he is drawing on a latent medical and spiritual discursive divide, Burton is careful to compartmentalize his despair discussion so that he can use the term generally (when we're extremely sad) and also in its more important religious sense (spiritually, fatalistically, etc.). We see an example of this in the general and religious usage of *despair* in the "Synopsis."

In the "Synopsis," Burton indicates that despair's characteristics are distrustful and timorous behavior, though, if he had wished to connote its religious depth, then surely *doubt*—and

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[34] Burton has a habit of blending his voice together with secondary and primary sources. This is even more obvious when quoting from a stylistic mode in which he blends the original Latin language directly into his own translations (intermediately offered, but present). In discussing the reading experience, Fish discusses how Burton defeats objectivity by blurring it with his narrative voice and then a parade of sources. As Fish reasons, "[Burton's strategy] of inclusion, which collapses speaker, reader, and a thousand or more 'authorities' into a single category of unreliability, extends also to every aspect of what we usually think of as 'objective reality.'" Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts*. 314.

its religious connotations—would have been the key signal word to most theologians. Instead, Burton is willing to see melancholy and despair—like other mental disorders—as either interchangeable with or mutually reciprocal to somatic conditions. This said, definitions and generic conventions become more important when explicitly connected to the body-mind divide, which Burton is willing to cross mid-treatise.

For critics, the body-mind tensions in *The Anatomy* are a product of competing discursive spheres. Burton, bearing experience in both medical and spiritual matters, approached *melancholy* with competing discursive paradigms. Still, Mueller uses the mind/body divide to situate Burton within the 'Melancholic Tradition":

> [As both a physician and divine, Burton] is concerned in part with the same traditional problems, the relation between body and mind or soul, and the distinction between a melancholy growing out of the physic cause and a desire brought about by man's sense of being out of favor with God.[35]

With these dual loyalties exposed, Burton carefully discusses the body in a way that invites critical generic scrutiny. In parts of *The Anatomy*, Burton is willing to draw from religious generic tensions, sometimes abruptly. For example, Angus Gowland has shown that the term *madness* is itself a type of corrective, generic convention stemming from the *consolatio* tradition. This is most obvious in the above discussion of ubiquitous or global madness. In borrowing the madness as global affliction from the consolation tradition, "[Burton] was clear that by portraying 'the unconstancy of humane felicity' and 'others misery', his *consolatio* [i.e. *The Anatomy*] would bring those who are happy back to a condition of 'moderation' and help them to attain true self-knowledge" (27).[36] In using Cardan's voice, Burton says he

> will go on; for this must needs do some good to such as are happy, to bring them to a moderation, and make them reflect and know themselves, by seeing the inconstancy of human felicity, others' misery; and to such

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[35] Mueller, *Robert Burton's England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 21. In his introductory chapters. Mueller relates Burton to other theologians I've discussed, including Baxter, Bright, Perkins, and Wright.

[36] Gowland, "Consolations for Melancholy," 27. Gowland is drawing from Burton's second partition, "A Consolatory Digression, containing the Remedies of all manner of Discontents."

> as are distressed, if they will but attend and consider this, it cannot choose but give some content and comfort.[37]

In effect, Burton is approaching affliction via reason, meaning that the mind has power over the body.

What makes despair interesting to this topic is its role as the terse middle ground between the global melancholic experience and the afterlife, an extreme example of suffering that eschews legal arguments, medical cures, and clerical prayer; in this way, it exposes some of the slippage between the competing discursive spheres. For example, shortly after the cited quote above, Burton admits, "'Tis true, 'no medicine can cure all diseases, some affection of the mind are altogether incurable…"[38] In engaging with the medical and spiritual, Burton is aware that certain afflictions are impossible to mediate medicinally, but he preferences despair both textually and medically as the most dangerous state associated with melancholy *because* of its spiritual nature, in essence sidestepping somatic treatments in lieu of spiritual consultation: even if despair was a product of physical and spiritual conditions, its treatment was mental alone, if it could be cured at all.

Specifically because despair was an inexact madness, sharing its characteristics with phantasy, frenzy, and other mental disorders, Burton is able to mobilize it throughout the *Anatomy* as a place-marker, the final stage of dangerous melancholy and a signal of extreme dotage or some form of fatalistic delusion; but, in order to combat his general conflation of afflictions, Burton organizes *The Anatomy* so that despair is the second membrane under the religious melancholy subsection (3.4), signaling to his audience that, no matter its lay definition or its mannerisms, despair is fundamentally a religious problem.

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[37] Burton, *Anatomy*, 2.3.1.1, 127.

[38] Ibid.

II: The Religious and Medical Divide: Representing Despair

Religious melancholy primarily pertains to organized religion and superstition. It is a global condition and, as I have written elsewhere, was used by Burton to attack the typical enemies of the Church of England.[39] Given that religious melancholy shows us that Burton was willing to see religion as prompting negative social change, despair and its effects likewise can be seen as socially influenced, though in a slightly different way than religious melancholy. Within the religious melancholy section, superstition and its proponents (i.e. enemies of the church) took advantage of general believers by creating rituals and charms to control them, removing agency from the individual believer; however, the despair of the despair section was a specific condition that afflicted an individual because of religious misunderstanding and personal doubt. Therefore, because Burton sees despair and religious despair as in part socially influenced and not simply due to an individual's moral failure, he approaches despair as an autonomous eschatological agent more precisely than his peers.[40]

Informed by the spiritual-medical divide and the neo-Galenic approach to medicine, the English melancholic division often paralleled how a scholar approached the mind-body divide. Like Thomas Wright in *Passions of the Minde* (1601), Burton approached spiritual affliction in a way that deviated from other prominent writers of melancholy. For example, unlike Timothy Bright's *A Treatise of Melancholie* (1586)—which is perhaps the most notable precursor for Burton's *Anatomy*—Burton is willing to engage with spiritual affliction in a medical discussion. In part, Bright is hesitant to discuss both spiritual and mental afflictions because he is wary of offering spiritual advice for a somatic condition (melancholy):

> 'the affliction of soule through conscience of sinne is quite another thing th[a]n melancholy'. The former condition, according to Bright, involved 'sorrow and feare upon cause purely rooted in the 'mindes [true] apprehension' of sin and divine wrath, and occurred in people whose bodily and psychic health was intact.

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[39] See Jeffrey Squires, "Robert Burton" and "Anatomy of Melancholy," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History 1500-1900 (CMR1900).* Volume 8. Eds. David Thomas and John Chesworth (Brill, 2016), 192-197.

[40] Duncan Salkeld, *Madness and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993), 26.

> The symptoms of the latter, however, were fear and sadness with 'no ground of true and iust object', originating in a bodily 'disorder of humour' that affected the 'fancy' in the soul.[41]

Unlike Burton, Bright evokes despair in two separate ways: one a spiritual condition originating from an affliction of the conscience[42] ; the other a response to melancholy. The difference between the two, therefore, is the cause: *dispaire* or *desperation* may refer to a symptom of melancholy or *dispaire* may refer to an afflicted conscience, the latter being reserved for a complementary but separate section of *A Treatise of Melancholie*.

Bright draws a distinction between "natural melancholie," or "howe the bodie, and corporall things affect the soule," and an afflicted conscience, which he describes as when one feels the "heauy hande of God vpon the afflicted conscience," the torment of "remorse of sinne," and fears "of his iudgement."[43] When using *dispaire* in relation to natural melancholy, Bright indicates that despair acts as a facet of affliction not unlike crying, lethargy, and other symptomatic responses, but one whose root lies in a physical, humoral condition, "a bodily disorder of humor" that affected the "fancy in the soul." In Bright's opening declaration, we can see this usage:

> I vvould at large declare vnto you the nature of melancholie, vvhat causeth it, vvhat effectes it vvorketh, hovv cured, and farther to lay open, vvhatsoeuer may serue for the knovvledge thereof, vvith such companions of feare, sadnes, *desperation*, teares, vveeping, sobbing, sighing, as follovv that mournefull traine, yea ofte times, vnbrideled laughter, rising not from any comforte of the heart, or gladnes of spirit, but from a disposition in such sorte altered, as by errour of conceite, that gesture is in a counterfet maner bestovved vpon that disagreeing passion, vvhose nature is rather to extinguish it selfe vvith teares, then assvvaged by the svveete breath of chearefulnes, othervvise to receiue refreshing.[44]

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[41] Bright, qtd. in Gowland, "Consolations for Melancholy," 18.

[42] Angus Gowland explains that this usage stems from the Christianization of the ancient consolatory tradition. In syncretizing the previous *consolatio* tradition, Christian writers "included the distinction between *tristitia secundum Deum* (godly sorrow for sin) and *tristitia saeculi* (worldly grief)." These Christian consolatory writers were interested in a sorrow stemming from "a divine providence that imposed tribulation upon us as an ultimately beneficial test of our piety and spiritual endurance." Gowland, "Consolations for Melancholy," 15.

[43] Bright, *A treatise of melancholie Containing the causes thereof, & reasons of the strange effects it worketh in our minds and bodies: with the physicke cure, and spirituall consolation for such as haue thereto adioyned an afflicted conscience* (1586).

[44] Emphasis mine. Bright, "To His melancholicke Friend," In *A treatise of melancholie.*

If left untreated, Bright sees "plaine desperation" as an extreme response to melancholy, but Bright indicates that this is not explicitly a 'true' case of despair since it is brought on by somatic affliction whereas despair properly refers to religious—spiritual—punishment.[45] The assumed difference between despair via melancholy and despair as spiritual affliction is the authenticity of the doubt, mainly that despair may be inflicted as a type of divine punishment.

While Bright divides despair around its origin, Andrew Broode in his medical treatise, *Breuiarie of Health* (1587), chooses to ignore religious despair entirely. In referencing despair via melancholy, Broode is quick to indicate that despair is a product of a somatic defect (melancholy) and that its sufferers think "to here or to see that thing that is not heard nor seene," implying that despair is a delusional response:

> M[e]lancholia is deriued out of two wordes of Greeke which is to say of Molon, which is to say in latin *Niger*. [Note: A kinde of madnesse.] In English it is named blacke and of Colim, which is to say in latin *Humor*. In English it is named an humour, the deriuation of this word is as well referred to this sicknes as to ye humour which is one of the complexions. This sickenes is named the melancoly madnesse which is a sicknes full of fantasies, thinking to here or to see that thing that is not heard nor séene, and a man hauing this madnes, shal thinke in himselfe that thing that can neuer be, for some bée so fantasticall that they will thinke themselfe God or as good, or such lyke thinges perteyning to presumption or to desperation to be dampned, the one hauing this sicknes doth not go so farre the one way, but the other doth dispayre as much the other way.[46]

For Broode, the "melancoly madnesse" is somatic, stemming from black humor; yet, its effects are largely described within a desperate framework, where the desperate either "thinke themselfe God or as good" or "dampned." The final sentence of the entry is difficult to parse[47], but Broode implies that the tendency to despair of one's election occurs less often than despairing of damnation,

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Andrew Broode, *Breuiarie of Health (*London: By Thomas East, 1587), 78.

[47] Given Broode's sentence construction, there are multiple ways to interpret this sentence; yet, the religious *topos* encourages me to provide the easiest interpretation, probably that there is an inverted relationship between belief and suffering, where presuming oneself saved or damned tends to have an inverted effect on one's actual salvation. While Chrysostom expresses a similar sentiment about priests, John Downame specifically uses it to discuss the desperate: "And hence it is that whereas one perisheth through despaire, many thousands perish through presumption and securitie." Downame, *The Christian Warefare* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1604) I.6.

which makes sense with his definition of melancholia as "another kinde of madnesse" prompting terror:

> [T]hey [that] which be infested with this madnesse, be cured in feare & drede, and doih think they shall neuer doe well, but euer be in parel either of soule or of body, or both, wherfore they do flée fro[m] one place to an other, and can not tel where to be except they be kept in safegard.[48]

In these instances, Broode clarifies 1) that despair is a delusional response to fantasies and 2) that it is a physical response not unlike someone fleeing in terror or running from an imagined horror.[49]

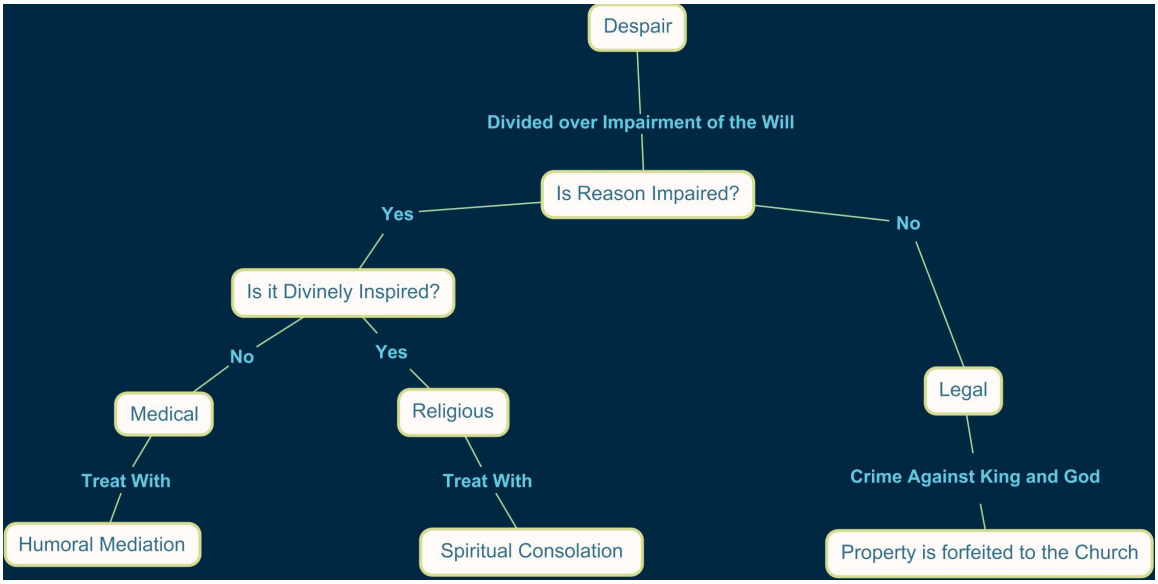

Figure 2: Legal, Medical, and Religious Divide

In describing somatic melancholy, both Broode and Bright emphasize that desperate delusions stem from humoral imbalance and thus are false; yet, Bright is willing to acknowledge that despair may be genuine, where 'sorrow and feare upon cause' purely rooted in the 'mindes [true] apprehension' may stem from 'sin and divine wrath.' This particular divide is informed by the generic or discursive tensions between the two treatises. As mentioned above, Bright is reluctant to engage with religious despair in a medical treatise because he sees the condition as

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[48] Broode, *Breuiarie of Health,* ch. 43.

[49] Figure 2 shows how the tripartite discursive divide functions around despair.

stemming from an afflicted conscience and evoking spiritually justified terror. As a physician, Broode is simply uninterested in religious despair.

If, as a physician and divine, Bright is nervous to represent despair fairly to its competing medical and religious paradigms, then Burton is far less anxious when engaging with it. For Burton, regardless of its roots, despair is a potential final stage of any melancholy and is characterized by its extreme nature and dangerous, unchecked emotions. I mention this because Burton discusses non-religious despair and despair often interchangeably, without much interest in differentiating them, primarily using the term as a final stage of extreme sorrow.

For Burton, *despair* is appropriately applied to minor and major afflictions, applicable to both those that suffer from minor afflictions like "want of sleep" and want of "nutriment," and to those that suffer from great afflictions, such as guilt from murder, rape, and extortion. Since a "guilty conscience for some foul offense former[l]y committed" does not rely on a hierarchy of sin, the guilt or despair felt for a 'foul offence' is relative to the individual. In this way, Burton observes that *despair* is appropriately used depending upon the individual's own weighing of their faults.[50] Reading outside the final despair section also opens up this 'foul offence' to include desperate conditions, like longing for lost children, although this may or may not involve God as an object of despair. Likewise, the term is applicable to animals, such as dogs and dolphins, who sink into despair when confronted by the loss of a loved one, even dying from their forlornness.

Within the despair section, Burton clarifies:

> There be many kinds of desperation, whereof some be holy, some unholy, as one distinguishes; that unholy he defines out of Tully to be *ægritudinem animi sine ulla rerum expectatione meliore*, a sickness of the oil without any hope or expectation of amendment, which commonly succeeds fear; for while evil is expected, we fear; but when it is certain, we despair.[51]

He reiterates, "Many such kinds there are of desperation, when men are past hope of obtaining any suit, or in despair of better fortune."[52] As is clarified in both points, despair represents a final

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[57] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.3: 400.

[51] Ibid., 3.4.2.2. 392.

[52] Ibid., 393.

moment, a place where 'hope' or 'fortune' are lost. Whether imagined or real, the effects of despair are similar enough that Burton uses the term interchangeably; although, the usage is distinguished by the object of one's concern: God. In Burton's final treatment of despair, the principal elements that mark the desperate condition are religious in that the conscience is affected and God is the object.

Because religious despair is distinguishable from despair only because of its object, it may be the end stage of any melancholic condition, and, through the bulk of the book, Burton attends little to these distinctions in order to discuss its systemic effects. In general, despair attacks the entire being, body, mind and soul: "The heart is grieved, the conscience wounded, the mind eclipsed with black fumes arising from those perpetual terrors [i.e. the afflicted recall to torment themselves].[53] This makes it a true solution to Democritus Jr.'s earlier complaint that mental illness is largely ignored: "if our leg or arm offend us, we covet by all means possible to redress it; and if we labour of a bodily disease, we send for a physician; but for the diseases of the mind, we take no notice of them."[54] The general despair and religious despair are further conflated by this ignorance; echoing Broode, Burton explains that, once afflicted by these tormenting diseases of the mind, the desperate turn away from God, believing that their general election—their position as one of the saved—is pre-determined: evidenced by their earthly suffering, they are damned to hell.

There is a way to cheat the religious/non-religious divide by saying that *despair* evokes a fatalistic connotation whereby individuals predestine *when* they die, not necessarily if they do; however, that sloppy use of *predestination* ignores Burton's church affiliation and the specificity of religious despair. The importance of Burton's sloppy definitional usage is discursive: Burton breaks from Bright's discursive hesitancy to evoke despair (somatic) and religious despair (spiritual) as similar enough to be called the same because they both evoke a religious effect: a desperate's

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[53] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.1: 395.

[54] Burton, *Anatomy*, 69.

suicide condemns both the body and the mind. Therefore, Burton's categorization of despair perforates the earlier spiritual/physical discursive divide.

Because despair essentially erased the rational element of man, Burton believed that it was a religious and legal necessity to acknowledge despair's impact on the mind's rational capacities. While I disagree whole-heartedly with his final conclusions, Stachniewski is accurate to summarize that, "While others [e.g. Bright and William Perkins], therefore, were insisting on the segregation of religion and melancholy, Burton was content to let them blur into one another."[55] In perforating the medical/religious discursive divide, Burton depicts despair as a systemic, dangerous condition that negates rational thought. To accentuate the dangerous of this condition, Burton drew on an amalgamation of neo-Galenic medicine, residual Platonic beliefs, and his above-discussed representation of despair's somatic and spiritual effects.

Above I explained that Burton is not always specific with despair as a term, but when engaging with religious despair in the final section, he assumes the condition is *de facto* always religious, evidenced by the term's alternative nomenclature: the "Devil's Bath" (*balneum diaboli*).[56] For example, the Latin name emphasizes how Satan physically tortures the individual, mainly by overwhelming the sufferer's mind. It figuratively depicts the somatic effect the soul has on the body; and yet, for the spiritually minded person, the condition *literally* allows Satan to penetrate the body.

When the individual recalls past failures, the mind opens the body to the temptation of despair, a condition which exposes how the mind physically overwhelms the body's spirits, systemically depressing them. This point is important: despair is fundamentally a disease of the mind/soul, but its effects are somatic as well as spiritual. In recalling guilt for a past sin, the desperate opens a wound in their conscience, allowing Satan into their being. The effect of this is

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[55] Ibid.

[56] See Jeremy Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 64-77.

somatic in that Satan opens the door for an influx of bile. In other words, the consequence for the spiritual affliction (despair) is both somatic (bodily suffering) and spiritual (damnation).

Like his break with the medical/spiritual divide, Burton breaks from a strictly Platonic or Aristotelian system as well because, while he admits that "The body works upon the mind by obfuscating the sprits and corrupted instruments," he also includes a dynamic Galenic understanding of the mind-body.[57] The difference between the systems, to generalize, is that Platonic medicine emphasizes spirits, the Aristotelian the four elements —hot, cold, wet, dry—and, Galenic the somatic, humoral features.[58]

In some parts of the *Anatomy*, the mind-body divide is typical of medieval medicine because it splinters the inward souls along Platonic tripartite lines: "vegetal, sensitive, and rational." This makes three distinct kinds of living creatures: "vegetal plants, sensible beasts, [and] rational men." In his typical casualness, Burton indicates that the connection between these souls and the body "is beyond human capacity,"[59] but the inference is that the rational soul essentializes man.[60] It is worth quoting the entire summary of the rational soul:

> this rational soul includes the powers and performs the duties, of the two others which are contained in it [i.e. vegetable and animal], and all three faculties make one soul, which is inorganical of itself, although it be in all parts, and incorporeal, using their organs, and working by them. It is divided into two chief parts, differing in office only, not in essence: the understanding, which is the rational power apprehending; the will, which is the rational power moving: to which two all the other rational powers are subject and reduced.[61]

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[57] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.3: 396.

[58] See fn. 62 below. Not all critics neatly distinguish between Platonic and Aristotelian medicine, and my readers should assume that they are distinct, but mutually informative enough to be equally different from Galen. I do not believe Burton saw any of these systems as distinct enough to be concerned.

[59] Ibid., 3.4.2.3: 396.

[60] Burton emphasizes the tripartite nature of the human soul, similar to how Aquinas prioritizes the mind/spirit to essentialize humans by their rational capacity: "*I answer that,* We must assert that the intellect which is the principle of intellectual operation is the form of the human body […] For the soul is the primary principle of our nourishment, sensation, and local movement; and likewise of our understanding." Aquinas, *Summa of the Summa*, Ed. Peter Kreeft (San Fransisco: Ignatius, 1990), 253.

[61] Burton, *Anatomy*, 1.1.2.10: 164-5.

Burton's explanation draws attention to the rational as chief soul, and its two main components—understanding and will—as the most important mental faculties. Of the two, will is the most important function wherein a person "covets or avoids such things as have been before judged and apprehended by the understanding." Burton is pretty forward that man is possessed of mind, body, and soul, a mutually informative three-part system, but how firm then is the divide here? If we tease out more of the connection between the souls and human body, the connection that Burton dismissed as 'beyond human capacity' is easy to recognize at its extremes.

One of Burton's foremost principles is that one system, whether it be mind, body, or soul, can overwhelm the others. In part, this is a byproduct of Burton's mixing of Platonic and Galenic medicine[62], where melancholy in general (despair in extreme) is, as Bergen Evans sees it, a "disease of soul *and* body, in which heart and brain 'mutually misaffect one another…'"[63] Evans will go as far as to say that "physical symptoms were to Burton of secondary significance" to the mental afflictions, meaning that, while Bright emphasizes that somatic melancholy prompts a spiritually similar affliction in the soul, Burton's semantic weight is placed on how the mental faculties affected the body. Mueller is less certain: "Burton seems to agree now with Plato, now with Galen." The reader "can conclude only that [Burton] believes the relationship to work both ways."[64] While these critics are accurate that Burton mixes his medical traditions, Burton is clear that mind-body relations are hierarchal. Burton follows Galen in seeing a mind/body interdependence, but he is clear that this interdependence breaks down when faced with the more dangerous mental/spiritual disturbances. Burton implies that, while it is important to understand the idiosyncratic, physiological aspects of melancholy, spiritual affliction could overwhelm the body.

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[62] As Lawrence Babb nonchalantly explains, "The Elizabethan and early Stuart conception of the melancholy man is compounded of these two [i.e. Galenic and Aristotelian] not wholly compatible elements." Lawrence Babb, *Sanity in Bedlam: A Study of Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy* (East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1959), 3.

[63] Evans, *The Psychiatry of Robert Burton,* 56.

[64] Mueller, *Robert Burton's England*, 23.

Given that Burton says that the rational soul contains the animal and vegetable within it and that the trinity together form the soul, it is important to see the soul here as less Platonic or Galenic and more of an intermingling of the two; the soul is a type of interlocking homeopathic system wherein problems with one tend to affect the others via humoral imbalance. It results in holistic impairment. For neo-Galenic thinkers like Burton, Gowland explains that emotions (here, extreme sadness) were primarily from the spirit:

> …whereas for Galen passions were primarily physiological phenomena, medieval and early modern faculty psychology was essentially Aristotelian in its emphasis on the primacy of apprehensions (in the rational soul) and appetite (in the sensitive soul) in stimulating emotion. The emotions were thus movements of the soul, not of the body.[65]

The relationship between the souls and their systems means that, while we can argue about a divide between the mind and body, emotional afflictions often caused dangerous, physiological effects on other systems, primarily by causing "a surge" of emotions that qualitatively impair or flood the humors in the heart. In the case of melancholy, the heart attracted black bile from the spleen.[66] Notice the mechanical imagery within this description:

> …contracted the heart, which drew in and imprisoned the blood and spirits from the rest of the parts, depriving them of the vital heat and moisture necessary for healthy functions, and cooling and drying the whole organism. The blood around the heart, thus cooled and dried, would degenerate into more black bile, which then spread outward through the body with a multiple of damaging consequences.[67]

This cardiopulmonary, humoral effect cyclically impaired the desperate's mediating faculties.

In the case of despair, the systemic effect implies the impairment of important mediating faculties, like the conscience and the will, which were essential to curing humoral imbalance. For Jeremy Schmidt, Burton used Galenic medicine primarily to justify his anatomizing of melancholy; however, he conversely drew from "moral philosophical reflection on the passions," specifically the mediating consolation of Seneca, Cicero, and Plutarch, to offer cures for this

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[65] Gowland, *Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy*, 49.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

Galenic afflictions.[68] In the section from which I have been quoting, Burton reverses Schmidt's observation by offering a reference to Euripides' *Hippolytus* story to show how devastating the passions can be, highlighting how neither the body nor mind can mediate them: "We cannot resist, but as Phædra confessed to her nurse, *que loqueris, vera sunt, sed furor suggerit sequi pejora* [thou speakest truth, yet my passion drives me to follow the worse course]."[69] As the Latin quote implies, Burton receives the Phaedra story through Seneca without directly commenting on its moral, philosophical framing. Rather than evoke the stoicism important to the Senecan tragedy, Burton instead chooses to use Phaedra's tragic and pitiful failure without referencing her moral failure specifically. This is typical of Burton, who is capable of a great deal of dissonance when evoking sources, but it is a significant example in that it uses a Stoic philosopher to prove the failure of mediating consolation, the failure of the mind to temper the body.

As a stoic, Seneca uses Phaedra's immoderate desire to drive his borrowed Euripedean plot; Burton, though, echoes Seneca to show how the mind—despite all inclinations to blame fortitude or the will—cannot resist the temptations of the body; while the nurse offers an alternative, Phaedra *cannot* accept it. Notice that, while Phaedra implies the she *could* resist her passions by following her nurse's counsel, Burton is far more absolute: "*We cannot resist*." Burton's awkward syncretizing works: we're not capable of saving ourselves from our corrupted form. But the reference also shows how extreme emotional and mental disturbances incapacitate the will. Seen in relief, Democritus Jr.'s earlier observation that "We are torn in pieces by our passions"[70] makes conflicting sense, for when despair depresses all things, the system becomes as one, weighed down beneath the black bile of sadness.

Burton uses these extreme examples to show that, while the body is primarily responsible for moderate disturbances, the most dangerous of those—the ones most akin to Phaedra's—are

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[68] Schmidt, *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul*, 34.

[69] Burton, *Anatomy*, 1.1.3.1.

[70] Ibid., 69.

those passions of the soul, the profound mental, emotional disturbances that evoke and disturb the entire person. For the on-looker helplessly watching, the effect shows how, when left unchecked, the passions dismember and distort before their eyes.[71] The desperate are not torn apart by despair; they are crushed beneath its fatalistic force. The difference between being torn asunder by emotions or depressed by emotions depends on whether one is speaking for or observing the desperate. For those watching, the effect is a figurative destruction, the tearing apart of the body under extreme emotions (or a violent anatomizing if you are Burton). For the sufferer, the depressing effect is holistically suffocating: they are drowning in black bile.

While Burton is indebted to the medical and pagan writers before him, he owes the violence of despair to its religious, consolatory writers. For example, we can compare Burton's discussion of despair's holistic effect against John Downame in *Christian Warfare* (1604), which Burton sees as having "well answered" several of his own desperate hypothetical objections.[72] In comparison to Downame, the consolatory tradition exemplifies the dangers of despair.

Unlike *The Anatomy*, which has dual obligations to medical and religious writing, Downame's *Christian Warfare* is clearly a consolatory religious treatise that he has "written especially for" the sakes of those "who are exercised in the spirituall conflict of temptations, and are afflicted in conscience in the sight and sense of their sinnes." He never attempts to invade the medical discursive sphere, but instead engages with despair as only a spiritual affliction, urging consolation by drawing on typical scriptural arguments to bolster his readers' resistance to temptations.[73]

Burton is indebted to the consolatory tradition because he draws the mind's susceptibility to despair from spiritual affliction. He inherits the mind's shortcomings from religious writers like Downame, who explicitly show that, like the flesh, the mind is also susceptible to the passions.

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[71] Gowland, "Consolations for Melancholy," 23.

[72] Burton "Notes: Page 416," *Anatomy*, 502.

[73] The quote is drawn from the longer version of Downame's title.

Reason, a human's chief distinguishing mental and spiritual power, could also be his or her chief failure. In designing his text to help readers, Downame uses *reason* to refer to a Christian's ability to resist Satan, basically bolstering the faculty of reason over other faculties, like memory. As Downame explains, "the violence of Sathans tentations and his owne corruptions ye[t] be sometimes led captiue into sinne yet afterwardes hee is greeued for it, hee hateth and abhorreth it, and earnestly desireth and indeauoureth for the time to come to leaue and forsake it, and to serue the Lorde in newnesse of life."[74] Flesh, like memory, is tortured by recalled sin, opening the door for Satan. In the section on apostasy, Downame explains that the comfort of grace cannot be recalled by the apostate: "Now therefore the acceptable time and day of saluation is past neuer againe to be recalled, and though with Esau thou seekest repentance with teares yet shalt thou neuer find it."[75] In both these instances, reason remains unaffected but *memory* is faulted. Once committed, apostasy removes the comfort of grace; the result is the ontological status of exclusion: despair.

What is striking about this attack on the mind, though, is that Downame is explicit that the mind, body, and spirit are together as a single unit:

> In a word, whosoeuer are truely sanctified, they are also wholy sanctified, that is, as the Apostle speaketh, sanctified throughout, in euery part and facultie of bodie and soule. And therefore whosoeuer would bee assured that he hath attained true sanctification, he is to labour to compose and frame the whole man, his minde and imagination, his will and affections, his outward actions, life and conuersation, according to the exact rule of Gods law: in all of them mortifying the old man, and his inbred corruption, and imbracing the contrarie duties of holinesse and righteousnesse [76]

Downame is attempting to frame affliction as disturbing the whole being by showing how the mind-body relationship is impaired by sin. Consolation then comes in the form of mortifying the flesh, subduing its 'inbred corruption,' while maintaining the mind's 'imbracing' of 'holiness and rightousnesse.' In short, the rational mind is king and rules the body according to 'the exact rule of

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[74] Ibid., 522.

[75] Ibid., 422.

[76] Downame, *Christian Warfare*, 600.

Gods law.' In line with Augustine, Christian liberty is conforming the body to the will of God completely—mind, body, and soul.

In showing the dangers of despair, Burton draws on this spiritual discussion to show how the mind's shortcomings invert one's religious, holistic dedication to God. After reaffirming that the mind and body are unified, Burton inverts Christian liberty to depict despair as complete misrule, a position where one is ruled by oneself instead of Christ. Recalling Phaedra, if the mind were completely dedicated to God, then the emotions which run over Phaedra's capacities could have been resisted, and one could remain subservient to the moral path. Instead, her body—at least the senses—rule her mind.

In Burtonian despair, we will see an instance when the afflicted soul rules the body and mind, contorting the body and afflicting the mind as a cycle, and thereby impinging upon Christian liberty. In this assertion, Burton is in agreement with Catholic and Protestant thinkers, at least insofar as the mind cannot reason itself from hell. Consider Thomas Wright's *The Disposition or Garnishmente of the Soule*:

> Againe the torture, the worme of Conscience, that stickethe so depe with her stinge in the soule of all damned creatures, shoulde neuer appeare in hell, if man weare depryued of libertie. For their torment consisteth in this, that for their owne demerites being created of God in suche sorte, that if they would, heauen laide open for them by doing well: and yet they cast them selues into hell by their own accorde by woorking euill. For if they could not haue done well but of necessitie weare plunged into finne, I see not what remorse they can haue.[77]

Along Aquinas' line of thought, Wright reasons that, in order to deserve eternal damnation, man must have liberty of choice.[78] Deprived of reason, tortured by conscience, the sinner must deservedly suffer or choose to remain in hell of their own doing. Without this caveat, we risk debasing God and limiting his agency. The religious argument here is over *liberty*, or whether *free will* and *predestination* are mutually exclusive concepts; however, the assumption here relies on how capable the individual is to reason and how much suffering limits divine adjudication; if we

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[77] Thomas Wright, *The Disposition or Garnishmente of the Soule (*Ioachim Trognesius, 1596), np.

[78] See more on this discussion in the following section on Milton, pages 17-21.

assume despair is a divine punishment, it has to be deserved or else it is not despair. For Burton, any despair not divinely inspired is a sign of irrationality.

In believing one is excluded from grace, the individual's humoral system is fully overwhelmed by melancholy: "The part affected is the whole soul, and all the faculties of it."[79] Quoting St. Augustine of Canterbury, Burton elaborates:

> [Despair is a] "fearful passion, wherein the party oppressed thinks he can get no ease but by death, and is fully resolved to offer violence unto himself; so sensible of his brethren, and impatient of his cross, that he hopes by death alone to be freed of his calamity.[80]

But, whereas the causes and cures for melancholy are diverse, Burton defines despair around an individual's soteriological/eschatological beliefs, how individuals view their salvation/damnation: "…wherein the party oppressed *thinks* he can get to ease but by death." Despair primarily afflicts reason in a way contrary to Platonic theory. Whereas Plato saw a clear divide between the soul and its material container, Burton sees despair as an affliction which primarily shows how the ethereal realm impacts the material, the rational man his own body. The change is not just spiritual; it is ontological, where reason—our defining characteristic—is negated, our identity supplanted. In effect, to escape from the existential torture of despair, a melancholy individual commits suicide, reinforcing suicide's spiritual significance but also calling into question its somatic relationship to the cosmos.

What's interesting, though, is how Burton latently questions the effectiveness of the spiritual consolation tradition because of this ontological exchange. For example, assuming that recollected memories or sinful guilt are typical earthly experiences, the passion of despair necessitates an individual be experienced in warding it off a la Downame's *The Christian Warfare*; however, the principle spiritual faculties for warding off despair are the most impacted by it. As the faculty most emphasized as a mediator between God (or the Devil) and man, the conscience is

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[79] Burton, *Anatomy,* 3.4.2.1: 395.

[80] Ibid., 394

hobbled by despair through a circular recollection of fault, guilt, and shame inordinately promoted beyond their proper place: "[past recollections] open a gap to the devil [...] to carry them to hell."[81]

Because of his tenuous relationship with the Church of England, Burton's *Anatomy* contains several divergent concepts, including a moderate understanding of human will and a fluid opinion on predestination. These church controversies inform his advocacy for legal leniency toward suicide. In the following section, I explore how Burton interacts with dominant Church of England ideology so that he could advocate for a more temperate understanding of suicides. For Burton, despair's evolution from a medieval concept akin to sloth into an existential threat akin to apostasy reveals the complicated anxieties and concerns related to church doctrine, both for the early modern individuals as well as for those clergy responsible for treating them.

III: Religious Principles and Legal Allowances

For Burton, despair represents an existential, ever-present threat; however, not all English theologians believe this. Some theologians like Perkins saw it as a temporary position, and others framed it as a disease. "To them, despair was a condition one 'caught' rather than a spiritual state one attained and might transcend."[82] Engaged in these tensions, Burton occupies a liminal place somewhere between the two, but understanding the term means that we must understand how church controversy contributed both to its presence and its eventual alleviation. Toward the latter, Burton influences a change in mental illness in the early modern world by participating in religious discord in the church. When Burton deviates from the melancholic tradition, he fundamentally grounds despair in a changing sense of self and theology, a change that emphasized despair as a reoccurring threat significant to how Christians framed their spiritual life. In their seminal study of suicide, *Sleepless Souls*, MacDonald and Murphy explain that

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[81] Ibid., 398.

[82] Michael Macdonald, "The Fearefull Estate of Francis Spira: Narrative, Identity, and Emotion in Early Modern England," *Journal of British Studies* 31 no.1 (January 1992): 60.

> …divines depicted hapless sinners as souls poised between saving grace offered by God and his good angels and self-murdering despair inspired by the devil and his demons, just as the medieval moralities had. They stressed above all that the cosmic struggle between God and Satan, the angels and the demons, the saints and the unregenerate, was replicated in the mind and heart of every person. The spiritual warfare took place on every plane of existence; human emotions had their counterparts in the unseen world of the supernatural.[83]

Torn between the Job-like cosmic battle, "[the common people] were notoriously prone to interpret events in almost manichaean terms, as the outcome of a struggle between good and evil spirits."[84] Here, despair becomes the sense of one's abandonment on the field of battle.

In this atmosphere of historic theogony, we see the desperate individual in terms of the wayward spirit, a lost soul who turns violent toward his or her self. This loss or abandonment is explicit when Burton, opportuned by a discussion of spirituality, categorizes *despair* by its "pernicious" nature and its fatalistic exigence. Tellingly, Burton cites *Job* VI and VII as his example:

> **8** Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for!
> **9** Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!
>
> […]
>
> **15** So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.[85]

As was the potential case with desperate Job, suicide "was interpreted far more often as the result of diabolical temptation than divine retribution." In a world marked by its soteriological risks, despair and suicide were both just another temptation: "Satan was above all the Tempter, injecting ungodly urges into people's minds and luring them on to despair and self-destruction."[86] MacDonald and Murphy may agree that we could extend despair as the catalyst for this suicidal nature. In this way, we may situate despair in terms of Nathan Johnstone's argument about diabology in *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England*. According to Johnstone, diabology was a "powerful and reflective belief, subtly but importantly different from its

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[83] Michael MacDonald and Terrence R. Murphy, *Sleepless Souls: Suicide in the Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), 36.

[84] Ibid.

[85] *KJV* Job VI 8,9 ; VII 15.

[86] MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, 34.

predecessor, and one that, in both its continuities and changes, expressed what was a profound experiential reality for its adherents."[87] Religious preoccupation with the devil intersected with important concepts, like *predestination* and *despair,* to permeate all facets of life, increasing the significance of despair beyond its soteriological effects.[88]

While the laity may or may not of had a firm understanding of the semiotics at stake, the Church of England itself *was* divided over its doctrine and individual belief, mainly over how theological theory materialized in practice. The divide lies between a Puritan soteriology and the individual's experience of salvation, a tension in which an individual's "sound religious knowledge and the ability to discern for oneself the reality of diabolic temptation was to replace blind faith" in God alone.[89] If we imagine a Calvinist-leaning church that saw faith as temptation overcome, despair becomes more significant to the process of mortification because it took the assumption that flesh was sinful and weak and man impotent next to the devil, and played it out to its extremes.

As explored in chapter 2 on Donne, despair was seen as a routinized spiritual experience by theologians like Perkins[90]; however, Burton treats the condition as potentially fatal and difficult to escape—well beyond routine. As Burton believed that humans were essentialized by the rational soul, they are undone when this soul is disturbed. The faculties most responsible for preventing despair, primarily the spiritual and mental, are often the ones responsible for its spread. Perhaps

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[87] Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2006), 12. Johnstone is talking about the role of the devil in early modern theology. I draw this parallel between despair and demonology as is clear from Burton's discussion that despair as emotional condition is inseparable from its theological and existential reality.

[88] In *The World of Renaissance Melancholy,* Richard Gowland directly situates Burton in terms of this changing perception towards demonism: "The increased concern with the disease [i.e. despair] was partly stimulated by contemporary perceptions of the rise in the incident of witchcraft and demonic possessions…" Gowland, *The World of Renaissance Melancholy,* 18.

[89] Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism,* 85.

[90] Perkins explicitly divides despair by its source, whether originating from the conscience or from melancholy: "For many hold, that [trouble of Conscience and Melancholie] are one. *Ans*. They are not one, but differ much." See William Perkins, *The First Part of the Cases of Conscience* (John Legat, 1604),176-83.

rooted in the earlier association of despair with asceticism, those most afflicted are the most religious, the ones most apt to lose their identity are those who rely on religion the most to define it.[91] Those most trained in spiritual armor are most susceptible to its shortcomings.

I find it difficult to determine whom Burton faults most for the passion of despair. He situates much of the fault for despair on the church: "…the greatest harm of all proceeds from those thundering ministers, a most frequent cause they are of this malady."[92] Yet, he also squarely lays fault on an individual's perception of his or her place in the cosmos. For example, the desperate's fault can be compared to Oedipus' hubris in that both 'believed' themselves above the gods, believing that they *know* more than God and that they were themselves damned. The desperate claim knowledge of election, knowing that God had excluded them from heaven for an unforgivable sin. But this begs the question—for us and for Burton—whether the desperate had *willingly* abandoned God. In other words, because the desperate believe they are beyond hope, they feel they know God's mercy better than God, thus, they abandon God as he has abandoned them. But, as is the case with Spira and other famous instances of despair in this dissertation, many early modern thinkers were willing to question whether such views were a product of madness.

Burton is quick to see despair as self-inflicted; however, he also concludes that despair is a "cruel reckoning" against the desperate, questioning whether it must always be both divine condemnation and self-willed, or whether divine wrath could be a sign of madness. Echoing the traditional line on desperation, Burton explains that the conscience moves against the self so that "our conscience will be still ready to accuse us" (401). Unfortunately, once the desperate have committed suicide, they have earned a just sentencing (suicide is always self-incriminating); and

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[91] As discussed below, Burton strengthens his definition of despair with the medieval connection of despair with apostasy and learnedness, mainly that apostasy results from a misunderstanding of religious treatments and an overwhelming dedication to study: "This meditation terrifies these poor distressed souls, especially if their bodies be predisposed by melancholy, they religiously given, and their tender consciences, every small object affirms them, the very inconsiderate reading of Scripture itself, and misinterpretation of some places of it…" Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.3: 398.

[92] Ibid., 3.4.2.3: 399.

yet, Burton takes issue with the middle-ground between desperation and suicide, questioning whether the perception and/or experience of exclusion is not a sign of irrationality or madness.

For Burton and other Christian thinkers, despair represents a judicial verdict—as Bright reasoned, the effect of exclusion from grace. However, the assumption in Burton's despair section is that despair is a misperception of divine judgment, even if the effects of exclusion, though imagined, are still felt. This is most apparent in that, for the desperate overwhelmed by black humor, the physical response to exclusion is real enough. While Christians like Burton would argue that salvation is the difference between the two—*knowing* that God would never abandon a sinner—because of *perceived* exclusion, the desperate suffer regardless of reality, and the perception of exclusion creates an existential suffering both physical and mentally self-perpetuating, what I call the *desperate paradox*: if I am feeling the torment of hell now, then I must be predestined for hell. In emphasizing the existential, experiential knowledge of hell, Burton shows how conceiving of hell and feeling hell are identical: as the damned, they experience hell on earth:

> [T]hey suffer the pains of hell, and more than possibly can be expressed, they smell brimstone, talk familiarity with devils, hear and see chimeras […] roar and howl, curse, blaspheme, deny God, call His power in question, abjure religion, and are still ready to offer violence unto themselves by hanging, drowning, etc.[93]

Notice the experiential nature of Burton's verbs: *suffer*, *smell*, *talk*, *see*, etc. These are not verbs qualified by *seeming* or *believing* but rather verbs that speak to the body's infernal experience. This is the consequence of the neo-Galenic medicine: the spirit, when in despair, creates the actual experience of exclusion so that—for the desperate— it is impossible to distinguish the two. For the non-desperate viewing their suffering, the difference is authenticity: the desperate suffer because of their stubbornness whereas true desperation comes from God. In addressing the stigma of suicide, Burton uses this differentiation to argue for a more moderate stance on suicide verdicts.

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[93] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.6. 424.

As MacDonald and Murphy show, the belief in the devil's power permeated popular literature and legal documents,[94] creating a nexus of reality in which the individual, already caught in a cosmic struggle, was also ensnared by an earthly one, a battle he or she were ill-equipped to win. Especially for those cases that culminated in suicide, despair enlightens this complicated intersectionality mostly in that it exposes how influenced individuals were by discordance in the social structures of their day. Even more telling, though, is the relationship of discernment to this discordance, mainly in that, when the individual was forced to parse religious, legal, and secular governing terms, failure to meet expected exegetical outcomes ended in death, and misunderstanding the scriptures could end with a hanging.

This self-discernment represented the individual's preoccupation with his or her salvation, materializing as the fear of eternal damnation. For Johnstone, this threat was utilized as a form of Puritan social control, and he implicates the Puritans for producing a means to "browbeat their parishioners with the threat of hell."[95] But that threat was acknowledged by various church actors, including Burton. As Burton says in his criticism of thundering clergy members, the process of salvation/damnation "was extended by the laity in the strict regime of the Puritan family, and in the ironic self-sabotage of godly individual themselves," mainly implying that by transferring a system of power that operationalized victimization, these godly Puritans subverted their own intentions, undermining the purification process which gave them their credo. Unfortunately, for some believers, this victimization materialized as a complex emotional response, in some cases a nexus of fear and sorrow that created despair.

I believe that, because Burton is willing to see individuals as idiosyncratic, we must be careful in viewing how church teachings manifested in his work and how people responded to them. Before moving into despair as a response to the Church of England, I will discuss the fearful and sorrowful response to religion as a contradictory example, highlighting again that Burton and

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[94] MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls,* 47-60.

[95] Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism*, 18.

his argument must be situationally considered against the entirety of the text. For example, Burton evokes diabology in "Symptoms in the Mind" diametrically to the way he evokes it in "Sympotoms of Despair." He faults the individual in the former and exculpates them to a great degree in the latter.

In discussing fear and sorrow, Burton faults individuals for their suffering rather than the devil himself. While Burton admits that that the amount one fears or sorrows is relative, he is quick to indicate that fear and sorrow are "inseparable companions," both emotional reactions created by an individual's misperceptions.[96] Stemming from a "corrupt fantasy," the emotional reactions are stimulated by a misperceived external stimuli, mainly materializing as social anxiety.[97] In elaborating the conditions, though, it is significant that Burton faults the individual, citing an obvious disconnect between the individual and his or her social setting. For example, he engages with religious fears, where the individual believes "heaven will fall on their heads: some they are damned, or shall be." Though when cited here, Christianity and its host of characters are the dark fear of "hobgoblins and devils," a "thousand chimeras and visions."[98] Tonally, we see these projections as ungrounded fears or risks, just projections of a fearful mind. As he says of one such fearful archetype:

> Fear of devils, death, that they shall be so sick, of some such or such disease, ready to tremble at every object, they shall die themselves forthwith, or that some of their dead friends or near allies are certainly dead; imminent danger, loss, disgrace still torment others, etc.; that they are all glass, and therefore will suffer no man to come near them: that they are all cork, as light as feathers; others as heavy as lead; some are afraid their heads will fall off their shoulders, that they have frogs in there bellies, etc.[99]

In her book, *Robert Burton and The Transformative Powers of Melancholy*, Stephanie Shirilan explains that these delusional figures—hypochondriacs as they were becoming known— "represent what we might call the threat of psychic rupture under the pressure of competition affective

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[96] Burton, *Anatomy*, 1.3.1.2: 385.

[97] Ibid., 388. In most instances, Burton discusses this anxiety as similar to agoraphobia or an over-exaggeration of perceived risk, including fear of devils, witches, sink holes, public embarrassment, etc.

[98] Ibid., 387.

[99] Ibid., 386.

demands in popular piety and hygiene scripts."[100] In citing Timothy Reiss' *Mirages of the Selfe*, Shirilan extends this discussion to specifically glass men, men who believed their bodies were as fragile as glass, mentally materializing the figurative nature of the soul as ethereal and ephemeral; yet, Reiss hypothesizes that there is a subversive nature to this delusion, "suggesting that the cultural resonance of the glass delusion may have more to do with the fantasy of undermining than of bolstering the ego: that the glass delusion 'forbad belief in separable self.'"[101] The Glass Man, a hypochondriac who suffers from glass delusions, marks an interesting and informative instance where social theory—medical but also religious in this instance—materializes in the form of mental disorder, "projections of anxious vulnerability"; however, Shirilan's argument falters in that she embraces Reiss' willingness to see mental delusion as willed, political subversion.[102]

In applying her condition to examples of despair, Shirilan's discussion falters, specifically in reference to Spira's radically popular apostasy. Consider this passage:

> William Perkins and Robert Bolton both transcribe their conversation with melancholy prisoners such as [Francis] Spira and [Hannah] Allen. They do so, purportedly, to demonstrate techniques for their consolation, but the technique of reproduced dialogue has the effect more often than not of showcasing the insufficiency of the past's response to the parishioner's overly zealous but undeniably pious interception of Reformation theology. Where these men and women [i.e. the desperate] err they err in affection, failing to meet the harsh decree of predestination with good cheer. To accuse them of being too precise or excessively conscientious is to accuse them, in a sense, of being too great imitators of Christ. Spira is tormented by pangs of conscience not for his own sin but all sin. To Spira, all sins resemble one another: all are part of the collective burden Christ assumed on our behalf…[103]

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[100] Shirilan, *Robert Burton and The Transformative Powers of Melancholy* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 94.

[101] See Reiss, *Mirages of the Selfe: Patterson of Personhood in Ancient and Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003), and Gill Speak, "An Odd Kind of Melancholy: Reflections of the Glass Delusion in Europe (1440-1680)," *History of Psychiatry* 1 no.2 (1990). Though Shirlian is mostly interested in the fragile allegory, Speak clarifies that the Glass Men transform themselves materially, thinking of themselves as things like "a urinal, an oil lamp or other glass receptacle, or else he might himself be trapped within a glass bottle" (193).

[102] Reiss qtd. in Shirlian, *The Transformative Powers of Melancholy*, 96-7.

[103] Ibid., 97. Shirlian provides an interesting read into Spira's name, explaining that his non-Anglicized name, "Francis de Spera," would translate to "Francis of Hope" and Francis *without* Hope (Frances despera) simultaneously. She adds that Spira is a variant of Shapiro, a name commonly associated with the Jew of Speyer Germany, thereby signaling Spira as a conflation of enemies of Christ, a "racial obduracy and antipathy to [the] Christian faith" (98).

Spira is a quite famous example of despair, rhetorically framed by multiple authors, including Beard in *Theatre of Gods Judgment* (1597) and Nathaniel Bacon in his extremely popular book, *A Relation of the Fearefull Estate of Francis Spira* (1637).[104] Shirilan's discussion is laudable in that she is sensitive to Spira himself, the often contradictory voice lost to the tract's authorial framing provided by Beard and Bacon; yet, Shirilan's argument on Burton is not completely fair to Burton, as she tends to infer elements that are contradicted elsewhere. For example, Shirilan analyzes Burton's Spira citation as the same as his glass men analysis of erotomania. Unfortunately, this conflates his discussion of glass men from partition one with the Spira example, which comes in partition three, where Burton has clearly moved into his religious section of the treatise. This is significant because Burton takes pains to differentiate his approach to hypochondriacs like the glass men from the desperate.

In drawing the Spira narrative from Simon Goulart de Senlis, Burton explains that Spira suffered "the pains of hell in his soul" and ignored the council of learned men. He simply submits that, while Spira "in all other things…discoursed aright," he was "but in this [i.e. desperation] mad." The use of the narrative is brief, meant only to evaluate Spira as mad; yet, Burton interrupts his own reliance on Felix Platter to insert the famous reference. Why? Because Platter's examples are nuanced, and Burton concludes the section by admitting that these qualities, like the hypochondriacs, exist on a spectrum: 'These and such-like are intended and remitted, as the malady itself is more or less; some will hear good counsel, some will not; some desire help, some reject all, and will not be eased." He stops short of saying so, but Burton uses Spira as an example of the latter, the restless, the mad. Burton is less interested in Spira's voice than he is in evaluating

[104] For a discussion of the readership and impact of Spira's narrative, see Macdonald, "Fearefull Estate of Francis Spira." For Spira's place in England, see MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, 39-40.

Spira's rationality as it impacts his spiritual viability, but he admits that conditions, emotions, and bodily responses are relative.[105]

When we recall Burton's propensity to conflate mental illness with the term *madness*, it becomes more important to consider the surrounding evidence and previous categorizations. In "Symptoms in the Mind," Burton indicates that fear and sorrow are not "commons symptoms to all melancholy," and clarifies that he is explicitly discussing "fears without cause," as the section title clarifies.[106] Fear of random death [i.e. being randomly struck by a horse] and fear of predestination could be conflated as fears without cause, as both arise out of an over-exaggeration of risk and a lack of prescience; however, Burton inverts his "fears without cause" in order to distance hypochondria from despair. While fear and sorrow are emotional symptoms of hypochondria, Burton indicates explicitly that they are inspired by misperception, that these are 'without cause.' But when discussing the fear and sorrow associated with despair—when again the devil and his ilk are evoked—we see Burton's tone radically change, so much so that he uses *cause* as the principle difference between the two:

> But melancholy and despair, though often, do not always concur; there is much difference: *melancholy fears without a cause*, this upon great occasion; melancholy is caused by fear and grief, but this torment procures them and all extremity of bitterness; much melancholy is without affliction of conscience, as Bright and Perkins illustrate by four reasons; and yet *melancholy alone again may be sometimes a sufficient cause of this terror of conscience.*[107]

Signaled by Sherilan's discussion, I see in this passage that Burton teases out how the believer is fomented by an emotional response to religious discordance, a significant cause onto itself. No matter the reason, despair has a cause, something to be observed, something that the physician

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[105] For more on despair, its treatment, and its relationship to hypochondria see Schmidt "From Religion Despair to Hypochondria," in *Melancholy and the Care of the Soul*. In this chapter, Schmidt engages with underlying secularization arguments embedded in MacDonald and Murphy's *Sleepless Souls*.

[106] Burton, *Anatomy*, 1.3.1.2. 385.

[107] Ibid., 3.4.2.3. 396. Emphasis mine.

then must observe and, in some ways, respect.[108] In Burton's case, *despair* is significant because it is inspired by religion, because it is fundamentally a religious disease that is an end onto itself, a finality of both early and eternal life. In response to Sherilan, it is significant not because it is subversive or unwarranted, but because it is extremely dangerous to the very people who experience it.

Like despair, religiously inspired fear and sorrow had their place in religious worship. For example, in *Beyond Melancholy* Erin Sullivan explains that the proper Christian response to innate depravity—original sin—was tearful repentance: "Whereas tears for earthly losses were seen as vain and even life-harming, tears for ingrained human corruption […] evidenced a necessary humbling of the soul and an earnest desire for salvation."[109] Sorrow here functions as a conjured, ritualistic act, a behavioral component necessary to demonstrating one's Christianity.[110] Sullivan concludes that, in referencing the motif of Godly sorrow, these individuals were concerned to account "spiritually generative sorrow into the stories of their lives" and distinguishing it "from more suspect forms of medical and bodily melancholy."[111]

This demonstration of generative sorrow is true of Donne and other devotional poets, but while godly sorrow is symptomatically similar to despair, the focus on 'spiritually generative sorrow' is that it catalyzes renewal in grace and movement toward God,[112] whereas despair

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[108] Compare to Felix Platter's repeated belief that "*Melancholly* […] is a species of alienation of the mind in which the *imagination* and *judgment* are so perverted, that without any cause they are very sad and fearful, and they can alleadg[e] no certain cause of their sadness and fear, but that which is of no moment, or that false opinion which they have conceived from depraved apprehhension." Felix Platter, Abdiah Cole, and Nicholas Culpepper, "Platerus Golden Practice of Physick," (London: Peter Cole, 1664).

[109] Erin Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy: Sadness and Selfhood in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016), 127.

[110] Keith Thomas astutely puts it, "some suffering was almost essential as proof that God retained an interest in the person concerned." *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 82.

[111] Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy*, 128.

[112] Citing Kaufman's *Prayer, Despair, and Drama*, Sullivan concludes that narratives of "dejection and 'wretchedness' were used to 'spread displeasure,'" a tactic which encouraged "the painful process of scrutinizing their souls and humbling them sorrowfully before God" (136-7). Despair then is a stunting wherein the sinner never moves to the humbling stage.

essentially is the stoppage of growth, a spiritual stunting whereby the sinner moves inversely away from God. In discussing the mind/body divide, Sullivan concludes that, while despair continued as a part of one's redemptive cycle, its role and relationship to somatic suffering blurred: "Illness of the body ushered in illness of the soul, making it ever more difficult to determine if one's despair was a kind of holy trial, or a growing realization of one's eternal separation from God."[113] Burton blurs the religious soteriological stage and somatic affliction, explaining that "…affliction is a school or academy, wherein the best scholars are prepared to the commencements of the Deity"[114] while maintaining that these "religiously given" individuals "have tender consciences" and are prone to "inconsiderate readings" and "misinterpretation" of scripture. In short, while religious authorities like Perkins argued that suffering was necessary to mortification, scripture and mortification terrified "the souls of many," especially those with a predisposition to despair.[115]

In part, the difference lies in intentionality and control, perhaps even evoking sixteenth-century notions of disability.[116] The religiously sound believer slips into sorrow, fear, and despair to demonstrate their depravity and recuperation by the grace of God. But melancholics become disabled by their condition, incapacitated and in need of a return to humoral balance so that, when religious scripture and its meaning catalyzed the condition, they were ineffective to cure it.

Given the contentious religious landscape within England, Burton's theological engagement with despair embroils him in some of the pushback against the more draconian principles of Calvinism, mainly its reliance on election and predestination. While most critics agree that Burton explicitly indicts the church as responsible for promoting despair, they divide

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[113] Sullivan, *Beyond Melancholy,* 172.

[114] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.3. 425.

[115] Burton, *Anatomy,* 3.4.2.3. 398.

[116] In terms of the activism of disability studies, such as the research of Allison B. Hobgood and David Houston Wood, despair represents a true problem in that it is always seen as a deficit, always seen as a condition from which one must escape. For more on tensions surrounding disability studies and its role in historical research, see Jeffrey R. Wilson, "The Trouble with Disability in Shakespeare Studies," *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 37, no. 2 (2017). For Hobgood and Wood see *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio UP, 2013).

over how Burton engages with Calvinism, specifically how he views and moralizes *predestination*. Critics primarily agree that Burton is moderate in his spectral positioning, teasing Laudian universalism while still admitting a hesitance toward Calvinistic notions of predestination. According to John Stachniewski in *The Persecutory Imagination*: *English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair*, "Burton is, all the evidence suggests, one of those Church of England clerics who were quiescently conformist Calvinists. He conveys discomfort with the subject of predestination…"[117] Mary Ann Lund, who typically opposes Stachniewski, agrees with his dubious tone in "Reading and the Cure of Despair: The Anatomy of Melancholy." In this case, she reasons that Burton's "theological position is not straightforward or clear" and that "[Burton] is careful to avoid entering current polemical debates"[118]; however, in her expanded discussion in *Melancholy, Medicine, and Religion in Early Modern England*, Lund agrees with Stachniewski's claim that Burton is a Calvinist, focusing instead on his dubious position toward its tenets. She stresses that "Burton's ideas on predestination are an eclectic mixture, something he shares with many English clergymen and theologians of his day," finally concluding that "Burton deliberately distances himself from dogmatic commitment regarding the controversy, although there are signs in the text that he was drawn to a moderate anti-calvinist understanding of grace."[119] Even Gowland, who disagrees on Burton's reluctance to engage with church controversy,[120] reasons that, in attempting to depict religious melancholy as a product of social and religio-political schisms, Burton was being pushed toward "a viewpoint in which the problems to be solved concerned the

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[117] Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination*, 244.

[118] Mary Ann Lund, "Reading and the Cure of Despair in *The Anatomy of Melancholy,*" *Studies in Philology* 105 vol. 4 (Fall 2008): 53.

[119] Lund. *Melancholy, Medicine, and Religion*, 75.

[120] For a more substantial treatment of the evolution of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* text and the Anglican Church, see "Melancholy and Divinity" in *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy*. Additionally, see Lund's extended discussion in "The Cure of Despair: Reading the End of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*" from her book *Melancholy, Medicine and Religion*.

broad social and political effects of religious belief rather than its theological rectitude, or even its relationship to the destiny of the individual soul rather than social harmony."[121]

Even if Burton is willing to engage with these social, religious tensions—here, mainly between the Calvinist and Laudian clergy over grace—he is quick to qualify them, perhaps, despite Gowland's reasoning, because of his focus on 'the destiny of the individual soul rather than social harmony.' There is something in both the text and the critical assessment of it that boils down to Burton's anxious engagement with despair, something that exhumes the author's emotional resonance. If we compare "Religious Melancholy" as a different section from its despair subsection, we see that Burton is most willing to engage with the religious and political tensions and discordance in the "Religious Melancholy" section because he is expressing theological belief, theoretical problems on a global scale; however, in the despair section, when he is dealing with the individual, Burton galvanizes his concern for the desperate at the expense of his theological beliefs, engaging with his Calvinist leanings by expressing suspicion toward key Calvinist traits, like election and predestination, because of their effect on the individual. This is most readily available in the cures section, where Burton departs from his medical discursive style to reason with the reader, his tone "shot through with emotional, spiritual, and philosophical response to the pain of melancholy,"[122] yet still tonally different from the consolatory tradition from which he borrows his concern for the reader. Unlike the consolation tradition, Burton omits the "sharp rebukes" that chastise the sinner, rebukes which emulated the thunderous ministers whom Burton scorns. Instead, Burton's tone—even when engaging directly with religious discourse—again dissembles his own perspective to reiterate concern for the desperate.[123]

Like his definitions of *melancholy*, Burton's religious allegiances become less important the closer he gets to himself or to the individual. When he speaks of the desperate individual, his

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[121] Gowland, *Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy*, 204.

[122] Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine, and Religion*, 180.

[123] Ibid.

definitional anxiety and hedging categorizations of despair become even more apparent. Lund puts this with more certainty: "It is impossible to reach an entirely definitive statement of Robert Burton's beliefs about grace and predestination based on the evidence of 'Cure of Despaire' and perhaps Burton himself would not have been able to do so."[124] Furthermore, as even Stachniewski acknowledges, Burton's anxious engagement with the religious condition again splits the medical and theological interests, manifesting in "a constant shifting tone of facetiousness, half-irony, and disavowal."[125] This shifting religious belief and anxious or ambiguous treatment of despair evidences more than just inherent textual quirks; it shows a genuine concern that the devil could surely penetrate the soul. As a general strategy, Burton advocates or engages with a number of religious terms, tenets, or controversies in any given passage, but maintains an explicit belief that comfort for the afflicted and concern for their salvation are the two paramount points of religion.

Two examples of these textual and scriptural engagements should suffice to show Burton's concern for the desperate, specifically in the face of religious controversy. Burton accounts for an on-going spiritual susceptibility to despair by tempering how he understands the human will, a concept Burton clearly references as a Lutheran and Calvinist depiction, but sought to clarify with references to Arminianism and his own unorthodox stylings. Mary Ann Lund explores Burton's 'unorthodox' depiction of will by analyzing his use of German reformer Philip Melanchton, from whom Burton pulls a notion of will that directly limits or tempers the social adjudicative mechanism, basically the need through which society must govern and control a person as a rational actor. According to Lund's reading, Burton borrows from Melanchton a sense that the law itself—both Old Testament and human law—was meant to guide the spiritual development of man. For Melanchton, these laws were necessary in that they fluidly allowed human agency and yet still put the onus on them to fear God, a concept discussed in my first chapter as cooperative grace: "While God's grace is the primary cause of conversion, Melanchton teaches that the will to a

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[124] Ibid., 75.

[125] Stachniewski. *The Persecutory Imagination,* 225.

certain extent cooperates in the process since God draws only those who are willing to be drawn."[126] By allowing the human will more agency than would be acceptable under strict Calvinism, Burton uses Melanchton as an alternative to the strictly Calvinist reading of *predestination.*

As exemplified by the Melanchton-Calvin tension, Burton uses our shared "absurd paradoxes" as a means of tonally challenging some of the more draconian church teachings.[127] In "Cure of Despair," Burton spends several pages summarizing some of the more controversial aspects of the church, including the tensions both within the Church of England and between it and other religious sects. Most important, however, are explicitly references to Luther and Calvin and the minor references to Arminians—though, as Lund mentions, not Arminius himself. Still, in referencing Arminius' teachings, Burton carefully separates them from Origen and the famous—albeit false—conflation with Arminius' "*plausible doctrine* of universal grace."[128] Over a page after praising universal grace as plausible, Burton evokes Origen in order to tonally assuage a Faustian fear of eternal damnation: "For how can he be merciful that shall condemn any creature to eternal unspeakable punishment, for one small temporary fault, all posterity, so many myriads for one and another's man's offense *quid meruistis oves?*"[129] These rhetorical questions do more than simply provide sarcastic or subversive thoughts because they work similar to a double entendre, where by signifying one thing, the rhetorical question baits the reader into considering a heresy or false statement. In this instance, the claim itself is faulty (Burton is aware that humans are held responsible for their death), but the tone is important: concern for the death of others, while unavoidable, may not be excusable, but it is important nevertheless. For example, the Ovid Latin acts as antecedent to Burton's complaint that such thoughts are absurd; yet, like the rhetorical

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[126] Lund, *Melancholy, Medicine, and Religion*, 186.

[127] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.6.

[128] ibid., 421.

[129] Ibid., 423.

question, the Latin provides a metonymic example: it rhetorically begs the sheep (*oves*) to self-indict for a guiltless crime (What have you done wrong to deserve death?), while critiquing without context the Pythagoreans, implying that only the Pythagoreans, here used as a heretical group, would absurdly defend animals destined to die.

Stuck in a nexus of theological conflict and latent human suffering, the reader fails to see the importance of the trick: Burton asks and then refutes, but his refutation does not erase the asking, meaning that Burton can have his cake and eat it, as well. He fails to gloss the rhetorical question or the Ovid passage, but the reference is telling. Livestock and humans are similar in their life; pain, hardship, toil, suffering, and death are the emotional realities of the farm animal, but, as he says elsewhere, also of the desperate. Drawn from pagan rather than Christian iconography, Burton uses the sheep as subtle analogies for the absurdity of church theologians, but, if he truly believes how absurd the Pythagoreans sound, he interrupts his railing against the church explorations to advocate the universality of grace in the face of election:

> …we must be certain of our salvation, we may fall, but not finally, which our Arminians will not admit. According to his immutable, eternal, just decreed counsel of saving men and angels, God calls all, and would have all to be saved according to the efficacy of vocation[130]: all are invited, but only the elect apprehended: the rest that are unbelieving, impenitent, whom God in His just judgement leaves to be punished for their sins, are in a reprobate sense; yet *we must not determine who are such, condemn ourselves or others, because we have an universal invitation; all are commanded to believe, and we know not how soon or how late our end we may be be received.*[131]

In this passage, Burton sounds strikingly like Donne and his ilk; however, there is a certain pragmatism that, once again, mediates how the believer interacts with scripture, even at the expense of religious engagement. In the section I have italicized, we see Burton's awareness that, like *predestination* represents a forbidden question into God's knowledge of election, so too do

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[130] As Arminius explains, the "efficacy of vocation" comes from a "concordance" of internal and external vocations, a relationship that accounts for human agency. The external vocation are the actions of the believer in accordance to their vocation—their calling; the internal vocation is the stimulation of the Holy Spirit on illuminating and motivating the heart to hearing things saids and acknowledging the word. Arminius, "Disputation XLII: On the Vocation of Sinful Men to Christ, and to a Participation of Salvation in Him," *The Works of Jacbous Arminius, Volume 2: Private Disputations*, Ed. Antony Uyl (Ontario: Devoted Publishing, 2017), 41.

[131] Burton, *Anatomy*, 423-4. Emphasis mine.

inquiries into others' salvation welcome criticism. In the following section, I return to the inquiry that started this chapter, an inquiry into the fate of the dead. I explain that, in structuring his despair chapter to conclude on a valediction forbidding our inquiry into other's fate, Burton participates like a small but important section of Londoners who looked on despair in a less-scrutinizing manner.

IV: Legal and Social restrictions to Suicide in London

In his short "Prognostics of Despair" section, Burton explains that, of those desperate who kill themselves, the majority are "mad, blaspheme, curse, [or] deny God;" yet, of their means of suicide, he only says that they need "no illustration." Drawn from Felix Platter, Burton provides examples of suicidal means, such as jumping from buildings, drowning, and hanging, the last of which was commonly linked with *despair.* In *Allegory of the Vices and and Virtues* (1306), medieval Florentine Giotto di Bondone shows *Desperatio* as a woman hanging herself as a demon penetrates her head.[132] In Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Despeyre wears "about his neck an hempen rope."[133] Burton, following in this association, links despair with hanging in "The Author's Abstract of Melancholy":

Figure 3: Giotto, "Desperatio"

> I'll change my state with any wretch,

[132] Figure 3 is one of Giotto di Bondone's representations of vice, despair. "Cappella degli Scrovegni: Desperatio," *Giottodibondone.org* (2 Apr. 2018).

[133] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Ed. A.C. Hamilton (New York: Longman, 2007) I.ix. 22. l. 7. 117. Hamilton's gloss indicates that Despeyre is wearing a hangman's halter (fn. 117), though the *OED* lists "A rope with a noose for hanging malefactors," as the second definition to *halter*. "halter, n.1," in *OED* Online (Oxford: Oxford UP, June 2017).

> Thou canst from gaol or dunghill fetch;
> My pain's past cure, another hell,
> I may not in this torment dwell!
> Now desperate I hate my life,
> Lend me a halter or a knife;[134]

As with the knife also referenced in Burton's "The Author's Abstract" and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the means to commit suicide both metonymically symbolizes the linkage between suicide and despair, as well as its stigma in society. Simply seeing a noose immediately evokes suicide and its social abhorrence. The culturally loaded relationship between despair and suicide—a relationship with clear legal, cultural, and religious baggage—is thereby easily referenced through the symbol of a noose, the stigma easily conjured through a knife. And yet, Burton's own writing resists what these motifs suggest. Rather than approach despair as simply a literary theme or a routinized medical condition, Burton shows an astute understanding of the lethality of both hanging and despair, clearly adjusting his religio-medical engagement based on its legal and cultural implications.

Like the early modern noose, lethality is an important discussion in suicide awareness today because certain objects carry the stigma of suicide and the ease of its achievement. For example, the Golden Gate Bridge became both a symbol and a means of suicide.[135] To mitigate this stigma, a public debate urged the construction of a physical barrier to symbolically and physically impact its stigmatization.[136] In the public contentions over the suicide barrier (finally funded in 2015; construction began in 2017), lethality was an important argument in showing that, because suicide was impulse-driven, lethal means were important in considering how likely a person was to 1) receive help and 2) regret their decision.[137] For example, researchers have shown that guns

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[134] Burton, "The Author's Abstract of Melancholy," In *Anatomy*, 13.

[135] Richard H. Seiden and Mary Spence, "A Tale of Two Bridges: Comparative Suicide Incidents on the Golden Gate and San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridges," *Omega*, 14:3. (Baywood, 1983).

[136] For an important example, see Tad Friend, "Jumpers," *New Yorker* (October 13, 2003).

[137] Richard H. Seiden, "Where are They Now? A Follow-up Study of Suicide Attempters from the Golden Gate Bridge," *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 8:4 (Winter 1978).

(95%)[138] and the Golden Gate Bridge (98%)[139] had an exceptional impact on whether a suicide could regret his or her decision, simply because the chances of surviving a suicide attempt (5% and 2% respectively) were so low. This knowledge allowed proponents of a suicide barrier to use the bridge's lethality to encourage lawmakers and the bridge authority to remove the lethality, in this case, by establishing a barrier.[140] The insidious nature of the 'barrier,' is that, rather than preventing jumping, the suicide net actually allow suicides to fulfill the impulse to jump, allowing the potential suicide to fulfill their desire while mitigating their physical injuries.[141] In short, these individuals attempted suicide and were injured—but lived.

In this analogous case, the assumptions involve the threat of death, potential for impact or regret, and impact of potential cure. These assumptions materialized as bridge barrier proponents struggled against common misconceptions imbedded in legal and social authorities.[142] Writing in the seventeenth century, Burton similarly struggles with the theological, legal, and cultural implications of suicide, but, rather than engaging with the symbol itself, Burton's suicide debate focuses on despair, the religious condition through which the desperate are tempted to kill themselves. As illustrated above, Burton carefully engaged with medical and religious discourse over despair. In this final section, I explore how Burton uses legal perspectives on suicide to advocate for leniency toward suicide in London, where his book is published and, assumedly, a large section of his readership was located. By carefully advocating for the insanity of the

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[138] Dayna Atkins Whitmer and David Lauren Woods, "Analysis of the Cost Effectiveness of the a Suicide Barrier on the Golden Gate Bridge," *Crisis* 34:2 (2013): 103.

[139] Seiden, "Where are They Now," 208.

[140] Edward Guthmann, "Lethal Beauty: The Allure: Beauty and an easy route to death have long made the Golden Gate Bridge a magnet for suicides," *SFGate* (October 30, 2005).

[141] As of 2018, the barrier has yet to be built, but the nature of the barrier and its potential for trapping survivors is remarked upon by reporters. See Samantha Schmidt, "After years and hundreds of suicides off the Golden Gate Bridge, a new net could save lives," *The Washington Post* (April 14, 2017).

[142] As Guthmann complains of the GGB suicide problem, "Strangely, the greatest stumbling block in the building of a suicide barrier is the attitude of a population that prides itself on open-mindedness." "Lethal Beauty."

desperate, Burton tries to undermine pervasive social stigma toward despair and suicide within the Age of Severity.[143]

In early modern England, both legal and popular thought defined suicide as willed murder, "a conscious and premeditated act committed by a fully rational criminal."[144] Generally speaking, the major facets of life—religion, legal, political, etc.—were aligned against the suicidal for much of English history.In part, these connotations of suicide were exacerbated during the sectarian conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, trickling into the courts and, unfortunately for the desperate, increasing the rigidity of their punishment.

As historian Ralph Houlbrooke curtly summarizes: "Suicide was the worst sort of bad death."[145] Construed as a failure of religious and secular life— "a secular crime as well as the worst of sins"[146]— English society constructed the desperate as paradoxically both irrational and rational simultaneously, both demonically overpowered and yet still capable of premeditated murder. This legal qualification reflected the popular view that suicide was a crime against the monarch and God, as eighteenth-century jurist William Blackstone explains: "[T]he suicide is guilty of a double offence; one spiritual, in invading the prerogative of the Almighty, and rushing into his immediate prefence uncalled for; the other temporal, against the king, who hath an interest in the preservation of all his subjects."[147] The general populace participated in the punishment of suicide

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[143] MacDonald dubs the period between 1500 and 1660 the 'Age of Severity,' noting that, in terms of convicted *felo de se* cases, there is a steep plateau between 1560 and 1640. It serves as a section title in his article "The Medicalization of Suicide."

[144] Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam* (New York: Cambridge Press Syndicate, 1981), 133.

[145] Ralph Anthony Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 210.

[146] Ibid.

[147] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1765), IV.xiv. 189

either through the spectacle of the suicide's body or as a jurist assigned to adjudicate a suicide's lucidity and his or her penitence.[148]

In his synthesis of religious discourse, Burton contends that suicide's acceptability depends on the suddenness of the desperate's act, how lethal their means proved. His interest here is less the legal framework through which one evaluates a suicide's mental state, and more the spiritual status: "It is controverted by some, whether a man so offering violence to himself, dying desperate, may be saved, ay or no? If they die so obstinately and suddenly that they cannot so much as wish for mercy, the worse is to be suspected, because they die impenitent."[149] The contention for Burton is not over the legality of the crime itself, but how that legality depended upon the salvation of the sinner, or over how it is received by the ecclesiastical courts. As with any jury or court case, much of this boiled down to provability. For Burton, the church inculpates sinners based on arguments about intentionality that are false. Conversely, because the ecclesiastical courts were interested in soteriological conditions only insofar as they represented the mental capacities of the individual, they were less interested in penitence than will. To be cynical, much of their motivation was based on the money that suicides brought into crown coffers, where even jurors received payment for each homicide (including suicide) convicted.

Suicides were primarily under the purview of the ecclesiastical courts who adjudicated whether a person committed suicide and whether the person did so rationally (*felonia de seipso*; shortened to *felo de se*) or irrationally (*non compos mentis*).[150] According to historian Michael MacDonald, death by self-murder was afforded the typical legal qualifiers attached to murder,

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[148] For suicide historians, popular perspectives on suicide are difficult to trace, and much of the empirical evidence used by major historians, like MacDonald and Murphy, and suicidologoists, like Durkheim, has been questioned in print. For a survey of English and German historical suicide scholarship and its shortcomings, see Róisín Healy, "Suicide in Early Modern and Modern Europe," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (September 2006): 903-919. 10.1017/S0018246X06005577.

[149] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.6. 408.

[150] As Edmund Wingate explains, "He is *felo de se* that doth destroy himself out of premeditated hatred against his own life or out of a humor to destroy himself." Wingate qtd in MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam,* 133.

mainly that the age and state of mind of the perpetrator were important in qualifying the act. Though tried along with other forms of suspicious death, suicide both echoed and deviated from other types of criminality. For example, in explaining *felonicè*, J.H. Baker explains that *mens rea* was implied by the early modern usage of *felony*, so that, in labeling someone a felony, the implications were that he or she were capable of evil intentions. In using these terms, the courts both during and after the sixteenth century were less interested in the state of the felon's mind as they were with the "defendant's capacity to form a malicious intent," or whether the accused was able to "know right from wrong" so that, if unable to morally reason, "his action was more like an animal reflex than the exercise of moral choice."[151] Like other cases of felony and *mens rea*, self-murder depended on arguments about will, intention, and murder. Partly because more moderate illness did not necessarily affect the will,[152] the court sought to investigate whether the suicide willed his or her act, and intentionality, like when determining a homicide, was essential to a *felo de se* verdict.[153] Depending on the culture and country, *felo de se* verdicts legally required a seizure of property, public bodily mutilation, or, in some cases, a combination of the two.

As depicted in Burton's earlier Foreest reference, suicide burial necessitated a secondary mediator, an official who reviewed and, if necessary, granted a license or censure for burial. This person was the coroner. Besides attending court, the coroner's primary duty by 1600 was evaluating the cause of suspicious deaths, although they were generally empowered to call witness and juries, imprison murders, and call for court trials.[154] On being notified of a contentious death,

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[151] Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (New York: Oxford UP, 2007), 524-5. Baker sees the rise of medical jurisprudence as the main cause for a change of perspective toward suicide.

[152] Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 135.

[153] Michael Zell, "Suicide in Pre-Industrial England," *Social History*11:3 (October 1986): 307.

[154] James Sharpe and J.R. Dickinson, "Coroner's Inquests in an English Country, 1600-1800: A Preliminary Survey," *Northern History* xlviii (September 2, 2011): 254.

the coroner used regional constables to summon members of a jury.[155] As a local member of the gentry with some medical knowledge and enough land and holdings to pay fines, the coroner was typically of higher standing[156] than the jury, which was typically comprised of "yeomen and husbandmen" and "sailors, saddlers, shoemakers, and in at least one case, a minstrel."[157]

Although the coroner, like today, primarily was in charge of the body and its evidence, the jury itself maintained some power over the interpretation of the corpse. As Carol Loar notes in "'Under Felt Hats and Worsted Stockings': The Uses of Conscience in Early Modern English Coroners' Inquests," the coroners' juries had a "self-informing nature" through which they "collected and examined evidence, and pursued lines of inquiry, often outside the inquest setting." While these juries were chosen from local principalities, their knowledge and biases are difficult to determine, but their function was to administer a verdict on the cause of death. In cases of suicide, this verdict was unchallengable, even by the coroner himself; yet, if dissatisfied, the crown could request a follow-up in the Star Chamber.[158]

Legally, a suicide's chattel was forfeit to the royal almoner,[159] a servant of the crown who, in theory, distributed the goods as alms. These goods, called forfeitures, were the legal fine for

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[155] Carol Loar, "'Under Felt Hats and Worsted Stockings': The Uses of Conscience in Early Modern English Coroners' Inquests," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (2010): 395. While there are some nuanced differences between the country and city coroners, I focus on London, so I have ignored some of these minor idiosyncrasies.

[156] MacDonald and Murphy reiterate Sir Thomas Smith's 1583 observation that coroners were drawn from a "meaner sort of Gentlement." Qtd in James Sharpe and J.R. Dickinson, "Corner's Inquests," 255. For more on Coroners and juries, see MacDonald and Murphy, "The Coroner's Jury," In *Sleepless Souls*, 110-4. Sharpe and Dickinson indicate that a full-scale study of coroners has yet to be written, implying that MacDonald and Murphy are supported by Smith's observation alone.

[157] Loar, "Under Felt Hats," 395.

[158] Ibid., 396.

[159] Blackstone explains the reasoning for this punishment in his *Commentaries:*

> [T]hen for this offence [i.e. suicide] it is reasonable to punish the living man, who committed the offence, and not the dead man. But how can he be said to be punished alive, when the punishment comes after his death? Sir, this can be done no other way but by divesting out of him, from the time of the act done in his lifetime which was the cause of his death, the title and property of those things which he had in his lifetime.

In order to punish the suicide who has died, they punish the living man's extension, i.e. his family. II.xxvii 404 fn 1.

having done "a thing against or without Law or Custome."[160] When dissatisfied with either the "verdict [of a coroner's jury] or appraisal" of suicide's goods, the almoner could request "his most potent weapon," the Star Chamber, to review a trial.[161] Within the legal process, the Star Chamber was the formal setting through which several important outcomes could be tempered or changed. It also, as MacDonald explains, provides the majority of our evidence for how cases were heard or tempered.[162] For example, an almoner's suit to the Star Chamber represented a real danger to families as it essentially could strip them of potential inheritance, especially given that the majority of suicides were men.[163] Coming in response to a jury's verdict, these suits were a moment through which the state meant to either take possession of a suicide's possessions or mediate a suicide's punishment. While after the mid-1580s, almoners increasingly threatened jury independence in deciding a trial, most trials did not represent much financial incentive and most "suicides forfeited nothing at all." Others possessed "nothing" or had their chattel valued at "very small sums."[164] Regardless, almoners "sued in [the] Star Chamber and sued often,"[165] implying either that the financial incentive was worth the suits or that there may be another exigence driving them. Most historians cite this increase in suits even while acknowledging the little financial worth of them with passing speculation. I believe the suits speak more to a quasi-benevolent desire to stigmatize suicide rather than any individualistic avarice, thus explaining why almoners wasted energy demanding 'very small sums' from poor

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[160] Sir Edward Coke, "An Abridgement of the Lord Coke's commentary on Littleton" (London: W. Lee, D. Pakeman, and G. Bedell, 1651), 801. For exceptions, i.e. dower and land deeds, see Edmund Plowden, *An exact Abridgment in English of the Commentaries* (London: FH, 1650), 154-7.

[161] Ibid., 413, 396.

[162] MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 137.

[163] Over one-third of reported suicides were women, but, as legally unlikely to own property, the court stood to gain little from pursuing a suit against them. Fifty percent of reported women suicides were married, and thus would have defaulted their property and money to their husbands. MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, 27.

[164] MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, 26.

[165] Ibid., 27, 78.

families.[166] Still, the almoner's pursuit of suits against poor families could not have helped the reputation of an increasingly disliked Star Chamber.

Located in Westminster Abbey in London, the Star Chamber served as a supplementary body to try criminal and civil proceedings, a "extraordinary or supplementary court of law" used increasingly to prosecute "sedition and ecclesiastical offenses."[167] In hearing cases of suicide, the official mediator was the vicar general. As Paul Seaver explains in *Suicide and the Vicar General in London*, the vicar general was "the chief judicial officer of a diocese, […] a layman with training in civil law who both presided over the bishop's courts and over an office that granted licenses," including, in special circumstances, the license for Christian burial and, should a decision of *felo de se* be decided, then a seizure of property, the suicide's chattel. In special circumstances, the episcopal licensing of burial typically granted the right of burial, and, for Seaver, a similarity between licenses implies some overlap in how cases were dealt with, but in all of the manuscript licenses the court granted, the court directly faults the suicide for self-murder, normally including a caveat that the self-murderer be buried on consecrated land.[168]

According to MacDonald and Murphy, there was an increase in *felo de se* verdicts between 1560 and 1630. Roughly 97% of suicide cases during that time received a *felo de se* verdict.[169] When deciding dubious cases, juries "often returned verdicts of *felo de se* when it was impossible to prove with certainty that a suicide had occurred."[170] As "willing participants in the reign of severity,"[171] the jury's rigidity created a complicated communal response to suicide, though the social stigma of suicide remained intact: "There was a striking disjunction between

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[166] An alternative explanation may be just how perversive lawsuits were in early modern England, where "about four million persons were involved in over one million legal actions every year." B.J. Sokol and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* (New York: Cambridge, 2003), 3.

[167] Baker, *Introduction Legal History*, 117-9.

[168] Seaver, "Suicide and the Vicar General," 25-8.

[169] Macdonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, 27-31.

[170] Ibid., 57.

[171] Ibid., 59.

popular attitudes to the secular and the religious penalties for self-murder." In other words, while violent, 'condign' burials were carried out by a participatory and almost appreciative community,[172] the seizure of property was generally frowned upon, and was "very often evaded or resisted."[173] MacDonald and Murphy's research implies that, while suicide remained stigmatized for the general populace, their attitude toward the seizure of property *could be* protective on behalf of their desperate neighbors. Evidence shows the jury could resist an almoner's attempts to seize a potential suicide's property rights, should they choose to do so. Potential resistance, however, did not imply that juries actually did resist. To return to the financial motivation for these suits, over 90% of suicides from common roots received *felo de se* verdicts despite their lower economic means, whereas around 65% of suicides from the gentry were found guilty of intentional self-murder, even though they were reasonably more well-off.[174]

And yet, historians still see at least a potential reluctance to strip a family of its inheritance, a belief that followed a corner's case into the Star Chamber. Appeals to the ecclesiastical court were bumped to the Star Chamber, framed as disputes between the crown—"anxious to confiscate the victim's goods"—and the family. In resistance to such financial threats, the family and friends sought to frame the crime not as accidental or self-inflicted but caused by mental illness.[175] While it is easier to see the crown and suicide's families as dichotomous, the reality is that there are multiple social forces at contention in the court, perhaps most encapsulated by MacDonald's passing comment about communal outsiderness as a predictor of *felo de se* verdicts: "[I]t is safe to say that eighteenth-century *felones de se* were often marginal members of the community in which they died: strangers, criminals, people in disgrace, servants, apprentices,

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[172] Compare to Gittings' comment that for some clergy, the "extreme brutality of the traditional burial rights for suicides" encouraged leniency "toward the bodies" of the unfortunates. Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual*, 74.

[173] MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, 78.

[174] See Michael MacDonald, "The Secularization of Suicide in England 1660-1800," *Past & Present* 111 (May 1986): 50-100.

[175] MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 137.

abject paupers."[176] In these instances, we see that coroners' juries were "in effect mediators between the values and interests of the governing elite and the sentiments of the local community."[177] Suicides were just another instance of a social nexus wherein the destitute were reliant upon the community sensibilities, normally at great loss.

Above I have mapped a bit of the multiple factors that impact the burial of suicides, including the multiple parties and some of their incentives. What appears in this discussion is that, while we may frame almoners, juries, and petitioners as financially motivated, their engagement seems to have involved a more complicated, diverse sense of social obligations, most of which may be explained easily by this: while money, social standing, and religion were all at play, the soul of the suicidal was forefront at stake. For example, MacDonald establishes that soon after after the Restoration, juries began palliating the laws of suicide by helping families avoid forfeitures by directly awarding more *non compos mentis* verdicts, implying a buffer against rights to chattel[178]; yet, while this occurred on a smaller scale before the Restoration, the vast majority of suicides in this period received the *felo de se* verdict. A notable exception to this involves cases that were originally found *felo de se* by juries and yet granted consecrated burial by the courts, meaning that the petitions maintained that a suicide *committed suicide intentionally* and yet was still granted burial.

Paul Seaver has shown that in London roughly during the period Burton was active and writing *The Anatomy*, the Vicar General saw an increase in petitions to allow for church burials of suicides, an increase illustrative of a complex understanding of suicide. The London Vicar seems to have understood suicide in a way that explicitly allowed for Christian burial while still condemning the act as illegal. Unlike the rigidity with which other church leaders approached suicide, the London Vicar's mindset reflectively illustrates a

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[176] MacDonald, "Secularization of Suicide," 78. MacDonald indicates that mercy toward the destitute and resistance to seizure of the goods was characteristic of the period. See pp. 79-80.

[177] Ibid., 79.

[178] MacDonald, "Medicalization of Suicide," 75.

> public opinion sufficiently ambivalent about suicide to permit these vicar generals, who were, it must be remembered, civil lawyers, not churchmen, to take a permissive stance toward the issue of Christian burial, and to encourage the laity to seek such Christian rites for their friends who had murdered themselves in some publicly obvious fashion. These licenses, after all, never condoned the act and never suggested that to kill oneself was virtuous.[179]

Roughly between 1600 and 1640, several decades before MacDonald and Murphy establish a period of leniency, social forces combined in a way that "it became plausible for petitioners to request, and a series of vicars general to grant, such petitions [as allowed for christian burial]."[180] While the rest of the surrounding counties continued declaring rigid *felo de se* verdicts, "London led the country both in opinion and in practice, anticipating later changes perhaps by as much as two or three generations."[181] Perhaps not unrelated, these same juries also convicted 81% of gentry suicides, an increase of around 18% the statistical average.[182] In this small, but important section of England, we see juries engaging with suicide in a way that both illustrates its lack of social bias —commoners and gentry were both permitted Christian burial and both risked financial seizure —while also bucking the trend of other English regions.[183]

Seaver's work illustrates a growing change in sentiment in London, a change which Burton seems to be affected by and contributing to—a changing perspective on suicide that is, as Seaver hypothesizes, a bi-product of stage, print, and other forms of public engagement with suicide. In the remaining pages of this chapter, I discuss Burton's role in this public engagement, speculating that *The Anatomy of Melancholy* acts as a type of locus for these sentiments, encapsulating and expressing some of the dynamic—though often contradictory—ways in which society attempted to mitigate and punish suicide.

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[179] Seaver, "Suicide and the Vicar General," 45.

[180] Ibid., 45.

[181] Ibid., 47.

[182] Ibid., 29-30. This said, MacDonald and Murphy hypothesize that the bulk of suicides were poor, based mostly on increased suicides during bad harvest years and the fact that most suicide's possessions were valued at "less than five pounds" (27).

[183] As many scholars have noted, the staking of suicides was not present in northern England or Scotland.

While primarily exploring social bias toward suicide, Seaver's argument relies on the narrative evidence offered by petitioners to encourage a *non compose mentis* verdict or the granting of Christian burial. Within this adjudicative moment, the actions and body of the desperate became a codex, a mode of recovering or constructing the mental edifice of the suicide, a means by which loved ones re-narrated the biography of a suicide so that they appeared repentant. The petitioners themselves maintain several important tropes, mostly aimed at establishing a cause for suicide, such as social causes (debt), mental trauma (loss of child), or personal sickness (interminate pain). In elaborating these causes, petitions "always offered grounds that might explain or excuse the act, mitigating circumstance that might justify" excusing the suicide from further punishment. Of these eclectic justifications, two stand out: the time to repent and language of distraction or melancholia.[184]

In discussing despair and suicide, Burton evokes both these principles directly. In discussing the lethal means of suicide, Burton shows that lethal means is significant to establishing penitence, implying that more lethal a means, such as hanging, the less likely one could repent:

> If their death [i.e. the desperate's] had been a little more lingering, wherein they might have some leisure in their hearts to cry for mercy, charity may judge the best; divers have been recovered out of the very act of hanging and drowning themselves, and so brought *ad sanam mentem*, they have been very penitent, much abhorred their former act, confessed that they have repented in an instant, and cried for mercy in their hearts.[185]

Aware both of the religio-cultural stigma of suicide (demonic) and its legal process (rational or not), Burton explicitly notes that the lethality of means could impact the defensibility of a suicide, basically the evidence needed by the suicide's family to defend their death. Notice that the keys to the narrative are *ex post facto* abhorrence for suicide and also the *demonstrable* act of penitence: the confession. As with most court hearings, the courts relied on available witnesses to

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[184] Seaver, "Suicide and the Vicar General in London," 32-9. Drawing from the court records, Seaver provides several importance cases; however, while he discusses Burton in passing, he does not directly engage with Burton's mode of embracing this language, mistakenly stating that Burton fails to discuss a suicidal burial.

[185] Burton, *Anatomy*, 408.

demonstrate this penitence, and the narratives include notable moments whereby the suicidal may exculpate themselves. The trick, though, was highlighting a change of mind, a movement from the desperate temptation to the redeemed or redemptive. For example, in the Richard Allen case of 1601, Allen was incapable of verbally committing himself to God because he had sliced his throat. Confession is not possible. However, Allen demonstrates a change of mind—his penitence—by "groaning and lifting up his hands, whereby it appeared, that he had an apprehension of, or was penitent for, the sin he had committed in laying violent hands on himself, and died a good Christian."[186] A parishioner of London, Allen was granted Christian burial because his petitioners were able to demonstrate his change from desperate to redeemed.

Hidden in Burton's language is the knowledge that, because suicide is impulsive, it represents a certain turning of one's mind, a moment when one has lost oneself. Whether it be religiously explained, as when Satan gains control of the mind, or legally explained, as in an intended suicide, the act of suicide is diametrically opposed to the act of repentance, one representing an act of destruction, the other an act of reconstitution: 'diverse *have been recovered* out of the very act of hanging and drowning themselves, and so brought *ad sanam mentem*.' As testament to this return to sense, suicides *abhor* and *repent, confess* and *cry*, demonstrating through internal feelings and physical acts a reconstitution of rationality. In the case of the London-based coroners, these feelings and acts worked to separate the legality of the situation (the crime against the King) and the soteriological implications (the sin against God), admitting to the physical suffering from the suicidal's crime while expressing the penitence for the act.[187]

Burton's use of *drowning* and *hanging* is interesting in that they represent diametric cases, one semantically exchangeable for self-murder and the other vastly more dubious, yet still essentialized as self-murder. Both means were very popular forms of suicide; hanging was the primary means of death for men, followed by drowning. For women, drowning was the primary

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[186] qtd. in Seaver, "Suicide and the Vicar General," 27-8.

[187] Seaver, "Suicide and the Vicar General," 38.

cause of death. Following the trend of all suicide trials, *felo de sec* verdicts were the most common outcome; however, despite their shared popularity, the difference between hanging and drowning has more to do with the the dubious nature of their evidence: hanging was *de facto* willed suicide whereas drowning took concerted effort to decide, creating a "mystery for the jury to solve."[188]

In most of the petitions Seaver engages with, hanging resulted in a *felo de se* verdict and a declined petition. Indeed, even in the period of leniency, the only gentry to receive a *felo de se* verdict hanged himself.[189] Whether solely because hanging prevented a desperate person from expressing redemption or also because of the association of hanging with suicide, hanging was almost a universal proclaimer of willed suicide. In his seventeenth-century study of the Bills of Mortuary, haberdasher John Gaunt categorizes "hanged" and "made-away with themselves" in the same bracket, implying a semantic interchange between the two.[190] Conversely, drowning tended to be a bit more complicated. Instances of drowning could imply accidental death, murder, and, as Gaunt says, "because [these types of deaths depend] upon the casual Trade, and Employment of men, and upon matters, which are but circumstantial to the Seasons, and Regions we live in…"[191] As Gaunt implies, drowning made the life of courts more difficult because, unless there were eyewitness to the suicide, it was difficult to ascertain whether a person intended to kill themselves.[192] People drowned to commit suicide, but people also drowned because they were cleaning their laundry in the Thames.

In the cases of drowning, juries were forced to sleuth if they wished to determine the mindset of the suicide, evaluating the intentionality of the victim and the time and occurrence of

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[188] MacDonald, "Secularization of Suicide," 66.

[189] Ibid., 78.

[190] John Gaunt, *Natural and Political Observations mentioned in a following Index, and made upon the Bills of Mortality* (London: Thomas Roycroft, 1662). In another table, *hanged* is used as its own category on page 17.

[191] Ibid., 23. Gaunt also lists accidental deaths like falling from a scaffold and being run over by carts in this comment.

[192] MacDonald, "Secularization of Suicide," 66.

the crime. Regardless of the dubious nature, juries almost always returned a verdict of *felo de se*. For MacDonald, these verdicts—especially because of the dubious nature of the evidence —"illustrates the strength of the prevailing revulsion at suicide," but more importantly, contradict the beliefs of "liberal medical writers," like Burton. These medical doctors saw melancholy and madness as signs of mental unrest and instability. Conversely, these signs of mental impairment were "more likely to sway pre-Civil War juries towards findings of *felo de se* than to incline them to mercy."[193] As Guffman complained of the Golden Gate Bridge, everyday people and their assumptions about suicide were the most significant barriers to treatment.

If hanging is clearly suicide because one did not simply fall into a noose, drowning exposes the complication of desperate suicide and juries' unfortunate refusals to acknowledge that mental illness could be impulsive; however, there were instances where juries, swayed by their better angels, sought to mediate drowning cases. Carol Loar discusses several instances where drownings were contested. In these contestations, almoners and juries battled over the conscience and the juries' independent ability to form judgements on whether suicides intended to kill themselves. She concludes that, while almoners mobilized an objective notion of conscience that maintains right and wrong as objectified elements, juries relied on a subjective notion of conscience, one specifically determinable by an individual's senses and beliefs. In the context of the coroner's inquests, both the body and assumptions about it divided almoners and juries, splitting the parties over how to view or judge the dead. In defending their reading of the body, both parties mobilize the conscience as a qualifier, a defense against malicious views of their verdicts.

For Loar, contestable coroner inquests such as drowning show a changing conceptualization of *conscience*: "The older, objective idea of conscience, with its publicly understood, commonly held views of right and wrong, was gradually challenged by a subjective view of conscience by which each individual decided how moral dilemmas ought best to be

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[193] Ibid.

resolved."[194] Basically, the question involved which party had the right to determine what a conscience should reason from a case. For some drownings, jurors were motivated to contest the almoners because suicides were not clear cut, and yet their rhetorical nature was *de facto* assumed by all the parties involved: both parties assumed the conscience and its faculties were essential to debates over the suicidal. The flaw for the petitioners, though, was not on the living and its rationalizing capacities, but on the dying and desperate, those afflicted whose mental faculties were compromised yet assumed functional—the gray area between the *felo de sec* and *non compos mentis* divide. In this way, petitioners' families were tasked with engaging not with their own consciouses, per se, but with framing the dying as having changed from a desperate conscience to a redeemed one, a temporary insanity that, upon the fatal blow, was redeemed or redeemable.

While it would be difficult to directly connect how a family sought a change in verdict with Burton, we can see that Burton reframes the permanence of suicidal impulses, showing a sensitivity to the survivor's ability to escape a desperate conscience and moving the discussion of suicide away from condemning a suicide to reframing its spiritual implications. In order to shift discourse, Burton emphasizes the effects of death and despair—the symbolism of the act—as a contention over whether a soul is redeemed. These shifts continually reposition the discussion away from despair and suicide's temporal elements to their soteriological effects. Sensitive to the suicidal impulse, Burton explains that the desperate could slip at any movement into a suicidal state, becoming stuck with "cauterized consciences" so that "they cannot think a good thought" and are "carried headlong to their destruction."[195] However, again, time plays a role in this cauterization. Burton is aware that penitence and redemption are significant in allowing for a *temporary* desperate conscience before a suicidal act and a redeemed conscious after:

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[194] Ibid., 414.

[195] Ibid.

> "God" (saith Fulgentius) "is delighted in the conversion of a sinner, He sets no time"; *prolixitas temporis Deo non præjudicat, aut gravitas peccati*, deferring of time or grievous of sin do not prejudice. His grace, things past and to come are all one to Him, as preset: 'tis never too late to repent.[196]

The tone and language here emphasize understanding, not only for the desperate, but also the reader. Consider his comment that "Repentance will effect prodigies cures, make a stupend metamorphosis."[197] The stupendous metamorphosis is not physical, but mental, a change from suffering to moments of comfort and security.

Discursively, Burton is invested in the language of comfort, and his content is primarily aimed at spiritually assuaging doubt. However, through implication his argument contends with the idea that, *ex post facto*, the mind is mutable; yet, the society around him believed suicidal intentions were permeant, the mind monolithically dedicated to death. This in itself is notable as even today the myth of inevitable suicide remains, that once someone has a suicidal impulse they will stop at nothing to succeed.[198] Likewise, much of the early modern emphasis on intentionality existed because of the spiritual belief that reprobation was a mindset, a guilty conscience that poisoned the individual's will-to-act. The double-speak of religious belief and the wringing-hands of medical doctors did little to change this belief in the legal sphere. In this regard, the last few seconds of death become important in exonerating either the person's character or the reason for their suicide only in that it contested the guilt for the sin, not in exonerating the person for the crime.

What makes Burton notable then is that he extends the crime itself as a sign not of spiritual guilt but of mental instability, basically equating all suicides with insanity. There is some strength to this conflation. In his reading of John Gaunt's study of the Bills of Mortary, MacDonald

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[196] Ibid.

[197] Burton, *Anatomy*, 413.

[198] See Matthew Miller, Deborah Azrael, and David Hemenway, "Belief in the Inevitability of Suicide: Results from a National Survey," *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 36, no. 1 (2006): 1-11. Thirty-four percent of Americans interviewed believed in complete substitution, the belief that if a person is blocked from using one lethal means, they will find another means of killing themselves. Another 40% believed that most suicidal people will seek out an alternative means (3-4).

notes that Gaunt is skeptical of the accuracy of the numbers, basically because Gaunt felt they were not categorically sound. "Lunatick" deaths are a prime example. Doubting that people died from lunacy, Gaunt believes that many of the suicides were lumped in with the Lunatick category, further evidencing that, at least for Gaunt but probably for others too, lunacy and suicide were conceptually conflated. Conversely, MacDonald is clear that mental affliction (specifically melancholy and other mental illness) predominantly led to *felo de se* verdicts.

Even if this is the case, Seaver has shown that London—where Burton's brother, George, resided—valued the language of distraction, language that expressed or showed previous experience with mental illness. Petitioners used the language of distraction to justify burial, explaining that signs of mental instability and despair were reason enough for suicide. Likewise, Burton explicitly states that the language of distraction should be evidence enough to excuse a suicide, even drawing from Ottoman culture to justify it:

> If a man put desperate hands upon himself by occasion of madness or melancholy, if he had given testimony before of his regeneration, in regard he doth this not so much out of his will as *ex vi morbi* we must make the best construction of it, as Turks do, that think all fools and madmen go directly to heaven.[199]

Like the petitioners who sought to excuse a suicide, Burton juxtaposes mental illness against moral evaluations of character. He uses a Puritan emphasis on redemptive testifying to show the demonstrable proof of good character, thus framing the decision for self-violence as an out-of-character action, one predicated not by the will, but by an illness (*ex vi morbi*) that has overtaken the desperate individual. Here is both the proof of redemption and the language of distraction. Although Burton used Latin to disguise his 'temporary insanity' argument, it nevertheless remains.

How petitioners learned these tricks to convince London vicars is unclear; yet, it must have involved a common belief that popular perspectives on suicide, despite pressure from the almoners, were less monolithic than we can assume. Likewise, it is improbable to prove a direct overlap between this London movement and Burton, who spent the majority of his time in Oxford. Still, *The Anatomy* was printed in both Oxford and London and was registered in London

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[199] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.6.

in 1622.[200] Regardless of how much influence either the movement or Burton had on each other, Burton's stance on suicide burial and his opinion that suicide, like its root despair, involved complex religio-medical arguments reinforces my argument that Burton was attempting to mediate judgment of the desperate. It is not surprising then that his beliefs should overlap with a select few vicars and lay people interested in excusing suicides.

VI: Robert Burton's Suicide

The *Anatomy of Melancholy* ends with Burton's plea that readers "give not way to solitariness and idleness."[201] For some, Burton's continual concern for others is hallmark of his own fatalistic resolve, a note that fueled the"undergraduate witticism" that his death on January 25, 1640 was self-inflicted.[202] According to whispers, Burton had predicted his death would occur that year and, facing the failure of his calculations had "sent up his soul to heaven thro' a slip about his neck."[203] Despite his melancholic disposition, he was healthy enough, observing in his 1639 will that "being at this praesent (I thancke god) in perfect health of body and mind."[204] The implication that he committed suicide—note the reference to a noose—might coincide with his lack of physical illness and his apparent struggles with mental illness. Fox notes Burton's increasing melancholy and its impact on his work, saying "The later years of his life had been a burden to him, from the continued increase of his melancholy,"[205] a theme promoted by Burton both in his *Anatomy,* as well as his self-scripted epitaph:

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[200] Richard Nochimson, "Studies in the Life of Robert Burton," *The Yearbook of English Studies* no. 4 (1974): 101-3.

[201] Burton, *Anatomy*, 3.4.2.6. 432.

[202] Evans, "The Psychiatry of Burton," 11.

[203] Anthony A. Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1815), 653.

[204] Nicolas K. Kiessling, "Robert Burton's Will Holograph Copy," *The Review of English Studies* 41.161 (February 1990): 97.

[205] Arthur William Fox, *A Book of Bachelors* (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Company, 1899), 404-5.

> Paucis notus, paucioribus `ignotus;
> Hic jacet Democritus junior,
> Cui vitam-pariter & mortem
> Dedit Melancholia.[206]

Still, if Burton did hang himself in his room at Christ Church, Oxford, it is doubtful he would have been interred at the Cathedral Church, and just as doubtful that his possessions, including most of his books, would have been donated without issue. Given the stigma of suicide and its repercussions, Burton's interment is proof enough that whatever killed him was at least more natural than a 'slip'.

Through this chapter I have argued that Robert Burton was interested in changing how one approaches the melancholic, specifically the desperate. In doing so, Burton occupied an iconoclastic position that separated him from many of his peers—religious and medical—and allowed him a progressive view of suicide beyond that of his country. Positioned during a narrow swath of leniency toward suicide, the Oxford scholar seems to have overlapped with a brief, iconoclastic movement that permitted *felo de se* suicides to be interred within the church. It is only fitting that, after advancing the English understanding of melancholy—and directly arguing for a new and more compassionate approach to despair and suicide—Burton should fall victim to his own students' wariness of his death. As he might quip, "…if any worthy man will stand for any temporal or spiritual office or dignity […], his own worth shall be the best spokesmen."[207]

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[206] Thomas Fuller, *History of the Worthies of England* (London: J. G. W. L. and W. G., 1662), 376. Paul Jordan-Smith provides a translation, "Known to few, unknown to fewer, here lies Democritus Junior, to whom Melancholy gave both life and death." Jordan-Smith qtd in Nochimson, "Life of Robert Burton," 109.

[207] Burton, "Democritus to the Reader," 98.

Chapter V

"The bitter memory/ of what he was, what is, and what must be/ worse"[1]:
The Self-incriminating Despair Of Satan

In his 1649 *Eikonklastes,* Milton engages with Charles I in a rhetorical war over *conscience*, a theological term that refers to a mediating faculty and yet is also used as a marker of self-assurance and temptation by both Charles I and Milton.[2] In critiquing the king's emotional response to suffering, Milton directly attacks the king's reasoning, self-assuredness, and connection to God. In short, he attacks the king's religious authority over the nation: "[The King] labours to have it thought that *his fearing God more then Man* was the ground of his sufferings; but he should have known that a good principle not rightly understood, may prove as hurtfull as a bad; and his fears of God may be as faulty as blind zeale."[3] In drafting his most famous theological poem, Milton thematically draws on these attacks by framing Charles I as a deceiver, an object of scorn, and a lesson for one's own Christian conduct. This critique implies that in *Paradise Lost* Milton exhibits a wariness of redemptive assurance, one counter to his asserted need to accentuate the redemptive powers of grace. The following chapter is primarily a close reading of *Paradise Lost*, Book IV

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[1] John Milton, "Paradise Lost," In *The Complete Poems and Major Prose,* ed. by Merritt Hughes (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 2003). ll. 23-26. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Milton's *Paradise Lost* come from the Hackett edition.

[2] As Staines puts it, "Milton collapses Charles's reason and conscience into not just humor and passion but fancy and folly" and, finally, the obstinate self-interest of "one man's will over the nation." John Staines, "Compassion in the Public Sphere of Milton and King Charles," In *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion,* Ed. by Paster et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 91.

[3] John Milton, *Eikonoklastes* (London: Matthew Simmons, 1649). EEBO. 77. Consider Charles I's response that dissidents used false zeal to stir trouble under his reign: "[I]t was easy to provoke to an open Rebellion a people prone enough to break out to all exorbitant violence, both by some Principles of their Religion, and the natural desires of Liberty; both to exempt themselves from their present restraints, and to prevent those after Rigors wherewith they saw themselves apparently threatened by the covetous Zeal and uncharitable Fury of some men, who think it a great Argument of the truth of their Religion, to endure no other but their own." Charles, *Eikon Basilike (*1649) XII. 101-2. For a lengthy discussion of the *Eikon*'s authorship, see Francis F. Madan "Appendix I: On the Authorship of the *Eikon Basilke,*" in *A New Bibliography of the Eikon Basilike* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1950).

through which I show how Satan's despair functions to explore Satan's despair and despair's influence on redemptive potential.

In showing that Milton uses Satan as a good temptation, I assume that Milton relies on a desperate paradox, a Catch-22 whereby Satan is damned by his own paradigmatic despair. This double-bind exists because, while his despair is characterized as similar to that of a human's, Satan lacks a human's redemptive agency, primarily because he is a fallen angel. As punishment, despair prevents him from accurately considering his options. Though Satan must be redeemable to prove God's mercy relies on human agency, Satan's agency is limited by his original rebellion against God. In characterizing Satan in this way, Milton follows a Christian assumption that man was wholly reliant on the redemptive powers of grace, redemptive powers which were almost entirely precluded from demons/evil angels.

Because he is non-human, Satan's despair functions theologically within a cosmic framework, a framework Milton deploys to show Satan's figurative and rhetorical struggle but not to excuse his failures. Still Milton's figure is paradoxical, a product of both Milton's assumption that God is incapable of doing wrong and the consequential draconian rejection of Satan's redemption. When he clarifies that Satan is the father of sin and death, Milton forcibly prohibits Satan's repentance, thereby necessitating a conditional type of despair similar to a human's yet different enough to warrant investigation.

Within Milton's theology, evil angels, unlike humans, are not guaranteed grace and cannot be redeemed. Even though Satan and his evil angels cannot actually be saved, Milton explicitly delineates double election and predestination based on individual agency: both angel and human must consciously choose to fall. The difference between the two parties is simply that Satan's choice to fall is inseparable from his choice to remain fallen, given that his despair prevents him from reasoning his way out of damnation. Instead, Christianity uses Satan eisegetically—and Milton follows suit—illustrating that a believer may avoid temptation and sin only through active, correct interpretation. Milton uses *Paradise Lost* as a programmatic path to salvation, a didactic means to

assist readers in detecting both their own fallenness and another's false, outward displays of repentance. Within this eisegetical tradition, Satan's interpretive utility reiterates God's grace, showing its continual availability even to sinful Adam. The byproduct of this utility is that Satan is distanced from grace, a rhetorical reminder that Satan's hell is as much mental as it is physical; speaking eschatologically, the hell Satan carries with him is the hell of his own utility. Thus, Satan is eternally damned because his despair best serves man's needs.[4]

An Epic Hero incapable of Tragic Despair: Satan's Role in reading *Paradise Lost*

Milton uses the Satan figure to explore the ongoing significance of the despair/comfort relationship, using the term to exhibit a complexity of meaning for Satan, but one distinct from human despair. While humanity is exhibited by human characters, such as Adam or Sampson—humans capable of a host of redemptive strategies—Milton is clear that Satan is a non-human character in a cosmic drama. By differentiating between Satan's despair and Adam's, Milton encourages an individual to self-scrutinize; however, the residual *gestalt* left with the reader—especially for those readers of Book IV—is an image of Satan's suffering in exclusion and condemnation, a deep echoing of a human-like desperation.

Akin to the human desperate, Satan is described in terms of the doubt that seizes hold of him; yet, Milton interprets Satan through God's judgement, a complicated ideology interwoven in Satan's fall/final defeat narrative. In the sections below, I detail Satan's despair through a theological lens and as an intentional, theological argument. In harmony with many of the voices around him, Milton's main point is that evil angels are denied redemptive grace, haunted by divine knowledge, and cursed to forever live apart from God. Thus, the misery of their external torment reflects the suffering of their internal condition. Still, Satan's misery draws readers to him in a meaningful and lasting way.

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[4] In observing this facet of Milton's theology, I am indebted to Phillip Donnelley, *Milton's Scriptural Tradition* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2009).

Traditionally, readers are diametrically opposed over the Satan character; critics who see Satan as a hero (Satanists) are opposed by those who do not (anti-Satanists). In his eighteenth-century analysis, *A Critique on the Paradise Lost*, early Milton critic Richard Addison engages with Satan's divisive character: "The Paradise Lost is an epic, or a narrative poem, and he that looks for an hero in it, searches for that which Milton never intended; but if he will needs fix the name of an hero upon any person in it, 'tis certainly the Messiah is the hero…" For Addison, some readers are weary of an epic hero as weak as Satan, a hero who is "by no means a match for his enemies." Writing in the eighteenth century, Addison himself is drawing on Dryden's remark that Satan was the true hero of *Paradise Lost*, mostly because Satan's weakness made him appear more human. As evidenced by Addison's explicit evocation of Dryden, Dryden's remark seemingly marks an ongoing division between readers who sought to see the Son as Milton's intended hero and those that saw Satan as the epic's protagonist.[5]

When Addison emphasizes the epic genre, he uses Satan's generic nature to prescribe how a reader should read the poem; however, R. J. Zwi Werbolowsky explains that Milton's poem is primarily at fault for the division, not the reader him or herself: "A fatal split in the presentation of Satan is undeniable. This split is inherent in the very texture of the verse, and is not due to our projecting something into the poem. The effect is that 'No remarks of Milton to remind us that Satan remains Satan can destroy … [the] … deep and noble significances [i.e. of Satan]."[6] Similar to when Werbolowsky faults the "texture of the verse," John Carey indicts the poem itself for the division in readers, taking a more moderate position: "…the poem is insolubly ambivalent, insofar as the reading of Satan's 'character' is concerned…"[7] Carey asserts that the ambiguity exists for Milton's contemporaries as early as Dryden because of different interpretive modes, a belief which

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[5] Richard Addison, "A Critique upon the Paradise Lost," In *The Poetical Works of John Milton,* Vol 1 (London, 1731), 14.

[6] R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Hero and Fool," In *Lucifer and Promethesus: A Study of Milton's Satan (*London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1952), 26. Werblowsky is quoting Wilson Knight.

[7] John Carey, "Milton's Satan," In *The Cambridge Companion to Milton,* Ed. Dennis Danielson (New York: Cambridge UP, 1999), 161.

accurately accounts for (by relief) the contradictory responses to the poem and justifies the split over Satan without faulting the reader.

Where Werbolowsky and Carey indict textual or generic qualities for the text's tensions, Barbara K. Lewalski uses a tension between the genres to show that Milton uses epic conventions to prompt "his readers to begin a poem-long exploration and redefinition of heroes and heroism." Lewalksi believes that Milton contrasts epic conventions against Satan's own stylizing as a tragic hero: "Satan cast himself in the mold of the tragic hero Prometheus, enduring with constancy, indomitable, will, and 'courage never to submit or yield' the punishment meted out to by an implacable divine tyrant…" While Lewalski plays fast and lose with the definition of *Romance*, switching between its medieval and pre-Victorian meanings, she primarily places the tragic agency on Satan, who, through his rebellion, prevents "the noblest qualities of literature's greatest heroes" and reveals "how susceptible [the heroes' qualities] are to perversion." In her argument, Milton's intentions were epic, his characters tragic. Like other anti-Satanists, Lewalksi sees Satan's characteristics as an invitation to readers, a way for them "to measure all other versions of the heroic against the poem's heroic standard," mainly the good qualities of the Son and God, but she is accurate that these are at odds with Milton's own epic ambitions, and he uses Satan to exhibit negative qualities.[8]

Likewise, Stanley Fish has summarized the debates between Satanists and Anti-Satanists by arguing that they revolve around *disobedience*, mainly whether disobedience "is a source of all Evil and the content of all error" or "a positive act that rescues mankind from an unvarying routine of mindless genuflection," an act that leads to the "distinctively human search for self-knowledge and knowledge of the Truth."[9] He continues this line of reasoning when he claims to have "reconciled the two camps" by shifting the interpretive focus to be on "method," by which he

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[8] Barbara K. Lewalksi, "'Higher Argument:' Completing and Publishing *Paradise Lost* 1665-1669," In *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 464-5.

[9] Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998), x.

means the experience through which the reader is *corrected*.[10] Similar to the way Dick Hebdige explains how dominant cultures re-assimilate deviant subcultures, Fish explains that the poem sets up "affirmation of variety" only to immediately counter difference "by the imposition of unity and the instance on an underlying sameness," characterizing the poem with a type of ambivalent power over discord and potential deviance of its readership.[11]

Fish moves this theory to its monolithic extreme in *How Milton Works*, arguing that because Milton aligns disobedience, confusion, and error diametrically to God, he marginalizes these important literary qualities, qualities significant to the Romantic literary movements but not to Milton's theocentric writing or his project. Fish sees the poem push these Romantic qualities to the periphery (perhaps marginalizing the readers who value them in the process?). Thus, if Milton saw God as the center and his being as an ordering principle, Milton could not center the cosmos on Satan, an agent of those tumultuous and dangerous qualities literary critics value in literature—qualities foreign to God.[12]

Fish is right in his final induction that Milton asks the reader to look beyond textual scruples to the spiritual essences within it:

> These forms are at once the vehicles of our instruction and the habitation of temptation—that is, of the temptation to take them seriously for themselves rather than as instruments of a supreme pedagogical intention, Milton's intention and, as he believes […], the intention of his God. There is, then, a double game going on in the poetry and the prose, but it is a doubleness impelled by the desire for its own erasure.[13]

But, while the text itself might impel a reader to look beyond the medium, to ignore the theological argument is to ignore the importance of Milton's poem itself: it functions like Satan's desperate condition, a mind and its *doppelgänger* breathing life into a theological snare. Far from a byproduct of Milton's poem or the process of its creation, the need to erase its own didactic

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., xxi.

[12] Stanley Fish, *How Milton Works* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001). I liberally paraphrased from Fish's introduction, mainly pages 13-15.

[13] Ibid., 15.

intentions is what creates the allure of Satan, the almost unfortunate paradox which both indicts and creates the experience that is Satan's despair. Milton's use of Satan is the easiest example of a zero-sum game, two ends of a theological argument where one must cease to prove the other: 1) the evocation of a significant, psychological figure as a character to entice the reader and 2) the theological, pedagogical use of this figure to save the readers from themselves. In the end, only one can survive.

Carey and Fish are signaling a similar argument: Milton's dynamic poem lends itself to dynamic readings, thereby accentuating interpretive modes. If anything, Fish seems to weigh these modes and preference one to the other(s). As Fish implies, Milton believed the poem and its interpretation were of significant import and, as one of the oldest interpretive modes, theology is clearly evoked throughout the poem as a self-correcting interpretive frame: No Christian would ever confuse Satan for a hero. The problem arises when the reader is aware of the theological nature of Satan's predicament because, once aware that Satan is damned *because* of Milton's exculpation of God, the fissures in the ordered cosmos become more apparent. But Milton's theology constructs a reader as much as the reader constructs Milton's theology. Rather than ignore the problem or allow it to hide in our Miltonic interpretations, Satan's despair is a significant example of the problems of comforting religious despair. Given that despair—especially religious despair—is framed often by its fatalistic nature, Satan's despair creates a lucid window into the overall tensions of the poem, a self-contained opening to the void and a window into its author's relationship to the reader.

Beyond an emotional locus, Satan's despair is one of the most important examples where a believer is forced to confront a pervasive ideology, a looming deity, and the oft-inexplicable nature of damnation. For some readers, Satan and his inability to either resist his monarch or to reason himself into salvation tests the boundaries of Christianity. For others, Satan's bugbear nature and his own contradictory obstinacy damn him for eternity. As Fish would explain, the framing of disobedience becomes paramount to how the reader views Satan's character; however, what is

significant to the present discussion is that despair is essentially disobedience, but does *disobedience* connote *will* and *intention*? If clergy are willing to acknowledge the desperate as insane—completely devoid of reason—can we fault the desperate for obstinacy and pride?

Regardless of the reader's perspective, Milton's theological framework is reliant on Satan's role as the enemy of God, a draconian categorization that falters when applied to the desperate human but is fairly typical for the period: Satan's prideful disobedience leads to his fall, his disobedience to the fall of man. As Catherine Gimelli Martin explains, Satan is a literary example of when "radically evil agents achieve their self-transformation by first perverting their imaginations, then their wills, and finally conscience and reason itself."[14] Disobedience here carries with it a lifetime of punishment, and the snare or hiccup lies mostly with the reader; perhaps because of our sympathy for Satan, many of us see the possibility for his salvation where Milton saw none.

Though Milton is quite forceful in showing Satan as damned (and damning himself), Satan is very human-like in his desperate suffering. This human-like facet is part of the double-bind. For as much as anti-Satanists preclude a favorable reading of Satan based on his enemy status—as a rebel he deserves his desperate punishment—his despair is a product of his punishment, a penal blindness which makes him appear *human* to readers when he is not; hence, Milton's repeated attempts to continually frame disobedience as willed. Whereas his theological role in the dramatic poem precludes his humanity, it works theologically as an important caveat for human redemption. This is to say that, although Satan's rebellion makes him the bugbear of the Miltonian universe, his despair, exclusion, and potential reconciliation with God inversely make him significant to humans as an example of a fallen man. For the Romantics, this materialized as a Promethean hero, but, unless we malign Milton's own theological prescriptions, there is an alternative way to see Satan as serving a benevolent purpose in Milton's project: as a foil to Adam's

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[14] C.G. Martin, "The 'Reason' of Radical Evil: Shakespeare, Milton, and the Ethical Philosophers," *Studies in Philology,* v. 113. 1 (Winter 2016): 163-197. Martin uses both Satan and MacBeth of as literary examples, but she provides an excellent overview of evil as it applies to rational approaches to it.

own humanity and the Son's perfection. Satan's airy nature makes him inhuman. His flawed nature makes him ungodly; yet, Satan serves a redemptive purpose in the *Paradise Lost's* long game: a good temptation. Therefore, we must resist the immediate thought that obedience would lead Satan to redemption, a theological necessity that falters throughout the poem despite how many times Milton brings it up.

I find it telling that the emotional presence of despair warrants such theological and critical quibbling, especially as despair is evoked by scholars preceding Milton as a means to comfort, not to condemn. Perhaps it is more realistic to see the human commonality in the shared nature of exclusion and its desperate nature: When they see Satan suffer, readers see desperate suffering as a human condition that may afflict them. One need not be theologically or historically grounded to understand that it is the lived suffering of hell that makes Satan such a significant figure. Although this chapter includes a discussion of humans and despair, I believe that Milton crafts Satan's misery as an amalgamated figure both theologically and rhetorically in order to assist readers, not exacerbate their disenfranchisement. Satan is a figure that draws heavily on the pressures and doubts inherent to religion and, thus, both shows Milton's concern for the desperate and shows human readers the dangers of denying their own comfort in grace.[15]

Satan's Despair and his Redemptive Agency

I would start with a simple premise: Satan is neither a human nor does he function as a human in the poem. He is a figure, a traditional bad guy whose self-serving nature is the plague of humanity; however, it would be wrong to treat him solely as a literary figure, some residual trope from a miracle play, or simply a Christian plot point in cosmic history. Still, the figure gains much of its import from a friction amongst these factors. And so the inheritance problem of the figure—

[15] I should note here that, throughout the chapter, I am assuming that Milton's average English reader was a theist and that, along with its other religious functions, the church performed a certain amount of comforting, what we might now call "mental health outreach." As is obvious throughout Milton's work, much of his writing is meant to assuage misunderstandings and discomforts that manifest in his readers.

the crux of Satan's plot—is its theological problem: choice and theocity. No matter how much Milton wants Satan to obstinately reject God, no matter how much Milton needs Satan to be a self-willed reprobate, Satan's suffering remains packaged with the need to justify God's adjudication of him.

Recall how Milton uses Charles: the king who rejects right reasoning is a king who has deluded himself. The king's faults—at least in Milton's treatment— necessitated his failure as a king and led to his incarceration. The incarceration elicits mutually reaffirming faults in the king's failure: Charles deluded himself because he was suffering, but he was suffering because he had deluded himself. The mutual reinforcement led to his death, like a King Saul fallen from grace. Like Saul, only a stubborn, deluded man could act as Charles acted; yet, like Saul, his failure as king and death in battle are reframed by Christian apologists who sought to emphasize David's role in the Christian history.[16] Likewise, Milton draws on a logical outcome to justify Charles' shortcomings: God has hardened the king's heart against redemption because he is wicked. Similarly, Satan is the outcome of Milton's logical calculations, the product of clear, delineated necessity, and he must act accordingly.

But, even if we acknowledge this theoretical or rhetorical posturing, Satan becomes most human to us because of this inevitability. Scholars like Nancy Rosenfeld have argued that he is a humanizing figure, similar to Adam and Eve schlepping their sinful burden: By the end of *Paradise Lost,* Satan, too, is no longer an archangel, but rather a human(ized) exile from paradise, doomed to wander the world bearing much the same burden as did the First Parents (29). Rosenfeld's argument is flawed mostly because of her reliance on John Bunyan, but also because she fails to acknowledge a well-known conceit: separate is not equal. Satan may appear human like Adam and Eve, but he is a dissembler—an ever-present fact to the early modern English—and is not human; no matter how much Milton humanizes him, no matter how much we humanize him, he is not

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[16] See *1 Samuel* 9 in contrast to *1 Samuel* 15. In his gloss of *Samuel*, Steven L. McKenzie stresses the alterations to the narrative through which pro-David editors sought to tarnish Saul's kingship. "1 Samuel," In *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 412-23.

human, and the rules by which he plays are not the same rules as humans. He is not for a simple reason: he can never atone for what he has done, and the very human-like need to reiterate that belief is what makes Milton seem the most human, and his epic hero so very much a rhetorical, theological heuristic for reading mankind.[17]

Satan is a figure, a prescription of what not to do and a reminder that God plays by absolutes. Paradoxically, this usage and tradition places Satan in a double-bind to which no human should relate. The power of Milton's characterization lies in this Catch-22 because it produces a desperate logic, a paradigm that constitutes its own end, and a framework which acts as a self-fulling prophecy: You have damned yourself so God has damned you.

In creating Satan's desperate logic, Milton draws on the theological conflicts around him. When critics discuss how Milton relates to conceptualizations of terms like free-will, predestination, and grace, they are primarily negotiating how Milton relates to Calvin and Arminius. For example, when Milton argues that Satan damns himself, he treats despair as inherently an individual's fault and as the punishment for resisting grace, a view which exhibits Milton's Arminian view of Calvinism: reprobates damn themselves by voluntarily choosing to sin and, thus, rejecting grace.

During the seventeenth century, arguments over theology amount to signifiant political debates as discussed in chapter one, and Milton is capable of mobilizing or altering course to meet with his poetical or political ambitions. While there is some contention amongst critics, I

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[17] Nancy Rosenfeld, *The Human Satan in Seventeenth-Century English Literature: From Milton to Rochester (*Burlington: Ashgate, 2008). From Rosenfeld's section title ("'Punished in the shape he sinned': Satan's Dissolution"), Rosenfeld sees Milton as believing his own logic: "Even as Satan raises the possibility of reconciliation with God, he makes it clear that it would not last. Satan does not, apparently, believe that he himself is capable of genuine repentance, even with the support of heavenly grace" (26). While she goes on to explore the "ongoing process" (26) of grace eventually denied Satan, the eternal moment of the fall seems to allow a temporal loop in her argument. Unlike a human (Milton, Bunyan, whomever), the immediacy of Satan's damnation and the inevitability of his second damnation are the same, meaning that Rosenfeld's quoting *On Education* and its discussions of supporting grace are irrelevant: Satan is not a human child. While Milton intentionally shows Satan's struggle with the possibility of salvation, his desperate condition only reiterates his lapsarian nature. Satan is not Bunyan struggling in and out of procedural, Protestant despair. He is exhibiting the self-fulfilling nature of carceral despair when experienced by an airy creature.

agree that Milton and his later theological works tend to be Arminian-leaning; however, John Shawcross has rightly complained that a dichotomy between Arminians and Calvinists obfuscates when it seeks to categorize theological leanings.[18] In this chapter, my argument depends on Satan's capacity to reject grace, a principle impossible to strict Calvinists, but not impossible to moderates like Milton.

While we should be careful in how we use the Calvinist/Arminius divide, Stephen Fallon has convincingly shown that Milton agrees with Arminius on the five key principles that separate Calvinism from Arminianism, including the stipulation that one must voluntarily cooperate with grace (what is called "resistible grace" in the Remonstrance of 1610).[19] Because he agrees with this major principle, Milton depicts Satan's self-incrimination in *Paradise Lost* in a way that encourages the reader to cooperate with grace; Milton prompts readers to empathize with the fallen angel, creating a lens through which readers see their own struggles. I use *empathize* here to stress Milton's didactic use of despair: we are meant to see Satan as a figure, an object through which we judge ourselves. Within a sin-based penal system, specifically one featuring a God who judges once for eternity, Milton uses an eschatological figure who falls beyond redemption in order to accentuate the dangers of following suit. If this is accurate, then the reader's fundamental question becomes whether Satan is responsible for his exclusion from heaven and whether his role acts to accentuate human redemption. The problem with this empathy is that, if Satan lacks human redemptive agency and God's assurance of salvation, is he

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[18] See also: J.T. Shawcross, *John Milton: the Self & the World* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1993), 137.

[19] Stephen Fallon, "Milton's Arminianism and the Authorship of De doctrina Christiana," In *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 41:2 (1999).

actually in human-like despair? No, in part because while Milton draws on several residual beliefs in the period, he still resoundingly agrees that Satan and his evil ilk cannot be saved.[20]

In *Paradise Lost*, Satan's despair evokes residual tensions between the Church of England Laudians and Calvinists, tensions Milton actively addresses and which serve to catalyze the poem. In these moments, Milton simultaneously evokes the heresy of 'universal' salvation and a Calvinistic determinism thereby creating a blend which teases the potential for all humans to be saved while simultaneously restricting the possibility of redemption. John Stachniewski argues that Milton's mixing of Calvinistic determinism and Laudian salvation creates Satan's double-bind: Satan wishes to repent because all repenters can be saved, but he knows his repentance will fail; if he will only fail, then why repent at all? For Stachniewski, Satan's desperate state is both an embarrassment to the residual Laudian sense of salvation and exemplary of exclusionary Calvinism; but, my focus is less on Milton's 'embarrassing' theological leanings and instead on Satan's theological position within Milton's argument. I agree Milton teases universal salvation, which may be a residual blending, although not of Laud and Calvin, but rather a mixture of theological inquiries into the devil from across the early modern church.

In order to make his argument, Stachniewski draws on a Marlovian psychology of exclusion stemming from a Calvinistic perspective. Certainly proto-echoes exist in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus,* but I believe it is the psychological relationship that links Marlowe and Milton's works. For example, to comprehend Satan's sympathetic nature, Stachniewski explains: "We need to know how in the protestant imagination the devil had become less alien, more intimately involved

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[20] As others have shown, Arminius did not extend 'universal salvation' to the demons. As Stephen Fallon rightly says, universal salvation was the "Pelagian heresy" (108), from the practitioners of Pelagianism, but the root for the belief stems from Origen, who denied that Hell was eternal and, according to Augustine, that "even the devil himself and his angels, after suffering those more severe and prolonged pains which their sins deserved, should be delivered from their torments, and associated with the holy angels." *City of God*, Ed. Philip Schaff (MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1890), XXI.17. 665. Also see: XXI.23-4. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Origen held that, after the final Apocatastasis, all creatures—even Satan—would be saved (1201).

in human thought processes, with a resulting confusion of spiritual values,"[21] a significant point that speaks to how seventeenth-century readers may have experienced the poem and how they might have understood Satan's exclusion from grace.

In his argument, Stachniewski is indebted to Helen Gardner's explanation of exclusion, an emotional experience through which human audiences are connected with tragic figures. Reasoning that evil angels can never repent, Gardner situates exclusion from grace via the tragic mode: "In the tragic world of Faustus and Macbeth we find presented to us in human terms this incapacity for change to a better state."[22] Yes, Satan appears in the tragic mode; but, as a tragic figure, does this mean 'in human terms'? While a reader may wish to disrupt the inevitable tragedy that figures like Faustus, Macbeth, and Satan face, these figures cannot *truly* repent. She clarifies that, while there may not be a generic connection between *Paradise Lost* and tragedy, "Satan belongs to [the tragic characters'] company, and if we ask where the idea of damnation was handled with seriousness and intensity in English literature before Milton, we can only reply: on the tragic stage."[23] Thus, like tragic catharsis, Satan's exclusion creates a sense of longing in the reader, evoking a tragic relationship where readers yearn for a halt of the tragic action.[24]

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[21] John Stachniewski, "Calvin, Satan, and Milton's Purpose," In *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 349.

[22] Helen Gardner, "The Tragedy of Damnation," In *Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1961), 320-341.

[23] Ibid., 232. Unfortunately, I think Gardner provides an unintentional disservice to the clergy here. Certainly they were also invested in dramatizing, addressing, and correcting the dangers of despair.

[24] I agree with much of Gardner's logic; however, she is too certain of Faustus'—and Satan's—disingenuous pleas for repentance: "The sin of Faustus here is presumption, the aspiring above his order, or the rebellion against the law of his creation" (232). No one should doubt Faustus' ambitious, egocentric nature, but, because he dramatizes a certain type of humanistic relationship with God, we should be wary of ignoring his pleas for salvation, the cruelty of his condition, and his final descent into hell. As Adams reasons,

> Whither goe these Atheists? I beleeue not to heauen; for they beleeue there is no heauen. They shall neuer haue those ioyes, they would nor beleeue. They are not in hell neither: there is no Atheist. Where then? In hell they are indeede, but not as Atheists. They no sooner put their heads within those gates, but Atheisme drops off: they beleeue and feele now, there is a God.

By his own damnation, he is forced upon enteral pain to believe; his punishment is its own form of subterfuge. Thomas Adams, *THE spirituall Nauigator BOVND For the Holy Land* (London: William Iaggard, 1615), EEBO. 54

Gardner's argument draws on a tragic tradition that frames Satan as I see him: a Christian icon incapable of repentance. For example, Bettie Anne Doebler shows Satan as embodying "wrong reason" and as an example of willed-rebellion: "From Milton's point of view there was no basis for Satan's rebellion but his own self-generated pride and envy."[25] Doebler interprets Milton's theology rightly: Satan cannot repent because he will not repent and God excludes him as he justly deserves; however, unlike Gardner, Doebler's flaw lies in her need to correct the reader's relationship with Satan based on Milton's theology. For example, Doebler labels Book IV as the "most deeply responsible for the sentimentalizing of Satan."[26] Fundamentally, *sentimentalizing* is a dismissive label and does a significant disservice to seventeenth-century clergy who were invested in treating desperate people, specifically in mitigating despair's medical and doctrinal ramifications. Secondly, the term implies that the relationship between the reader and Satan is unintended or inaccurate, that despair evokes only a hyperbolic emotional response from the reader. Doebler's use of *sentimentalizing* sets the tension between emotion and logic, mainly that the reader should not emotionalize what Milton has taken great pains to justify. Her conclusion ignores how Milton uses a reader's empathy/sympathy for an enemy of God to illustrate how temptations function, specifically one that questions the judgement of a divine judge.

Both Stachniewski's and Doebler's criticisms are corrective, as they use historical references to early modern theology to correct any emotional correlation. Historian Christopher Hill summarizes this complaint as a type of emotional trap, observing that "The emotion underlying the poem is more subversive than the poem's argument."[27] In short, despite their didactic intentions, their work mis-categorizes the reader's sympathy for Satan as a type of a failure on Milton or the reader's part. But this is not the case. Instead, Milton constructs a double-bind, a

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[25] Bettie Anne Doebler, "A Long Day's Dying," In "*Rooted Sorrow" Dying in Early Modern England* (Madison: Associated UP, 1994), 112.

[26] Ibid., 114.

[27] Christopher Hill, "Milton and Bunyan: Dialogue with the Radicles," In *The World Turned Upside Down* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 398.

theological snare that prevents Satan's redemption and tests the reader entirely *because* of this 'sympathy.' For Milton, Satan must have redemptive agency, hence the importance of despair in suppressing his faculties. Though this means that Satan is damned regardless, Milton uses Satan's despair and the reader's empathy toward him as a good temptation, a temptation urging the reader to return to grace and away from Satan and his damned condition.

The Desperate Reader and the Tragic Angel

Tensions over reading Satan are almost as widely known as the poem itself. As early as 1967, Stanley Fish could quip that he will make three "not new" comments about *Paradise Lost*: (1) the poem's center of reference is its reader who is also its subject (2) Milton's purpose is to educate the reader as to his or her responsibility as a fallen human and to instill a sense of the distance from which original innocence and the postlapsarian world are separated; (3) and finally, that Milton's method is to re-create in the mind of the reader the drama of the fall, to make him or her fall again exactly as Adam did and with Adam's troubled clarity, that is to say, "not deceived."[28]

Fish's observations are well-known, and as is obvious from Milton's body of work, Milton has a vested interest in justifying "the ways of God to men" in order to illuminate "Eternal Providence."[29] In this way, *Paradise Lost* is a major example of those religious enterprises discussed in the earlier chapters. Since the discovery of *On Christian Doctrine*, many readers are aware of the

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[28] Stanley Fish, "'Not so much a teaching as an intangling': Milton's Method in *Paradise Lost,*" In *Milton,* Ed. Alan Rudrum (Nashville: Auroa, 1969), 104-135. Fish goes on to expand this discussion in *Surprised by Sin* and *How Milton Works*.

[29] Milton, "Paradise Lost," 25-6.

tensions between Milton's theological and poetic projects.[30] In *Milton's Scriptural Tradition*, Phillip Donnelley offers insight into reading the complicated and oft-contradictory notions of 'Milton': "Rather, amid Milton's widely ranging audiences, occasions, and rhetorical cross-purposes, there are also some variously and partially repeated arguments and animating principles whose implications he draws out across texts."[31] Donnelley reminds us that motifs build consistency across Milton's corpus, but that Satan's despair—especially in Book IV—offers a pregnant moment that acts as a locus for some of these overarching motifs.

Satan's despair is one such pregnant moment where the reader, the poet, and the poem become—as Fish would say—entangled. In a disagreement with E.M. Tillyard over the "motions of Adam's heart," famous Miltonian A.J.A. Waldock observed that "we must sometimes expect" a "sort of clash" in "*Paradise Lost* between Milton's theory of a matter and the matter as he has actually presented it."[32] In his observations, Waldock explores how Milton approaches Satan *without*

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[30] See also: Arthur Sewell, *A Study in Milton's Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Archon Books, 1967). Sewell concludes from his textual analysis that what "Milton really believed […] may be something different from the doctrine argued in *De Doctrina Christiana*":

> [Milton's] mind seems to me to have many times gone its own way, to have lost its anchorage in his deepest nature, to have ceased with the needs of his inmost spirit. While the treatise reports a part of the man, his mind, the later poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regain'd*, and *Samson Agonistes*, seem to me to report a different, a more fundamental part, perhaps in many places the whole man. xii-xiii.

As with an analysis of many major writers, the mind was an evolving and often self-contradictory space for exploration. The poetry Milton creates only adds to the evolution and contradiction of his beliefs, while allowing the mind ample room to explore the nuances of his Christians cosmos.

[31] Donnelley, *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning,* 10.

[32] A.J.A. Waldock, "*Paradise Lost*: The Fall," In *Milton's Epic Poetry,* Ed. C.A. Patrides (Baltimore: Penguin, 1967), 80.

mentioning the character, characterizing Milton's didactic intentions like a pilot navigating a tumultuous storm, an image Charles I evoked to describe his own bumbling about[33]:

> …Milton has begun to realize, if vaguely, that his material has been getting out of hand. He is rather like a steersman who, feeling the ship off her course and yawing, puts the helm hard over to bring her back: except that he is not quite as conscious of what is happening to his poem as a steersman would be of what was happening to his ship, and that his action is too late for the 'harm' (if we like to look at it that way) is done.[34]

Waldock is critiquing Milton's rhetorical coherence, or how well his political and theological arguments materialize in *Paradise Lost*. This seeming incoherence is important to understanding Satan, who, like Adam, encapsulates much of the desperate struggle.

For Milton, much of the difficulty in creating a coherent Satan lies with the tradition of Satan himself, and Milton's dynamic character is a "unique and multifarious" figure, part "angel, devil, spirit, manlike shape, mythic entity, theological principle," and "philosophic concept."[35] Rather than fault Milton for depicting a complicated figure, we should acknowledge that Satan's multifaceted biblical nature is in part to blame for Milton's struggles; moreover, we should credit these dynamics for Satan's strengths and weakness. After all, it is the depth and incongruity of the human-like Satan that allow him to telescope both Milton's theology and the human suffering associated with it.

As Frank S. Kastor shows in *Milton and the Literary Satan*, Milton draws heavily on both biblical and lay traditions, creating a character utility dependent on its purpose in the poem. The result is a three-tiered character, what Kastor calls "a trimorph": "Archangel, Prince of Hell, and

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[33] I am thinking here of Charles I's navigation of temptation akin to a ship: "If a Pilot at Sea cannot see the Pole star, it can be no fault in him to steer his course by such stars as doe best appeare to him." In *Milton's Places of Hope,* Mary Fenton notes that Milton uses nautical imagery negatively, depicting Satan's relation with Eve in terms of its "unrestrained, unanchored action" (21). Fenton explains that Milton "consistently rejects the ship as a positive image and model of hope" (21), an observation which casts Charles I's traditional, Biblical usage a negative light. Fenton's belief is reinforced by the Lady's usage in *A Mask*, ll. 307-310. Mary Fenton, *Milton's Places of Hope: Spiritual and Political Connection of Hope with Land* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006). Charles I, "V. Vpon His MAJESTIES passing the Bill for the Triennial Parliaments; and after setling this, during the pleasure of the Two Houses," In *Eikon Basilke*, 1687. EEBO. 656.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Frank S. Kastor, *Milton and the Literary Satan* (Amsterdam: Rodopi N.V., 1974), 8.

Tempter."[36] The three roles correspond to "three different places or settings." For example, pre-fall Lucifer is the archangel, while post-fall Satan is the Prince of Hell, and, finally, the Devil plays the role of the tempter who entices man to fall. Of the three roles, the Prince of Hell (Satan) occupies the majority of stage time, roughly 3.5 books to 3 for the others; however, Kastor sees the Tempter —the Devil as serpent—as the least-imposing and the most human-like, providing the depth of being within the trimorph. As the most dynamic aspect of the figure, the Tempter is also the most enticing.[37]

While the Tempter is the "lowest point that the Satanic figure reaches—the smallest in size of the trimorphic characters and the most bestial in appearance and actions"—he is also the most human, a "full, round character, in whom the total inner experience — emotional, mental, and spiritual—of evil finds a living, human voice […], truly a lost soul—at once contemptible and loathsome, yet tormented and pathetic."[38] If we were to read Kastor's argument through Gardner's lens, the tempter is the most like a tragic figure. Unlike his epic and religious counter parts, he alone has soliloquies, a tragic tool used by playwrights to voice inner suffering. Kastor even moves to distance Satan from the Machiavellian figures like Barabas, characters who destroy others to "ease" their "relentless thoughts." Yet, when compared to Satan, many of these Machiavellis seem too wooden.[39] The Satanic figure conversely morphs to fit its literary obligations, like a Henry V, mustering the troops in the morning and brooding in the evening, and Milton clearly uses different generic Satans, mobilizing the most humanized Satan—complete with conscience, reason, body, etc.—to increase its tragic impact. The effect, however, depends upon a reader's capacity to differentiate Satan as humanesque character and Satan as pedagogical tool; the onus therefore rests

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., 77-8

[38] Ibid.

[39] Milton, *PL*, IX, l. 129-30.

on the reader to sift between Satan as a character in an epic and Satan as metatextual tempter in a tragedy.

A few lines into Book IV, Milton succinctly lays out the dynamics of Satan's tragic despair. Unpacking the dynamics, however, occurs when the reader recalls the previous arguments on Satan's agency, fate, and the potential for salvation, arguments which are interwoven in the first three books. Though I focus primarily on the *Niphates* Top moment (*PL*, III. l. 742) scene, the scene itself draws on several earlier conditions, rhetorical moments that qualify Satan's tragedy and limit Satan's tragic nature.

In Book IV's argument, Milton explicitly emphasizes Satan's involvement in his damnation: [Satan] falls into many doubts with himself, and many passions, fear, envy, and despair; but at length confirms himself in evil…"[40] Our issue is with the agency embodied by *confirms*.[41] Imprisoned by an omnipresent Hell, can Satan confirm himself evil and, if not, what does it mean for Milton's programatic argument? Throughout the poem, Milton will reinforce the notion that an individual's agency and will—when reliant on God's grace— redeem or damn the individual, even

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[40] Milton, *PL*, IV. The individual arguments become more important after Milton rearranges *PL* into its twelve-book edition. For the 1669, ten-book edition, Milton's arguments were situated together before the poem in its entirety; however, after the 1674 rearrangement, the arguments were placed before each respective book, an arrangement that increases the argument's importance in controlling how the reader receives the book.

[41] For an important discussion of God's divine agency in choice, see Stephen Fallon, 'To Act or Not': Milton's Conception of Divine Freedom," *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49.3 (July-September 1988): 425-449. Fallon carefully shows that how Milton uniquely provides God agency of choice: "Milton extends to God the phenomenon that each of us feels as existential fact: freedom of choice" (449).

angels.[42] These beliefs are evidence in Book III when God explains to the Son that "Will and Reason (Reason also is choice)" are essential to the scheme of things: Will, the capacity to do, and reason, a mediating faculty, allow for liberty, the capacity to conform to God's plans.[43] In short, Milton builds from Lucifer's episodic fall an argument about individual culpability, reasoning that individuals must choose to damn themselves, and that the evil angels "themselves *decreed*/ thir own revolt" (*PL* III ll. 116-7. Emphasis mine). Here, Milton's framing uses God's benevolence as the litmus for right reasoning, meaning that choice—human and angelic—can only be weighed against God's will. As Fallon says of Milton's liberty, "Man acts rightly or wrongly in relation to God."[44]

Elaborated on in Book III, Milton stresses a latent contradiction between will and choice based on an individual's agency—the *choice*—that "our adversary" (III. l. 81) supposedly wields. The Father remarks that Satan—transported by rage—is empowered and free from physical incarceration:

> Only begotten Son, seest thou what rage
> Transports our adversary, whom no bounds
> Prescribd, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains
> Heart on him there, nor yet the main Abyss
> Wide interrupt can hold;[45]

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[42] Critiquing "free grace" as a "*Calvinistical* Hypothesis," Cambridge Platonist Henry More complains that "he that has no mind to Goodness cannot lay the fault on God but himself. Nor can Satan tempt by that forcible stratagem to either *despair* or *dissoluteness,* suggesting that if a man shall be saved, he shall be saved, or if damned, he shall be damned, and that he can neither help on the one nor hinder the other." More is critiquing Calvin's irresistible grace and perseverance, when one of the elect cannot resist or fall from grace and where agency and choice are monolithically in the hands of God, not the tempter or the believer. Both More and Milton in *Paradise Lost* prefer cooperative grace, where he can maintain More's faulting of the sinner yet still emphasize the individual's voluntary agency. Because More and Milton are discussing humans, the tension remains whether Satan has voluntary access to grace, which is implied when Satan refuses to supplicate himself to Christ. More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London: I. Flesher, 1660), 503.

[43] As Escobedo explains, "…reason or judgment, in the process of enabling moral choice (by apprehending the existence of options beyond mere passion or instinct), in fact guides the will to choose rightly, ideally limiting its freedom to select evil. To say that "free will / Would not admit" certain passionate inclinations so long as 'judgment' functions properly amounts to saying that judgment does more than merely provide neutral data for the will to consider; rather, the deliberative process of reason directs the will—prompts it and pushes it." "Allegorical Agency and the Sins of Angels," *ELH*, 75.4. (Winter 2008). 802.

[44] Fallon, "To Act or Not," 448.

[45] Milton, *PL*. III. 80-5.

Milton's general point is that Satan has yet to receive full judgement, a specific moment when God will physically bind the evil angels to hell, "Cast in the Abyss" eternally in defeat[46]; however, Milton is not saying Satan has liberty but rather is free to choose his path, which is made apparent by the figurative weight of 'no bounds/ Prescrib'd, no bars of Hell, nor all the chains/Heapt on him there'. The weight is meant to be literal, since the reader imagines the chains 'heapt' upon Satan, pressing him down, but, if taken figuratively, is God's comment accurate? Things become more convoluted when Satan expresses his despair in Book IV.[47]

In order to highlight the 'weight' of the infernal experience[48], Milton depicts Satan's transition from confidence to desperation in Book IV, a period where Satan exhibits both the physical and mental suffering typical of the evil angel's infernal nature and experience. Emboldened by his new enterprise—the despoiling of man—Satan experiences first the uplift of his endeavor, and the correlated infernal movement where sin weighs or depresses one's capacity to reason. Toppling from this rage-induced upward bend of spirits, Satan's disposition spirals downward into self-loathing: "…his dire attempt, which nigh the birth/ Now rolling, boils in his

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[46] See *Revelations* 20.10: "And the deuil that deceiued them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, for euer and euer." *The Holy Bible conteyning the Old Testament, and the New, newly translated out of the originall tongues* (London: Robert Barker, 1611).

[47] In researching general perspectives on Satan's freedom from hell, I found that the majority of perspectives argued that, while Satan may be geographically free from Hell, he is never free of its torments. As John Mayer explains, "that [in hell] there they [i.e. fallen angels] are in [chains of] darknesse, that is, in misery; euen as a man in a burning Feuer, wheresoeuer he be laid is still tormented with the burning heat of his disease." Mayer concludes that, rather then a physical place, hell is a type of penal existence, an experience "of obstinacy and desperation, which is a spirituall darknesse," an antithetical status to those that "beleeue and to haue comfort towards God is to be in the light." John Mayer, *Ecclesiastica interpretatio* (London: Iohn Haviland, 1627).

[48] As explored previously in this dissertation, Milton explains that sinning has a type of cumulative effect in which the weight of sin depresses the uplifting sensation of grace. See also: John Milton, *Christian Doctrine,* "On the Punishment of Sin," Ed. John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington (New York: Oxford UP, 2012) I.12., 433-4.

tumultuous breast,/ and like a devilish Engine back recoils/ Upon himself" (ll.16-8).[49] Satan experiences a mood swing that causes a systemic, distempering effect called backsliding, where individuals falter in their dedication to God.[50] The reference to an Engine, styled like a canon, fits well with the tumultuous nature of backsliding: propelled upward by rage, he is equally propelled downward into despair.[51]

Milton's goal is to stress how the passions affect the individual's capacity for redemption by depicting desperate distemper, an emotional instability that fissures one's dedication to redemption. For Satan, this effect manifests when suffocating despair engulfs him: "horror and doubt distract/ His Troubl'd thoughts, and from the bottom stir/ the Hell within him, for whine him Hell/ He brings, and round about him, nor from Hell/ One step no more than from himself can fly/ By change of place" (ll. 18-23). The distemper causes an instability of thought, where the previous sins overwhelm the future possibilities of redemption.

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[49] Note the water imagery in More's depiction of hell, probably playing on *abyss* as a body of water:

> For who can imagine the horror, the stench, the confusion, the Flames of Fire, those loud murmurs and bellowings of the troubled Seas working and smoking like seething Water in a Caldron, the fearfull howlings and direfull grones of those rebellious Ghosts, who besides the general defacement of whatsoever they heretofore took pleasure in, are in an unexpressible torture of Body, with an unimaginable vexation of Minde; Self-love then (the centre of the Animal life) proving the depth and bottom of Hell, as being inflamed and boiling up with the highest indignation and vengeance against it self, that when it had so many opportunities, it provided no better for its own happiness.

More depicts the suffering physically, whereas Milton is careful to evoke the imagined torment within Satan, but the overlap in water or water-imagery binds the humoral aspects of despair with infernal Hell's experience. More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, 41.

[50] In his practical guide to Christianity, *The Christian Directory*, Baxter cites Pride—"especially pride of gifts, or knowledge, or holiness, which some call spiritual Pride"—as a significant cause of backsliding, or the condition when a believer turns away from truth, goodness, or from obedience: "Satan assaulted our first Parents by that way that he fell *himself*; and his success encourageth him to try the same way with their posterity." Richard Baxter, *Christian Directory* (London: Robert White, 1673), 625.

[51] Presbyterian William Bates emphasizes this mood shift in his description of despair: [T]hese self-deceivers from extream Security have fallen into extream Fear. Then Truth and Conscience, that were so long under unrighteous restraints, break the Fetters, and terribly charge the sinner. Then innumerable Acts which they thought to be innocent, appear to be sins, and Sin that they made light of, to be infinitely evil, and in the highest degree hateful to God. And sometimes by the suggestions of the enemy of Souls, they are overwhelm'd with despair, and their last Error is worse than the first." Bates, *SERMONS UPON DEATH, AND Eternal Judgment*, EEBO (London: J.D., 1683), 130-1.

Using despair, Milton explains Satan's soteriological condition, his potential for redemption, by showing how his previous sins prevent him from making amends or asking for redemption. As Richard Baxter explains, "the *Inclining to Evil* […] and the *declining* from true spiritual good, do almost always go together."[52] Satan's desperate moment relies on two assumptions, that Satan experiences despair like a human and that Satan has the potential for redemption. In the following section, I'll explain that, 1) while Satan experiences despair *like* a human, Milton explicitly frames him as non-human, and 2) that, despite Milton's theological quibbling, Satan lacks redemptive potential by Milton's own logic.

"Drive down to Chains of Darkness": The Death of the Will

We need not turn too far to frame Satan's despair as a byproduct of his own wrongs against God. From the very beginning of the poem, Milton lays out the oft-observed double-bind that stifles Satan's agency and signals his eventual defeat. When Milton is justifying "the ways of God to man" (l. 26), he upholds Satan as an exemplary sinner, one with the freedom to self-incriminate. In assuming the principle of free choice—a human has the free will to obey or not—Milton exculpates God from Satan's punishment: "the will/ and high permission of all-ruling Heaven/ Left him at large to his own dark designs" (*PL* I. 211-13). Again, freewill and choice are significant to the overall Christian scheme; yet, as Baxter explains above, the corruption of will and judgement are byproducts of sin, what is commonly called "spiritual death": "[Spiritual Death is located] in that annihilation of the righteousness and of freedom to act well," and that "slavery under sin and the devil, which is as it were the death of the will."[53] In this stage, Satan exhibits the limitations of will/agency in despair, but Milton restricts the analogy by assuming that evil angels hold themselves in damnation, albeit unintentionally, through this corruption of their reason.

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[52] Ibid., 617. Baxter is specifically talking about humans who chose "sensual or carnal good" over spiritual good, making such desires evil. This is not the case for Satan, who is inspired by pride and a need for revenge, but the effect is the same. As he inclines toward evil ends, his desire for good declines.

[53] Milton, "On the Punishment of Sin," 433.

In borrowing a phrase from *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,* we can summarize Milton's usage of Satan's despair as the "seeds and sparkles of new misery."[54] The seeds—probably pulled from "The Parable of the Sower"—entail those previous actions a sinner has performed while the sparkles are the torments inflicted as punishment; these new "sparks of Hell," as Baxter might call them, have grown to fruition through wickedness' nurturing. Parabolically speaking, we reap a new hell from what we have sown. In Book IV, Satan's actions against man are a consequence of his revenge against God, framing Book IV as proof that, when will is weighed down by sin, one's will makes things worse for oneself. Put another way, since his reason is corrupted, Satan's will only further defies his liberty because it functions to defy God. Here, Satan's mind conceives of agency in terms of disobedience, meaning that obedience (liberty) will always be slavery in his mind.[55]

As with distemper, despair is characterized by these tensions over will and fortitude, often symbolized in terms of misrule. For example, the tensions are allegorized in terms of kingdoms and kingship, seen in the Son of God's words in *Paradise Regain'd*:

> …he who reigns within himself, and rules
> Passions, Desires, and Fears, is more a King;
> Which every wise and virtuous man attains:
> And who attains not, ill aspires to rule
> Cities of men, or headstrong Multitudes,
> Subject himself to Anarchy within,
> Or lawless passions in him, which he serves.
> But to guide Nations in the way of truth
> By saving Doctrine, and from error lead
> To know, and knowing worship God aright,

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[54] As Milton explains in *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*: "For though it were granted us by divine indulgence to be exempt from all that can be harmful to us from without, yet the perverseness of our folly is so bent that we should never lin hammering out of out own hearts, as it were out of a flint, the seeds and sparkles of new misery to ourselves, till all were in a blaze again" (1). John Milton, *The Works of Mr. John Milton* (London: s.n. 1697). Alternatively, Milton could also be drawing on *Job* 7, which he quotes in *Christian Doctrine*: "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." John Milton, *The Christian Doctrine*, In *The Complete Poems and Major Prose,* edited by Merritt Hughes (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2003), 983.

[55] As Fallon reminds us, "The theological compatibilists are grateful for God's *nature*, Milton for his *choice*. Paradoxically, liberty is not enough for Milton's God; there must also be free choice." Fallon, "To Act or Not," 448.

> Is yet more Kingly; this attracts the Soul,
> Governs the inner man, the nobler part;
> That other o'er the body only reigns,
> And oft by force, which to a generous mind
> So reigning can be no sincere delight.[56]

The argument between Satan and the Son is over rulership: If the king's two bodies are in harmony with God, then the country will likewise be in harmony; if the country is in disharmony, then the king's bodies must also be in anarchy. But the tone and imagery evokes the man as a microcosm of the universe trope.[57] In *Paradise Lost,* Satan's character resembles this relationship in that he aspires to rule, only to be overthrown when "Pride and worse Ambition threw me down…"[58] How can he rule when even his own body is in discord? Conversely, the soul that maintains its harmony in the face of opposition is tested and strengthened. Satan is the inverse, where moments of redemption exacerbate his torture; ruled by passion and wrecked by despair, Satan appears the most human in his inability to rule himself, and his downward spiraling cements his role as an example of fallen reasoning, mainly through its impact on the conscience, the seat of Christian liberty.

I found it surprising that Satan had a conscience, in part because of how Milton characterizes Satan's will; however, Milton is quite clear that Satan 1) has a conscience and 2) that this conscience functions very similarly to a human's. It is tempting enough that critics like Lobo and Stachniewski frame Satan's despairs as exemplifying human reprobation: "Satan is merely a stark instance of the fate befalling human beings?"[59] Fallon agrees in part: "Both *men and angels*

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[56] Milton, *Paradise Regain'd*, III. ll. 466-480. 504-5. The Son of God is explaining his acceptance of a crown of thorns over the kingdoms of the world.

[57] In *The Elizabethan World Picture,* Tillyard cites this concept in Photius' *Life of Pythagoras:* "Man is called a little world not because he is composed of the four elements (for so are all beasts, even the meanest) but because he possesses all the faculties of the universe" (66). E.M.W. Tillyard, *Elizabethan World Picture* (New York: Vintage 1959).

[58] Milton, *PL*, IV. l. 40.

[59] Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination*, 349.

are created as rational creatures…"[60] In considering Satan's conscience, recall that Milton constructs *Paradise Lost* as an argument, and therefore must explain the conscience carefully in Book III, lines 194-202, to justify why Satan deserves his fate in Book IV. In the *Niphates* Top scene, Milton embeds reasoning directly within the conscience so that Satan's despair evokes a possibility for redemption while still preventing Satan from achieving it, thereby showing the reader that reason can only exist within a liberty/conscience relationship.

Milton explains that the conscience allows humans to navigate the complicated world of sin. At this point, the conscience is suppose to function the same for humans as angels:

> And I will place within them as a guide
> My Umpire *Conscience*, whom if they will hear,
> Light after light well us'd they shall attain,
> and to the End persisting, safe arrive.
> This my long sufferance and my day of grace
> They who neglect and scorn, shall never taste;
> But hard be hard'n'd, blind be blinded more,
> That they may stumble on, and deeper fall;
> And none but such from mercy I exclude.[61]

The great Creator is referring to man's salvation through the conscience, but we may assume that Milton uses *conscience* in Book IV consistently with Book III's "Umpire Conscience" (l. 195), or that the *conscience* that wrecks Satan is the same as the one that wrecks Adam later. In terms of textual time loops, we should also keep in mind that this conversation in Book III predates the fall of man, but not that of the angels; God's use of the term *will* either applies to humans only (Satan's creation predicates the placement of the conscience in humans) or forces us as readers to engage in some complicated apologetic work, wherein we justify that Satan self-generated a conscience at the start of Book IV. For now, the latter is easier and we will assume Satan has a functional conscience like that of a human.

Milton calls the faculty "Umpire Conscience" to signal the mediating position it occupies between man and God, echoing Calvin's description of the conscience as a mediating instrument.

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[60] Fallon, "To Act or Not," 446.

[61] Milton, *PL*, III. ll. 194-202.

Specifically, the conscience has two tasks which are initiated either to confirm liberty or to confirm disobedience. When one heeds its advice, the conscience leads to right path, and one is delivered to salvation by a cooperation between the two parties, man through submission to grace and God through supporting grace; if a human should scorn the conscience, the conscience inversely hardens his or her heart against submission, leading to blindness until which time they are judged by God.[62] The significance of the conscience, therefore, is that it provides a place where humans cognitively deal with temptation, a way for "exercising or manifesting their faith or patience," as Milton explains in *Christian Doctrine.*[63] But it is also an instrument for both inflicting further torment and prolonging suffering, a mental hell.[64]

When the Father describes the effects of the conscience—the hard be hardened, the blind be blinded— he uses an imagery that resonates with both the earlier Book I description of the fall and the later Book IV imagery of Satan's despair: "…they may stumble on, and deeper fall;/ and none but such from mercy I exclude." The imagery of falling soundly echoes both Satan's fall and hell's infernal position, mainly the place where those excluded from grace are dumped.

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[62] Even Laudians like Jeremy Taylor—a direct disciple of Laud—discuss how *conscience* is affected by fear. As he explains in *Dvctor Dvbitantivm,* the conscience binds the sinner to duty, punishment, or comfort depending on the actions of the sinner. In terms of punishment, "the binding [of a sinner] to punishment is an act of conscience also as it is a Judge, and is intended to affright a sinner [toward redemption], and to punishment [i.e. for sin]: but it is such a punishment as is the beginning of hell torments, and unless the wound be cured will never end till eternity it self shall go into a grave." Taylor, *Dvctor Dvbitantivm* (London: James Flesher, 1660), 15.

[63] Milton, *The Christian Doctrine*, 988.

[64] See Calvin's discussion of *conscience* in Book IV:

> [The meaning of conscience] must be derived from the etymology of the term. As when men, with the mind and intellect, apprehend the knowledge of things, they are thereby said to know, and hence the name of science or knowledge is used; so, when they have, in addition to this, a sense of the *divine judgment, as a witness not permitting them to hide their sins, but bringing them as criminals before the tribunal of the judge, that sense is called conscience. For it occupies a kind of middle place between God and man, not suffering man to suppress what he knows in himself, but following him out until it brings him to conviction.*

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), Book IV.10. 781-2. Emphasis mine. As might be inferred from this brief excerpt, Calvin emphasizes how, when the conscience— via a hounding or haunting—stigmatizes the individual, it is inspired in part by a divine will.

In experiencing this infernal position, most critics see Satan as experiencing an evil conscience. In *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, William Ames explains that a "Conscience is said to be *Evill*, either because its *Acts* are *sinnes*, or because it brings *trouble* and *sorrow.*" Given Milton's knowledge of Ames' work, it is reasonable to assume that Milton is drawing on this discussion, but only insofar as to latently echoes Ames' synthesis; given Milton's poetic ambitions, he cannot scrutinize the conscience to the same depth as Ames, whose work anatomizes and categorizes "divers degrees and sorts of an Evill Conscience" to a vastly more detailed level. Milton is not anatomizing a medical condition and *Paradise Lost* simply cannot be expected to convey the same level of categorization.

Through Ames we learn the categorical depth that *conscience* can afford, including but not limited to "benummed," "stupide," "despeate," and "seared or cauterized" consciences.[65] In this way, we generalize when we simply say that Satan suffers from an "evil conscience" because the term ignores how precise theologians like Ames and Milton are in their conceptualizations. Instead, drawing on Ames' discussion of the desperate conscience allows us to see how Milton's depiction obfuscates despair. Ames explains:

> The Despaire of the damned, which utterly rooteth out all hope of remedy, is the bottomlesse pit of misery, a suffering which carries specifically into the conscience itself: a *Desperate Conscience* (fully representing all sinnes, together with their exceeding great and unpardonable guilt, and Gods feareful wrath abiding upon Sinners, with the endlesse misery that followed thereon) is Gods most powerfull meanes to torment the Reprobate; like unto a worme, that most sharply biteth and gnaweth their hearts for ever: *Mar.* 9. 46. their *Worme dyeth not.*[66]

Rather than the typical *evil conscience* moniker preferred by critics like Lobo and Fallen, a *desperate conscience* is definitionally more precise to Milton's depiction in that, when Satan slides into despair, he conjures up powerful, passionate sins before capsizing into the lowest low of torment. The evil act here is less that of the tempter who torments another and more that of the desperate person who torments his or herself. This self-inflicted evil is most obvious when Milton

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[65] William Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases* (London: 1639). See specifically chapters 14 and 15, pp. 40-49.

[66] Ibid., 48. For my discussion of Ames' usage of worms, see Chapter 2. [page range]

depicts Satan's conscience: for Satan, the very thought of redemption itself acts as a type of suffering, a torment of seeing and experiencing his own hopeless condition for eternity, meaning that he inflicts onto himself a greater pain and suffering.

Until this point, I have discussed Satan's conscience as operating akin to a humans, including differentiating how a desperate conscience is different than an evil one; yet, even in differentiating Ames' usage from Milton's, we are treating Satan in human terms, but, by using angelic terms as a type of benchmark, Milton illustrates a way to understand the suffering of men. In order to understand how people suffer from a desperate conscience, Milton imagines how evil angels suffer from it.

In what is a strikingly seductive thought, twentieth-century critic C.S. Lewis asserts that "a fallen man is very like a fallen angel"[67]; however, we must unpack this simile, mostly because figurative language masks the tropological and rhetorical nature of angels. Simply put, a fallen man is *not* a fallen angel.[68] Milton takes great pains to show Satan in his most human suffering, but is it fair to compare a human who ignores the conscience with a powerful fallen angel? No, because the scene only works because of how powerless the powerful angel is. It only works because of who Satan is: a significant biblical figure, an angel endowed with special knowledge, and a sinner who cannot save himself from Hell.

Elsewhere Milton is clearer in differentiating how Satan's former position makes him significantly different than a human who suffers from a desperate conscience. According to Milton's understanding of the Christian hierarchy, the utility of angels divides man from angels, mainly due to two specific characteristics: 1) fallen angels are continually punished by God and 2) they execute the judgements of God. In both instances, Milton explains their roles in terms of their

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[67] C.S. Lewis, *Preface to Paradise Lost* (New York: Oxford, 1961), 101.

[68] Consider Thomas Adams' complaint that some theologians treat angels and demons as solely figurative: "Hell-fire is no fable; Deuils are not nominals, but reals; not imaginarie qualities, but afflicting spirites: heere the tempters to sinne, heereafter the tormenters for sinne. *Qui non credent*, sentient. They that will not beleeue Gods wordes, shall feele their wounds." Adams, *The Black Devill* (London: William Iaggard, 1615), 10.

punishment. Fallen angels suffer God's exclusions themselves or tempt others away from the righteous path, and thus they are punished eternally. In *Christian Doctrine,* Milton succinctly states that "The evil angels are reserved for punishment," but what does this entail?[69] While it is accurate to say that angels in *Paradise Lost* "are upheld by their own strength," the modern reader finds it difficult to parse how this caveat simultaneously connects to the divine will, mainly in how an angel's will is tethered to God's permission.[70] For example, Luther explains of the fallen angels that "they cannot escape without permission [from Hell, the bottomless pit, nor] can they do anything without the command of God."[71] The complications follow like this: 1) Angels remain unfallen because they support themselves (choosing to remain in Heaven), and yet 2) their wills are tied to God's permission, meaning they cannot wreak havoc except because of God's allowances. So, does God allow the evil angels to torment his believers or do they will it themselves?

In order to qualify evil agency, Milton uses the book of *Job*, explaining that the evil angels "going to and fro in the earth" commit evil in order to fulfill God's will, meaning that the liberty of their spirit and their role throughout the cosmos is defined and limited by God's will.[72] In *Paradise Lost* Book III, Milton qualifies Satan's agency specifically by indicating that, when Satan orchestrates the fall of man, the temptation itself creates choice for humans, a necessary component of their salvation. Depending on whether man should "accept not grace," he will be saved from death.[73] In this instance Milton is careful to situate freewill *as* human choice, defending

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[69] Milton, *CD*, 992.

[70] As Luther explains in *The Bondage of the Will*, "…God works evil in us, that is, by us, not from the fault of God, but from the fault of evil in us…" *Bondage of the Will* (Watchmaker Publishing, 2010), 141.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Fallon provides an important caveat. Humans (and angels, I'm assuming) are "free to do right or wrong" but they "must act; God, on the other hand, can do only right, but he is free to act or not." Fallon terms this "significant freedom," meaning that God is capable of choosing amongst "equal alternative goods": "God does not 'serve necessity,'" but his "free 'Yes' makes possible all later significant choices." Fallon, "To Act or Not," 449.

[73] Milton, *PL*, III. l. 302. The theological tenet revolves around willing submission: without choice, humans would be compelled to kneel, thus turning God into a tyrant.

God's foreknowledge against an accusation of divine control.[74] Oddly enough, the postlapsarian condition created by man vaguely resembles the supralapsarian condition of the angels in that those angels who chose to stand with God remained angels and those that chose to stand with Satan fell with him. Supralapsarian angels *chose* God or *chose* to turn against him. It is arguable to say they still have *choice*.

Choice is qualified with a self-awareness that the evil angels are being punished and are in torment because of their exclusion from God: "Their knowledge is great, but such as tends rather to aggravate than diminish their misery; so that they utterly despair of their salvation." The evil angels' knowledge, while extensive when compared to the good angels and humans, is allocated to punish them; the knowledge 'tends to aggravate' their misery, causing them to "believe and tremble, knowing that they are reserved for punishment" without any hope of salvation. Conversely, the good angels—meaning those who are unfallen—preserve themselves against such knowledge: "The good angels do not look into all secret things of God […] there is much of which they are ignorant."[75]

The knowledge allotted to evil angels is similar to that afflicting damned humans, and they share in the inability to escape from their torment. In his gloss of Book IV's despair scene, Merritt Hughes cites Aquinas in showing that the only knowledge allowed damned humans is the reminder of their suffering in hell:

> Accordingly, in the damned there will be actual consideration of the things they knew heretofore as matters of sorrow, but not as a cause of pleasure. For they will consider both the evil they have done, and for which they were damned, and the delightful goods they have lost, and on both counts they will suffer torments.[76]

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[74] See *PL* Book III. l. 102 ("Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell"), l. 124-5 ("they must remain [free to choose],/ Till they enthrall themselves…"), and *CD* ch. IX "Of the Special Government of Angels": "…good angels are upheld by their own strength no less than man himself was before his fall…" (990).

[75] Milton, *CD*, IX. 992.

[76] "Supplement to the Third Part," In *The Summa Theologiæ of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (2017). Q98.7.

For Aquinas, a type of darkness—what I call paradigmatic knowledge throughout this dissertation —frames vision so that a tortured soul can only see missed opportunities: "[Those in hell] will be tormented with the thought that the knowledge they had of speculative matters was imperfect, and that they missed its highest degree of perfection which they might have acquired."[77] In the *Summa Theologia,* Aquinas' is drawing on his earlier differentiation between evil and good, a difference which had already saturated the Church of England and its clergy years before, perhaps most importantly in the teaching of Perkins. Regardless of whether Milton was intentionally drawing on the Schoolmen, Milton echoes Aquinas in his description of hell:

> A Dungeon horrible, on all sides round
> As one great Furnace flam'd, yet from those flames
> No light, but rather darkness visible
> Serv'd only to discover sights of woe,
> Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
> And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
> That comes to all; but torture without end.[78]

There is an infernality to this blindness, one that is unique to the damned: 'hope never comes/that comes to all,' and infernal knowledge is marked as the sight of paradise lost eternally, the "happy state/ Here swallow'd up in endless misery."[79] Rather than focus on obstinacy as an earthly condition where a human abjures redemption, Milton explicitly shows knowledge and blindness as carried *within* the evil angels eternally—here both figuratively and literally—as darkness, a blindness which functions both to dampen choice and focus the evil angels on 'sights of woe' forever. Because the evil angels' knowledge and blindness stem from their fall from grace, they exemplify a paradigmatic doctrine through which they must continually hold themselves in hell. Unfortunately, this is the double-bind through which Milton's theologic argument of self-incrimination becomes the most suspect.

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[77] Aquinas, "Question 98. The will and intellect of the damned," In *Summa Theologia*, Q98.7.

[78] Milton, *PL*, I. ll. 61-67.

[79] Ibid., ll. 141-2.

When Milton follows biblical tradition as characterizing knowledge as blindness, he shows that torment is a conditioned view that not only prevents repentance but also increases adjudicative suffering without reprieve. In short, he draws on an unabated Calvin at his most draconian. Satan carries with him paradigmatic despair as the residual torment of hell from Book I, a torment that restricts redemption but, more importantly, tortures. Like the evil angels in Milton's *Christian Doctrine*, Satan's reasoning is burdened by knowledge, a type of vision that clouds reasoning (here through the desperate conscience), producing a demonic reasoning specific to evil angels and serving as the prime reason they continually self-incriminate and self-inflict their punishment.[80]

For some critics, Satan's struggle with despair depicts how Milton understood the interiority of the mind, the famous stipulation that Heaven and Hell were within the self. Milton is explicit in how these fluctuations manifest in other delusions of the mind, and I will discuss their relationship to despair below. In terms of his repentance, this delusional thought process manifests when the evil angels attempt to see Hell as an infernal paradise in Book I, what Church of England clergyman Samuel Crook calls "a contrary *Kingdom of Sin*"[81]:

> Hail horrors, hail
> Infernal world, and though profoundest Hell
> Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings
> A mind not to be chan'd by Place or Time.
> The mind is its own place, and in itself
> Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n[82]

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[80] Although this is common also to postlapsarian humans, there is a noticeable difference with angels. Inverting the famous line from the *Aeneid*, physician and religious writer Thomas Brown complains in *Religio Medici* that "There is not road or ready way to virtue, it is not an easie point of art to disentangle our selves from this riddle, or web of sin"; but, humans—unlike angels—have the option to pursue a path to redemption whereas it is contestable whether a similar avenue exists for demons. Thomas Brown, *Religio Medici* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1642),108.

[81] Samuel Crook, "CHAP. III: Of Satan *the* Arch-hypcocrite, *and* Father *of hypocrites,*" In *Ta Diapheronta* (London: A.B., 1658), 13.

[82] Milton, *PL*, I. ll. 250-255.

While the attempt here is to see hell as heaven, knowledge and the occasional sparks of despair make this impossible, instead drawing attention to a gray, internal stigma, a darkly brand that reflects the damned's hierarchal relationship to God.

Because Milton is willing to conceive of mental Hell as illustrating a state of being, he can connect individual suffering to a specific soteriological relationship with God, mainly that hell is a final experience, an eternal judgment where the soul is forever excluded from grace. For those in despair, the state of exclusion manifests as a (mis)perceived relationship with God; however, these humans maintain the possibility for redemption, a stark contrast with the finality of the damned. As explained above, these humans suffer the intemporality of hell, and they conceive of heaven as a release from hell; yet, the delusional evil angels can only see hell and call it heaven. The difference is that in hell there is no redemption and in despair, the potential for salvation seems impossibly far away. In short, hell is hopeless because it is final, even when one is physically outside its bounds, whereas, objectively speaking, despair is perceived hopelessness.

For those in hell, there is no redemption and the knowledge of exclusion is thereby used as a cudgel to abuse them. For the chief fallen angel, the inability to escape sin then becomes a self-delusional belief that it is better to rule hell than serve in heaven, a delusion which highlights the illogic of his thinking but also the flaw of his character: pride. Doebler makes several interesting observations on how Milton's Satan draws on the *ars moriendi* ("Art of Dying") tradition, odd considering death is impossible for him. Still, she is correct when she says, "By this point in the text Satan on *Niphates* Top may not be literally hopeless, but from the theological point of view (the view essential to English thinking) he is hopeless of reconciliation with God."[83] In the mind of the fallen angel, he is irredeemable; for Milton, this illogic is self-inflicted because of his pride, and therefore is representative of perceived hopelessness, despair.

To see the effects of Satan's self-incrimination, we can simply look at his pride. If Satan's ethos can be summarized in one desire, it is a desire for individual control, freedom from divine

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[83] Doebler, *Rooted Sorrow*, 110.

tethers. He does not want redemption; he wants to be free of Christian liberty, which is to rule heaven. He wants to be God.[84] While the argument is that he self-indicts, Satan primarily depicts the futility of resistance against God. An example of this futility is obvious when the fallen angels form a consul to strike back at God's plan, a consul in which they desperately hope to topple their jailer by ruining his plans:

> Consult how we may henceforth most offend
> Our Enemy, our own loss how repair,
> How overcome this dire Calamity,
> What reinforcement we may gain from Hope,
> If not what resolution from despair.

Even in this early stage of retribution—the early precipice of despair—the mind's carceral delusions are difficult to assuage.

By introducing Satan's introspection in Book IV—well after several of the important qualifiers are placed on his agency and conscience—Milton increases the fatalistic introspection of the fallen angel: "Nay curs'd be thou; since against his thy will/ Chose freely what it now so justly rues" (*PL*. IV. ll. 71-2). Milton inquires into how tethered Satan's will and mind are by exploring how *salvation* and *redemption* become a torment onto themselves. In this way, even the terms of hope typically used to alleviate desperation aggravate the fallen angel's pain. For Satan, the attempt at self-actualizing is part a confession, but his fallacious reasoning suggests that his mind is not his own: it is ruled by despair. If this is to be his confession, if he is attempting to admit fault, then Satan cannot even conceive of repentance—he cannot evoke the word—let alone pursue it: words only express suffering and manifest more suffering. Compulsory pride thus becomes the mask for a desperate soul with no chance of redemption.

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[84] In a similar vein, Thomas Adams depicts a devil dedicated to expanding his dominion: "[The devil] finds no such pleasure to dominere [unbelievers] in his owne hell; but he hath a mind to [dominere] Paradise." *Five Sermons*, 54. Again in *The Black Devil or the Apostate*: "Since hee [i.e. the Deuill] cannot be King in heauen, hee would commaund in hell." *Black Devil*, 30. Milton summarizes the flaw in this reasoning in *CD*: "…the wicked themselves fully co-operate in [the work of God], though with any view but that of fulfilling the divine will" (987). While Satan conceives of his wicked acts as a retaliation against God, he co-operates with the divine will.

"Drive down to Chains of Darkness": The Intemporality of Despair and its effect on Redemptive Agency.

Milton's argument is that redemption must be voluntary (i.e. chosen)[85]; yet, the experience through which Satan chooses to remain corrupt must be suspect because, like a human struggling with despair, his faculties are impacted by the experience of exclusion. If his desperate condition functions akin to desperate humans, then the evil angel's mental capacities are disturbed, meaning his possible redemption is questionable. For example, desperate people experience translocation and transtemporality, conditions which blur reality in a way very similar to how evil angels transport hell within them.[86] Both parties experience hell—i.e. the blurring of time and place—in a way that illustrates how despair stifles the mind, will, and soul. I call this experience the 'intemporality of despair," when the desperate experience eternal damnation before they have been eternally damned.[87]

The intemporality of despair occurs through translocation and transporality, highlighted in Book IV. For example, the narrator evokes John's vision of the apocalypse—a word that refers both to a time and place, or what can be best described as an *event*— in order to explain Satan's avoidance of combat. By evoking John's vision, the narrator frames Satan's complicated relationship to time and repentance, treating them as simultaneous, conflated events: Satan experiences defeat before initiating combat. He is defeated before he has even fought. Because the

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[85] See *PL* Book IV, ll. 532-4: "Can hearts, not free, be tried whether they serve/ Willing or no, who will but what they must/ by Destiny, and can other choose?" In *CD*, Milton explains that, "…divine governance of all things [should be] understood to be involved in things natural, civil, indifferent, fortuitous […] rather than in moral or religious [things]. Milton, "On the Punishment of Sin," 437.

[86] Earlier in the 1660s, Jeremy Taylor explains succinctly the general import of the conscience as a mood determinant: "Heaven and Hell are seated in the heart of man. As his conscience is, so he is happy, or extremely miserable." Taylor, "THE FIRST BOOK Of Conscience, the kindes of it, and the general Rules of conducting them," In *Dvctor Dvbitantivm,* 20.

[87] As discussed in Chapter 3 on Burton, the Francis Spira's case illustrates that desperate people reported themselves experiencing the torment and sensations of hell while still present on earth. I have coined the terms *transtemporality* and *translocation* to refer to the respective blurring of time and space experienced by the desperate. For Spira, see Nathaniel Bacon, *A Relation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira* (London: I.L., 1638).

reader knows Satan's future defeat at Apocalypse, Milton clues the reader into Satan's prescience by hinging his present actions on their future effects, his present agency on the memory and knowledge of his past failures, creating a timeline as swollen with inevitability as pregnant with potential failure.

Milton's complicated dealings with biblical chronology are not lost on critics. In his *Political History*, Daniel DaFoe complains that Milton "has indeed made a fine Poem, but [*Paradise Lost*] is a Devil of a History" and later, "Mr. Milton was a good Poet, but a bad Historian." Amongst several other complaints, DaFoe accuses Milton of ignoring specifics of Christian history, mistaking the creation of Hell as occurring before the fall. DaFoe complains, "Neither can I think we should allow things to be placed out of time in Poetry, any more than in History."[88] In summary, DaFoe's major complaint is that, in telling the history of the devil, Milton has played fast-and-loose with the timeline; however, arguing that Milton is writing a *history* makes sense when we recall the rhetorical nature of historical poetry.[89] While DaFoe's complaints are scripturally based—Milton preferences poetic effect over chronological loyalty—the conflations of events make sense when attributed to a deity who experiences events outside of time, reinforcing the belief that God exists in the eternal moment. Despite DaFoe's argument, though, Satan's unique experience could be exacerbated by these temporal distortions, excusing Milton's conflation of events because they fit with Satan's desperate condition.[90]

In Book IV, Satan's concept of time is skewed so that his knowledge of the present is inextricably linked to his knowledge of and rebellion against the future. Consequently, Milton

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[88] DaFoe, *The Political History of the Devil* (Westminster: John Brindley, 1734), 71, 79.

[89] Consider Sir Philip Sidney's sixteenth-century observation that "…the historian, wanting the precept, is so tied not to what should be but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that his example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore a less fruitful doctrine" (16). However, the poet is in part philosopher and therefore engages with teaching virtue, drawing "the mind more effectually than any other art doth…" (25). I make a similar argument in Chapter Two on Shakespeare. Sir Philip Sidney, "Defence of Poesy," In *Sidney's 'The Defense of Poesy' and Selected Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Gavin Alexander (New York: Penguin, 2004).

[90] Consider Adam's discussion of the Chain of Being in Book V, ll. 506-18, whereby human knowledge, when conditioned by obedience and mediated by contemplation, leads man to God.

begins Satan's wrecking of "innocent frail man" (IV. l. 11) by latently suggesting that these endeavors were/are doomed to failure. We can use the engine analogy referenced above to show how it operates on prophetic-like grounds so that the future is impregnated in a past moment; moving forward in time and space has a violent and profound influence on the past and vice versa. For example, the knowledge of his fall from grace, present endeavors against man, and future failure predicted in *Revelation* collide simultaneously *within* Satan, a condition that no human could experience because they lack the necessary divine knowledge specific to evil angels. Time and space boil "in his tumultuous breast" (l. 16) so that Satan can no longer easily conceive of his actual place or time but rather experiences them only as "horror and doubt" (l. 18), the infernal experience which has wrestled control of Satan's conscience and mind.

When he experiences the merging of time and place, he experiences the infernal place of hell and his experience within hell simultaneously, an experience which creates a carceral, irrational space and typifies his earthly experience: "hell within him, for within him Hell/ He brings, and round bout him, nor from Hell/ One step no more from himself can fly by change of place" (ll. 20-3). In this hellish moment when Satan's conscience is seized by despair, his present and future are shaded by the setting sun of his past rejection of God: "Now conscience wakes despair/ that slumber'd, wakes the bitter memory/ of what he was, what is, and what must be/ worse" (*PL*, IV ll. 23-26).[91] A subtle point is embedded in this dynamic lines, "Now conscience wakes despair/ that slumber'd" (ll. 23-4). Despair has always been within Satan, but was suppressed by his pursuit of revenge; once awoken, despair prompts Satan's damnation when it stifles his ability to reason.

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[91] When offering advice on death-bed repentance, Baxter makes a similar observation: "Speedily therefore get rid of sin, and get your Consciences throughly cleansed, by sound repentance and the blood of Christ: For so much sin as you bring to your death-bed, so much bitterness will there be in death. Away then with that sin that Conscience tells you of, and touch the forbidden fruit [no?] more, and kindle not the spar[k]s of Hell in your souls, to make the sting of death more venomous." Richard Baxter, *A Treatise of DEATH; The last ENEMY to be Destroyed* (London: R.W., 1660), 128.

Presumably, the despair of Book IV awakens the memory of Satan's torment, the internal memory of Book I's "penal Fire" (PL I. l.48): "His doom/ reserved him to more wrath; for now the thought/ both of lost happiness and lasting pain/ Torments him" (I. ll. 53-6). This linkage allows the reader to see that Satan's actions in Book IV are done from an infernal reasoning reified by the mistakes he made earlier in the poem. This experience acts as a paradigm, because it is essentially a memory of a future yet to occur.

In his gloss of the speech, eighteenth-century critic Richard Bentley tries to redefine *memory* in terms of other mental faculties, and he changes Milton's wording from "*the bitter* memory" to "*the bitter* Theory."[92] Bentley's point is that Satan's mental faculties, like his "Contemplation, Mediation, [and] Consideration," have been affected by despair. However, Milton's use of *memory* works in spite of Bentley's attempt to alter it. *Memory* refers both to a memory but also the faculty through which Satan may recall future events, the unoccured yet predestined events to which his earlier knowledge would have granted him access. Therefore, *memory* here evokes both memory—his time in heaven, suffering in hell, etc.—as well as the faculties through which he is meant to reason himself from despair. When Milton evokes this connection to both the earlier and later books, we see that Satan's experience of hell produces a paradigmatic reasoning (a *theory* in Bentley's view) experienced only by demons but similar to desperate reasoning, a type of experience that is part punishment and part self-inflicted but entirely debilitating. What makes Satan's experience unlike human despair is that Satan's memories are divine: he believes Gabriel would defeat him because Gabriel would defeat him, not because he misunderstands his position in the divine hierarchy.[93]

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[92] More than simply a critic or clergyman, Bentley is famous amongst Miltonists because of his editing of *Paradise Lost.* His eighteenth-century edition is interesting in that it provides both glosses and direct, textual changes to Milton's prose. The alterations are summarized neatly by one early reader: "[While your notes] truly are *Critical*, though between you and I my friend, [they are] not altogether so *Poetical*" (6). Edmond Miller, "A friendly letter to Dr. Bentley. Occasion'd by his new edition of Paradise lost" (1732), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*.

[93] Bentley, "ftn v. 24," In *Milton's Paradise Lost A new edition, by Richard Bentley* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1732), 106.

During the confrontation between Satan and Gabriel at the end of Book IV, God's prescience — the preconceived outcome of a battle with Gabriel—limits Satan's actions.[94] When looking into the heavens, he chooses not to act based on a perceived failure. After seeing his "Lot in yon celestial Sign," Satan witnesses his untaken actions—his choice in the present and their effects on his future— quashed because he sees and believes a divine Sign, scales weighed against him: "The Fiend looks up and knew/ His mounted scale aloft."[95] The implicit reference to *Daniel* 5 shows that Satan's eternity has been foretold and he is doomed, and Gabriel acts as God's agent, enforcing the limitations of Satan's will and strong-arming him into action. Though the Gabriel v. Satan conflict occurs at the end of Book IV, it signals how the earlier part of the book is meant to be interpreted; Satan receives knowledge of his fate (or is aware of God's role in limiting his will) earlier through his conscience and its reliance on right reasoning. Though these faculties are meant to allow a believer to navigate back to God's path, we can see from the memory example that these faculties are interwoven with Satan's knowledge of divine fate.

Milton's argument has roots in Paul's words in Ephesians 4.17-8, where Gentiles have given themselves over to "yee henceforth walke not as other Gentiles walke in the vanitie of their minde, Hauing the vnderstanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindnesse of their heart."[96] Milton frames the "blindness of their heart" as the dampening or negating factor that stifles one's repentance. For example, we see Milton echo this sentiment of wicked men in his translation of Psalm 82: "They

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[94] Luther evokes Satan as the prime example of this limited agency. Evil angels are restricted from doing anything outside God's will in a way that puts the culpability on the angels themselves: "Thus God, *finding* the will of Satan evil, not *creating* it so, but leaving it while Satan winningly commits the evil, carries it along by His working, and moves it which way He will; though that will ceases not to be evil by this motion of God." Luther, *The Bondage of the Will,* 141.

[95] Milton, *PL*, IV. ll. 1011-4.

[96] Ephesians 4.18, *The Holy Bible*. Paul makes a similar point in 2. Cor. 4.4: "In whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which beleeue not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine vnto them." As is apparent, Paul is drawing on the "hardening of heart" typical of Old Testament sinners/nonbelievers.

know not nor will understand,/ In darkness they walk on…"[97] More importantly, however, is that Milton conceived of this blindness as a type of punishment, as seen in his translation of Psalm 81: "Then did I leave them to their will/ and to their wandering mind;/ Their own conceits they follow'd still/ Their own devices blind."[98] In these references, both Paul and the Psalm writers are discussing human sinners in general, but Milton inherits this *topos* of blindness as punishment from Calvin, specifically when blindness is inflicted on a reprobate and manifests as a form of insanity:

> The reprobate, though they groan under the lash [of torment], yet because *they weigh not the true cause*, but rather *turn their back, as well upon their sins as upon the divine judgement*, become hardened in their stupor; or, because they murmur and kick, and so rebel against their judge, their infatuated violence fills them with frenzy and madness.[99]

Calvin explains this torture as serving a hierarchical purpose, an almost specific attack on how sinners conceive of themselves in the cosmic order of things: "[the reprobates] are not punished with the view of bringing them to a better mind, but only to teach them by dire experience that God is a judge and avenger."[100] A subtle contention lies with how God adjudicates these sinners. The reprobates 'weigh not the true cause' of their torment, which implies God punishes them to inspire a repentance of which they cannot conceive. If they had, they would know that God is the judge who punishes them for their wicked ways. So for reprobates blind to their own sins, the experience of being judged by God remains a sole purpose onto itself: proof that God is a judge and is judging them through torment, but without any utility besides punishment.[101]

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[97] Milton, "Psalm LXXXII," ll. 17-8.

[98] Milton, "Psalm LXXXI," ll. 49-52.

[99] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.iv.32. 429. Emphasis mine.

[100] Ibid., 428-9.

[101] Milton's contemporaries were more willing to temper Calvin's teaching. Baxter explicitly dismisses those frenzied or mad desperate from any soteriological conversations: "The commonest Despair (like Spira's) which cometh immediately from invincible predominant melancholy (though occasioned first by sin) is no otherwise sinful or dangerous, than the despair or raging of a mad-man or one in a doting feaver is." Baxter, *Christian Directory*, I. VII. 10. §6. 355.

Milton's stance on reprobation aligns with Calvin's, but Milton directly excuses God of double-election (for which reprobation is diametric pairing):

> For God does not reprobate for one cause, and condemn or assign to death for another, according to the distinction commonly made; but those whom he has condemned on account of sin, he has also reprobated on account of sin, as in time, so from all eternity. And this *reprobation lies not so much in the divine will*, as in the obstinacy of their own minds; *it is not God who decrees it, but the reprobate themselves who determine on refusing to repent while it is in their power*.[102]

Milton is concerned that some are tempted to blame God for reprobation, and Milton firmly blames the sinner rather than God: 'those whom [God] has condemned on account of sin, he has also reprobated on account of [their] sin.' In his early gloss of *PL*, Richardson tries to control this temptation by differentiating *predestination* from "Universal Fate," declaring that Milton—akin to "Moderate Calvinists"—defined *predestination* as "limited to the Future State of Man." Richardson's 'state of *Man*' comment is explicit, and he negates double-election—whereby God reprobates when he elects—by emphasizing human redemptive agency. For Richardson, Milton believed that, while "some are Elected Peculiarly, the Rest May be Saved Complying with the Conditions."[103] In other words, God provides ample opportunity for humans to redeem themselves via obedience and submission.

Most critics agree that Milton supports this belief by emphasizing human redemptive agency through *Paradise Lost*'s Fall of Man discussion and *Paradise Regain'd*. However, redemptive agency is still stifled by sin, and a human's redemption entails an active struggle against it. Sin weighs on a human's soul, not God, but once a human has been weighed and found wanting, he or she will remain damned for eternity. Milton shifts culpability from God (who possesses adjudicative agency alone) to humans (whose agency lies in shunning sin and seeking grace). As Richardson reasons, Milton's *mortis operands* relies on God's exoneration; double-election and election itself rest on the actions of the individual, not God. While the reprobation and punishment are consistent with Calvinist teachings, the moderating principle is Arminian,

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[102] Milton, *The Christian Doctrine*, 928. Emphasis mine.

[103] Richardson, "ftn. 114," In *PL*. 120.

tempering the use of punishment, which is earned—in Milton's conceptualization—by the individual, and never because of divine will. Punishment is always judicially inflicted.

Satan's blindness and hardening are therefore earned punishments from which Milton exonerates God. In *Christian Doctrine*, Milton explains that God deals with the sinner by withdrawing the light of reason: "The Deity does not effect his purpose [against the sinner] by compelling any one to commit crime, or by abetting him in it, but by withdrawing the ordinary grace of his enlightening spirit, and ceasing to strengthen him against sin."[104] Milton concludes this line of reasoning with the axiomatic statement that the sinner "is instigated to stumble, because he stumbles," a tautological statement that uses a shifting tense to indicate that carceral sin is always earned: man's fall "was to happen through his own fault." Milton provides examples of David and Ahithophel to show that God withdraws the bolstering of the conscience thus abandoning the sinner to the "influence [of] their minds, which were already in a state of preparation for any atrocity."[105]

Milton frames Satan's potential salvation in Book IV by embedding his arguments on redemptive agency in Book I and Book III. Book I makes it clear enough that Satan would incriminate himself with "reiterated crimes," and simply "heap on himself damnation, while he sought/ Evil to others…" (*PL* I. ll. 214-5). When left to his own devices, Satan incriminates himself and, as an effect, is punished for his actions. In order to see these actions as wicked, Milton explicitly gives Satan a conscience and draws on the argument of Book III. The effect culminates in Book IV where the many timelines materialize internally for the outcast, as if the sins Satan is punished for (and to be punished for) are all awoken across the eternal moment by despair.

"**Drive down to Chains of Darkness**": Punitive Despair

Satan's belief that he can rule Hell is based on a fallacious assumption that one can will the mind to conceive of hell as heaven and heaven as hell; however, Milton is clear that this is a fallacious

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[104] Milton, *Christian Doctrine*, 928.

[105] Ibid., 925.

thought in that the poem upholds the limitations of the will, upholding that divine objectivity trumps the powers of the mind: conceiving of torment as pleasure is not enough to actually experience pleasure. Hell cannot seem a heaven, because Hell is a place of torment, by essence dichotomous to Heaven. In this way, the semantics of hell and heaven are *de facto* switched. Put a different way, Satan believes he can choose to reign in a prison he cannot escape, but, as the saying goes, even the warden of a prison is in prison. The penal nature of knowledge, when seen in this way, makes Satan's boast to reign not but the shaking of his chains, makes him not a king but a slave to despair.[106]

Satan uses his desperate logic to express his subservient condition—albeit toward a different logical end—by basically arguing that he is powerless to achieve repentance, an inverse of the prideful monarch of Book I and II:

> But say I could repent and could obtain
> By Act of Grace my former state; how soon
> Would highth recall high thoughts, how soon unsay
> What feig'd submission swore: ease would recant
> Vows made in pain, as violent and void.
> For never can true reconcilement grow
> Where woulds of deadly hate have perc'd so deep:
> Which would but lead me to a worse relapse
> And heavier fall: so should I purchase dear
> Short intermission bought with double smart.
> This knows my punisher; therefore as far
> From granting hee, as I from begging peace.[107]

Though incrimination, the desperate conscience shows Satan his subservient place in the cosmos.

Both Satan's knowledge of the divine and his chance for repentance are encapsulated by his labeling of God as 'my punisher,' meaning that Satan's failure of reasoning is that he relates to God only as an adjudicator, only a tormenting jailer and nothing more. Though he may plead for

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[106] Martin explains that, in both psychoanalytical and ethical terms, Satan discovers in this moment "that the punitive Other he had sought to defeat is really the punitive self whose misconception of freedom has progressively destroyed his autonomy and disconnected him from his own emotions, from the sympathies of others, and from the mutuality of heaven, now transformed into an objectified "hell." "Reasons of Radical Evil," 180.

[107] Milton, *PL*, IV. ll. 93-104.

mercy from his punisher, the carceral nature of his grief is exposed: a believer is not a prisoner, not enslaved but liberated.. In order to reason himself back onto the path to forgiveness, Satan's desperate paradigm would have to shift, meaning that he would have to be outside of despair and his reasoning would have to be completely abandoned; he would need to conceive of God—and obedience to the Son—as the means of salvation not punishment, perhaps by begging his forgiveness from a 'redeemer'. Instead, his rebellious pride only reaffirms his fallen state. His thoughts then emulate his earlier acknowledgment that "lower still I fall, only Supreme/ in misery; such joy Ambition finds" (*PL*, IV. ll. 91-2).

Because he knows the damage he has done to Heaven, his knowledge impacts his capacity to repent based on his reputation with the fallen angels. Satan led the other angels to fall, and he cannot repent for fear of shaming himself to them. Like a human concerned with earthly redemption, Satan's loyalty to the fallen rout—his pride—creates a social tether holding him to his rebellion. In itself, this social relationship has less to do with despair than with the moment of mob mentality in which Milton is obviously interested. However, it, like Satan's desperate condition, is fundamentally connected to Satan's special knowledge as a fallen angel. The other obvious overlap is the flaw in his reasoning, a desperate logic which again incriminates him for an action he has yet to commit.

As Hughes notes in his gloss, Satan's confession shows that the angels fell freely; however, the confession also serves to again highlight the illogic of Satan's role as a reprobate, especially in light of the above discussion of Satan's spiritual death. Milton is explicit that it is through his conscience that Satan recalls his previous faults, mainly the original betrayal of God; however, Satan's move post-confession is not to repentance, but to his famous inquiry into his desperate condition:

> Me miserable! which way shall I fly
> Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
> Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
> Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,

> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n.
> O then at last relent: is there no place
> Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?
> None Left but by submission; and that word
> Disdain forbids me and my dread of shame…[108]

The double-bind for Satan is that he is stuck between Heaven and Hell and fixated on himself, the self-love of the damned.[109] Even with eyes fixed on Heaven, Satan cannot conceive of repentance because he is burned by his own suffering. Still, this self-awareness forges a profound aspect of this desperate condition in part because Satan is aware of his special torment.

Consider his physical movement through layers of torment, where Satan tries to stratify his suffering into geographical positions using infernal terms like "lower" and "lowest." The superlative falters when 'lowest' yields to lower, evoking that, though Hell is the lowest one can reach, the experience of hell yields an even lower suffering, a paradox that immediately evokes arguments on internalization of suffering. As Richardson glosses, "the Lowest hell he found was a Heaven to that Torment he felt from the Dread of Worse, the hell of Hells was in his own Terrify'd Mind. He Has, Fear Can have no Bounds."[110] Richardson's point that Satan's 'Terrify'd Mind' creates new tortures onto itself misses a signifiant point: Satan's mind is self-actualizing; yet, his focus remains on the wrath and despair he feels in the moment because he cannot conceive of heaven as anything but torment. Because it is definitionally dependent on his infernal life, *heaven* is always

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[108] Ibid., ll. 73-82.

[109] Why Satan remains in hell is too large of a question for my research; however, despair and its illogic certainly offers one such reason. Other theologians differ in this anchoring to hell from Milton. For example, In *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, More explains that 'self-love' is the anchor by which the damn keep themselves in hell:

> For who can imagine the horror, the stench, the confusion, the Flames of Fire, those loud murmurs and bellowings of the troubled Seas working and smoking like seething Water in a Caldron, the fearfull howlings and direfull grones of those rebellious Ghosts, who besides the general defacement of whatsoever they heretofore took pleasure in, are in an unexpressible torture of Body, with an unimaginable vexation of Minde; Self-love then (the centre of the Animal life) proving the depth and bottom of Hell, as being inflamed and boiling up with the highest indignation and vengeance against it self, that when it had so many opportunities, it provided no better for its own happiness.

More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness*, 41.

[110] Richardson, "ft. 76," 138.

antithetical to Satan's current experience, the restlessness of the damned. An analogy might be fitting. Satan's condition in despair is akin to asking someone on fire to conceive of a moment when he or she were not burning. Suffering is their being, and the self is limited by pain, as if one becomes the pain one feels. While on fire, can one conceive of life outside of the flame? Only when pain is no longer the definitional essence of normality. Where once one was human, now they are only engulfed. For Satan, the present torment is too much for the previous or future possibilities of being outside of torment. Thus, the transmuting of objects (heaven for hell/hell for heaven) represents the illogic of his condition and the incarcerated nature of Satan's desperate cognition.

Satan's internal rebellion, his distemper, manifests to cement his reprobation, and he cannot repent or be pardoned except by submission, an aspect of his complaint against the Son and a main cause of his rebellion in the first place. Within his desperate mindset, he attempts to highlight his lack of agency by speaking of disdain; yet, notice how the complicated use of italics both indicates that Satan is referencing the word *Disdain*, but also personifying it, in this instance indicated by the capitalization: "…that word/*Disdain* forbids me and my dread of shame." If this is still part of Satan's confession, what he is confessing is how little he understands his position within the cosmic hierarchy. The latent implication is that Satan is unable to grasp what has happened to his psyche, evidenced by the humoral distempering but in the fissuring of his mental faculties, evidenced by the personification of *disdain* into an externalized judge.

All the early editions italicize *Disdain*, implying that Satan has personified the feeling outside himself. As Oxford physician Thomas Willis says of despair, those who suffer from "despair of Eternal Salvation," are also want to fall into a "*Delirium* or idle raving, with mighty fear and sadness," a condition which evokes some times the impression of being modified, changed from one's former condition. This impression leads the desperate to "assume a new image, either Angelical or Diabolical; in the mean time, the Intellect, because the *Imagination* furnishes it only with undecent and monstrous notions, is wholly perverted from the use of right reason." For Satan, this impression causes a split whereby he personifies his "undecent and monstrous

notions" as *Disdain*, an actor who prevents his "use of right reason" but, more importantly, allows him a level of agency even while damning him.[111] I cannot repent because Disdain hinders me.

Andrew Escobedo provides an alternative explanation, albeit pertaining to Book II. In tracing Satan's allegorical and narrative volatile agency—his free will—Escobedo discusses the importance of Milton's dynamic figure. In quoting Theresa Krier's discussion of prosopopoetic *dæmons*, Escobedo explains that

> in this striking re-description [ie. *daemons* act as intermediaries between gods and mortals], daemons enable rather than merely compel the agency of personifications, transforming them into unfettered energy mediating between conceptual parts, the 'free movement across an interval.' If we apply this idea of free movement to the domain of will, we might say that a personification's actions represent a discharge of volitional energy.[112]

He continues by explaining how "Personifications simultaneously appear deeply compelled and radically free," and that "Personifications do not undergo a process of cognition when choosing. Their mental activity of choice is usually represented as happening all at once—in what we can describe equally as a sudden volitional discharge or as an involuntary daemonic compulsion."[113] Escobedo's argument pertains to Sin; however, we see the significance of *Disdain* as especially tied to a volitional energy in that Satan's split in personality stems from his perceived *lack* of volitional energy: part of him is literally free (*Disdain*) as it has been liberated from the tormenting side of his other part (the desperate Satan), who remains hindered.[114]

Rather than showing the level of agency Satan has in his rebellion, the introspection and personification illustrate on how Satan's understanding has been conditioned, mainly that he is both empowered and impotent. By personifying *Disdain* as an external agent with control over him, Satan is able to gain temporary rational focus, albeit one that turns inward, focusing on his

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[111] Thomas Willis, *Two Discourses Concerning the Soul of Brutes* (London: Thomas Dring, 1683), *EEBO,* 200.

[112] Escobedo, "Allegorical Agency," 805. See Escobedo's expanded discussion in *Volition's Face: Personification and the Will in Renaissance Literature* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame UP, 2017.)

[113] Ibid. 806.

[114] Ibid.

reputation with his peers rather than with God: If he is to return to hell, he will be shamed for being in despair when he, unlike all the other evil angels with "looks/ Downcast and damp" (*PL*. I. l. 542-3), appeared as the only fallen angel without despair: "yet such wherein appear'd/ Obscure some glimpse of joy, to have found thir chief/ Not in despair, to have found themselves not lost/ in loss itself" (ll. 523-6). While empowered by the temporary personification of his own self-disdain, Satan becomes increasingly aware of his own incarcerated nature, an agency itself; however, rather than pursuing this awareness to repent, Satan's reasoning devolves into an obfuscating, incarcerating mess. As with his previous beguiling of the other fallen angels, Satan appears 'obscured' because, while he appears in "wonted pride" (l. 527), his emotions are feigned. In Book IV, his conscience has revealed the shame he cannot admit to the other fallen angels: that he, too, is in despair.[115]

Satan grieves in part because he cannot submit to God without the capacity to realize that his actions and will have been conditioned by the will of God. Again, Satan acts because God allows him to act by abandoning him to his illogic, the false reasoning inherent to a 'bad' conscience; but, with this noxiously entangled case, Milton achieves an important pedagogical goal: using Satan's unique type of damnation as a good temptation.

Satan's Utility: The Temptation of Redemption (or Tormenting the Tormenter).

As stated earlier, Milton's argument relies on a major assumption: Satan must have the opportunity to repent or else his sin cannot be a sin. Aquinas predates this awareness in his reasoning over despair:

> The damned are outside the pale of hope on account of the *impossibility of returning to happiness*: hence it is not imputed to them that they hope not, but it is a *part of their damnation*. Even so, it would be no sin for a wayfarer to despair of obtaining that which he had no natural capacity for obtaining, or which was not due

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[115] As William Empson notes in *Milton's God*, this is our first glimpse into Satan's isolating solitude: "We have not had Satan alone before—he has always been either negotiating with rival powers or encouraging his followers, so this is the first time he could have told us that he regards lying to his followers as a painful duty" Empson, *Milton's God* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1981), 65.

> to be obtained by him; for instance, if a physician were to despair of healing some sick man, or if anyone were to despair of ever becoming rich.[116]

Like Aquinas, Milton believed individual agency essential to sin and God's goodness. As we have seen above, Satan's despair is his wages of sin, and damnation is "due to be obtained by him." Therefore, his despair is a facet of his damnation that in part limits his redemptive agency and warns him of his damnation. This said, Satan is the victim of a theological framework, a fly-in-the-ointment apparent from Milton's own logical deductions on humans. In *The Persecutory Imagination*, Stachniewski goes as far as to argue that Milton's Satan exemplifies what internalized religious reprobation had become, resulting in a confusion of spiritual value.[117] Whether or not Stachniewski is accurate—most scholars now say he is not—his mistake here is that he believes Satan experiences despair in a way consistent with a damned human, a condition which itself is distinct from redeemable humanity and occurring *ex post facto* an *a priori* judgment: despair is catalyzed by a perceived final judgement (that has yet to come).

Satan's faulty reasoning is a byproduct of his desperate judgment.[118] Milton explicitly says as much when he assumes that evil angels are specifically reserved for judgement, a condition exacerbated by a special knowledge of their fall from grace. Inherent to their desperate condition, this special knowledge makes the evil angels akin to humans post-damnation, where, as Aquinas

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[116] Aquinas, *Summa*, II.ii. Q 20. R to Obj 3. . Emphasis mine.

[117] Ibid., 349

[118] It is odd that some critics try to salvage Satan's rationality. For example, in her *Satan's Poetry: Fallenness and Poetic Tradition in Paradise Lost*, Danielle A. St. Hilaire explores Satan's "skill as a reasoner through a tortured series of questions and answers aimed at understanding both his new context and himself within it" (27). Unfortunately, St. Hilaire's assertion that Satan demonstrates "*rhetorical* consistency" in practicing the same "epistemological strategies" from Books I and II actually highlight his failure as a early-modern rhetorician (emphasis mine, 27). By "preferring the lack of knowledge implied" by his question acting strategy (31)—a strategy St. Hilaire says "shows his skill as a reasoner" (27)—Satan only highlights what we know later from *Paradise Regain'd*: Yes, Satan can practice the Socratic method; however, his conclusions are faulty, and he prefers ignorance over truth. As Northrop Frye reasons, "For Milton the only genuine act is the act performed according to the will of God" (137). St. Hilaire, *Satan's Poetry: Fallenness and Poetic Tradition in Paradise Lost* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2012). Frye, "Agon and Logos," In *The Prison and the Pinnacle*, Ed. Balachandran Rajan (Buffalo: Toronto UP, 1973).

reasons, knowledge and despair exist like an ever-tightening snare, one in which Milton went to great lengths in Book IV to justify as deserved punishment, albeit one that lasts an eternity.

As explained in the sections above, Milton firmly believes that, despite a weighted will and reason, reprobates damn themselves and that "*reprobation lies not so much in the divine will*, as in the obstinacy of their own minds; *it is not God who decrees it, but the reprobate themselves who determine on refusing to repent while it is in their power*."[119] But Satan is not a reprobate in the same way as a typical human because he has already been judged. In Milton's theology, Satan's despair proves that, once the decision to rebel was made, the angels' wills were tethered and, as a consequence, they must serve a specific utility to the cosmos.

In the Christian worldview, temptations abound but not all of them are evil. In *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin explains that temptations are an aspect of "continual warefare" (601) that help Christians "obey God" (601).[120] Temptations come in two forms: those from God and those from Satan. Those temptations which come from Satan—"concupiscence" — "are presented to our eyes in such a way that the view of them makes us withdraw or decline from God" (601); "Satan attacks those who are unarmed and unprepared" so that he may "destroy, condemn, confound." Conversely, good temptations stem from God (or his agents) by which he seeks to "mortify, tame, and cauterize [a sinner's] flesh" (601). While bad temptations may lead a sinner away from God, good temptations draw us closer to him.[121]

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[119] Milton, *Christian Doctrine*, 928. Emphasis mine. In agreement, Baxter adds: "When this disease [i.e. Melancholy] is gone very far, *Directions* to the persons themselves are vain, because they have not *Reason* and *free-will* to practise them…" Baxter, "Tit. 5. Directions to the Melancholy about their Thoughts," In *Christian Directory*, I.vi 4.

[120] In discussing his warfaring Christian, Milton explains in *Areopagitica*, "that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary." Milton, *Areopagitica*, In *The Complete Poems and Major Prose,* edited by Merritt Hughes (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2003), 728. Temptations are a trial, a struggle testing one's resolve like Christ in the desert, and therefore act as spiritual warfare that affects our nature: " ... Our nature is born of war and, therefore is called a struggle by Homer." Pico Della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1965), 11.

[121] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Church*, 601.

Evil angels are deployed as tempters by which humans are tempted to chose sin. Though evil angels "are sometimes […] permitted to wander throughout the whole earth, the air, and heaven itself," they are executing "the judgements of God" via God's permission. Primarily, their task is to tempt man, a task through which God tests man's resistance to sin.[122] Their utility is primarily to enforce human choice, determining by influence whether individuals resist temptation. To navigate this relationship and depending upon context, Milton relies on the simple maxim: evil is in action, and individuals are always responsible for their actions, not the tempters themselves. This said, the evil agents maintain a use similar to 'evil rulers' Pilate and Cæsar: "instruments" of the divine will.[123]

Milton presupposes that Satan's actions are only permitted to produce good, not evil, and we see him draw a firm line separating the two: "God distinctly declares that it is himself [i.e. God] who *impels* the sinner to sin, who hardens his heart, who blinds his understanding, and leads him [i.e. the sinner] into error; yet on account of the infinite holiness of the Deity, it is not allowable to consider him as in the smallest instance the author of sin."[124] Milton divides the desire to do evil and the influence to do it using *impel* and *compel*, but the difference is quite tricky. *Compel* is best seen as relating to an external temptation, as in a compulsion toward a desired object. Conversely, impulsion is achieved through an internal impulse—perhaps through the passions—which creates the necessary condition to act on sin.

God achieves the internal impulse to "manifest the wickedness of the sinner, not to create it" by removing those supportive structures that prevent man from yielding to sin:

> …even in the matter of sin God's providence finds its exercise, not only in permitting its existence, or in withdrawing his grace, but also in impelling sinners to the commission of sin, in hardening their hearts, and in blinding their understandings.[125]

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[122] See Milton's full discussion in *CD* Ch. VIII "Of the Providence of God, or of his General Government of the Universe."

[123] Milton, *CD*, 987.

[124] Ibid., 985.

[125] Ibid., 985.

By removing these supportive structures, God cooperates with the wicked in allowing them to harden their hearts and act in blindness: "God is said to drive men, not in the sense of seducing them to sin, but of the sense of beguiling them to their own punishment or even producing a good end."[126] Milton frames knowledge and reason diametrically, where reason is the impulse toward good (via the conscience) and knowledge is the recollection of malfeasances (hence, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil). Again, Milton frames these relationships around impulses, where the knowledge of evil/sin impinges on the impulse toward good. Blessed with a superior intellect, the good angels are spared the burden of sinful knowledge, from which they feel no impulse to pry, and are thus not much like postlapsarian humans; on the other hand, the evil angels are weighed down by the knowledge of evil, impacting their will and reason, and are thus more like humans. The latter case of impulsion best describes Satan's condition, where, like David, Satan was 'in a state of preparation for any atrocity,' meaning that his inclination was toward evil, thus he was predisposed to perform it. However, when this logic is applied to *Paradise Lost*, Milton evokes Satan's cosmic utility in tempting the reader, while still maintaining the distinction between angelic and human actors.[127]

Evil angels perform evil actions themselves in that they tempt man away from God, making their temptations evil; conversely, God's temptations are good because they tempt man toward God. Because human and angel agency are both grounded in individual action, good and evil are always determined by the actor, not by the instigator. As quoted earlier, 'the Deity does not effect his purpose by compelling any one to commit crime, or by abetting him in it, but by withdrawing the ordinary grace of his enlightening spirit, and ceasing to strength him against sin'. Thus, Satan, as a actor in a cosmic drama, provides a good temptation to tease readers toward God. As readers, we continue to frame Satan as a symbolic construct, a nebulous contact point between

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[126] Ibid., 988.

[127] Ibid., 987.

religious frameworks and reader experience—an assertion that Stachniewski as others overestimate. Yet, we should remember that Milton's readers—as Nathan Johnstone warns—were aware of the immediacy of Satan's presence and empathized with his powerful abilities. Speaking of early-modern crime narratives, Johnstone explains, "The perception into demonic agency these [crime] publications advocated, and sought to provide for, was vicarious, seeking to transmit to the reader experience of diabolic temptation. It demanded, not a distance observation of the exposé, but an engagement and empathy with its protagonists." Rather than suggest that crime was "reassuringly aberrant," these crime narratives tempted the reader via empathy, the placement of the reader within the possessed's shoes.

In experiencing the narratives, "readers *could* empathise with the psychological/spiritual experience of criminals," basically as victims of Satan's temptations and infiltration, whereby "the Devil entered the conscience and took hold of the corruption already present, blowing it up until it exploded into violence or murder. The audience's recognition of the anger, greed or jealousy that Satan inflated into murder allowed them to experience diabolic agency vicariously."[128] Yet, while the early modern subjects sympathized with demonic victims, this experience is warranted by their appreciation for demonic temptation of others—in this case murderers—for whom they felt a type of empathetic connection, an experience which showed an almost dire desire to resist and protect themselves and others from demonic influence. Conversely, it is a stretch to say that these individuals empathized with demonic tempter, just the victim of the temptation.[129]

While it may not condone Satan's actions, Book IV asserts that even creatures as despicable and unredeemable as Satan teeter on redemption. Unfortunately, we have seen that Milton creates a redemptive paradox where Satan could never be redeemed, and *Paradise Lost* acts

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[128] Johnstone, "Crime Narratives and Demonisation," In *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 153.

[129] Rumrich uses this point to critique Stanley Fish, explaining of post-Romantic readers: "Perhaps most post-Romantic readers tend to sympathize with a character occupying Satan's narrative slot—that of a noble if flawed rebel leader. Yet sympathy is distinct from moral or emotional identification." John P. Rumrich, *Milton Unbound* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1996), 19.

as a lengthy exploration of the subject of God's wrath and abandonment, crescendoing when the tempter is tempted to repent. If we accept Milton's argument, then Satan's utility is in showing a conscience's illogic, a faulty faculty which makes Satan irredeemable; however, if we invert Satan's desperate logic, we see that the flaw in Satan's reasoning is also significant in limiting how humans evaluate themselves and others by showing how despair prevents redemption. In short, it operates akin to Johnstone's logic: the reader emphasizes with despair's victim, even while still hating the tormenter. What is unique in this instance is that the tempter and the victim of the temptation are one in the same.

Recall that Satan's complaint that an oath sworn in agony was faulty, that eternal torment made any personal submission 'violent and void.' To explain, Milton depicts analogous cases within the scene: if submission made in agony is null and void, does it hold that the inverse also must be true? If, when made during torture, submissions and pleas are null and void, are decisions made in agony not excusable? If God knows of Satan's torment and his inability to seek authentic forgiveness, why does it not stand to reason that Satan's plight is inescapable because of the suffering inflicted upon him? The result, therefore, is a frustrating portrayal of the desperate: damned if he does and damned (by Milton's logic) if he does not. When we realize that Satan is excluded from grace, I believe we can explore his situation in a way that shows his suffering as both dissimilar and yet useful to a human's experience, where Milton provides a look into God's temptations, temptations that can assist a believer in returning to the path, and, unlike Satan, a means to cooperate with grace.[130]

Paradise Lost is fundamentally the history of the cosmos, where Milton explores both spatially and historically the expanses of the universe. In the imagined beginning of this

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[130] Above I provide a brief discussion of Milton's theology, mainly showing that, while Milton himself is an Arminian or moderate Calvinist, his theology occasionally wanes between extreme and moderate Calvinism. In Arminius view of grace, a believer had to cooperate with the will of God—sometimes called voluntarism. Extreme Calvinists believed that human will was inconsequential to God: the elect were saved and the damned damned regardless of cooperation (with God's will). The fact that Satan reasons himself out of grace by refusing to yield to God marks Milton as a moderate Calvinist because Satan must cooperate/voluntarily submit to the will of God.

expansive history, the poem provides a specific moment in which the greatest reprobate falls further from grace, where the temptation to return to grace only increases his exclusion from it. What we can suspect then is that Milton uses the moment on *Niphates* Top as a cipher, a way of interpreting how temptation works throughout the Christian worldview. While Satan's predicament prevents us from calling him human or even *humanized*—mainly because we know he cannot be redeemed—his experience shows to a human the individual's reliance on grace and the need to cooperate with it. The empathy that one feels for Satan allows a reader to see a plea for redemption as a good temptation, a way to overcome suffering via God's mercy.

We see an example of this in the book of Job, where Satan finds himself challenged by God to "considered [his] seruant Iob," an open invitation to tempt Job to sin against God.[131] Rather than turning Job to Satan, the temptation instead draws Job closer to God; however, the role of Satan here resembles an earlier, Biblical precedent where Satan assists God to test his believers rather than Satan's role as tormenter.[132] But Milton does not discuss the effect of temptations on Satan in *De Doctrina*, only surmising that Satan and his ilk are reserved for punishment, meaning that Book IV's temptation is aimed primarily at the torturing of Satan: If evil angels can never be redeemed, then tempting them toward redemption constitutes torture.

Certainly torturing the tormenter is not unprecedented, and German mystic Jakob Böhme depicts a conversation between a narrator and an evil angel wherein the narrator tries to tempt a devil to repent, increasing the fallen angel's suffering:

> How art thou bright Angell turn'd to a drudge to bear about that sack full fraught with sins? from a Prince to a base Executioner? Get thee hence with thy load of sin, and take mine in to make up waight, for 'tis mens sinns thou hast most need of, nor doth ought else belong to thee in my soul, thou hast not the least share; here I stand, devour me if thou canst. But see, I have in me a signe or mark, *viz.* the sign of the Cross, whereon Jesus strangled sin and death; destroy'd Hell and bound up the Devill to remain a prisoner within

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[131] Job 1.8, *The Holy Bible.*

[132] The *New Oxford Annotated Bible* emphasizes this point, explaining that the Satan of *Job* is the adversary of man, but not of God. Satan's status in Christian traditions changes later. David J. A. Clines, "*Job*: Fn. 1.1-2.13: Prologue," In *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 727.

> the Dungeon of Gods wrath-principle, eat up this *Recipe* with the rest, and they may perhaps remetamorphose thee into an Angell.[133]

In the interaction, Böhme's narrator uses a return to grace as the temptation, although primarily indicating that the demons attempt to "eat up this *Recipe*"—figuratively consummating the doctrine of punishment being espoused by the speaker— and consequently ingest redemption. In yielding to Böhme's reasoning, the devil "may perhaps remetamorphose" back into an Angell. Böhme's mystical writings are a tough comparison to Milton, but we can note how Böhme uses good temptation to torture the evil angel as a similar effect of temptation: strength for the human reader.

While Milton is participating in a different theological and political moment, the use of Satan's torment is similar to Böhme in that both writers assume that a demon could be saved while reiterating it is damned eternally.[134] Böhme's conceit is straight-forward: driven by desire to eat the believer, the demon would only reap more torment. Conversely, Milton obfuscates his torture of Satan, creating redemption as as a torturous effect of Satan's own preoccupation with God. The slight overlap lies in the effect of evil against the sinner, an action which creates the torment. Finally, both Böhme and Milton use the potential for redemption to console the reader: it is impossible for a demon to consume a believer's body because it has transformed into a symbol (a *Recipe*) of Jesus' defeat of sin and death. Likewise, Satan's actions marked him as tortured by potential redemption, perhaps like Böhme's demon but frozen before the believer, incapacitated by whether to eat or not to eat.

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[133] Jakob Böhme, "A receipt for the Prince of Darkness when he comes in his black visard to affright the soul into despair," In *A Consolatory Treatise of the four Complexions*, Trans. Charles Hotham (London: T.W. H. Blundon, 1621). Böhme does conclude that because the devils are liars, they will reject redemption and remain in hell.

[134] Augustine engages with this topic in *City of God,* observing that, of those theologians who say all men have potential for salvation, Augustine opines that "human tenderness is moved only towards men" and that the sympathetic "plead chiefly [for] their own cause, holding out false hopes of impunity to their own depraved lives by means of this quasi compassion of God to the whole race" (666). Conversely, he reasons that "they who promise this impunity even to the prince of the devils and his satellites make a still fuller exhibition of the mercy of God" (666). *City of God*, XXI. 18.

John Donne provides another informative example. In discussing the potential for human immortality, Donne evokes two different levels of life to position humans in the great chain, a worm and a devil:

> To know this immortality, is to make this immortality, which otherwise is the heaviest part of our Curse, a Blessing unto us, by providing to live in Immortall happinesse: whereas now, we doe so little know our selves, as that if my soule could aske one of those Wormes which my dead body shall produce, Will you change with me? that worme would say, No; for you are like to live eternally in torment; for my part, I can live no longer, then the putrid moisture of your body will give me leave, and therefore I will not change;[135]

The worm, a base lifeform like man, is unlike man in that he has no potential for salvation. The worm wisely perceives that, should it risk damnation, an early death is preferable whereas a reprobate is 'like to live eternally in torment.' As if on cue, the thought of eternal torment without salvation evokes the Devil, who is also unlike a damned human in that he is ethereal in nature, yet like the damned as he also lacks a possibility of redemption:

> nay, would the Devill himselfe change with a damned soule? I cannot tell; As we argue conveniently, that the Devil is tormented more then man, because the Devill fel from God, without any other Tempter, then himselfe, but man had a Tempter, so may it be not inconveniently argued too, that man may be more tormented then he, because man continued and relapsed, in his rebellions to God, after so many pardons offered and accepted, which the Devill never had.[136]

Donne uses Satan's fall as a foil for man's; however, Donne also uses Satan's irredeemable nature as a cudgel against man. Basically, since the Devil cannot be redeemed—a common assumption amongst Böhme, Donne, and Milton—he is not punished as much as man, who willingly backslides or turns against God. Though compelled, the devil lacks the will to turn toward God. For Donne, this may explain why man is inflicted with *more* torment than a devil. Unlike Milton, who tends to treat Satan as different from man in degree, Donne argues that devils are by nature different in kind:

> Howsoever, otherwise their torments may be equall, as the Devill is a Spirit, and a condemned soule a spirit, yet that soule shall have a Body too, to be tormented with it, which the Devill shall not. How little we know

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[135] John Donne, "Sermon I," In *Fifty Sermons* (London: Ia. Flesher, 1649), 8.

[136] Ibid.

> our selves, which is the end of all knowledge! But we hast to the next branch, In the Resurrection we shall be like to the Angels of God in Heaven; But in what lies this likenesse?[137]

I have ended this passage mid-quote to accentuate what I have shown throughout Milton's Book IV, that the relationship between devil and human is far from certain, but that fallen angels allow theologians a certain pedagogical tool for discussing human redemption. As Donne rhetorically questions, "But in what lies this likeness?" Indeed, Man is unlike the worm and unlike the devil in that he cannot die eternally and is not cursed with irredeemability. Even though both a desperate human and fallen angel shared an eternal torment, they are different based on their potential for redemption, a point Donne accentuates by emphasizing man's corporal suffering only to backtrack his certainty. For Donne and Milton, the emphasis is on the possibility of redemption over suffering. Fifty years hence, Milton likewise uses Satan's fall, despair, and irredeemability as good temptations to encourage human redemption, where the depictions show an individual's emotional place in Milton's cosmos; Satan is an expression of how the conscience—powered by human-like will save bolstering grace—fails to reason itself out of despair.[138]

As I have argued above, Book IV contains a latent inquiry into the limitations of the conscience to grapple with the ethereal frameworks for the cosmos. Throughout Milton's works, he engages differently with his three characterizations of despair: Satan, Adam, and Samson. Critics range in their use of Satan's despair, juxtaposing Satan's suffering with human characters. Doebler explains that Satan's suffering creates "human empathy" and serves as an allegorical contrast to how Adam responds to despair's temptation.[139] In an unpublished thesis, Owen uses Satan's despair—"As with all melancholy men"—to discuss Satan's "self-reincrimination and examination,"

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[137] Ibid.

[138] Without going into great detail, Milton emphasizes the conditional nature of grace through man's voluntary submission to it; some scholars might see Böhme's method as a latent dismissal of solifidianism, the salvation by faith alone endorsed by the Church of England.

[139] Doebler, "*Rooted Sorrow,*" 115.

using it as foil to show Samson's redemption from despair.[140] In both instances—and as can be observed in many other critics—Satan's power comes from how he experiences despair and how this experience engages the reader.

If Milton had used Satan's despair alone, ignoring the redemptive strategies offered to Adam and Eve and later Samson, then our interpretation of Milton's theology would be vastly different; however, it is certainly frustrating to hear even learned scholars like Nigel Smith explain that "Paradise Lost is a free-will poem," using multiple voices and methods to tease out "Milton's conceptions of free will and authorship."[141] Smith is not wrong, and his point is consistent with critics like Carey who view the poem as dynamic and influential in accessing Milton's argument; yet, Milton's theological lynch pin, mainly that man is free, teeters on the excuse that Satan is unredeemable by choice. When the faculties to choose to cooperate with grace are faulty, what remains is a system designed to punish, not to save. The redemption offered to the humans creates an empathetic relationship—especially if the reader sees the suffering as noble or redemptive in itself—with a figure who *de facto* is made to *appear* human while being excluded from a human-like redemption. If Satan's utility is that he encourages humans to empathize with him, to learn from his failure, to be tempted back on to the right path, what makes Milton's characterization of Christ in *Paradise Regain'd* so frustrating is that it is the inverse of Satan: a man who chooses to shun evil *without* the possibility of failure.

For a large swath of early critics, Satan's danger is that he is the focus of the reader whereas the Son is meant to be the focal point of the text. In *Paradise Regain'd*, Milton's Christ is perfect in that he lacks a comparable relatability. Put differently, Satan is too temping because of his fallibility, and Christ is alienating because of his infallibility. In his 1966 essay "Revolt in the Desert," Northrop Frye critiques *Paradise Regain'd* for faltering in narrative suspense because of the Son's

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[140] Thomas Clinton Owen, "The Humorus Despair: The Melancholy of Satan in *Paradise Lost*" (Texas Tech University, December, 1971), 73-4.

[141] Smith, "*The Persecutory Imagination*: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair," In *The Review of English Studies* 45.178 (1994).

perfection. Humanity needs fallibility, and the Temptation in the Desert narrative lacks the human fallibility necessary to make it dramatic:

> One might think that Milton had selected the temptation of Christ because it is [...] the only episode [from the Bible] in which suspense and the feeling of the possible awful consequences of failure are consistently present. Christ's immediate discerning [of Satan], [...] and [the Son's] ability to reply 'Why are thou solicitous?" to every temptation, destroy[s] all opportunity for narrative suspense.[142]

Likewise, Tillyard complains that Christ's figure is too perfect, giving the *übermensch* a fortitude beyond human reliability, whereas Satan is characterized by a lack of fortitude: "Satan cannot even control himself when carrying out his evil intentions."[143] A lack of control, a lack of reasoning, and a lack of fortitude are the hallmarks of humanity and, in this instance, the dangerous overlap with the demon.

Perhaps Milton's strongest use of *Paradise Regain'd* is that it acts as a foil, similar to the main despair examples in *Paradise Lost*, reminding his readers that perhaps the most dangerous temptation is how alike a fallen angel and a desperate man appear, and the most dangerous temptation of all is wallowing in despair. However, like other theologians at his time, Milton strives to redeem his readers, even at the expense of his most powerful figures. Yes, Satan is offered an unfair treatment. And, though Tillyard accuses Satan of bemoaning his condition, bemoaning despair is also a hallmark of Job, and that awareness—the awareness that it is easier to think oneself damned than to think oneself saved—was the catalyst for Milton's finest poem.

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[142] Frye "Revolt in the Desert," In *The Return to Eden* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 143.

[143] Tillyard, *Milton* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967), 263.

Conclusion

The characters of Una and Red Crosse Knight from Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* were the initial inspiration for this dissertation. In Chapter One and elsewhere, I have discussed how Red Crosse's struggle with despair provides a look into the early modern fascination with the condition. Turning to works by Donne, Burton, Shakespeare, and Milton, I explored how despair was interrogated in order to mobilize the term to salve political, religious, and social contentions. In approaching a primarily religious condition, my case studies explored how religious belief manifested in both medical and spiritual affliction, opening the door to reevaluate legal and social taboos associated with depression and suicide.

While the focus of this dissertation has involved male authors and figures, I'd like to conclude by turning to the "Una" component of my initial interest. Spenser's Una, like Shakespeare's Queen Isabel in *Richard II*, acts as the compassionate intervener who spares Red Crosse's life. In fact, women are seen as a means by which desperate men are saved, and desperate women are largely a product of men's imagination, meant to illicit a certain means by which we evaluate, salve, and understand masculine anxieties. Given that, as Sharon Strocchia reasons, double the number of early modern men committed suicide than women,[1] it is perhaps unsurprising that male anxieties dominate a mainly male-produced discourse. But what of women's despair and women in despair?

In perhaps the most famous quip about female melancholia, Juliana Schiesari remarked that, in analyzing early modern melancholia, when we "speak of female melancholia," we speak "of

[1] Sharon T. Strocchia, "Women on the Edge: Madness, Possession, and Suicide in Early Modern Conventions," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 45, no. 1 (January 2015): 58. In this article, Strocchia is primarily interested in nuns, which makes early modern England less significant than some Catholic, continental nations.

something that is historically mute."[2] Schiesari is more precise than this famous quip might suggest: "melancholia as a cultural category for the *exceptional man*" denies "women's own claims to represent their losses within culture."[3] Scholars of female melancholy establish that melancholy is gendered and exclusionary, its role on stage and in literature often demarcating the genders. In investigating melancholy—and despair at times—Neely calls melancholy a "supple conceptual tool for thinking about the human,"[4] and despair functions in a similar way, a means by which men investigate the boundaries of life; yet, as I believe Neely would indicate, there is something obviously distinct between how early modern men perceive their own despair and how they approach the suffering of women.[5] But does despair function as a silencing or demarcating affliction like melancholia? Levy discusses how Burton, in attempting to establish women's melancholy, chooses to devalue the creative power of melancholy and semantically conflate it with despair.[6] As Levy indicates, the role of creative agency granted to Burton via melancholy—keep in mind, he's writing *The Anatomy* in order to cope with his own melancholy— precludes women. Instead, their melancholy is stagnant, lifeless, and fatal. It is the despair of the final section of *The Anatomy*, not the creative melancholy of the poet.

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[2] Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992), 95. As David Houston Wood explains, much important research has been done since Schiesari's claim to unpack and contextualize how melancholia is mobilized in the period. In addition to those I have cited, I am thinking here about Carol Thomas Neely's *Distracted Subjects* (2004), Allison Levy's *Re-membering Mascunlity in Early Modern Florence* (2006), and others. Less work has specifically focused on despair, but Neely and, more recently, Strocchia have explored desperate women on stage and desperate women in convents. Wood, *Time, Narrative, and Emotion in Early Modern England* (New York: Routleage, 2009), 64-76.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Neely, *Distracted Subjects*, 12.

[5] Drawing on Schiesari's research, Neely assumes, for example, that "the heroic tradition of male melancholy is always erected over and against representations of discredited female mourning" *Distracted Subjects*, 11.

[6] Allison Levy, *Re-membering Masculinity in Early Modern Florence* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), see specifically Part II, chapter 4: "The Death of the Fathers." For the section in Burton, see *Anatomy,* "Symptoms of Maids', Nuns', and Widows' Melancholy," 1.3.2.4. 414-9.

Hypothesizing about this important research raises two key points for me going forward: how did female practitioners approach despair and how does despair participate in the gendering of affliction? Lady Grace Mildmay (1552-1620), an Elizabethan noblewoman, Protestant believer, and medical practitioner, can serve as a brief case study of how to approach female despair.[7] As an early English autobiographer, Mildmay provides an excellent look into an exclusive literary circle. The text itself—written in Italian and designated to remain in the family—opens the door to a type of familial, personal knowledge.[8] Mildmay remarks that her meditations served as "consolation of my soul, the joy of my heart, and the stability of my mind."[9] In other words, Mildmay's writing acts as a humoral, mental, and spiritual ward against affliction. Teasing out the subtle differences seems important to understanding how consolation was mobilized in the period.

This dissertation explored how *despair* is mobilized as a means to comfort, sometimes masking its usage to demarcate and dismiss. Going forward, looking at despair and its many entanglements could prove fruitful in exploring specifically its obfuscating of other social demarcations, such as gender, where despair—to paraphrase Sidney—darkens all imaginations.[10] I hope that my work on despair has suggested new avenues of study for this component of early modern life.

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[7] For Neely's discussion, see Distracted Subjects, 72-6; for Mildmay's writing, see Mildmay, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewomen: Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620*, Ed. Linda Pollock. London: Collins and Town, 1993.

[8] Retha M. Warnicke, "Lady Mildmay's Journal: A Study in Autobiography and Mediation in Reformation England," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20, no. 1 (1989): 55-56.

[9] Mildmay qtd. in Warnicke, "Lady Mildmay's Journal," 57.

[10] Philip Sidney, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (New York: Penguin, 2007), II. 16.

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